



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Robert Vázquez-Pacheco

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Robert Vázquez-Pacheco
Identifier:	AAA.vazque17
Date:	2017 December 16-17
Extent:	8 Items (sound files (6 hr., 59 min.) Audio; digital, wav) 131 Pages (Transcript)
Creator:	Vázquez-Pacheco, Robert, 1956- 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

Robert Vázquez-Pacheco (1956-) is a visual artist and writer in New York, New York. Theodore Kerr (1979-) is a writer and organizer in New York, New York.

Scope and Contents

An interview with Robert Vázquez-Pacheco conducted 2017 December 16 and 17, by Theodore Kerr, for the Archives of American Art's Visual Arts and the AIDS Epidemic: An Oral History Project, at The New School, in New York, New York.

Scope and Contents

Vazquez-Pacheco speaks of his childhood in South Bronx housing projects; members and dynamics of his family growing up; experiences and discourses of religion, race, gender, sexuality, reading, and the

arts as a child and adolescent; attending SUNY Oswego for one year; an existentially pivotal year in Miami in 1975; returning to New York in 1976, immersing himself in Latino gay culture, and being exposed to white gay culture; living in Hempstead, New York for two years with a boyfriend, and beginning to paint again; working at Chase Manhattan Bank and volunteering for the Gay Switchboard in New York City in the late '70s; the beginning of the AIDS epidemic; caring for his boyfriend, Jeff, who died of AIDS in 1986; the particular experience and effect of HIV on communities of color and low-income communities; mounting societal homophobia during the epidemic; leading Gay Circles, a gay men's consciousness-raising group, in the late '80s; his involvement in ACT UP, and burgeoning political consciousness, after Jeff's death; activism as a creative outlet; working at different times with the People With AIDS health group, the Anti-Violence Project, the Minority AIDS Taskforce, Latino Gay Men of New York, Minority AIDS Coalition in Philadelphia, and LLEGO in Washington; AIDS activism's failure to think intersectionally and build coalitions; his involvement in Gran Fury; becoming a more prolific writer, and getting involved with Other Countries, in the early '90s; Gran Fury's 2011 retrospective; the need for racial diversity and representation in activism and the art world; white flight from AIDS activism following the arrival of protease inhibitors; personal frustrations with the current AIDS activism discourse and nonprofit organizational complex, and the general cultural conversation about HIV/AIDS; contrasting representations of AIDS activism in *How to Survive a Plague* and *BPM*; and the essential role of art in AIDS activism. Vazquez-Pacheco also recalls Mark Simpson, Craig Metroka, David Kirschenbaum, Maxine Wolfe, Avram Finkelstein, Deb Levine, Charles King, Robert Garcia, Ortez Alderson, Derek Hodel, Gregg Bordowitz, Michael Callen, Carl George, Joey Walsh, Matt Foreman, Vito Russo, Larry Kramer, Tom Kalin, Marlene McCarty, Charles Rice-González, George Ayala, Essex Hemphill, Manolo Guzmán, Donald Moffett, Cladd Stevens, Richard Elovich, Loring McAlpin, Michael Nesline, Peter Staley, David France, Andrew Miller, and others.

System Details

Recorded on Tascam DR-100MKII R00329.

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) -- Political aspects
- AIDS (Disease) and art
- AIDS (Disease) and the arts
- AIDS activists
- Activism
- Artists -- New York (State) -- New York -- Interviews
- Authors -- New York (State) -- New York -- Interviews
- Political activists -- New York (State) -- New York -- Interviews

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- ACT UP (Organization)

Ayala, George
Bordowitz, Gregg
Callen, Michael, 1955-1993
Elovich, Richard
Finkelstein, Avram, 1952-
Foreman, Matt
France, David, 1959-
Garcia, Robert, 1933-2017
Gay Switchboard (Berkeley, Calif.)
George, Carl
Gran Fury (Artists' collective)
Guzmán, Manolo
Kalin, Tom
King, Charles Bird, 1785-1862
Kirschenbaum, David A.
Kramer, Larry
Levine, Deb
McAlpin, Loring, 1960-
McCarty, Marlene, 1957-
Metroka, Craig
Moffett, Donald, 1955-
National Latino/a Lesbian and Gay Organization
Other Countries, Inc.
People with AIDS Coalition
Rice-González, Charles
Russo, Vito
Simpson, Mark, 1965-
Staley, Peter
State University College (Oswego, N.Y.) -- Students
Visual Arts and the AIDS Epidemic: An Oral History Project
Walsh, Joey, 1938-