



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with AA Bronson

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Collection Overview

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| Repository: | Archives of American Art |
| Title: | Oral history interview with AA Bronson |
| Identifier: | AAA.bronso17 |
| Date: | 2017 March 3, 5, and 6 |
| Extent: | 13 Items (sound files (9 hrs., 37 min.); digital, wav) 201 Pages (Transcript) |
| Creator: | Bronson, AA, 1946- Kerr, Theodore |
| 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

Interviewee AA Bronson (1946-) is an artist, magazine publisher, and curator in Berlin, Germany, and Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Interviewer Theodore Kerr (1979-) is a writer and organizer in New York, New York.

Scope and Contents

An interview with AA Bronson conducted 2017 March 3, 5, and 6, by Theodore Kerr, for the Archives of American Art's Visual Arts and the AIDS Epidemic: An Oral History Project, at Bronson's home and studio, in Berlin, Germany.

Scope and Contents

Bronson speaks of his mother's comparison between WWII-era London and New York City during the AIDS crisis; the community that formed in St. Vincent's Hospital in New York during the AIDS crisis; his early childhood in Fort Nelson, Edmonton, St. Jean d'Iberville, and Ottawa, Canada; the development of his sexuality; early childhood fascination with library books; regular visits to the Royal Ontario Museum and National Gallery of Canada as an adolescent ; collecting architecture books and later studying architecture at the University of Manitoba; dropping out of university in 1967 to help form a commune and free school in Winnipeg; watching the commune grow to 65 people and operate on a consensus model of governance; working in Toronto for Coach House Press and Theatre Passe Muraille; the beginnings and interpersonal dynamic of General Idea; leading Gestalt therapy workshops; General Idea's interest in countering the notion of artist as individual genius; organizing File magazine and Art Metropole as correspondence-driven endeavors; having regular exhibitions in Europe by the late 1970s; moving to New York in 1986; the genesis of the AA Bronson persona; General Idea's aesthetic and output; General Idea's AIDS-related artwork; caring for Jorge Zontal and Felix Partz from General Idea, during the height of their HIV-related illnesses in the early 1990s; going to nightclubs and sex clubs in New York as a reprieve from caretaking; the difference in AIDS healthcare and AIDS activism in Toronto and New York; Zontal and Partz's deaths; the ongoing trauma of losing loved ones to HIV/AIDS; the beginnings and development of his solo art career from the mid-1990s to the present; creating the General Idea archive and catalogue raisonne in the early 2000s; developing a professional healing practice in the 1990s and early 2000s; the incorporation of healing into his artistic persona; directing Printed Matter from 2004 to 2011; developing several book fairs, including the LA Art Book Fair; attending Union Theological Seminary; studying Tibetan Buddhism; and the role of the internet in his current collaborations and community-building work. Bronson also recalls Robert Henforth, Murray McLauchlan, Alison and Peter Smithson, Danny Freedman, Gilbert & George, Joseph Beuys, John Armleder, Ray Johnson, Chrysanthe Stathacos, Lawrence Weiner, Susan Harrison, Barbara London, Ydessa Hendeles, Matthias Herrmann, Barr Gilmore, Jean-Cristophe Ammann, Ealan Wingate, Andrew Zealley, Max Schumann, Thurston Moore, Serene Jones, Terence Koh, Garrick Gott, Jonathan Katz, and others.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Artists -- Germany -- Interviews
Curators -- Germany -- Interviews

Types of Materials:

Interviews
Sound recordings

Names:

Visual Arts and the AIDS Epidemic: An Oral History Project