Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Hunter Reynolds, 2016 August 10-September 7

Funded by the Keith Haring Foundation.

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Hunter Reynolds on 2016 August 10-Spetember7. The interview took place at the Fales Library in New York, NY, and was conducted by Theodore Kerr for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Visual Arts and the AIDS Epidemic: An Oral History Project.

Hunter Reynolds and Theodore Kerr have reviewed the transcript. This transcript has been heavily edited; many of the corrections and emendations appear below in brackets with initials. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

THEODORE KERR: This is Theodore Kerr interviewing Hunter Reynolds at the Fales Library in New York on August 10 [2016], for the Archives of the American Art, Smithsonian Institution, card number one. Hunter, I wonder if we can start by just telling me where you grew up, the name of the city, and your first memory.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Well, I was born in Rochester, Minnesota, and we moved around quite a bit. My first few years, my father was a Minnesota Viking football player, so that's why I hit the road there in Rochester, and we ended up—he ended up going—becoming a—back then, there was a dual league, football league, that he was not quite good enough for the Vikings A-team, so he went off to a secondary professional team and got signed to the Florida Gators, and we ended up in Jacksonville, Florida, and then moved around a few times there and ended up finally in West Palm Beach. And that's where I stayed until I was 15.

First memory, gee. Well, there's—I have a lot of memories from very, very early in my childhood because some—there were quite traumatic things that happened to me, so some combination of really early memories, you know, which manifested as dreams. My mother, in her post-postpartum depression, when I was six months old, severely burned me with scalding hot water, and I remember a lot of that experience, especially the healing part of it, which happened, you know—luckily, I was—when people see my skin graft and doctors see my skin grafts, they go, "How old are you?" because, from 1959, 1960, I just happened to be at Rochester, Minnesota, where I was born; the Mayo Clinic was there, and they were on the forefront of burn technology. So my skin grafts were really good, and yeah, and my first memories of life were the healing process of that quite traumatic event.

THEODORE KERR: In your home or in the hospital or—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: In the home. So I don't remember the actual burn. I think the memories—you know, I was six months old when it happened, so it was kind of this, you know, you do have psychic, visual, physical memories, and you can—and they started manifesting as dreams later as a child, and I had recurring dreams that were, like, very intense, and then I was able to go back and put together a timeline history of my early childhood through my grandparents, through—because the chaos and traumas, the next—you know, that was just the first one, but it continued for seven years of my life. So—but the real memory was that when I was healing—you know, my mother—they didn't know, you know, my mother was alone, and she told me a story about it that I believed until I was like 25.

And then finally, I started questioning this story because it was my fault that I burned myself, and the story was, she was cooking dinner with an electric skillet, and I was in a bassinet on the floor under the stove. Hello? And I pulled the cord down on myself. So that story I believed for many years, and then I just was like what? No, no, that could—first of all, even if that was true, why was I down on the floor under the fucking—like how could that happen? So then what happened was two women came into my life, my grandmother on my father's side and an aunt on my mother's side, and these two people knew that my mother had already been depressed and tried to commit suicide, and their job was to keep me as far away from her as possible during the healing process.

So my first memories are with these women around me, and then towards the end of that—and slightly—it's—when I was able to, in therapy, figure this out, this memory thing, and kind of timeline it with myth and reality and documents with—both sets of grandparents were avid filmmakers, you know, super-eight film photographers, hobby photographers. So there's thousands of pictures of me throughout my childhood that document these moments through time. But the perception of them through the photographs are very different, like why am I, you know, so happy looking, you know? And so I had this disconnect between what I was projecting in the images that they were taking of me and how I actually was dealing with all this trauma.

So—and art became a thing very, very early, because my grandmother was a hobby painter, and she was all—[and my grandfather too, and they were always painting in oils wherever they were traveling on vacations; –HR]

they took their little paint kit and easel and took me with them. But it was my grandmother who taught me how to paint in oils when I was 4. I was a prodigy. And so that was an initial healing vehicle that really happened in my earliest childhood. [I could escape into it painting, and my grandmother taught me all the fundamentals of it. Sometimes I do go through depressions, and they can be quite severe and I need to isolate; I need to hear water; and I need to be in a womb. I do that, and then I just pop myself out of it. –HR]

[One of the things that I need when I'm depressed is the sound of water. And growing up in Florida, I had it always at the beach, where—we lived on the beach as a kid, and we were only a block from the beach. I was always in water. I'm not a boat person; I have to be in the water. I want to be under the water with fish. So from very early, I learned how to swim, I was 2 years old, and that's where I would escape: To the water, to the forest, and to art. If I got outside the house and into nature, I could immediately reinvent myself in the world. –HR]

And that became early tools, and so I had this opportunity, after 9/11 when I had this big meltdown in my life and went to therapy and timelined it all with visuals and what's myth, what isn't, what have I mythologized in my own storytelling, and my—I was able to go far back when my father and mother were still alive, and my grandparents were—one grandparent was still alive, and I was able to really dig. You know, I was close to the truth of what happened, like oh, we really moved 17 times between the age of 1 and 7 years old. Let's see, hurricane—I've lived through three hurricanes, two houses being destroyed, rooftops being blown off with us inside in Jacksonville in our apartment—I mean, this was constant chaos, and so every moment of my life, really, at that time, was extreme.

And it's always been extreme, and so there's a tape that I have in my life, and I've learned to adapt to it, but if I don't have a lot of chaos in my life, I tend to make it. [Laughs.] And one of the things that happened towards the end of the first year is that I learned how to walk really good, and there was all these—there's all there Super 8 films of me running in from my—into the forest and following inchworms and, you know, being around my grandparents goats and stuff, and I was able to ask my dad to remember like as far back as he could and to confront my—what my mother did, and, "Do you think she really tried to kill me?" And he said yes. And she did successfully abort two fetuses, which I saw happen.

So that was my life; it was like that. And water, the sound of water, is something that I am just like—when I am really depressed here in New York, I get—I go take the Staten Island ferry and go across, you know, like I need to be around water. So even I have tapes, like in the '90s when I was in Berlin, I would get depressed, and I had this tape, the water; like I'd put it on and go into my room and sleep for three days and wake up and get through it. So that all led to this dream that was a reoccurring dream of me being somewhere in water as a baby, not drowning, but crying, but kind of in a garden, like, you know, a waterfall. Like not that I was in the waterfall, but I was crying behind the waterfall in a cave. That was the recurring dream.

And I was able to tell my dad that story, and he said, "Well, you know, that's weird because, after your grandmother and this"—mama bird was her name, his aunt, "left, you suddenly started crying. And we thought—you didn't stop; you didn't sleep; you didn't eat for three days. You cried. So we took you to the doctor," and he—they said he's healed fine, just let him cry himself out. So for 10 days, they—and it got so extreme that they put me in the bathroom in the tub in a bassinet, turned on the shower, so it would drown out my crying. And suddenly, it just stopped, and I was like get me out of here, and I would run out to the forest. They would always say to come out to find me in the woods. I'd find some, you know, fjord, or make some, you know, something. I—that's how I survived. A long story, first memories.

THEODORE KERR: Did you have siblings?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: I do. I'm the oldest of four. So there's five years, almost six years between my brother [Mark –HR] and I because my mother had two miscarriages. Actually, they were aborted fetuses, but she self-aborted in the toilet, and I saw them. And then they got divorced when I was 7. My dad remarried when I was 10, and a half—I have a half-brother [Brian –HR] and a half-sister [Tasha –HR] from this second marriage. So I'm the oldest of four. There's 14 years between me and my sister [Tasha –HR], who is the youngest.

THEODORE KERR: Did you live with your siblings ever?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, I took care of them. One of the things that happened in my life was my father melted down and—when I was 15, and I went up to live with him in California, and it was like going from the frying pan of my mother and into the situation of his life, which was totally in meltdown mode. So I came out when I was 14, and I was the first out person in my high school in 1973. I started the first gay and lesbian student union in the State of Florida, not consciously, but my action of coming out created this avalanche, and we started a kind of semi—what turned out to be a kind of unofficial student union. And we actually got into the yearbook of 1975 as—we called ourselves the [Breakfast Club –HR]because we'd skip the first hour of school and went to Denny's and hung out together.

[But my mother couldn't deal with my coming out. –HR] So she threw me out, and I went to live with my grandmother, and then 10th grade, I never finished. I mean, I finished 10th grade and then called my dad, who I hadn't seen in four years, and he lived out in California and was trying to be an actor. And I said, "I'm gay. I want to come live with you," and so he said, "Great," and he was—seemed cool, you know, I'm the oldest, and they were just 20 years old when they had me, so they were kind of astounded to think I'm 15, and my dad's only 35, and I'm like going out there to live with this fucking hot, gorgeous dude. My dad was fucking gorgeous: sexual, open, like my stepmother was only 10 years older than me, so it was like having this [laughs] weird thing. And they were in meltdown mode.

And because I had worked and because I was a certified lifeguard, I just got lucky, and they lived in this big housing complex out in the valley, and I literally walked into—you know, from the airport to their apartment, passed the big sort of complex pool and an office—management office that said summer lifeguard needed. So I had a job the next day, like really, off the plane, full-time summer job; out, gay lifeguard at a huge apartment complex in the valley. It was fun except, three weeks into it, I realized that their lives were falling apart, and he was possibly being evicted; he didn't have a job; all this other weird shit was going on. They were drinking, doing lots of drugs, having orgies, and the kids were like unsupervised, [and three weeks after I arrived my stepmother split and left him and the kids. –HR]

I didn't pay the rent, but for that summer, I bought all the food, and I kept the electricity bill going, and I kept the phone bill going. And so I took care of my brother and sister, and then I tried to go register for school and do that, but California has a law, which is called the Independent Adult, and because so many gay and lesbian kids are runaway kids in general, highest population of—even still to this day, of running away, LGBT kids, like they go to LA, so it's a good place to be homeless. [Laughs.] You know, it's warm; it's always fun, sun; you can hide in shrubs in Beverly Hills and get food and dumpster dive, and it's really—it was like that then, and it's still like that. So they had a law, even back then, which was called the Independent Adult Law. And if you were a runaway and if you had a job and were supporting yourself, even at 15 years old, which I was 16 by then, they consider you an adult.

You can't vote, but they can't send you home. And the—and if you're caught by police or truant, whatever, "Why aren't you in school?" and you can say, "I'm an independent adult." You have to prove it, but they're—they, then, can't call your parents to come get you or whatever. Kind of cool. So I knew about that right away, and I got a job, and I lied about my age; I looked older, and so at 16 years old, I was on my own with my own apartment, having this schizophrenic life, which was Hollywood on one hand and working a full-time job on other hand, and hanging out with all the prostitutes, and going to Gino's, and what I call my Joan Jett summer, where we were friends in this kind of—yeah, Joan Jett and I were not only friends; we were like really good friends for a summer, that first summer I was there. It was like right when Cherry Bomb was coming out. And then we—you know, when I saw that movie, I was like, "Yeah, that's what we do." I was—I mean, just really—they weren't—you know, they were a weird band because he—they were—he just put them together; they weren't really friends, all of them. So Joan taught me how to dance punk at Gino's, the punk club, and I would hitchhike between Gino's and Studio One, and have this crazy life, meeting these amazing people and

THEODORE KERR: What's Studio One?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Studio One was the gay club. It was like Studio 54, except it was much earlier than that; it was like the first big, like, mega-disco with—you know, I heard a—you know, I'd meet these gay dudes in Palm Beach, and I'd say—you know, we'd go to New York, we'd go to LA, and at a certain point, I was like trying to decide if I should run away to New York or go to live with my dad in LA, because I did have some money saved up. So it wasn't like I was going totally empty-handed. I was going with a good chunk of cash from my Jewish family's—my stepfather's set up a bank account for me when I was younger and handed me $6,000 in cash when I left town and said, "Spend it wisely." [Laughs.]

So Studio One was like, you know, it was like Studio 54. It was—I think it opened in 1972. And it was the big LA club, and out in LA, all the bars close at 2:00 o'clock. So there were two after-hours places to go. One for like sort of straight rock and rollers, and then the Odyssey, which was the gay one. So at 2:00 in the morning, all these clubs would empty out, and everyone would go to the Odyssey until like—you know, you'd stay there until 10:00 in the morning or, you know, they would have a whole weekend; they didn't have to shut down. They didn't serve alcohol. Plenty of drugs. And it was where everyone went from street kids to—you know, Grace Jones would walk in and [Diana Ross appear to pick '70s Voguers –HR], off the floor of the Odyssey. So it was—Studio One was the big [disco –HR]—like Studio 54, and I just saw everything there, like they had a Back-Lot Cabaret, like the Michael Todd room [at the Palladium an 80's New York club –HR].

And all the superstars and drag shows and Divine, you could—Divine was there all the time, Wayland Flowers and, you know, all these people, and so I was in the middle of it all. I mean, I didn't know I was in the middle of it all, but I was in the middle of everything because I somehow managed to just be in the middle [laughs] of it all. And yeah, so I did that for a couple years, and I got kidnapped by these serial killers, which I would hitchhike

between—it was about two miles between Hollywood and Vine, which was the Golden Cup [diner –HR] and Gino's, to West Hollywood. And I didn't have a car, so I'd hitchhike. And I'd get picked up, and you know, some dude would say, "Oh, I'd suck your dick for 50" or 25 bucks or whatever, and I was like, "Sure, extra money to have fun at the club, yeah."

So it started out like that, and I had lots of friends who were runaways, some real runaways, and I'd help them out because I had an apartment. So I kind of became like this daddy kid. Schizophrenic life, it was really crazy, because I'd—I went to work every day. I had a graveyard shift in the [in the mailroom of Blue Cross of Southern Cal –HR]. So I worked from 12:00 to 7:00 in the morning.

THEODORE KERR: Not at the lifeguard?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: No, this is after the lifeguard.

THEODORE KERR: Okay.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: This was after the lifeguard. And that first summer, I was a lifeguard, then I had—I got a job at—faked it through a friend; he said, "There's an opening at Blue Cross of Southern California in the mailroom. I'll be a reference. Lie about everything. You look like you're 25; just tell them you're 20." I did. I had this job. And it was very crazy because I, you know, go to work at 12:00, get off at 7:00, do some morning stuff, take a nap, hit Hollywood at 5:00 p.m., go hang—because there was lots of stuff to do early evening, and the clubs opened at 9:00 or 8:00, you know. So I could go hang out at the club and leave, and—at 11:30, had to be at work at 12:00. [Laughs.] That's—man, it was crazy; that's what I—and then after I got kidnapped, so—at the time, there were two major serial killers going on: the trash bag murders and this other thing; I forget the name of them. Trash Bag Murders was the most famous.

And they were picking up young, teenage boys in Hollywood, prostitutes, and murdering them, cutting them up, and throwing them on trash bags in the freeway. So I got picked up by this dude, and he offered me to—you know, 100 bucks to tie me up and suck my cock. I said okay, I've never really done that scene before, you know. Lots of porn going on, my—you know, my dad was—and stepmom were actually doing porn; that's what I found out later. And my dad ended up doing two John Holmes films, which are here in my archives. One of John Holmes most popular films, *Cream Rinse*, is starring my dad. And I—whole other side story, but yeah. Dad was doing porn in reality, and I found out by walking into a Hollywood bookstore on Hollywood and Vine and going through the—they had a gay section, got out of the gay section, saw my dad, went, what? What? My dad and my stepmother on the cover of a magazine, that's how I found out they were doing porn. Then it all surfaced after the internet, and you can order it all online now. So 20 years later, I thought—can you imagine watching your dad—you know, it's not something you think about, right? But yeah, it's weird because it was like the catalyst that let—caused my stepmother to leave. So it was all—it's all about. And I'm making art about it, so finally, I've got all these weird tapes and, you know, part of—all my new work is coming out of—you know, after the interview, I can show you my—they have three tables in there of my archives that I'm processing myself here.

And so anyway, these guys pick me up. It's—I mean, it's a whole story, but I can basically, you know, Visual AIDS just published it with Kathleen White. You know, she did the extended interview of it. It's on [the AIUpInIT –HR] blog. So—and it's the first public—I mean, I've—for many years, I didn't tell anyone this story, and then kind of—yeah. So what happened was these dudes were copycatting the—and they had a business—so I said okay; he said, "I live in Silver Lake," and we went from—I was going—we were going towards West Hollywood; he turned around and started driving back, so I said, well, that works for Silver Lake. And as we approached the Hollywood freeway, he just turned on going north—I mean south, and I was like, "Well, Silver Lake's that way; where are we going?" He's like, "Oh, I forgot I have to stop by and see a friend and pick something up." And I was like oh okay. You know, 17. And so I had not been out of LA, greater proper LA, and I knew kind of we were going downtown and passing the place where he said he was going to go.

And I was like starting to get nervous, but you know, when you're that young, you just go—you just like—I was like—as soon as I saw, like, LA turn into like half an hour, I just thought, "Okay, dude where are we going. Like I want to"—you know, "Take me back." [Laughs.] And in that moment, he pulled over, and it happened so fast; it was so fast; I just—you know, when I think about it, it's like, what? So he pulled over, and the dude in the backseat hiding on the floor jumped up. I was gagged, blindfolded, handcuffed, like that. And that still didn't freak me out. I was like, oh, this is just some part of the scene, you know, rationalizing it, and then we drove and drove and drove, and I was like—so I sort of half freaking out and half like not freaking out. But I—and they took me—they had taken my glasses off, and so I'm blind, you know, without my glasses, even then. And—but I become sensory, really, because I lived the first eight years of my life without glasses in a kind of blur. And so language, reading, writing all came to me backwards. Like, anyone who knows me now would never know that I was functionally art illiterate until I was 13 and couldn't form sentences and how to pay—it all came backwards. Language came completely backwards for me, so everything was visual. If I got close to a TV, I could process information. My grandmother knew something was wrong, and she'd read to me, so I became very auditory. And

so like this—so I, kind of, hyper-real remembered everything. We drove for a long time, and I remember colors of the streetlamps changing. I remembered sounds of stuff, and it was kind of like, you know, early evening when this happened, like, I don't know, 8:00 or 9:00 o'clock, and we just drove for, like, an hour and a half in silence.

And there were a couple times where I was trying to, you know, figure out—he had me handcuffed from the front, and I was trying to—trying to figure out how I was going to like, you know, open the door and throw myself out. And I thought, "Not a good idea." [Laughs.] So I kept analyzing, and then, slowly, we found these—after, like, an hour and a half, we veered off the freeway. I could smell the ocean. It was a long, sort of winding exit, not like a sharp one. It's kind of like, "Shh," like that. And suddenly, we—I could, you know—like, within 10 minutes, we were near the beach, and I could smell the ocean. And then we turned left and went up a steep kind of incline road for, like, five minutes, and then we hit some road bumps and, shortly after that, turned into a driveway of the house. And so that ended up becoming very significant detail stuff that ended up helping get them caught.

So, you know, basically the bottom line—it's a long, long story. I was with them for three—two and a half days. They tortured—did everything that you could possibly imagine being done in S&M. So, the one guy was a Shell Oil executive; it was Laguna Niguel, where they took me, and he was—he had—he had taken his psychosexual psychosis and turned it into a business—side business. So, they were actually photographing me in all these different positions, and there—so kind of the first few—four hours was me being tied in this kind of roped—little roped positions, the artful tying, and I hadn't really been hurt yet, and I kept rationalizing that, you know, just, this is their thing; they're taking pictures; it's all going to be okay. And for the first, like, four hours, it was, kind of, but I saw that I was in the basement with no windows, and there was no way out.

And so I kind of was smart enough to, like, think about things along the way like, "Okay, there's no way out of this and so fighting might not be a good idea. How are you going to get out of this situation?" And I just constantly was thinking about that, and then the next—started—and then they went off and left me there for, like, an hour and a half and got high, ate dinner, and I guess came back really fucked up. So they were like—suddenly, the pictures all became, you know, part of the thing, but it was a very professional photo setup, and there was—the guy who picked me up was this younger, sort of, 35-ish, kind of scuzzy-looking biker dude, and the older dude was this really good-looking, silver-haired daddy. Like, anybody would just go, "Whoa, he's hot." [Laughs.] And he was the Shell Oil executive. And it was his house, and he had had—and he was the one who actually murdered all these kids and started out in diaries in the 1950s.

His acts—probably the first one was an accidental auto-erotic asphyxiation, and that has turned into a psychosis for him, and slowly over the years, he kept doing it and documented it in these diaries that were eventually found. And so by the '70s, he had, you know—'70s and porn was the big new industry of, like, video. Going from Super 8 to video. And the porn industry in the '70s just exploded, and I was, you know, exposed to it every day. Tons of my friends were doing it; I saw and hung-out with some of those famous '70s porn dudes; Dick Fisk and I had an affair, if you know who that is. [Laughs.] Google him. You know, and all these hot, '70s porn dudes were everywhere. They were at the gay clubs and, you know, so they were just there. I knew some of them. So it was kind of something that was just part of the whole thing out there. And so, this guy had—he was doing very high, professional photography, and then he would use the opportunity to act out his own psychosexual stuff, so when the—when the shift changed, it kind of changed really abruptly. And they were obviously fucked up on cocaine and pot and whatever else, and by the time they came back from that break, they were obviously fucked up and everything kind of—you know, the camera was—all that just started to work, but they just kind of—and they hung me in the middle of the room as, like, kind of a punching bag from—and that—that's where it started really bad.

So they used me as a punching bag, and then they got out. Then when I knew I was—like, "Uh-oh, I think I'm in trouble" [laughs] is when the razor came out, and they shaved me and started slicing me. I mean, like, you know, kind of the body slicing of what kids do to self-inflict, right, that kind of stuff. So, it just went on and on and on, and there was a point in which I just lost consciousness, and they would threaten to kill me. And they did everything from stuffing baseball bats up my butt to beating me to a pulp to—and basically, I had had so much experience with suffering and pain, physically, that I could psychically block it all out and figure out, you know, when I was hanging there and they had this sponge down my throat and the ball gag that sliced my thing, and they were punching me, and I was trying to keep the sponge from lodging down my throat. That was—and so everything like that became, like, this act of will to figure out how to physically get through the pain in order not to die.

And so the worst thing they did, at the end, was I was hanging from the corner rafters, and [other SM objects – HR] and just barely enough to touch my toes, and so I lost all feeling in my hands, screaming, yelling. "No one can"—you know, at a certain point, you're just like, "Oh, no one can hear me because they don't care. So I must be—there's no way out." So, you know, after all that, then—and then they finally—I don't—you lose time to—you don't know what's going on, you know. You suddenly wake up. You're like, "Oh, I'm still here." And there I woke

up, and they were putting my clothes on, and I—it didn't even occur to me to think about what that meant, you know? And they had me always tied to something, and they were—and we were out of the basement in some, like, dining room, and they were eating and still kind of talking at me, like telling me what they were going to do, cut me up, and yet, they were—he said, "Sign this," and, you know, I had just no concept that, at that moment, I was signing a model's release. [Laughs.] And that probably meant I wasn't going to die.

And so, they dressed me and led me—had me handcuffed by the wrist only and then blindfolded and gagged me again, but not just heavy and led me to the car and put me in the trunk, fetal, and then, in there, bound my feet, and I just thought it was the end. You know, that minute became, kind of, like, really, consciously aware like, I was in the trunk; we were driving a dirt road, and I just thought—it all became hyper-real like, the sound, every sound, the motor stopping. The—every pebble we drove over and then the engine being cut off, the door shutting, and I just expected the trunk to come open and [demonstrates gun sounds]. All that happened except the gun, and they just picked me up and threw me on the side of the road and drove away. They didn't unbound—they didn't untie me though. And so, I have this, you know, like—kind of like, "Oh." And it was like, 5 o'clock in the morning, just sunrise coming up on Monday morning, so they had picked me up Friday night and let me off at, like, you know, start of the work week. Then I turned this way, and I saw a fence, a chain-link fence like, right—they threw me right next to a chain-link fence and I had plastic—they had put plastic ties on me. And I was like, "Oh." Got those off, got the feet off, and then—and then I looked the other way and saw a big field and saw the freeway—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —and ran for the—and I just ran for the freeway and thank God it was, like, 5:00 o'clock in the morning because I just ran right up into the middle of it. And where there's—cars were coming, but there weren't that many and this—I literally ran into the middle of the freeway, and cars swerved around me, and I kind of fell over, and I didn't get hit, and two or three cars stopped, and this woman who swerved around me—I'll just never forget the sound of her high heels like, [demonstrates shoes clicking]. She's like, "Oh my God, oh my God. Did I hit you?" You know, she thought he had hit me, and you know, this is way before a cell phone days, and there's no way to just call 911, so a couple other cars stopped, but they saw me get up, and so they just—she stayed with me.

She said—she looked at me and said, "Oh my God. What happened to you?" She's—I mean, she first—she looked at me, and she thought she had hit me and done this damage to me. [Laughs.] And I was like, "No, no, no, you didn't hit me." And she's like, "What happened to you?" I said, "Where am I?" She said, "You're in Laguna Niguel. Laguna Beach." I was like, "Oh." She goes, "What happened to you?" She—and I said—she said, "Come on, get in my car," and this woman was my angel, savior. She said, "Well, we"—she's—she had—you know, I couldn't tell her anything. I was just comatose, and I saw this—saw myself in the mirror and was like, oh my God; my face was just bloody, and I had these cuts and blood everywhere and bruises all over me and so she said, "I think you need to go to the hospital." [Laughs.]

I was like, "No, no." I freaked out on her. I was—"No, no." You know, like, I didn't want her to go to the hospital; I didn't want to do anything. She just took me home, and she said, "Okay. Calm down. We're going to go home, and we're—I'm going to take care of you." And I said, "I just want to go back to LA" And she goes, "Okay." And she's just—that morning, took care of me, got—cleaned me up, you know. I—she said, "Are you sure nothing's broken?" And I—of course, I had broken ribs, you know. [Laughs.] My hands were—the nerves in my hands were sliced. And she just saw—you know, she figured something out, and she said, "Okay." She just kind of calmed me down, and she—I guess she had gone off and made a couple calls, and she knew about the Trash Bag—the Trash Bag murders were happening right then.

And so, anyone who was paying attention to anything about that would have known, "Oh, this is a runaway teenage kid, something, connection." So, she put all that together enough to know and she just—she just lied to me and said, "Okay, I'm going to take you to the bus station now and, you know, I'll buy you a ticket, and you'll be back to LA" So she did that and then, you know, put me on a bench, drove away, and really—like, the next second, a police car came and an ambulance, and they just took me away. And then I lied about everything, and it's all—and this weird thing is, it's all on the internet now. You know, the guys who did it, the copycat killers, the lawyer, the—and I ended up being the link to eventually getting other kids to come in, and this one cop, who ended up being the cop—the good cop, who stayed with me and finally convinced me to come in and tell the truth and—but it all led to them being caught and prosecuted. It was a horrible experience, and I've got these court transcripts and, you know, like they're projecting images of you in front of a jury and calling you a whore and prostitute and, "You deserved it," and all that shit. It all happened to me.

THEODORE KERR: Were you—were you able to talk about it with your friends, at the time?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: No. Very basically. So basically what I did was I had three gay mentors. I had met these amazing gay men in Hollywood, and I was—I didn't, you know—and they said they saw me—who—they saw me

—more of me than I knew about myself, so I looked 25. You know, there's this—you know, this amazing picture on Facebook in that album where I tracked that year in 1976—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —and my friends, who ended up getting picked off to go dance in Diana Ross's concert tour, that's all online.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: I just kind of tracked this history online, and then I found the DJ, who I worked for in Hollywood, as a—my girlfriend and I worked as spot disco dancers. We worked for a DJ, we'd go to big Hollywood parties, and we'd be the disco dancers going out to get everyone loosened up and dancing. Someone sent me those pictures, which I posted on Facebook, and I'm doing John Travolta before he did it. I was like. [Laughs.] So —yeah, so I had kind of healed. I went into that hibernation zone, and I had told Richard [Oreiro], who was my first real boyfriend when I was 16, Puerto Rican dude, who was the director of Bullock's [department store –HR] and who got me interested in fashion. And he said, "Hunter, you know, you're an amazing person. You're talented. You need to get your shit together," and I just had this thing about being independent.

I wouldn't—you know, I'm just mean to all these rich students, but I wouldn't—I wouldn't—I mean, I had—Rock Hudson wanted to come make me to be one of his boys, and I was just like, "No. I'm, like, doing it on my own." I wish I hadn't been so like that, but I had the opportunity to be a kept boy, and I wasn't. I just—so Richard, he said, "You need to go back to school; you need to get your GED; you need to go to art school," and he set this program for me, and I did it. So, literally, at the same time I was—I decided to reinvent my life. I had three friends that I could tell the story to, but I didn't tell them the depth of it. And I never went to therapy over it. I just simply moved on and listened to what these people said to me. You know, if I didn't have the ability to, like, listen to the advice of these amazing gay men I had met, who ended up mentoring me, I would—I don't know where I would be.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: So, yeah. So like, you know and I turned just—turned 18 and went—moved, quit my job, got a job in [downtown Hollywood –HR], got an apartment right behind Hollywood High, and went to Hollywood High Adult School, which is where I graduated from. [Laughs.]

THEODORE KERR: Amazing.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And worked full-time, and so then I met my lover out—I worked in Century City, so I had to get on the bus every morning and go to—and I don't how I—this mailroom job, claims adjusting—so, you know, it turned into the thing because I could type. The only skill I came out of high school with was typing. I can't spell. I can phonetically—you know, I can fake it, right? And so I got this job working as a claims adjustor in Century City for this insurance company. I was like, "How did I get this job? I don't know what the fuck I'm doing." And I'd take the bus every morning to Century City, and that's where I met my [lover the late, Tom Bradham –HR]. And he was, like, 13 years older than me, and he saw me, and he's—he just got me, seduced me. It's totally in every way that I ever needed to be seduced, and he got it. And within six months, I was living in a loft. I applied to FIDM.

THEODORE KERR: What's FIDM?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Fashion Institute of Design Merchandising and wanted to be a fashion illustrator, so I did a portfolio which Richard—which, I was inspired by [George] Stravinos this fashion illustrator from the '70s, who was, like, really hyper-realistic pencil drawings, like, real fine pencil detail kind of things, '70s illustrator. And he did some stuff for some of the '70s gay drags and things. And so I kind of modeled my thing after him, put a portfolio together, and got in, and then got a scholarship and—but I still had to work full-time. And so Tom, you know, I, and two other friends got a loft, one of the first big lofts in downtown LA in 1979. I'm 19 years old. [Laughs.] I'm doing it, and yeah, so we—you know. That's what I did. I went to school, and I realized, after a year of fashion school, that I was not interested in being a fashion person, although it obviously came back into my work.

And I heard about Otis and CalArts, and I applied to both of them, and I got into CalArts—I got—I got into—I mean, I was, you know, accepted into both schools, but CalArts was fucking in Valencia, and you had to have a car, and you had to get out there, and you had to have someone supporting you because it was, like, just out of my league. So I went to Otis, which was right across from MacArthur Park and a 10, 15-minute bus ride from my house downtown, and I worked downtown, so I—you know, my boss was this woman who—I've always looked for women around who can help me because, like, replacement mother kind of thing, and this woman, she just saw what I was doing, and she said, "Okay, I'm going to help you. We're going to create a job for you here."

So I was working in the mailroom at Arthur Young & Company, one of the biggest CPA firms in the world, where there's a massive art collection, and she created a managerial—administrative department manager job; I was the manager of the mailroom, and my responsibility would be to come in at 6:00 a.m., so I was getting up at 6:00 a.m., go in, organize the run-out for the guys, leave at 9:00—6:00 to 9:00, three hours. School started, usually, at 9:00. I was always a half an hour late for my first class, and either teachers accepted that or they didn't. A lot of them didn't. They just said, do—you know, "I don't give a shit. 9:30's when I'm coming in. Dock me," whatever. When—couple teachers were really, kind of—but she did it, so I'd go back at lunch for two hours because there was always a two-hour break between the morning and afternoon of school, and then I'd go back at 5:30 and get the last mail run out because there was an evening shift. And that's what I did for two years until I got the phone sex job and became the first gay, male, phone-sex fantasy-giver in the world.

[They laugh.]

So, there's the first half of our story. I need to take a little break.

THEODORE KERR: Okay.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: [Laughs.]

THEODORE KERR: That's a lot. Thank you—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: —for sharing.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: [Laughs.] I didn't really have any therapy around it. I kind of just moved on.

[Audio break.]

THEODORE KERR: Back speaking with Hunter at the Fales Library. Before the pause, Hunter, you were talking about how you hadn't told anybody about the kidnapping incident, and then you moved to New York, and then you started to talk about it.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, so when I—when I went to Otis-Parsons and graduated from there in 1984 with my BFA and, you know, I did this whole thing where I was already together with my lover five years, and I had—you know, I always just used to use my art as a way to move forward and forget about even—you know, like, just immediately, just not deal with the pain of the traumas in various ways, and after the court trial, basically the combination of this really intense, horrible event in my life was—at the same time, I was just finishing my GED and deciding to go to college. It was kind of the process of court, being in court, and putting these guys on trial, and being the link that got them caught, and then facing this kind of reality of describing the images that they're projecting of you being tortured, and the discussions around Hollywood and what's real and what isn't. And so, that kind of—you know, I just went into school, and that kind of—I wasn't sure how it was going to manifest in my art.

I was already doing a performance art group [called UNARM and had social issues, attached to it and I had a career—my career started my first exhibitions –HR], all happening outside of school because I was involved at downtown art scene in LA in the early-'80s, and you know, people like Fred Tomaselli and I were really good friends and he managed Gorky's Restaurant. You know, it was a community of artists just starting out and the CalArts graduates like, Kathy Burkhart, Susan Silas, we were all—there was this whole wave of us that came to New York in 1984, the CalArts group and the Otis Parsons group. We all, like, moved here same time.

So I didn't really have time to process this shit. I kind of just, like, went on, and I had decided to tell my lover, not that we wanted to—that I wanted to break up with him, but I had been with him already for five years; I was 25; I needed a break. He was a very intense person, so I said, "I'm moving to New York first because I just need to get on my own feet and do this on my own," and yeah, [I got kind of thrown into the middle of this— I didn't know anybody in New York except Richard Oreiro; a lover and mentor, one of the sexiest queer's of the '70s –HR] who helped me get to fashion school had since moved to New York and become a fashion director, one of those big stores; I forget which one. So he was here, and a girl in LA said, "Oh, my ex-girlfriend, she's lesbian. She's a comedian, and she has a room in Tribeca that she rents out. Her name is Reno." So I became Reno, the [comedian-roommate –HR]. You know who Reno is?

THEODORE KERR: Mm-mm. [Negative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: You don't know who Reno is?

THEODORE KERR: No.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Anyway, so I'm suddenly thrown into this kind of lesbian, East Village '80—1985 scene and meeting all these artists and transferred my job from LA, I had this full-time job—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —in Arthur Young & Company, and the headquarters was here in New York. So, you know, I wasn't—I had this room in Tribeca for—2,000-square-foot loft that I was paying $600 a month for in 1985—

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

[HUNTER REYNOLDS: —which was her entire rent. Hear that, Reno, if you ever hear this. So I was like—oh, I was clueless. And I had—but I had—I was being paid well, making good money at 25 years old, and this is a CPA firm, so—but I had no connection to the art world and those crazy lesbians, and I was thrown—sort of starting getting—connect to the East Village and, wow, and she was performing in different plays and all these, like, early, early spaces 122, and I started really into the scene and then, Ray—Ray Navarro who I went to school with in LA, who I knew since he was 16, and Aldo Hernandez—and I suddenly was living with Aldo and, I—well, it's a little later, but—so I just got into this East Village scene pretty quick and even Club Area had just opened up and was two blocks from my house and so that first three months I was like, "Well, I'm not—I'm not meeting artists, and I'm not meeting—I need to be in SoHo; I need to work in SoHo, and that's, like, where I need to be to meet people for—to"—I wasn't going to graduate school, so I made this huge decision to quit my job and get a job as an art preparer for Circles Art Gallery on West Broadway in which a lot of really big people started out at for $5 an hour.

Coming from like, making $24,000 a year when I am 25 to $5 an hour in New York City, even in the '80s, was nothing. So I'm working there, and I'm meeting some artists, and I'm starting to like, you know, meet people. And after, like, three months of that, I was like, "I just can't take this," and I had this big fight with—you know, and it was where I—my first family of friends was—the guy, Scott Hill, that I worked there with and these families—I would always make these really immediate circles of families and, you know, so I met this guy working at Circle, an art preparer, Scott Hill, and his girlfriend was Leslie Dahlgren, and they had a loft down on Canal Street where Hugh Hamrick lived where there was his long-term lover David Sedaris, I always blame David for breaking up my family. –HR]

THEODORE KERR: Oh.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yes. Not that he'll ever hear of this, but—so, I was in this circle, and I started—Leslie was, like, this amazing woman, and she worked for [inaudible], so fashion and art and all that stuff was back in my life immediately, and she would have—she was friends with Tom Giuliani and Massimo and all these early dealers, and these were friends before they were anybody that I was—you know, everyone knew I was an artist, but—so I kind of quit that job in a rage because I just couldn't take it anymore and had no idea what I was going to do. I just walked out the door one day, walked down Prince Street, and walked into see a Jean Michel Basquiat show at [Annina Nosei Gallery and overheard something about a job and asked the gallery assistant Pamela Gettinger Tucker if I could interview for the position. –HR] So I went home, got on the phone, called the gallery, and said, "Is there a job available?" And she said, "Just a minute." And then Annina gets on the phone, "Blah-blah-blah-blah-blah. How did you get blah-blah-bah?" The guy had just quit; the preparer had just quit that morning, and I overheard it, and I called in, and the next day, I was working for Annina Nosei Gallery. Changed my life, and that's how I met—you know, my first installations were Barbara Kruger and—you know, she was—Annina, you know, that Basquiat movie is all true, pumped up; it was—and he had just left for Mary Boone, and so I worked there for a year and a half.

And in the meantime, Ray moved out, and I started living with Aldo in the East Village, and my lover finally came a year later, and we didn't—we lived separately, but he became—he was a theatre person, and he went directly—somehow got connected to the Limbo Lounge, and the first real underground theatrical space in the East Village produced Lesbians of Sodom and Gomorrah and Charles Busch and Ethyl Eichelberger and David Wojnarowicz, where I met John Kelly doing *Diary of a Somnambulist*.

And my first six months in New York was suddenly like, "Pew!" I mean, this—I'm in this scene, not even knowing or trying to be in it. I just was there and—yeah, so it was amazing. And so I worked for Annina for about year and a half, and I couldn't take her anymore, and I went to Paula Cooper, and I ended up working Paula Cooper seven years until I left for Europe.

And that's when I, you know, of course, met Tony and Joy and the girls and Zoe, all the girls with Jennifer Bartlett, and that whole Paula Cooper crowd of people, which was amazing, Robert Gober, and you know, I had this kind of amazing time, you know, and like—and I never used drugs or alcohol to escape my pain until later in my life, so when I kind of was reviewing all that, when I—after the strokes, and I'm 45 and laid up from having HIV strokes, and after everything I've been through, how the—who was that person? I had no idea who that person was.

Like—and so I started really going, "How did I do this? How did I work a full-time job, have a full-time, social nightlife? Went to every—everything, the Pyramid Club, the Mudd Club, the Area, The Saint, all the—you know, I had—I had two choices when I got off work. I was going to go home, make art, do something for my art, or go out. I'll—you know, worked for Paula Cooper, loosy-goosy a bit. You know, 10:00 you start work. She, you know, comes in generally at 11:00, sunglasses on, being hungover, goes—you know, there was, like, a lot of space to move around and, you know, kind of had a cool situation, where, you know, you could be late and not—no one really know. Sneak in through the basement or something. I mean, you know, and I wouldn't drink, and I didn't do drugs, and so I would get up in the morning, do some work, go to work, and then, you know, started connecting myself to the art scene, non-profits, and had my first show at a theatre on—the Limbo Lounge eventually turned into Home for Contemporary Theatre and Art in Tribeca, and my lover, Tom, was the manager, and they had a gallery in the front, and I just got a show there and had my first kind of—oh, no, my first show was at [Annina's loft on Wooster Street. –HR]

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Annina let me do a show in her loft and I had my first piece—non-official exhibition with Nina, but she let me have her loft for the summer, and I did this exhibition there, and that's when I had—yeah, so that was my first show, was 1986 in New York.

THEODORE KERR: Do you remember the work in the show?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Oh, yeah, yeah. It's here at the library. It's on my website. It's called *Path*, and it was when I was still painting, and I was kind of integrating—you know, I wanted more physical experiences. I had started a performance art group in the '80s in school that became something called "Unarm." We were doing an anti-proliferation, nuclear proliferation. We made these kind of *Mad Max* scene installations, and I was involved with sort of the theoretical scene of LA Harry Kipper, who was—who is Bette Midler's husband, who's a famous performance artist and unknown, really, like—I mean, well, Bette Milder made the—you know, she married—she's with him; they're still together and—but I knew him before—from the LA—when we were out performance-ing. And so—yeah, you know, somehow, I just—having the job with Annina suddenly made me somebody everyone wanted to know. Even teachers would bring me aside, and she had this false reputation of being someone who did look at work, even though she didn't, and I would give these people pulling up—you know, and because I'm sympathetic, I'd—I would give them a little time, but, like, people would come in with paints, and rolling the thing and, like, spread them out on the floor, and I was like, "No, no. Don't do that." And she had a camera.

She was crazy, crazy, crazy, and her archives are here. And in fact, when my archives [inaudible] came here, Marvin [Taylor] said, "You know, you've—there's a lot of stuff on you at Annina Nosei's." I said, "Yeah, because I worked for her for almost two years." I was like, "Oh." He said, "Yeah, both those files are here now." I was like, "That's cool." And so she, you know, kind of—was amazing to work for her. She was crazy, and she discovered everybody, gave everyone their first shows, but she was too insane to keep people, so, you know, and she'd leave for four months out of the year, and me and the other assistant, we were in the gallery showing work to Mick Jagger and Steve Martin and Madonna. You know, it was, like, kind of a cool job. [Laughs.] But she was insane, and Paula was completely the opposite and, you know, I had this amazing experience with her, working. You know, I love installing art, and I love making other artists' work look good, so I'm really good at it, and I love to do it, and I soon became her head preparer and somebody who she could trust to actually even do work with the artists, and she'd come in, do a—you know, kind of oversee, but not micromanage, and yeah, so that's where I met Tony and all the girls and everybody. It was an amazing group. But also, suddenly, I'm—I have already established these friendships with all these art dealers and all these art people, and so when I finally got up the nerve to, like, have someone over in my studio, and it kind of just all happened because I would be—the advice I would give any artist coming to Annina's to show the work is, "If you want to be here, be here."

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: "Forget about bringing your slides around. No one's going to give you the time of day. I'm only giving you the time of day because I'm sympathetic. This is not the way to do it. Just come here, move here, be here, be here. Then that's the only way it's going to happen."

And that's the way it happened for me. I never had to take my art to anybody. It just sort of naturally unfolded, and my first show was Valerie, the director of Artists Space, which was then here in Tribeca, and she was riding her bike down Walker Street, and she saw my exhibition in the window, and I had these political pictures of Malcolm X, and she stopped in, and she called me and said, "You need to submit your slides to our artist registry, so I can put you in the selection show," in 1987, which was Felix and Kay Rosen and some really good artists, and I was in that show.

And it happened because she was riding her bike by. And then that—[laughs] that, you know, like, was a big

moment for me, the Artists Space selection show, and that's where I met Felix, and I had been working at Paula's, I guess, six or seven months by then, and Paula had not seen my work yet. And on the day that the opening was happening, I was installing a Jonathan Borofsky gator board painting, hung monofilament from a pipe and Khristopher [Haynes] was supposed to be standing there holding it, and I pulled it, and he had stepped away, and this thing went crashing to the ground right in front of Paula's office, and as Dan Cameron was bringing a bunch of people in—like, literally, Dan Cameron, young curator, is coming with a group of people he's showing the show to, and I make this disaster happen on the afternoon of my opening at Artists Space. And all I could think about was, "Oh my god, Paula's not going to come now. She's—I'm going to get fired."

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: "Going to be fired." [Laughs.] And it's like—and Paula, like, walked out from her office. She always—she always had her sunglasses on, either like up here, or somewhere, you know. And she looked at the shattered Borofsky on the floor, and all these people were standing there, going—and I was like, on the ladder, going—and Paula looked at me, put her glasses on her eyes, turned around, [laughs] and shut her door. I was like, "Oh, fuck." And she didn't speak to me the rest of the day. But she came to my opening.

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And I said, "I thought I had been fired." She goes, "Oh, no. Don't worry. Shit happens." [Laughs.] I was like, "Really?" And so—and then Bill Arning came and then Pat Owens came, and Pat and Bill bought my first—put first pieces of stuff out of my studio. And, you know, between 1986 and '87, I had, you know, White Columns show, white room, all the art—all the alternative spaces, and Bill was the first curator to really start including my work in groups, you know, group shows and then—so, you know, that was all happening in tandem with, you know, like, starting ACT UP and Art Positive, so in four years, between '86 and '89, was—because, you know, I'm 25 to 29 and just kind of, like, doing it. And it was kind of amazing and then going out. You know, like, I really—you know, when I had strokes and had to look back at that time and go—I just didn't—I just couldn't comprehend how I did it, how—but you're young, and you do it. And I wasn't fucked up on drugs.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, that was a big thing, I think, made a huge difference.

THEODORE KERR: Let's go back a little bit. I want to ask—you said, by '80s—or, during this really busy time in your life, you were involved in ACT UP and you were involved—and you were creating Art Positive, and I'm hoping that you can kind of think about, when was the first time you heard about HIV?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Well, you know, in my—from the beginning—so, in 1979, there was a study conducted—being conducted, still going on, called the LA Men's Study, which was a sociological study of gay men. They were offering some not—you know, some kind of, like, healthcare if you became part of the study, and so I found out about it up at the school, and I joined the study in 1979, and they started taking my bloods works [sic] from that point on. And so you went in every—I think it was every quarter, four times a year, and you had to give your blood, tell your story. The—they would give you a physical and, you know, referrals, something you might need or something. And so they had been keeping my blood work since then.

So when the HIV happened, there was this black dude, Lamont, who was one of the first people in LA, one of the first documented men of color to die, and he dies, weird, cancer. And—but I was in a relationship with my lover [Tom Bradham –HR], and we weren't exactly monogamous, but we weren't—I knew I wasn't—like, I knew what I was doing on the side. HIV—this—the LA Men's Study [at UCLA –HR] turned into an AIDS/HIV Study, and they went back, and that's where it's ground—patient zero was found in '76. You know, they have documented HIV back in the '70s from this study and—but it didn't really come a reality for me, even in the first year that I moved here to New York. Tom and I never used a condom, and we didn't talk about it. That wasn't in the gay world.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: So my gay friends at school—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —[Mark Niblock, Ray Navarro, Tony Green, Jimmy Riva; –HR] were—you know, they're all dead except me and Gary Wood [. . . –HR]. There's some really cool artists and, you know, I didn't go to gay bars; I didn't hang out in the gay scene; I'd go to west Hollywood, and most of my friends were straight, the artists, and that was my world. I wasn't—I wasn't not being gay or anything; it just wasn't my scene, and so I didn't really confront it until I moved to New York and started being—like, woohoo, sex clubs, man's world, like, you know, and I was—I was pretty toppy. Wasn't the big bottom where I am now. [Laughs.] And everybody

wanted me to fuck them, so the occasional time that I did get fucked was very rare. But I started working out my kink stuff here in New York, and I still didn't think about it. I mean, sad to say, but I didn't. So I wasn't really into it, and I was, like, kind of, like, "Oh, gee. I need to start using condoms." It was kind of like after this first year of being in New York in '85 when everybody's just like, "Whoa," you know, I got to the tail end of [inaudible].

And I can just say, no, I never saw a condom anywhere. [Laughs.] People weren't using them then, even at the beginning of the—you know, in the first few years of the—nobody. I mean, maybe they were talking about it, but maybe they weren't. I didn't have a clue, really, and I didn't think about until, suddenly, like, '86, '87, all that shifted. So many people were dying, and the first groups of—you know, the beginnings, before ACT UP, you know, the first—the first pre-ACT UP stuff was, you know—and suddenly it just became, "Oh, yeah. We need to, like, do this condom thing." And yeah, so it kind of became—I became a condom Nazi, then, and started, like, trying to figure out how to use them and, you know, still have an erotic sexual experience and then, you know, '87 happened, ACT UP, and that was all just really quick and just seemed like, "Oh, yeah. Yeah, we're all doing this now." But no one in ACT UP really knew if they were positive or not, and myself included. So—

THEODORE KERR: Because people didn't want to get tested?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah. Right.

You know, like, one of the things about Ray Navarro, was just that, you know, we were—he was so precocious and so genius. When he came into Otis, I was so intimidated by him that, you know, I have the—my archives here have these files where he'd be [inaudible]. He was just there; he was in it, doing it, and he, like, owned-the-world kind of guy, you know, at 17. You know, he was just like, "I'm it." [Laughs.] But in a good—but not in an arrogant way, but kind of in a—you know, kind of—kind of, but not.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And so he became the gallery director of the student gallery really quick, and he coordinated my first exhibition at Otis Parsons [inaudible] his letters were, "Got to write to Ray, or he's going to—try to be professional," and I'm like, "I'm trying to be professional." But he was—he got the—kind of the adjunct video department going there. There was none. There was a photography department. Suddenly—and there was no performance department, either. You know, you had to go and sculpture, so, you know, he came out, and suddenly, we were living together with Aldo. You know, our apartments were next to each other, and Aldo Hernandez had, you know, this—the kind of transplanting of LA into New York, '84,'85, this huge wave of artists coming in from LA, both CalArts and Otis. It was a migration, so there was, like, all these kind of—and I had known Aldo from LA because he was a part of this, like, kind of the scene there that connected to the underground music scene there.

And so, you know, it just all happened overnight with it—where it seemed like, you know, ACT UP suddenly started, and everyone. I'm thinking about—Tom and I are still together. I'm not really having a lot of gratuitous sex, but some and, you know, I'm starting to figure out, like, how to use condoms and all that and—but I was much more voyeuristic, so—you know, but I had my rules, and then I didn't know—then in 1989, it was a, like, crazy, significant year. I decided that this whole thing going on in ACT UP, where people didn't want to know and—like, it had become a thing, you know, like—there are all these controversies between all the sex going on with everybody, the lesbians and the gay men fucking each other all the time and like, Gregg and Zoe, [laughs] you know, like, all these boundaries that were being broken within ACT UP, and one of them—so a lot of people didn't want to know. They assumed, but they actually didn't want to know.

THEODORE KERR: Why didn't—why would someone not want to know?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: I think the fear of knowing, even in ACT UP. It was a big conflict. A lot of my friends in ACT UP didn't want to know consciously; Ray was one of them. He didn't want to know. And we had talked about that quite a lot. So he said I just figure it's going to happen, and somehow, the fear of knowing would just make it all happen even faster.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Something like that. So, I made a decision to go back to LA in the fall of 1989, so Art Positive started, Kostabi and the *Center Show*, it happened. I'm having some success with my art. I just had gotten the biggest, largest grant ever given to an individual artist at the time to do my show at Hallwalls, which Catherine Howe had curated. So by the fall of 1990, I had just come out of, like, every non-profit space here, doing all this stuff with ACT UP, Art Positive starting, and then knowing that—in January of 1990, I was having this major exhibition at Hallwalls. Like—and so I thought, I don't know why I needed to know then, because stuff in church was happening—something happened. Like, it was like, some—like, there was some like, "Okay, I'm going to—" Oh, this is what happened. So I decided that I wanted to finally get arrested, and I had wanted to know my status. So all I had to do was go back to LA and get the test results for the last 10 years, which they

don't tell you. They wouldn't—you had to go to them to get the results. Even if they knew that you were positive, they didn't tell you, which I thought was kind of weird, but—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —they didn't. And since '85, I kind of was in this study; they were trying to get me to send my bloods from New York, and I did that a couple times, and I had Howard Grossman my doctor and, you know, so I just thought, "Okay, I want to know now." So I booked a trip. I had already asked for a leave of absence from Paula for—to do my show for three months. She gave me, you know—like, she was great. You know, she was very supportive of all the artists who worked for her. She'd sell our art from the side room. We could put, you know—half the artists she showed were working for her at some point or the other, you know, and there was—like, I replaced Todd Haynes in—[laughs] you know like, they're amazing people who worked for Paula Cooper. So I had gone in and already asked for a leave of absence, and I went Thanksgiving—let's see, Stop The Church was December—I don't know, the first week of December, and I went out to LA and got the results, and they told me exactly what month—quarter I converted in, and I was kind of shocked, thinking that it would've been like, sometime around—you know, it was like, between—the last quarter between '83 and '84.

THEODORE KERR: That's when they—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: —noted that you—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: The only time—yeah. Yeah, so they had like—and then I had all my numbers before I was positive—

THEODORE KERR: Right.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —my average T-cell level, my—all those numbers before I was positive. So here I am, 1989, finding out I've been positive since the last half of '83, beginning of '84, in which I was like, "It'll determine—oh, gee. Where did that happen? How did that happen?" I knew exactly. The two times I went to the downtown bath house without my lover, and I got fucked. The first time in years, it had to—had to have happened there. There would've been no other place that could have happened because my lover was negative and stayed negative. So I come back from New York and from that, freaked out, all fired up to, like, get arrested for Stop Church, but was not able to be a part of any of the affinity group action committees. I was literally getting off the plane and—like, the day before, going to Paula, telling her, asking for my job back, but still, could I have this small leave of absence to go do this show at Hallwalls, but I had, kind of, like—you know, it was—I would go down to part-time because I was making some money, and I freaked out.

I need the insurance, kind of. She said, "Of course," you know. So I'm like, "Okay, that's good." And then I would go into Stop The Church, and the next day, and I mean, that's—you know, that famous picture of me being lifted up by the police, that happened because I was, like, wanting to be in the die-in down 52nd Street, and I got caught in that—in that crowd of 6,000 people with the barricades, right in the middle of it, and I lifted that barricade up and threw it in and then just thought people would run in with me. But, you know, they were like, "No." They cheered. [Laughs.] Leon Mostovoy , you know, took that picture. And those three cops who lifted me up, I said to them, "I want to be in the die-in. Can you just lay me down there before I get in the paddy wagon?" And they did. They took me to the die-in. [Laughs.] They laid me down. [Laughs.] Even some people remember that. They're like, "These cops just laid you down." I was like, "Yeah, yeah, that's because I asked them to."

THEODORE KERR: Why do you think they said yes?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: You know, I think they realized what I had just done, and I was—I was in football player mode, because I played football, and I was like—and they were dodging me, and I was dodging them. And this crowd was insane. I mean, everyone saw this happen. I did it by myself, and I had, like, two blocks where no one else came out of that, just me, which I thought it was kind of surprising. I really expected a flood of people to come with me, but no. And in that first block, I was dodging them, football, and they kind of got that. [Laughs.] So they—when they grabbed me, they just lifted me up, and as they did that, I just said, "Can you just—I just want to be there in the die-in." And I think, just part of the New York civil disobedience, even though bad shit does, and did, happen, that moment, they just—

THEODORE KERR: Played along?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah. They understood, or knew, like—you know, I've always had these good and bad cop experiences. And so, yeah, they did.

THEODORE KERR: And this is your—it was recently confirmed you're living with HIV; your show's coming up in

three months—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: I'm positive for six years already.

THEODORE KERR: Right. But you just found out at this point?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Like a week before.

THEODORE KERR: And your big show is coming up at Hallwalls, and—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And I'd already been making work about, you know, the—the work I'd been making was kind of about, like, activism, taking what I was experiencing in the streets, and the table installations, and the dialogue table at the *Center Show*, you know. This—the show Sam Gordon just did was gorgeous, and the renovation and excavation of all the work. But there were, like, 15 other artists in that show, me being one of them, that did not do murals on the walls.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And our history isn't remembered there yet.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: But I did a series of tables.

THEODORE KERR: Wait, I just want to back up, because this is good for the historical records. So what you're talking about is the large-scale show at the LGBT Center—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: —in which a lot of artists were commissioned to create work in the Center, some of which was mural work that has been persevered? No.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Excavated.

THEODORE KERR: Excavated and noted, and what you're talking about is—what you'll talk about now is the work that you did that wasn't a mural.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Right. So there were other installations there that were installations or even photography. Zoe Leonard was in the show. So there were all the murals that were done, of course, and then there was a lot of other stuff. And so, I did a—I wanted to do, kind of, these dialogue tables, which I'd been doing already, just kind of started, and doing these, kind of, big murals of ACT UP media images, and I projected them on the walls and made a mural of them. Like, so I was, like, using the media experience in the time.

THEODORE KERR: And you were already a member of ACT UP?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, yeah, from the beginning.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: I think I started—I think I started within the first two months.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: I started going to meetings. And I just always considered myself, just, a soldier.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And then we—Paula—we got Paula involved, and she did a lot of hosting and things, in pre—the first two years, you know, '87, '88 into '89. So I just basically was, like, a soldier, you know? Like, I was—I had my circle of friends. There were the art friends, connected through Ray, connected through Aldo, Mark Harrington, you know, the—and it's kind of bizarre to think about, but, you know, there are whole circles of people that I never interacted with in ACT UP that were only there in the room, and they were the ones you didn't—the voices, like, Peter Staley, like, I said two words to him the entire time I was in ACT UP, but we're friends now. But I was friends with Mark, because Mark and Jay Funk, and Mark was in the East Village scene and

friends with Aldo.

So, you know, these connections would happen, and you were just in that circle, and I was friends with Gregg Borodowitz, and so that whole scene, and Ray, and so the diva TV scene with Catherine. That was, kind of, my connections. And so, I was a soldier. What interested me, what was fun for me to do, was just going to demos, and doing what I can artistically to help with, you know, signage, and whatever. And it'd be fun getting on the buses and just going down, and I would always jump out of a parade and go into the museum, and jump back in. [Laughs.]

And I would be a jumper. I wouldn't—I didn't want to get arrested. So, you know, I had a couple of experiences of laying down, and then, as the police came, I'd jump up and felt like a coward, but I ran.

THEODORE KERR: Why do you feel like a coward?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Because it's a real commitment, and—to get arrested, and I felt like, you know, I had a lot of fear of the police, for—because I was raped by one. And I saw the good side and bad side of police, and I just didn't want to deal with it.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: That was the bottom line. I don't really have nothing that [laughs]—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And I know what they can do, like, so making that decision for Stop the Church was real—was a real big step, and, yeah. So the *Center Show* happened in March, and you know, like, being a part of ACT UP, you could take your voice, right? And that's what happened with me and a lot of other people. Like, you suddenly—our voice, my voice, exerted itself over, you know, the Kostabi *Vanity Fair* interview, and that's in the *Center Show*, so you know.

I wasn't really friends with Keith Haring, but he—as he was interacting with ACT UP, I knew him through that scenario and David Wojnarowicz, kind of, the same way, although I'd had some private time with David a few times prior to that, just by chance. I, you know, had this amazing experience, was going to Philadelphia, and standing on the train station platform, and he was standing—he was one of my idols already.

I knew who he was. I—one of the first performance art experiences was him and John Kelly, just changed my life, seeing their work that, you know, that first six months I was here. So I knew who he was, and I was like "Oh, there he is," and he—and yeah, we ended up taking the train together, sitting there and talking, and I was telling him all the parallels of my life, and how—they—he was like "Wow, god, that's amazing," you know? And I said, "Yeah, but you did New York." And, you know, he was like, I don't know, five years older than me. And so, you know, my voice—I'd never, you know, had—I didn't, even then, didn't realize, like, who I was, you know, like, and even how other people saw me, and so I had lots of insecurities still. Like, old tape stuff even still comes up now, you just don't ever get over. So—

THEODORE KERR: I think before we wrap up today, I want to hear more about some specific artworks from that time that you were making. So you were talking about the work you made in—for the *Center Show*.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, so this is all part of that story. So basically, I was making these tables and environments, and had already started, kind of, showing a bit with Simon Watson, who was showing, like, activist's work. He was a member of ACT UP. He would do these, kind of, benefits and make thematic shows around politics and whatever, and show—you know. So he has gallery, and he was showing, and, you know, I started using language and stuff in my work and getting invited to group shows, and then make something specific for that show. But the culmination was these tables, dialogue tables, which was really about sitting around a table like this—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —and dialoguing and making that into art.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: So even the experience—when I got invited to be in the *Center Show*, I wanted to make a piece that was specifically about my experience in that room—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —at the Center. And so, I took—I wanted to make—you know, when you're—when you were proposing your whatever it was you wanted to do, have it be voted on every week, there was like—the first hour was, like, everyone throwing out their stuff and having it voted on, and if the floor wanted to hear more about it,

say go off, and make a plan, and come back and re-present it to the floor.

So there were these side rooms, off that main room, that people would go into and hash out their details and bring it back to the floor, and the floor would vote on it and decide whether we were doing it or not. And this would be anything, the ZAP, to starting an affinity group, to whatever it was. Discussion blah, blah, blah, and Peter and Ann Northrup, and those voices were up there—you know?

That's why I was like, "God, these people are amazing! How do they do it?" They keep these Log Cabin conservative republicans and the—and the East Village radicals somehow coming together, you know? It was kind of, like, mind-blowing in the moment. And I just admired them, and would sit back, and—I was always in the back room; I would never sit in the front. And I had my group, and Bill was always, you know—he was friends with me, and—

THEODORE KERR: Which Bill?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Bill Dobbs.

THEODORE KERR: Bill Dobbs.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And he was like [yells] [inaudible]—

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —like Jesus Christ. [Laughs.] You know, like, I would, like "Okay, why don't you do that?" And so, you know, so I made three tables that were, like, square tables—you know, like coffee tables, like café tables, basically, ones that are—but I projected historical imagery on them. So, like, I had this original Stonewall drag queen, and an image from ACT UP demo, and then an original image of a battered protester from a 1968—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —democratic convention. So I wanted to bring up—have these three images in the room, with no explanation of what they were. The people were actually sitting around, having these committee meetings, and then go, "Oh, what's this on this, you know, on"—I mean, there was something on the wall that said something about it, but, you know, like, basically, they didn't know. It was kind of, like, these images out of place, but related. And, so, that was my piece. And, yeah.

So then, I mean, we make it in the first three weeks, and they let us have access to that place for, like, weeks before. Murals were started, you know, a good couple of weeks. People were allowed to go in at night and do their murals and do stuff, so it was a long—it wasn't like—it was the first time they had done anything like that, and so—and it's a functioning building, even though it was falling apart, not the way it is now, and really grungy-looking, but cool.

And so Mark Kostabi came out with that interview in *Vanity Fair*, in which he said he was in the show, and he said Bill Olander had just died, and he was being interviewed by Anthony Haden-Guest, and long interview, and blah, blah. And I knew Mark from LA I actually knew him. And he was kind of a dandy-esque, artisan kind of guy; I kind of got his work, kind of liked it, but he was infamous for using his bisexuality, like, persona to gain access to the gay mafia of the art world of the '80s, which it was; it was like a gay mafia. And if white, gay men had a lot of patriarchal power, they had it in the '80s art world.

And I knew him, and I—and I was making decisions about, at the time, about the show at Art Museum of the America, like I was confronting, like, how gay do I want to be as an artist? How gay do I want my art to be? How coined "gay art"—I was confronting all that every step of the way. And people like Felix, who didn't want that coin, and there were a lot of people who didn't, gay artists who didn't want it and were actually "Don't define me that way. Don't define my art as gay, and—period." And Felix was that person. He didn't want his work defined, really, in any—although he did it, he didn't—he did a lot to not pigeonhole himself that way. And so I slowly started just accepting that I was not going to be that person. And then—

THEODORE KERR: You started to talk about the *Vanity Fair* interview and what Mark said.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, so Mark said—he said, "Although the gay—the art world is controlled by curators, art dealers, who are gay, and they're all dying of AIDS. And although I think it's sad that they're dying of AIDS, I think it's for the better because gay men don't participate in the perpetuation of human life." And I was like, "What?"

THEODORE KERR: And he was in the *Center Show*?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah. There were straight artists in the *Center Show*. It wasn't just a gay thing. Fred

Tomaselli was in it; there were other straight artists in the show, and it wasn't, like, an exclusively gay show.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: So I lost it. I lost it. And I'd already had enough, like, experience that, suddenly, I just was like, "No fucking way is he getting away with this."

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And C. Carr's book, you know, helped me point this out, because the history, and with—and C. writes about it in her book, that David was the person that got Mark thrown out of the show. [Laughs.] And I was like "No, hello?" But I understand why that is, because—

THEODORE KERR: He was the vegetable artist. Is Mark the vegetable artist?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Mark Kostabi?

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: No.

THEODORE KERR: Oh, okay.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Mark Kostabi is, like, the Andy Warhol-ian—

THEODORE KERR: Oh, okay, I'm confused, then.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: He does these—he does these—he has performance personas. He pumps out this, kind of, clone-ish art—

THEODORE KERR: Okay.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —with, kind of, figures with no faces, cartoon-esque, but with art theory, you know, kind of —

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —somewhere in between Lichtenstein Warhol, and—he became very rich, and he'd show Ronald Feldman, and his whole thing was pumping out art made by studio assistants. And, you know, he had this factory, and he got a lot of success, and he was very, you know—same age as me.

THEODORE KERR: I'm sorry, I interrupted you. You were saying you understand why C. Carr wrote that David—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, so, anyway. So what happened was I was the one who immediately got on the phone with the curators, and with David, and with—and with Keith.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: I called everyone. I said, "This is what he said. We've got to get him out of the show." And it's, like, me being the impetus of censoring—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —an artist. Having an artist thrown out of a show—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —at the Center, I mean, that had a lot of issues around it, as well. Like, okay, no, but this incites violence against gay people, and this guy cannot be in the fucking show. So I did that, and that created, like, a couple weeks where a thing went back and forth, and David—Mark wrote letters to everyone apologizing and even calling me. And I said, "Mark, I'm sorry, but, I—you're unforgivable. This—I can't believe you even had this thought." And because what I—and then Aldo—and so the—so what happened was David, the powerful artist of the show, took my stuff, because I wrote letters, too, and got him—Mark wrote a letter, which is—which is what she refers to here in archives, that was a kind of response letter to all that, and David's response. And it was David and Keith who got him thrown out of the show—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —finally, before the opening. So at the opening, I wanted to do more; that wasn't enough. So I handed out a flyer with Bill Dobbs and said "Anyone who wants to do more about this, meet next Wednesday here at the Center," blah, blah, and 60 people showed up [inaudible] everybody. And that's how Art Positive started.

THEODORE KERR: [inaudible]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: That was the first Art Positive meeting. So then we took—then we took the next two months and attacked Mark Kostabi, like decimated him. Even to the—we sat with Ronald Feldman, trying to get him to throw him out of the gallery. We went to Tina Brown, *Vanity Fair*. Simon, me, Bill, and somebody else would go to these meetings with these mega people. Si Newhouse—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —of, you know—Conde Nast, and they were doing a mega Mark Kostabi book, and all this battering went into press. And we were—in the meantime, we made this face, no, the virus, and we pasted it all over the city, but I brilliantly thought of the final thing, which really got under his skin, which was that I took this to every maître d at Chanterelle, Odeon all these hip restaurants, they'd come out, gave them the info. Should this person even be served here? He started getting, you know, kicked out of restaurants, and that's when I got the call from him. And, yeah, so that was, like, two and a half months, and we ended up—he ended up pissing a lot of people off because, in his attempt to, you know, heal, you know—contrition?

THEODORE KERR: Like, in his attempt to do damage control?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, yeah. Like, he, kind of, spun the story, and it got spun several times in the newspapers in the wrong way, and it pissed Si Newhouse off so much that he did cancel the book, and—which eventually Rizzoli did. But, you know, we—he had—we sent letters to his collectors, like Sly Stallone, famous movie stars, and it did a lot. So that went on for a couple months after the show opened. And then, at the same time, the Helms Amendment—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —happened, and then we just dropped all that, went on to the Helms Amendment. And the Artist Space show happened—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —and then the first meetings for Visual AIDS, and Patrick [O'Connell] , and—you know, that planning that summer of going into Day With(out) Art.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And I—that was actually something I was voting against.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Like, everything would've came to—I was like, "Why are we covering up stuff? Why don't we like, do stuff?"

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: You know, the whole thing of covering up and shutting down everything, it wasn't—I wasn't—a lot of us weren't into it, and we got voted down in ACT UP and, like, all these other communities. And so Art Positive ended up doing the Helms Amendment next and that demonstration on the steps of the Metropolitan in August which 2,000 people came to, in which I was putting my name out as a person—ACT UP 101, no, no.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Don't put your name and number on anything because the FBI and CIA followed me—called me at work, and I got the file; my file down in Washington. [Laughs.]

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.] This—you're giving too much good stuff. We have to wrap up. But I want to just ask a question about—if I understand correctly, you're saying that Art Positive came out of the—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: *Center Show*.

THEODORE KERR: Censor [sic] show—the *Center Show*.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: The *Center Show*.

THEODORE KERR: And so I'm wondering, for—and was the *Center Show* about HIV/AIDS, or—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: No. No.

THEODORE KERR: It was about LGBT issues.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: No.

THEODORE KERR: No.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: It wasn't about—it was—

THEODORE KERR: It was about—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: It was about doing a mega art show at the Gay and Lesbian Community Center. I mean, most of the artists were gay. It had no political theme whatsoever. I mean, you can go into my archives; I have a huge file on it. No, there was no political theme.

THEODORE KERR: So where did the idea for Art Positive come from?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: It came from throwing Mark Kostabi out of—getting Mark Kostabi removed from the *Center Show*.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Which was my initiative, which ended up happening.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Quietly. Really, no one—no one protested, and everyone agreed that it had to be done. The curators did it, and he was removed from the show, and it was no big deal. It was just, like, kind of, done and over.

THEODORE KERR: Disappeared, yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: But I wanted to do more about it. So I, on the opening—at the opening of the exhibition, handed out these flyers and said, "If you want to do more about this, meet next week at the Center."

THEODORE KERR: I guess my question—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And then—and then—and then, so that's what happened; 60 people showed up, and then after, probably half way into the Kostabi thing, we asked for it to be an official affinity group. And I stood up in front of the ACT UP floor for the first time in my life, scared to death, and had to present it to ACT UP and get it voted on as an affinity group for the demonstration that was going to—we were planning to do for the Helm—you know, the Helms Amendment.

THEODORE KERR: What did you see as the connection between the *Center Show* and HIV? Like, I'm wondering where does "Positive" come in?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Oh, well, Art Positive came—the name had a couple of first generations, and it's, sort of, more from—like, okay, Art Positive, HIV, ACT UP, positive, positive influences from art—homophobia, AIDS phobia, and censorship in the arts was our first byline. So we were seeing AIDS phobia, censorship phobia, and homophobia in the arts.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And so, I mean, we could've been called out for throwing an artist out of an exhibition, but the show at the Center was not about AIDS or HIV. It was a show at the Center. The curators, I think, wanted to make it a big deal, so they included straight artists who were part of the theme, who may have been—but if you read the press release, it's not—it's just—I mean, it's not, like, a response to ACT UP, or, you know, there's nothing really overtly political about that show except giving the opportunity of all these gay artists, lesbian artists to come together and make this work in this exhibition called the *Center Show*. But that included some straight artists, too, and, yeah.

THEODORE KERR: I think it's so interesting because I hear what you're saying is, like, that moment for you, what you all galvanized around was this idea that you couldn't really parse out homophobia and AIDS phobia and

negativity in the art world. They were all, kind of, one, kind of, like—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: They were connected.

THEODORE KERR: It's a clump, and that was what you wanted to rid—that's what you wanted to get rid of.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Right. Well, those, kind of, specifically morphed into growing and it became part of this larger cultural, social scene that was going on. You know, that was ACT UP, with the arts groups and affinity coming out of ACT UP. They were really creating their own stuff, like Gran Fury, DIVA TV, House of Color, all these, you know, groups that were artistically inclined. They [are all, kind of, interwoven –HR] with each other, so the politics in getting all these voices happening at the same time, at the same time that Patrick O'Connell [founding –HR] Visual AIDS in the archive, you know. It all just happened so fast, and so much of it, I mean, even when I go back in the timeline, just 1989, I'm like "Oh, my god; it's kind of crazy how it all just came together in that year." And, yeah, so I'm just—and then from the demo, the Helms Amendment, and having an impact on that, you know, and what was happening with Karen Finley and Tim Miller and Holly Hughes and Penny Arcade, and all those East Village artists and, you know, institutions that, you know—suddenly, everyone was just talking about all this. It was, like, '88, '89—I think it was, like, kind of, like, the people were really dying, and we were, you know, taking this voice and doing something with it. So it all just, kind of crazily, happened really fast.

THEODORE KERR: When we meet again, let's start with '89—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Okay.

THEODORE KERR: —and work from there, because I feel like that's a whole other three hours to start.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, yeah, yeah. '89 is crazy.

THEODORE KERR: Do you want to say anything on this tape before we stop today?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Bye. [Laughs.]

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.] Bye.

[END OF TRACK reynol16_1of3_sd_track02.]

THEODORE KERR: This is Theodore Kerr interviewing Hunter Reynolds at the Fales Library in New York, New York, on August 24, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, card number two. Hunter, the last time we spoke, we ended right around the creation of Art Positive. And I wonder if we want to pick up just by describing what Art Positive is.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Okay, so yeah, Art Positive is—it still is kind of still putting stuff together a little bit, here and there. It's a—it was an affinity group of ACT UP, which fought censorship, homophobia, AIDS phobia in the arts. And so it started in 1989, and I was primarily involved with it for the first year and a half. Then I went to Germany, and Aldo kind of became the main—Aldo Hernandez became the main holder of the group. And it went on for like three and a half, four years, I think.

And it was a grassroots organization. We wanted to be really different than Gran Fury. We wanted to affect, you know, like the—after the—I think we talked about the *Center Show*, right? How it started at the *Center Show*. Maybe that's—that's really loud, that noise. So I forget. Did we talk about how it started? Yeah. So then you know, went on to do—we put the timeline together. The archives are now housed in Chicago at—in the collection of Daniel Berger.

THEODORE KERR: The archives for Art Positive? Okay.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Art Positive, yeah, which I have some here, and then the—all the—some in his house, but the bulk of them are now in Chicago with Daniel Berger, who is—who did that exhibition last year, the first exhibition of the archives. And you know, it had—we were an open group, and so depending on what we were working on, there could be anywhere from 20-200 people at meetings, and so we did several protests, and then we did kind of a similar—it was kind of in tandem with *Electric Blanket*. We did our own slideshow, but *Electric Blanket* became the famous one. But we had one too, and so—just on the good news front.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: The Rubin bought my video.

THEODORE KERR: Which one? The last one?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: *Medication Reminder* [inaudible].

THEODORE KERR: Oh my god, that makes me so happy.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And I just found out yesterday.

THEODORE KERR: That's beautiful.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Good.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah. So yeah, so we did a lot—you know, did the Metropolitan—did I talk about the after-Kostabi stuff?

THEODORE KERR: Nuh-uh. [Negative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: No. So we talked about Kostabi in the beginning, and then the Helms Amendment. So roughly like when just Kostabi issue was kind of done. The Helms Amendment—so there was the Mapplethorpe show, and the Gang of Four, Ted Miller, Holly Hughes, Karen Finley. And who was the other one?

THEODORE KERR: I can't remember the fourth one.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Anyway—Penny Arcade, maybe? No.

THEODORE KERR: Maybe. She's listed, but I don't—I think she's associated but wasn't one of the four.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, yeah, okay. So anyway, that all just started happening, and Visual AIDS had just started happening. That summer of '89 was kind of, like, you know, this blowout summer where everything just sort of came together. And we coordinated a major demonstration on the steps of the Metropolitan Museum. And because this group gave me my first voice in ACT UP—you know, like I'd always just sort of been a soldier, and it was like how anyone can take their voice and have it heard and turn it into something collective. So this was my first experience being a kind of leader a bit.

And you know, there were some ACT UP 101 mistakes [laughs] that I made, which was, as kind of primary organizer of the demonstration, Bill Dobbs and—people took on different roles. It was kind of cool how, you know, people just took on these different roles, and they kind of naturally did it on their own. So I was kind of, like, working on orchestrating this big-picture demonstration, and we were using the Metropolitan Museum as a backdrop for, you know, metaphorically, a lot of the art and the museum could possibly be censored or highlighted or, you know, censored based on the Helms Amendment. But you know, we didn't send the press release or anything. We didn't call them and ask them permission.

And we just put it out there, we were doing it, and I guess they freaked out, the museum freaked out, and I stupidly put my name [laughs] and contact information, our telephone number on 8th Street, as the contact information. "Contact me." And ACT UP 101 [laughs] no, no, because it pins a person to the whole thing. So that's what happened, and on the day of demonstration, I was at work at Paula Cooper Gallery, and the receptionist said, "Hunter there's a telephone call." I said, "Can you take a message? I'm busy." She said "I think you need to take this. It's the FBI."

[They laugh.]

And I was like, "Oh." And, "This is Agent," blah-blah-blah, "from the FBI, and you're Hunter Reynolds; you're organizing this demonstration." And I was like "Yeah. You know, we're doing it on the sidewalk. It's not against the museum; it's using the museum as a backdrop." Blah, blah, blah. He said "we want you to meet us at—45 minutes before the demonstration at this location."

So I went up there and—I had to go up there anyway, and it was like they had put barricades all the way to the left of the museum, like by the park. And they said, "Well, your demonstrations going to take place over there." And I was thinking to myself, "No, it's not." So that was meeting with the FBI. I mean, it was like 10—the New York City police force, the security at the museum; it was like this 10 uniformed guys from different agencies. I just said, "Oh, okay, you know, we have the right to do this, you know." He said, "Yeah, it's public property. Stay away from the museum."

I agreed to everything they said, looking at—knowing, while I was agreeing to all that, that I was just totally lying to them and that I was going to have be the person—because we, suddenly, within half an hour—we thought a couple hundred people would show up, you know? We had made signs; we had like done all this propaganda, and you know, visual ACT UP stuff, and—but I kept looking at the stairs and going—and looking at the barricade,

and going, "How is this going to happen? How am I going to—I can't—I have to just do it."

And so suddenly, within 15 minutes before the actual time of demonstration, there's satellite; there's trucks; the press came. And Bill had put out a press release, sent it out to all the newspapers, listing all the famous people who were going to be there, which was totally bogus, too. He was just like, "Andy Warhol"—not Andy Warhol because he was dead already. Viva. He like did some Andy Warhol stars, and he did Joseph Papp, and he did some famous artists, Leon Golub, and they all came.

THEODORE KERR: The artists all came?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Everyone. Everyone he named in the newspaper came. And within the first five, 10 minutes before—suddenly, it was like hundreds of people were coming. And the first, like, 100 people, I had to suddenly—we had all these posters, and all this stuff, and visuals, and I just, you know, did it; I started marching them in a circle around the front of the stairs. And these cops went ballistic on me. I mean, they really freaked out. Came up to me; "We had an agreement," blah, blah, blah. One guy was blood-curdling red. And I just look at them, and I said, "Look, arrest me now, or let me run this demonstration. There's our lawyer." I pointed to Bill Dobbs. I was like, "He's our lawyer. Talk to him." And it just went into its own natural thing, and it was like ACT UP, and almost 2,000 people came. And it was like everyone had their own outfits and, you know, with all these different arts groups and, you know, just like—it was amazing.

THEODORE KERR: And weren't you dressed up?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: No.

THEODORE KERR: You weren't?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: No. So I was trying to figure out how to end the thing. You know? So the circle happened, the protest, chants, all went on their own. And I was standing there looking at this amazing amount of people, and this whole thing, and all these famous people came. So it became clear that we had to figure out how to end it and get people to speak. And someone had a bullhorn, and so I started going up to all the famous people like Joseph Papp, and Hans Haacke came, and Barbara Kruger came, and Nancy Spero came, and Leon Golub came, and Viva came, and who else? There was another Warhol person there. And yeah, it was like, "Okay, are you willing to speak? Are you willing to say something for five—you know, a few minutes?" Most of them said yes, so Leon Golub spoke, and Hans Haacke spoke, and Joseph Papp spoke. So basically, we kind of, you know, sort of stopped the demonstration.

In the meantime, the police had taken the barricades from the side of the museum and brought them to the steps. So they, while the whole demonstration was going on, were moving the barricades, so that we couldn't go up on the steps of the museum. So right at the right—like I was like, okay, how is this going to end? How do I end this? To get these, you know—like what's going to happen? How do you make this end and transition? And an ACT UP-er just did it, just did it on his own. He picked up the barricade, threw it onto the steps, and all 2,000 people went up the steps, stood on the whole museum steps, chanting for another 20 minutes of [demonstrates chanting], you know, crazy chanting. I was like—Bill and I were just like, perfect. So we'd already talked to all these people; we just—I think Hans Haacke was the first one, or Joseph Papp was the first one to speak. And we, you know—"Okay, everybody, calm down. You've got the bullhorn." And he just stood there facing the crowd of people, in all those amazing pictures, and there's some video footage that I've never gotten that's out there in the world about this. But it was kind of like, wow. It was an amazing kind of moment.

Yeah, and then we came home and had hundreds of telephone calls from all over the country on our machine. And then our phones became tapped, and every meeting we had, some police, or undercover person came to Aldo's house, our house. I mean, it's strange—which only holds, like, 25—max 20 people, in the little apartment, but if we had a meeting there, and we'd always have to ask, "Is anyone here?" You know, so they'd follow us around, and that all happened.

THEODORE KERR: And when you asked—because I think a common ACT UP activity was to say, like, "If a police officer is here, it's your duty to report they're here." Would anybody come forward? No, but you knew that they were there.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Knew when—yeah. If they—I mean, they only came to our house like twice, I think. But it was obvious they were.

THEODORE KERR: What were some of the takeaway messages from the demonstration outside of the Met?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Well what it did was it created an immediate, nationwide, grassroots connections. So we, immediately—Aldo, basically—I think our next thing was—that happened in August. Next demo was for the Artists Space show, but in between, there were all these things. Like we were invited to panels, and we did

letter-writing campaigns and connected the dots to all of these uprisings, new upstart organizations, across the country who called us, like Arms Akimbo and all these kind of famous, grassroots, queer organizations that happened at the same moment in other cities. We linked them all up through factsheets and helping each other, you know, do demos there, and letter-write to our congressmen and get—go to Washington, lobby, and so Aldo did all that.

THEODORE KERR: What were some of the stated goals?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Well, really just to stay on top of fighting the Helms Amendment at that time and doing what we could do to highlight what was going on with the NEA. And you know, we lost in our battle. It was—they won.

THEODORE KERR: And the Helms Amendment was the thing that he put forward to stop the funding of—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: What the Helms Amendment successfully ended up doing was defunding individual artists from the NEA. You could get individual artists grants. Really defunding much of the nonprofit funding that went to anything queer, anything radical, you know, not that they kind of ended up—I think the legislation—I mean, I have to read it. My copy of it's here somewhere. What it ended up doing was defunding individual artists. [Inaudible] doesn't exist anymore. And just severely limiting the funding to nonprofits and cultural arts institutions in general.

THEODORE KERR: It seems to me that that is such a quintessential Art Positive moment because it brought together all the things that you all cared about, that could seem desperate to someone outside, but you all knew were connected.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, so, you know, when you go through—the cool thing was this exhibition in Chicago. You know, he has all the archives. And we kept minutes, and we kept pretty good records, and so we kind of like were looking at this primary two years that it was really, like, active, like, the most, and going "Jesus Christ, we," you know, "did a lot." And there were several exhibitions, the most well-known being the—you know, people would just group off and do things, you know? So we weren't like, everything was by committee. We kind of ran it like ACT UP. We'd say, "Okay, you have an idea? You want to go do this? Let's all approve it. Go do it." So there were installations and stuff, like Leon Mostovoy.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: [Laughs.] And Jody Rhone did this crazy exhibition down at—I think it was at the old Abrons, where they did this hypodermic needle syringe mobile thing [laughs], which I never actually saw until we saw—until I saw the archive pictures. I was like, "Oh my God, that's"—I mean, because there was stuff that—parts of the group were doing different things at the same time, and you know, we all didn't necessarily overlap with stuff. So my performance with the bras was going to be with Lola's flag.

THEODORE KERR: Lola Flash's flag?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, well, it's an Art Positive flag.

THEODORE KERR: Okay.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: We're now sort of naming the people who—giving some credit to the people who actually either primarily contributed to a project. We kind of kept that, you know, Art Positive; we wouldn't identify names, necessarily, but you know, in the years—we're kind of letting that be okay. So like I'd probably say, you know, "I came up with the slogan 'Artists with AIDS.'" You know? And did that slogan, so—and I did these posters, these really controversial posters, which were Jesse Helms being fucked by a Tom of Finland. You know, I took a Tom of Finland drawing and put Jesse Helms' head on it and said this really kind of politically incorrect shit. Put it all over the East Village, and it ended up getting, like, talked about at museum panels [laughs], because there was like a pro and con to what I had done. I was always not the most politically correct person. I would like give you, "Okay there's this angle, and there's this angle," and I'm going to, like, just put it out there.

So Lola's photographs all Lola Flash's visual imagery of the main flag, and since she's being highlighted as an Art Positive member, and her work, and blah, blah, blah with Sur, and talk, and do the performance. And I got a lot of pushback about my idea, about doing a Black Lives Matter kind of mock procession, getting—collaborating with some trans art. You know, no one was having it, so I had to pull it off the table.

THEODORE KERR: You mean in 2016?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah. Just, the performance I'm doing at the Bronx got a lot of push-back.

THEODORE KERR: Okay.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: From like the people I wanted to maybe collaborate with. They were like, "You're white, dude. Why are you doing this?"

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: [Laughs.] I was like, "Yeah I am, but"—it's like it's a generational need, the opportunity; you're burying the white man at the same time as, you know—and I was like, "You can look at it in all kinds of ways." In fact, Quito sent this awful, mean letter to the museum. And I can't stand her anyway, but. [Laughs.]

THEODORE KERR: And didn't talk to you about it?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: No.

THEODORE KERR: Oh.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: I wanted to—what I did was I sent—I reached out to a couple people privately and wasn't getting—and then my summer kind of got melted away, and all this medical stuff, and deaths and everything. So I didn't really deal with it until I was invited to back up to Arts in the Woods. And I had this year lapse. I didn't go last year. And I'd proposed this idea as a workshop, and Quito and Will [Fisher] had just done this thing at Destiny. And you know, they could have come to me and said, "Oh, we've just did this thing." You know, I would have said, "Well, you can just use this opportunity to do a demonstration the way you want to do it, and I'm giving you an opportunity."

But she didn't—she just wrote a nasty letter to Sur and the museum. And Sur contacted me, because I wrote a nasty letter back to her, knowing that she had written this letter without even seeing it. I'd heard about it. [Laughs.] So I said, "This is how I feel about you and it, and I get—like, you know, you could have just opened a dialogue with me about it, instead of just dismissing me and attacking me at the same time." She still hasn't written me anything.

I mean, I did three letters, kind of an angry one, and then the kind of like, "Okay, I'm sorry, but you know, why didn't you just contact me?" And then talking about it. Because she—Sur wrote me this whole thing. I was like, "Sur, yeah, I get what you're saying, but I have every right to"—not only as a white person, gay person, privileged person, access to the gay patriarchy, and all that stuff. I know about all that stuff. I've been dealing with that all my life, and it's something—it's an issue. And this was about intergenerational links that these different dialogues could happen around, not me just being an arrogant white guy doing that.

THEODORE KERR: Do you think there were also links between the activism of the moment, surrounding Black Lives Matter, and the AIDS activism?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, definitely. I think they're doing most successful, you know, organized, and I think they've looked at a lot of ACT UP models and—whereas the Occupy Wall Street was unable to do that. They couldn't get—you know, I think the Black Lives Matter has really coalesced around their issues, and even city by city and, like, organized in such a way that, you know, they're getting the same kind of, you know, access to what they need to do that ACT UP did, because you have to have a vision. You have step one, not just to whatever your end point is. And so I think they've been—are successful and doing that better than other groups.

THEODORE KERR: I want to go back to the slogan you coined, "Artists with AIDS." And I wonder, for you, was that just about HIV-positive artists?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: "Artists with AIDS." Can you—I have to—I'm frying my brain cells. I can't remember what it says exactly.

THEODORE KERR: Okay. I mean, even just those words, "Artists with AIDS," were you just referring to—when you were thinking about Art Positive and Artists with AIDS, did you—were you thinking primarily about artists with an HIV-positive diagnosis?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah. I think that that was the—not—let's see, what was the slogan? I just have to look at it.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, of course. I guess while you're looking it up, I can say what I'm getting at is that, in this current moment, AIDS can often be understood as an individual experience, but in my understanding of the past, and the work that you all did, AIDS is better understood as both a virus that some people lived with, or HIV was a virus that some people lived with, but also a communal experience.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: I think it was—I thought, you know, it was—I think, by the time—you know, my trajectory with activism in like—from '85 awareness to '87, became more and more a community thing. Even to get it—kind of, the label of getting it had to do with you being gay. It was already an issue of being, you deserve to have

this disease because you're a promiscuous slut, and gay people really shouldn't really have the right to be who they are anyway. So that was the community feeling that already extended to me before, even, I was positive or knew I was positive. Like those feelings were already there, and I already identified them for myself, as a community thing, not just that I was living alone as a gay man with these feelings.

I knew that I was part of this community. But that had to do more with, I think, me and my trajectory of kind of awareness from a very young age that I was not alone in choosing to be gay or choosing to—you know, it was really a choice to accept my gayness and then be open about it. And that started very early, and so by the time I got—I was always kind of aware that I wasn't alone in that, even when I was going to the first gay community center in Los Angeles. When I was a teenager, you know, they already had one open there, and that's where I, you know, went to the first kind of gay—that's where I saw Harvey Milk speak, and Gloria Allred, and [laughs] you know, like way back in the mid-'70s.

THEODORE KERR: Wow. [Laughs.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah. [Laughs.] And so I always felt like I was part of a community. Even though I may have been, different times in my life, in and out of it, I always never felt alone in it. So it's always kind of been about that for me.

THEODORE KERR: And also I'm hearing that there's an overlap between gay identity—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: "AIDS is killing artists. Now, homophobia killing art."

THEODORE KERR: Okay, let's say it again.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: "AIDS is killing artists. Now, homophobia is killing art."

THEODORE KERR: Do you want to say just some more about that, like where it came from, what it means to you?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Well, I think, you know, when we were—in fact, I was just—Jody Rhone was just painting a lot of these pictures from Gay Pride with Tony and stuff that year. I think it was the year that we made that t-shirt, so everyone has them on. So I was like, okay, that—it was like, yeah, AIDS—well, it was just, you know, it was just reflection of what was actually happening, and what the group was dealing with in that moment, which was artists were dying, and that was our community, and that's what we wanted to highlight. And homophobia—which, you know, the terms are how they—you know, it's kind of like—in my letter, I use the word—I use some of the old slangs that young trans kids get so annoyed with. I get annoyed at them for—I mean, I've been attacked by these young, trans people. So have other people. And I like—okay, what good is that for you?

I mean, I want to understand more about your experience, and you need to understand that my generation had a different experience. And frankly, a lot of that experience has allowed you to be who you are. [Laughs.] So don't attack me for using the incorrect term. You know? Which is what's happened quite a lot. So homophobia, you know, we all have our—you know, it's hard not to label things, and it's hard not to because, on one hand, you do want to create a construct for a dialogue. And it's hard to avoid certain words, certain labels, and those things can change over time, and whatever. And you have to be aware that you are making a kind of pigeonhole thing, but that's part of—I've never had a, you know—I've always thought that's just part of how we have to do it in our society because you have to make specific—it's almost like advertising. So we—"AIDS is killing artists." You know—

THEODORE KERR: It was a fact.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: "and now, homophobia is killing art." I mean, AIDS-phobia was, too, but we just wanted to get it down to a nutshell in that moment.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And, you know.

THEODORE KERR: Earlier you said that you wanted the group to be different than Gran Fury; what—how is that different?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, we wanted to be very different from Gran Fury. We were invited to do a lot of like Gran Fury-esque things. So every time we wanted to stay grassroots, wanted to stay open, Gran Fury was also—already filling a certain kind of propagandistic, artistic niche that was—they were very good at. And so, we wanted to kind of stay the opposite of that: more grassroots, more street, more wheat-pasted stuff. We, we do a lot of wheat-pasting stuff on the street and more gorilla-esque kind of actions.

Even the exhibitions that we chose to be in would have this kind of alternated element, too, and because we had a different—you know, we made the slideshow at the same time as the *Electric Blanket*, and thank God we found—I was—Leon and I did pretty much the slideshow together and, you know, like 200 slides of—you know, you've got all of these current artists, plus museum works, and all this stuff, and it was just like a—it got projected and one didn't come with it, but it just—the *Electric Blanket* was just there first.

THEODORE KERR: Was it themed or what was the—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, so I, you know, was using my visual imagery, and some other artist was, you know, like in the flag—there's two flags. There's the positive flag and the negative flag, and so the negative flag kind of follows my visual imagery of kind of newspaper articles, headlines, and I was isolating all of these headlines and had this form of, you know, isolating and kind of layering Xerox, hard, kind of, pixelated pictures of all the photographs of politicians or whoever they were. And the slogans, I would isolate these headlines. I'd just put them on a red background or something. All of this stuff is here in my files here and so the slideshow kind of had these slogans, newspaper article headlines in red, and then just—it was just different artist's work and, you know, kind of really—art that was in all of the major museums that anybody could see.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: That was about nudity, homosexuality, or whatever.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: But stupidly, I was coming back from some exhibition of it somewhere and left the two trays on the subway, and it was gone, and I—we forgot that we had—there was—so we found this new excavation of the archives that happened; we found an original copy of the slideshow.

THEODORE KERR: Like recently?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: That's amazing.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, [laughs] I was like, Whoa. Aldo was like, I thought we lost that. I guess we—I guess we—these are the masters, which I was supposed to have returned to all the galleries and museums. We're like, I had borrowed like master slides from MoMA and like master slides from all these places and didn't return them.

THEODORE KERR: Which is great for history.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah. [Laughs.]

THEODORE KERR: So after the Met action, you said the next big action was—there was lots of—there was lots of demos and bands—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, so the next big thing was Artists Space and [inaudible], and so, you know, I was on my—my role in that was kind of visual stuff, you know, and I—

THEODORE KERR: Like creating visuals?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, creating all the visuals and when you—when, you know—at the—they kind of very coolly—in their history book, their big thick book, you know, you open the middle of the book, and it opens to the Art Positive—

THEODORE KERR: You mean the big Artists Space book?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, so it opens up to that section, as the middle of the book, like I opened it up, and I was like, oh wow. I mean, it doesn't—they don't even credit us—

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —for the—but it's all those images from the protest and all those signs that we made, and Aldo and Dennis and Bill, I think, were the main people who did all the meetings with Susan [Wyatt] and John Frohnmayer.

THEODORE KERR: And those are the folks from Artists Space, Susan and John?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, and again, I guess, to ask a repetitive question, what was the goal of those actions?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: I think it was a kind of tool to protest the varying things that were happening around the exhibition.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Which had to do with, you know, a kind of conflict between Frohnmayer, Susan Wyatt, the exhibition, the language. There're multi-layers to that—to that story. So we were just—the protest was kind of highlighting—it was at the opening. It was kind of, like—I think there was some stuff that the Frohnmayer had done and said that we were kind of protesting that and kind of just using it as a general backdrop to all of the issues that were around. We weren't protesting Artists Space necessarily, but it was kind of like all—there were a lot of complicated issues, which I really didn't get involved with.

THEODORE KERR: I guess I want to talk about your art practice and how—its relationship to living with HIV. So when you think—and your experience of being in community with people living with HIV. So when you think back or when you look at your body of work, which I think you're doing a lot of now, do you see like—can you almost like theme out or name periods where you're making work about HIV, versus not? Or—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Is it project based or—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, no, well, when I sort of transitioned, you know, I'd always kind of, like, been making work about my experiences as a gay man, and my kind of text pieces and photograph pieces and, you know, not all of them, but there were themes and some pieces that were more directly related to being gay. Like I did all of these psychological text pieces from *the Man with the Edible Complex* and how my mom and, you know, being a gay kid, and so like from '85 to '87, it was kind of weaving that story together somehow and, and then also, slowly, identifying as a gay artist.

THEODORE KERR: Right.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: You know, and that took some time for me to come to as a label. And so I don't know. I was thinking a lot about, like, the first show at Artists Space was kind of a mix. I had a gay theme text. I had some, you know, other language pieces at the same show that I was in with Felix and Kay Rosen and all of that. But I had some political imagery that I was using that actually got me into that show, which was kind of—like I was always interested in—you know, I've always been interested in publications and magazines and news and information, and I'm addicted to TV and watching the news, even to this day. You know, like so I have this news thing that goes all the way back to my childhood and looking at *Newsweek* and these news periodicals and some of my first paintings and first bodies of work has to do with, actually, the structures of newspapers and magazines. I mean, even—I forgot about that until I went back and looked at them.

So, yeah, so ACT UP comes along and, I'm starting to experience more, what I thought—almost like performance art, you know, these demonstrations. I definitely saw them as almost like art, better art than anybody could make, socially, then. You know, because you change the world and you want to change something; art's probably just above poetry and the ability of it to really—I mean modern art, meaning, to actually change the mass idea or mass views or collective views is really—I became really aware of how it's a reflection. Even in Gran Fury or museum context or political art, who's your audience and what are you trying to speak to, and if you're showing a MoMA, okay, so maybe you change your ideal and your visual perception of something, but collectively, there's very few works of art that actually can change a collective, mass thing the way film or books or almost any other medium can do.

So I really thought that propaganda, within the—visual propaganda, within the context of these performative demonstrations, I was sort of thinking of them as almost like art experiences for me, personally, and that was a better, more cogent vehicle to be a part of affecting a kind of collective change. And that's the way I saw it, so when I started making a—you know, Simon Watson and a lot of the ACT UP artists and art venues started, you know, doing these thematic shows and making art specifically for these exhibitions that were about these ideas and blah, blah, blah. So, Simon Watson was one of those galleries who did that, and so all these artists were—he was really showing socially-connective work, and he would make these themes or give you the opportunity to make themes, you know, and I did a few exhibitions where are positive members or like Catherine Saalfield and Robbin Murphy, and there were a couple exhibitions we kind of did altogether.

That wasn't Art Positive, but it was kind of like—and those were my first table installations and first projective images of, like, current media images on the walls and, you know, kind of taking these constructs of what I was experiencing directly, in the moment, and putting them in another space and re-contextualizing them, and that was kind of, like, a dialog I was having, and other artists were, too, you know? How do you bridge those gaps and those connections and links? And so you become aware of it. You know, one thing is giving this immediate audience and a more rarified audience and how you, as an artist, are dealing with this constant ebb and flow of social awareness, activism, your art, the object of your making, how it all connects together, and in one context or another. So, I was—I was on kind of this fence, where I was constantly thinking, well, why am I even doing this art?

THEODORE KERR: Well—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Why does it—why does it even matter to do it?

THEODORE KERR: That was a question you had for yourself?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, like when I feel like I'm being more effective by being a part of the thing in the street—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.].

HUNTER REYNOLDS: So I never not—I never did not make the art, but I was constantly having those questions.

THEODORE KERR: So you felt like a pull between activism and creating your work?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, like how's this one object going to be more effective than actually putting your body in the street?

THEODORE KERR: And how are you answering it?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: [Laughs.] I never really did. I just kept doing them both. Well, I mean, that was the answer, was that I just came to this reality, well, I'm an artist, and that's just what I do, and there is a context for it to function in this gallery and museum environment that's different than the street, but you know, it was kind—and then, you know, constantly getting identified as a political artist or a social artist, a gay artist. You know, that was all happening at the same time.

THEODORE KERR: And what about an artist living with HIV? Were you ever labeled that one?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Well, that was a big issue. That was a big issue for everyone. It was one thing to be an artist dealing with these issues, but it was another to be an artist who said, "I'm a person living with HIV or AIDS," and even—nobody wanted to say it publicly. I just posted that video on YouTube that was part of the New Museum's *Flux Attitudes* show.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Where Patina du Prey—and we had the O Party, the Party of the Other.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: So we had this, this convention as a Flux-ist, kind of, as a agitprop thing, or we modeled it all after the '92 election—and there were like 25 people in it, and we had this big convention at the New Museum.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.].

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Where I wore my flag jacket to Patina du Prey and there was—Dread Scott was in it, and some great people and we had this huge American flag with an O in it called the Other, and we were the Party of the Other and the O Party, and this was just an event that the New Museum did. I found it on their website. Historically, there's my jacket hanging on the wall in the next room over there, but no one has ever seen this video.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: So I digitized it and posted a couple weeks ago on Hillary's—on the evening Hillary was, you know, speaking—

THEODORE KERR: You mean, yeah. Yeah.

Hunt Reynolds: And it is the speech that I disclosed—I mentioned publicly, and I don't know any other artist that really did that very—in my trajectory of artists. In fact, there were people who absolutely did not want to—didn't want to know about that—

THEODORE KERR: Right, then you can—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —even if they—even if they were making work that was related to it.

THEODORE KERR: So there was, at the time—and I mean, we can both say easily, to this day, there's artists in the art world that are living with HIV that choose not to disclose, and even more, there's artists, and there were artists, making work about HIV that chose not to disclose?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: That was a very difficult thing to disclose and even more than just being pinned a gay artist, you know. You—it was one thing to—I mean, okay, everyone knew, in the world, but you would never—I mean, I don't know. I'd have to really think about who—if—maybe you would know more. No one I knew—wanted to identify themselves as HIV-positive artists in the time that they were just dealing with it then.

THEODORE KERR: And I think we should be obvious for the historical record; why did people not want to disclose their status?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Well, because you already had so much horrible pushback about just taking on an artist—of being a gay artists that limited you to—once I started realizing the—you know, that you didn't—a lot of my friends didn't want to be defined—defined with the word "gay" as part of their work. Even if they were making work that was gay, they would reject it, push it away, and I found that it was the gay press, and my experience in the gay world, that I got the most accolades from. So, I started slowly—you know, my first press was *Out Magazine* and all the—all the gay rags. I was like, well, you know, why should I have a problem feeling weird about being a gay artist?

THEODORE KERR: Was there a separate or specific stigma attached to HIV though?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: I think there was, yeah, sure, even more. Yeah. Because there was another layer of that that was like even more like, you know, difficult to deal with. Both your—you know, and—you know, I think that's part of the premise of even the Jonathan David Katz exhibition *Art AIDS America*. You know, there were artists who actively didn't want that cite. Even I was part of their subtext. They would push, they want to be defined that way.

THEODORE KERR: And is it—does it have to do a little bit with the role of the—the status of the artist in culture to be—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: I think it has to do with, specifically, the status in the art market and the powers and the structures that we're doing with the art world then and now and any time. It's really—it's a really reaction to the market and the viability of your art to be taken to another level and not pigeonholed into a category that limits that very much. Like there's only certain collectors that are going to buy gay art. There's only—you know, Leslie-Lohman Museum was not what is was then, what it is now. There were—and I still don't really understand why they claim to be the only gay museum in the world when the Schwules Museum preexisted them, and they're always like—so, well, wait a minute. There's another museum in Berlin that's been there a long time. But yeah, so slowly, I just started to accept all that and, and make a—you know, the speech I gave the museum was kind of about that.

THEODORE KERR: And say the year again? 1992?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Two, yeah.

THEODORE KERR: What was the response?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: You know, I don't know. I mean the thing was it was convention. The response was, you know, kind of to everyone there. Carter Kustera was the press guy doing the TV interviews; there were a bunch—but we never published this video, never. So you know whoever was at the convention was, you know, so yeah—I was—it wasn't a thing that I made really clear except to—when I—when I listen to what I—how I wrote it, I was like, pretty good speech. [Laughs.]

THEODORE KERR: And was there—was there response in the days or weeks afterwards?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: No, no, no.

THEODORE KERR: And—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: We were just one thing that happened as part of this big event and we didn't get any press, you know, no one—that's why I realized—when I found this tape in my archives, I was like, oh, no one has seen this. So I kind of waited to post it on YouTube until Hillary's—because I'm really making the speech. And it's like my kind of like Che Guevara mode because Patina.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: We're going to have this spray and I'm doing—and I'm up there with Dread Scott and Dread's doing rap. And it's kind of me and Dread at the end of this convention on stage rapping together. [Laughs.] You should look at it it's on YouTube.

THEODORE KERR: I will. For you did anything change? Like did you feel—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: I felt empowered by it. I felt I was making a really big—but I was also in the—Ray had just died; I had—you know, I was kind of in this transitional moment in my life, going from Ray's death to this kind of really accepting that I can be dead soon, you know, this kind of whole shift in everything, you know, about my work, which happened really after—because of Ray's death and that experience in my life.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And how he's—you know, that's why I always try to honor him because it was like he changed my life, and his experience of process to death was what gave me the power to make the work I did after that.

THEODORE KERR: It was witnessing him in his life and death.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, and specifically even something he said to me as part of his last parting words to me. Yeah, specifically.

THEODORE KERR: Do you feel like sharing those words?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, sure. So, Ray's illness was—I was—you know, what people at that time didn't know about our relationship was that Ray and I preexisted every friendship he had here in New York.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: We went to school together at Otis, and we weren't really friends at Otis. I thought—I was scared of the dude. He was like so not, like, anything I saw myself as. He was the most self-confident, borderline arrogant, like I own the world, at 17 years old [laughs]. I own the world and I'm going to show you my—I mean, he wasn't—it was just like so—he was so self-confident, so amazing, and I just was not that person at all, and I was kind of like—I was always cowering around him and then I didn't know how to—he was so smart and so quick at expressing himself that I—at that time, I was just not that person even. I hadn't even gotten there in myself. So, it wasn't—but we had all these other connections, and he was, I think, two years behind me and so I graduated and went to New York, and I knew Aldo and that whole crowd already. There was a whole wave of people coming from LA that I was connected to all at the same time, '84, '95, From Cal Arts and Otis and so, you know, suddenly Ray's back in my life, and we're you know, living—we got him the apartment below, and he's off doing his video for this Whitney program and we just—you know, we just became closer and close. And it was this night that I was with him when he got the pain from the cryptococcal meningitis and we were walking down 13th Street from the Center and he just—he just held his head and said, "Oh!," you know, just like this sudden, sharp pain, and he knew, and he was afraid of being tested.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: I didn't know my status, and there was a bunch of people—and we even had, I think, conversations about it, like he would say, "I just don't want to know. I'm sure I am; I don't want to know." I mean, there was no—there no medication; there was nothing to know except you were going to get it and die [laughs]. So, you knew you were probably positive. You knew that you were eventually going to get something and then you were going to die. That's what you knew.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: In the meantime, you're going to scream and yell and do whatever you can to fight for what we needed.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And that was an attitude, which a lot of—surprisingly a lot of people had, and it was kind of

a fear, and I had it, too. I didn't want to know. But that moment was the first thing and he was, within a week, in the hospital and kind of in and out and then never out for a long period of time, and so he was able to kind of open up as a flower in this process. He became very religious. He was very Catholic. It was Catholic stuff, which all of us were kind of, oh, you know—

THEODORE KERR: Surprised?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, very. And his mother came, Pat, who, you know, like my mother; I'd heard all of these horrible, bad stories about her from him, and I was like, dude, I don't know what your experience with this woman was, but she's amazing, and she's doing—get over it and he did, and it was like this thing where she just was there for him and advocating, and you know, everyone had a different role in his life, and it was very hard for me to even confront going to the hospital to see him sick. When we started doing a—we were the first people at St. Vincent's to get 24-hour access to a patient.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Have a bed put in for us to sleep in because he fell out of bed and broke his wrist and, you know, people didn't—nurses didn't want to touch people, and it was a horrible time. And so it was in those nights of being there with him in my shift that I had to—you had to wrap yourself around this thing and his pain and screaming, and then he'd suddenly want to work, and he'd get lucid, and he'd have this whole—you know, he would wake up and just, blah. And he knew how to use everyone around him, and he did it and it was amazing to see because he just opened up like a flower. "I'm going to do this. I'm going to get this done. I want you to help me," and people wanted to help and so he just brought them in and, you know, towards the end, we get this call he's going. We're in the hospital, and finally, I realized I—every time I was there, there was always people around. I don't know; I had this one desire to just be with him alone one day. I went and there was a couple people who were always in the room, and you know, I said, "Ray, you know, can we talk alone," and Ray's like, "Yeah, yeah, everyone out, out," and we had this amazing conversation where he—you know, he said, "Hunter, you know, you've known me longer than anybody. We go back to school," and he just went into this whole thing, and he said, "You know why I'm here; you were with me that night. I'm here because I was afraid. I was afraid to know. That is why I'm dying here," because he wrapped his head around him [being] afraid of wanting to know, somehow weakened him, even though, you know, there were—AZT was just coming out. It had just come out. He had just—you know, he wrote and did essays, and that year and a half that he was sick was really a long trajectory. It was really long, you know, like a whole, almost like nine or ten months in the hospital, and he made the photographs and the essay for the show. He coined it "Queer Theory," you know, the same time that—who's that other woman?

THEODORE KERR: Eve Sedgwick, that one you mean?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: She gets more credit for it, but it was the same time.

THEODORE KERR: Okay.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: She and Ray both wrote those essays, "Queer Theory."

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: It was for our essay that he wrote the term for.

THEODORE KERR: It's for your—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: For ART+ Positive.

THEODORE KERR: For ART+ Positive literature that he wrote that essay, yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: ["Army of Lovers" −HR] So he just said, "Don't be afraid of this thing."

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: "Don't let it control you. Don't let it control your work. Let it be free in you. Accept it."

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And it was like that [snaps]—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And everything I did after that shifted with my work and I—that's when I made this disclosure and speech. That's when I decided that I wanted my work to be more metaphorical, more emotional, more about the depth and meaning of life, as opposed to these more political—they were just more about the emotions, and, you know, less about the theory. I mean, I just shifted—I mean, it kind of constructed itself in many different ways, but Patina had already been born also that same year, '89—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —and that was an act of—for me, of kind of confronting homophobia and gender phobia and—within the gay community; that's the whole impetus of Patina being born and—

THEODORE KERR: Do you want to talk about her birth a bit?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Sure. It all happened in '89. It was—so in the fall of 1989, right around—I had been making these dialogue tables, these installations with, you know, photographs and I had my studio [inaudible] one and [inaudible] were coming into the studio, and I knew that I wanted to kind of deal with something about gender, about the experience I was having at the Pyramid Club, about my own masculinity, about—and just basically copy a Warhol idea and it was all—basically, all I did was—well, I just wanted, step by step, document the renewal of my hair and my face and put makeup on because I had been wearing my mother's clothes and, you know, this big, butch guy, but like, I have this other side, and I mean, that's like all through my childhood, you know? My grandmother and I used to sit and make clothes for her dolls out of—out of her own lingerie, and she'd have her martinis and tell me all the stories and, you know, so I had this going back, and my mother was a beauty queen. I'd put on her dresses and spin around, and my grandfather painted these—you know, when you look at my history and you see these images going back to my childhood—which they all did. The music box—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: I had this music box next to my bed, my grandma's music box, where I'd end up making my, you know, seven pieces—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: It was a life-size music box. So I just did that and had Michael Wakefield photograph step-by-step this removal of my hair, my face, putting makeup on. I'm with this famous Pyramid drag queen, who's helping me, and he's a photographer, and he's just shooting step by step by step and he kept—through the steps, he kept saying, "Oh my God. Hunter, you're a natural," and I had taken off my glasses. I didn't have contact lenses yet. I was like "Yeah, I couldn't really see except the up close." So that night, Aldo and I were going to go to Christian Marclay's performance at The Kitchen. So anyway we did this photoshoot, and Aldo comes to pick me up; I'm still in this basic face drag: my tweed coat, you know, no intention of going out looking like this, and Aldo was like "Oh my God, Jesus Christ, you have to go out. You have to go—we have to go to The Kitchen like this." I was like, "Are you kidding me? No way." He's like "No, no, no one is going to know who you are," and, you know, like—"All right." So he convinced me to do it. I put on this feather wig and had my face, and I was like looking at it, "Oh God. I do look like my mom."

[They laugh.]

And we came up with this idea that we had in the car; we would—we would introduce myself as a performance artist from LA and blah, blah, blah, and we'd kind of have fun with it. Yeah, so we went, and I heard later that people thought I was Padalesco [ph] because I was really big, and so at the intermission, we're out in the lobby, and we're talking with friends, and no one knew it was me, and one of the first things that happened was I was in a group of, like, three or four people, and two of them were really close friends, and they—one of then lashed out at me and said, "Why are you talking to me?" and pushed me away and turned away, and both Aldo and I went, "Okay, what was that?" You know, this is 1989; this is the New York art world; this is The Kitchen; this is like—and it happened three or four times that people were embarrassed or didn't want to talk to me, and one person actually physically pushed me. A friend pushed me away from him. "I don't—why are you talking to me?" and Aldo stood—we stood out there in the lobby for a few minutes before going back in the second half, and he's, "What was that about?" and I said, "I don't know."

It was really perplexing, like of all the reactions you could have, these were the ones we got, and so in the cab on the way—so there's like—there was a reception happening, big, huge, art-world party happening that evening as well, Ashley Bickerton's opening party at the La MaMa, huge Tina Lyons [ph] event—I miss her—and yeah, one of those big, art-world parties of the '80s happened after [inaudible]. That was the thing, where everyone was converging on the La MaMa; it'd like be like this mega dance party, and it was Ashley, plus some other artist's after-party, opening, kind of all together.

So we were planning to go to that anyway, but in the cab on the way home, all those—we're talking about this reaction, like, what was that about, and we were supposed to figure it out; there—something about it provoked people's internal—like it was out of context. It was—there was no reason for me to be there in drag. There was no—it was just—the bottom line: it was out of context, and it really brought up this internal homophobia, you know, not even the word "trans" then but, you know, a kind of gender phobia and drag phobia and, you know, like—and we thought—and I really thought like, "Okay." I said, "Why don't we go to the party?" I said, "Yeah, let's go to this party; let's really play with this, like let's play"—I was like, "Okay"—somehow the transition got me enough confidence to walk into that big, huge party where I knew I was going to be seeing my best friends—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —and somehow play with this and push it, and I did [laughs], and it was—Tom Colaianni, correctly, rightfully claims that as the birth night of Patina du Prey, and he is the birth mother of Patina du Prey. So I did that. In the end, I was really bold, and I did everything from following Ashley to the bathroom and going up to him at the urinal where he was pissing, and I reached under and grabbing his dick and shaking it and going, "Ashley, you're such a man." Then all the tranny chasers of the art world were there that night, went below—Ashley Bickerton [laughs]—and they couldn't get enough, and I'd sit down at the tables of my best friends, and people knew it was someone who knew them, of course, but nobody could figure it out.

Finally I was standing in front of Tom Colaianni and Massimo De Leon. I just think I had my 30th birthday like right before that, you know, '89, and I was standing with—Tom was like, "Who the fuck are you?" and Massimo's like "Yeah, who are you? I know you." I was like, "Boys, you were at my 30th birthday party," and I ran my fingers through Massimo's hair, and Massimo goes, "Oh my God, Oh my God. Tom, it's Hunter," and then the cat was out of the bag, and it was like this amazing evening of kind of this whole trajectory of events and feelings, and then three days later, I got the pictures back, and it utterly freaked me out.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: I was like, "Oh my God, what am I? A drag queen?" Like I'd never identified myself in this way before and even the homophobia, kind of internal, you know, all that experience of like, "Oh, this is just a segment of our population. You know, drag queens, gender-fucks, whatever, you know, they're just very"—you know, everyone's pushing them away, but then the community even—if you're not on stage at the Pyramid Club, you can't be here, and so it—all that came up, and I put them in a drawer, and I didn't look at them for like five months—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —and Tom Cugliani was having a studio visit with me, and he saw them in the drawer and said, "Oh, these are from that night!" I was like "Yeah." He said, "I want to show these," and they were part of that Eros Thanatos [ph] show that he did and then everything that I—I did Andrea's show, and that whole identity happened within, you know, the next three months, and then Patina just became a thing, and I was always kind of playing with those ideas of provoking these—putting myself in these places that had no context for this thing to be in and do so—walking tours and just go to McDonald's and sit there and—

[They laugh.]

—but I would always be in this, like, kind of weird half-drag—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —and I started going to—I mean, I realized I didn't want to co-op the female body, right? That was the first coding thing where I was really—I didn't really know what I was dealing with. I knew it wasn't—I wasn't going to—I didn't want to be a queen on a stage. I didn't want to be a trans person but I wanted to kind of deal with these codes and how they worked and what they provoked and how just doing them in this context or that would elicit all these different responses. So that's kind of the—and then I would just have Michael photograph me every couple months, you know, so the first year and a half was like these photo sessions where'd I'd just do the—he showed me this trick that became my signature, you know, the tape—

THEODORE KERR: The raised eyebrows.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah. So I then always showed this mask, and I never wore a wig and—maybe a hat, you know, but—and I always showed my hair on my chest, and I never put breasts on and shaved my head and just do earrings, you know? It's—had this half-code thing, 1930s, dandy-ish look, or—but I would go to the sex clubs like this. I would go to [Club] Edelweiss, and I would go to Pals and, you know, none of the guys who wanted the trannies there wanted me.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: The trannies wanted me.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: So they—so I would get, like, these dudes who didn't want me at all, and all of a sudden, this gorgeous girl with a dick was all over me. It was like—and I had to confront the sex of it all—at the same time, you know, the—and I was sort of going, "Okay. There's this whole other thing," which I was trying to figure out, like the guys who really want the girls—straight guys, they're not gay; it's a whole different sexual category. There's a whole different gender category; there's—you know, 20 years—25 years later, there's a whole new language for it. Back then, there really wasn't and—but the—they were there, and so like, you know, when I first had the opportunity to really talk to a friend who was attracted to a woman with a dick, I mean, just like, "What is that about" and "how does that work for you?" because I am getting this whole other experience. I would go to Edelweiss and get these—and I have, you know—I have lots of attractions for women, and I'm even somewhat bisexual, and those are all parts—so this whole sexual thing, as well as the art thing, it all mixed up in that—this one project, Patina du Prey, which resulted in the show *Drag*.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —and—

THEODORE KERR: I saw that show.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah. My first—my first solo show in New York was called *Drag* at Simon Watson, where I hung in the cage.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: I would get dressed at a vanity in front of the gallery, shelf—I'd get dressed, big queen mirror that said—I took every label, everything I—you know, and just did it, and I don't think anything had really quite been done like—I took all of it, just put it there in Patina's name. This was in 1990. Think Gregg Bordowitz wrote the essay for it, and it was called "Drag."

THEODORE KERR: And had the dress been created yet, by then?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: No.

THEODORE KERR: No.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: No. So this was—this was the first—the first—this was like taking my gayness, my drag-ness, my radical self—HIV was not there in a—it was like this whole other segment of my political self, was my first exhibition in New York City, was called *Drag*.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: My first exhibition in Hallwalls, beside *Paradise Lost*, same year, was, you know, the activist installation up there in Buffalo, so I had these two polarities, but Patina became the thing that people knew down here, and that's all they thought I did, even though it all happened in that same year, my tables, my—but I—so I had this queen mirror, and it was like—beautiful, pink mirror with the word "Queen" etched in it, and I sat there in the morning with all the photographs and had this series of Michael's photographs, really beautiful, black, you know, high photography, fashion photography-esque photographs of me floating with tulle and like, you know? I mean, even—like I would look at it like, "Jesus Christ, I had a pretty face," but it's, you know—I wasn't fat then, but you know, like hairy body and—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —I didn't really—so I would sit there in the mirror as people came in, and I would just be slowly putting on my makeup, and I'd look at them, gaze at them in the mirror, and possibly engage them in a conversation, then back of the gallery was a cage, like a round, metal cage that was hung from the ceiling that I would get bolted into—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —for the afternoon, and I lived in this cage for every five or six hours a day, every day, for 30 days, and I did everything from sleep in it, to piss out of it, to—I would—I mean, I don't know; I did a lot of shit. [Laughs.] It was—it became the infamous show [laughs] like that and people—there was some good press

and my first—you know, Gretchen Faust [ph] review in *Art America*, our arts magazine, and Gregg had written this beautiful essay, and there's videos, and it was—got press all over the place, so people were coming from Boston.

It was like a first kind of show, I think, anybody did anything like this, really, like take drag and make a one person show out of it in a gallery in such a codified way, and I would hang in the cage and I—and I generally wouldn't talk to people. The opening was like this star-studded thing and, you know, I had this big dinner party and Ashley Bickerton had fallen in love with Patina, and everything I did, he'd send me flowers, and he was having his wedding that night to [Jessica Craig-Martin –HR], Yasuo Minagawa's [step-] daughter, this Paula Cooper family that I was connected to. So in the same night as my opening, Ashley Bickerton was marrying Jessica, and I went from the cage, crashed their wedding party, and went back to my dinner [laughs] in the same hour. There's all these—apparently, there's all these famous photographs of me that I've never seen with me at Paula Cooper's daughter's wedding to Ashley Bickerton.

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: So those were the kind of things that happened, and once I embraced it, you know, it became this thing, and so this woman—in the video, which is on YouTube, this woman comes from Boston. There was some press I got in Boston, and she came, Serena Nanda, and happened to come on the day that I was making this video, and she got into talks where these people couldn't look at me. I realized—and when these came around the corner and saw me hanging in this cage, they could not look at me. People—it was one of the psychological things that I had really had to analyze, like it was too confrontational; it was too much.

THEODORE KERR: Because of the cage or because of the drag? The combination?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: All—the combination.

THEODORE KERR: And it was raised, right? The cage was hanging—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: —from the ceiling.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: People's heads were about at my feet.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And they'd run into the back room and peek; very few people could just look at me. It was very confrontational. It's a human being in a cage, and there's no context for it; suddenly, you're there in front of this living thing staring down at you, you know, so—and I realized that, if I had played with some variables, that I've—so I got some tulle and would just make this bubble of tulle inside and kind of peek through it and then play with all these different layers of how people could confront this imagery and amazing things, like straight friends from the art world just going, "Hunter, somehow I got so turned on by looking," and there were some pictures that were really sexy, like of my ass in fishnets and like I had a nice, big ass for—

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —[laughs] like I could look very woman-esque and, you know, it was just kind of crazy like the different reactions. Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: And so from this point on, did you [inaudible]—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Well, this woman gave me her book.

THEODORE KERR: Oh, right.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: She wrote a book called *The Hijras*, which she'd studied—she went to India and lived with the hijras, and I had been sort of slowly following these, you know, gender theorist books and all that stuff happening in that period, March, you know, June—I forget all the names. You know, all these queer, feminist women—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —theoreticians and kind of this onslaught of gender theory happening, with queer theory and all that from 1990 to '93, you know, that big—and the *Dress Code* show happened in '93 so basically the—it was—she sent me her book, which was kind of a 20-year study of the hijras in India, and I already had heard—reading about the [inaudible] and the whole like concept of the third gender—what I called at the time the "third

gender" and its grayness and variations and how complex it actually is and different societies have different ways of dealing with it, and so it was really that book that kind of led me to the next phase, which was, okay, I don't want to co-opt the female body at all. I don't want to even deal with creating women's clothes for myself. I want to deal with myself as a man in a dress.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And that's the basic—so the flat-chested dress, *The Banquet* dress that—*The Banquet* dress was the next dress. So—

THEODORE KERR: What's a *Banquet Dress*?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: *The Banquet*?

THEODORE KERR: Oh, *The Banquet*, not "a"—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Okay.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, *The Banquet* collaboration with Chrysanne Stathacos. That was the next piece, and it was the first time I took the whole image of creating myself as a life-sized music box—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —with a thematic dress, hair and blood printed on the dress; it was bringing together her ideas that are our true artistic visions in this collaboration, based on Dionysian mythology and all these—my HIV-positive blood with her hair, vaginal hair, you know, bringing these two images together as part of a collaborative piece, and so *The Banquet* dress was the first dress where I made it, you know, for my body without breasts, very clearly without breasts, and that was '92, and then Piotr Nathan and I—it was '90—yeah, '91—I had this experience of going to Poland, Warsaw being the first gay exhibition that happened in the history of Poland.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Right? '91, right, when the wall came down, and it was this huge thing, so I had just had that experience of being this—putting a street poster on the streets to talk about—and he did this poster of Patina du Prey's face, pink and purple. It was like this classic movie star image kind of a face, and it said [foreign language], which meant "the face of freedom" or—freedom has many forms. Who loves you? Patina du Prey," so taking this and I put that on the streets of Warsaw, all over the city on these kiosks and in buildings, and that was the only way artists communicated—during the commies' time, and so our show was coinciding with the first gay club opening, the first political activists' like organization happening in Warsaw. So these kind of political actions and Patina becoming a political thing moved into *The Banquet* and then the following year, the *Memorial Dress*.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Which was the second dress.

THEODORE KERR: And was that something that you'd been thinking about for a while?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: No. It happened from one performance. So I got invited to go to Berlin, and I'd already met Frank and Frank and I had—you know, I had this German boyfriend, Piotr, we'd kind of—from '89 to '92, I was going back and forth to Europe, and I was really living my life on—still on this notion that Ray had said to me, like I was just [snaps]—you know, I was—I was under 200 T-cells.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: I was—you know, had already rejected AZT; I'd already told my doctor no to AZT in 1989.

THEODORE KERR: And you did that because?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Because everyone—because Ray was in the hospital, because everyone on AZT was dying, and they didn't seem to be getting better, and they were killing people with AZT, 600 milligrams.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: 600 milligrams a day.

THEODORE KERR: Right.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And I—[inaudible] gave me the kind of intuition to look at Howard Grossman and say, "No. It doesn't seem to be helping people. I don't want to take it. I may be dead tomorrow, but there's nothing really going on with me other than my T-cells are"—

THEODORE KERR: Depleting.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —"at 95."

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Right.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: [Laughs.] Which wasn't good.

THEODORE KERR: Right.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: "But I feel okay. I don't have any—and I'm just going to plow through my life—and I'm going to go. I'm going to go, and I'm going to go, and I'm going to go," and I'm going to go with this feeling that Ray had given me—that I would just be bold, be—and that took me for 10 years, you know?

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And so—and I also discovered the time that people had—you know, I realized that my average T-cell level was low anyway. It had nothing to do with my immune system being—because my percentage point was always—my T-cells were 150, and my percentage point was 28—normal. So that's what I started looking at back then. Fuck the T-cells. Whatever the—you know, my percentage point is normal, even if I have 150 T-cells. Because I've never been over 200 since 1989. So I always have to explain that to doctors, even when I'm getting new treatments, that they don't want to treat you if you have under 200 T-cells, and I'm saying "Okay, yeah, but look at my percentage point. It's 17; it's okay."

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: So—

THEODORE KERR: So you're saying you went to Berlin; you were invited to Berlin.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, so I'd been invited for—I had—I had applied for [inaudible] grant , and I had had this studio that I showed with Jim Hodges and I was getting it—you know, I was preparing for this idea of going to Europe for a year on an artist residency, which I had applied to and gotten, but wasn't sure if I could really wrap my head around actually doing it, you know, leaving New York, leaving a job, leaving insurance, going to a foreign country where I could die, you know, just to do it as something to do before I die because Ray said not to be afraid.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: [Laughs.] That's basically it and take that opportunity, so I did and it was a show calling *Getting to Know You* and it was curated by Marcia Tucker in the museum, and it was this big show of American artists, and it was the show that I was going to go to, to set things up and then come back and go to this residency, but I decided to come and go, then do the show, and see if I could manage it all. So I had just come from the Washington, '92, display of the *AIDS Quilt* catalogue—the *AIDS Quilt* on the mall, and they had published a catalogue along with the quilt, with all the 26,000 names in it, and so I did this performance at the opening of that exhibition, which was a hospital bed with all this ephemera and stuff on it, Patina in drag, and kind of this hospital gown, kind of, slash nurse, slash patient, with a microphone, just reading all those names—

[. . .]

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THEODORE KERR: This is Theodore Kerr interviewing Hunter Reynolds at the Fales at NYU in New York, New York, on September 7 for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, card number three.

Hi, Hunter.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Hello, Ted.

THEODORE KERR: So this is our third interview. And last time we spoke, we just ended on talking about the different incarnations of the dresses and we were just about to get to the dress of names [referring to the dress that had the names of people who had died of HIV/AIDS –TK]. I wonder if you want to talk a little bit about how that dress came to be.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Sure. So that is called the *Patina du Prey Memorial Dress*, and it's like an ongoing living memorial to people who died of AIDS. It was created in 1993. And the image is like a life-sized music box where I'm standing in the center or the dress is in the center of a stage turning. And the fabric is printed with—the first version was 25,000 names of people who died of AIDS; all the names were taken from the *AIDS Quilt* Catalogue, of the 1992 catalogue. And then I was first exhibited—it was funded and presented—well, it was funded by Frank Wagner and nGbK in Berlin, and it was made in Berlin. And the process of making the piece was, you know, very arduous, taking all the names from the catalogue before there was computer. It was back in the graphic—well, there was an Apple computer graphics. But it was quite laborious. And then silk screen fabric and having a designer sew it together, as it comes almost couture dress—well, not almost, it is couture dress.

So—and then it was exhibited first at the ICA in Boston for the *Dress Codes* exhibition in 1993. And it was kind of amazing for me because I had had the experience in *The Banquet* dress of kind of understanding the physical qualities of my body and how people reacted to this durational performance of me just turning in one place for like two or three hours and ended up being this kind of—it was the first time—well, the second dress—this was the second in a series of dresses. *The Banquet* was the first where I, you know, didn't co-opt the female body, and the dress is a man's dress, no breasts. And it was very funny, and the shipping of the piece from Berlin to Boston, I didn't know—I got this call from customs saying the dress was being held up in customs in Boston because they couldn't figure out what gender to give it, which I thought was very, like, amazing that I didn't know they had—all clothing coming from foreign countries has to be gendered. [Laughs.] And I was like—and they noticed it was a dress without breasts, you know, that had a flat top, and what is it? And they—actually, I thought it was astounding that they held it up and even asked and noticed that it was not a normal dress. I said, "Well, it's kind of performance art." "Oh, can we put it in the costume category?" And I said, "Yes. Just put it in the costume category [laughs]. Theatrical costume." So that's what they did. And so that was kind of amazing.

Then I went to Boston for six weeks and did performances in the dress every day. And at the opening it was kind of—it was one of the longest performances I've ever done in the dress. Ended up turning—that I stood in one place for almost five and half hours turning. And I wasn't really prepared for what was going to happen physically, mentally. It was the first time I was showing the piece and realizing that many people were actually looking and reading it; the dress moves slow enough that you can read the names, and finding names of people they knew or friends and lovers or family and friends on—actually on the dress. If they had a quilt, they were on the dress and that version. And people would have cathartic, deep expressions of emotion and catharsis and things that—

Yeah we're going to get interrupted.

[. . .]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yes, so I wasn't really prepared for that type of reaction. I thought—you know, I just didn't know what it was going to be, but people actually wept and even had convulsions and uncontrollable emotional outbursts in front of me, and I had to—in front of everybody, hundreds. It was one of the biggest openings the ICA had had to date. There was a line going around the block. It was a four-hour opening. And there were a couple 3,000 people that came through that evening. So I didn't realize that the opening was so long and so I just stayed there. And I was having a cathartic experience myself; containing their emotions within my body caused a whole reaction for me to physically have a kind of cathartic experience, out-of-body experience, myself.

So when I realized what was going on in that moment, that I had actually—a vision had been completed, the circle of my life. And I knew kind of from the time Ray told me his parting words on his deathbed three years earlier, I had completed a circle, and I was like, "Okay, if I die tomorrow, this piece is my masterpiece. And it's there in the world. And I've done it." And this performance is kind of an acknowledgement of this awareness that I'd had at the time from 1989, about that the whole nature of my life in art was a connotation the transformation of pain and suffering, death. And this was—and transforming that into a vehicle of healing, this performance and dress. So that was the beginning of basically eight years of—I've tried to calculate how many hours I spent turning in that dress, but thousands over.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: It was shown three or four or five, six times a year in Europe, durational performances at museums. It went onto the ICA, and that show was amazing because it was like I was there present everyday getting dressed in the vanity. And Boston was the center of gender transformation in the country. And MIT had

the most advanced gender reassignment surgeries going on and hormonal and science. And all these so-so gender transforming people wanted to live in Boston to have access to all these trials and experimental surgeries. And so I was meeting these people on a daily basis coming to my show. And I would get dressed as a public performance piece. In the morning would be getting ready in a public vanity, *Patina du Prey's Vanity* installation, and I would sit there in the mirror reflecting in the mirror, talking to these people. And I had this kind of amazing interactions with people.

And one of the most amazing one was this woman, Nancy Nangeroni, who was in the process of transforming from a man to a woman. She wanted to go through the full surgery. She had been a straight man, and through a motorcycle accident, she, I guess, had feelings of—but had never really dealt with her trans-self until a motorcycle accident severed her penis. And so she was going through this process, at the time, where she was trying to understand the concept of her sexuality and what that would end up being, and she really wanted to be a woman with a vagina and have a man as a husband. You know, that whole hetero-general-trans, you know, generational kind of—this was 1993, and she was already in her 40s and had already been married.

And, you know, so her concept of trans-person was conditioned by her generation. And so she wanted to date me, to take me out to dinner, and talk about these issues, and finally, I said to her—I said, "Well, you know, you are and were a straight man attracted to women, and that probably will not change when you become a woman. So you need to maybe consider that it's all right to be a lesbian [laughs] because you're not going to be able to change your attraction. It sounds like, really, your conflict with all this is your sexuality and that you will not actually be anything but a straight man in a woman's body sexually." And she looked at me like you're looking at me and, you know, we became friends, and then I went away, and we corresponded and then we lost touch. And about five years ago on Facebook, she found me [laughs], and she said, "You changed my life, and I'm married to this amazing woman."

And, you know, like—it's kind of like—so those kind of experiences I had because of this dress continued for eight years. Cathartic, deep, kind of—the universe brought these amazing experiences into my life because of this piece. And then *Memorial Book* which was a—you know, there was the intention of the dress being not only a living thing, the adding of names to the dress as a process and, over time, could happen, theoretically. So from Boston I had a book where people could add the names, which was called a *Memorial Book*. And so when I came back after three months at the end of the exhibition, and it's also the place where I met Lia Gangitano , and it's kind of this family of people sort of formed around this piece, and the book was full. And some of the names, you know, every time somebody wrote a name, sometimes they just wrote the first name; sometimes they wrote—obviously, there were many people who were writing about one person, so they would repeat the name, and inscriptions, and their thoughts, and drawings, and kind of like this overwhelming theme in this book, the expression of people's feelings. And so the first three cities were—then ICA, then I flew back to Germany, and it was shown in nGbK. And then the next exhibition was in Hagen at Karl Ernst Osthaus Museum in the *Tema: AIDS* show Kim Levin curated. Do, you know, about this show?

THEODORE KERR: Nuh-uh. [Negative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Oh, you should look it up its—

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. Say the name again.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: *Thema: AIDS*. T-H-E-M-A. [*sic*] AIDS.

THEODORE KERR: And it was Kim—?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Levin. Do, you know, who she is?

THEODORE KERR: No.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Kim Levin was a writer—is a writer who was writing for *the Village Voice* and other art periodicals. She was a like a Holland Cotter of the '80s and '90s. And she was a curator, and she mounted some kind of major exhibitions, and this was one of them; it was at the Hagen, Karl Ernst Osthaus Museum, and it had a lot of—it was kind of Frank Wagner-esque major exhibition on AIDS and art, which she curated, and the *Memorial Dress* was in that. And so, kind of back to back, I had three major exhibitions of the piece. I was doing performances at all of them on a daily basis. So for like almost a year, it was like, you know, at the Hagen, you know, like I would go there and live there for a month or six weeks and do performances every day from 12:00 to 5:00 or, you know, three- or four-hour performances. And so when it was showing at nGbK, what happens, I had this compilation music that kind of was a choral, like medieval, Gregorian chanty-like music, which I kind of—was the first phase. But then Edmund Campion, who was—who is a contemporary composer and who was like—at the time, he was just kind of starting his career, and he was Claudia Hart's boyfriend, and he came and saw the *Memorial Dress* at nGbK. And like, I don't know, two months after, he just sent me this "Music to Turn On."

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: It's called "Music to Turn On." And it was just perfect. Like a whole orchestrated—it was like a symphony that he created for the dress. And so that's the music that plays with it ever since then. It's like this winding kind of [demonstrates] sound that goes up and comes down; it's just, like, perfection. And so I was pretty coming aware that this piece was beyond anything I had ever imagined it being. And that it was beyond me, and I was the vehicle for its life. I just had to take what it gave me.

And so one of the things that happened was a spiritual quality of this piece and how that interacted with my own confrontations of where I was: friends dying in '93, '94; New York was being devastated and I wasn't there, you know, and even in Berlin, many friends that were dying; '93 and '94 were like the biggest years of death. And it was just before the cocktail came out, and so I was kind of like wrapping my head around my own existence, although the healthcare there I had immediately gotten onto; Frank Wagner and Ingrid, his sister, got me immediately onto Künstlersozialkasse, the artists' insurance in Germany, which is like the best artist—I mean, normal people in Germany are jealous of artists because we have the best insurance; they'll even pay for your crowns. You can go petition them; it's not normal for everyone to have their crowns paid for. Everyone in the world has to pay for their crowns, but artists can petition the government in Germany to pay for all their dental work. [Laughs.] So I had that done. And so—and then I had a consortium of gay doctors and so, you know, it's very kind of different than here. And, you know, I was still under 200 T-cells I had had some minor kind of things happening; nothing major was going on yet. And so I just continued to, you know, work.

And then '94 *Creative Time*, Simon Watson got it as the *Creative Time* project for the 25-year anniversary of the gay games—I mean, of the Stonewall gay pride. And so that was what I came back to New York for, for, really, the first time for an extending period of time, to do that. And in the meantime, I had created in Boston, what it started was this dervish dancing and this white dress and working with Maxine, so this connected dervish thing was happening. The turning, the spiritual thing of turning in one place is a dervish dance.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: So in the show in Berlin, an energetic healer—when I called them my angels, these people who come to the dress because the dress is a sign of healing and spirituality and all these other things, just not an art object; it's beyond that.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And the angels always came. And I also realized that I had a kind of energetic, spiritual power when I was in the dress. It was something very specific. So all the spiritual, God-like, spiritual things connected to that piece because the piece actually became a vortex, which I was aware of at the ICA in that first performance when I went out of my body, and I was taking the light and energy of all this emotional, all this spirits, all the spirits circling around the piece in that spot. That awareness all happened, and that's why I fainted. There's this famous picture of me coming off of that where I fainted and Susan Hort caught me, this collector.

[They laugh.]

There's like this *Madonna* picture of her holding me; it's really bizarre. And I kind of fainted at the end. And so what happened in conjunction with that was that, in Berlin, a very famous, energetic healer, who lived with the black sheep—the Blackfeet Indians and went to Turkey and studied with Sufi's and had started his kind of own energetic healing, spiritual healing retreat center in Berlin and Hamburg. And he had positive sexuality, and he's the person who brought Annie Sprinkle, and he worked with kind of contemporary artists, too, was interested in art. And he came to the exhibition. And I kind of knew who he was through my boyfriend, and after my performance, he said, "I want to dance for you. I want to invite you to Hamburg, and I want to dance for you." And I had just come up with the idea of doing the white dress, and I had been commissioned to make the ascending dress—

THEODORE KERR: Interesting.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —which is the hanging white dress, which hangs from the ceiling; it's only been shown three times ever and never in America.

THEODORE KERR: Oh.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: But it's—one of the board members of the ICA commissioned me to do it while I was there. And so I made the same dress, and it was the first white dress that I did, in this private collection in Boston. Had it made while I was here in America and installed it in her atrium, in her collection house, and there it sat for years until she let it go to Germany as part of my show at the church at Trinitatiskirche in Köln.

So Maxine came up and photographed. And I got the idea of the whole connection to dervish dancing and went back, and Dieter said, "Come to Hamburg." And he did his whole retreat centered around me and the *Memorial Dress*, and he created this dance, this amazing dervish dance for me in Hamburg. So there's all this bizarre, energetic healing in my life that came out of the trajectory of making this piece, and that spawned the beginning of *I-Dea, The Goddess Within* project with Maxine, which ended up being an eight-year project spanning the globe.

THEODORE KERR: What's Maxine's last name?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Henryson. So she and I just—and we pretty much set it up as being a collaboration, not just her documenting these for pharmacies; it's a collaborative project; she's an equal part of it. And kind of our—the performance trajectory was, you know, site-specific. I would scout locations, and I'd say, okay, come to Germany: we're going to do Berlin; we're going to go Hamburg; we're going to Belgium; we're going to Antwerp, Brussels, and all kind of based around my show structures or whatever. So the first two years, that project was in tandem with the *Memorial Dress*. And so she has over 13,000 photographs of me doing this performance, and that ended in 2000 with the documentary, Canadian. We got our residency at Banff, and they did a documentary, one-hour documentary for their public television on this project.

THEODORE KERR: CBC?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah. So, I'm still trying to get those archives because they have all this footage and all we got from the directors were degraded—we got VHS copies of the thing, but they degraded. And they—I have them here, but I'm trying to get all the footage. If I die, somebody go get that footage.

[They laugh.]

From the archives of the Banff.

[They laugh.]

Because I want—it's the only video—well, it's not a video project; it was a photo project, and we never had anyone shoot video of any of these eight years of performances that were street performances.

THEODORE KERR: Oh wow. But the CBC has video? And you think it's at Banff?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: At the Banff. It is at Banff. It's on their website. I just have—I want to get it from them, get copies from. So the directors, who made the one-hour documentary, which we have—it's partially on my website, but it's kind of like not a great copy. By the time we got everything digital, the VHS had degraded. And I'm looking—I want to find the original footage. I know they have it; he gave it all to Banff. So it's all there, but I've never seen it. I want to—you know, they filmed me for two—in Winnipeg.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And so there's two versions of that documentary that were from St. Norbert Monastery, which was amazing where I got on these like big sort of—you know, I would do all these spiritual performances just as part of these retreats or other things, like I was invited to spiritual ashrams. And I'd go, "Maxine, we're invited to Ma Jaya's ashram in Florida."

[They laugh.]

And we'd go. And like there was this—you know, these spiritual teachers all over the world heard about the dress, and they would invite me to come to their ashrams or their retreat centers to do a performance.

THEODORE KERR: And what do you their—what do you think the draw was for them, like what was the link?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Well, AIDS.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Many of them had—Dieter was a gay man. He had a multi-dimensional—with not only gay men but his—you know, I ended up studying dervish dancing and taking his workshops, and he was—you know, he did things for gay men and, you know, but and all the AIDS and dying and death and the transformation affected all these people, too, you know, because they had many followers, and many people with AIDS became followers of spiritual paths through their process, so that was the connection. So Ma Jaya was a—you know, there's always controversy, you know; some of them are cult-y, and some of them are whatever, and they're like mini cults, but that can go a lot of different ways. So Ma Jaya had this center in Sebastian, Florida, and one of her followers found me in Germany and told her about it, and she had this thing that she called the Ganges.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: So she had generations. She was like Fran Drescher, except from the 1940s.

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Brooklyn. Brooklyn, Italian, Jewish, "Weh" [imitating an accent], you know, like the voice, the leopard skin.

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: You know, like totally Fran Drescher.

THEODORE KERR: *The Nanny*.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: *The Nanny* like 40 years earlier. And she had this spiritual awakening, in the 70s, and she was a married mom with kids, and Jesus came to her and blah, blah. And she went off on that path and created an ashram down in Florida. It was a big thing and had hundreds of followers, and she created schools, and you know, she had an inner sanctum of people. And yet, be celibate if you lived on the property. If you didn't want to be celibate, you could buy a house in the surrounding, and blah, blah. And she had a school, and she did all that, but you know, it's always issues. But I always find it fascinating to go, and she heard about me, and she invited me to this thing as a special guest and to do a performance.

And I was one of the few people brought into her inner sanctum, and she had many, many gay followers who died of AIDS. And she also actively collected—this was—this was something that was kind of like, wow, you know. Okay, many people died of AIDS, and their families abandoned them and didn't collect their ashes. And there was somehow—she could find out who these people were, and she would go and collect their bodies and bring them down to this ashram, as well as many of her gay followers who died of AIDS. So she was very into healing people with AIDS, and she had following of people in San Francisco and Los Angeles and a lot of people with AIDS. So there was this whole segment of the dress, the second version of the dress, that's Ma Jaya's. If you look on this second dress—there's two dresses in there.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: The first one and second one, she added all the names between 1993 and 1996, when the piece shown at Visual AIDS Cyclorama.

THEODORE KERR: And the names came from the book?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: The book.

THEODORE KERR: Okay.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Or these connections. Yeah. So these—so what I did when I went down to the ashram, was I was kind of blown away, really blown away, by this. Whatever—later there were many issues in Europe, and I talked to the kids, generations of kids, because they would go out of the ashram. They had—it was kind of like Amish in a way, that they—okay, you're raised and you're born in this ashram, and then you have the option, at 18, to leave and go off into the world, and do what you want to do, party, do drugs, and she encouraged all of that.

But if you want to come back and come back home to be at the ashram, then you have to follow all our rules, which was celibacy. It was major rule. It was like, really? And I tried to figure out how that worked out there. And some of them, "Well, you know, some people can't deal with it, so they buy a house around the ashram. And they're connected to the ashram; they worked in the ashram, but they're not living in the inner sanctum of the ashram." And she had all these temples of various faiths, all these faiths around this big lake that she called her Ganges.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Where she put all these ashes of people who died of AIDS, and other people, members who died, but whatever. But she said there were more people-who-died-of-AIDS' ashes in that pond or lake than her members. And then she put their urns in this altar space, you know, so whatever urns, and she had quite a few members, really lots, that were—her members who died of AIDS take up 200 or 300 names.

THEODORE KERR: Oh, wow.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: So this over 35 years. But she died, I guess, 10 years ago. I don't know what's happened

with the ashram now. But this is the kind of story that happened, so in Europe, it was very much that kind of—this kind of spiritual activity going on in my life. And I became—you know, at a point, I had to—I started with teachers and studied with Dieter. And this informed my work in the *Memorial Dress*, and every year, you see my—as you see me change and how I move and act and gathered more—you know, and when you see me doing the dirge dancing and moving through space, so when I started going—doing performances where I connected, you know, got off the stage—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Trinitatiskirche show, exhibition in 1994, God when I—that's why I—like when I timeline all of stuff, I'm just like, oh God, how did I do all this?

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: What are you looking at? Are we on time?

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, you're doing great, great time.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: There's a couple stories I want to tell.

THEODORE KERR: Okay.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: As part of this, more. So you know, I was having the roll-on life that was amazing. It was every turn, and everything that was happening from this piece was kind of blowing my mind and just keeping me moving, and because they—I got—in Europe, you get paid to do your work, and you get paid a lot of money to do these performances. And it varies country by country, but Germany is the best really, in that they have a, like—okay, career level, Marina Abramovic gets a certain amount of money. Beginning, young artists get a certain amount, you know, the stage—you know, it's all kind of, you know—

THEODORE KERR: Leveled?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Leveled. And then—so I was able to live—you know, I would get paid for every performance. Not only that, what happened three years in a row is, I was usually some World AIDS Day performance of the piece, somewhere in Europe, and AP photographers and press people would come to those performances. I was on the cover—there were two years in a row where the dress was on the cover of every newspaper in Europe.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: World AIDS Day twice, as cultural arts thing. Well, I didn't know until three years living in Germany that Germany pays you, as an artist, every time your name is printed in a publication, in the news, also with various structures of how much for what thing. I was like—someone said, "Hunter, have you turned all this into the finance—into the cultural finance aumpt [ph]." And I was like, "No [laughs]. I haven't." And he said, "Well, you should do it because you're going to get a lot of money." And I said—

THEODORE KERR: So basically you keep the clips, and the—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: You keep the clips; you keep everything.

THEODORE KERR: Oh God.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Every book that has your name in it, every—yes. You keep it all, and send them the original, or a copy will do. And I did that back three years; I got like 25,000 deutschmarks.

THEODORE KERR: Great. Good.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: One lump, kept me going for another, like, three years. Stuff like that. So I was able to really live off my work there, in a much more stable way than here.

THEODORE KERR: And are you returning to New York often?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yes. I'm traveling back and forth quite a bit. So every year, I'm having at least one or two shows, and at least one show in America that brings me back. So '93, '92, yeah.

THEODORE KERR: And what about—how about your friends and stuff here? Were you seeing them?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah. Yeah, so my life was really going back and forth. After the first year and a half, I

decided to center myself there, so when you go through my archives and all these binders here, these are all made in Germany.

THEODORE KERR: Ah, okay.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: So these are European forms about [inaudible].

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: So the way I keep all my exhibition records is like this.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: You know, and I put all the correspondents, all the negatives, all the things that: —you know, press releases, everything, and like, this is the—I was—the city of Kassel's Documenta, there's this cool museum in Kassel called the Museum of Sepulchral Culture.

THEODORE KERR: Sepulchral?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: What does that mean?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Death.

THEODORE KERR: Oh, wow.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: It's the museum of death. And it is fantastic.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And it has a contemporary art collection, but it also has this major collection of—all my actual pictures I've pulled it out of here. They're all—it was amazing. Like all that fetish stuff from—they had—it's a major museum in Kassel. It's in the—it was built in a bombed-out ruin of a castle that's above the center city, in this kind of like cliffy. And the catacombs of that castle, original castle, are incorporated into this museum. And not only that, it's the gay cruising area. And so it's like this—I mean, it was kind of amazing that I was there for a month, and I was featured project for the city of Kassel, for the Documenta 7, Documenta.

So, yeah, like there's all these amazing pictures of me in it. And you know, I got—it was—the *Memorial Dress* became a cultural image in the minds of people. I went everywhere; people knew—had seen it, like, or knew about it. So it was kind of a famous thing. It was printed in so many places on so many—on several, you know, television documentaries. That was—you know, so that was kind of like this famous piece, and people in Europe knew it.

So in the Hagan show, I—the Trinitatiskirche show, which is this major exhibition I had of my work in 1994, centered around the *Memorial Dress*, so one things that happened was, out of another exhibition in Hamburg that Claudia Hart did, where we created *The Banquet*—Chrysanne Stathacos and I, we created *The Banquet*. It's the sponsors of that exhibition—was a fashion designer; I forget the fucker's name. Anyway, one of the German fashion designers, and a Reemtsma Cigarettes, so Reemtsma Cigarettes is like the R.J. Reynolds of Germany, except they were very left-wing, politically, socially, and on the cutting of left wing, like the Bronson of cigarettes.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: So the company had this very forward-thinking attitude about how to spend this money, to give money to radical art ideas, to radical artists, to unique projects, and take the cigarette money and do something good with it. So they had this whole art, cultural arts department of this cigarette company: Reemtsma. And it was curious because one of the first things that I experienced in going to East Germany and going to the Wall and being there when the Wall came down through Pitor Nathan, and having the experience of driving through East Germany before there was anything. So [Piotr –HR], on that first trip, we went from—the last phase of that trip was going from Nuremburg to Berlin.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And he said, "I want to—I want to"—and the Wall was just coming down while we were on this trip. And so he said, "I want to show you East Germany, and we're going to do something that's very illegal. And if we get caught, they could take us to jail right away. But I'll get us out of it. Don't worry. But you have to

see." This was after a three-week trip of driving through West Germany, started in Hamburg, the third richest nation in the world, where there is no underclass as we know it.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: As we know it.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Maybe the Turkish generation for fourth fichtner [ph]. I said, "Take me to some poor neighborhoods." Everyone fucking had a Mercedes. Everything was—like there were no homeless people. There was nothing to compare to our culture. So I was—every city, I was like, "Take me to a bad neighborhood. I want to see the bad neighborhoods." And there were none.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: I mean, he'd take me to a Turkish neighborhood and say, "Well, this is a poor, Turkish neighborhood." And I said, "Well, this looks like our normal suburbs." [Laughs.] So we had this experience, and we go—we went from color advertising, western, socialized democracy to nothingness like that. Nothing. No lights, no color. Driving through little towns. No signage. Very little, maybe one black and white, or one—nothing to identify where stores were, where anything was. We'd have to sit on a street and watch people come out with bags to figure out what they were going into. So we went to some small towns like that, and I was kind of blown away.

And then—and then we went to kind of a medium-sized town. Suddenly, there was a little different; you could see there was signage, but there was no advertising. There were just like signs for stores, and it's not something—obviously, we were from the outside. Everything was coming down, and they wanted our deutschmarks. So they were dragging us in; our car was surrounded by people, and there were storekeepers coming out, "Come to my store! I'll give you whatever you want! Give us deutschmarks. Give us deutschmarks," you know. We walked with all this weird kitschy, East German stuff.

And then he took me to Leipzig, and we went through Leipzig, the biggest city. And that was amazing. But it was just, like, there was no color. That was the—that was—everything was brown and drab. In Leipzig, things were really bombed out; there was these bombed out buildings everywhere. Or you looked at buildings, and go, all the bullet holes are still in them. And people are living in these shells of the war. They had not been renovated, but were interiorly renovated, so they could live there again, but the outskirts were just, like, bullet holes everywhere. And so then we got to Berlin, which appeared like Oz. This glowing, around 12:00 midnight at night, and it really was like entering Oz.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And even, Piotr lived probably a quarter mile from the Wall, from Martin-Gropius-Bau in Mitta [ph]. You could hear the chipping, and I bought a tape; it's in the archives here, Mauer Wall. Somebody recorded the chipping, thousands of people chipping with hammer and chisel, all 24 hours a day.

THEODORE KERR: Wow.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: We came in about a week to 10 days after the wall had just opened up on that trip. And so, this kind of informed my whole experience, you know. And on that trip, I also met Frank Wagner for the first time.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And so Piotr and I—and I applied to the artist residency, you know; Piotr and I kind of had this off and on thing and ended with this exhibition in Warsaw, being the first gay and lesbian anything that had ever happened in the history of Poland was our exhibition in 1991, where he and I had this kind of double show together, and I connected to the underground gay movement there. And we had lines of people, lines around the block to get in. And I was doing this Patina du Prey performance, where I was posing with them. And here in the—no one's ever seen any this work. There are hundreds of photographs of me as Patina with these peasant people, or gay people, or people from all over Poland who had come there because they just seen the first gay anything art-wise. They were going to go to the first gay club that had just opened up. And there was the first office for the first gay and lesbian, LGBT political organization that had just come out from the underground, all happened in the same six months.

THEODORE KERR: Wow.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And that was kind of like amazing.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And so, these kind of stories adjunct to this amazing experience I was having in Europe just continued to happen.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: So Hamburg, at *The Banquet*, I did this radical thing where the fashion designer was treating us like shit. Like we were just accessories to his whole thing, that he sponsored this major exhibition, which all these cool, amazing, American artists. Tony Oursler, blah, blah, blah, you know, everyone—just shipped everyone there to this villa in Hamburg. You know, that picture of me in the Love dress, the pink and blue dress, in the atrium with this kind of beautiful, 17 century villa, was in this place. And we did *The Banquet*. He paid, as the opening event, to have *The Banquet* recreated in that room, as part of his opening extravaganza, sponsored by him and Reemtsma and all these other companies. So they treated us so badly, this guy, that I was—you know, he just wanted to separate us the from the VIPs, and I—

THEODORE KERR: Like you and Chrysanne were being treated badly.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, in the production of this piece, and being like used—

THEODORE KERR: Okay. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —for his promotional stuff. Like, "Oh, look how cool I am doing this piece." But in actuality, he wanted to control everything we did. And I was, like, not having it. So we got all the artists to agree that we were have this artist—that I was going to be around the artist table. *The Banquet* would actually be the artists; fuck all the VIPs in the other banquet rooms. They wanted to see what was going on, and you know, we just separated from them.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And, and that kind of—Bariat [ph], the curator, made that happen. But I was so angry at him, that I ordered a pig's head, and I was turning around. I could see him; we were in that main villa room, but *The Banquet*, like 200 or 300 people in a big VIP banquet were all in these side rooms. But the head of his table was just in view of me, and I would, like, turn and kind of, like, gesture with this pig, this head as we were turning, right. But I was—by the end of the performance, I was so frustrated. I just got off the table, spun into the main banquet room, spun with the pig head through the whole 200 people, and then turned around and threw it onto his plate. And the food just went [demonstrates], and it was, like, a whole thing. So Reemtsma, the people at Reemtsma were part of that VIP room, and I guess I impressed somebody there so much that they immediately contacted me and said they wanted to work with me. And they brought me—they brought me to Hamburg for this type of thing, showed me the type of things they fund, which were—they said, "What—what can—what ideas do you have?" So I created a whole Patina du Prey safe sex condom ad, based on one of their advertisements that I took in East—the first thing in East Germany.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Six months later, when I went back, the first company advertising things in East Company were Reemtsma cigarettes and Camel cigarettes. There were yellow camels everywhere. Everywhere. That was it. I got all these great pictures of it. I, you could drive down, yellow camel awnings, yellow camel, just yellow camels, not camels—even the word "camel," just the camel on yellow. And Reemtsma's advertising, which was forward-thinking, left. So the first one—the first advertisements had was called "Test to the West." And it was a drag queen handing a cigarette to this yuppie-esque white guy, 1989, I mean '90. Yeah. '90, '91. I was like—I took a picture of this billboard, and I was like, "Wow, that is fucking cool."

And so I based a whole project on that billboard. Which was Patina du Prey handing a condom, almost a copy—I copied it exactly. You know, "Test the West, Patina du Prey wants you to have safe sex," and is handing the condom to the person. This was all part of—so they agreed to give me a 100,000 deutschmarks budget to create this campaign, safe sex campaign, and sponsor my entire exhibition with a catalogue. I would be getting like 40,000 of that for myself. At this exhibition space in Köln, which was Trinitatiskirche show, the Catholic Church that did contemporary art exhibitions. So there's two exhibition spaces in Köln. There are churches that are functioning churches that do contemporary art. So this was one of them, and there was the protestant one.

So as—at this show, same exhibition, called *Love Again* in Hamburg, I got this huge connection going because there was another artist in this exhibition who was the ex-wife of Günther Förg, [Krista Naylor –HR]. And her work was all these images of this ghostly—like, took it—there are all these big photographs about the size of that poster, and you're looking—is that Freddie Mercury?

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And she did this whole—she was a painter, mid-career, 40s, late-40s, you know, pretty hip, young, contemporary art exhibition, who had built her career on, kind of, abstract exhibitionist art, coming out of the neo-expressionist movement of the '80s, and went off on the side thing, and made these—you would look at that work; you would go, "Oh wow, that's Freddie Mercury." It's like these realistic, bizarre interiors with ghostly Freddie Mercurys, with little dogs and TVs, like, what the fuck? It was really great, and it was Freddie Mercury. And she was—the opening night, also *The Banquet* night, was corresponding with the second anniversary of Freddie Mercury's death.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: So AIDS—even in the show that had nothing to do with AIDS, or even my work, was just—it was called *Love Again*. It was just a different theme, and she came up to me at the opening and introduced herself, said "I'm Krista Naylor. I made this work. And tonight is the second anniversary of Freddie's death. And I love your *Memorial Dress*. I saw it in Berlin at nGbK. And I would like to invite you to Köln to do a performance at my opening at the Trinitatiskirche show in Köln." I said, "Oh, great. I'm actually having an exhibition at the Karl Ernst Osthaus Museum in a few months. The court—you know, overlaps your exhibition in Köln. So let's work that out."

So I'm doing the *Memorial Dress* in Köln—I mean in Hagan. And she is bringing her Vishka, the director of this church, to see my work. And I'm going to then go down and stay with her for 10 days and do a performance at her exhibition, almost a year before my exhibition there, six or seven months before I actually had my exhibition. So this is like a little universe connecting the dots.

THEODORE KERR: Totally.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: So her Vishka, I had no idea what he looked like. I'm performing; she comes; I see her, and this funny looking dude with this beard, 19th century beard, and he was kind of there. But I didn't realize he was with her. And he sat down on the bench and started reading the *Memorial Book*. And I suddenly noticed he started weeping. And then it—and she went over to him and started comforting him, and I thought, oh, this must be the guy she's brought to see me. So I'm continuing, and I see this whole thing unfold there, which, very emotional thing happening; something he read in a book spawned it. I had no idea what it was until I got off the dress, and she introduced me to him, and he was composed, and he said, "Oh, I really—this is amazing. I want you to come to, you know—I—you know. Yes, do this performance. We'll pay for"—blah, blah, blah, you know, "come down to"—so I did all that and went down to stay with Krista. And oh my God. Okay. I had, like, this reading done in the late-'80s that told me my spiritual family would be in Germany. On my path to spirituality, I sought lots of different directions while it was all unfolding in this massive way. So I went down and was staying with Krista, and I got the Freddie Mercury story. She would sit there and talk to Freddie as if he were sitting there across from you. You'd have a conversation with her, and she was including Freddie—

THEODORE KERR: Oh wow.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —as if he were sitting at the table next to me, as if it were normal as a conversation. And she says, "Well, Freddie came to me. I didn't know who he was. I mean, I barely knew who Queen was. And then suddenly I'm having this vision, and at the end of my bed, this—there's this dude telling me how we're going to interact for the rest of my life. And we're going to work together. And it's AIDS and all these things that he"—she was chosen because of her connection and her life and everything that happened in her experience with AIDS already, which was her sister was the first diagnosed AIDS patient in Germany.

THEODORE KERR: In East Germany or Germany?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Germany.

THEODORE KERR: Oh wow.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: The first diagnosed patient was a woman.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And it was her sister.

THEODORE KERR: Wow.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: She ended up writing an essay for my book; it's in the book. So I'm like blown away by that. I'm—I can get what you're saying to me. I don't have any problem with it. Freddie is here, and I get your story. And then she said, "Well, you know, I divorced Gunther," and blah, blah, blah, "and then I got together

with this gay man who was HIV positive and we"—she said, "I could be positive myself." I said, "Really, why?" "Because we never had safe sex." I said, "Okay, you had a seven-year relationship with a gay man, who's dead now, and you never had safe sex with him? And you don't know if you're positive?" She said yes. I said, "Why?" "Because I'm not afraid of it." I said, "I get that, okay, let's move on. Yes, I understand that exactly."

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, and you understand that because of your experience in ACT UP, or you're just—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah. Right, right, just you're going to make that confident decision that you're not going to let it control you in any way, and you're Robocop.

[They laugh.]

That's one way to do it. And she had that, like, thing. But she was also grappling with some other surrounding issues which had to do with Herr Witchka. I said, "What would she—what happened?" She said, "Well, he read a passage in your book," and she pulled out the book, and she showed it to me. This passage here was written by Herr Witchka's daughter's boyfriend, who's in high school, senior in high school, and they're together. And what he read right here is this boy is saying not only is he gay, he could be positive and that he has fear and hopes that he's not positive, and Herr Witchka read this and new exactly who Dylan Naylor is; that's how—I mean I've highlighted this story because it's a major part of the story of this dress. And it's in the book, and it's in my life, and it continues to be a major story in my life. So I was like, "What? Oh my God." She said, "Yes, and so what's happened since he read that book is it created this whole drama in their family." And of course, they were just platonic friends, but they—he—it freaked out everyone, and Dylan had to come out, and Dylan went and got tested, and he is positive, and he's 17 years old.

I was like, "Okay, I want to meet this boy." She said, "Yes, I want you to meet him, too. And he's a very—he's a genius, prodigy violinist, and he plays, already at 17, for the Köln Philharmonic. And he's going to do something in my exhibition with your performance." I said, "Oh great, so I'll meet him there." And she said yes. So I met him at the opening; he performed, and I performed. And we went out the next day, and he said, "Oh, I'm so glad to meet you. I came and saw you, and I went and got"—I said, "I've heard this story. I want to talk to you, and can I talk to you tomorrow? Can we have lunch? And come to Christa's and we'll have lunch." And he—and I said, you know, "This is a spiritual journey, and you're on it, and I don't, you know—you're 17." And he said, "Yeah, I knew I should be safe. I was seeing this older man," and blah, and he said, "but I don't blame him." He says, "This is my journey, and your dress and your—me meeting you gives me hope." I said, "Well, you have hope. And, you know, live your life; go on and live your life, and don't be"—I just passed the words Ray passed to me. I said, "Don't let this control you." This was '94. You know, the—and, "There's going to be treatments and, you know, you're going to be okay. And I want you to perform at my opening next year." He said okay. So Hamburg, Herr Witchka, Reemtsma, it's all happening, and I'm in—I'm showing my work in this major, amazing church, which is a functioning church, in which they're letting me paint my blood on the alter nave of the church. The church was bombed in World War II and rebuilt. So it doesn't have the ornateness, but it has reconstructed windows and you know.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: It's very, kind of, beautifully simple, but huge, you know, like a huge cathedral. And I had two levels of it and photo weaving and said let me put the hospital beds in; the ascending dress hanging 100 feet in the air over the—turning like a ghost, the *Memorial Dress*, and so at the opening—so I'm back in America just before—like two months before the show. Everything's been approved, the billboard campaign, the condoms with Patina du Prey on them. "Patina du Prey wants you to have safe sex." The whole campaign's done. They're being designed. And there was a big, huge fight within Reemtsma itself. The marketing department—the head of the marketing department was a very conservative—what ended up being the conservative almost homophobe, which my exhibition brought out. And he contested it, and there was a fight in Reemtsma about the content of my show.

THEODORE KERR: He's just going to grab his computer.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And the marketing department refused to market my exhibition. And I found out about this while I'm in America. I said, "What's that mean?" She said, "Well, that means that the company and the money and everything we're going to do is still going to happen, except the marketing department will not be marketing the exhibition." I said okay, whatever. So that's all set; they're about to give me the money; they're about—you know, it's all set in motion, in place, design's done, all this stuff. Sylvia called Herr Witchka. Herr Witchka had some hesitation because he was getting some fallback about this exhibition handing out condoms as part of the art exhibition. And there was no discussion, no nothing. Sylvia, the head of the whole project, cancelled right on the spot because it was on the edge, and they had denied the Keith Haring retrospectives money to pay for my exhibition. And she made an executive decision, at that moment, to pull the entire thing, like two months before it was all going to happen.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Called me to New York, told me. I was devastated, of course, devastated. And they felt some guilt, and they ended up producing that beautiful little catalogue and giving me some more money and, you know, going forward with the show. I didn't do the condoms; I didn't do the advertising campaign, but that's all in here in my archives. And yeah, it was just—THEODORE KERR: So the exhibition didn't happen?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: The exhibition happened.

THEODORE KERR: Oh.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: It just didn't—just the marketing and money from Reemtsma didn't happen.

THEODORE KERR: Okay.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: So the billboard campaign, the condom campaign, the multiples campaign, the payment to me, the payment for all the work and production I had to—you know, they felt so bad at the church that they upped their budget, but only to complete the exhibition and the catalogue—

THEODORE KERR: Right.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —not to do any of the stuff that Reemtsma had committed to, plus, you know, my honorarium, of course, went way, way, way, way down. But the wife of her Vishka—so anyway, so Dylan, this boy —

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —comes and plays at the opening, and I do this juror's dance healing circle and all the blood spots, and it was fabulous, and I was there for like six weeks, and we had this whole interaction, and it was beautiful, and it was energetic in the book. So in the meantime, I am finding out that Visual AIDS is doing another major exhibition at the Cyclorama, and Nick Debs is communicating with me in '95 period. *The Banquet* was sold to Robert Schiffler, and we went out there and we created *The Banquet* again, and I'm thinking, oh, they're going to do a show in '96 in Boston. I've got to make the second dress. I have to complete the circle of the dress because, three years later, it's going to be shown in Boston with all these names from the book that actually can end up on the dress. So that's why there's two dresses in there. So Boston, Visual AIDS; this is part of the Visual AIDS archive. And no one knew anything about this. I mean, I had to inform Nelson [Santos] about all this.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Like actually that whole thing got buried in the director's burial ground from director to director. So—

THEODORE KERR: You mean that whole life of the dress and the way that—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, well, you know, how things get buried when directors leave institutions and, you know, whatever. Yeah, so no one at Visual AIDS, when I approached them later, many years later, knew anything about, like, this happening.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: It's like, well, yeah, so that's—so Nick said, you know, "We don't have the money to bring you here. We're doing a catalogue," blah, blah, "can you help us," right? So that's when I came up with the whole idea of selling our Art Positive archives to Robert Schiffler for $12,000, which then was donated to Visual AIDS, which, in turn, produced and finished my memorial published book, the black book.

THEODORE KERR: Okay.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: You've seen that, right?

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, so that was completed, and it was a two-year, three-year project just to complete that, and Visual AIDS, this money, made the second dress, kept, I don't know—gave me like 4,000 of it for production and finishing that book and kept the rest. And then I went to Boston and did that Cyclorama show in the dress, and it was amazing.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: It was amazing.

THEODORE KERR: And did it feel like a return, like a—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yes, it was like a total cyclone; it was unbelievable. People came who had written in the book and found their names on the dress. So that was like a complete circle, and yeah. So—

THEODORE KERR: And then—and what happened to Dylan, first of all?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: So Dylan—so all of these people have come back into my life via Facebook. [Laughs.] So Dylan went on to become—he's gorgeous, gorgeous. I mean, he was a pretty boy, but he turned into an absolutely studly, gorgeous man, and I remember him telling me, you know, all these things about music and how it was going to be the thing, and I said yes, that's what it is for me; my art's the thing that keeps me alive. And so he went on to become eventually the Hamburg—director of the Hamburg Philharmonic violin—head violist. And contacted me, I guess, first version of Facebook. What year did Facebook come out?

THEODORE KERR: It's been out for 10 years now.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Because yeah, '06, 2006, right? Yeah, so the first—I think there was Myspace before Facebook, right?

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: So yeah, I had Myspace, and maybe it was Myspace. No, it was—I think it was Facebook. Anyways. 2006.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: I hadn't heard from him; I hadn't heard from Krista; I had lost touch with all these people when I moved back, when I crashed into the wall of 2000, 9/11, the whole—

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: The kind of that life just disappeared.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. What life disappeared?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: My life in the '90s, this trajectory of amazing life, you know. I mean, I got PCP [pneumocystis carinii pneumonia] in '96 in Berlin. And that's when I went on the cocktail.

THEODORE KERR: In Berlin you started the cocktail.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, yeah.

THEODORE KERR: So those four or five years between the end of the dress cycle and 2001 were horrible?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, yes. No, no, no, so what happened was, leading up to 2000, 2001, is—no, they weren't horrible. I got PCP really quick, bad, and immediate recovery.

THEODORE KERR: Amazing. Through you.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Like yeah. Like [demonstrates speed].

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Like literally, I thought I was having really bad bronchitis or something, or a bad flu, and I was on the bus in Berlin, and I started coughing up blood. And so I got off the bus and went to a payphone and called my doctor; they had an emergency number. Just call and they said, "Stay where you are. I will send an ambulance to you to take you to the only—this special hospital."

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And so they did. And it was the place where, you know, whatever cutting edge pneumonia, AIDS stuff. Which were—you know, they had a lot of stuff that we didn't have yet. And I don't know what they did, but I was done. It was like 10 days, and I was through it and then, you know, my T-cells were always lower and—but they—you know, I had a whole huge drop from like T-cells dropping to way down, to like below 50, and

then my percentage point going from 28 to 13 all in one big drop. And so—but I recovered it from it, and it was like it didn't happen. And then—yeah. So then I had this—1997, the Cyclorama happened; that was a big year. The Yerba Buena Center happened and so like these four, major, one-person exhibition centered around—the *Memorial Dress* happened in those five years, starting with the Trinitatiskirche show. And then '97 was a big year, and you go through this kind of cycle of being an ausländer, of being someone—an American living anywhere else, you know, so each cycle—each year is a cycle of that, and I, you know, had this kind of built-in life there, but I was getting—I missed America.

Felix died, that was significant, in 96, and I made that whole body of work based on his death. Bordeaux's death, these other people—Gerhardt's death. You know, this memorial series of photo event portraits, *Love Light* series, and kind of mourning using—the photo we used to have another dialogue with mourning, and the dervish dancing project, you know, was going on its own, too; we were—we got a residency, Maxine and I, at Yaddo and to edit all these photographs. And so '97 became this big year where, in America, I had a three one-person backed shows, back to back. Marianne Boesky [Gallery]; I got the Pollock-Krasner grant, first big one at $30,000, the most money they had ever awarded to any artist at the time; and showed Art Resources Transfer, and Yerba Buena Center of the Arts. Three sort of major shows, *the New York Times*, [reviewed by Holland Cotter −TK]. So I thought—it was a big grant; I thought it's time to come back, and I started transitioning back to America. At the same time, I was having all these horrible side effects from the first version of Norvir, and I kind of made this decision to move back to New York, and that all kind of pivoted and happened in '99. So—and getting that Visual AIDS benefit performance art—the first mummification, and then I got—you know, I kind of, like, took the money and kind of, like, got an apartment again here and kind of shifted the energy from not totally leaving Berlin; I kept my apartment there, but kind of shifting back to New York. And, you know, it's—slowly, within a year between '99 and 2000, everything just dried up there.

THEODORE KERR: There being Berlin?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Berlin, Europe—

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —because I wasn't there. And I didn't kind of think about that, how I was living off my art there. Tony and Jim had made it big.

THEODORE KERR: You mean Tony Feher and Jim Hodges?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: My two best friends. In the timeframe that I was gone, they had become famous, huge artists, my three best friends: Fred Tomaselli, Tony Feher, and Jim Hodges. And I tried to re-engage all those friendships, and Tony was the only one that reengaged me as a friend. And I was having this kind of feeling of loss of knowing that world I'd just created and how it gone on this amazing journey; suddenly I'm back in America with no benefits, having to get on welfare benefits; the grant dried up, and I had to get a job working at—the first job I had since Paula Cooper Gallery; are you kidding me? Thread Waxing Space, though, became the operations manager for Thread Waxing Space. So all those things together and the kind of trajectory of the one-person show at Marianne Boesky, which was—I thought I had made it.

I had—all my pieces were on reserve by major collectors, and then something happened, and none of them sold. Meanwhile, Fred's having a major exhibition right next to me, and we're both on the street smoking cigarettes, going, "We've made it," and his sold out. Tony had a show; Jim had a show; you know, everyone was making it big, and I thought I was in that time zone, too, and it fell apart because of what I found out later; you know, it sort of stands as out of my control. It doesn't have anything to do with me, but the partnership at Boesky Gallery was breaking up the month of my show. And Marianne was great. She gave me five—I don't know, $4000 for this show, but she was just starting and a novice, and her partner was falling apart, and I was just the artist victim of that.

THEODORE KERR: And so they didn't know how to run a gallery; they didn't know how to like change the reserve to selling for example.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Oh, there was something specific that happened in a show.

THEODORE KERR: Okay.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: I won't mention it here. But let's just say the partnership was dissolving; it had nothing to do with me, but I was not an artist that continued on with her, even though I got this amazing *New York Times* review, by Holland Cotter, you know. It's like really great press rise. Yeah, so slowly, I hit the 2000, what I call, wall.

THEODORE KERR: 2000 wall, yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And I splat up against it like a big blood-spot coming on the floor. And it all ended [snaps], all of it. My career in Europe ended. Something—I didn't really have a functioning career here the way I thought it would happen. I was working a job, which was an amazing job to have, and Lia was my, you know, curatorial boss and, you know, my family was still together in a way and Glen Fogal and just the Thread Waxing Space family. And—but you know, kind of everything shifted, and I had to, you know—drugs were there in a different way, and kind of this whole thing of realizing—to your peer between '99 and 2001, which also represented the end of Thread Waxing Space, my disability getting much more difficult to manage, you know, as a person with AIDS turning 40 still alive already. And, you know, the effects of the drugs and all of it together ended up creating a vacuum of—

THEODORE KERR: Do you think AIDS apathy or like kind of like an AIDS exhaustion also settled within the culture?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Definitely.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Like a psychic darkness that continued; it started there with the understanding that, somehow, I was still alive. And now dealing with all these horrible, horrible side effects, shitting your pants all the time in the street, be so tired that I had to—as one of the conditions of my job, which I had to tell them—they had me and another person to choose from, and I was like point-blank honest, I said, "I want this job. I think I'm going to be really good at it; however, I'm a person with AIDS. I am not just HIV-positive. I am a person with AIDS." And, you know, that was a distinction that I had been staying away from for many years, but actually, I'm a person with AIDS was a 100—less than 100 T-cells, and I have all these side effects from these drugs, which include a 3:00—between 2:00 and 3:00, I collapse, and I have to have a place to lay down for 20 minutes, period. It was that kind of fatigue that just overwhelmed you at mid-afternoon, which most people get, but at 40, you shouldn't be getting, you know, like—

THEODORE KERR: Right.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: You know. You're a workaholic, you work, you work; you're going your energy and crash, boom, whatever, maybe you take a break, you know. But basically I had—I was really just like [sighs], and I had to—and so I said I need to lay down—

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, good.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —for 15, 20 minutes. And that has to be a condition. And I had to bring a change of clothes to work because I might shit my pants, which happened once in one of our board meetings. You know, Norvir, where you're talking that first horrible, liquid, awful Norvir—

[They laugh.]

THEODORE KERR: Fountain of poop.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: A fountain of poop. God. And I was like, Sustiva, keep it away from me—like I told my doctors. I was like Sustiva—

THEODORE KERR: And how did you know this stuff about the medication?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Oh, just by being a peripheral ACT UP person [laughs].

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Yeah. So you were reading the literature, having the conversations.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, yeah. I mean, you know, I knew enough about how to like read at least about what I was going to be taking, what the—you know, and my New York doctor was pretty good, and I just was on—by then, I just knew, you know, okay, this is going to work for me. I know, I know—and I was testing theories, like I'm not that compliant. Don't give me anything that I have to stay on. Or I have to take a half an hour before food, or a half an hour after food on an empty stomach, under any kind of severe timeframe, because I won't be able to do it and I don't need any more psychodrama going on in my head.

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: I don't need to take some Sustiva, and I never have.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Great, because you're like, "I can manufacture that on my own."

[They laugh.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah. Right, right. I got to take this cigarette real quick.

THEODORE KERR: Okay. Cool. Let's take this off of you.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Okay.

THEODORE KERR: Got it. Okay.

[Audio break.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: But when I time on these stories—

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —with the images and stuff, which I have—and Dylan is—he—he's like my son.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: He contacted me on Facebook, and—in 2009, was my 50th birthday, and I went to that big trip back to Germany—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —for the first time since I'd left—

THEODORE KERR: Oh, wow.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —since 2001.

THEODORE KERR: Do you want this recorded or not?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: No—

THEODORE KERR: No.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: But he ended up doing this Hamburg thing, and then he said—I went and stayed with him, and he wrote me this long, long letter when he first found me on Facebook, and he's like, "My God, you changed my life," blah, blah, blah, "and I love you, and you're the most important person in my life." So when I turned 50 and went back, I made a special trip to visit him in Hamburg—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —and he was just kind of in his mid-30s by then, and he's like, "I need to change. I can't do this anymore." He said, "I've been playing with this electric guitar—I mean, this electric violin, and I want to—I love parties, and I love to go dancing," and he's gorgeous, like gorgeous, and so he said, "I've got this lover, and we're," dah, dah, dah, "we're getting married," and it's like I go back, and one year later, he's sending me stuff. He is the Ibiza.

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: He has this, like, stage, glitter, studly body, the electric violin and like Ibiza dance music, so he's just like the king of dance parties all over the world—

THEODORE KERR: Amazing.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —and I told him, "You are going to be the central thing of my Memorial."

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Like my Memorial's going to end—be built around your ability to come here and give this party to the world.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] That's beautiful.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: My world.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, that's beautiful.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, he's—and so, Krista and her sister, there's this whole thing—her sister and

[inaudible], great and not dying—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Good.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —and getting on treatments and her son, like—

THEODORE KERR: Where's my phone? Right here.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Okay.

THEODORE KERR: Oops. I'm sorry.

[music playing]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: This is him.

THEODORE KERR: Oh, wow.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: There's always something new on, right; listen to this song. Yeah, there's loading problems, but—

THEODORE KERR: It's beautiful, though.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Dylan Naylor.

THEODORE KERR: Oh.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: I'll send you the link. He's like my child.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And his last name is Naylor as well?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Naylor

THEODORE KERR: Oh.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: He has a website. This I know [inaudible].

THEODORE KERR: And he's related to the woman who did the Freddie Mercury prints?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah. I mean, he's not related to her by blood.

THEODORE KERR: Oh.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: He was the boyfriend of the daughter of the director of the church.

THEODORE KERR: Of the church. Yeah, okay, and is he out about his status?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Oh, yeah. Yeah, he's totally queer. I mean, that's part of the thing, that he wanted to transition himself from the philharmonic world where he kind of had to be in the closet in certain ways, to this, to doing what he just loves. Look at him.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Yeah. Totally.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And I said, "Dude." I mean, it's like—

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —he's living his vision, you know?

THEODORE KERR: No, it's beautiful.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And he attributes it to me.

THEODORE KERR: Yay. Yay.

[They laugh.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Oh, sorry.

THEODORE KERR: You're good.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: [Inaudible]

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.] See you soon.

[music ends]

[Audio break.]

THEODORE KERR: So maybe for our last 20 minutes, we should jump to the present moment.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Okay.

THEODORE KERR: So we're sitting in the Fales NYU Downtown Collection Library amongst your collection, and I guess that there's a few things we should talk about. We should talk about the archives, but we should also talk about the *Mummification* performances.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, so—'97, '98, '99. So I was—my performance art throughout the '90s was either centered around my dress sculptures as durational performances, either *The Banquet* dress, the *Memorial Dress*, the *Ascending Dress*, the *Dervish Dress*, which is an idea, *the Goddess Within*, public art, guerilla public art performance dress—Dervish dancing—and so for each venue, or each situation, I would kind of push and pull the different trajectories of playing with durational performance for theatrical street performance—guerilla performance art. So I'd add in or be influenced by the context of either where I had been invited to exhibit my work, or in conjunction with my own work, or someone else's work. So over the three-year, four-year period in the mid-'90s, where I was playing with all these different elements, you kind of see the transitional points where things either change visually, like what I'm wearing—you know, the transition from Patina wearing earrings, gloves, and makeup to, toward the end, like all that—symbols of the female sort of being taken away, like the gloves. I started wearing my beard kind of more radical fairy looking, and then dealing with simple concepts of restraint, torture, and transformation of my pain in various elements. So the *Love Dress* had this element where I was first tied to the performance. So I'm wearing a hood.

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: So I'm kind of this pink and blue male boy-girl jester—court jester, and then kind of hooded, executioner hooded or Ku Klux Klan hooded or, you know, all these different kind of references—and then hands bound in the front.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: So hands being bound during the performance containing my energy became a thing that I was working with, and there was a number of performances where I bound myself and restrained myself within the context of these performances, and there's the release, the kind of release at the end became a thing, and I would often do a Dervish dance as part of the—of course, you know, the butterfly kind of cocoon transformation. So that idea started happening in the mid-'90s with my *Dervish Dress* performances.

Then I had this opportunity to do a performance in conjunction with Richard Attila Lukacs' exhibition in Berlin, where he invited me to do a performance as part of his exhibition, and his work illustrates kind of this fetish, mythological paintings of beautiful, skinhead, German boys, Nazi—neo-Nazi movements, this kind of fascist—kind of gay art trajectory, which had been happening since fascism, the gay—which you can go to the Schwules Museum in Berlin and go through the archives and find these gay Nazis' histories; gay, fascists histories; and there was this amazing artist who was this Italian fascist, Mussolini's regime, who did all these amazing illustrations, drawings of himself, and orgies of German, Nazi boys, and it's like really crazy stuff but really kind of, you know, the 1930s. So this kind of history was part of his exhibition, and I wanted to—my performance to kind of reflect and deal with some of the issues that he had—were in the context of his exhibition were.

So I decided to base it all on a Memling—Hans Memling painting, and Hans Memling was one of my favorite artists, and—I come from a painting background, and he was having—during Hans Memling's lifetimes, his triptychs and diptychs were often separated in his own lifetime. So by the time he died, most of his works that he made as triptychs and diptychs had been already separated and sold off as separate panels. So 600 years after his death, there was this major mounting of the reunification of all of his work in Bruges, in Belgium, and I went to see it, and I was—you know, I had my second Stendhal syndrome fainting episode in front of art—in front of his heaven, hell, and—heaven and hell, life and death massive painting, which in—you know, when you see these things in books, you just don't realize how amazing—when you're standing in front of this huge fucking painting of epic proportions that he made in the 13th century, you know, and I kind of fainted in front of it.

So I did a number of pieces based on his work, and this performance was based on his painting of the sacrifices of Saint Sebastian, which had all these—you know, the blood drops looking like little sperms coming out of all those pores and emulating the crucifixion of Christ, but not, in three implements of torture on the ground before him, and so I kind of like, okay, I want to base my performance after this painting, and I took the idea of the crucifixion and the sacrifice of the body, and threw the extreme submission of torture you know, leading back to my kidnapping, leading back to all the things I had been through, all the journey of sexuality I had been through, to this point of standing in front of this artist's work, who's representing this kind of mythological trajectory of pain, submission, fascism, Nazism, militarism; you know, his paintings and work all coded under sexual desire of gay—you know, almost a dark side of sexual gay—you know, sexuality that we can all have and so I decided that I wanted my performance to emulate those codes, but in real time, in real space, in an art context and with my codes embodied in it.

So there's—so I did a Dervish performance where—again, there's a great video of it, which has never, ever been shown; it's also here in the archives, of, you know, Dervish dancing through the streets of Berlin, entering the exhibition, being bound, and then I asked, with the hood and turning, and then I constructed three people that would then whip me while I was turning.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: The three people started with a transgendered trans-person, then a kind of male, gay, straight, male figure who represented both male, gay, and straight, and then a female who was, in actuality, kind of like the Marlene Dietrich, Edith Piaf becoming a very famous cabaret singer but who was also a dominatrix in real life, Cora Frost, and each of them would beat me for 15 minutes, 15 to 20 minutes, and then switch. Well, the audience—you know, and I instructed them to like kind of, you know, play it by ear, don't stop unless I really am telling you to freak out—and I freak out and stop, but I just want you to do the continuum. I've never done anything like—and it really, you know, it was taking me back to this experience I had being raped, and I was confronting that in the performance, as well as in this art world context with Kunst-Werke. So by the time I got to the middle—towards the end of the second male person, I guess blood was starting to appear on my back and people in the audience were screaming, "Stop," and then Cora just let into me and beat my back bloodied.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Blood started splattering around the room, and so the whole confrontation—I mean, it wasn't even part of the thing, that this HIV-positive blood was being splattered out of my body [laughs].

THEODORE KERR: Right.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: It was kind of just coded in there, and so this was kind of a significant thing for me, and it led into kind of a—the *Mummification* performances.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: So two years later, I was asked to do a *Mummification*—I was asked to do a performance at Pork at the Visual AIDS benefit at Pork and I was—I knew those guys, and I knew, you know, all those people at Pork. I knew them, and I said, "Okay, what am I going to do in the context of the bar that I would like to do connecting the S&M, the leather scene, the fetish scene, but how do I make it real or connect to art?"

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: And I thought of getting mummified and having the *Dervish Dress* on underneath and kind of letting that experience happen, but have it be not sexual.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: I wanted to lean it out of the sexuality, out of the fetish thing somewhat was in this context and see how I could play with that. So that's what I did, and they—funny, because DL Alvarez was the person who was mummified, and Peter Sparrow and Andrew Harwin. Yeah, so they mummified me. They put me on this cross and then people thought I was just an object, and somebody put their cigarette out on me.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: They didn't know I was alive, and then I got cut out and spun around on the white dress, and that was the first incarnation of the *Mummification* performances, and it really was, for me, kind of like a transitional point, being in the thing, knowing that my life was changing and kind of representing this transformation, and where it was going, I didn't know.

THEODORE KERR: Where did you think you're transferring from?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Well, I was in the process of transferring from this whole—you know, I have to look at the day. I think it was '99 or maybe '98, even. I don't know. There's so many pictures on the—I was going somewhere. I didn't quite know where, but—

THEODORE KERR: But this is leading up to the hitting the wall in 2000?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, this is leading up to the hitting the wall in 2000, which also culminated in me being asked to be a part of this exhibition in France called *New York*—something, which was another big American show exported to Europe and not France and the PS1 curator—I forget his name back then—and I thought, okay, I'm going to do this *Mummification* thing, but I'm taking it out of the context of sexuality and fetish, and I'm going to do it in this hotel. It was one of those shows that kind of—it was on a New Year's Eve of 1999 to 2000.

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Wait. No. It was '99. It was '98 to '99. Yeah, so that—yeah, because I was with my grandmother in 2000.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: So it was '98, '99, 2000, and the Visual AIDS was in the fall of '98, and—yeah. So like three months later, I was invited to be in this show, and I did kind of very intense—they gave me a whole hotel room, and I covered it in cellophane and tape, and taped everything in the room, and then was in there getting mummified in the morning performance and afternoon. Two a day.

THEODORE KERR: Oh, wow.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Totally insane.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Like I was—okay, well, Marina [Abramovic] just sat in the chair for three months—

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —you know, like—

[They laugh.]

THEODORE KERR: Right.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: It was like kind of crazy, because, you know, it's a confrontation for the people doing it, for the people watching it, because it has this quality of like spontaneity in which—that I built into it, which is primarily that most of the people who wrapped me have never done it before, and I'm telling them how to do it while they're doing it.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: So that creates a whole tension, and so it was very intense, and I did seven performances over a three-day period. It was part of this festival out there, and I really had these various experiences. Each one was really different for me inside and kind of representing my body and the transition of my psyche and people experiencing this death kind of—and rebirth through just the iconography of mummification out of context.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: So I started playing with it. I came back and got invited to be at a couple of festivals here in New York, and did it on the street here and kind of each time I did it, I thought, this is an imprint of my timeline. Each one of these skins represents my body, and it's an embodiment of my experience and trajectory through life and surviving because it kind of represented—started to represent for me just my experience as a long-term survivor, and surviving this, and constantly dying and rebirthing, and going through this rollercoaster ride of living life on the edge of death.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And was there like a social aspect of that, too? Like did you—if we look at the trajectory of your art career, we can see the ways in which the art world was very receptive to work around HIV, and then, slowly but surely, the art world has kind of walked away a bit from HIV.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Right. So I had to kind of walk away myself in that I had this coinciding experience of me going on disability, of 9/11 happening, of my experience with that event, and my psychic meltdown around that, and me starting to use drugs, not for recreation, but becoming addicted to escaping my life and pain through drugs.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: So this whole thing that started happening sort of after 9/11 to 2003 and '04, for a three-year period, where I'm really falling apart inside and out kind of like in this psychic pinball machine that I created in myself. That was a result of all this pain and suffering and kind of not being able to find ways to escape it through my work the way I had before or just the deteriorating health thing, which has continued for me, and my psychic space has changed, and the addictions have changed sort of and, you know—but basically, the last 15 years of my life has been this kind of living hell of long-term surviving.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] When did you first hear that term, long-term survivor?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: I think not until I came back from Florida in 2006-ish.

THEODORE KERR: Did it feel like something you immediately understood, or it felt right for you, or something?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: You know, after having—going through this six year period, from 2000 to 2006, where I was constantly navigating that kind of psychic collapse combined with a physical collapse, culminating in these strokes and addictions, and this whole shift in my psyche and how—I mean, I managed to be making art through all of it somehow, and even the disasters—what I call disasters—from my life have become part of my work, too, and the reinvention—constantly reinventing myself and how I process things—yeah. So after surviving the strokes, the fungal infection of my brain was kind of like a—you know, like this was the first time, actually, I heard these words where the doctors said, "We are starting to see things like this happen to you because you've lived so long, and you're a long-term survivor of HIV and AIDS," and, you know, there's a lot of things that are happening to long-term survivors that—this was, really, the first time I heard the phrase, 2005.

THEODORE KERR: And it was from a doctor?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, from the doctors.

THEODORE KERR: And then did you start to see that in the culture? Like—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: —did you start to meet—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, and it started—you know, in the time between the two years it took me to get back on my feet, physically and financially, and everything, after having this other, you know, mountainous collapse, like what the fuck does the universe want from me?

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Really? Like this point of which I just go, "Okay, I'm done," and I had a lot of people die around me in that time. My roommate committed suicide and, you know, I had other friends that died, kind of like—not HIV deaths necessarily, but you know—

THEODORE KERR: Were they living with HIV?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: No.

THEODORE KERR: No. So they weren't inside of that world, but they were part of your world.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: [Inaudible.] They were part of my world. I have a whole, huge world that doesn't have anything to do with being gay [laughs].

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: I mean, I've always a lot of straight friends in my life, and—yeah, so—

THEODORE KERR: Is there no crossover between straight and HIV for you?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah, there is.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Of course, but it's not the only story I have.

THEODORE KERR: Right.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: You know, I have lots of women friends, too.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: The crossover is because I'm in their lives.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: So now—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And then—so the long term—I guess what I'm also, then, interested in is like, in the last few years, now we've seen a resurgence with like, you know, we know each other because there's this kind of new cultural fascination with HIV, and there's whole new generations that have come up that did not live through the initial years, and I wonder how that has been for you to meet like generations of young people.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Well, it's been kind of, you know, this double-edged sword where, you know, when I struggled back from the strokes and moved back to New York and had to reinvent my whole creative process and coming out of that, and in that kind of universe, supplying the tools for all that time to happen, and the kind of grace that the universe allows to happen even if you don't want it to happen [laughs].

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: The earth, you know, is like, "Oh yeah, okay." You know, this included me reentering New York after an absence and kind of spending—getting all my archives together and kind of looking back on my life through the archives and going, "Who the fuck was this person?"

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Like I really had no idea, could not identify this person, with who I was.

THEODORE KERR: When did this look back start?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Well, I had the strokes in the summer of 2005, right during Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Wilma. So the look back didn't really start until I got back to New York and had to make some serious choices about where I was going to be because Florida State's the worst state in the country to be in Really. And so I had to get back on my feet, as opposed to spending a year in physical therapy down there which they wouldn't—you know, I—they make it very difficult for people down there.

So I started looking back and, you know, kind of—when I was able to assemble my archives and my art all in one place in that loft in Brooklyn that I got through the family of friends who came back into my life, who'd never really left my life, but who—I kind of abandoned them, you know—just kind of were there to help me in a really low time. And so I got back on my feet and started really looking at reinventing my work, and I found—you know, I had kind of thought, Okay, Photoshop. Making this photography through archives, that's to deal with the immediate disaster in my life, which was *Hurricane Hunter, Hurricane Wilma*. The hurricane and the strokes all encapsulated this crazy three-month period. And make that into art—present it to an institution and see if they go for it and Momenta did.

So that was my show in the Momenta gallery, and that, then, led me to, you know, this concept that this last 10 years of my life represented these kind of disasters: the 9/11 disaster, *Slamming Love*, my crystal meth disaster the *Hurricane Hunter*, *Hurricane Wilma* disaster, the *Survival AIDS* disaster, you know, like—[laughs].

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Yeah.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: So I had successfully made this one project disaster into art—

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: —even got a grant for it and thought, okay, well, let's do the other ones, the more—. You know, Lia, we were talking about doing a show, and I didn't know exactly what, you know, I was going through my archives and going through these histories and my own history, and finding stuff that, you know. I found that

box of newspaper clippings, and that was kind of like the catalyst for the idea of what's turned out to be—probably going to be the significant masterwork of my achievements.

THEODORE KERR: You think the weavings?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: The newspaper weavings?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: *Survival AIDS*, yeah, the series. What else do I have to say? Not much.

THEODORE KERR: In general or in the last 10 years? What do you mean by that?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Well, I mean—no, what I'm saying now is the last two series of works—the *Survival AIDS* series, which has turned into the major, creative production of my—of my life as an artist now.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: It informs my long-term survivor; I've been able to incorporate everything I've ever done into this series including the significant *Mummification* performances. So I've encapsulated my whole artistic practice—my diaristic life and storytelling—into a body of work that's not going into museums.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: It's my masterwork and I'm confronted with my own mortality right now. Long-term survivors dying—the reality is I may not live to be 60 years old.

Yeah, I said that when I was 30. I said that when I was 35.

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: I said that when I was 40. I thought I would get that when I was 45, the worst time of my life. Really, my 40s sucked, but I've been able to transform it all and come up with a life. This is my masterwork—right?

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: I'm making my masterpiece. I have no problem saying that at all—and my choices come down to like what—Tony just dying—the deaths of, really, some of my longest friendships, long-term survivors were, you know, were going—and whether or not I get to be 60 or over 60. The reality is my body is falling apart. Every day, I'm in pain and I'm dealing with a kind of psychic suffering and physical suffering that, you know—it's kind of piling on top of all this. Finding hope and the desire to—the ability to even move. I don't know. I'm still struggling.

The last year has been horrible in that regard, but I'm starting to find my psych-space feeling better and, you know, what's getting me there is this creation of my foundation which is just done. It exists.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: That's like, wow, I created a foundation, which—I'm still alive and although it doesn't have a lot of money in it yet, it may be the living legacy of my life and I have to protect all this work for that and all this other stuff for that. So what do I—what am I looking at to make this the end of my life story—my life story—and surviving *Survival AIDS*? So I've sort of started putting the term to almost everything I do. I just joined—the grant application to—like everything is now—Bronx Museum, *Survival AIDS*, *Mummification* performance, and I see this trajectory of 15 years of my body—in my retrospective, after I'm dead, I am, indeed the history of my tracking of my body for 30 years.

THEODORE KERR: What it seems to me—I—this is really powerful stuff. It sounds like a weird question—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: [Laughs.]

THEODORE KERR: —but I think you can answer. How would you define AIDS?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: I was thinking about that earlier today because I, somehow, was like 25, you know, I was interviewed like in 1993 and asked this question and basically, it boils down to, well, it sucks to have AIDS.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: It really does, but it's been a gift to my life in a very, like—I'm living in the present and I'm dealing with my reality and creating and moving, you know, because, ultimately, no matter how painful life is, it's a beautiful thing to live—and the gift of knowing that and believing that is why I'm still alive—. One of the reasons I've been able to somehow psychically not kill myself, to not go through with the self-destruction—and the universe has a plan, and whatever it is, I'm still fucking here, and I don't know why—and I have to adapt my psyche to that in order to find a reason to get out of bed in the morning other than to live.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] I think the video with Kathleen White really speaks to a lot of these things that you're thinking about. It's so beautiful. The colors are like so lovely, the use of glitter, her voice. It's like—

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Yeah. What can you do? You know, it's about—and friendships, you know, being—I would be nothing, nothing. I would be nothing without the people in my life who have been, really, the bedrocks—my support structures; they're families and communities, you know, and it's all you can—you know. So when I lose hope, and I lose the feeling of like—you know, it's been hard, this summer and it's going to be hard the next—but you know, burying Tony, and being a part of that specialness. Just like being with Kathleen when she died gave me hope, gave me life, gave me life.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Again, the way Ray died; again, the transition, the process of surviving, and being a witness to this thing, which, I guess, is all I can say about it, really. It's like it's part of—yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Do you want to be done?

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Done.

THEODORE KERR: Done.

[They laugh.]

Okay. Thank you.

HUNTER REYNOLDS: Done.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]