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Oral history interview with Joy Episalla, 2016  
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# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Joy Episalla on 2016 February 23-March 17. The interview took place in New York, N.Y., and was conducted by Cynthia Carr for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Archives of American Art's Visual Arts and the AIDS Epidemic: An Oral History Project.

Joy Episalla and Cynthia Carr have reviewed the transcript. Their corrections and emendations appear below in brackets with initials. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

## Interview

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay. This is Cynthia Carr interviewing Joy Episalla, at Joy's home in New York, New York, in the East Village on February 23, 2016, for the Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, Card Number One. So Joy, could you say your name and spell Episalla?

JOY EPISALLA: Sure. Joy Episalla. And it's E-P-I-S-A-L-L-A.

CYNTHIA CARR: Your date of birth?

JOY EPISALLA: August 17, 1957.

CYNTHIA CARR: And where were you born?

JOY EPISALLA: Bronxville, New York.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh. Um, so did you grow up there?

JOY EPISALLA: No, just happened to be where the hospital was. My parents were living in Yonkers—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh. Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: —and so, yeah, that was I guess the nearest hospital to where they lived.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay. What are your parents' names?

JOY EPISALLA: My dad's name was Charles Episalla, and my mother's is Joy Episalla. I'm named after my mother, but really her name is Gioia, G-I-O-I-A. And that would have been my name, except that my mother had a lot of problems with that in school—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, yes.

JOY EPISALLA: —so when I came along, by that time she was Joy, and so am I. So there you go.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. Now when you were a girl were you interested in art then?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. From pretty early on. I mean, some of my best moments were at my grandmother's dining room table.

CYNTHIA CARR: Drawing, or—

JOY EPISALLA: Drawing, you know, coloring in the beginning, you know, young—young, and then starting to draw things like Mickey Mouse and Winkey and all those things that were in *The Sunday Times*—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh yeah. Uh-huh [Affirmative].

JOY EPISALLA: —you know the newspaper. And watching movies with her. She was fabulous. Ruby Keeler films and musicals and stuff, and you know making drawings. And I had the best thing, which was, I had a little closet there—I was really already out of the closet, but nobody knew—where I kept stuff so when she was, I don't know, doing her thing I would play there. And I also had this huge coloring book that was *Alice in Wonderland*, but it was almost as tall as me.

CYNTHIA CARR: Wow.

JOY EPISALLA: Which I think actually—we'll probably get to later—but I think it actually had some very interesting influence on me, actually. [They laugh.]

CYNTHIA CARR: Really? *Alice in Wonderland*?

JOY EPISALLA: *Alice in Wonderland* and the size of this book. It was larger than life size—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh. Uh-huh [Affirmative].

JOY EPISALLA: —it was almost as tall as me, so were the characters, and then I got to like—you know, work them out.

CYNTHIA CARR: Hmmm. And this was when you were in grade school?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. I'm in grade school. Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah. And then what about high school? Did you take art classes?

JOY EPISALLA: Oh yeah. So all through grade school, you know, you have art classes, and that was my thing.

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh [Affirmative].

JOY EPISALLA: I really liked it for sure. Yeah, by high school I got real lucky. I had a great art teacher.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, what was her—what was that name?

JOY EPISALLA: His name was—oh my God, now I'm going to space out because I just had it in my head.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, sorry.

JOY EPISALLA: Hart, his name was Mr. Hart. And I'm trying to remember his first name—Bill.

CYNTHIA CARR: Bill Hart, okay.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. He was really great.

CYNTHIA CARR: What was it about him?

JOY EPISALLA: Well, he definitely took an interest in me, in the sense that he was the first person to put a 35mm camera in my hand. And then I ended up doing all the yearbooks, so this is like probably 7th grade. Because by 7th grade, in the school that I went to, you had Kindergarten through I think 4th—no Kindergarten through 3rd, and 4th through 6th, and then at 7th you went over to the high school.

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh [Affirmative].

JOY EPISALLA: So, that's when I first met him. And I'd hang out in his class all the time, you know that's where I went if I wasn't going to go somewhere else.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, right.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, so he not only—yeah—started me with the camera, but he got me started in print making. So I was always drawing and painting then in his class. He started us with oil paints, I mean I tried a bunch of stuff and I loved it. And you know, won a couple of contests. You know, it was actually quite illustration-like. I was also [taking -JE] AP Bio at the time, and I actually thought I was going to be a medical illustrator. Who knew I would get my medical training in a whole other way? But I guess we'll get to that later.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: But in any case, he started me in printmaking and he took me to Manhattan College on his own time and I did an etching there. So he was really quite interesting. And he actually you know, by the time it was time to apply for colleges, he thought it would be great if I went to a—

CYNTHIA CARR: Went to art school?

JOY EPISALLA: Right. And then of course, well, my parents [there were -JE] two things; one, was I went to school on student loans because there wasn't a lot of money.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: And they were I think nervous at that point on what, you know, what would happen, blah—blah—blah, how would I make a living?

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah. Right.

JOY EPISALLA: Not—I mean, quite supportive of me, I mean I did a lot of things. Like I did all the sets for all the plays and, you know, that kind of thing in high school—

CYNTHIA CARR: In high school, right.

JOY EPISALLA: I painted a huge mural in the Elmsford Main Bank, I painted a bunch of murals in the school, I was very—I made costumes. Besides the art teacher there was a great—oh boy, I'm going to forget everybody's name, what was his name, my drama—the drama teacher [Richard Goodwin -JE], it was like a drama club. He was gay and his sidekick was this English teacher [Susan Cannell -JE] and she was a lesbian. So they were probably the first two people on my radar also.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: And he was fabulous. He would take us to New York once a year to see something. And we also did pretty amazing plays in that school. It was in Elmsford. It was Alexander Hamilton High School and at that time I would say, probably more [black students -JE] than white. We are talking the '60s into the '70s.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: It was very interesting, because there were actually—the school had a lot of black students, we were singled out because we were surrounded by a lot of white high schools—all-white high schools.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, uh-huh [Affirmative].

JOY EPISALLA: So there was tension between our school and other schools because of that. So I learned at a very early age, probably in a pretty unfortunate way, about how awful people can be. Which was that in our school there were these white kids that didn't like black kids, and they were much older than me—I think I'm like oh—maybe 8th grade or so—9th. There was this boy, Michael, who I knew, who was a basketball player, and we had a great basketball team. Of course, we beat the shit out of all those white schools, you know. It was cool. [They laugh.] But—he got in—these kids confronted him in the play yard one night and they killed him—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, wow.

JOY EPISALLA: —they stabbed him.

CYNTHIA CARR: And the ones who killed him were also students at your school?

JOY EPISALLA: Yes. Of course they were found. But it was so tragic—

CYNTHIA CARR: Wow. This is high school?

JOY EPISALLA: This was high school, so it was huge.

CYNTHIA CARR: So—yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: I don't know if I can—I'm bad with names, I will try to find them for you. I'm really terrible with names. I will never forget faces, but names, I'm just—

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. Yeah. What year of school were you in when that happened?

JOY EPISALLA: Anyway, I think this has got to be like 9th grade, somewhere in there maybe 10th, because I'm quite involved with the drama club and what happens is, this same drama teacher decides to do West Side Story, except between the white kids and the black kids, right?

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, yeah. Right.

JOY EPISALLA: The Jets and the Sharks. And he gets all of these students to come out for this, those who would not necessarily come to the drama class, and lot of kids who sang in their church, like Baptist church, and you know amazing voices. It was very moving and it really brought the school together.

CYNTHIA CARR: Wow.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, it was huge. [So by the time that happened if there was any friction there was with other

schools, I think we were all very protective of each other—you know what I mean -JE]?

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: You know, in a certain way?

CYNTHIA CARR: Were you involved in the West Side Story production, did you work on the sets or anything?

JOY EPISALLA: I think I'm a little bit too young at this point. So that's what makes me think it's either—somewhere 7th or 8th [grade -JE]—somewhere in there [1970 or 1971 -JE].

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah. Did that maybe get you interested in the whole drama idea?

JOY EPISALLA: Oh, I was totally interested. Maybe you could only join at a certain grade? I don't remember. But I was very involved. Let's see what did we do after that? Eh, fish got to swim, birds got to fly—what am I talking about—it's a boat—*Showboat*.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, *Showboat*. Oh yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: We did *Showboat*. That was pretty amazing. Also incredible—incredible, I mean, super interesting story. And pretty amazing students. You know, the talent in the school was—my recollection of it, I mean—many people from all around [came to see the production -JE]. He was very good. I'll think of his name [Mr. Goodwin -JE].

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay. And Mr. Hart, did you have him all four years?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, all four years.

CYNTHIA CARR: Wow.

JOY EPISALLA: And so, actually he suggested Rochester Institute of Technology because they had a big Art and Design School, they had the Craft School, and they had photography and I was very interested in photography. And they had printmaking in their Art School, so that was like a compromise, that it wasn't a full-fledged "art school," and I would take some other liberal art courses, but basically I was in the Art School.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah. Right.

JOY EPISALLA: So he kind of facilitated that, and talked with my parents about it and all that, so you know it made it maybe more palatable, I don't know. I looked at Carnegie Mellon and I looked at a number of schools, but I don't know, that seemed—that was fine.

CYNTHIA CARR: So when you were there, you had a major in photography, or was it a major in art or—?

JOY EPISALLA: Actually, I was doing a lot of printmaking, I was doing some photography. I was modeling a lot for photographers because that was a way to make money, because of student loans and all that kind of stuff. So I had to have a job when I was in school. Let's see; I had a janitor's job, and I had a modeling job. I did some weaving in Craft School. And I made friends with very interesting people in many different departments, which was actually the same for me in high school. I had friends in different groups of people. And I think that served me well, for later on in life as well, different backgrounds. There was a lot of diversity, in my high school at that time. [. . . -JE].

CYNTHIA CARR: Do you remember seeing any major exhibition or museum show or something that influenced you?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, I was thinking about that. For sure—one of the things is my mom had some books. My mom liked to draw and paint. And I actually think that the influence was her brother, my uncle Anthony, who was a painter and an incredible draftsman, an amazing drawer. And—I mean, he could think of something in his head and he would scribble it on a napkin. I always remember him coming to visit. He was my mom's oldest brother and I was very close to him. So he had a very big influence on me. In fact, by the time I graduated college, it was him I was going to go and stay with for a while. So we were very close. So he was influential as a person and seeing somebody who was living it, in a sense. I mean, he was an ex-Marine, he had a gas station on Camp Pendleton in San Diego. And kind of a gruff but sweet guy, and a total adventurer—a complete adventurer, all the way. So, I don't know, he was influential. I think—I remember my mom had this great book—I think I still have it—was an art history book and on the front was Nefertiti, and I thought, "Who is she?" [They laugh.] And that got me totally going.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: So yeah, here and there, there were books. You know, I went to the Hudson River Museum, up in [Yonkers -JE], and we went to Lyndhurst and we had things like that. But not—I don't think I got to go to the Met until college. Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: So you hadn't come into town to see any of the museums, you think?

JOY EPISALLA: No, I mean, we came in to see the National History Museum and the Planetarium, but they didn't—yeah, no. As my memory serves me, I'm pretty sure. So when I actually got to the Met, I was absolutely thrilled.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And I'd say the other person who influenced my abilities to, you know just go for stuff because I thought it was interesting, and not worry about whatever—you know wherever that landed me—was my dad. Because my father was a very self-made person—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh. What did he do for a living?

JOY EPISALLA: Oh God, he did everything. And that's what I learned. Well, he was a taxi driver, he was a used car salesman, eventually he started family camping on the East Coast with tents and Colman [stoves] and sleeping bags and things like that. And we—our family trips were to try out some new equipment, so we did that kind of camping in tents. And then he graduated to small trailers and we tried those out, and then eventually he got into motor homes and boats. He loved boats, he used to have a boat. And so we did a lot of traveling, and that's how we traveled because of whatever his work was and going to pick up a new unit or whatever. He worked very hard and even if there wasn't a lot of money, he figured out a way. He was very creative. He eventually builds a building that houses his show room, and I was there for all that—but you have to also understand—and we will probably get to this later, well anyway—we'll go there later, but I was just thinking a number of things. Like for instance, I was I think 2-years-old when my father got his captain's license.

CYNTHIA CARR: Captain?

JOY EPISALLA: Captain for a boat. A week later a guy hired him to take his 60-foot Schooner, [the Sepeo -JE], down to Florida. I had my second birthday on that boat, I was potty trained on that boat—[laughs]—and it was quite an experience because it was just my parents, and a first mate and a cook and this guy's boat. It was quite an adventure. He was totally ready for an adventure, and ready you know—also a very good person. [If he saw -JE] somebody stranded on the side of the road, he would always stop and bring them home or whatever. He was very giving, and fun and like to joke and always laughing—and amazing.

CYNTHIA CARR: That's great.

JOY EPISALLA: And my mom is the other character. [They laugh.] She's also a riot. It was colorful.

CYNTHIA CARR: Did you have interest, say in high school or college, were you interested in politics or did you try to bring politics into your art work?

JOY EPISALLA: You know, obviously during that time, when I was very little, Kennedy was shot—[and later -JE] Robert Kennedy was shot, I remember being on the playground [and hearing the news -JE]. And Martin Luther King and all those things sat in my head. I guess, I definitely knew the difference, and I was very—and I also think it was the way I was brought up, is that you always helped people. Even if you didn't have a lot you would share. So those, values—values? I don't know what you call them, those things, I think I learned from my family.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah. Uh-huh [Affirmative].

JOY EPISALLA: My aunt, my dad's sister, she was always taking somebody in. She was an incredibly wonderful woman. She was the one who taught me to crochet and knit, and my grandmother taught me to sew. But in that, I met a lot of different people. I spent a lot of time around adults too, I think, so I'd hear a lot of conversation, so obviously it sat in my head until I was ready to use it. I think in school, probably by high school, we had a couple of male teachers that were really unfortunate, so that by high school we were allowed to finally wear pants. And I had trouble with this [gym teacher, Mr. Winters -JE] all the way from kindergarten. I was the kid that sat in the corner in her mary jane patent leather shoes, because I was not going to participate in his gym class. It was just not for me, I like some sports, but he was not my cup of tea, and from very early on, I must have known it. And by 7th grade he was our homeroom teacher and he was appalled that we were allowed now to wear pants. He told us he was going to make ladies out of us. That struck a note. So he—I boycotted. So I think it was those kinds of tensions, actually, who you were as a woman and what was your place in the world.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. Yeah. He was a gym teacher?

JOY EPISALLA: He was a gym teacher. Yeah, there were some very macho, chauvinistic, pig guys all around [They laugh.] that I recognized. And I'm probably lucky because my dad was not like that, so I knew it could be different. But I definitely recognized these people as somebody who was not going to be my friend, and that's politics probably already then—not where I was going. You know what I mean, then me and my friends sticking up for each other.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah. Right. You know, what year did you graduate from college?

JOY EPISALLA: I think I graduated in 79.

CYNTHIA CARR: In 79, okay. So by then it's—

JOY EPISALLA: So by college, I—I also jumped around a lot. I only did two years at Rochester Institute of Technology—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, okay.

JOY EPISALLA: —and then in my third year I transferred to Tyler School in Rome.

CYNTHIA CARR: In Rome, oh.

JOY EPISALLA: Which is where I met my partner, Carrie [Yamaoka].

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, Carrie was there?

JOY EPISALLA: I was doing printmaking there, and I think she was in painting. Anyway, so very interesting program and I'd always wanted go to Italy, because that's my background because my mom's side is from around Rome and Naples and my dad is Sicilian. So all that stuff I think played into my, you know, my dad grew up during the Depression. There were a lot of things I heard about, you know. You were lucky to have a roof over your head and food on the table and those things—and you had to work. I worked with my dad, we'll probably get into it later, but I was working at 6-months.

[They laugh.]

CYNTHIA CARR: At 6 months? Goodness.

JOY EPISALLA: I was the Ivory Snow baby.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh you were?

JOY EPISALLA: Uh-huh [Affirmative].

CYNTHIA CARR: I had no idea.

JOY EPISALLA: And the Pink Dreft Baby.

CYNTHIA CARR: So you were in advertising already at a very early age?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, and I got my Social Security card from it.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh my God.

[They laugh.]

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, my dad was showing my picture at some cocktail party, and some guy saw it and said—you know—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, that's the one we need for our campaign.

JOY EPISALLA: So, I learned to watch commercials. I still have this thing for commercials. It's really crazy. But anyway they made money—my parents, that's how they made money.

CYNTHIA CARR: How long did you do that?

JOY EPISALLA: I don't know. I don't remember any of it, of course, really I mean.

CYNTHIA CARR: You're a baby.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, you're a baby. Yeah, the first probably—until I was a year and a half or something probably. I could look on my Social—you know you get that statement. And then I worked with my dad at his used car lot answering phones from [about seven years old -JE], and then I used to go to the [New York -JE] colosseum with my dad with the trailers and I sit in one trailer and he would be in one trailer, and I'd show them how it worked. So work was part of what you did.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: Oh, man.

CYNTHIA CARR: So your junior year you went to Italy?

JOY EPISALLA: Yes, so I went to Rome and that was a whole thing and quite amazing and when I came back from there, I didn't want to go [back to -JE] Rochester. And I didn't want to go to Tyler, I didn't want to be landlocked. And I was taking out student loans anyway, so I figured hey I might as well go where I want to go. So I went out to California, because also my uncle was out there. So I went to California College for the Arts, their Oakland Campus and I got my BFA in fine arts and printmaking. And I had an interesting teacher out there, names Charles Gill. He was the printmaking teacher.

CYNTHIA CARR: But you came back to the east coast right away after you graduated?

JOY EPISALLA: After—I thought about living out there, and I was going to go stay with my uncle, and he passed away.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: So I didn't—[I went to the funeral and then came back to New York, and also because Carrie and I were seeing each other and we had this long distance relationship and -JE]—

CYNTHIA CARR: She was still there, in Rome?

JOY EPISALLA: —No, she came back. She was at Wesleyan.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: Her senior year she went to Wesleyan and I went out to California, and then we both came back to New York.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh. What year was that? '79-'80?

JOY EPISALLA: That was '79.

CYNTHIA CARR: Did you move to the East Village then?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. No, well, I lived over on Broome Street with a roommate from college at Rochester, [Beverly] D'Andrea, who is a very interesting photographer.

CYNTHIA CARR: Then you started a career here? You were working here because?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, I came to New York. Let's see—I was living with Bev, and you know, trying to make art—but I didn't really have the space. I was taking photographs or whatever and—

CYNTHIA CARR: So you were doing photography at that point?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, and I was making drawings actually. And I worked at Canal Jeans. So did Carrie—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: —I think we all did. Eventually I moved in with Carrie, and she had an apartment over on Spring and Lafayette. So yeah, we lived there four years. Through that time, oh let's see, eventually we had restaurant jobs. So we were waiters and trying to do our art and trying to work out of the apartment, both of us. And then through the waiting job [at La Louisiana on Lexington and E 28th St -JE] we met Robert Bordo, the painter, and Michelle Araujo and Adam Simon. Bobby and Carrie and I were waiters together at this restaurant called La Louisiana. And he and Michelle and Adam lived in Hoboken, and they had beautiful studios in this crazy factory building. Once Carrie and I saw that, we were like, we're going to Hoboken.

[They laugh.]

Because this is not—we wanted a place to work.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah. When was that, what year?

JOY EPISALLA: [1982 -JE] we moved out to Hoboken. God—we were so crazy.

CYNTHIA CARR: There's no rent regulation over there though.

JOY EPISALLA: It was the top floor of a factory building. It was 7,000 square feet and we decided to split it with these two lesbians that we knew. That was pretty funny, because you would have thought we were all on the same page. Nothing against them, I like them very much—but work wasn't their thing and luckily they brought in this guy, Andy, he was really good with his hands and carpentry. So we basically fitted out this space together.

CYNTHIA CARR: Were they artists? These other women that came in?

JOY EPISALLA: One was a dancer, and I can't remember what her girlfriend did at the time.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, okay.

JOY EPISALLA: I can't remember. But anyway, we split this place in half and basically built a 100-foot wall. And this place had been an aniline dye factory, which was

CYNTHIA CARR: Aniline dye?

JOY EPISALLA: Aniline dye

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh okay.

JOY EPISALLA: Very carcinogenic, actually.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh boy.

JOY EPISALLA: Right. Probably not the best place to live. In fact, when the real estate broker showed it to us, he said, "Listen, I think you girls should go and think about it. I won't show it to anybody, but go and think about it." He couldn't believe we wanted to live there.

CYNTHIA CARR: Wow.

JOY EPISALLA: Anyway, we split it in half and we had these amazing studios and a living space, and so we stayed there 11 years—with no heat—except when it was below 40, and then the landlord's heat would come on. So we basically had these Quartz heaters. You remember those? We had to drag it around like a dog.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: We lived in this absolutely crazy cement floor-to-ceiling place. The landlord—in the studios we had those big windows, big factory windows, but in [what we devised as -JE] the living space he had blocked them all in. And we decided to unblock them. So on a Sunday, our friend, Bev sat across the street, and me and a friend, Anthony, and Carrie, took out all the cinder blocks in this nine by nine feet of window. In the meantime, we collected window pieces on the street and we built a grid. Anthony left and we had this scaffolding that we rented, and Bev and Carrie, I've got them by the belts of their pants, while we lifted this thing that we built up into the hole that we made and we cemented in from one side. We had now a window that [was held in with turn clips, what you use on a porch -JE]. And there was one that we thought was a really big deal, that actually had hinges that we could open in the winter. So the window stayed in and otherwise it was screened. Of course, if it rained in the summer at the wrong direction, you had to cover everything with a tarp because it rained inside the building. And in the winter, if there was enough snow on the roof, it leaked unbelievably and sounded like musical instruments in pots going everywhere. And we did this 11 years. I mean, we are completely out of our minds. And during that time we had a painting company where we were painting apartments. So that involved, [hiring -JE] like, everybody that we knew, like friends Bev, Bobbie, Donald, Michelle and Adam—

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Bev, oh God, Bill Allen, and Barbara Westermann, my brother-in-law Peter, Carrie's brother and his wife, [Gerda -JE], I mean, all of these people who were also artists, most of them. And we had this crazy painting company called On the Wall Painters. That's when you would put your stuff in the back of a large yellow cab. That's how you got around. Just to back up, when we were talking about politics, you know, when I was in California was when Harvey Milk was shot.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, wow.

JOY EPISALLA: So I was there for that, and that opened my eyes, right? I mean that was a big deal.

CYNTHIA CARR: Did you go to the march for his funeral?

JOY EPISALLA: Yes, I did. Yes, I did. And I was already involved in anti-nuke stuff out there.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: So by the time I came back to New York—Oh, and I was there for Proposition—what did they call it? Proposition 8?

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And I was there and helped to go house to house and vote against it and all of that. So I got quite involved in California.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, okay.

JOY EPISALLA: So that was already, you know, under my belt. And then when I came back here I did a lot of protesting for anti-nuke stuff, and abortion rights and women's rights to choose and Three Mile Island and you know you could go down the list of things that were—

CYNTHIA CARR: At that point, were you part of feminist groups, or gay/lesbian groups or anything like that?

JOY EPISALLA: When we came back to New York, eventually—there was an art group that did a lot of sort of political—I will think of their name.[Group Material -JE]. But we got together, Carrie and me—

CYNTHIA CARR: Was it PADD? The Political Action—

JOY EPISALLA: —No, but I worked with somebody. There was an anti-nuclear group I worked with and their headquarters was on Lafayette Street. Do you remember them?

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, I remember even the building you were talking about, but I can't think of that name. There was also the War Resisters League in that building too.

JOY EPISALLA: Yep. Yep. I went to the Marxist School. I came back to New York and did that for a summer.

CYNTHIA CARR: Studying what there?

JOY EPISALLA: Marx. Yep. Capitalism.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay. Right.

JOY EPISALLA: Yep. I was getting all my ducks in place, and that was all going on. Gosh, what are they called? Anyway because of this group and because of the friends—you know Bobbie and Donald were gay, and we were gay and then other friends—Michelle and Adam were together. We ended up doing this piece, it was a performance piece called *The Enemy*. The enemy is in your house, the enemy yada-da. And we did this performance, and at that time Bobbie Bordo was living with Mark Morris. And he was an old friend at that point. We actually did this performance in Mark Morris' space and I believe there were 100 people there. Carrie and I did the fallopian dance. It was very elaborate, video, we made drawings, projected video, we made movies—just this whole thing, and it was choreographed, but there was not one single picture—there's no documentation of it but there were a hundred people there, and still until this day, people say, "I remember that performance that you guys did."

CYNTHIA CARR: Do you know what year that was? Was it in the 80s?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. [1980 or 1981 -JE].

CYNTHIA CARR: You were still living in Hoboken?

JOY EPISALLA: [No, not yet—moved to Hoboken in 1982 -JE]. Yeah, I was still living in Hoboken and Four Walls was also started around that time. I participated in that. Then you start seeing a lot of artists who came out of these things and how you know people for a super long time.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, right. So when did you start exhibiting your work?

JOY EPISALLA: When I was living in Hoboken. Yeah I showed at Rutgers University and I showed at the Newark Museum and there were a couple little galleries in Hoboken. Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay, that was in the '80s. Then you would have moved to—

JOY EPISALLA: Then I moved back to New York, and then of course I'm out there eleven years so it was all those things.

CYNTHIA CARR: So when was it? '95?

JOY EPISALLA: No I moved here in '93.

CYNTHIA CARR: To this apartment?

JOY EPISALLA: To this house, yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: So now, that's a big span of time in there.

CYNTHIA CARR: And you've become an activist which we'll discuss in a little bit.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. So I do start showing in New York during that time. Well, one big thing that happened during that time when I was living in Hoboken, was I went to Yaddo. I had a residency at Yaddo in '85. That was a big turning point for me. I thank them very much. I think it's very good, especially for young artists. I think it's a great thing. You know to me it felt like a fairy came down and said "bing!" Fairy dust! Let's go to Saratoga Springs, and you know be in this like totally magical place for two months. I met a very, very—one of my best friends, Vanessa Jackson, who is from London and she is an amazing painter. We became best of friends. You know, so it was another way of meeting people, and we are friends to this day. I met many people and many artists through her. Probably around '85, things started changing and more starts happening in terms of trying to get my work out there. You know, whatever you want to call that.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. So you started showing in New York probably in the mid-80s?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, probably. We can look at the CV later and I can tell you exactly. I was in a show at the Art and Architecture.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, The Storefront for Art and Architecture?

JOY EPISALLA: Yes, I showed there. There were many other things, but I can't really remember. So about that time, well we will get into other things too. I mean, there were many jobs going on too, all at the same time, simultaneously. In those days you could work in a restaurant—

CYNTHIA CARR: You could live very cheaply, back in the day.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, you could pay your rent by like one night's work just about, and if you worked a couple more—like Friday or Saturday night, or Thursday nights, then you have enough to live on. It was pretty hard to mouth and you never paid attention to it that way, then you got to do your work. Right? And see your friends.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: I think another thing that was probably influential, even early on, even in high school, was music. You know, certain music. David Bowie, you know.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: I remember, I would have to be in 6th grade when that album came out.

CYNTHIA CARR: What, *Ziggy Stardust*?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. And I'm looking at the cover and this boy and this girlfriend of mine, they're making out in the other room, and I'm playing David Bowie super loud and staring at the cover—thinking, "Oh my God. Who is this person? There's something else out there for me."

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: You know, I related totally. You know how you have a moment with something and it stays with you—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah. I know for myself that coming from my sort of very narrow background in the Midwest, I happened to see Bread and Puppet Theatre on TV. And it's like something that—I mean, how did something like that land on television in Peoria, Illinois? Who knows? Thank God it did. Seeing something like that gives you a sense of possibility.

JOY EPISALLA: Absolutely. Even if you feel like you're in this place where you don't know what's going to happen. Yeah, it really changes things.

CYNTHIA CARR: —I think David Bowie had that kind of impact on a lot of people.

JOY EPISALLA: —Joni Mitchell, Carole King, James Taylor, I don't know—Bob Dylan. Go down the line, but I think that music was very—Joan Baez, Pete Seeger. You know, there was this whole—

CYNTHIA CARR: The thing about that music is that it had content and a lot of it was political.

JOY EPISALLA: Absolutely. Absolutely. So those things become like a mantra—playing, there's like this soundtrack to those years for me. You know, it's still a lot of music I would listen to now. I remember I went to my first jazz concert in Rome. That had a huge influence on me, so that kind of stuff along the way, going to a Grateful Dead concert, or a Pink Floyd concert, or Elton John. Or the amazing concert Dylan did—remember, in white face with the plumage and the whole nine yards?

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, "Aladdin Sane" or something like that.

JOY EPISALLA: That was Bowie, but—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: No, I meant Dylan—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh Dylan? Yes.

JOY EPISALLA: Dylan did that, oh well, we can look it up too. [The Rolling Thunder Revue -JE]

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes.

JOY EPISALLA: Anyway, seeing that and also how people dressed, because—actually fashion for me was also something that was very important. I learned how to sew when I was like 9, and I started making my own clothes, or we would go to the thrift store and buy things and I would adjust them. So that was always a big—I still sew, you know. I don't know, seeing Jimmy Hendrix, I wanted to look like Jimmy Hendrix. I wanted to be James Bond and look like Jimmy Hendrix, and I think my dad was in there. I really related to my father. I wanted to be James Bond and get the girl. I was totally there. That's from young, you know. I think it's funny. Obviously, James Bond was not politically correct, but he seemed to be having a good time and I think I could do that. Eventually I did become my own secret agent, didn't I, during the AIDS crisis?

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes. That's true.

JOY EPISALLA: All those things, it's funny how maybe it has some funny resonance.

CYNTHIA CARR: Do you first remember when you first heard about AIDS?

JOY EPISALLA: What happened was, Carrie and I —our parents started dying. In '86 Carrie's mom passes away and it was a huge blow. We started going back and forth to Tokyo to visit her grandfather. And her grandfather dies in '88, and it's a whole long story, but we were going over for the funeral or like a memorial. It must have been the second to last week of January. It was the only time my dad said, "Don't go," but I went. And when we came back, my father died a week later.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, wow.

JOY EPISALLA: On the 5th of February.

CYNTHIA CARR: In '88?

JOY EPISALLA: Nine.

CYNTHIA CARR: '89, okay.

JOY EPISALLA: So that's where I was, I was with my mother for a very long time taking care of her. It was quite intense. So by the time I kind of get back into my own life, I mean, I [had to teach my mother a lot of things

because my mother never wanted to learn [them when my father was alive -JE]. She did learn them. My dad had built them a building at this point and he based it on our loft and he sold their house and he built them a loft upstairs, this double-decker building that used to be his showroom. In fact, he only lived there for four years. It's pretty wild to me [to realize that -JE] now.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh. Right.

JOY EPISALLA: So like, I taught her how to use the ATM machine, and how to do the checkbook and how to do the finances. My father discussed that stuff with me forever, I knew how to build things. So I was doing the whole thing with her, and yeah, that's when I finally—I think—I guess I had been at the restaurant. No, I think I was working for Detail at that time—

CYNTHIA CARR: Detail?

JOY EPISALLA: —which was run by this British guy, Anthony Robinson on Spring Street. It was a jewelry store. This is actually right, because I quit the restaurant job and I'm working at Detail and I'm the buyer. In fact, well later on, but Nancy Brooks Brody, I bought jewelry from her and her friend, David, back then. That was when we first met in a whole other incarnation.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, right.

JOY EPISALLA: So, I'm working at Detail doing this jewelry thing, and Carrie and I are going back and forth to Tokyo trying to sell jewelry to the big department stores. It's a whole crazy story—it's hilarious. So we do this up to the where—it was a way for us to be there. So when my father dies, very young, he was going to be 63, and Carries' mother was going to be 62.

CYNTHIA CARR: Wow.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. So it was like somebody had pulled the rug out from underneath us.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: It was like—boom, boom— it was like being hit over the head and it was intense. So by February, I must be there at least six months with my mother back and forth from Hoboken or staying overnight there with her. God. By the time I come back, I am no longer working at Detail, I get my first magazine job. I think Carrie had already started working at *Us Magazine*, and then I got the *Us* job in the stat room. I was making stats.

CYNTHIA CARR: Photostats?

JOY EPISALLA: Photostats. You know we'd make the type for the magazine, right? I'm saying that because, maybe I started doing that and then I had to quit, maybe it's right there in '89 that I had to quit, because I'm up with my mother—there's just no way [to keep a job -JE]. [When I finally -JE] come back in, I get a job at *Elle Decor Magazine*. In fact, Robert Priest who was the designer at *Us Magazine* at that point, I ran into him on the street. He was always very nice to me and he said, you know, I think they are hiring at *Elle Decor*. Because I didn't have a job and I was trying to get my life back together, and I went to *Elle Decor*. It was run by these absolutely crazy French guys. Totally insane—whole other story. [Laughs.]

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: Unbelievable. They would keep us there until 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning changing something by a point. Nutty, crazy stuff. Anyway, James Baggett was working at *Elle Decor Magazine*. He was one of the editors. You know, we chatted each other up, and then of course when they were taking their time and we were there forever, I would go hang out in his cubical. And in this cubical were all these posters and stickers about something called ACT UP, and "Silence=Death," and this pink triangle.

CYNTHIA CARR: So you hadn't known about ACT UP before this?

JOY EPISALLA: Nope. Well, I'd been in some crazy—you know, in my own other world for most of '89, so maybe this is like—It's probably before '90, because I think the first action that I did with James was the Waldorf Astoria where we dumped the money out [a hotel window when George Bush came there as President -JE].

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: So whenever that is, and something about Cuomo. I remember those two things, so it's somewhere in there is when I come to ACT UP. But anyway it was James Baggett. So you know, we're shooting the shit and talking and I start asking him—you know, you start getting to know somebody and he tells me about ACT UP and I think that sounds pretty interesting and he takes me to my first meeting in the Great Hall at

Cooper Union. And it's the first time I meet The Marys because James was already part of The Marys. And I was home. That was it. From that moment in time I felt like I found my people, my tribe.

CYNTHIA CARR: But before this you'd been aware of AIDS and people dying right?

JOY EPISALLA: Yes, but I don't think I had any—I would say to you that when my father died that February, I don't know what I knew about it. I was pretty devastated; it was very devastating. It took me a while to come out of it. I had probably seen things in newspapers. I don't know—it hadn't totally—but that's not totally true. When I was living in Hoboken, a friend of ours died. That's what happened. What was his name? He was an old friend of Anthony's, the English guy I worked with at Detail—oh, I almost have it.[Gordon Stevenson -JE]. He was the first person I knew who died of AIDS, so that was back when we first moved to Hoboken and we changed that window, it was right around there, so it's got to be '85, '86[1983 -JE], so yes.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, that was fairly early.

JOY EPISALLA: I also must state for the record that my memory is not too brilliant anymore. I don't know what's happening there. Sometimes I think it's I have too much going on in my head.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes, I know what you mean.

JOY EPISALLA: Too many screens to look at and too many emails to answer.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right

JOY EPISALLA: Gordon. His name was Gordon. Gordon died of AIDS.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay. Yes, '85, '86 [1983 -JE] was pretty early in the epidemic.

JOY EPISALLA: It's somewhere around in there. It could be '87. [It was 1983 -JE]. I could find out, but that's kind of what I remember.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: So I do hear about it. Yeah it makes sense, so by the time I meet James, it all makes sense to me at some level, you know.

CYNTHIA CARR: Did he talk to you about—was he HIV positive?

JOY EPISALLA: No. No.

CYNTHIA CARR: But he talked about maybe what the government was not doing?

JOY EPISALLA: Well, it was pretty clear from sitting in his cubicle, I mean he had everything up. And at that point, he had started out at GMHC as a buddy and that's how he came to ACT UP.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh. I see.

JOY EPISALLA: So, and he told me about that. You know, you start, like we're talking right now—we were talking then, like where do you come from—, and we were on the same page for sure. We hit it off totally. He and I were quite close at that time. It was clear. It wasn't like I had to be brought up to speed, it was more like I might have been hovering out here and I finally figured out that my maybe square piece or triangle piece could fit in this round hole. You know what I mean.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes. Now The Marys was an affinity group within ACT UP. Maybe you should explain what an affinity group is.

JOY EPISALLA: Yes. Yes. So there was all the body of ACT UP. You had all these people and there were different committees you could work on. And basically it was like a beehive and everybody brought what they knew in the outside world into this place so we could use it. So what everybody did best, is what they did.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: And so if there was a big demonstration, then probably all of ACT UP would do that demonstration. But there were smaller groups almost like little satellite groups within ACT UP, called affinity groups. And the affinity group might plan a very targeted action, that probably had more risk of arrest that would have been very hard to do with a lot of people. It had to be more stealth than that.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. Yes.

JOY EPISALLA: I had met The Marys and became one of them probably the first night I sat down in those seats at Cooper Union. I found them all—they were all fascinating people. So right from the get go, I think, like I said I think the first thing might have been that older action and then we did a demo against Cuomo—I can't remember—the first Cuomo, not the present Governor, the Governor's father.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, so it started there. So The Marys would, depending on what was happening, you know—people would go to the floor of ACT UP and it was all based on *Robert's Rules*, so there was no hierarchy. Anybody could come to the floor and present something, or an issue or give a teach-in. Right. Then you had the groups, you had the treatment and data group, and you had the housing works group, or what would eventually become Housing Works. And the treatment and data group would eventually become TAG, the Treatment Action Group. You had the Women's Caucus in there. You had Latino and Asian, you know—God, there were so many different factions, but all working together, right.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: So you might have your core group that you worked with, and then you'd have your affinity group and your affinity group could be mixed up with everybody. It was a very tight group of people.

CYNTHIA CARR: And the name "The Marys," that's like an old derogatory term for gay men.

JOY EPISALLA: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. And of course, there were the "Bloody Marys," "The Marys" and "Hey Mary."

CYNTHIA CARR: And I remember you telling me once that The Marys would meet every week or you would go to the ACT UP meeting and then The Marys would go out together afterwards. And that's how it worked?

JOY EPISALLA: Yes. Absolutely. Always. And we'd go to— it's not there anymore—what was the name of the diner?

CYNTHIA CARR: Kiev?

JOY EPISALLA: Yes, Kiev. We went to Kiev a lot and we went to Florent a lot.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah. Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah so we'd go out and have a bite to eat afterwards and either start planning something or—it seems to me now—I don't know—I think Maxine Wolf who was also an ACT UP member said it best, but it was sort of like, you know, if you looked at any given year, there was probably an action every single day of the year. So you lived and you breathed it. Because also at that time—you're talking the end of the '80s and the early '90s—and that's the [peak -JE] of, you know, the worst of the epidemic and the AIDS crisis was at its peak. And people were getting sick and dying basically, and there was nothing on the horizon as much as everybody was trying to work to find something and ACT UP absolutely put it on the front page. It had to be that you had to say the word "AIDS" and you know—you didn't get AIDS from kissing. There were all these fallacies that we would try to turn on their head. You had the Catholic Church and those crazy nuts who were bigoted and horrible people and taking it out on—it was just a very strange time and I think it was like being in a war.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh yeah, totally.

JOY EPISALLA: So it was like a war zone, and you had your unit—that was The Marys—and we all had each other's back. That was the other thing. You trusted people implicitly. You never thought anything else.

CYNTHIA CARR: How many people were in The Marys?

JOY EPISALLA: I'd say there was a definite core group of 12 to 15, and then there were some outliers that would come for certain things. But I would say—I'd have to go down the list of names.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. I was thinking maybe if you can think of the names, while we're here.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. Barbara Hughes

CYNTHIA CARR: Barbara Hughes. Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: Tim Bailey.

CYNTHIA CARR: Tim Bailey?

JOY EPISALLA: Yep, B-A-I-L-E-Y.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, I will send you these later.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. Mark Lowe Fisher.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: Jon Greenberg.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: James Baggett.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: Ken Bing.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: Stephen Machon, M-A-C-H-O-N

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: Anna Blume.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: Oh, what was his name?

CYNTHIA CARR: That's eight. You can give me more names later.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. I mean like, Carrie [Yamaoka -JE] was peripherally—you know did some things. BC Craig did some things with us. Michael Marco did some things with us. We also worked in tandem with Anonymous Queers, so we worked in tandem with—

CYNTHIA CARR: That was another affinity group?

JOY EPISALLA: I don't know if that was the name of their affinity group or not, but Anonymous Queers kept putting out those broadsides—and that's where Stumpf/Kane first appeared—that was Vincent Gagliostro? Oh, and Michael Cunningham [was a Mary -JE].

CYNTHIA CARR: How about Stumpf and Kane?

JOY EPISALLA: Oh God, how could I forget? John Stumpf. [Mary Member -JE].

CYNTHIA CARR: John Stumpf.

JOY EPISALLA: I can't even believe I did that.

CYNTHIA CARR: That's okay.

JOY EPISALLA: And Dennis Kane. Mary Member.

CYNTHIA CARR: Dennis Kane, okay. Okay, let's see, that's 14 names with a couple of them being peripheral.

JOY EPISALLA: I mean, not totally peripheral. But, yeah, there was this guy, Ned. I can't remember his last name. I have it written down somewhere. Also, peripheral might be the wrong word. Like this Ned was there for the Channel 13 action, but I think he moves away at some point. Do you know what I mean? It was that kind of thing.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, okay.

JOY EPISALLA: Anyway, there's probably more.

CYNTHIA CARR: And Anonymous Queers was part of ACT UP?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, well, basically it was Vincent Gagliostro and Avram Finkelstein.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, okay. And then did they both turn into Gran Fury or just Avram?

JOY EPISALLA: Vincent was part of Gran Fury.

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JOY EPISALLA: I mean, maybe a silent partner—

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay, partner.

JOY EPISALLA: So that—yeah. They were very involved in that.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: And then of course the other thing is, by '91 I'm part of The Marys, but I've met—Carrie and I have both met Zoe Leonard by this point. And Nancy Brooks Brody. And the four of us and a number of other women like Jean Carlomusto—I mean, that's a whole other list. We start fierce pussy. So, we're doing fierce pussy at the same time as we're in ACT UP and at the same time I'm a Mary and at the same time—you know, yeah. So we're doing fierce pussy stuff as well as all the ACT UP stuff.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh boy. Well, let's start with The Marys and we'll get to fierce pussy. Is that okay?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: Now, after you joined them what was the very first action? Was that the MacNeil Lehrer or the—

JOY EPISALLA: The first big action we did was MacNeil Lehrer.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay. So, let's—

JOY EPISALLA: Oh, and Bob Henry. He was another [Mary -JE.]

CYNTHIA CARR: Bob Henry?

JOY EPISALLA: Bob Henry was Dennis Kane's boyfriend. Bob Henry was one of The Marys.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: So I told you, names'll start coming to me probably as I think about the actions.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, yeah. So, what was the idea behind MacNeil Lehrer?

JOY EPISALLA: So, what happened was the first Gulf War started.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh. Yes.

JOY EPISALLA: And that was January—end of January the first bombs were dropped.

CYNTHIA CARR: In '91?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: And I think Day of Desperation is 31st of January, but don't quote me. We can check it out.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: Anyway, so, that happens and we just feel like, this is completely fucked up. A; the war period. And B; there's a war at home that is invisible to everybody else who doesn't have somebody who is either themselves, their lover, their friend who's dying of AIDS, right?

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative].

JOY EPISALLA: And we're still doing our thing, right? You know? We've got all the balls in the air and who you're visiting in the hospital and whose memorial service have you gone to? And what action are you doing? And we're just like, "Are you kidding me?"

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And we feel like not enough—I mean, the amount of attention that's being put on the Gulf War, a

war that we shouldn't be involved in and the problems at home, in the United States are not being looked at—especially AIDS. And so, we decide that that's what we're going to do. We're going to highlight that and that was on the floor of ACT UP. So Day of Desperation, which eventually takes place in Grand Central, was underway. So that was the big overarching action.

CYNTHIA CARR: Everyone in ACT UP was involved in Day of Desperation?

JOY EPISALLA: Exactly, yes.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: And then off of that, affinity groups would branch out and do their thing.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: So, there were three affinity groups that decided that they'd hit the networks.

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh.

JOY EPISALLA: So one hit—it was actually—Mark Fisher was in Wave Three at that time. So maybe he went between the two.

CYNTHIA CARR: That was another affinity group? Wave Three?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, Wave Three. And I think those guys—I think he had something to do with Wave Three. Mark was with us during—anyway, they hit—what was his name? John, I can't remember it. [John Weir -JE]. He's on camera with the guy from CBS, the newscaster.

CYNTHIA CARR: Dan Rather, or—?

JOY EPISALLA: Yes, yes.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: Yes, Dan Rather. So that was CBS, right? Am I right?

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, and the idea was to disrupt the broadcast?

JOY EPISALLA: Disrupt and—yeah, disrupt the broadcast and make them discuss AIDS.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh. Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

JOY EPISALLA: In a non-violent way, but yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. But I mean, those shows are live.

JOY EPISALLA: Right, so—

CYNTHIA CARR: So you would come in while—

JOY EPISALLA: What was the guy's name again? John—is the one you see on camera disrupting Dan Rather. [John Weir -JE].

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: So that was that station.

CYNTHIA CARR: John being a part of—?

JOY EPISALLA: Not our John, this is a John—John Weir? John? I—we can figure it out.

CYNTHIA CARR: But he's a protestor?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, he's a protestor. He's a—I think he's Wave Three. I could have this wrong and we could check my—

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: "Blah blah blah," but so they hit that and then another—there was another affinity group, I

believe, that hit NBC or ABC.

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

JOY EPISALLA: I can't remember. And our target for The Marys was Channel 13 in New York that was at that time off of Columbus Circle near 59th Street on the West Side.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

JOY EPISALLA: And the *MacNeil Lehrer News Hour* is what we decided and so—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, right.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. And I remember—also, when you went off the floor at Cooper Union—you—you know, you broke out into your groups, into your affinity groups, and—you have to also remember too, everybody was trained in civil disobedience.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: Amy [now Jamie -JE] Bower was one of those great people that would do those trainings. I think BC [Craig] did it too. Anyway, you know, you learned how to, you know, go limp, what you needed to say to cops, what you didn't have to say, you know?

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: It was all broken down. You didn't fight the cop if—once they got a hold of you, you went limp. And how to stay safe and how to be lookouts for each other and you always had to have a lawyer on site and other people to watch, monitor what was going on. So that you were—you and the people you were doing this with were safe. We'd all had this training and I remember being outside—we'd gone outside in the hallway outside of the big hall at Cooper Union. I don't know who had this idea. I thought they were absolutely out of their minds.

CYNTHIA CARR: What? To break into these shows with protestors?

JOY EPISALLA: Well, at *MacNeil Lehrer*, we had an in. We had an in.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, I see.

JOY EPISALLA: We had somebody who worked there who gave us their I.D.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh [laughs].

JOY EPISALLA: And, you know, we did reconnaissance on—we did a tour.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh. Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

JOY EPISALLA: Because you could tour the studios.

CYNTHIA CARR: On a different day you did a tour?

JOY EPISALLA: Absolutely.

CYNTHIA CARR: Just to see what was where and—?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. Right.

CYNTHIA CARR: Did all of you go?

JOY EPISALLA: No. Only—there was only a group that went and then came back and—

CYNTHIA CARR: And reported.

JOY EPISALLA: Reported. And so, you know—so—

CYNTHIA CARR: So three or four people went and did a report, something like that?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, we did a report and we had the I.D. And then at the same time, I remember Dennis and Bob coming back from—because they thought the City Corps building was the other place we should hit.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: With bloody bones.

CYNTHIA CARR: Ah. [Affirmative.]

JOY EPISALLA: So our thing was there. So this is all going on at the same time. So the night before Day of Desperation we're going to hit *MacNeil Lehrer News Hour*, right?

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: And I think Tim and John were at Tim's watching it on TV and we had a cell phone that was humungous.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. One of those big, huge cell phones, yes.

JOY EPISALLA: I made the IDs because my magazine work at this point was really paying off and I could—knew how to do things. I still know how to do things. Anyway, they looked fabulous. You know, they were on the ball chain—and we took pictures of everybody. And it was going in. So we all had our jobs.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

JOY EPISALLA: And so there was—I think a little café or restaurant right down the block from—

CYNTHIA CARR: From the studio?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. So some of us—I was there with James Baggett and I think maybe Kenny. [Ken Bing was also a Mary -JE]. I can't remember. And Timothy was at home and I think with John. Oh Dennis was with us because Dennis was super nervous because—I remember driving uptown. I can't remember whose apartment we met at. I am driving at the same time putting together the IDs on the ball chain and Dennis is basically fainting in the car. Like flipping out. [Laughs.] Anyway, we get to—everybody—you know, we're all in gear and they go in. They go in and I think we call them as soon as—I think they make their way to the green room.

CYNTHIA CARR: Ah.

JOY EPISALLA: And we call them on the cell phone and say—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes. How many went into the green room?

JOY EPISALLA: There was Barbara, Steven, Anna, that guy, I want to say his name is Ned, but I could be wrong. [Neil Greenburg -JE]. Mark Lowe Fisher, and I think Jon Greenberg.

CYNTHIA CARR: That's quite a few. Mark—

JOY EPISALLA: I think it was—I think so.

CYNTHIA CARR: Barbara,[Neil -JE], Anna—

JOY EPISALLA: Anna Blume and I think—

CYNTHIA CARR: So that's one, two, three, four, five people who went into the green room?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: Let's see—Mark, John, Barbara, [Neil -JE], and Anna.

JOY EPISALLA: And Stephen.

CYNTHIA CARR: Six people.

JOY EPISALLA: And then James and I and Dennis I guess. Maybe Bob. I can't remember. We were in the diner down the street. So we gave them the signal to go in.

CYNTHIA CARR: Because you were watching it on a—on a TV?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, and actually we weren't. It went like—I think it was like a three way call. It's like Tim called us that it's coming on now.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh okay.

JOY EPISALLA: We had timed it and—

CYNTHIA CARR: Did you want to time it for a particular moment on the show?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, they wanted to go in as soon as they came on.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, as soon as it came on?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. Which is what they did.

CYNTHIA CARR: So what happened? How many people got into the actual—?

JOY EPISALLA: They all did.

CYNTHIA CARR: They all did?

JOY EPISALLA: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] And I think they—I think they handcuffed themselves like under [MacNeil's desk -JE]. I never can get straight who was in New York and who was in Washington. We have to figure that out.

CYNTHIA CARR: I see. [The show had two news anchors, one in New York and one in Washington, D.C..-CC] So whether it was MacNeil or Lehrer—it was the guy in New York that they handcuffed themselves to —

JOY EPISALLA: Under the desk.

CYNTHIA CARR: Under his desk?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, and on poles in the room and just started saying, like you know, what our demands were.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh. Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

JOY EPISALLA: And New York went black.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: They went off the air.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, I see.

JOY EPISALLA: And so what you see in the footage is MacNeil or Lehrer with his guest in Washington.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: And then the other one comes back on because by that time they'd gotten everybody out and they'd been arrested.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, I see.

JOY EPISALLA: And he says basically verbatim what we wanted him to say. You know? They were AIDS protestors who say that we are talking more about the Gulf War and other things than what's happening here at home about AIDS. And I told them that—that we covered AIDS too. He says something really dumb. But it didn't matter, we'd done it.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: And so those guys went to jail and of course we were the monitors, James and I.

CYNTHIA CARR: I see.

JOY EPISALLA: And Dennis and them. So we went to the precinct and we had the lawyer and we got—waited to get them out. And then we all went back to Tim's to watch the footage because he'd taped it.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh. Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

JOY EPISALLA: And now who—God knows what time it is. I don't know, right? Did they get out at three in the morning? Did they get out at four in the morning? I don't know if I went home. I can't—I might have for a couple of hours. I don't know. But we were back at it down at the World Trade Center where we met—

CYNTHIA CARR: The very next day?

JOY EPISALLA: That morning.

CYNTHIA CARR: In the—that morning?

JOY EPISALLA: Like right after jail and we got everybody out and we probably had a coffee, I don't know. And then we went down and it was freezing. Absolutely freezing.

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

JOY EPISALLA: And we were down—there's a—actually, one of the only pictures of The Marys is taken down there. And it was the needle exchange demo with coffins that we were going to carry up from a march from down there up to Grand Central, I think, is the route.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh. What about City Corps?

JOY EPISALLA: Wait.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: We're getting there.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: So that is what I mean, it's complicated.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: So we break off because we've already planned the City Corps thing, and in City Corps there's a big atrium.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: We had made these flyers that looked like death notices with the black borders.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And they were pictures of people of all races; a little boy, a little girl, a man, a woman, older person. And it said on the back something like, "This could be your brother, your sister, your lover, your wife—your uncle, your aunt." And, you know, we used the statistics they used from the Vietnam War, like how much production work—production and loss happened by losing all of those lives and we made those numbers about the AIDS crisis at that point in time and that was what was on the back [of the flyer -JE].

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

JOY EPISALLA: And Dennis and Bob, their reconnaissance was brilliant because they did a slide show for us showing us what the City Corps building looked like—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: —and where we could situate ourselves. And what we would do would be—at the moment that some of us would go in with this big bag of bloody chicken bones covered in ketchup and dump them in the middle of the atrium while all these people are having their lunch—and stick the sign in it that had those statistics on it about AIDS. And at the same time fluttering down would be these beautiful—these like, very solemn, you know, delicate little images of all these people, single portrait.

CYNTHIA CARR: So a portrait.

JOY EPISALLA: Right. In black [and white -JE], with the black line.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah. Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

JOY EPISALLA: And well, then we did that.

CYNTHIA CARR: So you did do—you did that that morning?

JOY EPISALLA: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CYNTHIA CARR: That morning.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, we did that demo and then we went there and we hit City Corps and then we hit TKTS. The tickets—tickets thingy—

CYNTHIA CARR: On Broadway—like in Times Square?

JOY EPISALLA: Up on—up on—no. In Times Square where there was a Marine and an Army [recruiting station—CC]. We did it right there. Another coffin with bloody bones.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh. And placed it—what? In front of the—

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, I think we just dropped it there.

CYNTHIA CARR: In front of the recruiting station?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, yeah. And then we went to Grand Central for Day of Desperation.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay. And at City Corps, Dennis and Bob had done reconnaissance there to show like where everything was they had done a slide show?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah and then we sat down and we would—

CYNTHIA CARR: And you planned it out like who's going to be where, whatever.

JOY EPISALLA: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CYNTHIA CARR: What happened at City Corps? Was there a reaction from the people when you dumped all the bones or—?

JOY EPISALLA: Well, it takes about 30 seconds for anybody to react to anything. You can basically do anything. You have 30 seconds. So if you're smart and you know exactly what you're doing you just think about what you're going to do and that's what you do and you walk away. And that's all we did.

CYNTHIA CARR: So you walked out of it? So you didn't really see what happened?

JOY EPISALLA: Well, yeah. I mean, they [people -JE] were sitting there eating their lunch and you know, we just—I'm assuming people picked up the flyers.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, okay.

JOY EPISALLA: Kind of didn't have a lot of time to kind of pay attention to—you know, I mean, we made our mark.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, right.

JOY EPISALLA: And we made our mark and then we went to Grand Central and then we made our mark.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, okay.

JOY EPISALLA: So it was pretty jam packed and quite explosive, you know? And that's where you see Day of Desperation—where you see the banner goes up over the departure board, how many people are dying of AIDS every X minutes?

CYNTHIA CARR: And this was—in Grand Central, it was more than just The Marys?

JOY EPISALLA: Oh yeah, oh it's all of ACT UP.

CYNTHIA CARR: All of ACT UP is there?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, so all the affinity groups are doing their thing all over the place and then everybody comes to Grand Central, I think it was rush hour.

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] Evening rush hour?

JOY EPISALLA: Evening rush hour, right? And by that point, you know, we had a media—ACT UP had a media group and so the press releases had gone out.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: So, I remember there was a reporter there, it was a woman reporter [Sue Simmons -JE]—anyway, she started talking to me and I was with Tim. I think I was with Tim and Carrie or something at that point and I said—don't talk to me, talk to him. And so he was on TV that night. Sue Simmons maybe?

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes.

JOY EPISALLA: I think she interviewed me.

CYNTHIA CARR: She was one of the local newscasters, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, then it was her.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes. He actually went on the show, or?

JOY EPISALLA: No, in the crowd. She was there.

CYNTHIA CARR: She was interviewing people?

JOY EPISALLA: She started asking me and I just—I thought Timothy would—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah. He should talk.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah. Because he had—I mean, he has—

JOY EPISALLA: Well, he was HIV positive. He was living it.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes.

JOY EPISALLA: I mean, I was the witness. I could tell you a lot now probably because none of them, they're not here anymore. So—

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. Yeah. Now who was putting the banner up? Which group—do you know what group it was? It was just another group, another affinity group?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, I—

CYNTHIA CARR: What did the banner say?

JOY EPISALLA: I think it was—you can see in pictures. It's something like how many people have died of AIDS every X minutes at that point in time.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, I see, yes. Right. Okay. So there's another—so there was more?

JOY EPISALLA: There was another affinity group that did this brilliant thing. I know it was Heidi Darrow and it was a bunch of people in their group. I can't remember what they're called. And they came down that set of steps with these purple blooms that flew up to the ceiling. I mean the whole thing, it was beautiful. These big foghorns went off, that's how it started. And then people just came in from all over. It was crazy.

CYNTHIA CARR: Wow.

JOY EPISALLA: It was fantastic. It was—I think it was very effective.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, it got a lot of attention.

JOY EPISALLA: And I think it got a lot of press. We can probably look that up too. I probably have all that stuff, you know?

CYNTHIA CARR: This was like the beginning of 1991 when this happened?

JOY EPISALLA: This is the beginning in '91. And at this point—am I right? '91?

CYNTHIA CARR: I think so.

JOY EPISALLA: I have to look at the dates because I'm getting really confused because you're telling me that David died—

CYNTHIA CARR: He died in '92.

JOY EPISALLA: Yes, I think we have the dates, maybe the dates are screwed up.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: Because John and Dennis—I have to look this up. I cannot remember. We have to get this straightened out.

CYNTHIA CARR: I'll pause it. Ready to record that?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. Okay, so I am right. So basically the way it goes is—

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay, so Day of Desperation.

JOY EPISALLA: Day of Desperation is January 23rd of '91.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: And then we decide that we're going to go after Bush. So we do 30 Days of George Bush where we're going to—I think the first action was Kennebunkport for that.

CYNTHIA CARR: Was that like in the spring or something?

JOY EPISALLA: No, that was the summer. The beginning of September, it was 30 Days of George Bush. It was right at the end—it was the end of the summer beginning of September

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: And yes, I know because the reconnaissance for that was Timothy, James, Ken Bing and myself. And we went to Kennebunkport and we worked with ACT UP Maine. And—

CYNTHIA CARR: You went ahead of time? Like you went in the summer?

JOY EPISALLA: We went ahead that summer and—

CYNTHIA CARR: To scope it out.

JOY EPISALLA: To scope it out. To figure out, you know, maps and how we were going to do this and look for hotels. We knew it was going to be big. And then we came back to the floor of ACT UP and told them about Kennebunkport, but basically The Marys headed it up.

CYNTHIA CARR: I see.

JOY EPISALLA: And because we needed funds, right? So you would come to the floor of ACT UP and you would do a presentation basically.

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

JOY EPISALLA: Anyway, obviously everybody was on board and we were going to involve Housing Works and Harlem United and, you know, all these other groups that were also—it wasn't just ACT UP, you know? We felt like it needed to be the whole community, right?

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

JOY EPISALLA: ACT UP did try to work, with other organizations. And, I think there was probably people from GMHC. I mean it was huge. So we paid for the buses to bring them—haul them up there.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh. How many buses do you think?

JOY EPISALLA: Oh God, there was a lot of people. [Laughs.] We had to supply food. We got food delivered. You remember Aggie's?

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: I got sandwiches from Aggie's. I mean, oh we—the whole nine yards. Everybody had lunch. Everybody had bus fare.

CYNTHIA CARR: Wow.

JOY EPISALLA: We—we absolutely worked our tails off and that was the year [1991 -JE]—that summer, Vito Russo does his—a speech in Union Square Park. Union Square. And because we [The Marys -JE] are selling the t-shirts. We did these t-shirts that said, I think, "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness." And it's two guys kissing and two girls kissing and the two guys, I think it was Ken and Tim and somebody photographed that. You know, it might have been Bill Bytsura who photographed it. I can't remember. I have the t-shirt. And then it was me and Carrie—was the girl one.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: And we did it sort of like an Andy Warhol silk screen and we sold [it -JE]—and we were all wearing—there's a picture, a bunch of us wearing them and we're at Union Square and we're selling them. So we're trying to raise money. Because that was the other thing we had to do.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: I'm sure we did some other crazy things because it was absolutely unbelievable. And then—oh, and we did *The Plan to End the AIDS Crisis* that we were going to deliver to George Bush. So we wrote that whole thing, and we had this whole prospectus that went along with it. And this banner, it was 40 feet long and it was about eight feet wide, maybe ten feet wide. I know because I painted it. And it had every, single point on it. We brought that banner with us to Kennebunkport.

CYNTHIA CARR: With the plan to end the AIDS crisis on it.

JOY EPISALLA: Correct. That we're going to deliver to George Bush's house. Vacation house. And we took over the town and people were totally great. They were out there with water for people. I mean, obviously we were working with ACT UP Maine, so they had organized stuff up there already. I don't really even. I mean, when I think about it now, we had no cell phones. We had no email.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: We're doing this all by word of mouth, the phone tree, you know, dialing up on the telephone, and flyers. Right? Facts—we had facts. We had a media committee for that too. And it was huge. I think there were—I don't know. I want to say 5,000 people there, but there are a lot.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, I think I've seen pictures of it. It's huge.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, and then there were these posters that were made for it that—Richard Deagle would print up the posters.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes, yes.

JOY EPISALLA: And there's that picture of—by Bill Bytsura and its—and then we had the lawyers—like Jill Harris was there. There's a picture I think of me, Jill, Vincent Gagliostro, he was involved as well. And maybe, maybe Peter Staley is in the picture and James Baggett. And we're all standing around. I mean, it's obviously the logistics team. Now we're just—we're standing there like, you know? I have the photograph. Yeah, so we—a bunch of us went up the night before and The Marys, we all went up the night before and stayed in the Motel 8 or something. And then, got there, and just helped. We all organized it. And then of course there were all these other people from ACT UP who helped—it was huge. So, we did that and I think that was the kick off [of thirty days George Bush -JE] and we did the whole march. And we get all the way to his house—[there at the gate -JE.]

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes, the presidential compound or whatever it was.

JOY EPISALLA: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Cops all over the place.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And we get the banner and we lay it out. I remember, I think there's photographs of—oh God, okay, Charles King and who was the other person in Housing Works? Oh my God, I can't believe I can't remember. Keith Skyler.

CYNTHIA CARR: Keith Skyler?

JOY EPISALLA: You know who I'm talking about? Very handsome.

CYNTHIA CARR: I didn't—I've never met him.

JOY EPISALLA: He and Tim had a thing there for a while. Anyway, Keith is posing all over [the banner -JE].

There's all these [laughs]. And yeah, and then what happens is the cops break it up. They run over the banner [with a cop car -JE].

CYNTHIA CARR: They drove over it?

JOY EPISALLA: They drove over the banner. Of course they did.

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh—huh. [Affirmative.] Had you laid it on the street like in front of the gate.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, 40 feet long, it's huge.

CYNTHIA CARR: Wow.

JOY EPISALLA: Now, somehow that banner goes to the [1992 -JE] Republican convention. Okay, so now we're in '91, right? So now the banner sort of disappears but somehow somebody from ACT UP had it. Got it, found it, got it, whatever. I'm pretty sure, because I definitely didn't have it, I mean, I have a lot of banners. I have like all the memorial banners. I'd love to find a place for them, Smithsonian. [Laughs.] Hello? I've held onto this stuff but somebody's got to take it off of my hands.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: Anyway, so we leave there. Now this is the end of September and there was a bunch of actions all through September that The Marys were organizing. We organized this whole month. It was a lot of work.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes.

JOY EPISALLA: And I was working at GQ magazine.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: And—

CYNTHIA CARR: In the art department again?

JOY EPISALLA: I was doing paste up mechanicals and I got the job there—it's hilarious. Because I think I got the job because both guys—my boss and this other guy Craig, they both had long hair that they wore in a braid and when I came in for the interview my hair was long and I had it in a braid. I think it was like—the three—I don't know what.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: So I was working there and I'm on the phone. I'm using everything they have. I stay late. I run posters [off -JE]. I mean Conde Nast paid for so many posters for ACT UP and for fierce pussy. I'm doing it all there. And we're having—hey, we're having fierce pussy meetings this whole time.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes.

JOY EPISALLA: This is all going—everything, it's all going on at the same time. And—I'm on the phone making phone calls. For all the logistics, right? I mean, we're all doing our thing. You know? When you have down time [at work -JE] you're going to do it, right?

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: Or not down time. I could paste up mechanical and talk on the phone. Anyway, I think it happened on a weekend. I don't know. And I went there. I—maybe I only worked till that Wednesday that week. You know, I'd go in for two weeks and off for two weeks or something. Al. That was my boss' name. Very interesting guy. Anyway. So, I'm ready to leave for the day and he said to me—

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JOY EPISALLA: "At the end of the day, I want to talk to you."

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: And I think, "Shit—I—my, you know, goose is cooked." And, he's going to tell me I shouldn't have taken too many supplies because I just walked out with half the store for sure.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: And he said, "I want you to be careful this weekend."

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, so this was before Kennebunkport?.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: Wow.

JOY EPISALLA: And, "I want to give you a small contribution."

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh. Nice. That's great.

JOY EPISALLA: I—he's no longer with us. He got hit in a hit-and-run accident—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: —like, couple months—I don't—couple months later.

CYNTHIA CARR: Really. Oh, boy. What was his name again?

JOY EPISALLA: I don't remember his last name. Al was his first name. He was really into photography, and we had a lot of conversations about photography. You know, this whole time, of course, you know, my artwork suffers, I think—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, because you didn't have time to do it.

JOY EPISALLA: Well, I was doing some.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

JOY EPISALLA: But I think it—yeah. I mean, I think I gave a lot.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah. All of these things you were involved in were so intense and so—

JOY EPISALLA: So intense, and it was—

CYNTHIA CARR: —it took so much labor, you know.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, and it was totally constant.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, and there's a kind of emotional toll to it—

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: —I think—

JOY EPISALLA: Absolutely.

CYNTHIA CARR: —with this kind of activism.

JOY EPISALLA: And I think your adrenaline is just so in play—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: —and I think it was in play for, like, I don't know how many years straight.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [Affirmative], yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: You know, live, breathe—it was so insane—that I think it's only now, in talking about it and thinking about it—I don't even know where we got the energy from in a way. I mean—

CYNTHIA CARR: We were younger.

JOY EPISALLA: Well, yeah, it's that—but it was—it was huge.

CYNTHIA CARR: It was, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: It was super huge that way. You know—in the meantime you're going to Monday night ACT UP meetings, and—you're picking up another obituary [at the back table -JE] —and somebody's making a thing

[action or report -JE] on the floor, like— A: who's sick, who's in the hospital , who died.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes.

JOY EPISALLA: I collected obituaries.

CYNTHIA CARR: So did I, actually.

JOY EPISALLA: You know? Right?

CYNTHIA CARR: It was the first thing I did every morning, every—read *The Times* and look—

JOY EPISALLA: Exactly, read *The Times* and look at the obituaries.

CYNTHIA CARR: Look at the obituaries—very first thing.

JOY EPISALLA: Absolutely. Very first thing.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: And I collected many. I've still got them.

JOY EPISALLA: So do I. So do I.

CYNTHIA CARR: So, yeah, and—

JOY EPISALLA: So there's, you know— it's this very kind of strange head space that you're in.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes.

JOY EPISALLA: And, yeah, so—maybe when we've finished with Kennebunkport today, because I think we're—I mean, I don't know—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, well, we can go on with the month of George Bush. We don't even have to do it now. Because this is—it's been about two hours. Do you want to stop for now?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. I guess, yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah?

JOY EPISALLA: Because okay. I'll just say this, that the end of that month, we went down to the White House, to Washington—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: —and to the National Archives, where Ryan White's mother made a speech—and we did a march from there to in front of the White House, where, I think, you know, we locked ourselves to the White House fence—I can't remember—

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: Something like that. And we were all arrested.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: This has big significance for much, much later, but—we were all arrested, we were all held together—all the guys, all the girls, didn't matter—

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh [Affirmative].

JOY EPISALLA: —in this room, and then we were put [back on the buses -JE]—we went down, and then we all paid a fine and we went home on the buses. So that was the last action. There were many—I mean, I'd have to look through my—

CYNTHIA CARR: That was the last George Bush action.

JOY EPISALLA: That was the last—that was the 30th, it was the last day of September.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, in 1991.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: And Ryan White—do you remember if he had died that year, or—I have to—

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, see, there's some stuff—we're a little sketchy here.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: So how will that work when they put this together? Will they reinsert things? Like, I mean, it's a little weird. Because, you know, you can't totally be chronologically—

CYNTHIA CARR: I know.

JOY EPISALLA: —and then you realize what the chronology is, you know.

CYNTHIA CARR: It's hard to remember stuff from 20, 30 years ago. Oh—90. Ryan White died in 1990.

JOY EPISALLA: Ryan White died in 1990, so Jeanne White, his mom—

CYNTHIA CARR: She got very involved. She was—

JOY EPISALLA: Jeanne Elaine Hale, that was her name. She got very involved, and she was very outspoken. She was a lovely person, and—yeah, so she came down with us, and—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, she was with you on the bus?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, I think we brought her down. There were a lot of people there.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: And we got her down there and we had a whole media crew. We did—I think there was a press conference, and she gave a speech at the National Archives, and then we marched from there to the White House.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, okay.

JOY EPISALLA: To give him the Plan that—we had this big thing—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, you still had the Plan?

JOY EPISALLA: We had the banner, but we now had the Plan, and it was like —it's a big document.

CYNTHIA CARR: I see. It was on paper at that point.

JOY EPISALLA: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.], I made this very elaborate seal for it.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.], so it was in an envelope—

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: —to give to the President?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, I'm sure I have all of these things, yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: And you—oh, you still have it?

JOY EPISALLA: Oh, God, I have everything.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.]

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. But anyway—

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. That's where that is.

CYNTHIA CARR: So you want to stop for now, and we'll do another—start another session?

JOY EPISALLA: Yes, that sounds—

CYNTHIA CARR: That's fine.

JOY EPISALLA: —because otherwise it's too much, I—

[END OF episal16\_1of2\_sd\_track08\_r]

CYNTHIA CARR: This is a test of this new card, and everything else; make sure I'm doing it right. I've got the volume turn up to 10, basically, because I couldn't hear the last one. That's all.

[END OF episal16\_2of2\_sd\_track01\_r]

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay, this is Cynthia Carr interviewing Joy Episalla at Joy's studio in New York, New York, the East Village. On March 7, 2016 for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, and this is card number two.

CYNTHIA CARR: Umm, you know, when we stopped last time; you were talking about the month of demos about —focused on George Bush; Bush the First.

JOY EPISALLA: That's September of '91.

CYNTHIA CARR: September of '91, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: It was called 30 Days of George Bush.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: And we, The Marys basically; The Marys, sort of, brainchild, whatever you want to call it; and then that was brought to the floor of ACT UP—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: The bigger group, The Marys being an affinity group I was part of, and that was presented to the floor and voted on. And everybody said yeah. So we started the first of September and in there we went to Kennebunkport to Bush's—at the time the father; Bush the father—

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: Their summer home.

CYNTHIA CARR: Well we'd talked about that last time.

Joy Episalla: Right.

CYNTHIA CARR: And there was one thing that I think was maybe left out; we talked about the Days of Desperation; Kennebunkport; the McNeal Lehrer—

JOY EPISALLA: News Hour, yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: All those things. There was another one where the George Bush action was at the Waldorf Astoria, I think we did not discuss that.

JOY EPISALLA: Which was earlier.

CYNTHIA CARR: That was earlier?

JOY EPISALLA: That was like one of the first things; I think it was actually one of the first things I actually did with ACT UP and The Marys; and that was at the Waldorf Astoria. And we dropped— I think we dropped money out of the hotel window.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes, yes.

JOY EPISALLA: Probably with Bush's face on them. And if you ask me what, in fact, we were going after him for, I can't tell you right now; but I think it was money for AIDS and not for war; or money for you know—kind of, a pretty typical—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, so that would have been maybe in what—1990? Or earlier '91?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, that would have been in 19, I think, 90.

CYNTHIA CARR: 1990.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: So you had rented a room on purpose that would be near the door?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah that was on the front end of the Waldorf Astoria so that when the cars pulled up, we were already in the hotel room, and the money went out the window, like confetti flying down.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.] Right, and okay, was there any reaction to that? Did they try to arrest you or?

JOY EPISALLA: Honestly, I think we're able to get out of that room before, and I did that with James Baggett. And I can't even remember, I can't—I don't remember it all, so we'll have to look it up.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: So it was, yeah, so the action at the Waldorf.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, okay, and maybe, I think you maybe—you printed something on the money; on the fake money?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, uh-huh [Affirmative].

CYNTHIA CARR: Some saying or other like, "blood on your hands," or something like that.

JOY EPISALLA: Uh-huh [Affirmative].

CYNTHIA CARR: But I don't remember either, because I remember you telling me about it you know years ago.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, and of course our memories—[laughs].

CYNTHIA CARR: And now we're old and we don't remember anything.

JOY EPISALLA: Exactly.

[They laugh.]

JOY EPISALLA: Selective memory.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, right, okay. So anyway, beginning with the, um, you had—there were two men in The Marys who died in the beginning of 1992, I think it was.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: John Stumpf?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, so—it was—um, okay, so how did it go? Yeah, I think—I want to—if my memory serves me right, I think that John died first; and I think John died, actually, at the end of '90, and that—. No, no, at the end of '91.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: Very close to the end of '91.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: And then Dennis died in January, of 90—

CYNTHIA CARR: '92, probably.

JOY EPISALLA: Uh-huh [Affirmative]. Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: That would make sense.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: Uh-huh [Affirmative].

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: But you know or—or did I rearrange that? Flip them? But I think that's right.

CYNTHIA CARR: It would make sense because then you had the build-up to David's death in the summer.

JOY EPISALLA: Yes, so that's probably right. So basically, and you know at this point—'91, you know, that was really the height of the AIDS crisis, between '91 and '93— through '93 I'd say.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: Because everybody, you know even in ACT UP, people would come to the floor and say so-and-so is sick; and then so-and-so is in the hospital; so-and-so has died. And you know, at the back of the meeting, and the meetings at that point were in the Great Hall at Cooper Union.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And before you entered the hall there were tables outside where there were things you could pick-up; you know stuff that people had run off for others to have. And always, there were obituaries. And, um, I started collecting obituaries of people that I knew, and you were going to memorial services.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, all the time.

JOY EPISALLA: All the time.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And we got—it was like you couldn't go to another memorial service.

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh [Affirmative].

JOY EPISALLA: It just seemed; it's so strange to me now, it's like—but at that time it's like it didn't satisfy anything. I mean, I understood what it was for in terms of one's family or maybe you know. But I kind of feel like—well, the group of us definitely felt like—and I don't think it was solely The Marys, I think this was, you know—other people. You know David Wojnarowicz felt the same way; it's like if I go to one more memorial I'm going to—you know—scream. Because it's not going to answer anything and it's not out in the public.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: It wasn't in the public.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And about that time in '91 I heard—and I don't know who else was with me, maybe Carrie my partner; Carrie Yamaoka, artist, I'm saying that for your record.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. Right.

JOY EPISALLA: Y-A-M-A-O-K-A

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay. [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: C-A-R-R-I-E

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.] Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: I think we went to hear—David's book *Close to the Knives* came out in '91.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, I think that's true.

JOY EPISALLA: And he did a talk at the Drawing Center. And we—I was there and I'm pretty sure Carrie was there; and I don't know who else; I can't remember.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And David read that section in *Close to the Knives*: I wish that every time a loved one or friend died of AIDS that their friends, lovers, partners, would drive a 100 miles an hour down to the White House and throw their bodies over the White House fence.

And for The Marys it was like, "Eureka."

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh [Affirmative].

JOY EPISALLA: Right. Exactly right. That's what we're going to do.

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh [Affirmative].

JOY EPISALLA: That's what we have to figure out how to do. Because all these people that we know, and people we don't know and—you know we're talking how many, and we could look up the numbers. But you know, hundreds of people are dying of this disease and no one is paying any attention. And people are having memorial services that are fine for a very small group of friends; but the—the world around us has no idea. And it's like being in the middle of a war.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And people are dying left and right, but nobody is paying any attention. And that's the quote from Vito Russo, the famous—from his famous speech; he says that, you know?

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: So all these things are in play, right? And The Marys are meeting and we get David's book and we start reading it and we start thinking about, yeah okay, right, we're going to—The Marys are going to carry it out. We're going to do this. And we started talking about it and at that point—at this point both John and Dennis had died. And so in honor of both John and Dennis—John Stumpf, Dennis Kane—we were going to do this in their memory and it was called *Stumpf/Kane*.

And we wrote this text for it which I think we can probably find—I have it somewhere. I think it's in my presentation so—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, okay.

JOY EPISALLA: We have a way of getting at all of these things.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: So we wrote this text saying, "We'd like to carry out your political funeral," basically. And it was a very succinct text, that was the other thing. We spent a lot of time writing these things. And our idea in the beginning was that, we were going to put it on the floor of ACT UP; and I think that the first time *Stumpf/Kane* came out into public was on the back of the broadside that Anonymous Queers did for Gay Pride 1992. And, that would have been in June. The end of June.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, you handed it out during the Gay Pride Parade.

JOY EPISALLA: That's right.

CYNTHIA CARR: I remember, yes.

JOY EPISALLA: And so we, yeah you know the whole idea was that we were going to get people; videotape people that wanted to do this, and have that as their, almost like a last will and testament kind of thing, but as their testament about what they wanted to do with their bodies after they died of AIDS.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: And that even in death they were proactive, and that they were going to fight, not only the good fight, but they were going to—you know, this was all to end AIDS. And we were all sick of it—literally and mentally, and in every possible way. So, The Marys were pretty bound and determined, and so then we looked into how to do it. And we met with an undertaker out in New Jersey; who happened to be one of The Marys'

brothers-in-law.

CYNTHIA CARR: I see.

JOY EPISALLA: And we went over; what are laws for taking a body—after someone dies, like, what do you need? And I mean it turns out that all the stuff that we all know about; someone dies and they go to a funeral home; whatever the religion, if someone is religious; which I don't think any of us particularly were. But, however you want to look at this and however you want to honor someone, I think we've all been under the impression that there were certain things; that you know the body gets released to the funeral home and from the funeral home it goes wherever.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: Cremation, or burial, or whatever. But in fact, you're allowed—you can have the dead body in your own home and have your own wake. It's actually quite natural. And if you look back in history, you know, you had—

CYNTHIA CARR: It's how people used to do it.

JOY EPISALLA: That's how people used to do it. You'd have the body in the home. And the family would be there, and you'd be with the person and—or what was left of the person. And people would come.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: And you know, that's where you get all those death portraits. Right? I remember like Victor Hugo, I mean we're talking—this was how it always was done. So it's only modern history that wanted to kind of sanitize it.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And you shouldn't—I don't know [say -JE] anything about death. You're not supposed to talk about it. Well, we were definitely going to talk about it; because we had watched it, right? We'd watched our friends die and—for what? So, David's writing totally rang true to us. And about this time, so we put *Stumpf/Kane* out there, and we'd done the research on what it is we needed to have in place if we were to do this. And we also thought that this would be for the community. We were all—we were kind of crazy too, as you can imagine; because really we were going to carry this out for—[laughs].

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: —I mean the whole thing, when I think about it now; I mean I know what we did. But—people that we didn't know. I mean the whole thing is just quite amazing to me.

CYNTHIA CARR: But you had made a pledge within your group—

JOY EPISALLA: Absolutely.

CYNTHIA CARR: That, you know, if we die we will do this.

JOY EPISALLA: Absolutely. Absolutely. That was the agreement; we all went around and we met as this was going on and we were just; you know we'd meet and talk about this and how we were going to go about it. And you know, we'd come back with reports and, you know, put all the pieces together. And I know Mark Lowe Fisher was—he was one of The Marys, and he was taking very, very, detailed notes. And it was all going into this Rolodex he had; who to call and how we would do this and all that.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. Right.

JOY EPISALLA: And the papers that we needed and, um—

CYNTHIA CARR: But you didn't find any takers at the Gay Pride Parade? I don't think.

JOY EPISALLA: No, but I don't know that we expected—we had given them a post office box, because remember, there's no e-mail.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: You don't have a cell phone.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: So I think there's a P.O. Box [listed -JE] down there where they could write to. Or, obviously, if people knew us, they would just get in touch with us.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: But I was going to say something about the whole organization—so yes, in our meetings together we'd always meet at somebody's house. We went around the room saying what it is we wanted, if one of us died. And I know that, actually, I think it was Tim wanted us to put him on a pyre with wood and burn his body and send it out onto the ocean. So it was all very elaborate—what everybody wanted. And—but it was first to go down to Washington; that was it.

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh [Affirmative], right.

JOY EPISALLA: And you know, I mean that would be part of the procedure, that we would take their dead body down to Washington.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: So, this is '92 June and in the meantime I—Carrie and I have an old friend, Jean Foos. And we met years ago in Rome; in fact that's when I met Carrie.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, oh, yes.

JOY EPISALLA: And we were all going to school at Tyler School of Art; so this is when we met Jean. So we'd stayed in touch. And I actually think that earlier on, if I'm not mistaken, Carrie and I went out to Jean's studio and I can't totally remember the exact—this is—I don't know that it—maybe it was before *Stumpf/Kane*. Anyway David came up in the conversation, and I knew she was very close to him. So, when this whole thing came about that we were going to follow through with *Stumpf/Kane* and do these political funerals—

The other thing is—I know what I was going to say—sorry it's not clear my—I'm jumping around. But there were no political funerals in the United States.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: Nothing had ever been done like that. There had been political funerals in South Africa, and Ireland I mean you can—But there was nothing like this ever done in the United States. So, that was the other thing. It would be—there was no precedent.

So, somewhere in June we also thought that—would David Wojnarowicz want to do this? It seemed to make sense. So, um, I approached Jean. And she said that, at point, "David is very ill, but I'll get back to you." And she did get back to us, and she said, "David's too sick and he's too ill to make a decision like that now." Almost ironic, no?

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes.

JOY EPISALLA: So—so that's where that was at.

So, we got through Gay Pride and July we're out in Fire Island and it was Carrie, me and Timothy—Tim Bailey, one of The Marys. He was, like, one of my best friends. And we get the news that David Wojnarowicz has died. I can't remember who called us out there. And immediately, The Marys started talking to each other and said, "Well, we have to do something, for David, that's a political funeral in some way." It's only right that we mark his—his dying of AIDS and government neglect, and, you know, all these things. And—so, because I was the contact for Jean, I approached Jean. And, um—and this is all happening super quick. I mean we're out on Fire Island; David dies July—

CYNTHIA CARR: What was it? The 12th something?

JOY EPISALLA: Something like that. I can't remember we'll have to look it up.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah. I think—

JOY EPISALLA: It's not far after—

CYNTHIA CARR: July 22 maybe is the date.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah it's sometime in July.

CYNTHIA CARR: I think its July 22.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, so it's '92.

JOY EPISALLA: I'm going to double check it. So he dies on—whatever it is—the 22nd, and we'd also realized that once people hear that David's died, you know, people are going to want to have—they're going to have a reaction to this. So wouldn't it be best to sort of harness this, you know, huge outpouring of response to David's death and David's work and David's writing and you know.

So, I got in touch with Jean Foos and said—so I think that The Marys had talked about it and I think we had actually figured out what we'd like to do, if this was okay with David's partner Tom.

CYNTHIA CARR: Tom.

JOY EPISALLA: Who I had never met before; and David's friends; and you know who we were to ask, right? So that what we were going to do was this; we were thinking of a march and there would be a banner. And, you know, we'd march through the East Village, because that's where David lived and we'd figure thing out.

So, Jean I guess must have told Tom.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah?

JOY EPISALLA: And said, "Why you don't come to David's house and come and talk to us?"

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, he opened up the loft, I think, a week after David died or something like that on a Sunday or something for people to stop in.

JOY EPISALLA: That's right.

CYNTHIA CARR: Something like that.

JOY EPISALLA: That's right. And this was on Second Avenue.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes.

JOY EPISALLA: Right above the movie theater.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, Second Avenue and 12th Street.

JOY EPISALLA: That's right. And Carrie came with me.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, yes.

JOY EPISALLA: And—I don't know who answered the door, and we went upstairs and it was the first time I laid eyes on Tom and there's many people there and they're obviously very sad and broken-up and you know it's intense.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: As soon as we walk in there it's like; this is intense.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: I mean of course; I felt very sad and I was not close to David, so I can only imagine how these people who've been, you know, his friends, and lover, and you know, everybody. So, but I remember one thing very specifically; I remember meeting Tom and looking him right in the eye.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, Tom Rauffenbart.

JOY EPISALLA: Tom Rauffenbart and somehow he made me just looking at—just eye to eye contact, I thought, "okay you and I are going to get along." I just had this feeling about him, immediately. And Jean was there so there were— I mean I didn't know if he was going to be an ally but something about him, like as soon as I saw him. So, we—I start to, I think I even had David's book with me, like, almost like proof; like, "Look, I've read the book." I think it was one of the hardest things I've ever done and I've done a couple of really hard things.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: But this was like jumping through a hoop of fire. Because as I explained what we were proposing, his friends—not Tom, but a number of people, got super angry.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: Like, who did I think I was?

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, they started interrupting? Saying things to you?

JOY EPISALLA: Well just, I mean, outraged. I mean, because look, they'd just lost their friend, right? So they're being enormously protective— and who the hell am I to come in, and tell you that or suggest to you, really, that there a number of people who want to carry out this idea of a political funeral, now would be in memory for David. And you know I tell them that the route that we're thinking, and I say to them, you know, "Look, you guys have to think about this. And you can get back to me." But I want you to know that there are so many people who want to pay their respects, that something's going to happen, probably anyway—and wouldn't it be better if it came from you guys, with us as support, to make this happen in honor of David?

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh [Affirmative].

JOY EPISALLA: And I left—I left there absolutely shaking.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh?

JOY EPISALLA: It—the—the—the—anger, sadness, mixed feelings, outrage—I mean you know, the whole—and you know what? They were mad. They were mad that David was dead and I happened to be a perfect target, in a sense.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: That, who am I to disrupt their—I mean I get it. But it was not—it wasn't very nice.

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh [Affirmative].

JOY EPISALLA: Nice is a stupid word but it was just awful really.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: Carrie said later to me, "Oh my god, that was unbelievable. I cannot believe you actually followed through and that you actually held your ground and that you were very kind. And, you know, you—you did it in the only way possible, and let's see what happens."

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: I don't think it was very long. Like, I think I might have heard back the same day from Jean that Tom was totally on board. And—he was—he wanted to do it.

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh [Affirmative].

JOY EPISALLA: And I think the friends were, you know, kind of kicking and screaming, but—

CYNTHIA CARR: I think Tom said something about he didn't want it to be violent.

JOY EPISALLA: That's right.

CYNTHIA CARR: But apart from that—I mean, he knew what, you know, he knew what David's mind was like.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: David would have loved you. [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: [Laughs.]

CYNTHIA CARR: I can tell you that, he would have.

JOY EPISALLA: Well that's very nice to hear.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes.

JOY EPISALLA: Considering.

CYNTHIA CARR: Definitely. But Tom was very leveled-headed, and I—you know, so—

JOY EPISALLA: Very level headed.

Cynthia Carry: And—

JOY EPISALLA: And he got it.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: I mean it wasn't—that's what I figured; I figured if—if you love David, and you know David, as I think you know David—

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: And then, you know about this writing that—it only makes sense to somehow follow through on his wishes. In a sense.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: So, the idea, what it came down was—like I said, there'd be this procession, and we had these pieces of wood that we used as clackers.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: It wasn't going to be violent, it was going to be a very peaceful memorial, you know—procession, funeral procession. And it was going to go down Second Avenue and it was going to turn on Houston and then it was going to come up Bowery, Third, to the parking lot where now stands that huge building with the Chase [Bank -JE]; but that was a parking lot.

CYNTHIA CARR: I remember, yes.

JOY EPISALLA: And what we wanted to do was to have a couple of slides with images that would go up on the wall of the then music building that's next door. Carl—I can't remember the name.

CYNTHIA CARR:| Yeah, Carl Weiss, or something like that, yeah,

JOY EPISALLA: And we went into the park—parking lot—I think it was me and James Baggett, maybe Tim; saying, "Would you mind if we used your electricity for a little while?" kind of thing. They were like, "Absolutely not." What's really comical is I think that place is rented by—Cooper Union owns that land, so it was very interesting.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah. [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: There's all other things that you could get into. Anyway—I know that now, because I've taught there, but it's just very interesting. Anyway, so James, I'll never forget it—there was right on the sidewalk; so we're talking on Third there—so across the street is Cooper Union, right?

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: There was a light post and James noticed that on the side of the light post, there was a panel in the base of that was loose—unless he loosened it. I don't know.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: And he popped it and sure enough there was a way to plug in.

CYNTHIA CARR: Ah.

JOY EPISALLA: So now we knew, as long as nobody sealed it on us, we had a way to plug in. So we rented this—at that time, boy were we high tech. We rented this slide projector, basically that had a huge throw.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: And the lumens—the light in it—was super bright, so that this thing would be lit up on this wall. Because it started in the afternoon; it wasn't dark out.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: So we had to try it out, right? We had to hope this thing worked.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: And so this is all happening in a very small amount of time. I mean I don't remember the date. I kind of want to say the 29th of July; I can't—I'm trying to remember. It was a pretty compacted—what's the day of the actual—?

CYNTHIA CARR: The funeral was the 29th, July 29th.

JOY EPISALLA: It was the 29th, I'm right. See, I remember. Isn't it crazy? To remember that? Um, yeah, so the—the—the funeral was the 29th of July. And so, what happened was that day—so we already told the floor of ACT UP that this was going to happen, this was how it was going to happen. We needed marshals for it, you know, so people would stay safe. We were going to take the street.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: We were going to take all of Second Avenue. We were going to take the lane going west on Houston Street, right? Come around and we'd come up the Bowery.

And so, you know, everybody from ACT UP—I mean, there were tons of people that showed up. It started at David's house.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: And in the meantime, we'd made these slides of, um—Tom gave us one image of David, which was David sitting, throwing the head—the sculpture of the head in the air.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, right.

JOY EPISALLA: So we had that image, and then we had an image of the White House, and the text from David's book that I said before.

CYNTHIA CARR: You also had some images of his work.

JOY EPISALLA: That's right, so we made posters. We made posters, because Mark Lowe Fisher worked for an architecture company. He was an architect, and they had one of those—you know, thing that they print their plans on? You know, again, we didn't have printers. We also didn't have any money.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: Anyway they printed the posters. And then I think, you know, we put them on foam core, and it was an image of David throwing it up and there were some, I think, of David's work. I actually think some friends and Tom might have made some also.

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh [Affirmative].

JOY EPISALLA: And we made a huge banner. We had to paint—so, between the 22nd and the 29th we painted this huge banner, "David Wojnarowicz died of AIDS, government neglect—" it was the whole litany of accuracy. And so that was in the front of the march was the banner and people carrying the banner and marshals up the side; and we had these clackers that made this kind of nice sound.

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh [Affirmative].

JOY EPISALLA: That's all the sound there was; it was almost like a drum. And there's some footage of all this.

And we came up—oh, and what we ended up doing—oh God—

CYNTHIA CARR: I thought you went down to Avenue A, and ended up marching down A, but you didn't do that?

JOY EPISALLA: No, we didn't. I think we went right down Second and around. Because we wanted to keep it tight.

CYNTHIA CARR: Ah.

JOY EPISALLA: And Dirk Rowntree—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes?

JOY EPISALLA: We asked one of his friends if they would be willing to read that text once we got to the parking lot. So as the march approaches, Carrie had—

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JOY EPISALLA: [—driven over in -CC] our car with Tim and—I don't know—someone else maybe; they'd already set the projector up. James and I—they plugged it in—

CYNTHIA CARR: It was put on someone's car.

JOY EPISALLA: It was our car that was parked right there, you know. And you know they must have turned it on at one second to test it out; to make sure it was big enough and that it would be sharp. And as the procession approached that parking lot there on Third Avenue; I think the picture of David went up and then I think the slide went up; that's what stayed up there; which was the picture of the White House and David's text over it.

We made all that stuff with Vincent Gagliostro where Vincent worked with the help of a friend; which I'm going to forget his name. [Howard Greenberg -JE].

CYNTHIA CARR: July 22nd is correct by the way, I just looked it up.

JOY EPISALLA: Okay, good, so yeah. So they approached; everybody approached and Dirk who was also one of the people who was very angry with me; I want you to know. He's Jean's partner; and he agreed he was going to read the text, so that's what happened. So we got there and he read the text.

Now in the meantime; I know that Tom didn't want any violence, but Barbara Hughes, one of The Marys, and I had already decided that we were going to burn the banner in the street. And when I went to buy the fabric for the banner, I asked them if they had something that wasn't fireproof. Because usually we got fireproof stuff just, you know, to be safe, but this time we wanted to go the other way.

Well, we had lighter fluid and we had matches. This thing we got it there and we, you know, crumpled it up and we put it in the street and it won't light. And so I am squirting it with tons of lighter fluid. She and I are covered in lighter fluid. It was really insane, and we finally got that thing to light, and it went up. And that point everybody surrounded this kind of bonfire.

CYNTHIA CARR: And then threw in the artwork; the reproductions.

JOY EPISALLA: The reproductions, and Tom was carrying a big sunflower and I believe he was the first person. Everybody was standing around the banner burning, and I think he was the first person to walk up and place the flower—the sunflower on the pyre. Right?

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: And then everybody started putting their placards in and it was super intense, super intense, but I think the perfect tribute to David Wojnarowicz.

CYNTHIA CARR: Now the march that started down Second Avenue—you didn't have a parade permit for this?

JOY EPISALLA: No.

CYNTHIA CARR: As I remember it, people started joining in.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, there were people from the sidewalk.

CYNTHIA CARR: There was a really big crowd—

JOY EPISALLA: Oh, it was huge.

CYNTHIA CARR: —going down the street, and didn't a police car show up?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, I think they did.

CYNTHIA CARR: And they started leading, that's what I heard.

JOY EPISALLA: I think that they did; they decided they would lead us. I think they knew that they couldn't get us off the street, and I think they saw what it was, and I think they saw how solemn it was. That was interesting, and so yeah, they led us. I don't know which one of us talked to them and then—so no, we didn't have a permit,

but if we were going to have a permit. I mean, by the time we jumped through that hoop—forget it.

And we figured that we were pretty responsible in the sense that we knew how to do this. And we were going to get it right, and we were going to get it right for David; and we were going to get it right for Tom, you know. And we were going to get it right for his friends. We were going to get it right for all of us. Because this was the right thing to do. You know, yeah it was pretty good.

CYNTHIA CARR: And that was the first political funeral.

JOY EPISALLA: And that was the first political funeral. Which, how ironic is that? David Wojnarowicz writes this text that many people are effected by, and he ends up being the first political funeral. It's almost—you couldn't write this stuff. Life is so strange, you know? And so that was the 29th of July in '92. And then came the Holland Tunnel action.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh right, was that that same summer?

JOY EPISALLA: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] It was the end of that summer. It was in—we'd have to look it up, it has to be sometime in October, September, somewhere in there. Because the Holland Tunnel action was about; there was a big attack again on *Roe v. Wade* and abortion rights and there was this secret—there was this thing organized—the Holland Tunnel action was organized by a number of different groups. It wasn't just ACT UP; actually it was ACT UP and a bunch of people responding and working in conjunction with—I'm not even sure who were the organizers in the beginning, but there were a number of different organizations. And The Marys all did this action.

And what happened was, it was very smart. You were given a piece of paper with an address where you went to, and when you got to that place you were given another address. So we finally ended up in a building across the street from the Holland Tunnel on Varick Street. And the cops didn't know where the hell we were. They knew something was going to happen, but they didn't know where we were, and they didn't know when.

CYNTHIA CARR: They knew something was going to happen? How did they know?

JOY EPISALLA: Well, because there would be cops in on any meeting anywhere, you know? So, you know, at the beginning of an ACT UP meeting you would always say, "Will the police identify themselves?" And of course—

CYNTHIA CARR: They never would.

JOY EPISALLA: Of course not.

CYNTHIA CARR: So it was planned by just a small group.

JOY EPISALLA: We were going to close—I think—

CYNTHIA CARR: A small group, and then the larger group was given these papers—

JOY EPISALLA: People found out about it. It's like—this was going to happen, and if you wanted to participate go to this address, and this is how it happened. And Zoe Leonard, Carrie Yamaoka, myself—I think it was Susan Wright—Suzanne Wright. And I don't know if Nancy was part of that or not; I think she was there. And then a number of The Marys, but we weren't together there. I remember we were with the women, and actually with fierce pussy, the collective that had started also in '91, with mostly lesbian artists who had been working in ACT UP and working in the trenches and ended up doing fierce pussy, which was like this idea of lesbian visibility.

Right, so that's who we were actually doing it with. But The Marys jumped in as well, so I know Mark Fisher did it, and that's very significant for later because—well, anyway. So these doors open up and right in front of us is the—we're going to close the Holland Tunnel, basically, that's what this was about. And it was going to be on the news, and we're going to tell them why, and all of that. And the doors open up, and we were chained together, Suzanne Wright, myself, Carrie and I think Zoe, maybe Nancy, I don't know.

CYNTHIA CARR: So this is the doors to the building on—

JOY EPISALLA: On Varick Street. They open up and all that's in front of us is a sea of cops, blue cops. And we are the first out of the building and we just charge, because we're going to close the Holland Tunnel. And we got hit with billy clubs. It was intense. It was intense! I mean if you think about anything like that happening now, forget it. Anyway, yeah we went for it and then of course everybody followed. So we were like completely hyped up for that one. I mean it was like, whoa.

CYNTHIA CARR: And all the activists were in that one building?

JOY EPISALLA: No, there were a couple of buildings, or they came in from different directions so they closed it off from both channels—everywhere we could. There were a lot of people for that. So then immediately of course we sat down and then we got taken away to jail, eventually.

CYNTHIA CARR: Did you actually close—did you get to the Holland Tunnel?

JOY EPISALLA: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, we closed it.

CYNTHIA CARR: So you got out past the cops, and got—

JOY EPISALLA: No, no we didn't have to; because they, in a way, had already closed it themselves. We just kind of shoved into the street. You know how it has those narrow avenues where the cars come? It was complete chaos. No, it was successful.

So, a bunch of people went to jail and we all got community service. And Mark Lowe Fisher, one of The Marys, had done the action as well, and we all got community service to clean Tompkins Square Park. Somehow, Mark got garbage duty which was a big mistake. Because Mark was HIV positive. His health was meh [not great -JE] but, you know, he was hanging in, but he wasn't a hundred percent and I think that garbage detail didn't help anything.

CYNTHIA CARR: I'm sure. Boy.

JOY EPISALLA: Because his immune system was already compromised, so he could pick up any kind of shit. And so after that, and this is why I'm not totally sure about the timing, except I know what happened; is Mark went on a trip to Italy—to Rome, and I remember seeing him off. And he went with a very close friend of his, which we'll have to figure out his name.

CYNTHIA CARR: And why did he go?

JOY EPISALLA: It was a vacation, he was going to go away.

CYNTHIA CARR: Was he really sick before he left?

JOY EPISALLA: I don't think he was in great shape, but I mean—I remember being in a cab with him saying goodbye to him. And saying to him, "Look, if anything happens you just call us." Why would I say that?

CYNTHIA CARR: Had he had—

JOY EPISALLA: So he went with this friend—I'm spacing out on his name, we'll find out who went with him on the trip. I almost had it.

CYNTHIA CARR: But he didn't have the usual, like, PCP or Kaposi's, or any of those things?

JOY EPISALLA: No, he didn't have that, but he wasn't in great shape. What happened was—there's a whole build up to this. We're coming into election time—this is all around election time, November.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, I can tell you I've got the date of his death here; it was October 29.

JOY EPISALLA: That's right. Okay, and so we did it the night before [the election -JD.] Anyway—so what happens is, Tim Bailey, who I'm basically, you know, I was his—what do we call it? Care giver? I took care of Tim, you know. He got sick around this time, and so I would be over at Tim's house all the time, and back and forth, and I knew he wasn't right. He was having trouble breathing, and I said, "Screw this," I remember I drove my car in, because I was living in Hoboken at the time. And Tim lived on the corner of Sixth Avenue and Washington Place in that gray building on the top floor. And I took him up to Roosevelt Saint Luke's, we went in through emergency, and sure enough, he's got a collapsed lung.

And I mean that's a whole story in itself. Anyway so I get him in and of course they're going to operate, they're going to put in staples. They were going to staple him together. And I remember Tim—oh God, anyway long story short; he gets through that, and he's in his room, and I get a phone call from Barbara Hughes saying, kind of, "Can you talk?" I'm like, "Yeah, what's up?" "Mark is on the plane coming back from Rome, and he's very ill. And we are going to—he's going to come to Roosevelt Saint Luke's." Because I think they actually had the same doctor, I think maybe Howard Grossman was both of their doctor.

Anyway, "he's going to come, he's going to go from the airport, they're going to take him by ambulance and he's going to come into Roosevelt Saint Luke," which is where Tim was. And I said, "Okay, fine I will go down to the emergency room to meet him." And Tim is like, "What's up?" And I'm like, "Oh, you know, nothing, Barbara's saying like I should meet her later." Because I don't want to upset him. I mean he's got this thing coming out of

his chest that we called "the waterfall," it's like, you know, pumping [air into his lung.] I mean it was crazy. I was crazy.

So, I'm in the room, and the phone rings again, and I could tell by her voice it's not good. And I say to Tim, "Listen, I've got to go outside." I say, "Let me call you back," you know, still trying to play, you know, cool. I get out in the hall and I call her back and she said, "Well he's not coming to the hospital. He died on the plane over New York, and we,"—Barbara and Stephen, "We're going to go out there." I think that's how it happened?

CYNTHIA CARR: Stephen? Who is Stephen?

JOY EPISALLA: Stephen Machon.

CYNTHIA CARR: Stephen Machon?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, we're going to go out there and we're going to have his body brought to Redden's Funeral Home.

CYNTHIA CARR:: Redden's, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: It's so incredible, I remember I came back into the room, Tim's hospital room, and he looked at me and he said, "Okay, I've taken a Valium, so now you can tell me what's going on."

CYNTHIA CARR: Now did you tell him?

JOY EPISALLA: Sure, I told him and, you know, he was comforting me. Right? And I said, "Okay," and when I left him that night in the hospital, I went to Mark's house because it turned out that Stephen was Mark's—oh what is it, your—?

CYNTHIA CARR: Like legal guardian or something like that?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, you know, he was the executor.

CYNTHIA CARR: The executor, yeah, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: So we went to Mark's, and Mark had a color coded rolodex of what we were now supposed to do.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, Stephen had keys to the apartment and all that?

JOY EPISALLA: Yes, so here it was. Mark had been in all of those meetings, where he knew what we were going to do, and he had it all laid out. In what order we should call people, and what we needed—the whole thing of Mark's political funeral. He—

CYNTHIA CARR: He'd planned it out.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, I mean—well. we talked about all these things enough, and we said, "Of course, if it would happen to one of us we would carry out their wishes," and it was completely insane. I mean, that it was all there and that we weren't going to do it for other people. We were going to do it for ourselves. That's really what it came down to, you know?

And he was quite amazing, Mark. So we did; and what we decided was we would do it; he died on the 29th?

CYNTHIA CARR: On the 29th.

JOY EPISALLA: The 29th of October; so—

CYNTHIA CARR: And the funeral is the—

JOY EPISALLA: The night before the election.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, November 2nd.

JOY EPISALLA: November 2nd, is the political funeral, right? So that's what we decide; we decide this is perfect. This is what we're going to do. We're going to do it the night before the election, because we want it on the news. And we're going to have a service in Judson Memorial Church. And we talked to the people at Redden, and we wanted an open casket. We wanted him to lay in state at Judson. So, in the Jewish religion they have these things called the slip-lid casket so that the top comes off very easily. It doesn't open like a book like most, you know, the whole front end. And we had a very simple casket, I remember. I think it was almost like a pine—yeah it was very, very simple.

And so that was what was going to happen. So, Redden's delivered Mark to us at Judson Memorial Church. Now in the meantime I'd seen Tim that morning and—or maybe it was the night before, and Tim had done an absentee ballot to vote. I remember. He also wrote something he wanted me to read for him, because we couldn't get him out of the hospital. And so the plan was we were going to have him [Mark -JE] lie in state, and then we were going to take him [Mark -JE] into the street, and do a procession up Sixth Avenue to Republican Headquarters.

I mean we told, you know, everybody on the floor of ACT UP. They knew what was going on; and there were certain things that maybe weren't out there so we didn't get closed down. And I remember waking up that morning, we were living in Hoboken—Carrie and I woke up in the morning and we were like, "Oh my God, it's raining out. What are we going to do? Mark can't get wet." I mean, really unbelievable.

So, we went someplace in the garment district and we bought huge black umbrellas. I mean huge, about twenty of them. And I remember we—I think we met at Barbara Hughes' apartment because she didn't live far from there. And then I think we went to the church, and Redden's delivered Mark's body to us into the church, so it was just The Marys, and we practiced. We picked him up, because actually he was heavier than you'd think, even though he was quite emaciated.

I mean, what happened was—he went septic. That's what happened on the plane—he'd gotten an infection and didn't know it, and it went fucking blooey. That's what happened. In those days, that's the fucking thing that happened, you know? So he didn't have a shot in hell, unless they'd gotten an amazing amount of antibiotics in him. It had already happened. He must have felt—Oh, I almost had the guy's name again, Richard, was with him on the plane. I'll remember. Actually in the ACT UP oral history—Pritchard.

CYNTHIA CARR: Pritchard.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, that's his last name. Pritchard.

CYNTHIA CARR: A friend of his?

JOY EPISALLA: They went to Rome together. He was on the plane, so he has that side of the story—[laughs]—which is pretty interesting.

CYNTHIA CARR: Because obviously, he was feeling well enough to get on the plane.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, they got him on the plane. I don't know how sick he was, but yeah. And so yeah, we picked Mark up in the casket.

CYNTHIA CARR: And practiced carrying him. Put him on your shoulders? You put him on your shoulders?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, mm-hmm [Affirmative].

CYNTHIA CARR: And how many, six people, eight?

JOY EPISALLA: I think there were six of us. I remember it being—I don't know, there was a shot in one of the magazines. I can't remember, I have the picture somewhere. But I think it was me, BC Craig, who was also in The Marys [at the front-JE].

CYNTHIA CARR: BC?

JOY EPISALLA: BC and—I think, I have to look I have a picture, and I can give you the names—who carried him out.

CYNTHIA CARR: So you and BC Craig—

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, BC Craig. She was in ACT UP, but she also did stuff with us in The Marys and she was kind of, you know, part of it too. Also they [Carrie and BC Craig -JE] had done banners on Tim's roof, they had painted all these banners so that when. Well, anyway, so we practiced—

CYNTHIA CARR: And then there was a regular service?

JOY EPISALLA: [No, the service was -JE] everybody got up to the podium and talked about Mark, and it was intense, and here's Mark lying in state, and Judson's quite beautiful actually. And people got up, and I read the piece from Tim, and it was very intense. And then everybody filed out and then we got it together, and we lift Mark up, and carried him out, and people were outside with the big black umbrellas.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, walking next to you to keep you all dry.

JOY EPISALLA: So we came out of Judson and we went out to Sixth Avenue and went walking up the avenue and as we passed Tim's house the banners that they had painted fell down the side of the building.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, what did the banners say?

JOY EPISALLA: You know, I can't remember, but I can find out for you. I mean, it was so intense my mind is—I just remember carrying him and how heavy he was.

CYNTHIA CARR: And where was Republican Headquarters?

JOY EPISALLA: Forty Third Street, Forty Fifth Street and off of Sixth Avenue. And in the meantime—remember I told you ``The Plan to End the AIDS Crisis" [banner -JE] that had gotten run over by the cop car in Kennebunkport, and then it actually had gone to—somebody had gathered it from there and it went to the Republican Convention. Somebody called somebody's mother who lived in Texas who had the banner. That got FedExed to us, and was there in time so that when we got to Republican Headquarters, we put Mark in the street and then you could see his face.

Oh, but going up Sixth Avenue—cops all over the place. And there was a big banner in front of us, and everybody was around us so they surrounded Mark so that we would be protected from the cops. But actually they were amazing. They took their hats off. They turned their radios down. I mean it was intense. It was proper, you know. It was intense and it was crazy.

And then we got to Forty Fifth Street and Mark was put in the middle of the street and we had ``The Plan to End the AIDS Crisis," and it was like it came from Mark's chest down and rolled into the street, the whole ``Plan to End the AIDS Crisis" [banner JE].

CYNTHIA CARR: All the way down Forty Fifth Street?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, it was forty feet long so whatever that was but it looked—it was pretty amazing. And it's raining and the umbrellas, and I remember Michael Cunningham was there, and Michael Marco was one of the people who carried him. Oh, boy Michael made a speech, so did Bob. Oh, Bob, my God. You know who he is. He's the one who had the back and forth with Clinton. When Clinton was giving a speech—it starts with an R.

CYNTHIA CARR: Bob R? [Bob Rabsky -JE].

JOY EPISALLA: I'll remember.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: So, they were all there—and don't forget that this is Bush against Clinton. And Timothy, I said, had voted for Clinton absentee ballot, okay? So it's the night before the election, we're in front of Republican Headquarters in New York City, and all these people were in their offices up there looking out. But of course none of them came out of the building. And there must have been a police escort there by now. I think the police escort came in front of the march. I think they—I mean it all went off. And speeches were given there and there's tapes of all of that. Oh, Bob, oh I'm going to get it—the memory thing. And then when it was done we had a—I think we had a—what do you call them? Wagon car? [Station Wagon -JE].

CYNTHIA CARR: Station wagon?

JOY EPISALLA: A station wagon. You don't have station wagons anymore. We had a station wagon, and we put Mark in the station wagon at the end, and we brought him back to Redden's. Where we said goodbye to him.

CYNTHIA CARR: I see, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And Mark was cremated.

CYNTHIA CARR: I want us to add something about Redden's.

JOY EPISALLA: Yes. Redden's was the only—the only funeral home that was willing to do the funeral of a person with AIDS. Everybody else refused. They were afraid they were going to get AIDS, which was absolutely absurd. And Redden's they—I mean I ended up using them years, years, years later.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, I know a lot of people stayed loyal to Reddens. Even after others said, "Okay, we'll take a body of someone who had had AIDS." But a lot of people stayed with—

JOY EPISALLA: They were great; they were right with us. I mean, we told them everything that we were doing, and so they knew what was going to happen, and how it was going to go. And they were cool, they were totally

cool, they're very nice people. And in fact, I used them all those years later when my friend Frank Moore, the painter, also died of AIDS—that's where I took Frank.

CYNTHIA CARR: They did David—David Wojnarowicz. So yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah a number of people. Yeah, that's right.

CYNTHIA CARR: Anyway I thought it would be good to—

JOY EPISALLA: That was actually excellent.

CYNTHIA CARR: —to include that, because was shocking to me that no funeral home in New York City would take a dead person who had died of AIDS, except that one place on Fourteenth Street.

JOY EPISALLA: Yes. Yes, absolutely true. So that's, you know, that's November 2nd, right? And now Timothy starts getting really sick. I mean it's the beginning of the end, really, but we didn't think of it that way. I mean, we just kept trying to, you know, so I would go to all the doctor's appointments, and that's pretty much what I spent my time doing; taking care of him and going back and forth. I was his health proxy.

You know I had—and I could tell you stories about being in the hospital with him that would put your—I mean I don't even think I could go into it all, but it would [make your skin crawl -JE]—I mean unbelievable, the way people were treated.

CYNTHIA CARR: They were badly treated because of AIDS or—?

JOY EPISALLA: Well, he got out after the collapsed lung, but, you know, he was very fragile. And if I'm not mistaken, we have to find out when Hoffman-LaRoche was—

CYNTHIA CARR: Hoffman-LaRoche?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, because I have some crazy idea that Tim was there.

CYNTHIA CARR: And what was that?

JOY EPISALLA: That was a big action.

CYNTHIA CARR: I don't think I know about that one.

JOY EPISALLA: We have to look that up.

CYNTHIA CARR: So, were you part of that? Or was it The Marys who did that?

JOY EPISALLA: The Marys worked with TAG; by this time TAG, Treatment Action Group, they had organized it, but we surrounded Hoffman-LaRoche out in New Jersey off of Route Three.

CYNTHIA CARR: And what was—

JOY EPISALLA: Their entire compound. I did reconnaissance for that.

CYNTHIA CARR: What is Hoffman-LaRoche?

JOY EPISALLA: It's a drug company, and it was about the price of drugs.

CYNTHIA CARR: Your protest was about the price of drugs?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, and probably more. And I actually probably have a lot of paper on this stuff, but the reason I'm saying this is because it was really freezing out and I did reconnaissance. I got dressed up and looked like a reporter, I mean very different than the way I normally look. Like I had little rimmed glasses, and I even had my hair pulled back, and, you know, looked very ladylike, which is not my drag. I was in drag. I went in there as a reporter to do an article on them, but really what I was doing was trying to figure out how many entrances there were to the complex, and what we had to do, and how big it was. I worked with Tim and them. We decided—we worked with the Greenpeace people. They were a wild bunch. They were great, and they had all these ways of how you could, you know, surround something.

And so we made these pipes with a—

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JOY EPISALLA: They were about three feet long metal pipes, and they—I had a bar [welded down the inside of the pipe -JE]. There was somebody I'd used for art stuff, DeLorenzo [DeLorenzo & Sons on Grand Street, New York, NY -JE] over on—the sign for their building is still there on Grand street—to you know, manufacture these pipes for me, basically, you know. So what it was is you were going to—we were going to put our arms in these pipes. So we would circle the building, and they couldn't get out. And they wouldn't want to cut it—because then they could cut our arm off, but actually—and we were handcuffed in there, but we had handcuffs on with carabiner clips. So we'd put our arms in and click, clip on inside.

CYNTHIA CARR: What are they? Caribbean?

JOY EPISALLA: Carabiner clips. It's what you use for—you know, climbing mountains. Those clips.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: Anyway, they produced 144 of those for me.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: We surrounded Hoffman-LaRoche, and I think Tim was there, because it was super freezing and he couldn't do that. I think he was doing like media stuff or something, because he was too sick, and I—

CYNTHIA CARR: Well, I have a date-of-death for him of the next June.

JOY EPISALLA: That's right. It's possible he—

CYNTHIA CARR: June '93, so in the winter he really could have been doing stuff.

JOY EPISALLA: Yes. Yeah, he was probably still doing stuff. I kind of remember that. I mean, that was a really crazy action too.

CYNTHIA CARR: So you surrounded one building?

JOY EPISALLA: We surrounded their entire complex and closed them down.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, wow.

JOY EPISALLA: We had these, like, big weighted things—garbage pails full of cement, we rolled out of these vans and closed off all their exits.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, wow.

JOY EPISALLA: Nobody could get out.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: We were on the news, of course.

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh [Affirmative].

JOY EPISALLA: But I remember him, because I remember us eating in a diner. Or getting [warmed up in a diner together -JE].

CYNTHIA CARR: Did you get arrested over there?

JOY EPISALLA: I can't remember. Probably. You know, actually though; I don't remember getting arrested. Maybe they—I don't remember. I don't remember. Anyway, I have this memory of Tim being there, so he must have been well enough to do that, but not well enough to—it was so cold out there. People were coming up and they'd unzip your fly so you could pee.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: Right? Or, you know, blow your nose for you, because it was freezing. Absolutely freezing out there.

CYNTHIA CARR: Jeez.

JOY EPISALLA: I don't know how many hours we were out there. So anyway.

CYNTHIA CARR: And this was all of ACT UP had done this? Or you know.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, yeah, but they—it was TAG I think.

CYNTHIA CARR: TAG, yes. That makes sense.

JOY EPISALLA: That actually organized it, and then The Marys, and we had a lot of close connections to TAG so it was like, The Marys got in, then we did a—anyway, so fast forward through that into '93.

CYNTHIA CARR: '93. Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: Tim starts getting sicker, and he's in and out of the hospital, and the last round in the hospital—he had a, he was going blind from—Remember, he had pancreatitis first. So also, I learned how to—with him I learned how to run all the meds. I got a crash course in—so he was going blind, but the virus had now spread to his brain, and so he had partially—was kind of like a dementia, in a way. I mean John Stump had dementia, too. And I remember—so now we were—I mean, really this was all we needed. How many Marys had we now lost? So we were like "We're going for," you know, and "We're going to bring,"—I mean, "if Tim dies, we're taking him down to Washington."

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes.

JOY EPISALLA: And I knew that's what he wanted. And in fact he had paid for the buses.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: But now that he had—I mean I couldn't—I remember being with him, and I remember, it's a very long story but he thought he was in a hotel. But it was very weird because you couldn't smoke there.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh right, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: We used to keep a dirty ash tray, so that [if he asked for a cigarette, I could show him the dirty ashtray and say, -JE] ``well, you already had one. "

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: Because the guy next door was on oxygen, so he could have just blown up the whole place. Anyway, we got him home from there. And I had somebody helping me take care of him. And his friend,—the other Tim [Tim Hamilton -JE] was there, would come. There were friends in and out, The Marys were in and out. But when he was still in the hospital, he had this moment of clarity one night. And I said to him, "Oh my God, I've been waiting for you. I have to ask you; are you—is it okay? I mean are you on board? Do you want to do this still?" And he was like, "Yup. Yup, you're going to do it. You're going to do it just like we talked about. You're going to do it." You know?

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: So Tim came home and, you know, that was after the doctor told me, you know, "Look, there's really nothing we can do." I think I said to them, "Look, I mean if you're going to just do what you're doing, I can do this at home." And he was like "Well actually, we can't do anything more. You're going to have to learn how to let him die."

So. "And you have to make that decision." Thanks. And he started crying, the doctor.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: Anyway, so we did bring Tim home. And you know, there was the decline. I don't know how long it all took. I have many, many notebooks on all this stuff. I kept notebooks on everything, and everything that happened in the hospital. I mean I could tell you, the things that went on were unbelievable. Anyway, it was around Gay Pride. Tim told me to go to Gay Pride. Remember that? And I think I did—I was basically there. You know, I'd go home at night to Hoboken, and Carrie would be back and forth, and then this woman Alicia, she was helping me. I think she was HIV positive. She was just a lovely woman.

Anyway, he—Tim Hamilton. They were friends from Youngstown, Ohio. That's who was there. And, I had—we were just going to move into our house here in New York, and my mother was coming down with my aunt, and I was going to show them the house. And I was at Tim's and he was having trouble breathing, and I—well I mean I think, I don't really know what planet I was on really.

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh [Affirmative].

JOY EPISALLA: I mean it was all a lot. And I remember like—I don't know, I don't like getting into that whole thing. But there's a whole thing there. But anyway, I knew—I pretty much knew this was not going to go up. It was going out. He had a morphine drip.

CYNTHIA CARR: At home you had morphine?

JOY EPISALLA: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. And he died at home. He died on a Monday. And I think Mark died on a Monday.

CYNTHIA CARR: You said it was the night of an ACT UP meeting?

JOY EPISALLA: Yup, and it was the night of the ACT UP meeting, and Tim Hamilton and I were there with Tim. Tim kept saying "Are you okay? Are you okay?" I mean it was—

CYNTHIA CARR: To you he said that?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. I was laying in bed with him. You know. He was such a sweet, sweet, sweet person.

CYNTHIA CARR: Tim Bailey.

JOY EPISALLA: Lovely, lovely, beautiful, stunning, fantastic, fun. You know, vivacious, incredible. Anyway, he died at home, and we had to—the doctor came, I think, to sign the death certificate.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: Which was important because of what was going to happen. Because we wanted to have control over his body, and since he died at home, I didn't want him to go to the morgue. I wanted him to go to Redden's directly, but I called Carrie. Carrie was at the ACT UP meeting. So she would tell everybody, and then everybody came back to the house to see Tim.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh. All The Marys came back?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. Anyway, long story short, they [the undertaker from Redden's -JE] did eventually come and you know, they take you out in a body bag. And I helped them you know, put him in the bag and helped them out of the house. And then we brought him to Redden's and we picked him up at Redden's the next morning. So now the whole thing was going to go into place, to go to Washington. And we had to bring him out to the funeral home in New Jersey, because that was how we had the papers to pass through each state with him.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh. So you'd done all this work beforehand to figure out how this could happen?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, how we were going to take him.

CYNTHIA CARR: And the funeral home, was that the cousin of the—wait, who was that?

JOY EPISALLA: It was the brother-in-law.

CYNTHIA CARR: Brother-in-law, yes.

JOY EPISALLA: Brother-in-law.

CYNTHIA CARR: Of someone in the group.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, I don't know if I want to say it. I never knew if they ever wanted that out there, so I won't.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: Anyway, Barbara and I, I guess the day before this was all going to come down, so we had a van. And I remember going back to Tim's apartment to get clothes for him. Because Tim had been the Men's Designer for Patricia Field. He was also,—do you remember when they used to have, like, the House of Field, and they had all those—what were they called? They had those balls, the balls and he was like the mother of the House of Field, you know.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, wow.

JOY EPISALLA: Oh, he was amazing. So, Tim had to be dressed properly. So, I brought the clothes there to the funeral home.

CYNTHIA CARR: In New Jersey?

JOY EPISALLA: In New Jersey. That was the day before. And then we would go—oh, so in the meantime, of course I knew Tim's mom, and I had met his sister and I knew his brother, and they came. You know, I can't remember the last time I saw Dolly, his mom, at that point. She'd been in and out. She'd been around for when he was sick, in and out. She was lovely, his mom. But I think in the end, I think that she flew in from Ohio to New Jersey to see him for the last time. And Michelle, his sister came, and Randy, his brother. Younger brother. And so they—Michelle and Dolly said goodbye to him that morning, and then we—

CYNTHIA CARR: In New Jersey? .

JOY EPISALLA: In New Jersey, and again we had this slip-lid casket, and we put him in the van. And there was another car coming down with us, which was Tim Hamilton, Randy, Tim's brother, and Tim's boyfriend. There was a number of people in that car, but in the van with Tim was myself and Carrie Yamaoka, Barbara Hughes, Michael Marco and James Baggett and Tim.

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh [Affirmative]. And what about the buses? What was the story with the buses?

JOY EPISALLA: Tim had paid for the buses ahead of time.

CYNTHIA CARR: Two buses, or?

JOY EPISALLA: I think there were, like, four.

CYNTHIA CARR: Four? Okay. Which would be filled with ACT UP members.

JOY EPISALLA: Exactly. Whoever wanted to go down to the funeral, and whoever else wanted to come. And they were supposed to meet us down at the Capitol, at the reflecting pool. And what we were going to do was have a procession from there, which was actually the same procession they did with President Kennedy. That we were going to come down and in front of the White House on Pennsylvania Avenue. We weren't going to throw his body over the White House fence, but—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: But we were going to have him out there Anyway—so we drove down in the van. I think Barbara drove down, if I'm not mistaken. And we were with Tim, and oh—I was all dressed up. And I had these papers, the travel papers and all the things I needed.

CYNTHIA CARR: For carrying the body across state lines?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, and they were stuck in the bra of my shirt, so that nobody could get them. And all these white roses. Tim loved white roses. I used to buy him white roses all the time. I had tons of white roses in the van with us.

I mean we were, all of us, this was like—I don't know. It was so intense and so tragic and so sad, and it was like we crossed over that day, because it was absolutely, the whole thing was wild. Anyway, we drove down and—oh we had fliers with us, that said "This is Tim Bailey" and that we were going to give out, and we had the banner. I think the—I don't know if we had the banner in the van. We must have.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. The one that hung from his apartment building?

JOY EPISALLA: No, this was another banner that said "Tim Bailey died of AIDS and government—" I can't remember. Because by this time Clinton didn't do shit.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, yeah. [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: I mean that's the other pretty—I mean Bill Clinton and Hillary Clinton have definitely turned around. You know, they have the Clinton Foundation, and they do good work now, but at that time—oh no, they did not want us down in Washington. And I remember we had one cell phone that was humongous, to talk to Bob Hattoy, who was the AIDS liaison in the White House. We were talking to him from the parking lot.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, so you had informed him that you were coming?

JOY EPISALLA: What was his name? Sawyer. Oh god, oh man. [Eric Sawyer -JE].

CYNTHIA CARR: Sawyer.

JOY EPISALLA: I don't remember his name.

CYNTHIA CARR: What is he? A journalist? ACT UP member?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah ACT UP member. He was the one who had the cell phone. [ACT UP member had cell phone and knew Bob Hattoy -JE]. He met us there. Anyway, on the way down—so we drove down, and what we had to do was we had to go by this hotel to pick up the sound system, because we had to have a way to make a speech and say what was going on. And so we met—somehow Vincent Gagliostro—oh, I know who was with us. I think Michael Cunningham was with us. Or maybe we picked Michael up there, down at the hotel with Vincent? You know, and there were placards made for that too. You know, we had these big signs with Tim's face on it. With the beautiful photograph that Bill Bytsura had taken [of Tim -JE]. I don't know who made those. I have no idea.

Yeah, there were placards, and the whole nine yards. And we went by this hotel first, and we picked them up in the van with Tim, open casket. Tim in the back of the car, in the back of the truck. And I think they must have got in the van with us, and then we drove past the White House. And at that point we thought, you know, we should probably just do it right now. And get out of the van. I don't know, maybe somehow we knew. I don't know. You know how you get an inkling about something?

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: We drove right by the White House with him and we thought "We should just get out now." But we met everybody, and when we got there—we pulled up, and all the buses were there, and all these people were there.

But so was the park police, the FBI, the CIA. People in riot gear, dogs. Un-fucking-believable. And I remember getting—we stopped the van and we were like immediately surrounded, and I remember, thinking "Okay, I'm driving Tim out of here." Because somehow I had gotten the keys from Barbara, and I remember coming out the passenger side, walking back, I walked around the van, I jumped into the front seat, and I started the van. And the next thing I know, this huge man jumps through the [passenger -JE] window and he's holding my arms. And trying to get the keys from me, and fighting me, fighting me, fighting me. It was CIA, the guy.

CYNTHIA CARR: Jeez.

JOY EPISALLA: Wouldn't let my arm go because he didn't want me to leave, because I don't know what planet I was on, and how I was going to drive out of there. But they weren't going to take Tim from me, that's all I knew.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And he had me by the arms, and Barbara came up [through the driver windows -JE] and she started pounding on this guy and saying "Get off of her, get off of her." You know, and finally he did get the keys. And I had black and blue marks like all up and down my arms.

CYNTHIA CARR: Jeez. And this is still in the street? You're still in the—

JOY EPISALLA: He's still—so we're in the road around—right, the Capitol is behind us, I think, and we're in the road. There's like a drive, and so they've stopped us there, and it's like pandemonium. And they weren't going to let us—they didn't want Tim's body out of the truck, and so now it was going to be negotiation time.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: And the great thing, I'll never forget it, was Amy Bauer [now Jamie Bauer -JE], who was in ACT UP and who used to do a lot of the teach-ins of civil disobedience. She was there. I can hear her voice in my head going, "Surround the van. Surround the van." And everybody did, and they sat down.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.] Oh boy.

JOY EPISALLA: So there was a sea of our people protecting Tim, and then the cops and everybody on the outside. And they were trying to keep any passersby from you know—and people kept trying to throw the leaflet over the cops' heads so that people would know what was going on. And in the meantime, Eric Sawyer is on the phone to Bob Hattoy. With the crazy huge, when I think now, cell phone.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes.

JOY EPISALLA: And trying to negotiate with them, and telling them what it is, and telling them what we're going to do, and it's going to be peaceful. And it's, you know, just to bring to light, you know, how people are dying of AIDS and there's not enough being done at all, and here's this person in death, using his body to fight back. You know? And oh my god, I wrote some kind of speech. When I had time to do that, I have no idea, but I did. I think I was still correcting it in the van on the way down. I think we stayed overnight in New Jersey the night before. That's what we did, because I was writing it there.

CYNTHIA CARR: And you probably started really early in the morning to get down there.

JOY EPISALLA: Yes, we did. That's right, that's what we did. And the sun was out when we first got there. And now, it rains too. Of course. And so it's sun, it's rain, and it's like your adrenaline is all over the place. It's like it was the most sad, and scary, and tragic, to almost kind of a level of elation, because we were going to get—you know, we're going to do this for Tim.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: I mean it was—we were—and then I said—so we start negotiating and they have a coroner.

CYNTHIA CARR: A coroner? Now, didn't you end up in a parking lot somewhere?

JOY EPISALLA: That is the parking lot.

CYNTHIA CARR: That is the parking lot you're in. Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: This is the parking lot. We didn't move. Once we got there—we were stopped right there.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay, okay.

JOY EPISALLA: And they had a coroner there.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes, to check that he was really dead.

JOY EPISALLA: To check that he was really dead, and that we hadn't murdered him.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. .

JOY EPISALLA: [Laughs.] To check that we hadn't murdered him.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.] That you hadn't murdered him. Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: And so it was a woman. I remember that. And I was like—so that, you know, once they did that, then you know, they were going to let us have our procession kind of thing. But they didn't want us on the six o'clock news, is what they didn't want.

CYNTHIA CARR: I see. Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: But in fact, there were—there was news people there. I mean we—there was a big press release that the media committee of ACT UP had sent out. You know?

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: It was all happening. And so I remember being at the back of the van. The doors of the van are open, and you can see Tim. And so we're trying to negotiate, and then this coroner's there and she wants to examine him. And I'm just appalled.

CYNTHIA CARR: You probably had his death certificate.

JOY EPISALLA: I had everything, yeah. I had the death certificate, I had all the papers on me.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: You know, and I'm sure I went through some explanation on how it was perfectly my right to have Tim here and, you know, we were allowed to do this. And I had the—I can't remember the names of the disposition of something [disposition papers -JE]. The whole thing was, you could transport somebody's body, but you had to bring him back to the point of origin, which would have been the funeral home in New Jersey.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, right.

JOY EPISALLA: Oh—and so Randy, Tim's brother, came down. So everybody's around the van, and I'm in the back of the van. I think Barbara was there, and Carrie and James and, you know, we're all there and everybody's there. And she wants to examine him, and I am like "I want my keys back."

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

JOY EPISALLA: "I want my keys back now. Like, you have to give me the keys back to the car." And I think I did

get them back, and then she came over to examine Tim, and she had rubber gloves on.

CYNTHIA CARR: Did she really do that? Did she get into the van and examine him or see—?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. Yeah, she pulled down his shirt, and you know, you could see. And we were screaming. Absolutely screaming, "Do you feel our pain?"

CYNTHIA CARR: Boy.

JOY EPISALLA: Oh it was so intense.

CYNTHIA CARR: Wow.

JOY EPISALLA: That was, I think, that was the moment where I think I felt like, you know, I left my body.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: I think we all did. I mean, it was just absolutely outrageous.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, right.

JOY EPISALLA: And so disrespectful.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes.

JOY EPISALLA: And it was just awful.

CYNTHIA CARR: And then what did she tell you? What did she conclude?

JOY EPISALLA: Well, of course, he was dead.

CYNTHIA CARR: He's dead. [Laughs.] Jeez.

JOY EPISALLA: I mean, hello. I mean I had the birth—I mean the death certificate. It was just, you know.

CYNTHIA CARR: Boy.

JOY EPISALLA: Anyway, she backed away, and then we started negotiating again. And then they were going to let us do it. They were going to let us have a procession. That was what they told us. And then—then it was like they kept changing their minds, and at a certain point we just got so fucking fed up with them. We were like "We're doing this."

And so we start to take Tim's—in the casket, out of the back of the van. And you hear them say "Put it back in, put it back in." And that's the shot that's in the *New York Times*, where you see Tim's casket on an angle. I'm like up on the side of him. Carrie's in the picture. Oh my god, who's on the hood of the car, the police car with James Lerner, with his arm around his back. There's all kinds of footage of this. People are screaming. I mean it was crazy. It was crazy. And so he went back into the van. So like you know, we tried to bring him out, and then he went back in. Then we said—then we decided that, "Okay so then you have to let us have a procession." And they said they would, okay? And so people came up. Oh I remember Tim's friend. Oh god what was his name. [Peter, from London -JE]. So lovely. He came all the way from England. Patricia Field was there. I mean it was—a lot of people came. Tom.

CYNTHIA CARR: Tom Rauffenbart was there.

JOY EPISALLA: Tom Rauffenbart was there.

CYNTHIA CARR: Because there was that picture.

JOY EPISALLA: Yes.

CYNTHIA CARR: When they get to the point where you're just able to have people walk up to the van to pay their respects to Tim.

JOY EPISALLA: They come and pay their last respects, yeah. Yeah, yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: Tom was there, and Judy Glantzman.

JOY EPISALLA: Tom, and that was—Judy Glantzman.

CYNTHIA CARR: Who was, you know, good—

JOY EPISALLA: Very good friend of David Wojnarowicz.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes.

JOY EPISALLA: You know, who wasn't happy with me at the time, but you know—I mean look how things come around.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: It's amazing. Yeah, no, it was intense. And so people came up, and I had all these roses. We passed the roses around. Yeah, and people said goodbye to Tim, and then we closed the van doors.

CYNTHIA CARR: But that was the compromise. They finally—well not even a compromise—that they said "We'll let everyone walk past."

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: All the people who came down in four buses.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, exactly.

CYNTHIA CARR: Got to walk past the van.

JOY EPISALLA: So we were going to supposedly have—so we started up the van, and we had—the banner was out, and we were going to do—well the next thing we know, they cut us off. I should say that, you know, all the speeches did get made on top of the van, with the—you know. Michael Cunningham gave a speech. I gave a speech and I can't remember who else. And so okay, so now we're in the van, and they cut us off from the procession—the cops.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh. The procession, where's the procession?

JOY EPISALLA: So now everybody's behind [the van -JE]—the banner was there [in front of the van -JE]. I can't remember if the banner was in the front of the van or right behind the van. And we start moving, and the next thing we know, the cops have come in and cut off the marchers.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: And the van's alone, and they said "We're going to escort you out of here. The thing is, like you have all these people, right? And you have the cops in riot gear, and you have—I think we had two ambulances, five or six cops on motorcycles, and I think about 10 squad cars. And we were in the middle of this craziness, and they had all their sirens going, right? And they're going to escort us the fuck out of Washington, D.C. Because Clinton—they don't want us there. Right?"

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, right.

JOY EPISALLA: And they bring us through the black neighborhood of D.C.

CYNTHIA CARR: Keep you away from the tourists.

JOY EPISALLA: You got that right.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: Which is kind of great, because by this time, we put up a sign in the van that said "funeral" in the window, and out the window we are throwing the fliers that are about Tim. And people are picking it up and they're giving us the Black Power sign as we drive through the streets. Okay? So like even though—like, they couldn't contain us. Do you know what I mean? We refused to be contained, and they drove with their sirens. I remember going through the toll booth. Cars were over the side in ditches as we came through.

CYNTHIA CARR: Jeez.

JOY EPISALLA: And we're on the highway with them—I mean, I don't know really where this is all going. I mean we're just going along, and Barbara realizes we're running out of gas.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: So, she gets out of the procession, out of this [line of surrounding cops -JE], to try and tell them—and they're like "Get back in line." You know, you hear the "boom," "Get back in line." And finally I think one of the squad cars pulls up alongside, and she says "I'm running out of gas." And they took—we got through Baltimore, and then they took us off at an exit. And then we got to a gas station. So it was the van and I think it was only one squad car then, I think they all—and I got out of the van and I walked over to the squad car and I said "So are you going to escort us all the way to New Jersey, or what's happening here?" And he said, "No no, I think we've had enough for one day."

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.] Oh jeez.

JOY EPISALLA: And we went back to New Jersey to the funeral home.

CYNTHIA CARR: Boy.

JOY EPISALLA: With Tim.

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CYNTHIA CARR: So nothing, no march along the street, ever happened?

JOY EPISALLA: No. No.

CYNTHIA CARR: Everything took place in the parking lot?

JOY EPISALLA: Yes. But the, you've seen footage of it, it's quite something—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes. In fact I've seen footage of you giving your speech. It's very intense—

JOY EPISALLA: Oh, really?

CYNTHIA CARR: Very intense. Emotional. Really very good.

JOY EPISALLA: Oh, good.

CYNTHIA CARR: I think it might be on the ACT UP website or—there's something about the political funerals that I found ages ago, when I was doing research on it. So, yeah—it's good. You're there.

JOY EPISALLA: Oh, I was there all right.

CYNTHIA CARR: Boy. So then you get back to New Jersey—

JOY EPISALLA: Then I get back to New Jersey—

CYNTHIA CARR: And his family is there. What did his family think of all this?

JOY EPISALLA: Oh, but in the meantime, I didn't tell you the really crazy part of it, because it didn't end there. Actually, when we tried to take Tim out of the van, Randy, his brother, was there and the cops jumped on Randy. They knew he was Tim's brother.

CYNTHIA CARR: They knew?

JOY EPISALLA: They jumped on him and knocked him to the ground, and said that he had hit a cop, but he hadn't, and so they arrested him. This is in the pandemonium of, you know, "Put him back in the van," and us fighting with them. And so Jim Aquino jumped out of the van, he was right near the van—and went and got arrested with Randy, because he knew that Randy had never been to a demo before. This is the first demonstration he had ever gone to, but he was coming down for his brother. So we got him out of jail. I don't think they held him that long. I mean, they knew that they were fucked up to do that, right? But, we had a court case now. So when we got back to New York, now we had to find a lawyer.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh boy—

JOY EPISALLA: To fight the charges, right? Well, that was a whole other rigmarole. Absolutely crazy, where we had to go down for a court date, and I finally found a lawyer. Oh my god, the work we had to do. I remember, it was me and Michael Cunningham, because we stayed in a hotel room together, and Jim Aquino, and Randy, and maybe Tim Hamilton. Tim and Randy, I mean, that was family. I think it was the five of us that went down. And then we went to court the next day, and in fact, going to the courthouse, if I am not mistaken, we passed the woman that was the coroner.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, you did? [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. And when we got there, if my memory serves me right, I don't know that the cop ever showed up that arrested him, and he was let go. But they made us jump through our hoops to try and frighten us. I think they took Randy to see if they could frighten us into stopping what we were doing anyway. Which they didn't. I mean, it was all unnecessary.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: But that was the other significant part because it had a—even after we got Tim back, there was this whole other piece of it that went on for quite a while. So that, and probably, I mean, if I'm right, Tim died on—was it the second of July, or the thing was on the second of July or the first of July? I can't remember now. Again I have a—

CYNTHIA CARR: Boy, see I don't have a—

JOY EPISALLA: I have that. I have that. But it's something like that. It's not far along, it's the beginning of July, because about a week later Jon Greenberg, who was another one of The Marys who was not well, as well—he dies.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. I think you had originally told me it was two weeks after his funeral.

JOY EPISALLA: Maybe it was two weeks, something like that—

CYNTHIA CARR: That he died—it was like July 12, something—

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, I think so. I think Tim's thing was on the second, and Jon's funeral was on the 12th. At this point, Jon had been in the hospital, he was very sick, and Risa Denenberg was the person who was his—

CYNTHIA CARR: His health care proxy?

JOY EPISALLA: Yes. And who took care of him. And we all went. We were all visiting the hospital, and Barbara was very close with Jon too. It was kind of like I was with Tim, and they were with Jon, and that was all going on simultaneously too. That's what was so crazy, that we were able to do all these things all at the same time, while you were going to the hospital, and you're caregiving to someone. Ay-yi-yi, I mean, really.

CYNTHIA CARR: And organizing all this political stuff.

JOY EPISALLA: And organizing the funeral. And making sure everybody has a way to get down there, and making sure we had lawyers, and people on site, so they would watch, so there was footage—James Wentzy shot all that footage—that we had proof of what really went on. All that stuff had to be taken into consideration. So—yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: So, Jon Greenberg—

JOY EPISALLA: Jon Greenberg was the last of that round of The Marys dying, and he also died on a Monday. Marys die on Mondays, is what I think. We had Jon's funeral in Tompkins Square Park, and we did a procession with him.

CYNTHIA CARR: Where did you start? Where was the procession—?

JOY EPISALLA: I think we started at Jon's house, and Jon lived on First Avenue. We might have started—that's not clear in my head because when people finally got to the site in the park, he was already lying in state, and he was—

CYNTHIA CARR: Maybe he had come right from Redden's? Or something?

JOY EPISALLA: Maybe, maybe. I think I wasn't—

CYNTHIA CARR: It would have been hard to carry him up and down the stairs.

JOY EPISALLA: Nah, I don't think so. I think we were just in Tompkins Square Park—

CYNTHIA CARR: Probable came from the funeral home—

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, probably. We would have to ask Barbara about that stuff. I just—I remember—

CYNTHIA CARR: I remember seeing a picture of him lying in state in Tompkins Square Park.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, and Barbara gives that really amazing speech. And John Kelly was there—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, John Kelly?

JOY EPISALLA: And he sang "Woodstock."

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, wow.

JOY EPISALLA: So beautiful. Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: And nothing really strange happened there, right? I mean there would have been a lot of people walking around but they just saw, "oh —,"

JOY EPISALLA: People showed up for it. They knew it was going to happen—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh I see, a lot of ACT UP people came.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, and then friends of Jon's. I mean, they knew.

CYNTHIA CARR: Was it like a regular memorial that happened there? Where people talked about him?

JOY EPISALLA: I think we gave speeches—

CYNTHIA CARR: You gave speeches—?

JOY EPISALLA: There were speeches given, and then John [John Kelly -JE] sang, and I think that was the end of it. And frankly, I can't remember, because I actually think by this point I was kind of in shock.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, I think all of this is so emotionally draining, to go through setting up these funerals, and doing all this public stuff, making it visible. That has big impact on you, doing that. Plus, you're taking care of sick friends at the same time, and I just—

JOY EPISALLA: Yes, I mean, how many years ago is this now, and still I find it upsetting. I find it upsetting to talk about. If I really go there, the stuff that I can really start to remember is—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, I mean, this is 1993.

JOY EPISALLA: It's the summer of '93, and so that's July. A couple of months, and then, I have other friends who were not in ACT UP, but actually were at Jon's funeral. David Knudsvig who dies that August, my friend David Nelson, and David Knudsvig. And David Knudsvig, I remember him being at Jon's funeral, and he had, I think, pancreatitis, because he was taking Ganciclovir through one of those little balls that had to go through a port, and he would have it hanging on him. And he would walk around with it. I remember it really well, and I remember him being there. So, that's what was happening. David [David Knudsvig -JE] was getting sick, and we were spending a lot of time with David. So Jon, David, I mean, Tim, come on—

CYNTHIA CARR: And that was also due to AIDS?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, yeah. David died of AIDS. Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: But he wasn't in ACT UP and doing—

JOY EPISALLA: No. I mean, on the periphery. He came to Jon's funeral. So they all knew what was going on, and maybe—I don't know. They were all artists.

CYNTHIA CARR: All this—those years—I mean, people who didn't go through it, don't realize how hard those years were to go through—

JOY EPISALLA: No.

CYNTHIA CARR: —to see people dying literally every day.

JOY EPISALLA: You'd go to a meeting and you'd see somebody, and you'd see that they really didn't look good and—you'd just like —you'd cringe at the mere thought that like—

Also, there wasn't anything for people to take. I mean, there weren't the drugs. The drugs—these guys didn't—we couldn't get them to hold on long enough. What, four years later? '93, '94, '95, '96—the cocktail comes out?

CYNTHIA CARR: That's '96, when the cocktail comes. I remember passing people on the street, that I would know

by looking at them, that they had AIDS.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: And I thought, "Oh boy, how long is this person going to last?" It was just part of everyday life.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: So horrible—

JOY EPISALLA: Horrible. And the other thing, the loss is not only the loss to you losing this person you love, it's also the loss of what they could have given to the world.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, yeah

JOY EPISALLA: Their loss—I always think about that. Like how, I'm the witness, and I have a responsibility to be able to tell this story, but also to live my life, right? And I think after all that, in terms of art, I was making art, but not on the level that I wanted to be doing it, because I was doing all these other things. So we were all robbed in one way or another of precious time. So then my momentum was "you have to do what you love because you are also doing it for them, because they couldn't do what they love." Do you know what I mean?

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: You feel sort of, there is an energy you get from that, I guess. But the mourning side of it, the grieving side of it—there was no time. There was no time to grieve. Upset about Tim? Yeah, hysterical. And then the next morning we're doing this and that, and then Jon dies, and okay, and then? What do you do with all that? And I think it's very similar to being in a war, and you see your comrades shot down, or blown up now, right? How do you live with that? What's it called?

CYNTHIA CARR: PTSD

JOY EPISALLA: I think a lot of us suffer from that, but we had nothing to call it. Do you know what I mean?

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: Maybe, ours was in a little more slow motion, it wasn't "boof"! But it was "boof" within a short frame work of many, many people.

CYNTHIA CARR: Did you have a discussion among The Marys after Jon Greenberg's funeral about, "Let's—I don't think we can do this anymore?" Did you talk about that?

Ms Episalla: No.

CYNTHIA CARR: No.

JOY EPISALLA: No, what happened was, actually, Stephen Machon moved away after Tim died. Who else moved away? I think people not only burnt out, but they could only do so much.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, right.

JOY EPISALLA: They knew their limitations. Maybe I am not so smart in the limitation category. So—no, there was no discussion. I think we were in shock. I think we moved forward in the sense that we were still going to ACT UP meetings and there was still shit out there, and there was still stuff to do. And I think that was almost the only thing to hold on to, because you still had to do the work. I remember I was following a Hypericin trial for TAG. We were involved with fierce pussy. fierce pussy is simultaneous to all this. Fierce pussy starts in '91, this cadre of basically lesbian artists, activists, who are going to talk about lesbian visibility. So we're—all that's going on at the same time. I mean, I think it's pretty remarkable really, and the amount of work that we did. So no—there was no discussion, you just went about your business. I think The Marys—we became something called City AIDS Action. We started this thing called City AIDS Action.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh. In '93 or '94?

JOY EPISALLA: In '94, and we also did The AIDS Ride, a number of us.

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh [Affirmative]. The AIDS Ride?

JOY EPISALLA: The bicycle ride.

CYNTHIA CARR: To raise money?

JOY EPISALLA: From Boston to New York City. Yup.

CYNTHIA CARR: Now what about the Ashes Actions? Was that The Marys?

JOY EPISALLA: The Ashes Action is before the political funerals.

CYNTHIA CARR: Really?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, I know. I have always found that confusing, but that is what I found out, and I—

CYNTHIA CARR: Well I know that there were a couple of Ashes Actions—

JOY EPISALLA: David Robinson.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: It was that one.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay, and I know that Tom participated in the second one, and—

JOY EPISALLA: Okay, so that might have been after, there was one—

CYNTHIA CARR: It was, it was. He threw David's ashes onto the White House lawn.

JOY EPISALLA: Okay, so there was the Ashes—

CYNTHIA CARR: And that was a few years after David died, because he had been taking his ashes around to various places that—

JOY EPISALLA: And leaving a bit here, a bit there—

CYNTHIA CARR: That meant something to David.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, yeah. I did that with Tim too. I kept telling Tim when he was in the hospital, and he had dementia, I kept leaving him these notes that said that we'd go to Paris, because we had this plan to go to Paris. So, I brought him to Paris.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, yeah. David went to Paris. Some of his ashes are there, yes.

JOY EPISALLA: Our friend David Knudsvig also went to Paris, it's so interesting.

CYNTHIA CARR: It's the end of my book actually, about David.

JOY EPISALLA: That's right.

CYNTHIA CARR: Where I talk about, he took some to Teotihuacan, where the ants where, the infamous ants on a crucifix.

JOY EPISALLA: That's right, that's right—

CYNTHIA CARR: Tom took some of David's ashes there.

JOY EPISALLA: That's very good.

CYNTHIA CARR: He took them to places like the Christopher Street Pier, he took them there. The wall of Peter Hujar's loft, they've got some David ashes in that wall.

JOY EPISALLA: Good, that's cool.

CYNTHIA CARR: He really was very faithful. Then he took some after that to the Ashes Action.

JOY EPISALLA: Here's one: ACT UP, Action Ashes 1992.

CYNTHIA CARR: Ah, the first one.

JOY EPISALLA: The first one was in '92.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: And so there was another one in '96, does that make sense? That would that be—

CYNTHIA CARR: That makes sense, okay. That was the one.

JOY EPISALLA: I think that was the one. I think that the first Ashes Action, I don't even know if I was aware of it, because—What was going on? It might have been by the time—

CYNTHIA CARR: That you had started all the funerals—

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, or it was right before.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. So, I mean, I don't know if that was inspired by David's book also, but maybe.

JOY EPISALLA: The Ashes Action? I don't know. You'd have to—I think its David Robinson, the first one. If I'm not mistaken. I can't remember.

CYNTHIA CARR: So, David ended up there, on the White House lawn. Anyway, we can—

JOY EPISALLA: [Laughs.] Yeah good, we can connect the dots, for god's sake.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes, this has been great and intense. Probably enough for today, right?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay, I am going to stop. Next time we will talk about fierce pussy and—

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CYNTHIA CARR: Okay. This is Cynthia Carr interviewing Joy Episalla at Joy's studio in the East Village of New York, New York, on March 17th, 2016, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, and we are still on card number two. Now last time we were talking about the political funerals.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: And you were unsure of some of the dates—

JOY EPISALLA: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CYNTHIA CARR: —so if I could ask you now

JOY EPISALLA: —I got the dates now, yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: So Dennis Kane, one of The Marys, he was the first of The Marys that died, and he died on October 14th.

[Doorbell rings]

Ah, okay we have to cut.

CYNTHIA CARR: —we were at Dennis Kane.

JOY EPISALLA: Right, so Dennis Kane, he died on October 14th, 1991. And then John Stumpf, another one of The Marys, died on January 18th, 1992. And then that brings us into David Wojnarowicz, who—

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: We went to the reading. He did a reading at The Drawing Center. It was a benefit for ACT UP's needle exchange, and it was October 26th, 1991. And then we did the memorial procession for David on the 29th of July 1992, and I got the route mixed up. I said to use Second Avenue. It wasn't. We went down from 12th Street—he lived on Second and 12th above the movie theatre—went down east on 12th to Avenue A, Avenue A all the way to Houston Street, up Houston Street to the Bowery which becomes Third Avenue. And stop there at that parking lot that was across the street—

CYNTHIA CARR: —which is sort of—St Mark's place or Eighth Street.

JOY EPISALLA: Actually it's right before it, right?

CYNTHIA CARR: Right before it.

JOY EPISALLA: It's right before it. It's across the street from the Cooper Union—

CYNTHIA CARR: —from Cooper Union, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: The old Cooper Union building.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, that's where it was.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: And then Mark Lowe Fisher, another one of The Marys—he died on October 29th, 1992, on the plane coming back from Rome to Kennedy Airport. His political funeral was on Monday, November 2nd, 1992, so it was the night before the presidential election of Bill Clinton. And Mark's funeral was at Judson Memorial Church, and then when we came out of Judson carrying him. We marched up Sixth Avenue. So we went west from Judson to Sixth Avenue, and we marched north to the Bush Headquarters which was on West 43rd Street between Sixth and Fifth.

And then Tim's—Tim Bailey's funeral, political funeral—Tim died on the 28th of July 1993 and the funeral took place down in Washington DC on July 1st, 1993.

And then the last of The Marys was Jon Greenberg, the last political funeral we did, who died on July 12th, 1993. And his funeral took place on July 16th, 1993 and the funeral procession was in the streets of the Lower East Side and we went to Tompkins Square Park. I think he lived over on First Avenue and almost near First Street, or between First and Second Streets.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: And then was there other things I was supposed to straighten out that I—?

CYNTHIA CARR: That's it, I think.

JOY EPISALLA: I think

CYNTHIA CARR: Those were the important things.

JOY EPISALLA: Okay good.

CYNTHIA CARR: So in the middle—when you started in ACT UP, how long after that did you start fierce pussy because that was very close—?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: —right?

JOY EPISALLA: I guess I came in to ACT UP in, I guess, I'm going to say '90.

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

JOY EPISALLA: And we started fierce pussy in 1991. And basically, most of the women that became part of fierce pussy, which we considered a lesbian visibility art collective, had been in ACT UP. So the core members, I'd say at that point, were Zoe Leonard, Nancy Brooks Brody, Carrie Yamoka, myself, and probably Suzanne Wright eventually, and Jean Carlamusto was around that time too. And so there was a bunch of women who had been in ACT UP as well, and so we would go to one of our houses to have a meeting, and this was all going on at the same time, so the ACT UP meeting was on a Monday night so—I don't know, you know. And the first—

CYNTHIA CARR: So you were meeting weekly? With fierce pussy?

JOY EPISALLA: I don't know, I wouldn't necessarily say weekly, but for sure every time we thought we wanted to put something out there. And basically—the beginning was wheat pasting on the streets.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. But what was the impetus to start it? Like was there something that happened that said, "We've got to get together?"

JOY EPISALLA: I think we all felt slightly invisible in ACT UP in a certain way.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And you know we were in the trenches and we were taking care of our comrades and, you know, our very good friends and lovers and you know, whatever, right? You know, the women's issues on the floor were—they would come up, there was a woman's caucus—but we thought that our visibility, lesbian visibility, was not really out there. And I guess because we were so politically charged and charged in general about fighting the AIDS crisis, it just seemed like, you know, pretty—it made sense.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And so we started to talk about it, and we started to talk about the things that lesbians were called. Derogatory terms.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: That was the first meeting. And I actually think that—and the first posters—there were three "list" posters. It said, "I am a—" and then there was a list of words. So it could be—

CYNTHIA CARR: —like "bull dagger,"

JOY EPISALLA: "Bull dagger," "amazon," "feminist," "pervert"—

CYNTHIA CARR: —"butch."

JOY EPISALLA: "Butch." Yeah. You got it.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.] Things like that, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: "And proud."

CYNTHIA CARR: Ah, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: —was the last tagline.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: And we typed those up on a regular manual typewriter. And then, because Carrie and I were both working at Conde Nast, at different magazines, Carrie was working at *Traveler*, and I was working at *GQ* by that point. We'd stay after work and take the little, you know, text that was the typewriter text, and keep blowing it, blowing it, blowing it up.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, with Photostats, right?

JOY EPISALLA: Well actually, on the Xerox machine. They had a Xerox machine. So we'd run off all these Xeroxes of 11x17 posters.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: And then we come back and then we'd all pick a day or night to meet up again and go out wheat pasting. So we had buckets and brushes and wheat paste. And of course all that stuff we all chipped in for.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: So if there was a group of us that met to do the posters, we'd put out a call basically, and lots of other people would show up, so there was a shifting cadre of dykes in and out, you know, that would participate.

CYNTHIA CARR: Ah, I see.

JOY EPISALLA: So, you know, probably the list is long.

CYNTHIA CARR: I see, yeah. But the core group was the four or five of you?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah well—and there were some others for sure, you know, at that point. I mean I guess, we could—I think, if I'm not mistaken that on the fierce pussy book, I think we might have a list of who we could remember. [Laughs.]

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.] I see.

JOY EPISALLA: Which, if you hold two seconds, I might have right here.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: Let's see.

CYNTHIA CARR: So ready, ready to go?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: So the names of the people involved.

JOY EPISALLA: —people involved. I'm trying to see, did we write this here or not? Maybe we wrote it not here, maybe we wrote it—ah, active from '91 to '95, fierce pussy was composed of a fluid and often shifting cadre of dykes. Core members were Pam Brandt, Nancy Brooks Brody, Joy Episalla, Alison Froling, Zoe Leonard, Suzanne Wright, and Carrie Yamaoka. And so there were many women who came to the occasional meeting, came out to wheat paste, to stencil, we made stickers, or to drive this truck around the city that we eventually did. So that first poster, you know, just to give you an idea. "I am a mann-ish, muffdiver, amazon, feminist, queer, lesbian, femme, and proud."

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.] Right.

JOY EPISALLA: And there were three different versions, right?

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: "I'm a lezzie, butch, pervert, girlfriend, bull dagger, sister, dyke, and proud." And, "I am a stone butch, andron—"

CYNTHIA CARR: Androgen?

JOY EPISALLA: Androgen, sorry. "Femme, tomboy, girlfriend, sapphic, deviant, and proud." Okay, so those were the first three posters and we wheatpasted them all over the East Village.

CYNTHIA CARR: Do you remember when? Was it in '91 still?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, that's '91.

CYNTHIA CARR: Maybe summer?

JOY EPISALLA: That's our first—uh, we had jackets on.

CYNTHIA CARR: Let's see here.

JOY EPISALLA: We had jackets on.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: So it was probably—it could be—

CYNTHIA CARR: Let's see if it's on your CV. No dates on here.

JOY EPISALLA: No, it could have been spring.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, okay.

JOY EPISALLA: You know what I mean?

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: And the other thing was, I don't know that we named ourself at the first meeting.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: There were lots of discussion.

CYNTHIA CARR: About the title "fierce pussy?"

JOY EPISALLA: About what we were going to call ourselves. And—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, how did that name come about?

JOY EPISALLA: Well basically we were in this—it was a group of us and we were talking, and I think vagina dentata came up.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: And something else—there were a number of things. And some people really had a problem with fierce pussy, but there were a number of us that had no problem with that but thought it was really, you know, that should be our name. So eventually we did agree. But the other thing is, we never put our name on—we never put fierce pussy on any of the posters until a little bit later. Because we felt that—we were talking to our community. We were talking to other queers, right?

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And—or, to be specific, in that point in time, lesbians, right? And, so, it was a little bit like, once we wheatpasted these up the street, they were for everybody. And we'd go out wheatpasting, and you know, we'd fill the buckets at somebody's house, and we'd have lookouts with us for the cops because you weren't really allowed to wheat paste, but we did anyway. And yeah, we'd spend the evening, you know, we'd always do it at night. And we wheatpasted them all over the place, and you know we'd bomb different areas, you know like we'd do the East Village, or we did SoHo, or we actually did the Upper East Side at a certain point. Or the Upper West Side, but you get the idea.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And it was very low tech, you know, because a) it was the typewriter font, which the more it blew up and blew up and blew up, started to look like what was eventually known as something called Trixie—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: —[a font -JE] on the computer.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. Where it's a little faded at the edges and stuff.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, it's really kind of ratty around the edges, it's like very scratchy around the edges. So eventually when it came—when we moved forward in that way [to the computer -JE]—but in the beginning, all of them were done on the typewriter, the text part, and then the next group of posters we did, we used our baby pictures.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And so there was one of Jean Carlamusto which—and they were all—we Xeroxed them into black and white, whatever the photograph was and it was her [Jean Carlamusto -JE] in a little striped dress with little cherries on it. And under it had the big word, "dyke," across the page. And there was another one of—who was next? Let's see. There was one of me. I am sitting on the floor of my grandmother's linoleum black and white floor—and it says, "lesbian," across the top. And then there was one of Carrie that said, "muffdiver." And it's her adorable, with her little shirt off.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: [Laughs.] And I think there was actually another one—

CYNTHIA CARR: And I remember these.

JOY EPISALLA: —"lover of women,"

CYNTHIA CARR: Everyone is like two or three years old in this one.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, we're very young. And we thought, well they're our baby pictures. That, you know, that's our ownership, and, we were talking about a kind of history. Like, at what point are you queer? Well we decided from birth.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: Right.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And it was really interesting, because I think we wheatpasted them on the Upper East Side or the West Side, but people were a bit appalled.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: Like child pornography or something.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, I see.

JOY EPISALLA: Which is kind of nutty, because they were our baby pictures. I mean we wouldn't use pictures of anybody else. Any images we used were people either ourselves or people we knew.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And so we did those down here [East Village, NYC -JE] as well, and there's actually photographs of people looking at them on the wall. And what's interesting is, you know, years and years later, you'd run into somebody like at the Printed Matter or we finally did that—

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, I remember that, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: —the little retrospective for fierce pussy. And you know, people were like, "Oh my god, I have one of these posters, I ripped it off the street and had it in my house forever" kind of thing.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: And that was pretty interesting. So there was definitely a way that we definitely wanted it disseminated. And so, yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: Was that in '91 also? You think?

JOY EPISALLA: The baby pictures? I—what do you have there on our CV? Because I think—

CYNTHIA CARR: This is actually—it's just a list of the gallery stuff.

JOY EPISALLA: Ah.

CYNTHIA CARR: Starting in '91. And no dates, there aren't any dates.

JOY EPISALLA: No.

CYNTHIA CARR: Except for the year.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah we probably don't even know them. So somewhere in like '91, '92.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: '93, you know.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: And then we started doing a couple where—there was one called "She Had Reoccurring Dreams About the Girl Next Door," and it's two little kids. Oh, Donna Evans was another woman that was in fierce pussy.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh okay.

JOY EPISALLA: So it was Donna Evans, and I don't know who it was. And there was another one of Nancy Brooks Brody. Let's see if I can find it, it's so funny, so sweet. It was Nancy and her sister, like taken in a photo booth

CYNTHIA CARR: Photo booth.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. And it says, "Find the dyke in this picture."

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: So we started developing the text in a way, and also, we were always aware of the voice—how we were talking to the greater audience. You know like—find the dyke in this picture.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] I was interested in this project where you were renaming streets.

JOY EPISALLA: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CYNTHIA CARR: I don't know if that's the next one.

JOY EPISALLA: Well, I'm trying to think. That was for Gay Pride. I want to say maybe, let's see if we can—do you want to stop for a sec—

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: —and I can grab my—

JOY EPISALLA: Okay so I was correct. The list posters—that was 1991. And basically, as the first project, it was to reclaim derogatory language basically and transform it into an affirmation of our collective identity, right?

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

JOY EPISALLA: So, "sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never harm me"—we're taking those words back.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: Right?

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: So in a positive sense. And then with the baby pictures, again, it was in a similar way where we were reclaiming the language. We thought that our baby pictures were also a way of representing our personal experience. Right? But—and then also putting it in a social context of being out on the street. And so it was a kind of challenge to heteronormative assumptions, right?

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: And also about identity and family and gender and appearance. And those were done like between '91 and '92.

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: And then the next—it was ``re-naming the streets." And that was 1992. And, so we used stencils and spray paint. So we brought these stencils with us and, you know, we'd spray paint these cardboard signs. And we renamed many of the streets along the route of the Gay Pride march. So it was 1992 Gay Pride. And so we went out, like really, really, like, early in the morning with ladders. [Laughs.]

CYNTHIA CARR: Like did you do the actual street sign?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, yeah, with ladders and wire.

CYNTHIA CARR: So you'd cover Fifth Avenue?

JOY EPISALLA: —and we installed them, yeah—

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: —our own signs on top of the official ones.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh I see. Ah.

JOY EPISALLA: And so some of the examples, like Christopher Street became "Tomboy Turnpike." Hudson Street became "Audre Lorde Lane."

CYNTHIA CARR: "Audre Lorde Lane?"

JOY EPISALLA: Yep, yep. "Audre Lorde Lane."

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: Sheraton Square became "fierce pussy Plaza." Bleecker Street became "Martina Navratilova

Court." Fifth Avenue became "Joan Nestle Boulevard," and 10th Street became "Kitty Tsui Avenue."

CYNTHIA CARR: "Kitty Tsui?"

JOY EPISALLA: T-S-U-I. And those are all—you know, I can send you the proper—

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: So that's '92.

CYNTHIA CARR: How long did they last, do you think?

JOY EPISALLA: I don't know, but in fact, we have two.

CYNTHIA CARR: You have—

JOY EPISALLA: I don't know that we have them, but the Lesbian Herstory Archives has two. So somebody [must have given -JE] them, at some point.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh. Two of the street signs?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, it's either that or somebody kept them, I don't know.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, okay.

JOY EPISALLA: But somehow—two of them do exist. Which was—what do I have here? "Adrienne Rich Road," and "Mabel Hampton Street."

CYNTHIA CARR: Ah. And where were those? Where was "Adrienne Rich Road?"

JOY EPISALLA: I actually cannot remember.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: But it was definitely along the route.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay, good. [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: So, you know, we're busy. We're meeting, and we're coming up with these ideas, and then we'd go out and execute them. It was very low-tech that way. In a way—and we were very fast. We were very interested in—I guess being on the floor of ACT UP, everything got discussed. Not that you shouldn't discuss. You should, but we weren't totally into having a million meetings to then be able to go out and do these things. We kind of tried to be succinct in our ideas. And then carry them out.

Also, we didn't have any money. So it was basically all the stuff that we had ourselves putting into this. So you know, where Gran Fury, they might do a billboard, right?

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: fierce pussy, you know, the dykes, the lesbians, don't have a lot of money.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.] Right.

JOY EPISALLA: They're just, you know, using where they work to Xerox all the posters.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, right.

JOY EPISALLA: So Conde Nast was very helpful during that period of time.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.] Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

JOY EPISALLA: So now in 1992—

CYNTHIA CARR: Little did they know, right?

JOY EPISALLA: That's right.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: '92, also we did the political greeting card campaign.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: So it was around Christmas time, and it said "Season's Greetings" on the outside. And it was distributed prior to the November 1992 election, and they were preaddressed to Cardinal O'Connor and Senator Alphonse D'Amato, who was then the New York state senator. And they were completely like, right wing [anti-abortion -JE], totally homophobic. Anti-gay, anti-everything, anti-HIV positive people, the whole thing. And so it was our response to their endorsement of oppressive, misogynistic, homophobic policies that they were trying to institute. So on the outside it was a pale gray like cardboard card, and it could fold in half, and it said, "Season's Greetings" in a nice red script, and it had Cardinal O'Connor's address or D'Amato's address, and on the inside, it said—it had a photograph of a vagina basically.

CYNTHIA CARR: Ah.

JOY EPISALLA: Like the famous painting that's in—where is it? In Paris.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh yeah, it's called—

JOY EPISALLA: Something—

CYNTHIA CARR: It's called *Origin of the World*.

JOY EPISALLA: —there it is. We made our own *Origin of the World*.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: As you can see here.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh right.

JOY EPISALLA: So it said, "You can't legislate it. You can't lick it. You can't beat it. fierce pussy."

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: And so we handed those out and people would mail them.

CYNTHIA CARR: Ah, okay.

JOY EPISALLA: Now that was something we actually had printed.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: Right, so you could go into a Xerox store in those days, and you know, we would make up the little mechanical. And probably I did it or Carrie did it, since that's what we were doing for making money—paste-up/mechanical. And I'm trying to remember who shot this image. Her name is Diane. I'll find out. Her name was Diane, the woman who shot the image. And we did it up in her studio. Diana Dietrich.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, okay.

JOY EPISALLA: So anyway, so that was '92. That was towards the end of '92. And in '93 we were approached by this place, it was called Grazer Kunstverein. It was in Austria. And they had this billboard project that—I actually think it came through Zoe. I think they had actually offered Zoe this billboard, and she turned around and said maybe fierce pussy—this would be really good for fierce pussy. I think it was something like that.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: And so it was an ongoing series of artist billboards sponsored by them. So this was 1993, and we had numerous billboards throughout the city of Graz, and it had a blow-up of a black and white fifth grade class photo from 1972. It was actually Zoe Leonard's fifth grade class photo. And with large typewriter text across the top, in English, but actually it was in—

CYNTHIA CARR: In German, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: In German.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: It said, "How many lesbians in this picture?"

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: So these really huge billboards—there was one near a McDonalds and there was one—they were all over the place. It was pretty fabulous.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: So this is the one photograph we have of it. Of course—and in that, we did put fierce pussy.

CYNTHIA CARR: Ah I see.

JOY EPISALLA: So we did tag ourselves.

CYNTHIA CARR: That was the first time?

JOY EPISALLA: That might be the first time we start to tag ourselves, because we realized that, in a whole other context, it would be unfortunate for you not to have some knowledge of who did this and a reference point.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: So we started talking about that, about a kind of ownership. But we wanted it to be broad, but it's not like we the core group who was doing this work only owned it at all. We wanted it for the masses, you know, open—the ability for anybody to embrace it. But at the same time we thought it was important that fierce pussy's name be on it.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: And then after that—this was also in '93. So '93 was very [busy -JE]—now [that I -JE] think about it, 1993.

CYNTHIA CARR: You're also doing political funerals.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, I mean, by that point, in '92 already, Mark has died.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And I think this is—

CYNTHIA CARR: And you're going to the hospital.

JOY EPISALLA: And I'm going to the hospital, taking care of him [Tim Bailey -JE], going back and forth to his house, and I think it was Simon Watson approached us. This big thing happened in Colorado.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: It was a campaign that was waged in the wake of the anti-gay legislation that was passed by voters in Colorado.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah I remember that, yes.

JOY EPISALLA: And so it was called, "Boycott Colorado." And I'm pretty sure Simon Watson organized something out there. So we did a poster with two women on the beach, laying on the beach [in the sand -JE], and it said, "We're not going to Colorado." So sort of the sense of an advertisement, like where you go on your vacation. Okay, "We're not going to Colorado," and it also had "fierce pussy" on the bottom. And then we re-wrote the text. We'll have to figure out the name. Let me see if I can get it off of here. We also did this PSA, but—We did it as a PSA which I think was shown in the window of The New Museum. You can probably look on the CV. And it was an American flag that was flying.

[Phone rings.]

Sorry about that.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah I have that as 1993.

JOY EPISALLA: Right?

CYNTHIA CARR: The New Museum.

JOY EPISALLA: Yep, yep, yep. So we did this PSA, I think it was Carrie's voice, and—we re-wrote this text that you'll recognize. I'm just trying to read it here, "When they came for the Indians, you didn't speak up because you weren't an injun. When they came for the nigger, you didn't speak up because you were white. When they came for the suffragette, you didn't speak up because you weren't a woman. When they bashed the queers, you didn't speak up because you were straight. Then they came for you, and there was no one left to fight back." And then it says "fierce pussy." So it was a flag image that was moving and then this text came over it and then there was—and then we also did these posters.

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh huh. So that was a video?

JOY EPISALLA: It was a video. It was a PSA, you know public service announcement. And then it was also a poster. So that was all around the "Boycott Colorado" thing. That was all simultaneous.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: [Pinging sound] And that's the Whitney Museum again, sending me another one of those ridiculous, crazy—okay. So around '93, '94, there was a little bit of a jostle in fierce pussy. And I think that Nancy went and became a firefighter out on the west coast. And I think that Zoe went and was in Alaska around this time. And so this next project we did—now we're meeting at Pam Brandt's house, and she and Alison Froling at the time were girlfriends, and they were living way over on Avenue A. We had a lot of meetings at their place. Anyway, the Lesbian Gay Community Service Center which, that's what it was called then—So this is '94. They approached us to do a site-specific installation in the women's bathroom. And it was made as part of an exhibition called *Outhouses*. So this was actually probably one of the first times we actually did something indoors—

CYNTHIA CARR: Ah yes.

JOY EPISALLA: —that wasn't on the street. Okay, so the PSA was in the window of the museum, and, you know, it was probably the first time—that was a little bit different for us because it was much more object-oriented. And so it incorporated a billboard-sized poster, which was the—"How many lesbians in the picture?" Except that we changed it to, "Are you a boy or a girl?"

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JOY EPISALLA: —and that—so we were talking now about gender. Right?

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And so because the bathrooms at the Center weren't really divided up—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: —at that point. There was a brick wall there, and so on that brick wall we made a really big poster of the picture of the fifth grade class. And then it said on the bottom, "Are you a boy or a girl?"

CYNTHIA CARR: And that was Zoe's class, again—

JOY EPISALLA: That was Zoe's class again. So it was "Are you a boy or a girl?" And that was on this wall, and then you went into the bathrooms on the other side of this wall. And then in the—in the bathroom, we did this installation which on each of the doors we stenciled a quote, and one said, "Live the nightmare." And then on the flip side of the door when you got into the stall of the bathroom, there was a mirror that you were facing, and it said, "Demand your civil rights. fierce pussy."

And so on the front board [of the door -JE], it would say like "Live the nightmare. fierce pussy," and then you'd come into the bathroom to use the toilet, and you were facing a mirror, and etched on it, it said, "Demand your civil rights." And then the toilet paper we did ourselves as well.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: And the toilet paper again was every derogatory term that a lesbian was called, and we found a printer who did toilet paper, and that was our first edition of the toilet paper.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: So that was the toilet paper you could use in the bathroom. And I think it had a—it was like this

list that was repeated, repeated, repeated. And it also said "fierce pussy" on it. And so like another one of the doors said, "Fuck"—what was it? "Fuck 15 minutes of fame. Demand your civil rights" on the inside, on the etched glass. So that was the first—yeah. So it was the—you know, we had the big poster on the outside, and then you entered the bathroom, and you had these messages stenciled on the doors, and then the etched mirrors on the inside and the custom printed toilet paper. Which can still be gotten.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.] Purchased on the website. I saw that, yes.

JOY EPISALLA: [Laughs.] Eventually, yeah. So that was '94. And then—so it was this smaller group of us—and '94—so this will relate well—we did these posters called "Next Time We'll Bury It."

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: And the poster featured a redacted newspaper article, and we also did a version with the article intact, but in the redacted one we—I think we took out certain names and stuff. So what it was about was that one evening in 1993. John Bobbitt came home drunk and raped his wife Lorena in their Virginia apartment, and Lorena got up afterwards, went to the kitchen, got a knife, and cut off John's penis while he was sleeping. Then she took off in the car and flung the severed penis into a field. The police searched, found the penis, and reattached it. And so this was our response to that. So here was the redacted text that said everything. And then next to it, again in our typewriter font thing that we'd been using, it said, "Next time we'll bury it. fierce pussy."

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.] God.

JOY EPISALLA: Right? And also around the same time—this is '94, so it was quite a year for the religious right and the Christian Coalition. And so it was all this whole thing. It was—what was his name? Helm—Jesse Helms.

CYNTHIA CARR: Jesse Helms. Yeah. Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And he had this whole thing about no special rights for homosexuals. So that was our campaign. It was called "No Special Rights." And so it was the early '90s. The right wing and the Christian Coalition embarked on a campaign using phrases like "no special rights for homosexuals." And a slew of legislation across the country made it legal to discriminate against queers in the workplace, housing, parenting, healthcare. And so their—how do you say it? Incendiary?

CYNTHIA CARR: Incendiary?

JOY EPISALLA: Incendiary—I can never say that word—homophobic language created a climate which encouraged violence against queers across the country. And so there were countless bashings and murders and fire bombings. And fierce pussy responded with this poster campaign appropriating "No Special Rights." And so to ask heterosexuals the questions, you know, like "How would it feel to have that hatred directed to you?" So the posters—and there were a couple of them—and it would be like this nice [image -JE] shot that we'd pull out of a magazine of, like, a man and a woman sitting on a staircase, you know, like maybe he's going to become engaged to her or something. And so underneath, the text said, "What if we fire bombed your house because you were straight? fierce pussy." And then like a stamp across it diagonally, it said, "No special rights for heterosexuals."

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: So there was a couple of those. And in fact, those posters actually made it into a show at the public library, the New York Public Library—which was pretty interesting, having them in an institution.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: So that was '94. And Gay Pride of '94—so by this point, '93, we have all the political funerals. And we're kind of reeling from losing so many friends and people that you're super close to, and—but we kept doing stuff in ACT UP. In fact, The Marys sort of became this group called City AIDS Actions, because we were so sick of Giuliani by this point as well. So in '94, it was the twenty-fifth anniversary of Stonewall. So it was that big Gay Pride where everybody came to New York. And The Marys, with Anonymous Queers, so the same people we did Stumpf/Kane on the back of their—we did this other text. And it was "Welcome to New York"—and everything that was going on in terms of AIDS. So that was one piece of it. fierce pussy, on the other hand—Gordy, who worked for Fred Worden, who was an art mover—

CYNTHIA CARR: Gordy?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. I'll have to find Gordy's last name for you. I might even have it in my phone. Gordy let us borrow his moving truck.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: And Carrie and I, were still at the magazines. And so now we had been taught how to use a computer, so we were now very efficient in Photoshop. And so we had to find certain, again, fonts. So that's where we picked up Trixie, that looked like our typewriter font. And we did decide to do our own low-budget moving billboard, which cruised through the streets of New York during Stonewall that weekend. And it featured three six foot by 12-foot posters. And they were enlarged using a color Xerox machine—tiling it. So basically they were 11-by-17 pieces of paper that we had to put back together, wheatpasting onto the side of this truck.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, wheatpasting? [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: Wheatpasting. Because we were so low budget, once again.

CYNTHIA CARR: So it was like a real—it wasn't a van. It was a regular truck.

JOY EPISALLA: It was a big—it was a big white truck.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh. Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: And so one of the posters on one side of the truck—I'm trying to—so I can read this to you—come on. It said—so, and now we were getting to use color. You know, whoohoo. It said—it had this like starry background, right, like the universe. And up coming from it, like zooming up, it said, "Dyke: the final frontier."

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: To explore, you know—you know, new civilizations, "to boldly go where no man has gone before." And it looked like a movie poster. So that was one. And on the front of the truck, it said, "Fierce pussy." And on the other side of the truck, it had a poster [of a photo -JE]that I shot—there was footage from the original Stonewall, of the Stonewall riots.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And I shot footage off the TV. I ran the tape of what I found, and I shot a black-and-white shot, and so you see these protestors, and there's all this stuff going on. And so it's black and white. And again, we used all derogatory terms—and it was yellow on this black-and-white image of these people protesting at Stonewall—that queers were called.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: And it said, "You're here, you're queer, fight the real enemy." Was the tagline. So that was on the other side of the truck. And on the back of the truck, we did this AIDS poster, which had to do with our experience. And it was a page of a journal, like a calendar journal—what would you call it? You know—in those days, we didn't have everything in our phones. We had a calendar—

CYNTHIA CARR: Like a Filofax or—

JOY EPISALLA: Like a Filofax.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: Like a page of a Filofax. And it said, "To do."

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: So it had everything that the page had, and it was a double-page spread, so you saw the ringed notebook of the Filofax. And the hand writing, my hand writing, was script, and it said, "Start an IV. Hold a hand. Pick out a coffin. Bury your best friend." And then it says—God, I'm going to have a hard time reading this, aren't I—" [Tired of the Routine -JE] AIDS: Be Enraged. Become Explosive." So there were two of those, and they were pasted on the back of the truck. So this truck not only—so we took turns driving it all over New York City during that weekend. And—oh God, what were they called? They were down-south sisters [Camp Sister Spirit -JE]—it was this lesbian group that had land down south. They were really famous.

CYNTHIA CARR: In Florida?

JOY EPISALLA: I don't think it was Florida. God, I have to remember their names. They were so great. Anyway, they saw the truck. They thought it was a film, and they ended up giving us, like, their neckerchiefs that they had, and—oh, my God. I can't believe I can't—I'll remember who it is that we're talking about. [Camp Sister Spirit -JE].

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: Crazy. Anyway. We also drove this in the fierce pussy march. Not the fierce pussy march, the women's—the dyke march.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, right.

JOY EPISALLA: So fierce pussy had this truck, and—

CYNTHIA CARR: So like then that's the day before Gay Pride.

JOY EPISALLA: That's the day before Gay Pride. Exactly.

CYNTHIA CARR: So. Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And so that's where that picture came from—that was all of us at the time, on the back of the truck. So yeah. That was the truck. So Gordy let us borrow it, which was really cool. And we went to this parking lot, and we had friends that were over from London, Gill Ord and Andy Cohen and Keran—oh God, what's Keran's last name? K-E-R-A-N. I'll find out his last name. [Keran James -JE]. They had come over and they were staying with us, so they helped us. And Suzanne Wright was there, and Pam, and Alison, and Carrie, and me, we wheatpasted the truck in this parking lot and then took it out on the street. And then some of The Marys also drove the truck. So it wasn't just driven by the women. It was also driven by James Baggett, you know, there was a couple people—[like David Yorrii -JE].

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. Alison—did you mention—

JOY EPISALLA: Alison Froling. Yeah. I'll give you the right name.

CYNTHIA CARR: Froling. .

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. She was one of the—she was in fierce pussy.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: And then, you know, in the dyke march, we were in the truck, so some of The Marys, like Barbara Hughes and Andrea Benzacar, they were with us in the dyke march with the truck, right—we were all following it. Because I think we were using the truck to hand out The Marys' [City AIDS Actions Brochure -JE]. So it was all very crossed over.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: So that was '94. And then fierce pussy's a little bit winded down. We took kind of a little bit of a hiatus—but The Marys continued, like I said, through '95, '96, through when the cocktail came into play.

CYNTHIA CARR: In '96 and the cocktail, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: So we were doing City AIDS Actions at that point, fighting Giuliani because also Giuliani comes in and cracks down on wheatpasting—which was one of the reasons fierce pussy didn't—wasn't really able to do that anymore, because at that point you could get arrested and thrown in jail. Before that, it was like a misdemeanor. It was like no big thing.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. Right.

JOY EPISALLA: So it was becoming more difficult.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And—

CYNTHIA CARR: Wasn't there a project at the Herstory Archive?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. So I'm just going to get to that.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, okay.

JOY EPISALLA: So in 2008, AA Bronson at the time was running Printed Matter.

CYNTHIA CARR: Printed Matter, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And AA was over here [at Jay's house -JE] visiting. We were in the kitchen. Carrie was in the front room working at her desk, and AA was talking to me, and he was saying that he was doing these gay men's show—and he was trying to think of lesbian groups to do this with as well. He said he'd been looking for ephemera, and, you know, you could find all kinds of gay male ephemera, and it was actually quite expensive, but there was really hardly any lesbian ephemera, and whatever he found was kind of cheap. You know, like online or eBay or whatever. And he said, "And someone's told me about this group called fierce pussy. Do you know who they are?"

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: There you go, for lesbian visibility. Right? I mean—

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. .

JOY EPISALLA: And so I call Carrie, and I say, "Carrie, AA has a question for you." [Laughs.]

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: And I said, you know, "That's us," and, you know, there's a bunch of others—and he said, well—he was very interested. And he said, "I'd love to do a show of fierce pussy and Heresies." And we said, "Well, why don't you just give Heresies their own show?" Because there's a pretty big, you know, separation in time and even what we—

CYNTHIA CARR: Totally.

JOY EPISALLA: —you know, I mean, Heresies was first, and why not, you know do a show with them. That's a great idea.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And then we said, "But I think you should do a show of fierce pussy, you know, too," because—

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And so they did. And we put out a call to every single person we could possibly remember who had been part of fierce pussy no matter what, saying that this was happening, and it turned out that the more we talked with AA, the more he got into it, that they wanted to do a book, which became the fierce pussy book. And they wanted to do a little retrospective. So we put a call out to have a meeting about this whole idea, and the only people that showed up were Zoe Leonard, Nancy Brooks Brody, Carrie Yamaoka, and myself. Which was kind of "ha ha."

CYNTHIA CARR: The original four.

JOY EPISALLA: Exactly. Because also we were very close friends, and we had done other actions during this time. So, you know, people from The Marys, people from fierce pussy, we would do other things. And one of those things was when George Bush stole the election.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, right.

JOY EPISALLA: What year is that?

CYNTHIA CARR: Well, 2000 was when the election happened and he took—

JOY EPISALLA: When was the Republican convention in New York?

CYNTHIA CARR: Boy—

JOY EPISALLA: It's not 2000. It's later.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, like 2003 or '04, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: Or '04. It was 2004.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: So in 2004, a number of The Marys, a number of the people from fierce pussy, and then just some friends, we did another action at that time. So—and there were other times that we did other actions. Like we did this big TAG action at Microgenesis. There were a number of different things. So it would be that people that you knew from ACT UP or that you had worked with—you always felt like you had each other's backs in that same way.

So you'd get a phone call saying, "We're thinking of putting this together. Do you want to do this?" And that's what happened during the Republican convention. So the Republican convention was in New York. So it was fierce pussy, it was The Marys, and it was friends. And what we did was at grand central—there was a lookout at Michael Jordan's steakhouse with a table that was reserved in Rosa Parks's name. And it was Carrie and Andrea and a couple of other people. They were the lookouts. I think Fay Hirsh too. And then there were five of us. It was Anna Blume, Zoe, me, and Nancy [and Barbara Hughes! -JE]. Was there somebody else? Maybe. Maybe not. So we decided that—I think it was Anna's idea to begin with, and she said, "Let's do something during the Republican convention. It's unbelievable they're here in New York." And we basically framed it around us being citizens of New York City. New Yorkers, who don't want them in our—[laughs]—in our city. And so this was right the week before, and it was at rush hour, and we called James Wentzy, who had done all the, you know, filming of all the political funerals and a lot of ACT UP's actions, and we said, "Something's going to come down at Grand Central. Be there at a certain time. We can't tell you what it is." And we came in in disguise. And we had a banner. And we had gotten these balloons that said "bon voyage," huge big helium balloons. And the lookouts told us when to come in. And we had people on the doors that let us in, and in the meantime, there was a cop there, and there were—what do you call them—guards. They had the—no.

CYNTHIA CARR: The Secret Service?

JOY EPISALLA: Not Secret Service. They're—they had machine guns. They were all over the city at that point. They were all over Grand Central. They were all over the subways. The guard. What're they called—

CYNTHIA CARR: The National Guard?

JOY EPISALLA: The National Guard was there. And Andrea sees that as we're going to walk in from that entrance, that there's this cop there, and he's going to be a problem. So she chats him up. And she says, "I'm a tour guide and I'm waiting for these people to come in off the train, and do you know—" blah blah blah. And she's like yeah yeah at him over here, and we come in, and Anna's already—where there's like double staircase that goes down to the big room—and she's standing there with a Barney's shopping bag. And we all have these big balloons with little clips. And we put grommets in this thing [the banner -JE]. And I walked in first, and there was this National Guard behind me with a machine gun. And I clipped on [my balloons to the banner -JE] and walked down the steps because we decided we were not going to get arrested. And then as—

CYNTHIA CARR: So you clipped on—what did you clip on?

JOY EPISALLA: These big helium balloons that said—

CYNTHIA CARR: Onto—

JOY EPISALLA: Onto this banner—

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: —that then, once all four balloons got on, it flew up to the ceiling of Grand Central at rush hour and it said "No Bush, Lies, Wars." And it made it onto CNN. In fact, we got interviewed by CNN and said that we were New Yorkers and we were protesting Bush, and the lies, and the war and the Republicans being in New York City.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And so it was very interesting, I think, that, you know, this group of people that I still know and we are still close, work together if something comes up. I think that's pretty unique, you know?

CYNTHIA CARR: It is. Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: So fast forward to 2008, and AA, and the Printed Matter retrospective for fierce pussy. We put out a book and the book was—it's almost set up like a calendar. So you can hang it up. It has a hole in it—and it's a spiral-bound—

CYNTHIA CARR: A spiral at the top.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. And it has all those fierce pussy posters we've been talking about, plus a couple more. And we also did a re-dacted poster of all three lists, and we asked if we could wheatpaste on the outside of Printed Matter when it was in the old location on—

CYNTHIA CARR: On Tenth Avenue. Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: —on Tenth Avenue. And so on the inside, we had all our old posters, and we had you know, the season's greetings cards, and we had the toilet paper, and we had vitrines, and we found—we went back through all our archives. We found the original typewriting lists, and we'd put it all in—it was pretty great.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And it was also a great way for us to actually start organizing the archives [our fierce pussy archives -JE], right? And it turned out that it was going to be the four of us, so—okay, so be it. Anyway, we make this poster that's a redax of—you know, it says, "I'm a lezzie butch pervert feminist amazon bulldagger dyke and so are you." And we wheatpasted 11 by 17s of those, which we Xeroxed ourselves, so nothing had really changed all that much. And we put it on the front of the widow at Printed Matter.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes, I remember, because I saw the show and all that.

JOY EPISALLA: Right? So we wheatpasted on the front [of the store -JE] and we went out to lunch for like an hour, and we came back. And by the time we came back, the cops had been in twice saying that they'd had all these complaints in the neighborhood about this poster that was on the front—this wheatpasted poster. Now, 11 by 17, the type is not that big. Because people had children.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh. Yes.

JOY EPISALLA: Now—well, if your child in that stroller is old enough to read that above their heads, I congratulate them, you know? That's a very smart child.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: But in the meantime, while you're, you know—also, the cops thought that it had been up like for a week. They had no idea it had only been up for an hour. Right? So we also knew we had staying power. Right?

CYNTHIA CARR: [Affirmative.] Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: I mean, still. After all these years, what we were saying was still as relevant and problematic for people, not all people, but for a number of people, right?

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes. Yeah. Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

JOY EPISALLA: In the meantime, directly across the street on a huge billboard that the kid who's being pushed in the stroller could not miss is a nude woman with her arms and legs wrapped around a bottle of Courvoisier. But that's okay. Nobody has a problem with that. Right?

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. Right.

JOY EPISALLA: Anyway, so of course we didn't take it down. They—Printed Matter—they were a little bit like "Oh no," you know, la la la, but they finally calmed down. And so—yeah. The occasion came off and a lot of people showed up at the retrospective—and it was up for a couple of months. And it was from there—and, you know, that's where actually I think it was Marisa Cardinale came to the opening and said to me, "Oh, my god, I have one of those fierce pussy posters, and, you know, I don't even know if I realized it was all of you guys." Do you know what I mean? So it was like that. Like people you were now friends with—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: The book, in fact, has traveled. I have a friends that are in Copenhagen who—a friend of mine who lived in Cairo who was visiting them—I didn't know these people yet, because she introduces me to them later. She's sitting in their kitchen, and she—[Lara Baladi -JE], we're really close, so she knows about fierce pussy. And in their kitchen is the book hanging up in Copenhagen. So hey, good. You know, we're getting out there. We're disseminating, you know?

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: So after that, Maxine Wolf, who was also in ACT UP, who was actually very, you know, very active and a big part of the Women's Coalition in ACT UP as well—she was one of the people that started the Lesbian

Herstory Archive in Brooklyn, where they bought—that's one of the only lesbian archives that exists, besides—I think there's one out on the West Coast I think somewhere.

But it's the biggest, and it's jam-packed with very, very interesting things. Anyway, Maxine approached us to do a residency—actually to do a show there. And we said, "Well, how about this? What if we do a residency where we put up the retrospective like we did at Printed Matter, but we get to use the Archives' contents—contents from the Archives—to make certain pieces?" Because that seemed like a way to extend our relationship to it. And so we made—we incorporated material from the Archives, and it resulted in—it was called *Mining the Archive*. And you know, it's like a treasure trove. So we went through all this material, and we looked into all the, you know, the cultural legacy of lesbian feminism that's housed in this place.

And so there were millions of objects, and one of the first things we went through was their button collection. And we made this spiral on the wall when you walked in. It was pretty huge. And the middle button was this huge button that said, "Let's face it—we're all queer." So that was the middle.

And then spiraling out from that were all these different buttons. And what we kind of did in the spiral is that things were grouped together. You know, so— maybe there was a group about, [buttons -JE]—with the female fist. Or maybe there was a group about protesting a certain thing. So we kind of worked that out in the spiral. So that was on one wall. And, you know, how many buttons said "dyke" or how many buttons said "sister," or how—you know—they had thousands of buttons. I mean, it was unbelievable. And then one of the other objects we picked out were—we went through the T-shirts. And we arranged them on the wall in like a descending order and in a triangle. And they were really interesting, because some of the T-shirts had been handwritten. They have a whole catalogue of T-shirts.

CYNTHIA CARR: Wow.

JOY EPISALLA: And then the last piece we did is we kept looking at the pulp novels, the pulp lesbian novels and their covers are really quite amazing, so we did this grid piece with the covers of a group of them. But it also—it was also kind of a provocative rereading of, you know, lesbian pulp novels, because in lesbian pulp novels, the girl gets the girl in the beginning. But by the end of the book, either one of the girls goes back to the guy, or—the other one becomes an alcoholic and kills herself. It's always the same thing.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah. Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And a lot of these pulp novels were not written by women. They were written, probably, by men. And some were. Like what's her name, Beebo—

CYNTHIA CARR: Beebo Brinker was the character, I think, right?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. I think that was written by a woman. [Ann Bannon -JE].

CYNTHIA CARR: That was, yeah. Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: So we started—yeah. You know, we got into reading these, you know, and really thinking about them. And it ended up having an influence on us later for this other piece. So we were there for a year, and the other thing we did is we did salons. In an attempt to create like an intergenerational conversation, we invited a number of artists to join the Archive, this salon. And so we had Barbara Hammer, we had Sarah East Johnson, we had Emma Heddich, Ginger Brooks Takahashi, Kate Eichorn, Linda Matalon. And so we had a couple of these, and there'd be like three people [in each -JE] there might be a performance, there might be a film, there might be a talk, I don't know. And that was pretty interesting. You know, we got new people to come to the Archive, too, that way.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: So this went on for about a year.

CYNTHIA CARR: Wow.

JOY EPISALLA: And then we got invited in 2000 [2009 -JE] by Visual AIDS—I think it was at La MaMa Galleria, and it was a show that was curated by Virginia Solomon and—I have to look on the thing. Oh, god, he was the assistant dean at Cooper Union. Let's see if we've got his name on here. Steven Lam.

CYNTHIA CARR: Steven Lang?

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JOY EPISALLA: Lam. L-A-M. Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: Lam. Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: And it was called *Tainted Love*.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh okay.

JOY EPISALLA: So we did this piece called *Gutter*. And it came from reading the lesbian pulp novels. And we spent hours and hours and hours, and we would get more and more depressed. And at some point, we just thought, "This is like really fucked up."

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: So the way in which we had taken the derogatory terms and turned them around and made them ours, we were now going to make these pulp novels ours. And it would be about desire. So we made excerpts and redacted a number of the texts to reveal an alternate narrative.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh?

JOY EPISALLA: And we were interested in the malleability of the language, the relationship between reading and editing and authorship, and the activity of reading as a place, right? Or, as a space where you locate and explore your own desire, or our desire like, you know, the community. So this first iteration of *Gutter* was for the *Tainted Love* exhibition at La MaMa [Galleria -JE], and they had an adjacent alley that ran along the side of [the building in an alley called "Extra Place" -JE].

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes. Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: So we finally got back on the street. And what we did is we wheatpasted *Gutter*, and we made these huge blowups. After we redacted the text in small size, we then blew it up super big, like super big Xeroxes, basically—they were actually—we did it on a plan machine, where people do architectural plans in black and white. Now Kinko's was our new hangout. And, you know, these posters were like, I don't know, 60 inches by 30 inches—and they were all different texts. To give you an example—let's see if I can read this. Like there was one that said, "Bobby was a boy who thought he was a girl," you know. And there was another one that said, "Drop your skirt. Now step out of it." And then it said, "Tight boots," and then it said, "Thank you, Frau"—Frau—what was her name? Frau Dickson? You know, something—Frau Deitrich—

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.] Frau Dickson?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: Frau Dietrich?

JOY EPISALLA: [Frau Direktrice -JE] Yeah. So we'd go through these books, and there's a number of them. The texts are pretty great.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah. They're all pretty lurid I think, definitely. Pretty—

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. Pretty lurid.

CYNTHIA CARR: They call it "pulp fiction," you know.

JOY EPISALLA: Not for nothing.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: But they were—the texts we came up with were really pretty interesting. I wish I had some here. I could read them to you. But anyway, so then we did another bathroom project at the LGBT community center, but this time we did a permanent installation, and it's there now. And this was in 2009. And again, we used "Are you a boy or a girl?" And underneath it, we wheatpasted the list, the new—you know, the—all the list posters were all over, and, you know, and it said—and then on top of it were these very large blowups of "Are you a boy or a girl?" Because it was now an all-gender bathroom.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: Right? And so it was part of an exhibition called *Then and Now*. And so yeah, it looked like that. So we wheatpasted every single surface with the posters.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, I see.

JOY EPISALLA: I'm just trying to see if it was—yeah, "and proud," it was the original ones. The original three posters. So it was—

CYNTHIA CARR: So it's—there's one bathroom there now.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: For everybody.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. For everybody.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: And that's what the—how it's done. And I think what we did, if I'm not totally crazy, is I think we did a second edition of the toilet paper for [the fierce pussy retrospective, that we used there as well -JE].

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: Then, in 2009, there was a show called "ACT UP New York: Activism, Art and the AIDS Crisis, 1987 to 1993." And it was curated by Helen Molesworth and Clare Grace. And so we, again—what we ended up having was a residency up at Harvard University for a week, and we did it in a number of different ways to engage with the exhibition and also the student body. And there were several of our posters on display in the show itself piled in high stacks, and viewers could take them away with them.

And then we revisited some earlier projects, like the bathroom, and so throughout the Carpenter Center and the Sackler Museum we did over all the bathrooms with the three posters. And the students helped us out. We had a talk with a bunch of students, and then we had a whole bunch of students work with us during that week. But the other thing that we did was that the graduate school of design let us have the entire—the opening area [lobby -JE], and we did *Gutter* there. So it looked really beautiful. And that was up for quite a long time. So it was the second iteration of *Gutter*, and, you know, it was a public library in the graduate school of design, and we gave a presentation, and we conducted a discussion with the students at the women's center, and we had a symposium, which allowed us to look back at AIDS activism and our past experience. And I did a talk during that symposium on political funerals. I have to say that that that was quite an interesting symposium. Because in that show, of course, there were people from Gran Fury, there were tons of different people that the curators had found to be a part of this show, and the other part of the show was the ACT UP Oral History Project.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: So that—you know, so both of these things were going on. There were these visual elements, and then there was the oral history project that was done by Sarah Schulman and—

CYNTHIA CARR: And Jim—

JOY EPISALLA: —and Jim Hubbard.

CYNTHIA CARR: Jim Hubbard. Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: Jim Hubbard was very lovely. So what was interesting about that symposium was that I remember that Gregg Bordowitz was there, and Gregg Gonzales, and Mark Harrington, and Tracy Swan. I mean, tons of people came up for this, for the opening. ACT-UP members and just friends and—and I think in a way, it was also the first public response to all the things that we had done in all those years. And I mean, people were in tears.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: It was almost like a collective moment of grief that had finally coalesced. It was very cathartic. I mean, I don't know—there were students there. But it was pretty intense. It was really, really intense.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes.

JOY EPISALLA: So yeah. That was really interesting. And since then, basically it's been the four of us, and since 2008 when we did the retrospective at Printed Matter and the book, and it was just the four of us that showed up—and actually, you know, a number of people who had been involved in fierce pussy came to the shows, both at the Lesbian Herstory Archive and at Printed Matter. But they didn't—they didn't want to get involved, so we basically closed it down to the four of us. And I think that's also how we were able to do a piece like *Gutter* and the residency at the Archive, because we're kind of a mind meld, the four of us. You know, we've been friends for so long, and we've worked in different ways with each other, and we'd worked in fierce pussy with each other. So now we have a very interesting working relationship, really. And ``ACT UP New York Activism, Art and the

AIDS Crisis" came to White Columns. And the one thing that I think fierce pussy had—a feeling about, about that show is that it was—very nostalgic, but in an interesting way. And of course—

CYNTHIA CARR: The one at White Columns?

JOY EPISALLA: No, I think the one up at Harvard.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, okay.

JOY EPISALLA: And the Oral History Project is an incredible document. But it's everybody that's still alive, right? Talking about—I mean, because we're the witnesses.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: So we said to White Columns, we talked about it—they decided they would commission a piece from us that we wanted to now make a new work that explored mourning and loss but as an ongoing experience. One that would continue through today rather than just residing in the past. And it was also a way to kind of bring young people into something that they've only heard about. Right?

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

JOY EPISALLA: And to sort of bridge the gap between now and then. So again, text and the tone of the text, the voice, became really important. And this piece was called *Get Up Everybody and Sing*, which was a line from the gay anthem "We Are Family." But it's also sort of like conjuring up the dead and rising up, right?

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And all the phrases were "If he—" or "If she were alive today," you know, "he'd have his arm around you." "If she was alive today, she'd be smoking a cigarette outside." "If he were alive today, he'd be at this opening." "If she were alive today, she'd be in this picture." Right?

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: So they were [phrases -JE] that anybody could relate to— as "he," "she," and eventually, "they." We expanded the whole context of this piece—and so in a way we were conjuring up our dead friends, our comrades, our lovers, and going about various common activities; texting, flirting, laughing, talking, sex, dancing, and the accompanying wall text, which was on the wall almost looking like a fortune cookie—strips of paper that were put up really ephemerally with just blue tape that you use for when you're painting so it's not permanent. And the [ripped -JE] blue tape kind of looked like confetti dropping. And it was in the corner of White Columns as you walked in. And [pieces -JE] accompanying it was a stack [of copies -JE] which you could take away which was the lyrics to "We Are Family," the Sister Sledge song. You know, "get up everybody and sing," which, you know, there it was, the rising, right? You know, to bring it all back. So that from this piece, "Get Up Everybody and Sing," came—in 2013, Visual AIDS asked fierce pussy to do something for World AIDS Day. So what we did is we ended up taking the text from "Get Up Everybody and Sing," the wall text, "If he were alive today," "If she were alive today," "If they were alive today," and made it into a broadside. So the front was the full text, and then on each of the other three, you know, pages, basically, it was an "If he were alive today, he'd still be living with AIDS," "If she was alive today, she'd still be living with AIDS," "If they were alive today, they'd still be living with AIDS." And then the front [page of the broadsheet was all the lines of text -JE]. And that got put up at Printed Matter in the window, both sides facing out, just taped up in the window, and then big stacks below. People could take it away with them [for free -JE].

Well, we've now done this broadsheet. There's, I think, three—we're on our third edition, but each is a slightly different iteration. One went out to the *Art AIDS America* show, and then the last one was in Greater New York. But for Greater New York, we expanded the piece yet again, and we changed the text. We kind of updated the text. So in that case, we wheatpasted an entire wall at PS1 with all these lines, but we wheatpasted it on the wall backwards so that it was very ghostly. And when you walked in, it was huge, right. It took up the whole wall, like this mammoth wall. I think its 17 feet. No, 27 feet by 12-foot ceilings, 13-foot ceilings. And you know, the word "AIDS" was the only word that was in red, both on the broad side and in the text on the wall. So the viewer is behind the text. And what they're confronted with—and this wall had a portal, a door that went into the next room—which was important. So where that door was, whatever text would have, been there—going across there is cut out. So it's missing. And being confronted with something you can't read, but you're trying to decipher, there's a moment—you know, it's like you don't understand. And a way for us, all of our friends dying, I don't understand. I don't understand it now. I didn't understand it then, and nothing's changed in that way, right.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And so we were trying to almost manage slowing people down and having this be the experience. And then below were the stacks, and they could take away the broadside again with now the new text on it and the missing text, and also be able to read what was now on the wall. So that was our most recent piece. And that was called *For the Record*. And in fact, the broad side was called *For the Record* [all along -JD.]

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes. Yes. Okay. Now it seems like—oh, did you do a project with TAG?

JOY EPISALLA: Yes. Well, it wasn't so much a project. TAG—Treatment Action Group—which I am on the board of, and I've been working with the TAG guys since 1991 you know, through ACT UP, and then even when they broke away from ACT UP. I used to follow a Hypericin trial and, you know—

CYNTHIA CARR: Follow what trial?

JOY EPISALLA: Hypericin, which was St. John's Wort, which was something that we were hoping would have a benefit for people with HIV, because at that time there was nothing. So we were kind of taking it on ourselves to look into different kinds of compounds and, you know, anything. So that was the trial. It was in trial, and I was following it [to bring back data on the trial to TAG -JD.]

CYNTHIA CARR: I see.

JOY EPISALLA: Anyway, I kept working with those guys, and we kept going to meetings, and I don't know, maybe 10 years ago—I can't even remember when I was put on the board. And I kind of felt like a secret weapon for a long time. And then finally it was sort of like, "Oh, you're not on the board, I think you should be on it." You know?

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: So I'm working with them still. And I've been organizing—I have organized their yearly benefit, which—we do an edition. We ask an artist to do an edition for TAG that will be sold through ticket sales, and we've had a very interesting group of artists. And so one year, they turned around and said, well, would fierce pussy be interested in doing it? So—

CYNTHIA CARR: I see.

JOY EPISALLA: —we ended up doing it. And we ended up doing this piece called *Twisted*, and it was one of the texts from the pulp novels redacted. And it was all about being gay or lesbian or bi or trans—I mean, in that text, but it also talked about the moment, and it talked about love, and it was a good—so it was a print [an archival pigment -JD], actually.

CYNTHIA CARR: It was a print.

JOY EPISALLA: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

JOY EPISALLA: That's what we did for them.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: It's on their website.

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: And it was given out to people at the benefit—

JOY EPISALLA: Well, if they—at the benefit, you know, if you bought—if you—

CYNTHIA CARR: If you paid a certain amount of money, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: —yeah, then they got the—yes. The way we structure it is—there's usually 25—well, it's 20 in the addition, and then there's five APs, and the artist gets the five APs. So, you know, if it's something that ends up being framed, they get five framed ones, and—

CYNTHIA CARR: AP—artist's print.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. Artist's print. And I'm going to see if I can pull it up. If I can pull—

CYNTHIA CARR: But—

JOY EPISALLA: I could pull that piece up actually, probably. Let's see. Limited art editions and a TAG's website. La la. Okay, here it is. fierce pussy. So it was redacted and it said, "In bus terminals, railroad stations, restaurants, almost any public place, New York, Atlanta, Athens, New Orleans." And then it just [said -JE] twisted, and you can—

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.] Right.

JOY EPISALLA: And that was actually the text. I think that this—wherever this was from was a [pulp -JE] book called *Twisted*.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. I see.

JOY EPISALLA: So that was the text. It was a [photograph of the actual double-page spread, from the book that was the redacted -JE].

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, I see. Wow [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: Boy. It seemed like, from looking at the CV, the fierce pussy CV, there's a hiatus from say '96—

JOY EPISALLA: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CYNTHIA CARR: —until—

JOY EPISALLA: 2008.

CYNTHIA CARR: —until 2008.

JOY EPISALLA: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Exactly.

CYNTHIA CARR: Now is that because—I mean, '96 always sticks in my mind because that's when the cocktail became available.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: But that wouldn't have affected fierce pussy except that—

JOY EPISALLA: Well, it would in the sense that I think we were all a little bit burnt out.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah. Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: And from our AIDS work, and, you know—and also I think we all, as artists, wanted to kind of really get into our own work.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: You know?

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: So, yeah—I mean—

CYNTHIA CARR: Okay. So you—so you sort of—

JOY EPISALLA: I think at that point I, you know, I started showing a lot more. I think everybody who were artists—your own practice became really important, and now that people were staying alive—

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: —it was also a time to take care of ourselves.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah. Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: You know? So I think that was part of it. But of course the four of us had—were in contact and saw a lot of each other and went to each other's shows and were very supportive of each other, so, you know—yeah—

CYNTHIA CARR: So yeah, it sort of starts again with like the Printed Matter show where—

JOY EPISALLA: The Printed Matter show is—

CYNTHIA CARR: —where people are starting to say, "Oh, there's this group," and then— [laughs]—

JOY EPISALLA: Exactly.

CYNTHIA CARR: —you know, and sort of bringing you back—

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: —and in that way, you know—

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. Yeah. You know, so it's interesting, because like—

CYNTHIA CARR: And that's the art world recognition, finally. .

JOY EPISALLA: Well, art world recognition, and I think young people. I think there's a real interest that way for fierce pussy, and—

CYNTHIA CARR: Right Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. You know.

CYNTHIA CARR: Well, I was going to ask, you stopped working on your own personal work pretty much during those years of—

JOY EPISALLA: Those early '90s.

CYNTHIA CARR: —like say '90 to '96 or something.

JOY EPISALLA: I mean, I made—I was making work. Like, there's actually—I made a piece about Tim.

CYNTHIA CARR: About Tim. Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, that was in a show called—oh boy, I'd have to look at my own CV now. [The show was called *fruit x-x-x* at Jacklight, Gallery, NYC -JE]. I've—yeah. It was—I had been doing these scroll pieces. So work that I was doing in the early '90s—my grandmother had given me a suitcase of photographs of her sister and these two other women. My grandmother's in it, too. Now, before I ever came out, and my grandmother died the year that I went to Rome when I met Carrie. And in this suitcase were these pictures. And the two—it was my great aunt, her sister [my grandmother's sister -JE], with one of these other women, and in some of them one of the women is proposing to the other woman. She's down on her knee. They're holding hands. Their toes touch. They're incredible photographs.

CYNTHIA CARR: And this is from your grandmother?

JOY EPISALLA: These were from my grandmother. So hello. Like, she knew about [me -JE]—you know what I mean? Like, it's how—

CYNTHIA CARR: Wow.

JOY EPISALLA: —and I was very close to her anyway. I did a lot of work with those photographs.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, I see.

JOY EPISALLA: And the work that I was doing, I was already making photographs, and I was doing this rephotographing. So it was—which still is in my work, kind of an archaeological dig, right? The trace of what's left behind.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: So in some of these, I would investigate the moment of touch. Where there are these like beautiful clothes, and this is 1915. These photographs are from 1915 through like 1920, maybe. They're on these steps, and their toes are touching, or their hands are touching, or, you know. So that was the work I was doing during that time.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, I see. Yeah. And—

JOY EPISALLA: And you know, I think the work—what was interesting is where that work had people in it, my work started to have no people in it. And I was basically talking about absence and presence. So in anything from [say 1998-'99 -JE]—I did these pillow pieces that were color photographs that I had printed myself that were very large. One of them was 15 feet long by 4 feet tall, and it was done in three sections. And so part of the image of these two pillows laying on each other repeated itself, where one panel would [overlap the next -JE]—almost how film repeats itself. The frame, the frame, the frame. Or if you're looking at old film, sometimes it spurs together, and things run into each other, and—that, to me, was about memory. So in this pillow [piece -JE], one of the pillows is—they're really big, and they feel very sculptural. They sit on the floor and they lean against the wall. And they're very heavy, and one of them has all these stains on it, and the other one is not as stained, let's say. And so what were they about? They were about a kind of memory. What happened, you know what I mean? Like, the traces again—[the stains -JE]—was it sickness? Was it sex? Was it drooling? Was it sleep? Was it this dreamy—they're very dreamy. And they were shot with 35-millimeter, very fast film. And that was on purpose, because I wanted the images to be very grainy. So from far away, you see these big pillow images, and they look like they're floating, and they're very sculptural. But as you get closer—I printed them on color paper, it's called Fujiflex. It's a really beautiful paper that has a pearlescence to it. And so when you got really close to the images, you would see almost like a dot pattern of the color—you know, if they were a pale green, once you got close to it, it almost fell apart into its essence or into its dust. Right? So that was part of the—so I did a whole—I work serially, so certain things have been repeated all the way along.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

JOY EPISALLA: I'd been doing these curtain images, and [the idea of the -JE] curtain image was definitely from being in the hospital and being with someone in the hospital, and you had a curtain between you and the person in the next bed, and that was supposed to be a barrier but in fact it was this porous barrier where you could hear what was going on on the other side.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And it also became for me in my brain, as if I had all these curtains, and some of them you keep closed because you don't want to go there anymore, because it's too painful or whatever that reason is. And some of them are slightly open, and—so it became this space for me. And the curtain images—the first time I showed them, which was at Debs and Co—I think in '98—I had other shows. I had this show, and I think that—well, anyway. Those images, yeah, they were black and white. They were big black-and-white photographs that I—we had made a darkroom in—a friend of ours was living with us here in the garden apartment. David Nelson. And he was also a very interesting artist. And so we had set up this darkroom in his—what was his studio, where we would expose—I was making these huge prints. They were, I don't know, seven feet tall by 44 inches wide, and very long exposures. And they were these curtain images. And so in the curtain image, either there was a centered dark line where they just met, and so—again, it was like—you're on one side, and something's on the other side. So this place where you pass through, or not.

So yeah. [For a long time -JE,] all the images, none of them had people in it. You had a sense of people. And then around that same time, I started shooting the TV series, which was what was just in Greater New York, and those—the first one I shot was in '98, actually, in Naples. And what they were were reflections in the TV off. So it was the TV reflecting the room. And I would always shoot it as I was going to leave, when I was going to depart—places I stayed, so like hotel rooms, or whatever, Airbnb, I don't know, whatever it is. Now Airbnb. Then it was not, you know—what was it—you know, "pensione" or something. And I wouldn't stage anything. I never staged anything. In fact, even the pillows, they were just sitting in my sister-in-law's house. She was moving, and I saw them, and I shot them.

Everything I've always done that way. It's never been I've staged something. It's always been, I've come—I've found this image. And so with the TVs, they were—they would be the room used by me or me and Carrie, whatever. And it would be whatever was reflecting in the TV at that moment, and I would take the shot. And again, there were no people in it. It was just the room. But in that room, you have the trace of how many other people have stayed in that room. Right? Which has now been cleaned up, and you get it pristine, and then you use it, and then it, you know, it has this life, right?

And all these people's traces, and all this presence, and all this absence, and it's all happening in there. And here's the television, which is this thing which is usually putting its content in your lap, right, it's the—well, in my case, I was making the content. Right? So it's where the, you know, public and private is, you know, there's a movement between the two, right.

CYNTHIA CARR: And there would be—something would be reflected on the screen.

JOY EPISALLA: Well, it's like that one.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, yes. Ah, yes. So you see the room, it's like a mirror in a way.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. Right. It was using the blank surface of the TV off—

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: —as a—you know, mirror whatever, yeah—reflects the room.

CYNTHIA CARR: Well, the video of yours that I saw at Participant is like—to me it's like about time—

JOY EPISALLA: Absolutely.

CYNTHIA CARR: —because this camera's there, and you're watching this—the shops being set up on a street in Paris—

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. It's a market it.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, it's a market. And—

JOY EPISALLA: It's an aerial view of a market.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. So you see the things go up, it's all in real time.

JOY EPISALLA: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] It's all in real time, and it was—I'd been—I've done a couple of pieces like this, and I think of them as social sculptures, where something gets built and used and taken down again. And I'm really interested in this kind of very pedestrian level of things in a way.

And so in this case, I had been—I visited—Carrie and I had been visiting this friend of ours, Virginia Picchi, who's a psychoanalyst. And she's a very old friend. She used to live in New York, and now she lives in Paris. And Jean d'Arc, the plaza is right there, and that's also—this is what the market is called. And so I was saying to her, "Gosh I would really love to film the market, but from an aerial viewpoint."

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: So it becomes more like a drawing. Right? And a dance, in a sense because what you end up seeing is the—

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JOY EPISALLA: —beginning where you have the empty sidewalk and then the big truck comes, and the guys get off, and they start putting the poles in the ground in the holes, right?

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: Now, a whole other series—I have to say this—that I've been doing, were these portraits of people through their bookcases.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: And the first one I had done was of Frank Moore—the painter Frank Moore. Right after Frank had died of AIDS in 2002. And I had taken care of Frank. Frank and I were best friends and I was with Frank right up to the end. And so in putting things in order, I shot Frank's bookcases.

CYNTHIA CARR: I see, yeah. Yes.

JOY EPISALLA: And the way I printed them—they were larger than life size, so sort of like an Alice-in-Wonderland kind of thing.

CYNTHIA CARR: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

JOY EPISALLA: And they were [printed -JE] on a vinyl mesh [as a shade -JE]. So during the day, [because of the light coming through -JE] it would always be in front of windows, it would be kind of ghostly. But at night, it would become solid and you could read all the books. So I'm saying that for the reason of—at a certain point I wanted to shoot the *Complete Works of Freud*. Because I had noticed that in a number of different shrink's offices, each of them had them. There were never—the *Complete Works of Freud* was never on its own shelf, it was always like half of it here, and maybe half of it here. And so—they're actually dark blue books— but they have a very beautiful pale blue wrapper; almost looks like a Tiffany's box in color.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: And so some people have the wrappers on and some people have the wrappers off. So I started shooting them in different places. And Virginia knew these two psychoanalysts in Paris who had a set of these. And so they let me come and shoot their set of books. And the reason that this is specific for the piece that I shot of the market, is because it's them that ends up having their offices that I had visited before, they also live in that same building. And their apartment overlooked the market and it was the perfect site, and so through Virginia we contacted them and they said, "Sure." And I came over one day and explained my project to them and actually started filming that day—it was a video—[shot from -JD] their little terrace. And they gave me keys to their place.

But I had to come back the next morning at like four o'clock in the morning when they'd be sleeping. So the piece ended up being, basically, the day before when they set up [the market -JE,] the next morning when the vendors come in and set up their stalls and then you see the market in action, and then you see the market taken down, and, again, the empty sidewalk and the street cleaner comes through. And it's very beautiful. And it's all in black and white; it looks like an old French film.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And it's in three sections. So you have the beginning of the market the day before, you have the market going from early morning when it's dark until it's underway, and the last part, the market going and the market taken down. And you hear the real sound that's going on at the same time, right?

So it's all about slowing down. It's all about watching, you know, these little vignettes of things that happen, the drawing, the dance of the workers putting up the stalls and there's all these things going on.

And there's a voiceover—so every time I thought about and started to edit this piece, I always kept thinking about how—I was on the other side of the camera, what was happening there? And what the camera was taking in—what was in front of the camera? And so the piece ended up being about both sides of the camera. And so the narrative—the voiceover—is what happened with the psychoanalysts in their apartment through the whole time that I'm with them. Which was pretty—some of it was quite hilarious.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.]

JOY EPISALLA: Anyway, yeah. So—

CYNTHIA CARR: Well this is—it's sort of—all this sort of ties into what I've thought of as sort of my last question. Like when you really got back into just doing your work, you found that, you know, maybe you found that your approach had changed or your subject matter had changed, or—

JOY EPISALLA: Well, I think—

CYNTHIA CARR: —something had changed by going though.

JOY EPISALLA: —that the AIDS crisis had [made -JE] a huge dent in me, you know?

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And I think that I carry that with me. So I think that it definitely influenced my work. I wouldn't say that my work was specifically about [AIDS -JE], but I definitely think [it is in a conversation with my work -JE]—for sure.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And I think that, I think what's interesting now is that there are people in my work a little bit more, and that's interesting to me. And, actually, that started because—oh, I don't know—I mean, I'm just starting to look at things again in that way. So that's a little bit of a shift. But I think it's still about a kind of—the sense of being on both sides of something. So maybe where you have the curtain piece and you're talking about two spaces, well this, too, relates to those two spaces. And so does absence and presence, right?

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: Because they're, you know—so I think that, yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: I think it's had a real—

CYNTHIA CARR: So you mentioned the piece about people's bookcases, like Frank Moore. It just reminded me

that my oldest friend died a few years ago, and one thing I did was to photograph her bookcases.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: And her—all the arrangements she had made—the stuff that was on the bookcases—

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: —the things that were on various shelves. And I thought of it, "These are Susan's instillations."

JOY EPISALLA: Absolutely.

CYNTHIA CARR: You know, and so that reminded me of what you were doing with your work.

JOY EPISALLA: Exactly.

CYNTHIA CARR: And it's like something comes up with the death of someone.

JOY EPISALLA: Absolutely.

CYNTHIA CARR: And it's like all this stuff that they gathered and had their—

JOY EPISALLA: Touch.

CYNTHIA CARR: —it has meaning.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: It was chosen to put on the shelf for a reason. And so I'm taking a picture of it.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: So that's what you were doing there.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. And also the other thing that happened with that bookcase piece of Franks was that after 9/11, Frank and Carrie, and David Nelson, and myself, we went down to Ground Zero two days after. So on the 13th. And we went down the east side on bikes, and we left the bikes and then we walked in. Foolishly, none of us had masks on or anything.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: I actually think that's how Frank got—I mean—his health wasn't great, and I don't think it helped him.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right, yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: I mean because he dies in 2002, right?

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: Anyway, we went down there that day, and Frank, he got in. Like we got down to Church Street and we were walking towards [The World Trade Center -JE]—and you can see the trellis—[most of it hanging over -JE.] I mean it was just like—it looked like a nuclear disaster. It was unbelievable. And totally quiet and even though there were workers there—they were starting to clean up—anybody could have come down there then, because— you felt like you were little fives and you wanted to check out the land. Like, you know, what happened?

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

JOY EPISALLA: You could watch it on TV, but it had just happened right here. So how could you not see it with your own eyes? You know?

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah. Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: And he [Frank -JE]—we were walking towards it, and he was in front of me, and I was putting film in my camera, and we hadn't made a plan, like what we should have—if we somehow got separated, let's meet back here, kind of thing because it was dangerous down there. And so we're walking and he's in front of me and, you know, he's a big tall guy, and all of a sudden this cop just steps in front of me and [says -JE], "Where are you

going, young lady?" Kind of thing, and—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: —Frank kept walking, because they thought he was one of the workers.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: So he got all the way down to the pile where they were—with the buckets—

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: —and he photographed down there.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, wow.

JOY EPISALLA: And those photographs look a lot like Frank's work; the layers, and his work. And it was really fascinating. So—in fact, I just came across one, because he sent us one and it said, "To Carrie, you know, thank you for letting me borrow your bike." I just found it today, again.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: And—anyway, fast forward, Frank died on the 21st of April, 2002. And I was back at his house, and that's when I decided to shoot the bookcase. And I did it shelf by shelf. And then I put it all back together on the computer. In the order that it was.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: And he had two libraries. One was a personal library and then one was the art books. And there were crazy combinations, absolutely so Frank it was unbelievable, you know? "Gay Dharma," the Bible, and Home Depot catalog all together, you know?

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.] Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

JOY EPISALLA: Anyway, so I'm putting this thing [the bookcase -JE] together, right, because I've now—this piece ended up going to a show. I actually did a whole show that was about Frank, in a way.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: I mean there was a picture of these two towels in his bathroom hanging on hooks. You know— just things that were—anyway, I'm putting together the bookcase and we hadn't been able to find the photographs from 9/11 anywhere.

CYNTHIA CARR: His photographs.

JOY EPISALLA: No.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right. Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: So I'm putting together [the bookcase piece on the computer -JE] and I'm looking at these [segments of shelf images -JE]—you know, because I'm really looking closely—and I see an envelope. I think, "What's that envelope?"

CYNTHIA CARR: On the bookcase?

JOY EPISALLA: On the bookcase in my picture, right?

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: So when I go back to Frank's, I go to the bookcase, and sure enough there's the envelope with the pictures from 9/11.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh, boy. He had developed them all—

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: —or just negatives, or—?

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah. No, no. They were just like little [six-by-four's -JE], you know, color prints.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: But, that was kind of—you know what I mean?

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: Like he was talking to me somehow, you know—

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: And the last book that I borrowed from him was also right there on the shelf.

CYNTHIA CARR: Oh.

JOY EPISALLA: Like I recognized it so it was like I had given it back and he had put it there.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: It was just this very interesting—

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] Right.

JOY EPISALLA: Yeah, yeah.

CYNTHIA CARR: [Laughs.] But, yeah, okay.

JOY EPISALLA: So, yeah, I mean, you know, it's been a—it's a—I don't know—mixed bag there in the beginning. I mean what can you say? It's just what one's life is and how you decide to move through it and pay attention and — live.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah. Yes.

JOY EPISALLA: You know, we're the witnesses, right?

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

JOY EPISALLA: In that whole time and, you know, and then you're trying to live your life.

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: Right, you're trying to live your life. And you're also—you feel some responsibility in some case to do it the best you can.

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: Because they didn't get to do it—

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: —you know, right?

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: So you want to—and so I think that was the other thing about really putting my energy into my own work and really wanting to push that.

CYNTHIA CARR: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

JOY EPISALLA: I think that's an important thing. It's also important to have, you know, a studio practice and to have this place where you go, and place where you think, and—

CYNTHIA CARR: Right.

JOY EPISALLA: —where you discover things, and where you push things, and, you know?

CYNTHIA CARR: Yeah.

JOY EPISALLA: So—

CYNTHIA CARR: Yes. Okay.

JOY EPISALLA: Okay.

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[END OF INTERVIEW]