



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

## Oral history interview with Sur Rodney (Sur)

Funded by the Keith Haring Foundation.

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Oral history interview with Sur Rodney (Sur)
<b>Date:</b>	2016 July 12 and 15
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.rodney16
<b>Creator:</b>	Rodney, Sur (Interviewee) Kerr, Theodore (Interviewer)
<b>Extent:</b>	2 Items (Sound recording: 2 sound files (5 hr., 50 min.); digital, wav) 83 Pages (Transcript)
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Digital Content:</b>	<a href="#">Digital Content: Oral history interview with Sur Rodney (Sur), 2016 July 12 and 15, Transcript</a> <a href="#">Audio: Oral history interview with Sur Rodney (Sur), 2016 July 12 and 15, 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.

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## Biographical / Historical

Sur Rodney (Sur) (1954- ) is a performance artist and arts administrator in New York, New York. Theodore Kerr (1979- ) is a writer and organizer in New York, New York.

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## Scope and Contents

An interview with Sur Rodney (Sur) conducted 2016 July 12 and 15, by Theodore Kerr, for the Archives of American Art's Visual Arts and the AIDS Epidemic: An Oral History Project, at Rodney's studio in New York, New York.

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## Scope and Contents

Sur speaks of his cosmopolitan upbringing in Montreal; attending the Montreal Museum School of Art and Design; adopting a "freak" aesthetic; moving to New York in 1976; the confluence of his Canadian, gay, and black identities; helping to establish Gracie Mansion Gallery; contemporary erasure of the impact of AIDS and queerness on the 1980s East Village; caring for HIV-positive friends in the 1980s and 90s; the

impact of AIDS on intergenerational exchange in the gay community; the ostracizing of HIV-positive artists in the art world; working to preserve HIV-positive artists's archives before their deaths; developing a more explicit black consciousness in the mid-1990s; public silences around issues of sexuality and drug use in the art world; his body of work with Visual AIDS; the impact of effective medication for AIDS on the art world; his observations on contemporary intersections of AIDS and the art world; and his vision for a world when AIDS is over. Sur also recalls J.A. Holm, Fred Wilson, Lyle Ashton Harris, Lorraine O'Grady, David Hammons, Gregg Bordowitz, Al Hansen, Buster Cleveland, Tim Greathouse, Nicolas Moufarrege, Jeffrey Deitch, Michael McDonough, Yasmin Ramirez, Keith Davis, Mysoon Rizk, Andreas Senser, David Wojnarowicz, Gil Rankin, Frank Moore, Nick Debs, AA Bronson, Alex Greenfield, and Hunter Reynolds.

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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
- African American artists
- Arts administrators -- New York (State) -- New York -- Interviews
- Performance artists -- New York (State) -- New York -- Interviews

### Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

### Names:

- Visual Arts and the AIDS Epidemic: An Oral History Project