



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

## Oral history interview with Ron Athey

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Archives of American Art  
750 9th Street, NW  
Victor Building, Suite 2200  
Washington, D.C. 20001  
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>  
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/>

# Table of Contents

Collection Overview .....	1
Administrative Information .....	1
Scope and Contents.....	1
Scope and Contents.....	1
Biographical / Historical.....	1
Names and Subjects .....	2
Container Listing .....	

## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Oral history interview with Ron Athey
<b>Date:</b>	2016 June 17-18
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.athey16
<b>Creator:</b>	Athey, Ron (Interviewee) Fialho, Alex, 1989- (Interviewer)
<b>Extent:</b>	2 Items (Sound recording: 2 sound files (4 hr., 40 min.); digital, wav) 68 Pages (Transcript)
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Digital Content:</b>	<a href="#">Digital Content: Oral history interview with Ron Athey, 2016 June 17-18, Transcript</a> <a href="#">Audio: Oral history interview with Ron Athey, 2016 June 17-18, Digital Sound Recording (Excerpt)</a>

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

This interview is part of the Archives of American Art Oral History Program, started in 1958 to document the history of the visual arts in the United States, primarily through interviews with artists, historians, dealers, critics and administrators.

### Available Formats

Transcript is available on the Archives of American Art's website.

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## Biographical / Historical

Ron Athey (1961- ) is a performance artist in Los Angeles, California. Alex Fialho (1989- ) is a curator and arts writer who is the Programs Director for Visual AIDS in New York, New York.

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## Scope and Contents

An interview with Ron Athey, conducted 2016 June 17-18, by Alex Fialho, for the Archives of American Art's Visual Arts and the AIDS Epidemic: An Oral History Project, at Athey's home in Los Angeles, California.

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## Scope and Contents

Athey speaks of his childhood in Pomona, California; early religious experiences; early sexual experiences; formative exposure to punk music and culture in late adolescence; developing his own punk acts; contracting

HIV and seroconverting; intersections between HIV/AIDS and drug-using cultures; his body of nightclub-based performative work beginning in the 1990s; his reflections on international presentations of his work; technical aspects and design elements of his performance art and film work; changes in his lifestyle and self-care regimen after seroconverting; the role of the audience in performance art; his relationship to AIDS activism; motifs of apocalypse, nihilism, and humor in his work; his place in art history; his current work as a teacher and mentor; and his contributions to American art. Athey also recalls Johanna Went, Karen Finley, Diamanda Galas, Reza Abdoh, Cynthia Carr, Leigh Bowery, Divinity Fudge, Harold Meyerson, Lia Gangitano, Brian Murphy, Amelia Jones, and others.

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## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

### Subjects:

AIDS (Disease) and the arts  
Performance artists -- California -- Interviews

### Types of Materials:

Interviews  
Sound recordings

### Names:

Abdoh, Reza  
Bowery, Leigh  
Carr, C.  
Finley, Karen  
Fudge, Diamanda  
Galás, Diamánda  
Gangitano, Lia, 1968-  
Jones, Amelia  
Meyerson, Harold  
Murphy, Brian  
Visual Arts and the AIDS Epidemic: An Oral History Project  
Went, Johanna