



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

## Oral history interview with Douglas Crimp

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Oral history interview with Douglas Crimp
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.crimp17
<b>Date:</b>	2017 January 3-4
<b>Creator:</b>	Crimp, Douglas (Interviewee) Fialho, Alex, 1989- (Interviewer)
<b>Extent:</b>	5 Items (Sound recording: 5 sound files (6 hr., 2 min.); digital, wav) 69 Pages (Transcript)
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Digital Content:</b>	<a href="#">Digital Content: Oral history interview with Douglas Crimp, 2017 January 3-4, Transcript</a> <a href="#">Audio: Oral history interview with Douglas Crimp, 2017 January 3-4, 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

Douglas Crimp (1944- 2019) was a professor and art critic 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.

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## Scope and Contents

An interview with Douglas Crimp, conducted 2017 January 3-4, by Alex Fialho, for the Archives of American Art's Visual Arts and the AIDS Epidemic: An Oral History Project, at Crimp's home in New York, New York.

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## Scope and Contents

Crimp speaks of growing up in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho; his athleticism in water skiing and ice skating; sibling rivalry as a child; seeing art for the first time at the Seattle World Fair; being closeted and conflicted as

a young gay man in 1950s Idaho; attending Tulane University in New Orleans and the culture shock he experienced there; his first year in Tulane's rigorous architecture program and ultimately changing his major to art history; the pageantry of Mardi Gras parades and the gay society he explored; writing an undergraduate paper analyzing Marcel Duchamp's "The Large Glass"; deciding to go to New York City; finding his voice as an art critic while beginning his career at Art News and Art International; his extensive analysis of Joan Jonas; attending Firehouse dances sponsored by Gay Activist Alliance and coming into his sexuality; being a patient of esteemed doctor Dr. Dan William; first learning of the AIDS crisis and epidemic through a New York Times article in 1981 describing a gay cancer; receiving an NEA art critic grant and spending a year in Germany from 1985-86; returning to find friends and acquaintances sick with HIV/AIDS or having died from it; the Dia Conversations; his role as editor of October and bringing queerness and AIDS to the forefront; joining ACT UP; the genesis of October's AIDS double issue in 1987-1988 and its success; how the journal issue changed the course of his career and steered him to teach gay studies and further his work with AIDS activism; the inner workings of ACT UP meetings; the sense of community ACT UP provided and the empowerment everyone felt; noting a sense of personal and professional urgency during the crisis; the timeline of his AIDS writings; his reaction to seeing the AIDS quilt for the first time at the March on Washington; writing to a wide, non-academic audience; his 1988 course at Rutgers University on AIDS video; his complex relationships with Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson; the poor coverage of the AIDS epidemic in the media and how it informed his writing; the understanding of the need for safe sex practices and writing "How to Have Promiscuity in an Epidemic;" teaching courses on AIDS at the University of Rochester and how his teaching interest evolved into queer theory and studies; evaluating Warhol's work with a queer lens; writing about his experience with queer life in New York City in the 1970s to counter the condescending conservative narrative; his current writing projects and interests; experience in demonstrations held by ACT UP; and the tremendous communal support he felt during his seroconversion. Crimp also recalls Marilynne Summers (Robinson), Bernard Lemann, Marimar Benetiz, Ida Kohlmeyer, Lynn Emory, Diane Waldman, Betsy Baker, Lucinda Hawkins, Christian Belaygue, Krzysztof Wodiczko, Rosalind Krauss, Joan Copjec, Gregg Bordowitz, Terri Cafaro, Rene Santos, Craig Owens, Fernando Torm, Bill Olander, Richard Elovich, Daniel Wolfe, Hector Caicedo, Lynne Cooke, and Zoe Leonard.

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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)
- AIDS (Disease) and the arts
- AIDS activists
- Activists (LGBTQ)
- Art -- History -- Study and teaching
- Mardi Gras
- NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt
- Queer studies
- Queer theory

### Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

### Names:

- ACT UP (Organization)
- Baker, Elizabeth C., 1934-
- Belaygue, Christian
- Bordowitz, Gregg

Century 21 Exposition (1962 : Seattle, Wash.)  
Cooke, Lynne  
Copjec, Joan  
Duchamp, Marcel, 1887-1968  
Elovich, Richard  
Gay Activists Alliance  
Jonas, Joan, 1936-  
Kohlmeyer, Ida, 1912-1997  
Krauss, Rosalind E.  
Lemann, Bernard, 1905-  
Leonard, Zoe  
Michelson, Annette  
Olander, William  
Owens, Craig  
Robinson, Marilynne  
Rutgers University -- Faculty  
Santos, René, 1954-1986  
Torm, Fernando  
Tulane University -- Students  
University of Rochester -- Faculty  
Visual Arts and the AIDS Epidemic: An Oral History Project  
Waldman, Diane  
Warhol, Andy, 1928-1987  
Wodiczko, Krzysztof  
Wolfe, Daniel, 1960-

Occupations:

Art critics -- New York (State) -- New York -- Interviews  
Educators -- New York (State) -- New York

Places:

Germany -- description and travel  
New York (N.Y.) -- Description and Travel