



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Julie Ault

Funded by the Keith Haring Foundation.

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Table of Contents

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

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Julie Ault
Identifier:	AAA.ault17
Date:	2017 November 14-16
Creator:	Ault, Julie (Interviewee) Kerr, Theodore (Interviewer)
Extent:	6 Items (sound files (6 hr., 3 min.) Audio; digital, wav) 90 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Julie Ault, 2017 November 14-16, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Julie Ault, 2017 November 14-16, Digital Sound Recording (Excerpt)

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.

Biographical / Historical

Julie Ault (1957-) is an artist, writer, and curator in New York, New York. Theodore Kerr (1979-) is a writer and organizer in New York, New York.

Scope and Contents

An interview with Julie Ault conducted 2017 November 14 and 16, by Theodore Kerr, for the Archives of American Art's Visual Arts and the AIDS Epidemic: An Oral History Project, at a studio in Brooklyn, New York.

Scope and Contents

Ault speaks of the nature of memory and giving an oral history; her skepticism of linear narratives; leaving rural Maine for Washington, DC at age 17; her family history; her interest in popular culture and commercial

culture as a teenager; disco and nightclubs in Washington and New York in the late 1970's; working a variety of day jobs in New York, including a telephone answering service; meeting Tim Rollins for the first time in Maine; her interest in conversation; her relationship to questions; the formation of Group Material in 1979; her relationship with Andres Serrano; Group Material's collaborative dynamic, and its effect on her personal development; the complexities of trying to write or tell history; the shifting configurations and contexts of Group Material over 17 years of activity; mounting, and thinking critically about, individual exhibitions after Group Material; the first AIDS Timeline in 1989; the ephemerality of the Timeline; book projects as a means of depositing personal memories; her first memories of the AIDS crisis beginning in 1983; Group Material's Democracy and AIDS series at Dia in 1988; investigating the tension between art and activism in the context of HIV/AIDS; Karen Ranspacher's entry and contributions to Group Material; the initial decision to employ the form of a timeline and four arenas of research; different audience relationships and reactions to the Timeline; the collaborative process of creating the Timeline; losing NEA funding after the Timeline, amid the early '90s culture wars; Group Material's second exhibition of AIDS Timeline in 1990; her friendship with Felix Gonzalez-Torres; Group Material's third exhibition of AIDS Timeline in 1991; the Macho Man, Tell It To My Heart exhibition; and an acknowledgement of topics that could not be covered in the interview. Ault also recalls Doug Ashford, Vikky Alexander, Yolanda Hawkins, Mundy McLaughlin, Sarat Maharaj, Gertrud Sandqvist, Marybeth Nelson, Patrick Brennan, Hannah Alderfer, Peter Szypula, Sabrina Locks, Larry Rinder, Richard Meyer, Bill Olander, Marcia Tucker, Gary Garrels, Charles Wright, Frank Wagner, Martin Beck, Nayland Blake, Anne Pasternak, Mary Anne Staniszewski, John Lindell, Tom Kalin, Donald Moffett, Marlene McCarty, Jochen Klein, Lisa Phillips, Andrea Miller-Keller, Steven Evans, and others.

System Details

Recorded on Tascam DR-100MKII R000329.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- AIDS (Disease)
- AIDS (Disease) and the arts
- Art -- Political aspects
- History -- Philosophy
- Oral history
- Women artists

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- Alderfer, Hannah
- Alexander, Vikky, 1959-
- Ashford, Doug
- Beck, Martin, 1962-
- Blake, Nayland, 1960-
- Brennan, Patrick
- Evans, Steven, (Curator)
- Garrels, Gary.

Gonzalez-Torres, Felix, 1957-1996
Group Material (Firm : New York, N.Y.)
Hawkins, Yolanda
Kalin, Tom
Klein, Jochen, 1967-1997
Lindell, John
Locks, Sabrina
Maharaj, Sarat (Sarat Chandra), 1952-
McCarty, Marlene, 1957-
McLaughlin, Mundy
Meyer, Richard, 1966-
Miller-Keller, Andrea
Moffett, Donald, 1955-
National Endowment for the Arts
Nelson, Marybeth
Olander, William
Pasternak, Anne, 1964-
Phillips, Lisa, 1954-
Ramspacher, Karen
Rinder, Lawrence
Rollins, Tim, 1955-
Sandqvist, Gertrud
Serrano, Andres, 1950-
Staniszewski, Mary Anne
Szypula, Peter
Tucker, Marcia
Visual Arts and the AIDS Epidemic: An Oral History Project
Wagner, Frank
Wright, Charles

Occupations:

Authors -- New York (State) -- New York
Curators -- New York (State) -- New York
Political activists

Places:

New York (N.Y.) -- Description and Travel
Washington (D.C.) -- Description and Travel