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Oral history interview with Jim Hodges, 2017  
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# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Jim Hodges on 2017 March 9 and May 25. The interview took place at Hodges' studio in Queens, New York, and was conducted by Cynthia Carr for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Archives of American Art's Visual Arts and the AIDS Epidemic: An Oral History Project.

Jim Hodges and Cynthia Carr have reviewed the transcript. Their 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

CYNTHIA CARR: This is Cynthia Carr interviewing Jim Hodges at his studio in Queens, New York on March 9, 2017, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. And this is Card Number One. And the first thing they want is for you to name—say your name and spell it [laughs]—

JIM HODGES: [Laughs.] Okay, Jim Hodges, J-I-M, H-O-D-G-E-S.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay, and when and where were you born?

JIM HODGES: I was born in Spokane, Washington, October 16, 1957.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay, what were your parents' names? And if you could spell them also.

JIM HODGES: Ramona Delores Hodges; Ramona, R-O-M-A-N-O Delores, D-E-L-O-R-E-S, Hodges, H-O-D-G-E-S. John Harley Hodges; J-O-H-N, H-A-R-L-E-Y, H-O-D-G-E-S.

CYNTHIA CARR: And what were their jobs there?

JIM HODGES: My mom was a home maker and my father was a food broker.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, did they—do you think that they encouraged you in your artistic pursuits at a young age? Or were they interested in that?

JIM HODGES: Yes, they encouraged me at a young age. When I was in kindergarten, my kindergarten teacher told my parents that she thought that I was an artist—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: And—

CYNTHIA CARR: What were you doing in kindergarten—

JIM HODGES: [Laughs.]

CYNTHIA CARR: That got her interested?

JIM HODGES: She—I guess, she saw something that stood out to her as some kind of an anomaly. I think that it was the detail that I was bringing to the little drawings that I was making. And she recognized something in me and I—I'm not really sure, but she—it made—she made a point of making sure that she told my parents that she recognized some talent in me.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And my parents, my mom—I have five brothers and sisters and I remember as a young child my parents giving me a pad of paper and a pencil and sitting me at like, you know, at the kitchen table and I would be—I'd be set.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: They could—my mom could be too busy doing other things and I would just be—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Endlessly drawing so it was a natural thing for them to do.

CYNTHIA CARR: Well, what kinds of things were you drawing at that age?

JIM HODGES: I think just, you know, probably—I don't really recall [laughs]—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: I—

CYNTHIA CARR: But people, animals, or abstract stuff?

JIM HODGES: You know, sky and clouds and—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES; And trees and houses, you know, little—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: I'm sure no different then what little kids normally draw.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: But it was that I was putting in detail—I was drawing to—with detail—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: That the kindergarten teacher, at least, was pointing out. It was not usual for children—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: That I was, you know, making shutters with particular patterns. I mean everything was more complicated, I guess that I don't really know, Cynthia—

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: I think that—

[They laugh.]

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JIM HODGES: I'm glad that she said that because my parents didn't have any—they weren't artists themselves. My mother was very creative and an intuitive maker and understood art from an intuitive place. They—it wasn't in the—or, you know, there was no real culture in Spokane—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, were there art classes in grade school?

JIM HODGES: I went to a Catholic school so the—I remember the art that we had, I remember in third grade, I—it was—because it was a parochial school, it was tied in somehow with faith—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: And religion so I remember drawing hands holding a host or something, but my third grade teacher, Sister Imelda really liked that—

[They laugh.]

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: But, you know, I think—again, I think it's just normal—the normal kind of things that kids were given as art classes in the '60s which probably is more than they are given these days [laughs] as far as—

CYNTHIA CARR: Well, it's possible. But you were interested—you enjoyed doing it right from the start—

JIM HODGES: Oh, yeah—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: It was really my thing.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: I—it really was something I felt very much myself or I could find myself. In fact, I think it's probably where I hid out—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: In art—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: As a young person, I think it was—it was a place where I could—it was a solitude and solitary kind of experience and one that was uniquely mine. So the attention of my mother, for instance, was—I associated with that performance, I think, of making things that she would, you know, praise and, you know, as I said, being—having five brothers and sisters, I—you know, you're competing for —

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: Your mom and I was—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes.

JIM HODGES: A momma's boy for sure and definitely wanted her attention.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And then once you got into high school, were there art classes there?

JIM HODGES: By high school, I was already going at it. I mean my parents—when I was in junior high school, I think I was 12 years old, my parents—or 13, they—my mom enrolled me in a Saturday art class, painting class, oil painting class at the hobby store at the Shadle Park Mall—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: In Spokane and on Saturday mornings like at 9:00, I would—it would be me, this 13-year-old kid and retirement aged women—

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: All women [laughs]—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And we would—and that's where I started—that's where I first learned how to mix paint and set up a palette, and use oil paint—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: And so by the time I got to art—to high school—my high school art teacher was Claudia Halseth, was so inspiring—such a cool person and super enthusiastic and very generous in how she taught her classes, but also very serious and very disciplined. She was my—like the first real instructor who challenged my making. So when I brought my Sunday—or my Saturday morning crafts, oil paintings to school of barns and still lifes that we had taken—kind of copied from calendar illustration [laughs]—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: She was—Claudia was just like, No, kid, this isn't art, and she crushed me.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: But she also escorted me into ideas and concepts of art that weren't just about picture making and kind of set me on my way—

CYNTHIA CARR: And that was like tenth grade or something—

JIM HODGES: That was in tenth grade, yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, and then continued for the rest of high school with her or?

JIM HODGES: Yeah, for high school and then she had gone to Fort Wright College in Spokane—which was a private college—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: Run by Holy Names nuns and no one in my family had gone to college before—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, no one had?

JIM HODGES: No.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And so I was going to be the first one into college. And I didn't really know where to go and I didn't have much experience in even how—knowing how to look for a college—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: And Claudia was, as I said, was a big influence on me. And I really—I really loved her. And she said, "Fort Wright is a good school, you should go to Fort Wright," and so I did.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And Fort Wright was a hippie school, as I said, run by Holy Names nuns and they were cool, kind of radical women. And they had hired a lot of kind of hippie professors to teach and so the art school was fantastic. It was basically a—you know it's nestled in the woods on an old military fort. It was kind of Victorian, beautiful brick buildings and all in the woods along the Spokane River. So it was very close and very easy to go to Fort Wright for me. And also feeling very foreign and far away. And the art department was a very liberal, loose run place where you could basically write your own curriculum and figure out what you wanted to do—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: And that's where I got my BFA from there. And—

CYNTHIA CARR: And was it—it was in painting, right?

JIM HODGES: My BFA was in painting, yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: And what sorts of things did you paint? Were you an abstract painter or?

JIM HODGES: I kind of—I mean I kind of moved different ways through a kind of—I was very drawn to nature and spent a lot of time working from nature in direct observation of the landscape. I think my voice—I pretty much found my language, if you will—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Through renderings of nature. But my investigation as a—as you are when you're a young artist, especially in college, you pretty much try lots of different things and—

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, yeah.

JIM HODGES: Performance and ceramics and drawing and—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: And photography and print making—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, so you were doing all of those things?

JIM HODGES: Yeah, pretty much everything.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Everything but sculpture really. I didn't really make a sculpture.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: But I didn't make work that was—I don't know. I guess I made some sculpture too. But it was—like

I said, it was pretty much a—it was pretty—one could think of it as kind of a free form kind of improvisational school—

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: As far as like the curriculum went. The school there—the art school was run by a nun by the name of Paula Turnbull. And Sister Paula was a welder and super travelled and experienced. She took kids a couple times a year to Europe and travelled all over the place and really, really smart. And also an incredibly serious practitioner. She was always working in her studio. And here's this nun and you'd see her riding down the—you know, with her bike on campus and she had, you know, overalls and a welding helmet up on top—

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: Of her head and bells on the bike going. And you know she was super cool.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: I mean she still is super cool. She's like 90 something years old now.

CYNTHIA CARR: Wow.

JIM HODGES: Yeah, it was just a—it was an alternative experience, I guess.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: Even in Spokane. It was pretty much figuring it out for yourself which was tough at first for me because I really wanted some more discipline.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: I actually for a semester transferred to Gonzaga University—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: Which is also in Spokane which was a Jesuit school.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, yeah.

JIM HODGES: But because it was a—the curriculum shifted to—it was a BA from a BFA and I wanted—I mean my only skills really were within my hands as far as making goes.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: I'm not such a smart person. And the curriculum was much easier for me [laughs] in—at Fort Wright—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Not to say that it wasn't difficult and that I needed to still do academic work. But it wasn't the balance of amounts of credits were leaning towards greater—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And to art in—at Fort Wright and I was much more at home in the kind of hippie place than I was in the more disciplined Gonzaga.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: I'm making a confession here.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: I'm a little embarrassed to say now. [Laughs.]

CYNTHIA CARR: Had you seen any shows at a museum or gallery that were particularly influential or important?

JIM HODGES: At that time?

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, as when you were young like high school and college?

JIM HODGES: Not really. The only—I can't imagine—I don't think there was anything in Spokane—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: When I got to Fort—when I got to college, of course I was looking at art magazines and of course being influenced by the people around me and also there was an art community in Spokane also from the different universities that were there—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And different universities would have different—bring different artists in. So there was more to be experienced and to see. I certainly started broadening my understanding and then teachers who came to Fort Wright brought a lot of their experience and their own kind of investigation. So that's where—like for instance getting involved in performance and other types of expression that were not drawing on a piece of paper.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: I really loved that and as far as museums, I can't really think of anything until I was in my—well, I'll tell you I go back. My freshman year, I went to Italy with Sister Paula for a month and travelled to like 13 cities in —

CYNTHIA CARR: Wow.

JIM HODGES: A month and I had never been on a plane before when I—

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: Went on that trip [laughs] and it was amazing. So that was—that was, I guess, a kind of a baptism of culture and renaissance—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, right. Yeah.

JIM HODGES: Primarily but it was such an amazing experience. And it taught me so much and then by the time I was a senior, myself and two of my friends decided that we would take that same month—they had what was called January term. You had a month of an intensive course—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And so during that January term we came to New York and they—a kind of cultural exploration.

CYNTHIA CARR: What year was that?

JIM HODGES: That was 1980. In January of 1980 and that was amazing. I mean we stayed at the Vanderbilt, YMCA, and just kind of made that our outpost. And just explored—

CYNTHIA CARR: It was an interesting time.

JIM HODGES: Amazing—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: It was so amazing.

CYNTHIA CARR: Galleries, museums but also performances and things like that?

JIM HODGES: Well, and just—and just the street culture of New York itself.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: I mean, you know, Spokane is nothing like [laughs] New York. And—

CYNTHIA CARR: That would have been the time when there was still graffiti on the trains and—

JIM HODGES: Lots of graffiti.

CYNTHIA CARR: All that, yeah.

JIM HODGES: Yeah, it was a—and it was funny because we ended up also staying for a couple of days with one

of our—one of us had friends who lived in Brooklyn and we stayed with them for a few days. And we had—I had had a visiting professor from Yale, Robert Reed had come to Spokane to do a drawing workshop there. And so we went up to New Haven and visited Bob and he showed us around, you know, Yale and so we had a really full, really rich four weeks in the city. But I remember—what we did as far as the requirement for the credit went, I had to keep a journal and keep notes of everything that we did—and I remember writing in my journal that I really liked New York and it was a fun place to visit but I would never want to live there—

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: Especially Brooklyn.

[They laugh.]

So I don't know what I—what had happened in Brooklyn but I knew it's like that's where I didn't want to live—and three years later in 1983 I went to graduate school at Pratt and was living in Brooklyn—

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

[They laugh.]

JIM HODGES: So there you go [laughs].

CYNTHIA CARR: But was there anything during that month that stands out as something you remember that was—

JIM HODGES: You know, it's—I remember Bob, for sure.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Up in New Haven and his—and just his enthusiasm and he took us to an art opening of a woman who was making tapestries. And—you know, going to a gallery opening with him was very interesting. I don't remember the artist's name but I think just being in SoHo and being on West Broadway and walking in and out of the different galleries that were there. And just feeling the kind of—the rawness of the city. Like the—really feeling that moving from one neighborhood to another neighborhood, how you actually felt a physical shifting in your body. Like how you're perceiving where you're surrounded by.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: It was a time when, you know, SoHo, for instance was—it was—it wasn't a bunch of shopping. It wasn't shopping then—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: It was really—basically nothing but art galleries. There was one bar, I think Fanelli's —

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: And I think a handful of little stores and stuff but nothing really.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: So it was fairly empty, the streets were empty—

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: And trucks and stuff—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And Canal Street was a different place—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: It was like where you could go and actually buy stuff and dig through boxes and—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: Find interesting things and, you know, it was a—it was quite different. I'm sure I'm not the first



person you've interviewed to talk about then and now.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: I mean there was—so many things have changed. But I think when I came back and three years later is—and really living here, as I said, and then living in Brooklyn, one really felt the kind of—the necessity but the urgency in the street—from the street. I felt a sense of urgency I was sensing that from what I was getting when I was going to art galleries. Especially in the East Village.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: It felt like there was a—like this is—the necessary gestures are happening here. It's not casual. It's not pretend, it's actually very serious. With a lot of the things that these artists are addressing are really—I mean they're—they're our lives. And so this was—this was really important to me. And this I never would have experienced—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: I couldn't have gotten that, I don't think, during that month. And I also think in 1980 to 1983, I think things had even shifted more by then. I mean the East Village was really—like in 1983, it felt like it was really thriving to me.

CYNTHIA CARR: It was really just starting in 1980.

JIM HODGES: So in '83, it was like—I mean it was—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: It felt like—when I walked over there [laughs], it was like this place is amazing—I mean it was amazing and it was also like for a small town kid, you know, in Spokane, it was also frightening.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: But it was like how great is that?

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: I loved the East Village when I first moved here. Really loved it. It was just like a carnival—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: Of experience and just like what you'd see—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, it was—

JIM HODGES: A contrast of texture, of cultures coming—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: Rubbed up against each other.

CYNTHIA CARR: It really was great, yeah.

JIM HODGES: So interesting.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, did you have any interest in politics at all like during your school days?

JIM HODGES: I think that I always was politically aware.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: My parents—I think particularly my dad was more conservative—but very—you know, they're Catholics and my dad was a converted Catholic which—from the south, which I think makes it even more intensely Catholic, not that that's a bad thing but we had a different sense of politics. And I remember when Kent State happened and like the horror of that—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And my dad was conflicted because he was—at one point he'd be talking about moving our entire family to Canada to keep my brother and myself—my brother is two years older than me—out of Vietnam—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, yeah.

JIM HODGES: And then the next moment he's conflicted because he thinks, well, the National Guard must be doing—they must be doing something right, they're doing what the government says. So he was like kind of confused—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: For me, it wasn't confused at all. It's like you don't shoot students—obviously, I don't think my dad would have thought that they should have been shot either. But it set up a kind of conflict between us. And I don't remember exactly what we were expressing but I remember kind of like being in a kind of heated discussion with him about it. So there was—I think I—they're great parents because they provided me a kind of foundation for myself to express myself to them without it destroying us.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And without me hating them but without us having to be on the same page. And my father and I are still continually having intense conversations playing cards in the morning—

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: When I see him—

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, right. Right, so, you—what year did you graduate—

JIM HODGES: From?

CYNTHIA CARR: Fort Wright?

JIM HODGES: Fort Wright, 1980.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, 1980. Okay, so, that was like your senior year—

JIM HODGES: My senior year.

CYNTHIA CARR: When you came here, yeah.

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: And you have a degree in—

JIM HODGES: BFA in painting.

CYNTHIA CARR: Painting, okay. Now then you didn't move to New York till '83?

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: So what were you doing in those in between years?

JIM HODGES: I decided I didn't—I knew I wanted to go to grad school—I mean I thought I did. But I also thought that I wanted—I thought that it would be good for me—excuse me. To take a few days—a few years off—to figure out—to just get to know myself more outside of a curriculum that would—had a requirement of me performing as an artist. And seeing how I did on my own.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: So I set—you know I found a studio space and started, you know, basically set up a practice and maintained that for a few years.

CYNTHIA CARR: In Spokane?

JIM HODGES: In Spokane—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And in the interim, I started investigating schools and then—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Yeah, and then applied to a handful of them and then decided to go to Pratt because it's in New York—

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: And because it offered the least amount of support [laughs]—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: In a way. My best friend in college, this woman, Karen Kaiser—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Karen, we were—we were inseparable. We were always together and we kind of like the art department was—it was, you know, basically it became our—I mean because we were there 24 hours a day.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And it was like our place and this—you know, Fort Wright had a population—I don't know, there are hundreds not thousands of kids on that campus. Just hundreds, it was a small little place—

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: And so we, you know, we had a blast there and we worked together all the time. So anyway Karen and I were very close and when I decided to apply for schools, I applied to schools to graphics departments—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: For print making—because during the time I was out of school, I basically was just making drawings. And so I felt that my portfolio would be strongest in a graphic medium—and so that I would apply for, you know, print making classes and courses and did some research and found where were the best print making places in the country. And a handful of them were, you know, in the Midwest and my—one of my teachers who I had taken classes from at Gonzaga, Scott Patnode, had gone to Pratt—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And he encouraged me to apply to Pratt and he thought that it had a good print making department—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: And had some kind of—it had some kind of notoriety or something—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And so I applied to Pratt too and I got into, as I said, a handful of schools. And then I was—well, the decision—I have to make my decision. I remember my dad saying, you know, anywhere but New York—

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: Seriously, Oh, honey, please go anywhere but don't go to New York.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: And my friend Karen saying, "Ah, look at this list of people. Look at these lists of places you've chosen. You know it's going to happen to you when you go to all of these. You'll go there, it's going to be just like Spokane. You're going to be a big fish in a small pond—and why even leave here if that's all you're going to do? You should go to the place that you don't know what to expect."

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: And certainly that was Pratt because they offered the least amount of anything. I mean they weren't very—I'd call them on the phone and talk to them and felt like I was bothering them—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: A typical—it was very typical of what I ended up experiencing when I was there.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: And it was kind of the unknown so—and it was New York so I decided that's where I'm going to go.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: And I'm really glad I did but wow, it was tough.

CYNTHIA CARR: What—did you end up majoring in print making then or?

JIM HODGES: Actually, when I got to Pratt and realized after I got there that print makers weren't given studio space—I freaked out and went to the—into the dean and said, I need a studio and if you're not going to give me a studio space, I'm going to—I'll leave. I'll just go somewhere else. And I had contacted the other schools, I—where I'd been —

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: And they said you can still come.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: And he said, "Well, we don't give studios to print makers." And I said, "This doesn't make any sense to me. Why is a print maker less of a practitioner than a painter or a sculptor? Why not? Because you have a shop and you do your work there." And I said, "Well, that's not how I work." And he said, "Well, you'll have to change your major to painting." I said, "Fine, change me to painting" [laughs].

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: So that's what I did. So then I got my degree—my Masters in painting.

CYNTHIA CARR: I see. And what kinds of things were you painting in graduate school?

JIM HODGES: Kind of still—well, a combination of paintings that were from direct observation.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: But mostly I was, you know, God I was really being influenced by everything I was seeing.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: As I said, you know, I spent—I'd go to galleries often and also art exhibitions and museums. But galleries were super influencing me and as was just being in the city and the subways and the graffiti and everything that was happening—and so my work became more and more expressionistic, I guess. And I really started to have a real sense of painting and there was a grittiness to it but it was also, I think, very referential to art historical references that were, you know, whatever, very academic basically.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: But there was something going on in me that was—that was different from me. And it was an irreverence and a kind of—a kind of performative gesture within the work itself that was somewhat about a denial of my hand or a denial of the gesture itself. Something that would cancel it out by either putting something on top of a finished painting or some discarded thing that I was finding. But this is—had a lot to do with just what I was getting from the street—and getting from the place itself which had a kind of—there was so much conflict happening. I was sensing, at least, around me in the city. But also just in the kind of—just the way things kind of crash up against each other in New York—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Especially then when you're having, you know, real fights about gentrification and of course AIDS was starting to, you know, this is early 1980s. So I remember in 1980—well, in 1984 I got a job working at an art gallery. In the spring of '84, I found in the Village Voice I saw an ad, you know, looking for an art preparator. And school was going to be out and it was spring break. And I thought I need to find myself some kind of job so I can stay here—because I don't want to go back to Spokane.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And so I interviewed at a gallery—at Nancy Hoffman Gallery at 429 West Broadway and I got the job—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: And that was a really important moment for me because it then put me in SoHo three days a week.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: So after—and then my friends also were getting art preparator jobs like at Castelli—or different galleries—

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, yeah.

JIM HODGES: And so we had this little community of young, you know—

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JIM HODGES: College artists—in art galleries, which is still, I think, the tradition. In art galleries, most preparators are artists, I think—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: I would imagine. And so I was getting a lot of—I was getting a lot of information and going to lots of openings and things. And what I was going to say, at the gallery, I remember there was a friend of a woman who I worked with, Sique Spence, and Sique had a friend who was an art dealer. And I can't remember their name. But I remember that the art dealer was sick—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And there wasn't—from my recollection, there was gay cancer and there was ARC, but there wasn't a—there wasn't that word yet.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And I remember that that was the, you know, kind of the horrifying conversations and the fearful conversations that were going around about—because this friend of Sique's came to visit her and he was with a cane, I mean it's just like wow, he's super sick. And—I had seen in Spokane, actually, a couple years earlier before I left, Karen's boyfriend, who she lived with, had a friend visit her from—visit them from Seattle. And the guy, the whole time he was visiting—for two weeks he was in Spokane visiting from Seattle, he was kind of sick the whole time. And it ended up the next year, he ended up dying too. And so those were like the first AIDS deaths that I felt like in kind of a close proximity to or that—that became—it still felt completely like I don't know—I had no real like—a concept of what was really going on.

CYNTHIA CARR: So you had heard about ARC or something—gay cancer before that but you didn't know—

JIM HODGES: But only—yeah, but not in Spokane so much—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: But in New York, I was. I was hearing that.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: Because—I think really because of my relationship to the art world. I think that's how I got this information because so many people engaged in the world of art were being affected by it.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And artists were getting sick and so this was—it was a very small community of people—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: And so then came the—it's hard to piece it all together because it's pretty fractured in my memory but my roommate, Scott Smith—Scott, when I moved to Pratt, went to Pratt, the first week I was there, the first

like couple nights we were there, there was orientation for graduate students. And the first person I met was Scott Smith.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Scott was super friendly, outgoing, and quite a queen. Like—

CYNTHIA CARR: Were you out at that point? Had you come out?

JIM HODGES: No, I was—it was funny because when I came to New York, I was like when I move to New York, I'm coming out of the closet and I'm going to start, you know, living a life that was going to be more interesting and whatever.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: I mean who knows but I was going to come out of the closet. And the first night—so I met Scott and Scott's gay—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And I met Scott, Marnie, Lynn, Dave, and one other girl. But the six of us came together and Scott said, "Let's go into the city." I'll take us into the city, because Scott had lived here the summer before—doing a residency at some—for some artist. I can't remember who.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: So he had lived in the city for the year before and he was from Philadelphia, he had gone to school—or Pennsylvania and he had gone to school in Pennsylvania with Dave. And so they knew each other and then Lynn and Marnie and then this one other girl, the three of them were roommates and they—we all kind of got—came together—we were all kind of cute and attracted to each other. So we all got together. So we went to—Scott took us into Manhattan and we went to Christopher Street and we went to gay bars. And we were sitting in a bar and everyone was like, Are you gay? Are you gay? And then I was like, No, I'm not gay.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: That was like my—for whatever reason, I guess, it was just a very deep kind of fear and rooted in kind of this closetness and so I was—I blew my first chance. And then I stayed kind of closeted for another year.

CYNTHIA CARR: Did you stay friends with Marnie and Lynn and Dave—

JIM HODGES: All of them—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah? So they're still friends?

JIM HODGES: Yeah, Scott, unfortunately—Scott died. Scott was diagnosed with AIDS a year and a half later. He got KS [Kaposi's sarcoma].

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: He noticed KS on his foot when he was out in Fire Island one—like during one August day or something.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, boy.

JIM HODGES: And so that was horrible. Scott and I had lived together for—we lived across the hall from each other in the dorm. And then the next year, the next—yeah, the next week when we were getting out of school, we decided to rent an apartment together. So we rented an apartment near Pratt. And stayed there together for a couple years beyond college and then I moved—and in that time Scott was diagnosed.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And then Lynn and Dave had gotten together as a couple and they had moved over to Park Slope and there was a nice really nice garden apartment available next door to Lynn and Dave. And Lynn convinced Scott to move there and get that place. And I moved on to someone else by then too.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: So Scott lived next to Lynn and Dave for the rest of his life. He died in '93. Which was, of course,

horrible.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: But—

CYNTHIA CARR: Do you want to say last names of these friends? Marnie—

JIM HODGES: Sure.

CYNTHIA CARR: Lynn and Dave.

JIM HODGES: Marnie Fuller.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JIM HODGES: Dave Nyzio. Lynn McCarty.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JIM HODGES: And I can't remember the—their other roommate's name [laughs]. It's so funny I can't remember her. But she didn't hang out with us as much—

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: We stayed—all of us stayed very close and we're still in contact.

CYNTHIA CARR: And they're all artists?

JIM HODGES: Yeah, they're all artists. And Lynn and Dave ended up getting married. And they live upstate now.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Yeah, everyone—Scott, as I said, died. But everyone is still—we're all still kind of—I'm not as close. I'm not in contact with Marnie so much but—Christmas time I hear from them.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, yeah. So, when did you get your MFA? When did you—

JIM HODGES: In—I graduated January '86, 1986.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: I had to take an extra semester to finish school because in the beginning—the first year of my—of the second year—the first semester of the second year, I had kind of a break down, a kind of nervous breakdown. I think it had a lot to do with being closeted.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: But then also I was convinced that I was sick. I was convinced that I was going to die.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh. You thought you had AIDS?

JIM HODGES: Oh, yeah, I thought for sure I was—I thought for sure I did but I was like so in my head. I was like—I mean it's probably where the closet is.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: I was definitely in that.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: And the fear that—and the sneaking around and the kind of sex I was having which was all kind of clandestine in dark back rooms kind of stuff.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, right.

JIM HODGES: It was, you know, so it was—there was a grittiness and a kind of, I don't know. I mean there's nothing wrong with that. But it wasn't—it wasn't—I was messed up in my head. Like I said, I was in my head a lot. And I wasn't feeling well. And I had other emotional problems and so I started seeing a doctor and the doctor

—the doctor—I think he saw me as just like a perfect like sucker. Like he could tell me anything [laughs] and he played me. It was really weird. In fact, he sent me to a psychiatrist which was fine.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, yeah.

JIM HODGES: The psychiatrist within five minutes of talking to him, he's sitting in his, you know, wood paneled office and I'm sitting across from him. He has all these books behind him and I'm talking—he's asking—before I go in there, his nurse—receptionist puts a card table in front of me in the waiting room with a stack of cards on it. And she goes, "Okay, honey [laughs]. I want you to separate these cards to frequently, sometimes, and never. And just make them those piles." So the piles were—the cards were "can't sleep," "think about killing myself," "think about murdering someone," "why do harm to myself"—I mean these kinds of—I mean just like—but there was a stack of these like 4x5—

CYNTHIA CARR: Like a couple inches high?

JIM HODGES: Yeah, and so I did all the separation. She takes it away and then a little later I go in and I meet with the guy. And he's talking to me and asking me a few questions and he said, "Yeah, you're depressed. You're depressed." And turns around, reaches—grabs this book, textbook, opens it up and goes, "This is the book I teach. I wrote this book—"

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: "When I'm teaching my classes at blah, blah, blah."

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: "These—you have these—you're depressed. Depression is like—it's like diabetes. We can regulate it with medication. You just need some medication."

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: And I'm sitting there thinking in my head, I'm thinking I'm dying of AIDS and I'm, you know, I'm in the closet and you know I have these problems I've had since I was a little kid and you're just going to give me a pill? And I was just like so pissed.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: I said, "Thanks." And he said, "You can come back and see me if you want or something." He gave me a prescription for some—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: Anti-depressant and I threw it away and never looked back. And then just kind of figured stuff out for myself. I stopped going to that doctor.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: Started going to school again. That's why I'm telling you all this—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: Because I didn't go to school for about a semester—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: I was really—I lost like 30 pounds or something. Got really sick and then I thought I needed to snap out of it. And so I snapped out of it and started exercising and taking better care of myself. And—so it delayed my graduation from Pratt by a semester. So that's a long answer to that question.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay, [laughs] it's all part of the process though—

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: When you go through something like that, right?

JIM HODGES: Well, it was—I mean it's not the full story. Actually, there's more—it's more nuanced but basically I was, you know, I was a disturbed young guy who needed to—really needed to be myself.



CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Needed to feel that I had a kind of support to do that and to stop lying, just being who I am. And then if I were sick or whatever, that would be figured out too. But I guess it was like the—the fear of the illness and the fear of my own—of myself, you know, my own deeply engrained kind of homophobia and self-hate.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Made it very difficult. I mean I really felt kind of trapped.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: But at the time, I was, you know, I was going to bars at night and you know, going to like the Bijou Theater and having, I guess, what one could consider sex with people.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But you didn't feel like you were part of a community?

JIM HODGES: I didn't really—

CYNTHIA CARR: It seems like.

JIM HODGES: I mean I—and community is an interesting thing that I've—I guess I don't know my relationship to community anyway.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: But I didn't feel like I was—I felt like I was a part of a community when I would be like at The Spike, for instance.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Like or Raw Hide or I mean just these—there were places where I felt like ah, this is where—I'm part of this scene.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: But it was also I was drinking a lot and doing lots of drugs. So it was like—the hangover parts of that and everything else. I was not feeling well—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: And I was kind of messed up. And I was sneaking around—it was just such a—it was a very weird transition for me.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: I finally met someone—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: Robert Valenciano, I met him at an after hours club called Tracks that used to be on the West Side just south of—south of The Spike on maybe like 19th Street or something. But I met Robert in the summer of '86, maybe. And that was like the beginning of my liberation for sure—but also the beginning of a real kind of—exploring of queer life and being exposed to history, a kind of gay history that I really wanted.

CYNTHIA CARR: Ah.

JIM HODGES: And when I met Robert, Robert was 21. And he was—had been living on the street basically since he was like 15.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: He was an immigrant from Cuba. His mom, his sister, Doris, the three of them lived in a studio apartment in Jersey City and Robert basically dropped out of school when he was like 14 or 15. And then kind of just started sleeping on different guys' couches or getting involved with different people and kind of like lived as a kind of nomad for a while.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: But he was super smart and super sophisticated and had incredible taste. And lots of—I mean street experience and—he was very funny and really talented and sexy. And we met up and he was exactly who I was looking for.

CYNTHIA CARR: Ah.

JIM HODGES: He was exactly the person. All of his attributes were—were what if I had made a list of what someone should be—Robert would have had a lot of them.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: Maybe it wasn't a perfect score.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: But it certainly was—the main ingredients were definitely there.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Including just his—you know, his street smarts—

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: Which is really what I wanted to connect to.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: I mean I felt connected to the street when I came to New York.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: But I really wanted to be a part of it. If that means culture, that's what attracted me in culture. Not so much community as much as the culture.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, yeah.

JIM HODGES: Which I think is kind of a queer—I don't know. A kind of attractedness to something that is—that—an edge of something. If I wanted to define queer in me, it would definitely be that—what is happening, unorganized, that is happening in a kind of visibility but invisibility, a kind of paradox of experience that's happening, that's somewhat gritty.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Robert had a natural sophistication that was purely being generated from him. Not something that he picked up and learned. Although, he was super. He was a super smart guy and a quick read of things. He was—he was an amazing guy. He also was HIV positive when we met.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And that was intense. But not impossible.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: Could you excuse me for a second?

CYNTHIA CARR: Sure.

[Audio break.]

JIM HODGES: All right.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay, so, I think you said you got your MFA in January of '86?

JIM HODGES: I did.

CYNTHIA CARR: And then you met Robert that summer?

JIM HODGES: That summer, yeah. In like August or September.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, okay. Okay, and you became a couple?

JIM HODGES: Well, I guess you could call us a couple.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay [laughs].

JIM HODGES: And it might have been '87.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, okay.

JIM HODGES: Because I'm trying to remember. Because I hooked up with a guy in one summer and I—but I don't remember if it was '86 or '87. I hooked up with him, I think Robert must have been '87. I hooked up with this guy, Bob Morris. We met at Uncle Charley's and I ended up going home with him that night. And then we kind of hung out together for a couple of weeks. He was going away on some trip. His parents lived out in Long Island and he took me out to spend some time with them. He was pretty into like us and I wasn't feeling it. And I—after we stopped seeing each other, like after he went away for like a month or something and when he came back, I was like—I was over it.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And I started dating this girl, Sarah. I can't remember Sarah's last name. But we dated for probably—maybe that winter.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: The winter of '86 to '87. And then that summer I met Robert and I had broken up with Sarah. And I remember when I met Robert and I said to Robert, I said, "You know Robert, I'm not gay. I'm bi." And he said, "Really?"

[They laugh.]

JIM HODGES: And I said, "Yeah, I'm not gay." He said—Robert was great. He's like—he said, "Don't you think that it would be—[an assistant opens the door and walks thorough the room] don't you think it would be"—he said, "Don't you think you're kind of hiding in that inbetween? Don't you think that it's—you're saying 'bi' because you're afraid of who you are? And what if you just jumped off that fence and just took ownership of who you are and say that you're—you're with me so you're gay."

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: So I probably resisted for a little while. But then slid into that [laughs] as that's who I am. I no longer have these kinds of rigid kind of binary distinctions really. I mean I don't think of myself in any—I mean I'm with a guy but I don't know if it matters at all. But at the time it mattered a lot. Especially because I had been in denial of who I am.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: So Robert helped me off the fence.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: But that was after Bob and then Sarah as a kind of—I think a fearful retreat of Bob and his interest. And even though I was still going to bars and all the rest of that kind of stuff. I mean Sarah, she was great. I have no idea—I mean, she was a wild actress and she—most of her friends were gay so I think she just was like here's a gay guy who actually will sleep with me too—

[They laugh.]

JIM HODGES: So I don't think I phased her—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, right.

JIM HODGES: [Laughs.] It's very funny.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. What kind of work were you doing after you left Pratt?

JIM HODGES: When I—well, because I had this job in SoHo, as I said, I was going to all the openings and everything. That was a great part of that job.

CYNTHIA CARR: And you were still at Nancy Hoffman?

JIM HODGES: And I was still at Nancy's—and there was an opening one night at The New Museum. And it was an opening for an exhibition that was about performance art. And Linda Montano was reading palms—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, yeah. Yes.

JIM HODGES: In the window of The New Museum. And at that opening, she was there giving readings and so I was standing in line to get my palm read and as I'm standing there, I look through the crowd—and kind of the crowd parts and there's this green turbaned, green velvet caped woman kind of being escorted by an entourage of people and she kind of marches up to me. A wild looking woman and she said, "How long is this going to take?"

[They laugh.]

JIM HODGES: And I said, "Probably about another 25 minutes." "Because," I said, "everyone's about five minutes in there. They're five people ahead of you. Probably 25 minutes."

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And she goes, "Ah, I don't want to stand here. I want to go and look at the art." Or something like that—

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: And I said, "Okay, you go look at the art. I'll hold your place for you. And when you come back, you can do the same for me." And she said, "Oh, you're very nice, and then left." And so when she came back, I was next in line. And so I didn't—she didn't need to hold my place. But we ended up talking. And she said, "Ah, you're very nice." She goes, "You're not from here, are you?" And I said, "No."

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: And she said, "Are you an artist?" And I said, "Yeah." And she said, "Do I know your work?" And I said, "No, you wouldn't." And I said, "I just got out of—I just graduated from Pratt." And she said, "Well, I have a foundation. I give artists studio space in exchange for helping me with my art collection. Would that be something that you would be interested in?" And I said, "Yeah, I'm an art preparator. I could definitely help you with your collection." And we exchanged numbers and that was it. And I went in and had my palm read by Linda Montano and she looked at my hands and she said, "Don't be afraid of being who you are." Which was amazing, I mean seriously, she looked at my hands and she said, "Don't be afraid of making things that are traditional. You judge yourself because of who you are. And you should just be who you are." Which was incredible.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: I mean she's amazing.

CYNTHIA CARR: And this was in '86?

JIM HODGES: This was in '86.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, okay.

JIM HODGES: This was in the spring of '86. And so I went back to work at Nancy's the next day and I said, "Oh, I met this crazy lady." And I told a girl I worked with it was Elaine Dannheisser and she said, "Oh my God, Elaine Dannheisser? You met Elaine Dannheisser? She's like one of the biggest collectors of contemporary art. I can't believe that's who you were talking to." I said, "Yeah, she offered me a studio space in the basement of her building." She goes, "You're kidding." And so I said, "Yeah—well, I have to send her—I told her I would her my slides or whatever." And so a couple weeks went by and I wrote a letter to Elaine and sent her, you know, you send slides and your résumé and this kind of stuff—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: And I was, you know, I was not such a—I wasn't so fast but it was like—it was a different time. So I sent it to her—and a couple weeks passed after that and I got a phone call from Elaine and she said, "I'm sorry I haven't called you." She said, "Thank you for sending me your slides. As it turns out I don't have a place for you. But keep me posted on what happens with you and keep working hard and good luck. And it was nice meeting you," whatever. And I thought well, okay, well that's how that goes.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Within five days, I get another phone call from her and she goes, "Something changed, I have a space. Can I pick you up at 5:00 on Thursday?" And I said, "Sure." So I told Nancy. I said, "Nancy, is it okay if I leave an hour early? Because the gallery is open till 6:00. Can I leave an hour early because Elaine Dannheisser wants to—she said, so, yeah." So Elaine picks me up in this car and we—well, a driver picks us up and we drive down to her foundation in Tribeca on Duane Street. We walk into this, I don't know, 4,000 square foot space packed full of of-the-minute art. Like everything that was happening in the art world was in that place.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Every name you can think of from 1986 and earlier. But most of the moment was on the walls. And I'm just like—just jaw dropping can't believe this. And then she takes me in the elevator down to the basement and opens—pulls this door open. And there's this 1,200 square foot white empty room. And she said, "This is the space. Do you think you could work here—would this work for you?"

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: And I said, "Yeah." And she handed me the keys, told me the code for the—to get in and out of the place. And introduced me to another artist who was in the studio next door to me by the name of Rhys Chatham who is a musician—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: And Joseph—he and Joseph Nechvatal were sharing the studio next door.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: And the studio that they—that Elaine gave me belonged to a graffiti artist by the name of Bobby G.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: And Bobby G had been—I think he had gotten a DAAD and had gone to Berlin and was in Berlin—and so they—Elaine felt that she needed another person and so that's how I lucked out. But at the same time she also had that—who was also in the space with me was Walter Robinson.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: And so when Walter found out that she had given the space to me, he moved all of his stuff out. He was like, "I don't want to share a space with someone."

CYNTHIA CARR: Really? Geez.

JIM HODGES: So and I don't know if he and Elaine had had some kind of falling out anyway. But, anyway, that's the world that I was kind of like dumped into. I didn't know who any of these people were. But that's where I was dropped.

CYNTHIA CARR: Wow.

JIM HODGES: And there—and the reason why I gave you that big lead in—because I'm a blabber mouth but because the set up for all of it is that I had this amazing studio all of a sudden. It's the spring of 1986, I'm—I have this place in Manhattan like a kind of dream come true thing.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: I told myself when I got out of school that I wasn't going to work at a job more than three days a week. So Nancy's was three days a week and I promised myself that I would never make a job more important than my practice. And that I didn't care if I had to—if I was starving, I wouldn't work more than three days a week. But all of a sudden now I have this studio thing where I have to work basically 24/7 and be at Elaine's beck and call. But it seemed to me like it wasn't work. It's like I'm just going to be in the studio anyway, what difference does it make? I'm just always going to be here which I was.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: And so I move into this space, it's like the most studio space I've ever had, and underneath all this amazing art that's upstairs, and in Tribeca. And I start trying to make my paintings and everything I make, I just

feel like I'm hitting my head with a hammer. I just hate everything I'm making. And I called up my friend Scott Patnode who was that teacher who had encouraged me to go to Pratt. I called him up in Spokane and—

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JIM HODGES: And we're singing my woes to him like ah, I just can't believe how here I have this great place. I said, "These paintings I'm making just suck.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: I just hate what I'm making." He said, "Well, why do you think you need to make paintings?" And I said, "I don't know." He said, "Well, don't you think that you are doing something that's not real? That it's just some convention? That if—because you make drawings that you have make paintings? Why don't you just do what you like? Why don't you just make drawings? You make great drawings. You really like that. Why don't you just do that?"

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And I said, "Thank you." Of course that's what I should be doing. I should be doing what really makes me happy and what I enjoy. I packed up all the paints and stuck them on the shelf. And went to Pearl Paint the next day and bought a bunch of white paper and black charcoal and basically that's what I started doing. And I—and I started working with drawings and thinking what is a drawing? And if I don't know why I'm making a painting, why am I making a drawing and what is it about? What do I—what is mine in this pursuit? What matters to me? Because if I could be so easily led into a kind of convention of, oh, drawers make paintings and painters are artists. If that doesn't really apply to me then what else doesn't apply? What is my interest? And so I really started—what I feel like I did in the basement of the Dannheisser Foundation was a kind of a disassembly, a kind of critique of what I had learned, and a disassembly and an editing of things that did not apply to me. That didn't fit.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And this set me into a kind of pursuit and a research that was—went into the realms of some performance and installation and mostly process derived—or kind of based work. But really started me thinking about what the performance of the objects—what is an object doing? What is the performance? What is the duration? And what is its relationship to experience of others? And how does one affect and orchestrate experience with these materials in space? And that's the kind of beginning of a kind of conceptual foundation of my practice. Which got me looking around myself in terms of what—what my gesture—how a gesture is being introduced to experience.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: But all through a very narrow kind of materiality as far as drawing. And a kind of defining something as drawing—and for years, I talked about myself or referred to myself as a drawer. And so that was kind of the beginning. And so I have this amazing thing happening above me, the Dannheisser Foundation where I'm responsible for being the janitor but also responsible for receiving deliveries of art work which Elaine was receiving a lot—and also moving things around as new things were coming.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Putting things in storage, if things needed to be stored. And then giving tours of the foundation for when groups—like collectors from Brussels came or people from MoMA came or from—Elaine was, you know, moving from different board to different board as she was kind of moving up on the kind of—

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: The hierarchy of collector kind of patron.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: She was also becoming herself in terms of a personality within the art world. And so she moved from one museum to the other. And so all these museums were coming down too because they were interested in her and what she was doing. And what she was doing was profound. I mean it was super—she was a very aggressive person. Really very competitive and she wanted the best and she wanted the toughest and she wanted—and so these are the kinds of things that I was being exposed to in terms of how I was charged with maintaining them and installing them. But also getting to know them and having to talk about them to visitors to the foundation. And this is really where my—I mean this is what gave me everything I kind of know today really.

CYNTHIA CARR: It's like the real education.

JIM HODGES: Oh, my God—

CYNTHIA CARR: As opposed to school.

JIM HODGES: It was like the luckiest thing ever.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Art history was contemporary art happening within—at my, you know, that I was a part of something.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: That I was also—I was still working at Nancy's so I had this anonymous art world job where I was in the basement basically—the art janitor there, preparator, and then—and at the basement at Elaine's and then kind of disassembling and assembling and also dissecting and discussing art. Touring people through the collection as it was developing and getting to know Elaine and what she was interested in and seeing a lot of art through that as well. And then I was working at—I worked at—I got jobs at other art galleries too because my friends were doing that—so I would be doing that and also art trucking. I was doing some trucking jobs. Because though I wasn't going to work anymore then three days a week, I had to sometimes get other jobs to pay for me.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: But the Dannheisser Foundation was the—I mean there have been a number of milestones of things—people for sure who have influenced me. But Elaine provided for me a real place where I could, as I said, kind of tear myself apart and rebuild myself in the context of this art world that I was wanting very seriously to be a part of.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And at the same time, learning a kind of—that different aspects of what made that world, the different facets of it outside of just the artist practice but the relationship to the museum, the relationship to the dealer, the relationship to the collector, and the object itself and its life—its life outside of artist studio within the hands of a collector—and what that life becomes in that context which really informed me a lot. In terms of how things are handled, mishandled, and how they live with other objects was super important to me.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And so I also was able because I was—Elaine entrusted me with the collection, I encouraged her to play with the things that she was collecting. And to not fall into a kind of convention of display that she would have learned from a gallery or from a museum. But that she had the opportunity to do things differently. That she had her own place and that she could write the rules the way she wanted to. And that art could be experienced in a clutter if you wanted it to be. I told her that she had a garden and that she should really let it—she should really let the garden be seen—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: Instead of putting things in storage, it's like let's just make it a little more challenging for people to see these things. And let's let the art have to stand up for itself [laughs]—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Which it all was able to do. It was a kind of a mess walking in there sometimes into the foundation—but an incredible mess.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: An incredible, beautiful, crashing, cacophony of experiences. Because she was—like, you know, she had an incredible appetite as I said and was very ambitious for herself but also she wanted—she wanted the best and she wanted—she wanted people to know she had it.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes. So while that's going on, you're downstairs doing charcoal drawings—

JIM HODGES: I'm going downstairs—it kind of—well, that's how it started. The charcoal drawings. And then it was—it became a kind of a living kind of—I was making a garden as well.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, you were making the garden at Dannheisser?

JIM HODGES: I was making a garden. I was making my own garden [laughs] downstairs. I was making the mulch.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: I was making the earth from what I was doing. That really became my investigation—I was really shredding stuff up and really—I decided that I needed to rid myself of everything that I had learned and taken on as if it were my own and start from scratch. So I really went very primitive downstairs [laughs].

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: I mean it got really very raw and primitive. And as I said a lot of processed work. I decided that I—there was not going to be any—no figure, no relation—no reference to anything outside of the materials and the making of the materials themselves. So that whatever the experience was going to be, it was going to be an outcome of how I would— maybe the chemistry of what I was putting together. But it wasn't going to be about a picture of something. It wasn't going to be any of that reference to history. In a way, it was really going to be kind of a project for me. And so it was kind of messy and dirty down there. It was really a mess. But I was also interested in just, you know—with geometry, I was interested in the spaces, so geometry probably played into the work more than anything else. Black and white also, I wasn't doing—there were no color—there was no color at all. Black and white and grey, I started sewing—because when I met Robert, I had the studio already at the foundation and Robert started spending a lot of time with me down there. And Robert was—Robert made shirts and he could sew. And so he brought his sewing machine down. He'd be working in my studio and watching Robert sew, I started going and buying fabric and started sewing things as well. Because I could make things out of fabrics.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: And yeah, Robert influenced me a lot being in my space with me when I was working. One day, I remember him—because he was always singing or fussing with something.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Probably a bit ADD or something, but he was taking tape and taping it and putting it on a piece of paper. And then he was taking charcoal and he was just kind of drawing the charcoal on top of the tape. And I was watching him and I thought I really love what he's done. And so I started working with tape.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: So Robert's presence in my studio had an immediate impact in terms of my own curiosity and my own kind of like finding things around me materially. Robert actually had worked at a—at a jeweler—for a jeweler. I can't remember the person's name. But this person had given Robert a spool of cooper chain. A small spool of cooper chain and Robert gave it to me. I guess it was maybe in '89, '88, '89.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: I took that spool off of the shelf and made like a spider web out of it. And that was like the first web—I made a rose out of torn tar paper and scotch tape. And I made a web out of this chain. And both were a connection to Robert.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: The rose—when I met Robert, as I said, we met at Tracks—and Robert had offered me—we had been hanging out and we were having a good time. And Robert said, "Do you want—I have some acid. Do you want some acid?" And I had taken lots of acid when I was a kid. And it always scared me. And I hadn't taken it since the first—since Expo '74 in Spokane [laughs].

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh. [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: It was the last time I had taken acid. And so I wasn't interested in taking acid but I was definitely, you know, into drugs and drinking. And so I said something very rude to Robert which was, "No, I don't want any acid. What else do you got?" And Robert said, "What else do I got?"

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: He said, "You're a pig," and left.



CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: So he walks away and I'm like, ah, shit. And then a few minutes later, maybe 15 minutes later, I'm seeing him on the dance floor and he's dancing with this guy—this tall, you know, kind of handsome black guy. And I said, "Ah, there's that cute kid and there's the guy who took the acid."

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: And so that was mine and Robert's first meeting. We left and went different places. I didn't see him again the rest of the night. And then that week, I was walking in the West Village and walking towards me—I was walking east on West 4th Street just past Sheridan Square and Robert was walking towards—on West 4th towards Sheridan Square where the Chase Manhattan Bank, right there, almost at the corner. And I see Robert and I said, "Hey." And he looks at me and just goes—"meh"—and does that and just keeps on walking by. And I was like, "Oh, okay." [Laughs.] So that weekend I go—I went to Tracks again and I was dancing and someone came up behind me, kind of swung me around, and it was Robert. And we—I was tripping on—I was on ecstasy and Robert may have been on—I don't know what he was on but we were both feeling really social, I guess—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And really fun. So we danced all night and I gave him a ride home. And he was staying at this guy's house, Tad, who was—who ended up being—who was that black guy he was dancing with. He was a person that Robert—he was a friend of Robert's and so he always ended up sleeping on Tad's couch. And Tad was this older guy who was a florist. And Tad—I thought of Tad as like as my gay grandfather.

CYNTHIA CARR: What was his last name?

JIM HODGES: Tad Schafer.

CYNTHIA CARR: Schafer.

JIM HODGES: Yeah, he had a flower store in a hotel on Madison Avenue. Which I don't remember the name anymore. But he was a florist—and so Tad had—Tad was sick—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And I remember—I don't know what year this was or when this was. I guess there's a record of it when I made this piece. But I hadn't—as I said, I hadn't been making any reference to the world and no symbols or anything. Nothing that could be read metaphorically other than with materials that were speaking themselves really. And then I decided—I had this tar paper that had been—the people on the second floor who managed the building were a construction company. And they would store some of their materials in the basement of the Dannheisser Foundation right outside of my studio door. And so occasionally, when I needed something, if I saw it out there, and I liked it, I'd steal it.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And so there was a roll of tar paper out there and I had brought it into my studio and I had started tearing it up and making drawings on the floor with just torn paper—or plaster or whatever else I got from them out there. And I made this big torn drawing of a rose. And I thought, I'm going to save this. Because after I make these drawings and everything, I would just sweep it all up and start over. I never kept stuff.

CYNTHIA CARR: You threw everything away?

JIM HODGES: I would just throw it all away. I rarely took any pictures. In fact, I was kind of anti-everything at that point.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: I also—which also somewhat is conflated with this idea of impermanence and things disappearing and not being in control—and utilizing that as reality and in my own practice as well. And acknowledging it.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: But at this time, I made this beautiful, what I thought was a beautiful rendering of this big black rose. And I thought—I'm going to save this for Tad. I made it for Tad. In terms of the image, it was definitely a direction because of Tad being a florist. I was also thinking probably of the Virgin Mary or something too but I can't remember what that connection was.

CYNTHIA CARR: Is that the piece called *Latin Rose*?

JIM HODGES: It's called *Latin Rose*.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: Yeah, and *Latin Rose* was named because of Robert.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: I was going to call it like Rosa or something. I didn't want it to have a name like that so I called it *Latin Rose*. So Robert's influence on my life was the reason why the name—and Tad's presence in my life was the reason why there was a rose at all.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: But that was at one of the first kind of permanent things that I made. Something that I decided I was going to keep.

CYNTHIA CARR: So that's the shift. That's like 1989.

JIM HODGES: That was the shift—

CYNTHIA CARR: That's the shift away from the painting and drawing and—

JIM HODGES: It was a shift into something—well, it was—someone asked me a long time ago, how did you start making flowers? And I said, "From the roots up." And that really describes where this comes from. I was—I had made—I was underground in the basement of the foundation under dirt and in the dirt and the mulch of making. From that came this image of a rose. And it was somewhat of a gift to me. That was a gift that it was being suggested because of Tad. My contact to Tad and also Robert. And the scotch tape, being all scotch taped together was directly an influence of Robert. Because once I sat there that day when Robert was just playing around—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: And I saw him doing that with tape, I was like I'm using scotch tape—that tape is fantastic.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: So I started using it a lot. I mean playing with it a lot. It was just one more thing to work with. And it was also something I could—I got some of it from work.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: I was doing—I was, you know, I was making lots of Xeroxes at the time too. I mean I was playing a lot with things that were available to me, around me. And so the Xerox machine at Nancy's was something I couldn't resist.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, yeah.

JIM HODGES: So I was making these degenerative things. Like that would just destroy themselves because I was Xeroxing the Xerox after a Xerox—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, a copy of a copy of a copy.

JIM HODGES: So they would turn into these kinds of wonderful kind of—I don't know, universes. So there was this—I was using what I had around me. I didn't have much.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: In fact, at one time, Robert was—Robert was visiting—I had rented a—I had sublet an apartment in the West Village on Sullivan Street. It was \$500 a month. And it was this tiny—it's that building—it's in the middle on Sullivan Street between 3rd and Bleecker. And it's—it was in the middle of the block. It was a big building for a while. And it was an old converted convent. So the rooms were basically the cells like the nun cells—which made so much sense from my background [laughs]—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: But the tiny little place, I mean it was a trundle bed—it was like a single bed with a—it came out. And Robert and I were living there together for a while. And Robert was like, "Why don't you sublet your studio? Why don't you sublet that apartment to somebody and move into your studio and save yourself \$500 a month?" I was like, "Oh, my God, you're so smart."

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: Well, I'm not supposed to be living in the studio.

CYNTHIA CARR: Under Elaine's art.

JIM HODGES: Elaine doesn't want me living in her basement.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: There were no windows in the studio. There was no bathroom in the studio. There was no kitchen in the studio. It was a dark room which I had lit—in the basement of a building in Tribeca.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: But that's what I did. My friend—a friend of mine had just come back from this trip from Mexico and he needed a place to live. And I said, "Allen, you can move into my place. If Elaine calls, don't tell her I'm not living there. Just let me know that she called and I'll move into the studio."

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: So that's what I did. I lived there for about a year until I got caught.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: And then I was in trouble.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, so that was the end of your job with Dannheisser?

JIM HODGES: It was not the end actually.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, okay.

JIM HODGES: It was the end for a month or two and I got kicked out because I had put the entire building at risk from getting their C of O—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: Because it was being inspected and they found me in the basement like—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, the inspector found you.

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: Not Elaine, okay.

JIM HODGES: No, but Elaine called me within two minutes of the inspector finding me. It was so bad.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, boy [laughs].

JIM HODGES: It was bad.

CYNTHIA CARR: That must have been maybe 1990 when you got caught there?

JIM HODGES: '89.

CYNTHIA CARR: '89 which was the—

JIM HODGES: Because I got sober in 1990.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: And I wasn't sober when I was doing this [laughs].

CYNTHIA CARR: I see, okay.

JIM HODGES: I mean it was shortly after—I mean this was one of the last, I guess, pieces of evidence to let me know that my life was kind of a mess. That I was now living in a basement illegally and—

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: And I was being kicked out of the basement so I really had nowhere to live. I mean the shit all kind of hit the fan. At the right time for me, I was, you know. By then, I was 31 years old. It was time for me to get my shit together.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes.

JIM HODGES: But that was also thanks to Robert because Robert had gotten sober.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: And he introduced me to a 12-step program and helped me do that. And that was fantastic.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah. Well, while you were living down there, were you also continuing to make work?

JIM HODGES: That's all I was doing.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: I was making work. I was working all the time. And it was part of like—I was working, I was having lots of studio visits. I even had exhibitions in my studio. I would have—I would put on shows and invite—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: Because I was connected to the, you know, SoHo scene and East Village had moved by that time—was moving over back to SoHo and—I had worked at Wolf Gallery which then Jamie Wolf opened up a gallery on Prince and Broadway. In that corner building above Dean & DeLuca. No Dean & DeLuca is on Spring. It was on Prince—anyway, there was an art building there and Jamie had the corner second floor space. I think Massimo Audiello I can't remember his name. I think he had place in the same building. There were galleries there and also galleries across the street. I think John Weber was across the street. But, anyway, I was working for Jamie and so I had this connection to lots of different art world people. Curators and, mostly art dealers, not curators but art dealers. So like Hudson, for instance, from Feature—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, yeah.

JIM HODGES: —Hudson was—he came to my studio a few times and I'd see Hudson around, of course. And they were all very supportive of what I was doing—and so I'd have these little shows because I wasn't in any of these shows. But I'd have these little shows in my studio. And slowly but surely I started getting invited to different group exhibitions. But that's all I did was work. Nothing really started taking off for me until I got sober, honestly. I had been in a show at The New—or at Artist Space in the winter of '89, '90. And—

CYNTHIA CARR: And was that a group show?

JIM HODGES: And Zoe was in the same—Zoe Leonard was in that show too. Yeah, it was a group show. It was from their—it was from the artist—what was it? The Artist File? The artist slide library?

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, yeah.

JIM HODGES: They did their annual—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, I see.

JIM HODGES: Exhibitions curated from there. And my friend, Sique, who I worked with at Nancy's—her husband, Andy Spence, worked at Artist Space as well—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, I see.

JIM HODGES: And Sique was involved with Artist Space. And I think she—she is the one who introduced me to the curator who came to my studio. And I had my studio was set up and it was—it was kind of the high point of my work in its—in the kind of grunge, kind of punky—

CYNTHIA CARR: Now, do you mean you just left a lot of detritus around or you would take—

JIM HODGES: I made—

CYNTHIA CARR: You would tear up the work and leave it there?

JIM HODGES: I basically made an exhibition in my studio that was this kind of—I mean it was made out of Crisco and you know, tar paper—

CYNTHIA CARR: Crisco and tar paper, okay [laughs].

JIM HODGES: Burning candles and mirrors and you know—

CYNTHIA CARR: So it's an installation.

JIM HODGES: It was an entire room.

CYNTHIA CARR: It's an installation. I mean your first installation.

JIM HODGES: Including an outdoor—including I used a slop sink on the outside of it and I miked the slop sink so there was a sound element of this.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: I hooked up this—the water so it would create this kind of ambient sound that I piped into this. Yeah, it was an installation.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: So it was my first installation.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, yeah.

JIM HODGES: And then that—the other curator came and visited me there. And she put me into this show.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And what was in the show though? It couldn't have been that.

JIM HODGES: It was the stuff that I had extracted from it that could be—that could stand on its own. Plus I made other stuff. In the middle of the installation, I changed the entire thing and took away the stuff and put new stuff in it. I was just—I was a mess.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: But as I said I was a mess—because I was a mess. I was really—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah. So it was before you got sober?

JIM HODGES: Before I got sober. Yeah, I was—I mean I was working all the time. But I was also partying all the time too.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: Robert liked to do lots of drugs and so did I. And our friend, Tad was a drug addict too. In fact, I think he lost his flower business to cocaine.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh. Wow.

JIM HODGES: You know I mean it's just—that's the way things are.

CYNTHIA CARR: An early piece of yours that I have read about in here—the piece with a ski mask? Made from a ski mask—

JIM HODGES: Yeah, good luck.

CYNTHIA CARR: That you unraveled part of it?

JIM HODGES: I actually took the ski mask and I just cut the—I just cut out the [laughs] face basically. I just cut it in half. So half the mask I threw away and the part that was the face—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, I see.

JIM HODGES: I pinned it up in the corner of my studio. That piece, I think it may have been something—I may have shown something like that. Things like that were definitely going on in the studio. Tape and staples and—

CYNTHIA CARR: So it's like—it's funny, it's a move towards sculpture and installation which are may be the only two art forms you never did in school [laughs].

JIM HODGES: Right.

CYNTHIA CARR: So—

JIM HODGES: But this is—this is really an outcome of the investigation that I was doing. As I said, the—what is this—what is a drawing?

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: What does a drawing do? And what is it? And it's funny, the installation that I had in my—in my studio was a literal kind of map of experiences that I—it was like walking. I made a path for people. It was a very literal way of how people were to experience things in the round. I was very interested in the idea of choreographing movements.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: That the experience of looking was a bodily experience that one's movements are a part of it. So I would play with, you know, vantage points and how something would be experienced. And using all places in the room—the floors and the walls and the ceilings.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: So I was very interested in this space itself as material. Those were fun days.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: I mean I think I still have fun. It's just that my—my—I've changed so much since then.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes. Well, I saw your most recent show with the glass—all the stained glass.

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: It's—

JIM HODGES: It's a far cry.

CYNTHIA CARR: It's a far cry but also an installation.

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: But a far cry from this.

JIM HODGES: Yeah, I think that—

[END OF hodges17\_1of2\_sd\_track07]

JIM HODGES: I'm glad you saw that show. Thank you for seeing it.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, yeah.

JIM HODGES: I think that what I loved about then was the necessity of—of having to make from nothing, and the resourcefulness of one's imagination. And kind of like, as I said, like picking up things from watching someone else. It's like huh, that scotch tape is—that's a, you know, from someone who doesn't give a shit about what they're doing.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: Again, it's like I said this kind of a paradox of experience that where meaning is residing not purposeful. But it's meaning nonetheless. And like I—and it feels like this is what I'm—what I think—what I got from New York. Like what I got from riding on the subway. What I got from the—the accidental—of what I was witnessing. Like the way someone had ripped part of a face off of a poster and what that—layers of meaning could mean and how that altered what the content was.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And this kind of immediacy of making was very interesting to me. It still is. I guess I've changed. I mean I've changed quite a bit in the last, whatever, 30 years. But it's very interesting—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: Like what we get—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: I know that when I—you know, I've always—I always think that I'm—I find a lot of influence or, not influence, but inspiration from nature. And images of nature—or natural phenomenon or, you know, natural materials—and artificial materials that look like nature or whatever.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And there in Spokane, surrounded—from being in nature to being literally working in nature, I would never have arrived at this kind of making if I hadn't been in the basement in Tribeca, on the subways, in the street. I would never have gotten to that nature in me—if I hadn't been removed from it. The city really informed—made me the artist that I am. In a kind of—in spite of the city, I made it. You know what I mean?

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: It's like because it was so difficult. I mean the—New York is a very—was a very challenging difficult place to be living. Especially if you have certain—I'll use the word "standard" but I don't know if it's actually what it is. But if one's deciding that one won't work a certain amount of time [laughs]—then one's deciding that they're not going to have much money.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: It's like, okay, then what are you going to work with? You better figure shit out—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: And, like I said, it's like the kindness of people who I would meet, for sure, saved me and supported me. Nancy, for instance. Nancy, I mean I was a mess working for Nancy. I worked for Nancy for nine years.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And I was at my worst working for her. I would come to work some days after not being home. I wouldn't go home. I would go from The Spike to an afterhours club like to Jay's or one of the sex clubs on, you know, and then from there I would go on the subway—maybe tricking with someone getting on the subway, still kind of drunk from the night before and high or whatever. Stop—there used to be—I'd get off on the A train on Canal Street and West Broadway and there used to be an Army Navy Store on the corner of West Broadway and Canal. I'd go in there and I'd buy a t-shirt and maybe a pair of underwear. And sneak in to Nancy's basement when I got there where my desk was in the basement and brush my teeth and kind of wash my hair. Change my shirt—

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: And I would be good to go. But I was a mess. And I would spend the day—I would—by, I don't know, 1 o'clock, after lunch or whatever, you wouldn't see me. I would be downstairs on a piece of cardboard—

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: In the work room with the doors closed and lights off so I could try to sleep. I mean it was just terrible.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, boy.

JIM HODGES: And Nancy never fired me.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: She supported me and didn't—she didn't call me on it. So I was very lucky. I was very lucky.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: Because I had some decent people who took care of me.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: Elaine too. I mean I was living in her place and this like—I mean I would have parties and—I mean we weren't partying in Elaine's but there was no bathroom down there. So like we'd go—I'd go upstairs and we'd be in the Dannheisser Foundation and we were talking—some millions of dollars worth of valuable precious things. Of course, no one was abusing them—I would never let that happen.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, yeah.

JIM HODGES: But just the idea of this kind of like what?

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: The belligerence—

[They laugh.]

JIM HODGES: I mean God, it's amazing.

CYNTHIA CARR: And all of this was happening in the '80s? All of this?

JIM HODGES: In the '80s until 1990.

CYNTHIA CARR: Until 1990, yeah.

JIM HODGES: Because in 1990, September 9th is when I stopped drinking.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: And that—everything changed then. I still worked for Elaine.

CYNTHIA CARR: Was there a particular thing that happened on that day in September that made you decide: I'm going to stop?

JIM HODGES: You know, Robert had stopped so that was something. And Robert had introduced the idea to me. Slowly. I wasn't so fond of it. And I also didn't want to be part of AA. And I was like, What the hell is AA? I didn't like—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: It's—it wasn't my scene. And—but that night, I had—it's so funny. I—there had been an opening at—I think maybe at Stux Gallery. I think maybe it was like Candyass [Cary Leibowitz]. There may have been a Candyass show at Stux, maybe.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh yeah.

JIM HODGES: And I had gone to Stux with a couple of friends and at the opening, there was this tall guy with a goatee in this like satin ball gown—like floor length ball gown kind of big. Huge guy like 6'4" or something, big guy in a ball gown. And I think Cary's reception or like the opening dinner party or whatever was like at McDonald's down on Broadway—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: Because there was a piano there. I don't know.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: It was just camp you know. So, anyway, we—and so, anyway, we were out and that night I ended up at the bar—at The Tunnel bar which was on 1st Avenue and 7th Street. It was a bar, I would frequent that bar. And I end up sitting next to this big guy in the dress whose name was Hunter Reynolds—

CYNTHIA CARR: Ah, yes.

JIM HODGES: And so I met Hunter that night. And Hunter, you know, he's partying and carrying on. I'm partying



and carrying on and I think Hunter probably has the hots for me. But I was—I wasn't necessarily interested in Hunter. But I liked hanging out with him because he was funny and we were having a good time. But I didn't want to sleep with him.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Anyway, he got me to give him my telephone number before I left, which I did. And then I got up the next morning, I think I was probably sleeping in the basement of the Dannheisser Foundation or something that night. And I got up the next morning and I thought, Oh, fuck. I did it again. I—there it is, I gave another person, who I don't care about, my telephone number.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: And now I'm going to have to make up some thing because I don't want to have anything to do with this guy. Or I mean—it's kind of harsh thing to say but I wasn't interested in him.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: But I had played with him. I had seduced him enough so that I wasn't having to sit by myself. And so when I examined my behavior the next day, I thought, you know, how selfish and manipulative am I being? And what about these people who I'm just like using basically?

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: So it was some moment of clarity and understanding of—and kind of like looking at myself honestly. And thinking like I'm not behaving very respectfully of others and certainly not of myself. And if I wasn't drunk, I wouldn't have been doing that. And maybe Robert's right. Maybe I should just stop drinking for a while. And so that's when I stopped—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: And thought, okay, I'll just stop for a while and see where it goes. And I've liked where it goes. And I haven't drank since.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: But then it ends up Hunter calls me and after a while Elaine says—she got rid of another artist who was working in the studio next to me at the time. I can't remember his name now.

CYNTHIA CARR: It wasn't Rhys Chatham anymore?

JIM HODGES: No, they were long gone.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, okay.

JIM HODGES: Rhys and Joseph had left. And so I moved someone else in. But I don't remember who they were.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: We weren't necessarily friends. But then that person was leaving. And so I gave Hunter the studio. And Hunter moved into the studio next to mine. And then through Hunter I met Tony Feher who then when Hunter went to do a DAAD in Berlin, he gave his studio to Tony.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: And then Tony moved in next door and Tony was in the studio for, I don't know, maybe eight or nine months. Maybe a year. So that's when I met Tony too—is through Hunter.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. Now during this time, let's say the late '80s, had you gotten involved in any kind of—you know political stuff, AIDS activism or anything like that? Were you doing any of it?

JIM HODGES: I had gone to—I would join actions.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: I wasn't going to any ACT UP meetings. I—I really was only working. And hanging out with Robert and getting high. I wasn't—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: But I remember participating in a—there was a sit in or something on 6th Avenue and Christopher—like where Christopher and Greenwich, all those streets converge right there—

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: And there was some sit in there. And I thought I'm joining this. And I joined that and that was the first kind of like action that I was part of. And then there was a—Hunter was involved in ACT UP which didn't matter to me either. But there was a—something—I found out something about an action that was going to happen down in—I don't remember the name of the place. It's down on Broadway, some federal building. And I went to where everyone was gathering for the march. And guys were making—had made coffins and were sharing—carrying coffins and I remember carrying—helping carrying the coffin but—and so I went to that protest. And was a part of that. But I didn't really know anyone and—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. You didn't like become part of an affinity group or any of that stuff?

JIM HODGES: I didn't and it's funny—one night I also—I picked up a guy or he picked me up at some bar, maybe—I don't know at whatever bar I would have been at. And he was—I can't remember his name. But he was part of Gran Fury.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: And we hooked up one night. But I don't remember him. But see this—my world was somewhat—I was pretty fucked up.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: And so—and my interests were getting high and getting laid and—in fact, that was kind of it. And then just making my work.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, yeah.

JIM HODGES: I mean my—it was a pretty—and it got even more and more depressing—

[They laugh.]

JIM HODGES: My life. Because I, you know, I mean when you're at a certain part of your decline, I think as far as substances go, you don't really care about a lot.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And I was already kind of living hand to mouth and not without much. I had given up my apartment and everything. So—It was kind of bad where I was. So my consciousness was a bit skewed as well.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, yeah.

JIM HODGES: But I was involved when I could have—when I would have the sense enough to get involved, I would. It's funny—

CYNTHIA CARR: Early days.

JIM HODGES: I would go [laughs] I would march in the parade for sure on Gay Pride Day—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: But that was about it.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: And, you know, stand there during the moment of silence or whatever. But—and that was all about partying.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: I don't know. Partying but also—I mean there was also—I don't know. There was something in my youth and being young and gay and in the city and feeling defiant and radical in your—just your lifestyle. It felt like I was being political though I wasn't in any organized kind of politics at all.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Political by definition if you're gay or something, yeah. [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: I thought also being like—being an artist itself is like—like making things is political.

CYNTHIA CARR: Well, it's true. All right, well—

JIM HODGES: What time we got?

CYNTHIA CARR: Well, it's just a little after 6:00—

JIM HODGES: Oh, my God—

[END OF hodges17\_1of2\_sd\_track08]

CYNTHIA CARR: I have to start with this. Okay, this is Cynthia Carr interviewing Jim Hodges at his studio in Ridgewood, Queens, on May 25, 2017, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. And this is card number two. So last time we left off with a discussion of your piece called *Latin Rose*. And you say that that was an early piece in your oeuvre, but not the first one.

JIM HODGES: No I should say that it was the first—it was my return, my first return to an image-based work.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: A work that was intentioned to portray a picture of something, and up until that point it had been an effort to distill the work and to free it of references other than the material's life itself. And so that was, that's how it would be characterized then, as a first of sorts in that regard.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: But a work that I felt like I had landed on something and that I then ended up titling *One—Number One*, was a paper work that was a combination of charcoal and dirt and spit and water and ink and different things. But I had taken the paper and then stapled it together so it stood as a kind of standing work in the center of a room and the drawn aspects was I guess scalloped—it became like this scalloped edge the way I stapled it together. So that I stapled these edges all the way down the lengths of the paper.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: And then created an object that would create—have an internal reading. Everything that was drawn was something that one would have to look internally into this space created by this combining the papers in this way, so it became this free standing thing. And what I was able to manifest for myself in the work was—and achieve a work that would orchestrate a kind of experience through dictating a kind of movement to see it. That one would, it was a kind of choreographing.

CYNTHIA CARR: You had to walk around it.

JIM HODGES: Exactly. So to see the work, you would engage it as an experience. So that was my first, that's what I called *Number One*. Because it was doing the kind of duty that I wanted the work to perform, which was to engage a kind of performative experience for a viewer, a kind of subtle choreography.

CYNTHIA CARR: Would it seem like, say, a tube?

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: But it had the scalloped edges so it wasn't a round tube.

JIM HODGES: Well it was organic in form because it was paper so it could stand—I mean, paper is amazing material. It can do anything, really. So it stood about this high.

CYNTHIA CARR: What, three feet?

JIM HODGES: Yeah, a little under three feet, probably. And probably—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: It was a fairly nice size.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, quite wide then.

JIM HODGES: Yeah, probably three-and-a-half feet.

CYNTHIA CARR: The circumference was pretty large.

JIM HODGES: Yeah, it was enough to—and within that then the drawings themselves were kind of a collection of the kind of drawing that I was interested in at the time, which I said was non-representational, and most based in a kind of recording of process that I was engaging with the paper through introduction of different kinds of material or applications to it, with a desire to free myself from any kind of imposition other than bringing together the components that could possibly create a result. So some of the pages were hardly touched, and then some others were quite heavily affected by, kind of the exposure to whatever materials I was exposing them to. Most of them dirt and charcoals and stuff, because the studio at that time had developed a kind of a very—one might think of a dirty place, but I thought of it more of as a kind of a garden, and that kind of the materials themselves were becoming kind of the earth of the space and these things were kind of growing from it and being made from it. So even the—I was for awhile interested even just in the randomness and the casualness of gestures, so the stapling and where my fingers touched it and how it was touched and everything became part of it as well. So I wasn't worried about the pristineness of anything. It was quite the opposite. That if it was, if I was working and this is the labor, then this is what happens and there wouldn't be any kind of hierarchy or any kind of imposition as I said in terms of—the look was going to be the look. And I know it's kind of—I don't know if that makes any sense or if it's even that important.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: But anyway, that's *Number One*.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay, and then also I think in that year which was 1989, I believe, you made a piece called *Deformed*.

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: From the Bonwit Teller shopping bag.

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: Which was opened out to be a cross like the Red Cross cross.

JIM HODGES: Yeah, like a cross.

CYNTHIA CARR: Was that what you had in mind when you made it, that it was that kind of cross?

JIM HODGES: Well, I knew it was a cross. I didn't think "Red Cross" necessarily. Growing up Catholic I just thought "cross."

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh yes.

JIM HODGES: And that it had had this—also you know, reading Genet and *Our Lady of the Flowers*, and that there are flowers on the Bonwit bag, the Bonwit bag also having this kind of other, like history in the city with other—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh with Warhol.

JIM HODGES: With Warhol.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah.

JIM HODGES: So there was a richness to it and it was a very casual way that my friend Scott had given me the bag. I think that he maybe had given me something that was in the bag and so I had the bag and so it was a kind of an accidental thing. And the cutting of it and the opening of it was a—was the drawing, was the opening. And then to display it was how the drawing was finished.

CYNTHIA CARR: I see. So the flowers were already printed on the bag.

JIM HODGES: They came on the bag.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay. [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: As did the words "Bonwit." Which when I cut the bag, the bag is a piece of, you know, paper, again. And there are parts of the bag that I snipped from the backside of that bag.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And glued them onto the front of the bag to cover up where it said "Bonwit" on it, because I didn't want to have that. I wanted the flowers. I just didn't want—and everyone knew it, but I didn't want those words there. You know, there was a story in *Our Lady*—Genet, within *Our Lady of the Flowers*. When he was in prison writing that novel, the prisoners in the prison that he was in couldn't—they had to labor, but they weren't, it wasn't intended to be enjoyable work for them. So they, what they made actually was paper bags, so they would fold the paper and glue them and make paper bags. And with that paper Genet started writing and wrote his manuscript which then in turn was found by the guards and destroyed and then he had to write it again. So the association with the garbage bag, with or not the garbage bag but with the paper bag, was also, I found it to have this connection to Genet again.

CYNTHIA CARR: I didn't know that about, that he was making paper bags.

JIM HODGES: I believe I read that in Edmund White's biography of Genet.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: I read it somewhere. I mean, I hope I'm not misquoting it, but I believe that's what it was.

CYNTHIA CARR: Well I know it's true that the manuscript was taken and destroyed.

JIM HODGES: Yes.

CYNTHIA CARR: That's definitely true. Interesting. Another early piece was called *Flesh Suspense*.

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: And it's square. It has, you know, made with makeup.

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: And fish hooks and—

JIM HODGES: Yeah

CYNTHIA CARR: And latex, and—

JIM HODGES: Lots of stuff.

CYNTHIA CARR: Lots of stuff.

JIM HODGES: Yeah, that was—it's so funny. I—what would you like to know about it?

[They laugh.]

CYNTHIA CARR: Well what was the inspiration for that?

JIM HODGES: Well you know, it's—well one thing that it was—what I was, how do—

CYNTHIA CARR: I think some things written about it mention Stelarc. You know the performance artist who would hang himself by hooks.

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: I wouldn't have necessarily thought of that, myself.

JIM HODGES: It wouldn't have been anything that I would have necessarily connected it to either but I do— it was definitely about flesh and about suspending, that the canvas was the body and that this was being held through these hooks.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And it was, it was a violent—appearing violent, I should say, gesture and one that I felt was I guess a necessary thing for me to do. It was also, you know, the making of a surface and the making of a skin, utilizing the pain, the picture plane as a body, and then to pierce it and puncture it and to suspend it was operating on a few different levels for me and was, I guess that I probably remember it more viscerally than intellectually or conceptually. I think it was very much—if one's work becomes a record of investigations, which I believe it is, the

work becomes the history of its making.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And stands as the record of the event, and this event, *Flesh Suspense*, is a fairly full event for me, and not one that I feel like I can easily talk about and I think because there's a lot that's crammed into the work itself. And I think for me to start unpacking it in a way other than the obvious kind of references to what it is and maybe some, you know just commentating maybe on the use of the specific materials, but then the reading of the work itself is really, that's not my job anyway.

CYNTHIA CARR: Well I—in these works like *Flesh Suspense*, *Deformed*, *One*—I mean, the purpose of this oral history is to talk about work related to AIDS. Do any of those pieces have anything to do with AIDS for you?

JIM HODGES: Well I guess that I think that everything that I was doing at the time, without sounding grandiose or making it all too important, was in response to, influenced by, associated with, and informed by, and I couldn't be separating myself in any way from what was happening in life. And so the—at every, every, every—it was omnipresent. It was in everything that was going on with me and my studio. It was flowing through it. It was the atmosphere and it was also the, somewhat the reasons and also somewhat a kind of antidote at certain times; an exorcism in response to things, a way of throwing myself into the inevitable; throwing myself into the casual accidental of things, the unknown of stuff. And so if AIDS were part of this experience, I hope that I would have come to these questions and this inquiry on my own. But our generation, we were thrown into this war, this chaos, this horrible reality that felt like we were being attacked, and there was nowhere to hide and you didn't know if it was going to hit you. I mean it was so destabilizing across—I mean really across the society, at least queer experience, and it was, for me this is what I experienced.

CYNTHIA CARR: In all parts of the art world.

JIM HODGES: And then the evidence of you know like personal friends, people that you know, your best friend all of a sudden sick and then it was like, now what the fuck? Now what's going to happen?

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: And then you know, I remember going to the airport and Rock Hudson had just come out and said that he was sick and it was like, I was in a cab going to the airport or something like at Christmastime and I saw it in the cab and I was just like—it just horrified me, horrified me. It's like these, that this was happening in like this way and it was just feeling so—you know AIDS was such a horrible—it was such a perversion. And even the use of the acronym, to me, felt so—it's still hard for me to even think about that. It's like AIDS, it was just like, how could, how could, what is, what is this, how could that become what is, it just seems so evil and cruel and mostly perverse to me. Like this was perverse. So getting back to my making, this is what I was in. This was the reality that we were living in and this is the place where I was learning to find my voice in that environment and so that's why I said, I think I would hope that I would have come to these questions on my own anyway, but we were thrown into a war and I think that life and death—I think that that context not in some kind of theoretical way but in the actual, yes, people are going to die, people are dying, you could die, this is killing people. And this society that seemed to be violently reacting to the very sick people; the very sick people themselves were becoming—were targeted as, in a way by, you know, politicians who are so despicable anyway. They utilized AIDS in such a gross, you know, exploitive and opportunistic way, which is just, it's, which was just insult onto insult onto injury.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes.

JIM HODGES: So yeah, I—this was the environment and so I was attempting to utter my voice. And in a way that I felt could have some use, purpose, and ultimately speak for me. And so that's where it starts.

CYNTHIA CARR: Well and then in 1990 I think it is, you do that piece called *New AIDS Drug*, based on a piece that was in the *New York Times* about supposedly something that's going to be a cure, just like a lot of things that came along at that time that people with AIDS go, oh maybe this will do it, or like you know, it's almost, you know, a plant will save us.

JIM HODGES: Well it was a cucumber, that Chinese cucumber that was going to have something that they had promised that there was some, it promised something. And I thought, Oh my God! I was visiting my friend, Tim Hailand. He was—Tim worked in the communications department at *Forbes Magazine*. It was his job, basically, and that was the time when people sent faxes. That was, you're communicating with people all over the world in the magazine through fax, and I was at, I was visiting Tim in his office and it was at night and that newspaper, the newspaper was sitting there and someone had written on it, "This is amazing." And I read the article and I thought, Tim, I have to, I thought this was amazing too, and I said I have to make a copy of this. I want to show it to Tad, because Tad was my friend who was sick. And so I went to the copy machine at *Forbes* and I made a

copy.

And when I made the copy, I thought well I should make another copy. So I made a copy of the copy and when I looked at the two, I recognized that there was a slight change from one to the other. And so that's when I decided, I'm just going to keep on doing this. And for me it was a prayer. It was a prayer, a ritual, that I was making it come true. And through the process of Xeroxing page after page after the other, that through this ritual of generations of this ritual, would reveal the answer, would be the truth, that would be happily ever after, that this would actually be true. So that's what I set out to do, without formally thinking all those things really, but in a way as I'm doing it, this is what I'm thinking. I'm praying here, and that became the piece that I called *New AIDS Drug*, which turned into this—a beautiful kind of universe of little dots and accidental things on pieces of paper that very much to me looked like a universe. And I thought, oh.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, it looks like the cosmos, the end part, yeah.

JIM HODGES: That probably is the answer, that the cosmos are very big and that this thing is a speck within this universe and we are part of that and we register as those specks, I guess?

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: I've never really articulated my read of the work, but it was an important work for me.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: As far as it's, as far as it provided me with a kind of a direct ritual to make the work.

CYNTHIA CARR: How long did it take to do? Xeroxing the Xerox, Xerox after Xerox?

JIM HODGES: The great thing about being at *Forbes Magazine*, you know, at night, because Tim worked at night. Because that's when they're sending faxes to Europe and wherever around the world and there's no bosses around so I could make as many faxes. So I worked for quite a while and Tim was working so I was just at the fax machine—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, you were at the fax machine?

JIM HODGES: At *Forbes*, yeah. Or not the fax machine, sorry. The copy machine.

CYNTHIA CARR: At the copy machine, yeah. To do the copies of the copies, yes.

JIM HODGES: Anyway, so that was funny. So yes, then I made that piece.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes. So at this point did you have a gallery?

JIM HODGES: Mm-mm [negative].

CYNTHIA CARR: No?

JIM HODGES: No, I, but I was friends with a number of gallerists And most of my friends had some association with galleries, either were working in them or started showing in them. Most of them were just working in them.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: And that particular piece, the *New AIDS Drug*, actually, I asked Hudson from Feature—I had, I would put on little shows in my studio, and I did a little show and in that show, I'd show like four or five pieces. I think I probably—I may have shown *Latin Rose*, a woodcut of sorts that I made that was a rubbing I took from a fallen tree, and a video piece, and then this. I showed the *New Age Drug*. I think. Or it could have been in some other installation, but I had shows in my studio and I'd invite people over. And I remember showing it to Hudson and Hudson was—I said to Hudson, I said, "I could fax this to you and then you could have the piece in the gallery because I could just, you just have to keep on feeding the faxes into your—

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: wouldn't that be a nice way to receive it?" I think he thought it was kind of interesting, but not interesting enough to where he said, "Yeah, why don't you fax it to me." I guess I could have just taken the initiative and sent it to him, but I'm a polite person and I wouldn't want to assume that someone would be interested in what I do. So I didn't want to impose on him. But he seemed to like the work.

CYNTHIA CARR: But you didn't become part of his gallery.

JIM HODGES: Never, no.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay. Well then there was a piece in '91 at White Columns called *Gate*.

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: And was this like a first installation for you?

JIM HODGES: Yeah, it was my first installation outside of my studio, outside of my own little things that I was doing in my studio, which were also installations, but they weren't in a public space.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: So when I got to have the opportunity to do something in an actual gallery, I decided that I wanted to use the space as the material. And how to best for me to exhibit it as material, and so I decided that I would frame out a room and paint the room and the floor this beautiful blue color and then I mounted this gate that you, would basically lock you out of the space.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: And that was my first—I guess that was my first like one person exhibition in New York.

CYNTHIA CARR: And that was an entire room that was.

JIM HODGES: It was a room, yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: That was painted blue, and then it had the gate. The gate was made of chains—

JIM HODGES: The gate was made of steel.

CYNTHIA CARR: And then spider webs. Oh, steel.

JIM HODGES: Yeah. It was a metal welded frame that was made to look like a wooden slatted frame. So I drew a kind of cartoon wood grain on—I made a drawing, basically, because I don't know how to weld.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh yeah.

JIM HODGES: I made this drawing that was a somewhat kind of an art probably art deco-ey looking thing, but it was more for me, I was trying to make wood grain or cartoon wood grain. So I made this cartoon wood grain and put a ring on it and then from that metal frame I welded hooks that I could then start linking chain to. And so I gave the drawing to my friend Dave and made it to scale, life size, and then my friend, Dave Nyzio, he took it and laid it on a—he basically laid the drawing on his metal welding table and welded the entire thing following the drawing, so when, so it's an exact drawing. So I got the drawing back, the drawing has burn holes and stuff in it but it's still my drawing and from that he welded all that. So from there I decided what I wanted to do, what I wanted this piece to show was the kind of spectrum of weights and delicacies of this system that I was interested in: chains.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And so I wanted it to be this, the outside of it to be this kind of robust, like macho, like bike chain, what you get—so I bought this big fat chain. And then from there every concentric ring as it moved in towards the center became more and more delicate until I got to the very center, and it's the most fine chain that I could at the time locate, either on Canal Street or up in the 30s in the you know the M&J or Trimmings, one of those places, you know that you could find those things. And so I wanted it to be, and I didn't know actually if it was going to hold together. I didn't know if those tiny things could actually support—if the engineering was possible. And then I found luckily that it was. So what happens is that you have these concentric rings of what becomes the image of a spider web, and then by the time they get to the center it's just the most delicate thing that you could break. I mean, if you just pushed on it you could break it. So I loved that it could move from these very solid, you know, kind of stable macho thing to something completely delicate, and so then by the time that it got to the inside I decided that I wanted to exploit its delicacy and also to lay another kind of narration on top of it. So I purchased these little charms: a charm of a couple that are dancing, there's—I think there might be a dinosaur, a butterfly, a ballerina, also a kind of range of a cat. I thought that if I could—that there could be a history in this thing also, that within this—it probably goes back to maybe what I was seeing in the *New AIDS Drug* too, that there was this, that there were these world within worlds, systems layered on top of systems, that I was very, without the language to articulate that at the time, that I was drawn to and liked composing with, I guess.



CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: So yeah, so that was my first show, and at the same time, for that show I wanted to have something to give to people, so I made a bookmarker, a pink bookmarker that I put a very short, maybe two or three paragraph story on it, which was my life story. I called it *The Story*, and it was basically my growing up in Spokane. This very short thing about going to Kindergarten and making drawings and—

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JIM HODGES: A really simple little story that I liked quite a bit and so I made this little pink bookmarker and I left that. First when I was—I wasn't really sure how to leave it or how to have it in the, in the space and at first, I think had a shelf. When you walked into this space and there was *The Gate*, I think I had a shelf with them there and then I decided to remove it because I didn't want, I didn't want to distract from *The Gate* as the work.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And though I felt this was also a work, I didn't want it to inform that. I didn't want it, all of a sudden this narrative to become somehow logged or registered as something to do with what was happening in this piece.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah.

JIM HODGES: I thought it would be confusing, which I think it is. But I wanted people to have something so I left a stack of them at the front desk at the gallery and if people wanted them they could take them and—so, the gesture was—that's—I just wanted the people to have something.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: A take-away.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: [Laughs.]

CYNTHIA CARR: Has that been shown again, like in your retrospective or something? *The Gate*?

JIM HODGES: *The Gate* was shown.

CYNTHIA CARR: *The Gate* was shown.

JIM HODGES: Yeah, but I—

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JIM HODGES: —didn't give away the bookmarker.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JIM HODGES: I gave away other things, but not that.

[They laugh.]

CYNTHIA CARR: Great. Also—well, in '92 there was this piece called, *What's Left*.

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: And that's with your, your clothing on the floor.

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: It was really your clothing—

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: —that you, like, took off one night after you came home or something like that?

JIM HODGES: Yeah. I had been that summer in the month of August, I had received a grant from the Mid-Atlantic Regional Fellowship for, a \$5,000 grant award for my work, which was, like, the first real money I had.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And, you know and I'd been—it was—I'd been living in New York since, I guess like almost 10 years or maybe it was 10 years. I moved here in '83. And I'd never taken vacation, really.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: I mean [laughs]—everyone goes away in August and I would always just be here sweating like, you know like—everyone else that doesn't take vacations, so.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, right.

JIM HODGES: So, all of a sudden I had this thing, and I didn't go to artist residencies, I didn't get onto that thing—it wasn't my thing, but when I got this grant I thought, Oh, I'm going to give myself a residency. I'm going to go away for a month. I'm going to—my brother lived in Seattle. I was visiting him. We went out to Vachon Island in the Puget Sound and I—just right out—excuse me—just right outside of Seattle.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And—a short ferry ride—and I found this little cottage for rent and I rented it for the month of August. And I went out there to live and, and this little cottage was in the woods behind this house of this architect and it was, like, in the back of their property in the woods, and in the morning when I would wake up and there would be orb webs, like, all over the place, in the grass, in the house, on the—like, everywhere.

CYNTHIA CARR: Wow.

JIM HODGES: And one morning I woke up and my bike, I had left my bike leaning up against the cottage and I had left a window open and, when I got up in the morning, a spider had made its web connecting my bike to the open window.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: And I sat there for the longest time thinking about the tragedy of choice. And the randomness of this experience. And the beauty of that gesture of that spider to hold all of that in place.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And that really penetrated me. So, when I got back to New York I thought, I'm going to make a piece that, maybe could suggest the things that I thought I saw when I saw that gesture.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: So, when I got up in the morning I knew I was going to make the work. I chose my clothes, I got dressed in what I thought would be, for me, my kind of clone uniform of the minute. I had my Doc Martens, I had a belt that was studded. I had my jeans, I had, you know, a tight black tee-shirt, and it was like, if I were going to be going to The Spike or something that would've—I would've been wearing those clothes. And I thought, you know, I want to wear the clothes that I want to wear. And it was like this record that I knew I was going to be making. So when I got to my studio, I took off those clothes and made the piece with those clothes, and so that's—those are the clothes that became, that became that work.

CYNTHIA CARR: And there's a spider web on it.

JIM HODGES: I made a web that—and then from the—when the clothes and the thing, that's when I sat and I started weaving the web out of a chain.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: Small, very small chain.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: Because the clothes make kind of a circle, I guess, or they're like a U-shape or loop or something.

JIM HODGES: Well, the clothes—

CYNTHIA CARR: So then—

JIM HODGES: The clothes are, basically, how they came off my body.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, uh-huh. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: I didn't like art direct them, other than just stripping myself.

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: So they, like, how my—I—how stuff ended up in that was how it ended up. And then I took photographs of it when I boxed it up and tried to keep it that way each time and made a map so it could, at least, be the same distance from the wall and—

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: —things like that.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: But it's—and the clothes are, kind of, like—I mean, they're kind of getting a little stale now.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: They're a little old.

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: But, they're, they're okay. I washed—I've washed things in them.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: I've asked the people who own it if I can wash it—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: —when I've shown it.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And actually, when I showed it the last time, I wanted to show it in a space that was not gallery space or museum space. It was actually in the lobby of the Hammer Museum and the owners of the work wouldn't—and the museum itself—would not agree to, to let it be in that space because it was dangerous or it was vulnerable there. And so I remade the piece from my, from my [laughs]—I made an exhibition copy that I destroyed afterwards.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: So I could keep it there. So it had, it had my contemporary drag—

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: —attire on myself, myself clothing.

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: So I updated it recently, but—and I destroyed that.

CYNTHIA CARR: I see. It's probably somewhat similar though, jeans and tee-shirts, or—

JIM HODGES: It was the same at—I mean—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: Yeah, I mean, I kind of wear the same thing as I've always worn, but—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, yeah.

JIM HODGES: Yeah. Anyway.

CYNTHIA CARR: Boy. It seems like—I always thought of it as, like, when you come back from a night out partying or something, and then you just take your clothes off so you can go right to bed.

JIM HODGES: And that's the—

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: And that's the association, too. I mean, I think that that's the associations. I knew that clothes left on the floor where it would be, you know, would suggest things.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative]. [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: [Laughs.]

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes.

JIM HODGES: You know? And—but, but that's why I also wanted it to, to—without being, I guess stereotypical, but I guess, in a way, I was playing off stereotypes. I was also dressing in a way that I thought was my, was my signifiers of who I am.

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh, yeah.

JIM HODGES: So that I curated the clothing because I wanted it to say something about me. I wanted it to have an identity there.

CYNTHIA CARR: It's kind of what—it was the gay male style of that time. I thought it was, like—

JIM HODGES: One could call it that.

[They Laugh.]

CYNTHIA CARR: Think of a, you know, the—say the guy is in ACT UP.

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: They have a, you know—

JIM HODGES: The boots and the—yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: Doc Martens, the boots and the—

JIM HODGES: Mine weren't, weren't Doc Marten boots, they were Doc Martens loafers, but they were still Doc Marten.

CYNTHIA CARR: And, you know, actually a funny thing I didn't realize at the time, was that for straight people it was unusual to think of gay men as wearing stuff like Doc Martens and, and looking, kind of, tough.

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: You know? [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: Isn't that funny?

CYNTHIA CARR: I didn't realize that at the time, but I think it's—I've realized it since.

JIM HODGES: Well I mean, it's like, I'm fascinated by the way we, the way we present ourselves. So—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah

JIM HODGES: Yeah, I'm fascinated by that.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: And by fashion.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah. The—there's this—well, there's also this piece that was interesting to me, it's an untitled piece, but it's done with the saliva transfer. And it was then—it was part of the show that you did with your work and Warhol's work.

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: But, of course, I sort of like, paid attention because it's the use of bodily fluids, which at that period of time was something that was called into question, let's say,.You know and—

JIM HODGES: Well the—

CYNTHIA CARR: I remember—what is it, the group—not Creative Time, but maybe, that poster that said, "Kissing doesn't kill."

JIM HODGES: That's Gran Fury.

CYNTHIA CARR: Gran Fury, yeah. And it was an issue, like—

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: —a bodily fluid like saliva—would, you know, could kill somebody. [Laughs.] Or whatever. And so that's, I don't know, I just sort of noticed it for that.

JIM HODGES: And, and the politics of that. The propaganda that was available to the right to utilize that. To stoke the fuel of panic and fear.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: No one is—we're all susceptible to that. We're all affected by these attacks on us, on our—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: —security. But to think that one would be stigmatized beyond being traumatized by an unknown agent that's destroying you and your friends.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And who knows who's next. You have a government politic that's out to manipulate and exploit the experience, so that you become a target for other, from other directions as well.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: So you become this thing that's to be avoided, that should be branded, that should be tattooed, that should be locked up, that—I mean, and—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: —and to start—and to be policed and to lose your—the steamrolling of that narrative—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: —was the real—to me, is part of the affront that is, that is under—of course, ACT UP did a great job about bringing awareness to this kind of attack.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: And fought it brilliantly and changed the world—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: —in their actions. But that crime, like numerous crimes that our politicians have committed on us, as citizens is inexcusable and is criminal.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And those, those places of attack are the ones that—those don't go away and those can't be forgiven. Those have to be remembered and those are—people need to be held accountable for those.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Politicians, definitely, need to be held accountable.

CYNTHIA CARR: I know.

JIM HODGES: It's so convenient to hide behind their office doors—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: —and make this kind of—create these kinds of destabilizing energy and forces in people's lives—who are trying to live a life in spite of health issues, economic issues, what have you.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: Racist issues. Homophobic issues. I mean, come on.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: I mean, life is fucking hard enough already, you're going to make it even harder? Assholes.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: It's so, it's so despicable to me. And that's part of the perversion of the entire thing.

CYNTHIA CARR: Now, was that part of your thinking when you decided to use saliva?

JIM HODGES: Well, it was—I was thinking about kissing, for sure. And I was thinking about, about, yeah, about my saliva and about my body and, and it was also something that was very simple, it was something that I learned when I was a kid.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: It was something that I got from Bazooka bubble gum when I was kid. You got Bazooka bubble gum, you open it up and if you lick your, you licked your skin, you could transfer a fake tattoo onto you and that was—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes, right.

JIM HODGES: That was what I did. So it was like that was, that's childhood.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: That's my, that's part of the beauty of how I grew up. That was part of what I—so, it's like when I—I make lots and lots and lots and lots and lots and lots of drawings. I make lots of drawings.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes.

JIM HODGES: And I make drawings with pens. And I was making these drawings with these pens and at some point it got wet and the, and the blue that came from, from the ink when it was wet because it was, obviously, a water based ink—was so pretty.

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh.

JIM HODGES: And so beautiful, so I started making drawings and drawing so that I would intentionally transfer them onto something else, but then it became this other—which provided me with, again, that—the access to a wildness, out-of-controlness that I enjoy. That I need in my practice.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: A kind of out-of-controlness, of sorts, and not to an extreme case, but you know. I mean, there was just chance that was part of it that I appreciate and utilize in my work. So, yeah, I started licking the paper and then applying the drawings to it, and so I was making these little tattoos.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: Transfer drawings with spit. With my saliva. And, and funny, you know, I don't know if I was using it—I was spitting on my drawings then too.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Part of the process work that I was making was using my spit. And I still use spit when I make

drawings, especially charcoal drawings.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: It's right—in fact, I can't—I don't—I can't pick up a piece of charcoal without salivating.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: It's the bizarre, I mean, it seems crazy, but it's true. I—once I start working I start—I just—because it's such a natural part of my process of working. Because it provides—it just opens a material in one more way. I don't have to grab water—I don't need any of that. I can just use myself.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: I'm into that [laughs].

CYNTHIA CARR: And it's not necessarily a political gesture. [Laughs.] But—

JIM HODGES: Well, I don't think it—I think at the time, I think everything was being informed by that. But I wouldn't—I don't want to overly, I don't want to overstate things.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: I think that work—I think things stand for what they are and they resonate with the meaning and their intention and how they are recorded and made, and I don't, I don't want to overstate stuff.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, okay. Okay. There was a—while we're talking, you've been drawing here and you did a piece called *A Diary of Flowers*.

JIM HODGES: Yes.

CYNTHIA CARR: That you had the drawings—565 flowers. Is that right?

JIM HODGES: Well, that was the first work I—or the first large installation of that. It wasn't the first one of those I showed.

CYNTHIA CARR: And they were all drawings on napkins like you get in a diner, or something.

JIM HODGES: Yeah, yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: So, now how did that start? Did it, maybe, start when you just went to a diner and you started drawing? Because it's—

JIM HODGES: Yeah, somewhat like that. Not just diners but you remember when you were—back then, when you'd go to a deli, and you'd buy a cup of coffee, you'd get your coffee and the, the guy would open up a paper bag, put it on the counter, fill up your coffee, and always, they would grab the guy at the counter, it was just like—they'd grab a stack of napkins, stick it on top of the lid of the coffee, put it in the bag, fold it up, and hand it to you. So they were using the, the paper napkins as a way to keep the bag from getting all wet because they're always those little holes in the top of those coffee—plastic coffee things at the time—

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, yeah.

JIM HODGES: —at the delis that I was going to. And so then I started, then I would, you know, go to my studio and I'd have these paper napkins or, you know, and I was like, Well, I'm not going to throw those away, I can—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: —I could use those. So I started, basically, doodling images on it and I thought, Oh, I'm going to make flowers. I'm going to only make flowers and whatever I make will be a flower. And I won't throw any of them away and I'll use every one of them that I have, I'll keep and these will be the diary that I make. And so, that's what I did and that's how it, kind of, casually it happened. I was, at the time, working in the basement of The Dannheisser Foundation, which was a beautiful place for me to work. And—but in the winter the foundation, my—what was heated was upstairs and I was in the basement and the basement was only heated with ambient heat from the building itself.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: So, in the winter the floor was concrete, it would get cold and after a few hours working there my

feet would get cold, and once my feet are cold I would have a hard time staying warm. So then I would leave early and I would go to a diner and then I would spend a few hours making—drinking coffee and drawing.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Maybe hanging out with a friend or something. So that's—and then I would take them and put them in my backpack. And, I guess, that had been going on for a while and one day I took them out of my backpack and pinned them up on the wall in my studio and —

CYNTHIA CARR: So that was an installation in your studio that you did, *The Diary of Flowers*?

JIM HODGES: Yeah, the first time—I pinned it in my studio and then the following September, after I had shown *Gate* at White Columns, it was a tradition that the first show in September, at White Columns, would be a review of all of the artists who, the prior year, had done a white room.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And so Bill Arning invited me to present a work in this exhibition, and so I presented the first *Diary of Flowers*, which at that—for that one, I think it may have been, probably 75 drawings. Maybe around that, I'm not really—I don't really remember how many it was.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: And I—or maybe more than that. It was pretty big. So that was pinned up and that was the first time I showed it and it was that show, seeing those, I got a call. The show had been up for a while, and I got a call from Bill Arning and Bill said, "There's an artist who's interested in buying your work, but it's too big. They want something a little smaller and they want to know if they can come and visit you in your studio?" And I said, "Yeah." And he said, "It's Felix Gonzalez-Torres," and I said, "Great, give him my number." So, Felix called me and Felix was a character and he was very funny. He said, "I really like this work. It's, I think it's really beautiful and it's very strong and I really want to have it." And he said, "I want to support another artist, as well." He said, "I don't do cocaine, so I can buy art," or something, some joke like that.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.] Uh-huh, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And so, Felix came to my studio and he bought a smaller *Diary of Flowers* from me. And then buying, probably, three or four others drawings made like that that he gave to friends. He gave one to Amada Cruz, he gave one to Nancy Spector, he gave one to Michael [Jenkins], he gave one to Julie Ault. I think those are the people he gave them to and, and that—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: And then, I guess from that, that kind of—these shows at White Columns gave me some presence. People were—Andrea Rosen came to my studio, made a studio visit.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Ted Bonin and Carolyn Alexander came to my studio and, you know, Julie, of course, Felix. And Felix was, you know, Felix, when he was excited about something he didn't hide that. He let people know he was excited and, and so Nancy Spector, Amada—I mean, a lot of people came to my studio because of Felix's—basically, promoting the work to people who he thought would be interested in it.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative]. At that point, this was, like what, '94 or something?

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: So he was—

JIM HODGES: Well that was—was it '93, I think, was that show.

CYNTHIA CARR: '93.

JIM HODGES: '93, yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay. And so at that point, he was already established—

JIM HODGES: Felix was.



CYNTHIA CARR: —at that point. Felix was.

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, he had done some of the billboards. He done the billboards and—

JIM HODGES: Yeah, and he had had his first show at Andrea's.

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And he had done the billboards, of course. *The Bed* and, and also the, *The Stonewall Anniversary* at—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: —down at Sheridan Square. That beautiful timeline piece he did.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, yeah.

JIM HODGES: And I was, of course, familiar with Felix's work, but I, you know, we didn't know each other.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: And then we became, we became very close friends.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, yeah. There was another piece from around this time, that I just made note of it. It doesn't have to do with, with AIDS or anything, but it's called *Here's Where We Will Stay*.

JIM HODGES: Oh, yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: And it was—it's made out of silk scarves.

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: It's very beautiful.

JIM HODGES: Thank you.

CYNTHIA CARR: And it looks like it's like almost room size or, maybe, I don't know 10 or 12 feet, or—

JIM HODGES: Yeah, I think it might be even taller than that.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, uh-huh, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: I wanted it to be big. I wanted it to be, kind of, too big.

[They Laugh.]

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: I wanted it to be—I mean if we're going—if that's where we're going to stay it had to be big enough.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

[They Laugh.]

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, right. But this was inspired by your mother—

JIM HODGES: Well—

CYNTHIA CARR: —right? Or—

JIM HODGES: I don't think that that would be a fair, I don't know if it's—it's not *not* inspired by her. It certainly was inspired by my mom in terms of how I made it and what it was made of. But that would also—I don't want to reduce it to being inspired by mom.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JIM HODGES: My mom and I were very close and I absolutely adored my mother.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And, I mean, I was—I didn't realize until she was dying that I actually was in love with my mom.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: But I was really—my mom was an amazing person, and she taught me a lot and, and so the scarves, there was something about, you know, my mom would wear a scarf, as a lot of women do and did. And, I remember my mom's scarves always had that—a beautiful smell of her, of her scent.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Which was, you know kind of, I mean, my mom wore Shalimar, so it's a very, it's a quite specific smell.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And so the scarf with that scent was just like, there was, it was just a visceral kind of childhood thing that I kept and, of course, because I was in love with my mom—it was something that had some resonating and sustained impact in me and, and would lodge somewhere deep in my psyche, I think. So, so there's the back story to that.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: When I wanted to make this work, I wanted to make, I wanted—I was very interested in, in Sigmar Polke's work. And I also had seen work by another artist, whose name escapes me right now. He had a space for a while in Amsterdam, but I can't remember. I'm sorry, I don't remember his name. Anyway, he was making, basically, paintings out of camouflage. I bought a fabric—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: And Polke, of course, what I was interested in him was he was using sheets and tablecloths and fabrics and combining them and painting on them and, I was looking at these paintings because at the Dannheisser Foundation I, of course, get to see this—these Polke's and, and I was like, you know, it's great, I love that materiality, but why, why the paint?

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Why is there a necessity for—the painting exists. It's, why more? Why does there have to be more? So that's what I set out to make, was to make my painting, if you will, which is not. It's intentionally not painted. But that the scarves themselves were going to come in the pallet that I would be able to pick and choose from and that I had been collecting them for a while. I had been just going—when I would go to, like, the flea market or something I would, if I saw a scarf that was particularly pretty or something that had a nice color or something, I had been collecting them. So I thought, I'm just going to, I'm going to make a work out of that. And so I set about sewing it together and that was just—and I guess that that's part of the, the familiarity of family part of it, too, and the connection with my mom. Not just my mom, but my great-grandmother as well, who had shown me how to sew. And you know, how to thread a needle. And so, I could sit and make the work and it was a nice way for me to work. I could take the work outside and sit by the river—

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: —where my studio was in downtown Tribeca and so I could be outside during the summer and sew. So, yeah. It was an answer to a lot of things.

CYNTHIA CARR: And then—the title, *Here's Where We Will Stay*.

JIM HODGES: Uh-huh, mm-hmm [affirmative].

CYNTHIA CARR: What was that?

JIM HODGES: I was thinking of the work as a location. As a kind of—like a place where we could get behind, you know? Like we could go back behind there, we could get a chair and we could put the chair out and we could have a fort. We could have a tent back there. And which is also—these are, these are from childhood associations, too, with—like playing fort with my brothers in the living room or something with the coffee table and maybe a blanket.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: You know, it's like—so it was these fantasizes and the fantasy of *Here We Will Stay*, as it was really this idea of a—I mean, it was my, I guess a kind of a hopefulness for home. For an invitation for whoever that would be, who would be staying—we would be staying. He and I.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.].

JIM HODGES: You know? I mean—it was that.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: So, it was, I think it was, maybe, a kind of hopeful gesture—

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: —also.

CYNTHIA CARR: I think it was around that same time you started making the *Flower Curtains*.

JIM HODGES: After that. I had sewn that piece and after I made that one, I had made another one using similar materials and then I was in Spokane again—no. God, when was it? I'm trying to get the chronology right. Because I made this piece with my mom, I made this piece with my mom, which was a—I bought gauze at the fabric store.

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JIM HODGES: I was in Spokane visiting her. I was there again. I gave myself another August vacation.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes.

JIM HODGES: And I went to Spokane for August. And told my mom, I said, "Well, I'm going to be there for a month. I have to work. I have to do something. I can't just hang out." I said, "So, you and I, we can make something together." And she said, "Okay, that'd be nice." So, I went to the fabric store and I bought yards, and yards, and yards of gauze. And I sewed it up and made a piece of fabric that I think was probably, like, 24 feet square. And that became the canvas, or the paper, or the arena that she and I would work together with. And then I went to the fabric store and I bought all of these artificial flowers, all of these silk flowers.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: And came home with this huge bouquet of silk flowers. And I sat with my mom, and we started taking the flowers apart and then just taking a flower off a bunch of flowers sitting there. And then just casually sewing it anywhere on—anywhere on this piece of fabric.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Any direction, front, back, up, down. none of that stuff mattered. Wherever it wanted to go it wanted to go. And that piece I made and I called it *A Possible Cloud*. And then my mom and I, during the course of the month, we worked on that together. And we made that work. And then we would talk about what we were making and how is it experienced—how like, for me it was, like, okay, so we're making this thing, but then what? What happens to it? How do we show this? So, that was a fantastic conversation I had with my mom.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Really fantastic, because she—my mom wasn't—my mom was a committed [laughs] and—I used to call her "terminal" mother. She was a mother first and foremost, an amazing mother, but she had the incredible intuition as far as creativity goes. She was a very creative person and she was always making things, kind of crafting things and making things and amazing. But what I have realized in our conversations around this work is that she had a beautiful, articulate, intuitive understanding of things. And it was so wonderful to talk to her about how something is experienced, how something can be shared with someone else. It was fantastic and it was also a wonderful experience for me because my mom was my first teacher. She was my first critic. She was my first audience. She was my—she was that. She was the one who gave me the paper and also the one who pinned my drawings up on the refrigerator. You know? All those things. So, working with her again came all those rich and beautiful memories of her and her influence on me. And how she had helped me and actually influenced me and made me the person that I am. And certainly informed the way of a kind of care and thoughtfulness in the world, I definitely got from my mother. And all those things came back.

CYNTHIA CARR: So, this work called *A Possible Cloud*—

JIM HODGES: Yes.

CYNTHIA CARR: Was that the first flower curtain?

JIM HODGES: That was the predecessor to the flower curtains.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JIM HODGES: That was the first—it was a large thing. I wanted to make it big so that it would be, again—too big. And it was made out of these silk flowers. And then from there, I went back to New York and I had been—I guess at some point, because of Felix, I was introduced to Kippy Stroud at The Fabric Workshop and Kippy had invited me down to make something with the workshop. I had had a studio visit from—I can't remember the curator's name right now—but she was an adjunct curator from The Fabric Workshop.

I was being curated into this exhibition that was going to be happening at—used to be—Takashimaya. It was a Japanese department store on 5th Avenue that used to have an art gallery in it. And I was going to be in the show at Takashimaya. And I was going to make the piece—because everything from the show was going to be made at The Fabric Workshop. And so, I was invited by The Fabric Workshop to come down and to make a proposal to them.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And so, I went to The Fabric Workshop with three different ideas. And one was—one thing I brought with me is I had taken the silk flowers that I had been working on in my studio. And I had taken them apart and I had ironed—and I had removed the plastic parts from the fabric part. And then I had taken all those petal parts and ironed it flat, and then got a needle and thread. And I started sewing them together kind of haphazardly until I made kind of this odd-shaped piece of fabric that was pieced together from these little flowers.

And I brought that with me. And I presented my things that I wanted to do and it was a fairly—it was kind of a table like this. It was, like, Kippy was at one end, there was a handful of fabricators and people, directors and stuff from The Fabric Workshop. And I was sitting in the middle and I made that my thing. And I showed it to Kippy and she's like this and she said, "Well, I don't even think," she said, "I don't even think Virgil could sew this badly."

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: And she threw it to Virgil Marti, who was an artist who was working at The Fabric Workshop at the time. And she threw it towards him and it kind of landed in front of him and everyone at the table started laughing. And I'm looking at this and I thought, that's the one I'm going to make.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: Because that's the one that initiated this kind of lightness within this thing. And I thought, I said, "Let's make that one."

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: And so, I went with the idea of making this very big, again, I wanted a very big thing—utilizing the same kind of methodology that I had worked with my mom. It didn't matter where the flowers went, how they were—but I had to figure out a way of making it. So, The Fabric Workshop, Meryl—I can't remember Meryl's last name, but Meryl was the one who suggested that we pin all of the pieces of paper—or all of the flowers—that we pin them to a piece of paper and that with the piece of paper would hold it together. And then we could sew them under the sewing machine, and then we could make these panels, and then the panels then could be pinned together again, and then we could make this whole big thing. And that's how the piece was made. It was ingenious and very simple and straightforward.

And so, my whole thing was I was working with a handful of fabricators at Fabric Workshop and my thing was, like, Okay, we're going to pin all this stuff together. Do not make pictures. Don't make designs. Don't—I mean, all these, like, all these don'ts. Don't make it about you. Make it random. Just make it random. Everything's going to be exactly where it's supposed to be [laughs]. And that's how I basically made them—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: —was that way. And then I made 10 of them.

CYNTHIA CARR: 10 of them?

JIM HODGES: But not all at The Fabric Workshop. I made two or three with The Fabric Workshop. One they—I think two I made with them. They own one of them. And the rest are my exhibits and sold. And as I made them, I thought, Well, I could make these forever because people really like this and this could ...you know, then I thought—

CYNTHIA CARR: They're really beautiful, I think.

JIM HODGES: Thank you. But it was also—to me, it was my first kind of crisis of a success—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: —because I thought, well, shit. I don't want to be the flower guy.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: I wouldn't mind being the flower guy, in fact I love being the flower guy. But I didn't want to become a one-trick pony. I didn't want my work—I didn't want to be summed up by one gesture.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: And so, I decided at that time that I was going to make a certain number and I decided that number was going to be 10. And through that 10 that I would play with scale, and also play with color. And so, the first one was this multicolored thing. I think the next one I made was all white. And I showed the all-white one at CRG Gallery. And when Felix walked into the show, to the opening, he said, "I love it. Can you make it in blue?"

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: Joking, because that's Felix.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And so, then the next one I made was called *In Blue*.

CYNTHIA CARR: Was it in blue?

JIM HODGES: It was all blue flowers, yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: It was blue? Okay.

JIM HODGES: And I made that one with my mom.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Actually, after Felix died.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh. Well, I know that that work, there's something so delicate about it, which is part of what makes it beautiful, I think.

JIM HODGES: Thank you.

CYNTHIA CARR: And you know? And also, but—it seems like that comes up, and you're using these, like, spider web-type things and these flowers and things that seem—and that's why I've seen your work get talked about as being about fragility and temporary things and ephemeral, the ephemeral. I mean, does that make sense to you? Or, is that what's going on?

JIM HODGES: You know, it's like I said to you, I don't want to sum things up and I don't want to, like, simplify things.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah. Right.

JIM HODGES: I really try to avoid it.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: I mean, I really don't want to reduce things to these kind of knowns that—because then that

becomes the stamp and that becomes what it is.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: I wouldn't argue that the work is—it utilizes these attributes. But it is not—that's not the "there." You know what I mean?

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: It's like that's—it's like talking about a partially—it's like talking about the front of your face and not the rest of your head. You know what I mean?

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.] Yeah. Yeah.

JIM HODGES: It's like, is that me? Where am I in this? If we're going to look at me and talk about, where am I in this thing? Is it just because I have blue eyes? Is that what I am? So, I really do believe that these kinds of attributes and what something becomes reduced to is not necessarily helpful in discussing work. But I also understand the necessity of a kind of shorthand and a kind of reductive communication when one is burdened with the difficult—and I would suggest and say impossible—job of articulating with language, something that art is already articulating in itself.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, right.

JIM HODGES: So, there you have the problem.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yes.

JIM HODGES: These things will never meet.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. Right.

JIM HODGES: But yeah, in this same way that I was describing the chain and the variation of what I was referring to as a macho, you know, heavy biker chain on the outside and associating it with the most delicate and dainty chain on the inside. I'm fully aware of these gestures and their—the weight of them and how that weight is content. And certainly, the flowers and everything that is in that piece, which is basically just fabric, pieces of fabric sewn together. It's all intended to register across the spectrum that is revealed in it.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I think—

JIM HODGES: Including those things.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah. I guess the pieces I've read, there's some—some of the reviews that have come out about your work have sort of related it to dealing with AIDS and the loss that all of us went through during that period, you know? And that it somehow relates to what you're doing in your work. Because your work is so—it's I mean, it's not didactic or anything, like, some people. You know, like I wrote a book around David Wojnarowicz—

JIM HODGES: Oh, love his work.

CYNTHIA CARR: —and he was always, like, a message is right there. And yours is very different—

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: —than that. But—

JIM HODGES: If I could have—if I had the access of articulation that Wojnarowicz had then I would have utilized that.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: The work that I have is—and what I make is a result of the mechanics, machinery, the tool, the instrument that I have to work with, which is me. And this is as good as I can do.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: This is as good as I can talk. And it's—I realized when I was very young and it was kind of in a crisis moment—when I felt the necessity, actually, to be making more overtly political work. And it pained me greatly that I had no voice. I didn't feel like I had a voice when it came to that.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah.

JIM HODGES: And it dawned on me as I was sitting there, kind of stewing and being very disappointed in my lack of ability, was that my voice—what I am able to articulate, what I bring forward is the only thing I need to worry about. I shouldn't compare myself to others. I shouldn't make that the focus point, that I'm not doing good enough. I really need to keep my focus on what I can do and honor and respect the voice that I have.

Because that voice is the voice that I'm going to utilize. And what good is it going to do for me to try to do something that I am not doing? Not to say that I don't attempt to push myself all the time. Art demands that. But what I thought about in those moments of contemplation was that, like, sitting on a—like, I'm only just in charge of, like, what the space is that I'm taking up.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: I'll maintain and keep my focus on that. And I recalled when I was a kid, I ran track. And my track coach told us—when you're running, especially a sprint, which is what I ran—sometimes winning the race or losing the race by a 10th maybe a 100th of a second. And my track coach said that if you're turning your head to the right or the left to see where you are during that race, those incremental measurements of time that it takes for you to turn your head is enough for you to lose the race.

So, only run your race. And so, that really [laughs] that's something I always—I never forget it. Even though I continually do forget and go through the exercise of, Oh, I should be doing that. And then I should be doing this. And then it's like, Wait a second, get back into your own lane on this track and just keep facing forward.

CYNTHIA CARR: It's very good advice [laughs].

JIM HODGES: Wasn't it?

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah. Very good advice.

JIM HODGES: Helped me run.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah. Because, I see—think—your work doesn't have a message but it's poetic, you know? And so, I think sometimes looking at, say, the flower curtains, I can't always say exactly what I feel about it.

JIM HODGES: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

CYNTHIA CARR: But I definitely feel—

JIM HODGES: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

CYNTHIA CARR: You know? I mean, it evokes an emotional response, which I think is a valuable thing—

JIM HODGES: Thank you.

CYNTHIA CARR: —to get that from art, you know?

JIM HODGES: Thank you.

CYNTHIA CARR: It's really—

JIM HODGES: I appreciate that very much. One wants to provide—at least, I think that I would like the work to have a purpose and a use.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Of course. So, and then I guess that's what I feel like I—I try not to lie to myself and I try not to believe my own BS.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: I really try to listen to what my inspiration is and pay attention to it and, like I said, leave the rest of it outside and do my best. And I figure that its value and its judgment is not any of my business. And if I have been lucky enough to be able to maintain myself in this effort to be a service to this thing that I call art, for me—and that that is my master. As long as I am being a good servant to that thing, then that's all that matters. The rest of it is just chatter in my head. Or chatter outside of my head [laughs].

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.] Yes.

JIM HODGES: But thank you for saying that. It means a lot to me.

CYNTHIA CARR: Of course. Now, you did a show featuring your work with Felix's work.

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: And it was called *Floating a Boulder*.

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: Which, I love that title.

JIM HODGES: Thank you.

CYNTHIA CARR: I'm not sure what it quite means. But I just love thinking about that.

JIM HODGES: Thank you.

CYNTHIA CARR: Something very heavy has floated up, ascended. Or something.

JIM HODGES: Yes. Thank you. I'm glad that you liked it.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: Felix said, at one time, he loved my titles. And so, for the titling of that show, I really wanted it to be—I wanted it to mean what it was intended—what it needed to mean.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: And it took me—it was the—one of the hardest things was to articulate that show with language that I felt would hold it without crushing it.

[They Laugh.]

CYNTHIA CARR: And you curated, it right?

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: You chose work of his and work of your own—

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: —to go together

JIM HODGES: Yeah. And I got 90 percent of what I wanted—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: —in the show. All of mine that I wanted, but one collector refused to loan their work—

CYNTHIA CARR: Ah. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: —from Germany because they didn't—it was a piece that they said they never loan, which was too bad. So, I left a blank wall where it was supposed to go. And I made a post card of it instead. It's called *Untitled (Jorge)*.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: It's a beautiful image that Felix had taken of reflection—of the sun reflecting off the surface of the water. Gorgeous, gorgeous piece. And Jorge was a friend of Felix's who he would speak about often. So, I wanted Jorge's presence in the show.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: That was an incredible honor and I'm extremely grateful for Glenn Fuhrman and FLAG for letting me—inviting me to do the show. I mean, it was something I didn't really want to do. At the same time, it was like, Okay. I wish I could do it again, actually. I would love to do it again. Although until I would be doing it and then I'd be like, why am I doing this again? It's so hard.



CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.] Yeah. And your work that's in there, it's a lot of the stained glass work, right?

JIM HODGES: There was one piece made out of stained glass.

CYNTHIA CARR: The one piece of stained glass. Okay.

JIM HODGES: That was the first stained glass piece I ever made.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh. And so—

JIM HODGES: And that was—yeah, that's funny. Yeah. It was a drawing I made—when I was making *A Possible Cloud* with my mom that summer—I made that drawing as a kind of symbolic representation of my feeling about me and Felix as a kind—of these energies, as forces together—as a kind of special note to him.

CYNTHIA CARR: You didn't do any collaborative work with Felix, did you?

JIM HODGES: No.

CYNTHIA CARR: But you would maybe do studio visits and talk about your work with each other and were good friends?

JIM HODGES: Oh, yeah a lot. We talked about. I mean, Felix was a force of nature. And the most beautiful, generous, intelligent and funny—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: —person. I mean. He was just—he was an extraordinary person. And a demanding person. In the best way. In what you want people—how you want to be asked to be a good person, asked to be a responsible person, asked to be articulate, asked to be, you know, present—

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: Felix asked these things. Maybe demanded it more. So ...

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes.

JIM HODGES: Invited it, we should say. He invited it. He also invited a lot of play and a lot of joy. And magic and possibilities. So, yeah. We hit it off.

[They Laugh.]

CYNTHIA CARR: That's great. That's great.

JIM HODGES: And we had lots to talk about. But mostly, I mean, because, you know, we were at different places in our—what becomes a practice, what becomes a career. And so, you know, Felix would be talking about, "Well, here's the floor plan for the Hirshhorn." And I'd be thinking, like, well, maybe I'm going to have a show.

[They Laugh.]

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: You know, maybe I'm going to have a show somewhere. Which is very funny. But yeah. That didn't matter. I mean, Felix's studio was a table like this in his apartment.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: He didn't have a studio practice per se.

CYNTHIA CARR: Wow.

JIM HODGES: It was basically working at a table. That's where he did all of his work. At his home. And then where'd he'd also clear it off and serve dinner.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.] Oh, boy.

JIM HODGES: I wish he was here for you to interview.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, definitely.

JIM HODGES: You would *love* him. I would say you'd probably want to go back more than four times.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah [laughs] definitely. It's funny because I know somebody who was a good friend of his boyfriend, Ross.

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: You know, and talked about Ross and Felix and so—I think Ross died pretty early on, you know. But—

JIM HODGES: Felix was madly in love with Ross.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah. .

JIM HODGES: *Madly* [laughs].

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, and his work. I mean he did—the billboards are one thing, but, you know, his work had a subtlety to it like yours where there's—

JIM HODGES: Thank you.

CYNTHIA CARR: —you know, a stack of candy you don't think of as a political piece but it is.

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: I mean, you have to do a little more work as a spectator and think about that, you know? But that's good.—

JIM HODGES: And I mean, I think that—I guess that's why you talk about what you refer to as didactic, which I think is, you know I mean there's the objects, the experience of the viewer—the work is giving. Work provides. It doesn't lead and it doesn't insist. It welcomes and is a threshold. It's a threshold towards us. To ourselves. Any time I'm in communion with art experience, it's a mirroring of sorts. I am broadened to a refinement of my nature, my self. And I am learning about the world through this thing and about me and how I see. And art provides us with an endless, endless supply of possibilities and potential, but also of deep articulate knowledge and question. It questions. And this is why—we were talking about it earlier, about the robbing of a society, what kind of society are we going to become when we lack the ability to see and to understand visual language.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: It's, like, what are we doing when we don't—when we'll lack a particular clarity of understanding nuance, understanding the world through the lens or through the experience and exposure to an artistic gesture. This is not casual at all. It's, like, this is at the very root of our humanness is our record of these gestures. Going back to before we had any idea of what people were. We have evidence of these gestures. Do we want to become those same primitive people that we don't know what we're seeing any longer? Because that's where we will head up if we lose our sense of self through our work, through art.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And audience is what the work needs [laughs].

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: And if you remove the literacy of your audience, what do you have? What happens to art? Does it all become a written statement of some kind? Or are we still leaving space for some candy that's left on the floor? You know? I mean, these are very important questions. Because it is the children who are the ones that have to be—it has to be able to be taken to that deeper level of understanding of material and experience. And what does it mean to walk in and take something off the floor of a museum? I mean, this is—these are very important conversations—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: —and thank God Felix made the work. And thank God there was a museum. But I'm worried about the public at large.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well.

JIM HODGES: [Laughs.] I am concerned. Especially when art is the answer to all of our problems.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: And I'm not kidding when I say that.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. Oh. Yes. Let's see. So, that's when you started working with stained glass. That's sort of recent, like 2010?

JIM HODGES: Well, stained glass—I made that stained glass piece—I had wanted to make a piece of stained glass and I don't know how it ended up that I was able to do it, but I found a guy in Brooklyn, who had a stained glass shop and I decided what I wanted to make and it was the drawing of an eagle and butterfly that this drawing that I had said I'd been inspired kind of imagining of these energies of forces of nature together intermingling. And so, that became the image that I used for that piece and then I showed that work in San Francisco and I own the work, fortunately, so then when the show came up for—at the FLAG, of Felix and I, I wanted to include it because it had a history with he and I.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: As far as image goes.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And so, that's why I included it in that exhibition.

CYNTHIA CARR: And that history being, going back to what? The—

JIM HODGES: To that summer of *The Possible Cloud* and—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, okay.

JIM HODGES: —making that little drawing. And yeah. It was a time, Felix referred to it as a summer of—or, Julie, I think, referred to it as a summer of love.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, that's Julie Ault, you mean?

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JIM HODGES: And so, it referred to that period and it was a period, particularly a time in Felix and my history that I wanted to include in the show.

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CYNTHIA CARR: One piece that I found very interesting was the one called *Landscapes*, which is a white shirt—

JIM HODGES: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

CYNTHIA CARR: —lying flat on a table. And then inside the collar there are all these other collars.

JIM HODGES: It's actually—there are actually other shirts inside the shirt.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, other shirts.

JIM HODGES: Yes, they shrink.

CYNTHIA CARR: Well, it looks so flat—

JIM HODGES: Yes.

CYNTHIA CARR: —that I thought it must be one shirt with just other collars, but it—

JIM HODGES: No, there—

CYNTHIA CARR: —there are other shirts.

JIM HODGES: Every—they reduce in size. They get smaller and smaller and smaller and smaller, smaller, smaller, smaller [laughs].

CYNTHIA CARR: Wow.

JIM HODGES: Yeah, it was—I was in, in Maine at Kippy Kamp one summer, and I was up there working for a couple of weeks. And, I went to the fabric store there on the little island. It was a fantastic fabric store. And when I was in there, I was looking around. I thought, I could write my life story—

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: —with these fabrics. And I thought, Aha, that's not such a bad idea. I should make—I'm going to write my autobiography out of fabric. And so I decided I would write my life story up to that date through choosing the fabric for a shirt—and making them concentrically larger as I aged. So the interior one is basically a blank white shirt. And then on top—the smallest one inside was a blank white shirt. And then the next one was a baby-blue terrycloth shirt. And then consecutively material after material after material, I chose a symbolic representation of a particular period of my life.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And so, when we were little kids, my grandmother and my mom would make us clothing and make us shirts. And every Christmas, my grandmother Nana, my great-grandmother made us pajamas. We were three boys at the time, so we always had matching pajamas.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: I remember one pair specifically was red and white stripes. So I—there's a—I think maybe the second, third shirt was a red and white striped shirt. There is sort of this—

CYNTHIA CARR: These are shirts that you still had or you had to find them—

JIM HODGES: No, I had to—

CYNTHIA CARR: —to replace them?

JIM HODGES: —I went and I—then I came back to New York and I made the piece here in New York. But I went to the fabric store and searched for fabrics that I could compose this autobiography. This self-portrait through clothing—or shirts. And, yeah, and so when I was making the work I—the piece I called *Landscape*.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And there really all those other shirts in there.

JIM HODGES: They're all inside.

CYNTHIA CARR: Wow.

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: And you made the shirts? Or someone made them?

JIM HODGES: No. I worked with a friend of mine, Doug Safranek. His boyfriend Reggie—I can't remember Reggie's last name. Reggie was a shirt-maker. And—I guess you could maybe even consider him a tailor, but I don't know if he would call himself that. But he sewed well—and he could make patterns.

CYNTHIA CARR: Wow.

JIM HODGES: And, you know, it's my—and my boyfriend earlier on, Robert Valenciano, was a sewer. And Robert used to make me shirts. And he would make me shirts for, like, if I was going to have a show or something, Robert would make me a shirt. And I loved Robert's clothing. He was such a kook. And I don't know if—what Robert's—what my association with the shirts with Robert. There is something with Robert. I'm thinking that the—that identity as we talked of before—about who we are and how we present ourselves.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And, so that's something I think that it was part of Robert's influence as well. I've been very lucky. I've known some amazing people, who've had profound influences on me. And I feel like I've been blessed with a rich supply of inspiring people [laughs]—

CYNTHIA CARR: Well, that piece was—there was something about—I mean, I thought of it, immediately thought, "I contain multitudes," you know?

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: That kind of approach to it.

JIM HODGES: Right.

CYNTHIA CARR: But there's also something elegiac about it. I mean, it made me think—I just thought while we were sitting here, I thought of *Brokeback Mountain*.

JIM HODGES: Ah, that's interesting.

CYNTHIA CARR: The way it ends. I don't if you ever saw the movie or—

JIM HODGES: Of course.

CYNTHIA CARR: —you know.

JIM HODGES: Yeah, he steals a shirt.

CYNTHIA CARR: He puts on his boyfriend's shirt.

JIM HODGES: Doesn't he, like, I thought he takes it.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, yeah. There's something with—

JIM HODGES: I think he—

CYNTHIA CARR: —the shirt.

JIM HODGES: I think he keeps it in his—in his shirt.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, yeah.

JIM HODGES: Yeah, it's a beautiful thing—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: —But, yeah, I think that, well, those of us who've had the sad and extremely painful experience of going through our loved one's closets and taking a life and its remains in clothing—a lot of it is clothing.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: And so I think that there's something that is shared that we all can identify. We all enter a piece through the familiar and then there's the world that we open up in ourselves because of what it invites us to do. Or can—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: —Perhaps. So I'm glad it sounds like you had a nice thought about that work.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes. And, I mean you've done a lot of other work with, you know, camouflage, and which, I don't know, it seems different because we're supposed to be focused on the AIDS thing, I know—

JIM HODGES: Right.

CYNTHIA CARR: —but that's, you know, that's very interesting stuff.

JIM HODGES: Thank you.

CYNTHIA CARR: And also that they're, you know, comparing it with Warhol using it. I didn't realize how much he did use it, but he did.

JIM HODGES: Yeah, a lot. And also Pistoletto used it as well. And the camouflage pattern was a creation by a naturalist, an artist, by the name of Abbott Thayer, who lived somewhere in New England. I think maybe Massachusetts, but I'm not 100 percent. And he was interested in animal concealment. And he was also a painter, besides being a naturalist. So he had the ability to make things, and he made little cartoon army men, and kind of created these patternings and tried to sell the idea to the military. They rejected it and they didn't want it. So, kind of the father of camouflage was an artist. So my interests in it are multiple. But part of it is also—it being art. And that this rendering of nature is an invention of an artist. It's not—it wasn't stamped out by some military—though of course it is associated with it because it's been utilized by it. But it's, you know, it's an

artist thinking about and looking at the world. So, I—when I—the first piece that I made that I showed was a mural that was a wall of camouflage that I created a kind of vortex with. It spins and gets smaller as it moves into the center on this very big painting.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, yes.

JIM HODGES: And I called that work *Oh Great Terrain*. In a way, to celebrate its reference to nature and one of the great heroes of American voice and poetry Walt Whitman, who would often use the expression of, "Oh," in his songs to himself. And I wanted to echo back to that as well, to kind of celebrate us as this part of this beauty. And of this paradoxical reality that we [laughs] live in. This complicated realities that we're in.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JIM HODGES: That we occupy.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: But, thank you. I'm glad you wanted to talk about it. I don't think that it explicitly has much to do with AIDS per se, but I certainly think it can be examined and looked at from a queer perspective in terms of its —of camouflage in a conceptual—invention of concealment—and one's association with that as hiding one's life —

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: —which has been part of my queer experience—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes.

JIM HODGES: —when I was a kid—which I think may be of the past—

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: I'm not sure if that happens any longer with people, but not at least as frequently, although it still happens around the world, of course.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. For some, yeah.

JIM HODGES: Yeah, horrible.

CYNTHIA CARR: And—

JIM HODGES: Indonesia actually just this week lashed—caned two men—I think it was 80 or 98 times.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yow.

JIM HODGES: They removed two lashes from the cane for time spent in prison. It's really—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, boy.

JIM HODGES: Amazing. Yeah, craziness.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah. And the other thing, just—I'll mention just briefly because I think it doesn't have much to do with our central theme. But those boulders that look like jewels.

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: You know, with the way—I don't even know what's covering them—

JIM HODGES: It's stainless steel.

CYNTHIA CARR: Stainless steel?

JIM HODGES: Yeah. Painted stainless steel.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, painted stainless steel.

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: In very beautiful colors.

JIM HODGES: Thanks.

CYNTHIA CARR: So it looks like, I mean they are these giant, you know, rocks.

JIM HODGES: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

CYNTHIA CARR: But they look like they could be jewels if you saw them from a distance.

JIM HODGES: [Laughs.]

CYNTHIA CARR: I go, what's that? You know, so it's sort of like the opposite of what you're doing in a lot of your other work, which is so delicate and fragile.

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: And this is like these giant things that could kill you, but they look beautiful [laughs].

JIM HODGES: Thank you. Yeah, I am attracted to properties of things. And I'm glad that you appreciated that—

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: —those properties.

[They laugh.]

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes. Right. Well, one last thing to get in here is that there was a film that you made—

JIM HODGES: Yes.

CYNTHIA CARR: Now, I was a little confused. Is it called *Encke King*?

JIM HODGES: No, the film? The film is called—

CYNTHIA CARR: Or is it called—

JIM HODGES: The film is called *Untitled*.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, *Untitled*. Okay.

JIM HODGES: And I made the film with Carlos Marques da Cruz.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And Encke King.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, Encke King. Okay.

JIM HODGES: E-N-C-K-E King.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, okay.

JIM HODGES: I was asked to—god, it was like, it was quite a while ago now—if I would participate in a lecture series that was being sponsored and held at Artpace down in San Antonio, in connection with an exhibition that they were doing of a retrospective of Felix's billboards, which they were showing in three different cities in Texas. Over a course of the year, they would show the entire body of billboard works in Texas, and they were asking different people to talk about the billboard project. And I didn't feel like it was something—I didn't feel at all equipped or qualified to be making any kind of real scholarly talk on Felix's work beyond what's already the canon. I didn't feel like I could—that I was suited to do that. But I did think that I could bring my own experience and my history with knowing Felix and how—

[Assistant comes in to tell him the time.]

JIM HODGES: Okay, great. Thanks.

JIM HODGES: —and what I knew of him, that I could create something. And so my idea was that I would do a kind of a performance. A multimedia performance where I would have different people at a table and we would be talking and doing different things. And there would be go-go dancers—I mean there would be all these other things in films.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Quite elaborate thing. And it was going to start with getting lots of images. And so I needed to have a PowerPoint done. So I came back to my studio and I told Carlos, who was working with me, I said, "Carlos, I want to make a PowerPoint—I want to make this performance thing. I kind of gave him what I wanted it to be. And I wanted to include all of this stuff. And so we need to start with a PowerPoint." And Carlos was like, "I don't know that program. Why don't we make it a film because I know how to edit."

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: I said, "Okay. We'll do it in film." And then as it turned out, I started talking to people and there was no budget and there was no—I tried to get Jorge to go and dance and he wasn't available. And I wanted to get my friend Justin [Vivian Bond] to maybe propose—to do some performance thing. And I wanted to bring these groups of people together to do something, to create a kind of world, to inflate a kind of world, a context that one could imagine Felix existing in the center of it all. And from that place, from that state of these different conditions, he was putting forth these billboards into the world. And so the film sets out to create the context in which I tried to articulate a state or a condition that Felix was functioning in. And so, utilizing also aspects of Felix's work, a randomness of collaging of events and dates into a nonlinear chronology. This film does that same kind of thing. But it also allows for introduction of music, because I wanted this thing to be multimedia. Music, of course, was a very important part of Felix's life—as music is. And the specific music in particular, and specific references to different media, news, things that were going on that were informing him, and what we were living through.

CYNTHIA CARR: I mean, there's a lot in there about ACT UP—

JIM HODGES: Yes.

CYNTHIA CARR: —various ACT UP demos.

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: I don't know if he was in ACT UP.

JIM HODGES: He was.

CYNTHIA CARR: He was. Okay.

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: So, yeah. The Day of Desperation—

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: —was in there—

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: —and all that, yeah. So, it was that, plus—

JIM HODGES: Plus lots of other things.

CYNTHIA CARR: —other things from his life.

JIM HODGES: His life, and also just life.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: Life and—

CYNTHIA CARR: From that period of time.

JIM HODGES: From that period, but also earlier in that period. It goes back. I think the earliest footage is from World War II, the concentration camps.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: Which queer, gay people, when they were liberated from the prisoner of war camps—the gays ones had to go back to prison because they were—because they had the pink triangle on and they were still



illegal.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, boy.

JIM HODGES: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: That was the world.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.] Okay. How much has this film ever been shown? Is it just—it would have been shown in Texas, or was it—

JIM HODGES: No, it was shown that time, I mean that—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JIM HODGES: —so I think it's 58 minutes long.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: So that was my lecture.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: I went there. It was May 1st. It was May Day. And that was my lecture. And then I decided that I would—where did I show it next? I was invited to show it at—I can't remember the chronology. At the gallery. At Gladstone Gallery. Miciah [Hussey], who works at Gladstone, who was teaching up at a school, asked if I would show the film at the school. And so I did. And from there it was seen by—

[Assistants are leaving conversation.]

Thanks, guys! See you!

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: It was seen by Nelson Santos—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JIM HODGES: At Visual AIDS.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, yeah.

JIM HODGES: And Nelson asked if I would let them distribute the film for a Day Without Art.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: And I said, "Yes." And it ended up being shown, screened at I think 75 different cultural institutions around the country that year, thanks to Nelson.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JIM HODGES: I've shown it—I showed it in my show that traveled around. And I would show it again. It showed at the IFC on the Day Without Art here in New York.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, okay.

JIM HODGES: That was great. Then it showed at a couple of different institutions as well.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Great. Okay. Well, I think—

JIM HODGES: It's exhausting doing this, I can tell you.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JIM HODGES: It must be for you, too.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah. I think we've come to an end here.

JIM HODGES: Okay. Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]