



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Nayland Blake

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Nayland Blake
Identifier:	AAA.blake16
Date:	2016 November 25-26
Extent:	59 Pages (Transcript)
Creator:	Blake, Nayland, 1960- Fialho, Alex, 1989-
Language:	English .

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

Nayland Blake (1960-) is a performance artist and installation artist in New York, New York. Alex Fialho (1989-) is a curator and arts writer who is the Programs Director for Visual AIDS in New York, New York.

Scope and Contents

An interview with Nayland Blake, conducted 2016 November 25-26, by Alex Fialho, for the Archives of American Art's Visual Arts and the AIDS Epidemic: An Oral History Project, at Blake's home in Brooklyn, New York.

Scope and Contents

Blake speaks of growing up in a bi-racial family in New York City; visiting museums, art exhibits and shows, and going to the theatre with their parents; attending Charlotte Moorman's Avant Garde Festivals as a teenager; relating their emerging sexuality to the television shows Batman, The Addams Family,

and Star Trek; the decision to attend Bard College; the influence of Times Square Show; co-organizing Bard's first gay and lesbian alliance; attending California Institute of the Arts and the different culture they experienced there; their struggle to make explicitly gay work without it being beefcake; not feeling connected to a gay community in Los Angeles but feeling camaraderie with other artists; their decision to move to San Francisco; first hearing about HIV/AIDS while at CalArts and experiencing the first loss of a friend in San Francisco; the undercurrent of more and more men testing positive in their community; the long two-week wait to receive test results; the generational split within the gay community and how that was squashed by the epidemic; the subjects of mortality and mourning in gay art and how that changed the reception of gay artists; the gay and lesbian shows Extended Sensibilities and Against Nature; the organization of ACT UP San Francisco and subsequent split into ACT UP SF, ACT UP Golden Gate, and ACT UP San Francisco; the "imperiled and heightened physicality" Blake began using in their work; participating in Art Against Aids on the Road; directly addressing the frequency of AIDS deaths in their piece Every 12 Minutes; the social network of caregivers that rallied to support those dying from AIDS through home care and food delivery; curating In A Different Life; the pleasure in curating shows; The Shreber Suite installation pieces; purchasing Wayland Flowers' puppet Madame at auction; being a child of the '60s and believing sex is an expression of one's cultural identity; feeling attacked by the dismissive and oppressive Republican government in the 1980s; the extensive symbolism and meaning in their bunny themed work; the technology boom's affect on the Bay Area and their return to New York City; the show Double Fantasy about their relationship with their partner Philip Horvitz; teaching at International Center for Photography and their work in the kink community; the distance their students have to the HIV/AIDS epidemic; and their identification as an American artist. Blake also recalls Jeff Preiss, Cliff Preiss, William Hohaus, Debra Pierson, Nancy Mitchnick, Jake Grossberg, Robert Kelly, Kathy Acker, Gerry Pearlberg, Kathe Burkhart, Judie Bamber, Catherine Opie, Nancy Barton, Julie Ault, William Olander, Robert Glueck, Kevin Killian, Dodie Bellamy, D-L Alvarez, Stephen Evans, Michael Jenkins, Richard Hawkins, Ann Philbin, Rick Jacobsen, Amy Sholder, David Wojnarowicz, Rudy Lemcke, A.A. Bronson, Philip Horvitz, and others.

General

Originally recorded as 4 digital wav files. Duration is 5 hr., 49 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

African American artists
Installations (Art)
Performance artists -- New York (State) -- New York -- Interviews

Types of Materials:

Interviews
Sound recordings

Names:

ACT UP San Francisco (Organization)
Visual Arts and the AIDS Epidemic: An Oral History Project