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Oral history interview with Frank Holliday,  
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# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Frank Holliday on January 24 and 26, 2017. The interview took place in Brooklyn, New York at Holliday's studio and was conducted by Theodore Kerr 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.

Frank Holliday has reviewed the transcript. His 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

THEODORE KERR: This is Theodore Kerr, interviewing Frank Holliday at his studio in Brooklyn, New York, on January 24, 2017 for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, card number one.

Good morning, Frank.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Good morning.

THEODORE KERR: Let's start with, what is your first—or your earliest memory?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: My earliest memory is my Grandmother Holliday's garden, and looking at flowers in North Carolina. She had a beautiful garden. She was old-school. She had her garden, and—it was like a Garden of Eden, and Dogwood Trees.

THEODORE KERR: Did you live with her?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No, but I spent a lot of time with her. Annie Robertson Holliday.

THEODORE KERR: That's amazing.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: She was my escape. She let me be who I am. And she really encouraged—you know, she would—when I would sleep there, she would wake me up, and there would be certain flowers that would bloom at midnight, and she would wake me up and take me out in the dark and say, "Look, it's blooming!" You know, it was the color, and—peonies, and—I just remember it all being all around—and purple ice. She was, like, very Depression, and—she was, you know, like, poor. She was a seamstress. And her husband worked on the railroad, and so, in order—the treats that she would give us, she would put Kool-Aid in ice trays and wrap it—give us an ice cube, and then we would wrap a paper towel around it. I'm just remembering the purple color being [soaked -FH] into that, and purple all over me. So, that was my first memory, was really of her.

THEODORE KERR: How old do you think you are in these memories?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I think I'm probably, like, three. Three or four. I mean, I was just—I have vivid memories of her, and that—because she died in 1964, so I was, like seven. [... -FH].

THEODORE KERR: Did she live far from where you lived?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No, she lived—she lived, like, maybe a mile away. My father came back from the war and built her a home, her and the [husband -FH] a home. And she made it her palace, and it was my—my escape.

THEODORE KERR: What was your home life like?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: My home life was—I grew up in suburbia. New suburbia. My father was from the poor side, my mother was, like, Liz Taylor, debutante kind of, and they married, and they moved to this new neighborhood. My father was back from the war. He was a self-made man, and so I grew up in the American dream. You know, yellow house with the red door with nice plants out front, and inside was another story. I mean, it was—we were the deconstruction of the American dream. [Laughs.] But, we weren't poor. We were—my father had a factory, and he was an industrialist. This very Eugene O'Neill, you know, like he was an industrialist coming back and going to make it, and my mother was the beautiful Liz Taylor, you know—that was her model. She thought she was Liz Taylor.

THEODORE KERR: Did your dad talk about the war?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: He didn't talk about it that much. It was something—it was kind of—he was in the Signal Corps, so he wasn't in battle. His part—what he says is—they would do decoys, so that the Germans would think that they were going in a different direction, and so he was, like blowing up fake tanks and making it look—and so, you know, he was like, I think a captain or something. But he was very hard core, stern, strong, and very aggressive.

THEODORE KERR: Was he home a lot?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Was he home a lot?

THEODORE KERR: Yes.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Just at night. He didn't—he stayed with us, but he was—he was very—I mean, he had a different relationship with each of my siblings, and with me, I was the boy, so there was a weird relationship there.

THEODORE KERR: Who are your siblings?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Lynn Holliday. She's six years older than me. And Holly Holliday. [Laughs.] Who is 11 years younger than me. So, we were all like only children. My—

THEODORE KERR: Same parents?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah. Same parents. Yeah. Same parents. Holly was born as a surprise, late in life, like 42 or something, and my older sister was, you know, she was six years [older], so she was always the American Barbie doll. She was the one that had the convertible car and the blond surfer boyfriend with, you know, on the beach, with the two-piece bikini, and then—so she saw it through, like, the hippie era, and I was just the little crazy, creative American boy nightmare that Daddy did not—[laughs]—you know, I wasn't, like, sports. But, actually, my father didn't like sports. He thought sports were for those stupid people. He was not a sports guy. He was—he was interesting man. He fought the war. He ended up living in Paris playing in bands, and he—

THEODORE KERR: Instrument?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I think some brass instrument or something. Was big band stuff after the war. And he lived with a woman, and then he came home, and it was time to get married, so he met my mother, married, and it happened. And, yeah, my older sister went through, like, '60s, you know, falls and makeup mirrors and all of that stuff, and through the hippiness. And then, I was like, you know, painting and drawing, and fantasy world, and playing, and my mother was funny. We just laughed and had a good time all the time.

THEODORE KERR: What kind of funny was your mom?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: She liked to play, and she liked to drink. And she liked to play, and she liked to have fun. Like, you know, go on an adventure and do something, or just make fun, or go into, like, this—she liked to play. She was a good playmate. And she was a bad girl. I mean, it was all about getting in trouble, and let's do something we're not supposed to. She loved to always, "Oh, let's get into trouble."

THEODORE KERR: Did she smoke?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: She did smoke. My father smoked too.

THEODORE KERR: Was your mom glamorous?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yes.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: She—Liz Taylor. She was very glamorous. She was beautiful. She still is. She has Alzheimer's now. [She passed in March 2017, not long after the interview -FH]. But she, you know—the 14-inch waist with the huge breasts. I mean, she was the seventh child. Her mother's name was Bertha. Boone. Bertha Boone, and Daniel Boone is right on our line. And my mother's name is Bertha, so her name was Bertha Ruth Anthony, and so her parents got all of her sweaters monogrammed with B.R.A. on it. [Laughs]. And she had huge tits, so—[laughs]—when she—you know, she was—the little waist and big, you know, she was beautiful, and glamorous and sexy, and she always tells that story of having to go to high school, and everybody called her, "Bra."

[They laugh.]

THEODORE KERR: No wonder she was a bad girl.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Oh, she was great.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: She was so fun.

THEODORE KERR: That sounds amazing. And did you all have a good relationship with her? Like, all you kids?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I did. I did. I did. We were very much the same. I mean, we came down the same path.

THEODORE KERR: Was she an artist?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No, she was a—I'm saying "um" a lot—she was—it's kind of hard to talk about this. She was a housewife. She was the perfect housewife. And she had all of those—she obeyed her husband, and it was violent. And it was—it was violent. I mean, in the way that '50s relationships were violent with men and women. Yeah. And she—God, this is hard to talk about, because I don't want to really expose—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —too much. You know, she had a little drinking problem, and it got progressive. And my father got—you know, it turned into turbulence. And then they had this little son that was, like, tap dancing and painting and playing with Barbie and Ken. They didn't know what the hell to do. Then the '60s hit them. So, there were many periods through—the relationships were good and bad and tumultuous, but my parents were both very strong, and I had a very strong personality. So, we were all very enmeshed and involved with each other.

But during that period, there was so much social change that was going on, and so many ideals that were—that were taking place. I mean, I remember we had the first color TV in the neighborhood. I remember Kennedy being shot. I think that was on black and white. I remember that day, and I remember coming home, and when Ruby shot, my father, and—I saw everything just change and happen. You know, and the sexual attitudes changed, and political attitudes changed, you know. The Beatles happened, and everything—Elvis Presley, and—my parents were great jitterbuggers and dancers. So, we always danced.

THEODORE KERR: In the home?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: In the home. And we would dance. And they taught me how to dance. And, you know, big bands, and then I remember twisting. We even were twisting to Chubby Checker, big—I mean, we were very—they loved their cocktails and to dance. They were the people that, you know, at their—when they danced, people would stop, and they would be in the middle of the circle. They were very, very, very good. So, that was always encouraged. My parents always encouraged me to paint and draw. My mother, I was thinking about this the other day, she always said, "He's very good with his hands." And I've learned that my middle name was Trouble. Because if you didn't keep me busy, I was into something, and I was finding out about something, and I was causing and destroying something. That was just my nature. So, they very soon learned that keeping me drawing and painting and making stuff was the way to keep me, you know, from pushing or jumping out of an airplane, or catching something on fire, or you know, like, "How does this work?" So, I'm lucky that way.

THEODORE KERR: And so drawing was what your mom would kind of steer you towards?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Crayons. Paint. Making stuff. Whittling, sculpting. Yeah. Painting. I remember painting all the time, and, you know, she had some very sad moments where she would be on the couch, and I just remember drawing, and that—how I would make her feel better. Like, "Look, Mommy!" And she's like, "Oh, it's beautiful." Anyway, she would be, like, all [battered -FH]. So, I learned that there was a healing part of art, and that, that's something that I could make somebody feel better with.

THEODORE KERR: And from a young age, it sounds like.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Very, very young age. So, I would go to my grandmother's to escape the '60s madness, you know. Because she was a little lady, and she was very creative and a great cook, and she loved beauty, and she let me be Frank that liked to, you know, play with lace and run around and look at flowers and look at color, and, "Oh, look at the bird!" You know, she—I remember she had a pink satin couch. And I remember sitting on it, like, with my feet dangling, not even reaching the floor, and her, like showing me an encyclopedia of an extinct bird. The DoDo bird. That was a really young memory. But I remember sitting on that couch and learning Bible verses and just being able—I felt comfortable. I felt safe there.

THEODORE KERR: It sounds so beautiful.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was beautiful. And she was beautiful woman, and my grandfather sat there with a pipe. I had really no relationship with him. But my grandmother loved me. She was safe.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. Did you have words or ideas about how you—how did you understand yourself when you were a kid?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I was—I want to say that I was very free. And I was very open and exploratory, and I loved to laugh, and I was funny, and I had friends, but there was another part of—but then the social ideas of what it was to be a boy or a man started sinking in. I'm starting—before I started going to school and I started feeling—then I kind of got fat. The eating, you know, '60s eating, and, like, the school system really started telling me that I was very different and that I wasn't like the other boys. And I liked painting, and dancing, and laughing, and drama, and you know, all that kind of stuff, so I was fine until, all of a sudden, they told me I wasn't.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Right. And that was kind of like the family. We looked very—from the outside, we looked really good. On the inside, we were falling apart, because we were not—I mean, I have compassion for my parents. It's like, "Oh, the American dream. Oh, my God, we got him," [laughs] and that wasn't in the plan. I mean, we loved each other in the end, and all through it, they were supportive. But I think that, you know, that was—they were just trying to figure out how to—it wasn't going as planned.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And did you—did they bring it up with you, or did you have to bring it up with them, like, your difference? Are we talking about sexuality here, or are we talking about something even bigger than sexuality?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Bigger. Bigger.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, I—I mean, I think my father went to my grave, like, "No, Dad, I'm gay!" "No, you're not." "I'm gay." "No, you're not." [Laughs.] You know, he didn't want to go there. My mother, once she got over it, she was—but that was later. In their mind, I always had girlfriends [... -FH]. I always had the—you know, I wasn't, like, effeminate.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But I liked gay things. But I wasn't, like, super-masculine. I mean, I learned how to try to become super-masculine in order to protect myself. And it's taken me a long—you know, it's taken a long time to be free, to be okay with being free, and that you're not going to get punished. But in the beginning, I was very free and open and—yeah. But things changed.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, and in school, did you kind of feel, like, you were, like, you had, like, your inside life and then the outside life that you had to lead, or—how did you deal with school?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, school—the teachers—I was also dyslexic, and so I had a really hard time. They thought I had a speech problem and I had a hard time learning to read and to retain, and it was dyslexia. But back then, they didn't know it, so—and plus, the home life was deteriorating. And my grandmother died at, like, [1964 -FH], and so things shifted. And in school, I was smart, but I couldn't read. I was like the top of the class in science and math. I was the bottom of the class in like English and reading. So, I had to take speech and learn how to read, and they made me read in front of people. But, I had art. And I basically got through school doing bulletin boards and doing all the painting stuff for the teachers. They kept me in the back room busy painting, making. So, I learned, like, through research and through making visuals for the teachers and the school. And, I mean, they figured it out too, because if I were there, and I was like bored, I would get into trouble. I was talking or misbehaving, or throwing—you know, I was disrupting. I would get very bored very, very easily. So visually, that's how making stuff and—that's how I got through school.

THEODORE KERR: Even up until high school, or—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: High school's another story.

THEODORE KERR: Okay.

[They laugh.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Things start—you know, things changed. This is, like, elementary school. And then in, like, junior high school, you know, I didn't fit in with the sports and the guys, so I went for political kind of stuff. I became a very political person. And in junior high school, you know, bussing and integration happened. I'm from Greensboro, North Carolina, which was at the place of the first sit-in: Woolworth's. [... -FH]. O'Henry was from there. Dolley Madison was from there, and the Woolworth sit-in. The race riots started there.

THEODORE KERR: With, like, the counter—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

THEODORE KERR: —where the students refused to—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: —not get up.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: That was where I grew up.

THEODORE KERR: Amazing.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Oh, yeah. Greensboro's known for two things: the sit-in and the KKK Communist shoot out in the '70s.

THEODORE KERR: Ooh.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And then here I am, "Want me to put on a show?" [Laughs.] So Greensboro was this place, and so in junior high, I started having the confusions with, like, religion, and the '60s started happening. Drugs and hippies, and I was like, "Oh my God, that looks cool." And I remember in ninth grade they had us do—tobacco, alcohol, and drugs, we had to do, like, a project on it. And everybody handed in, like, 100-page report. I did a book that was 580 pages. I got a little bit too into the research. I was like, "Wow! That can do that?" So,—[laughs]—that led me into, you know, drugs, and you know—you know, that life of—it was something interesting.

THEODORE KERR: Like, a school assignment—[laughs]—led to you experimenting with drugs?

[They laugh.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It did!

THEODORE KERR: Amazing.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It did. I was like, "Wow!" I mean, I would—"We got to watch this guy." You know? [Laughs.] It was literally a book, and I collaged, and I was really into, like, Peter Max, and, you know, the new music, and the psychedelics, and *Life* magazine reading about hippies and David Bowie. Well, that was a little later. But Jimi Hendrix, and—I mean, there were the cool kids—they were, like, the kids taking acid, and, like, you know, Vietnam, and the war, and that was interesting to me. I wasn't interested in being a football player or cheerleader. I became, I think the treasurer of the junior high school. And I did it by—you know, they had bussing, so they segregated a—segregated? No, they—

THEODORE KERR: Integrated?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Integrated us. And I was just loving it. Because, you know, it was like, "Ah, finally!" It's not, "I don't fit into this"—I don't want to say white society, but coming at that time, it was the white society and the black society. And I identified more with the black society. So, when they came, I had some freedom. It was like it unleashed freedom. I ran for and I used—you know, I was very controversial. And I think my campaign manager was black, and everybody on my team was black, and I got elected by basically embracing them, and I got my first art award—I did a print, and it had half of a black man's face and half of a white man's face, and then in gray, which I figured, mix black and white and you get gray, and it says, "Unite in world brotherhood." And that got a Gold Key Award. And what's funny is it was exhibited in the Weatherspoon Art Museum, which is a big museum. They have de Koonings, and it's very big. And you know, all these years later, they have two paintings of mine in there. It's like a funny kind of thing.

THEODORE KERR: Did they know that you won that award? Like, have you ever mentioned that?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah, I have. I have.

THEODORE KERR: That's great.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But that was like a big—that was my first show. [Laughs.] The Weatherspoon.

THEODORE KERR: First group show or was it solo?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: My first group show.

THEODORE KERR: Your first group show, okay.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But it was all, you know, like—it was all—it was social. Social. I mean, I was definitely involved in social movements—

THEODORE KERR: And this is junior high?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: This is junior high.

THEODORE KERR: And that's what got you through?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Drugs and social—being rebellious and being—starting to realize that I could be in—I could be rebellious, and I found the rebellious people much more interesting, but I was diplomatic in the way that I knew how to bring people together and bring different groups together. I was like a—I was friends with everybody. I was a politician, really.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I could draw, and I could—and I always had the most beautiful girlfriends and boyfriends.

THEODORE KERR: Were you already making out with dudes?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah. Yes.

THEODORE KERR: Because it was the '60s, or because you couldn't not, or actually it's hard to tell?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I was always very sexual, and I always—it was just very natural for me to have sex with guys.

THEODORE KERR: And so do you think there was a conflict? An internal—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Of course. It was very natural until all of a sudden, I think I read that—"101 Things You Always Wanted to Know About Sex \* But Were Afraid to Ask," and I think I read something in it about being gay was sick, or that sex with—I never knew—there was never a boundary. And for some reason, I always had sex with my friends. And it wasn't—it was very secretive.

THEODORE KERR: It was, or it wasn't?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was very secretive. Like it was something—but I look at it now and I think that I had sex with all of the guys to protect myself and to build a kind of a blackmail. I hate to say that, say it like that, but they would protect me. Because I was never a fighter, or—I mean I was, you know, "Don't hit me." And I—I don't know. I learned at a very early age that sex could be used as a commodity. And, you know, keeping your mouth shut and having sex and having girlfriends, and life went on.

THEODORE KERR: You really were a politician.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: [Laughs.] I was. I really was.

[They laugh.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I had to learn how to survive really quickly in my home and in my life. Because I was—this was Greensboro, North Carolina, and I was very much like I am today.

THEODORE KERR: Right, so there was no, like—the notion of the closet wasn't applying to you.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It never applied to me. But I was never, I don't know. For some reason, I pulled it off. Because they didn't know. I always had girlfriends, but I always had boyfriends. I was having sex with the girls and having sex with the guys. I mean, girls wouldn't go all the way, but guys would, so where do you think I'm going?

[They laugh.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You know?

THEODORE KERR: Gay by availability. [Laughs.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah.

[They laugh.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So, that was—you know, I had to keep the—well, the one thing I've learned is, you know, as like with movie stars, like, you either have to want to be them or fuck them. And that's the whole—

THEODORE KERR: [Cross talk.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, you know, being a public figure, you want people to either want to be you because you're so amazing and accomplishing things, or to fuck you because you're so beautiful and attractive, and they want to desire you because they desire you either spiritually, physically, or—what is that other thing?

THEODORE KERR: Spiritually, physically, emotionally?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like, not emotionally but more the way—

THEODORE KERR: Like culturally?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Culturally. You're a figure that they want to be. They respect you.

THEODORE KERR: Ah [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: They respect or—

THEODORE KERR: Like socially.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Socially.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I learned that very, very early.

THEODORE KERR: Huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: That that was a way to survive.

THEODORE KERR: And then earlier when I mentioned high school, you said that's a different story, so...

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, I—there was a school called North Carolina School of the Arts, and it was in Winston-Salem, and it was a conservatory. It was the first public high school, college, art conservatory in the United States. And it was state-supported. It was part of the University of North Carolina. And, there were only 600 people, and it was very exclusive to get in, and I got in. I went for the summer when I was 14 years old, and I went in acting and in stage design. They didn't have painting or anything, so I was like, "Okay, I'll do that." And then I could dance. So, they accepted me for the year as a ballet dancer. So, I left home at 14 to become a ballet dancer.

[They laugh.]

You know, it was like, out of nowhere. I never wanted to be a ballet dancer. But that summer, I was like, "Wow." And, you know, I became a ballet dancer, and I left home, and it was a good thing, because my whole group of people were becoming more and more into drugs and getting more and more into trouble, and everybody ended up in prison, just about. Not everybody, but—and so I went to this place. And there were people from all over the world, and it had drama, dance, music, theater, theater arts. I think that's it. But everybody was from New York and all over the world, and these, you know, were very professional people. Agnes de Mille. People that I would never have had contact with. And all of these misfits of kids that were into the arts, ended up going there and we lived there.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And we had our academics, and we had 10 art classes a week, and academics so we could get through high school. And we all lived there, and it was an amazing, amazing experience. I met—everybody was beautiful and talented. And, you know, you had to audition. You had to—it was heavy. I mean, it was really heavy-duty.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, how did you get there? How did you know about it?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It opened in 1968, and I went in '72. And I think I read—I started winning awards, and I think one of my teachers said, "You should look at this place." And I remember sending away for the catalog, and I got it. It was this beautiful catalog and it was full of all these, like, weird hippie people and you know, it was like, "Oh my God, this exists." Because there was a—society wasn't—in Greensboro, North Carolina, it wasn't going towards being an artist. This was like this special—it was utopia, for me. I was like, "Oh my God, there are other people out there, dancing!" You know, and it became—I mean, I went to school with Randy Jones of the Village People.



THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.] The cowboy?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: The cowboy.

THEODORE KERR: Oh, wow.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah. I mean, that's who I met. I met him there. We're still friends. But that was the kind of people that were there. Tommy Hulce, who played Mozart in *Amadeus*, and, you know, great ballet—it was amazing. It was amazing. It was just an amazing experience, and you know, we were all making art and taking drugs and experimenting, and it was high school and college.

THEODORE KERR: So how many years were you there?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I was there three years. My high school years.

THEODORE KERR: Okay, and then did you do college there as well, or—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No. In, I guess, my second year of—I moved to New York, to Joffrey Ballet and School of American Ballet, Juilliard, they recruited all of us. And I was one of the people they recruited, and they brought us up here, and we studied dance. And you know, I took class. I was being prepped for being, you know, Juilliard and New York City Ballet. All my friends ended up in New York City Ballet.

So, I came up and did that, but then my friend Andy—Andy Rees, who was also a dancer—he gave me LSD one day and took me to MoMA. I skipped all my classes that day and we went to Museum of Modern Art. And I had never seen modern art. It was not something that—I mean, van Gogh, that was one of the first memories I had as a kid, is stealing \$20 from my father's wallet and I sent off from an ad in the back of a *Life* Magazine, and I got back a van Gogh book. And I copied all of his paintings in pastels. That must have been seven years old. Six or seven years old. I was obsessed. So, that was the only artist I'd ever seen. And then he took me to MoMA on LSD, and I saw all of—I didn't see it as, like, this was—there was no historical lineage to it. It was all of modern art happened that day for me. So, my work has always been different periods and everything kind of mashed together. And I quit dancing the next day, and I said, "No, I went to the MoMA, and I knew that's what I had to do."

THEODORE KERR: So while you were at the conservatory, you, like switched—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I switched my last year. I switched. I dropped out, and I knew I had to paint. And so, I went into the painting department. The art department. And—which was very controversial. Because I was a really talented dancer. And they were like—it was scandalous.

THEODORE KERR: So they thought you were making a mistake.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Of course. Because I was really good.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I just was very talented. But I knew that—I just felt that this is what I was supposed to do.

THEODORE KERR: Do you remember how you felt dancing?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yes. Yes, I do. Well, dancing was very disciplined, and it was very torturous, and it was very abusive. You know, "We'll send you back to the potato field if you were in Russia," and "More!" And it was incredibly disciplined, and incredibly brutal. And you were under a microscope. Your little—I mean, so there was that whole self-critical, you were looking in the mirror all the time. So, it was like this incredible critique that you were—every second, you were being critiqued by your body or your differences, or the sameness, or—but there was some—like, when you got it, and you started dancing, and it started happening, there was a feeling of freedom. It was freedom that you felt. But it took a lot of work to get to that freedom. It took discipline and it was—you felt it. You felt it. I feel that in my work sometimes, and that's what my work is about, is this freedom that opens up.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But you have to push it to where it, like—and you're flying.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, so how would you compare the experience of dancing to the experience of painting?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: They're both the same spiritual release, but learning how to translate something physical into something illusional with painting, that was a translation that took a long time. Painting took a lot longer

because there's so much more for me to learn. You have to learn color and form and this and that. You have to go through this whole list of stuff before it becomes—well, in dance, it's like a body memory. Like, at some point you're not thinking about how you're doing a turn, or you're doing a jump, you're just doing it. Your body remembers, and it just does it. And painting, it takes a lot longer to get all the orchestra tuned and playing together to where it's not about the technique. It becomes about, like, the expression of it. And that took me 30 years to get it. Because it was—painting was always torturous. It was always very torturous for me. It was never freeing.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Maybe I wasn't that good at it. Or I wasn't—it didn't—

THEODORE KERR: It didn't come naturally.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was—I was very serious about it.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So, it's been a slower journey. Now I'm having the time of my life, because I can make the paintings that—technically I can make them without thinking about it, and I reach for—the palette's developed, my impulse—but you know what linked the two? I'd studied acting with Bill Esper.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I went, you know, I went to his program for two years. And it showed me how to make something alive. Like, connect it. It took the words out of the painting, and it made—so I started making something visual, not about words. Not about ideas, but my body and—visual. It became visual. And that was a hard thing, is—when are the words and visual, and when are you expressing, and when did they get mixed up, and when aren't you communicating? So, acting taught me how to speak it out, connect emotionally. And then I started treating the painting as a scene partner. Like I'd do something to it, and then it changes me. And it tells me what to do, and it becomes, like, this alive process.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like in an acting situation, with a good partner. So, it's been a process to kind of, like, make it all come together and be about freedom again.

THEODORE KERR: And once you switched to painting, did people come around and go, "Okay, yeah, you made a good choice for you?"

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No. Not until—no.

THEODORE KERR: Not in school.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Not in that school. I mean, I had talent, but they couldn't understand why I would give up dancing, which I was—you know, the world was saying, "Here. Here. Here." And I'm just like, "Yeah, but, you know." You do get good legs out of it, but, you know, I was always a painter though. I mean, really. But I picked dance, but painting was what I did.

THEODORE KERR: And had you been painting and drawing while you were dancing?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Absolutely.

THEODORE KERR: Ah [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: So it wasn't a switch, really. It was just like you put on notice to the school.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, one thing I learned in dance was you have to spend a lot of time at it. So, I would, like, you know, smoke a joint, and draw, like, some eyeballs, and then take dance class, but you know, you put a lot of time in it. So, no, it was what I felt in my soul and in my heart. That's what I was supposed to do. I mean, that is what I did.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Although I've been very multi-disciplined and allowed myself to do acting and do movies and

be a dancer and do performance and do film and do video and do painting, and this kind of painting and that kind of painting, I let myself be free to go where I need to go. Like, I'm very anti-kind-of-academic that way. You know, I've made figurative paintings, I've made abstract paintings, I've made sculpture. You know, I've done all of it. I've allowed myself to do all of it. Now, marketing has been a nightmare, but now that I've been doing it 40 years, it's not. It's all come together. It's all come together now.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But for a long time, it was separate. But I allowed myself to do everything even though you were supposed to specialize, specialize, specialize. I allow myself to do everything. And, unfortunately, people look at that as not professional or not serious, or—but you know, in the long run, I let myself explore all these years, and I lived to be able to at least reap some of the rewards and have some of the freedom that I felt in dancing.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Or that I felt in, like, in a movie, where you're making a movie and everything is just coming naturally, and you're responding, it's, like, flowing.

THEODORE KERR: After the conservatory, where did you go? What did you do?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I moved to San Francisco. 1975. I heard there were some gay people there.

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.] Literally.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Literally.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I also wanted to get as far away from North Carolina School of the Arts, because you know, the drugs, I was—it was getting too much. So, right. So, moved to San Francisco to get away from drugs.

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And it's—no, I moved there because I heard there were gay people. I wanted to—San Francisco. I went to the Art Institute for, like, one week.

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But I went down Market Street, and I knew Castro Street. But I took a right instead of a left on Castro Street and wound up on the hill, like on Henry Street in an apartment. When we drove out there, I had really long hair. And I was like, "Wow." You know, "Give me some turquoise, man." But, I lived on Castro Street. And I was 18. And I lived—and I was taking a lot of photographs, and I lived right next door to Harvey Milk.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And it was before—he was still losing elections and his camera store, and I became friends with him. And I was 18 years old, and I was beautiful. I was a dancer, I was beautiful. And sometimes I think, like, "What? 18 years old on Castro Street? What are you thinking? I guess you weren't thinking, that's the point."

THEODORE KERR: What do you mean, what were you thinking? Like, in terms of [Cross talk.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Teaching people [at that -FH] age, I kind of think—I look at them, and I'm like, "You're 18," and, like, what I was doing when I was 18 and I was on my own, and I was like working as a busboy, and that gay movement was just happening all around me. It was pre-AIDS. It was, you know, Harvey Milk, and hang out with them, and going to—getting him—you know, like, and the hippies, and then being a young guy. I was 18, but, like, around all of these, like—it was the clones and the super-masculine kind of, you know, gay male. There were the clones, and then there were—there was me, and I had long hair, and you know. So, then there were the hippie gays.

What was amazing about it was that there were hippie gays, and there were people that were into rock and roll, and I was into rock and roll, and I found The Stud, which was kind of like a transvestite rock and roll, straight, gay bar where it wasn't disco, and it wasn't clone. It was all people. And I found, like, a lot of artists. And I found, like, filmmakers and artists and musicians and counter-culture, and—you know, because I went out there looking for the counter-culture, and it wasn't there. But it had turned into the gay movement. And so, I was, like, swept into the whole gay movement of—and I led, I think the '76 gay march with the flag, carrying the flag in the front of the parade. I have a funny story. We were waiting for it, and someone handed me a flag and said, "Go! Lead

the parade! Lead!" And I, like—[laughs]—ran down the street with the flag, and everybody was like—and then I turn around and the parade—[laughs]—had gone a different way.

[They laugh.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And so, I had to kind of walk back up with the flag and catch—[laughs]—

THEODORE KERR: And get back to the front?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —and get back to the front of the parade.

[They laugh.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I, like, ran in the wrong direction, leading the parade! But yeah. I mean, it was a movement. And it was a movement. It was a political movement, and at that point, I went to the San Francisco Art Institute, and I went to the museum there and I saw all the Clyfford Stills, and I saw my first John Waters film on acid at midnight on Elizabeth Street, or Noe Street, and that changed my life. And there was a whole counter-culture going on. And it was utopian, because there was no, you know—there was no—there wasn't AIDS. It was pre-AIDS.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah, and it was enmeshed in the sexuality that included you.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah. And I was good at it. [Laughs.] It was like, I just—I always thought I was just kind of like Forrest Gump-ish, and like, he was like, you know, he was meeting—you know, he never really tried to do anything, he was just always in the center of the vortex. And that's, like, in San Francisco, living next door to, you know, Harvey Milk, and it was like, just—things just kept serendipitously happening in my life, and I was very right on the edge of my generation, the elite of my generation. And, and it was—I mean, I was also learning how to be a man, and I was a boy, and I wasn't a macho man. I was, you know, a willowy dancer, and things were forming, and so became more of the artist. And it was different. Like, I was gay and I was an artist and I was an activist and an artist and rock and roll, and so it was kind of confusing, because it was starting to skew off again. And I ended up, you know, like moving in with—literally next door to the camera shop with a guy who—a Marine who had just come back from the Vietnam War. Steve Wick.

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Who was an amazing man, and I will always love him. He was much older, but he was a good man. And, yeah. So—and he was like the door person at The Stud, and you had to be 21. You had to be 21 years old to get in, and so in order for me to get in The Stud, I moved in with the doorman. [Laughs.] We have to survive.

THEODORE KERR: Commitment.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Right?

THEODORE KERR: Do you remember stories about Harvey Milk that you want to share?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, I met him because I would go and buy, you know, my photo supplies. And I would walk in and he would just become so intrigued with me. And he would always follow me out, and like, onto the street, and talk, and I would—I remember—I mean, we would eat, and he was funny, and he was very sweet. And he found me, you know. He found me. [Laughs.]

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And it was the '70s, and everybody slept with everybody.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And it wasn't—it was just what you did. It wasn't about—it was about being gay and being free. It wasn't about getting, you know, we all had our boyfriends, but everybody was fucking around. And what can I say?

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Being gay was about being sexually free. So, I mean, that was something you had to learn. You had to learn how to be sexually free and not get attached to people and have casual sex and still live in a community, because it still was a small thing. You would still see them. And I can just remember running into him in New York, and he would always invite me to his, like, parties for elections and dinners and—you know, I

mean, what can I say?

THEODORE KERR: Did you ever sense that he was doing good stuff? Did you believe in him in that way?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: He was great. Because he was always organizing, and he made me aware of what it was to be gay, like there was a gay movement, and he made me aware that we didn't have rights, and that we did have fighting to do, and that we were being—I mean all of this, learning all of this injustice. I was just gay and free. I didn't know, you know. And then, all of a sudden, you were like, "Wow!" And as the gay culture was forming, he was one of the people that were just starting to define it and starting to organize. Yeah, we all—it's a sexual movement, but we are humans, and taking it out of just a social thing into a more political, or not political, but human rights. And I mean, most of us were so drunk and stoned that we were avoiding—it was a kind of a way to mask and let us be open, you know, sexually.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And it was strange. He—you know, as any society does, it starts breaking off into, you know, they're the clones, they're the this one, they're the this one, it becomes fractured. And somehow, Harvey kept us all together somehow other than just having sex with each other.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And that was important for us, because it was, you know, it was getting—it was just, you know, out of control. We were all—

THEODORE KERR: The fracturing, or the sex?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Everything.

THEODORE KERR: Everything.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Because it was undefined.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was undefined, but you know—it was undefined, but, yet it was starting to fracture. You know, you could see—what do they say, like, groups can only handle, like, 75 people before they split—

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —into two groups. So, I mean, things were starting—you know, and then the lesbians were starting to fracture, and he kind of brought all people together.

THEODORE KERR: What was the role of women in your life? During this time.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Oh, during this time. I was—I had a girlfriend, Vola. My best friend, Lori Nichols. My friend Kathy Dumas. I had girlfriends. I was sleeping—but they all were, you know, except for Cathy—well, they ended up being lesbians. I ended up being, like, the last guy they ever slept with.

[They laugh.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You know. But we kind of, you know—we experimented, and then, you know, and then I became more gay, I guess. I mean, it's so weird. I was sleeping with women in San Francisco.

THEODORE KERR: In the '70s.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: In the '70s.

THEODORE KERR: Did you know the word queer?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It hadn't been co-opted yet.

THEODORE KERR: That wasn't a word that was—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was gay.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It hadn't been co-opted, and that really wasn't co-opted until the queer—what's the queer group? Until AIDS and we started doing activism around AIDS.

THEODORE KERR: Queer Nation.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Queer Nation.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: When we co-opted that to make it a good thing, like, you know, the Pussy—the Pussy March, you know, they co-opted that word—

THEODORE KERR: Right.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —and now made a bad word into, like, "No, this is a powerful word."

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: The inversion of language.

THEODORE KERR: But how did you relate to the word gay? Because just now, I'm kind of—you hesitated before you said the word gay, because maybe it didn't quite fit, or—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I was still homophobic. I was still—I had to deal with my homophobia. My ingrained homophobia and shame about being a gay man. I had a hard time saying that that was okay.

THEODORE KERR: How did that manifest?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Later. Later.

THEODORE KERR: Like, after San Francisco?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yes, much later. Yeah. I think not until, like, the '90s.

THEODORE KERR: Huh.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Really. I mean, I had to go through—because I always was girls and boys, and girls and boys, and you know. And I still had masculine ideas to hide behind and constructions of my personality in order to survive. I mean, I learned that—I don't know. I was never really discriminated against, but I think I discriminated against myself. I think—I don't know what I think. Water break.

THEODORE KERR: Water break.

[They laugh.]

THEODORE KERR: Did you have boyfriends at the same time as you were having girlfriends, or—yet?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Oh yeah, I was like a total dog.

THEODORE KERR: But would you have relationships with the boys as well? The men?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Kind of, but no. It was more sexual.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was more sexual. There was a split. I had more sexual relationships with men, and more emotional relationships with women.

THEODORE KERR: And what about tenderness?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: There was not a lot of tenderness. Maybe with women, emotionally. With men, no. With men, it was pretty brutal.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative]. Even with, like, when you said Steve, a tenderness kind of went across your face.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: In the end—there was tenderness. But I didn't trust tenderness. Like, I was a tough boy, and I

was constantly guarding my heart and protecting myself, and so I became very tough. And the gay movement was not—that I was involved in, I always had very brutal, sexual relationships. I wouldn't even know how to say that. It wasn't about tenderness, it was about some—you know, I'm going to end up with—Steve was a Vietnam, you know, Marine. It's like—it was about passion, and it was about two men together, and it was, you know. And with women, I always felt like having sex with women was too feminine for me. Like, "Ewww. I'm having to be like"—you know, it was weird. And like men, but it was just—it became very brutal. You know, S and M and all of that kind of like the discovering of sexual roles was happening, and I was a pretty and beautiful kid and—

THEODORE KERR: And you were curious.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, I also wanted somebody to love me, and so, you know, I would do what needed to be done.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I was also an 18-year-old kid in San Francisco surviving—

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —with older men. You know, I had a hard time with my father, I mean my father never showed love to me. So, I was always trying to get—find somebody like "I love you," you know I was seeking love, but more acceptance.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Were you finding it?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No, moments of it. This is more inside of me.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, the internal development of myself.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And were you making it work at the time?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yes, I was, I was doing lots of film, lots of photography and lots of painting.

THEODORE KERR: Let's talk about the film for a while, like what did film work mean to you?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I made films of my friends being gay and sexual. My photographs were all very sexual. I didn't know Mapplethorpe, but ended up becoming aware of him. But I was photographing the underworld and, you know, my lesbian friends and the counter-culture and nudes and bodies and—I mean, it was very—and I didn't realize—and the films were—I remember doing something about rock stars and the rock star dinner and dead stars like Jim Morrison, and just all that adolescent shit. But it was all Super 8 and pornography stuff and, I mean, when I was in school I had to keep a diary. So, I kept a diary and I got it back from the teacher and the teacher said, "You need to seek professional advice." That was what I got. I dropped—I mean he was right.

[They laugh.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But, you know I was living my life—[laughs]—I had some problems, but I was working it out. But the film work, you know it was sexual it was leather, it was, you know, sexuality and, like, transvestites with, like, skirts on and, like, penises. I was photographing what I was doing, rock and roll, gender bashing, sex and drugs and rock and roll.

THEODORE KERR: Where were you filming it?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: In basements and where ever I could.

THEODORE KERR: And were you showing the work as art?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No, no it was—we would show it, but no, I wasn't showing, I was just filming and print it was more photography. And I, through school and after school, I just kept taking it and doing it.

THEODORE KERR: And do you have a lot of those photographs and film still?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Not very many

THEODORE KERR: Oh.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No, not very many at all, I have a couple.

THEODORE KERR: A couple of—?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well I lost everything. I lost bodies of work. I had somebody come into my studio and steal my whole body of work.

THEODORE KERR: I'm sorry.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I left a whole—all of my work in a storage unit and I went back, and it was gone

THEODORE KERR: Huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So, I have like chunks of all my early work is gone.

THEODORE KERR: Oh.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I have to—you know, it was not easy to—you know, I had to survive. It's like the art was just—the only stuff that survived is really the stuff that I gave away.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Or that I gave in someone else's possession because I was moving every five seconds. I was being evicted every five seconds, I mean I wasn't like a good boy [Laughs.] I was unmanageable and not responsible and I made art—I mean, when I was making art it wasn't a career. It wasn't a career choice, it wasn't really a "oh yeah let's go to school for art." That was not something you did and to make a living at it, for me it was the experience of doing it, like sex, like the experience of sex and now let's photograph having sex, or let's photograph getting the tattoo, and let's photograph like, you know, revolting. And let's, you know, let's make a film of this, let's make—and you know John Waters and that whole like era of that. But it wasn't about—it wasn't commercial for me.

THEODORE KERR: Right. So, there was no preservation in mind, there was no preciousness?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No, it was free and it was left and—things keep showing up. I mean, things like this show at MoMA, I mean, I'm having to find work from that period that I did, and the only place that I'm finding it are people that bought it or people that I gave it away to, one showed up on the internet and it's in Germany, and so they're going to bring that. But it's like everything else was lost, and so it's interesting, it's like I have this lost history out there. I mean, I worked for Warhol, like I worked for *Interview* and Warhol in the factory and, one day, he wanted to see my work so I took two paintings with me and the slides and I showed it to him. And he was like "ne, ne, ne." So, then I came home, I lost the slides and I walked in and during the day somebody broke in and stole all of my work, my whole body of work.

And I was—I had two paintings in my hand and I set it down, I started smoking a joint and I was on the phone, you know the phone still had a cord so you were like wrapping—you could only go so far and I was like "la, la, la" and just noticed all of my work was gone. So, the only paintings that I had were those two pieces and a piece that was in a show. That's just how it's been. I mean, now I have a preserved, like, all of this is work and there's work in North Carolina, that I—my mother, she had work. But it was kind of transient, it wasn't like today where you have a portfolio, and you have a website and you—a learning portfolio.

You know, that—it was—art was life, art was happening, art was living. My life was art, I hate to say that, but it was.

THEODORE KERR: What did you think about the future? Like were you making future plans, were you—did you think about a career? [Laughs.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I had dreams of being a painter. I don't know—but that meant you die in a—you die young and I don't—no, I planned on dying pretty young. I was pretty much counting on it. I didn't think about the future, I only thought about tonight. [Laughs.] You know, that was kind of—and all of my friends, there was so much happening. This is in, you know, San Francisco and it was clubs and it was happening socially and it was happening in the streets, and that was more interesting to me. And the art was my future. Well, I did—a lot of people came to New York and started becoming being paid as dancers, so I had this whole thing of they were all of a sudden you know, like getting the royal treatment, getting paid and getting apartments and "blah, blah, blah" and I was in San Francisco being like a street kid and having—the future was—I was, you know, was getting sucked into the movement and getting sucked into the counter-culture life, and it was spinning out of control and that took me to some very dark places.

THEODORE KERR: Does that mean, like, psychological or does that mean physical, or?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Both.



THEODORE KERR: Both, yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Both. And I was with Steve, and I knew I had to get out of there or I was just dead, I would never be seen again. So, in California, I found everybody was an artist, everybody was an artist. So, it became this social leveling of everybody's an artist, everybody's creative, everybody—and so I felt like, well, no I think there is something about being—there's something special about being an artist, and it wasn't just mediocrity. And I knew that I had to go back to New York, and if I wanted to do it I had to go back to New York, and get out of the lifestyle that I was in because it was very street oriented. I was a rag-tag kid on the street.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I don't know how to say that. [Laughs.]

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.] I think you said it.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Any other way—[laughs]—and so my parents said they'd give me \$200 if I went to college. A month.

THEODORE KERR: Okay. That's a better deal.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Isn't it? \$200 a month, and so they paid my rent. I got accepted—I sent naked pictures—I think about this: I went to School of Visual Arts and my portfolios were just close-ups of my cock and my ass and me being naked and I just think about [laughs] the review committee like sitting there reviewing portfolios and all of a sudden there's this kid with—and this was like 1976, '77 and I was showing all of this like wild like self-portrait "ahhh" and I'm sure everybody else like doing like little—I didn't think anything of it. I didn't think of it but now I look back at it and I'm like, "Wow". I mean I probably would have like noticed, I mean that's probably why I got in. That's probably why I was—because I was doing something. I didn't ever think anything I was doing was worth a shit.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But I was doing it.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And did you—and no painting, you didn't send painting to them.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I had more photographs.

THEODORE KERR: You sent photographs.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Painting was too slow.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Photographs were "click, click, click", it was happening you could—or film, you could—

THEODORE KERR: Yep.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —it was too much of a social—

THEODORE KERR: Yep.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —issues. Painting was slow. The slowest—

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, and it's solitary often.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It is very solitary and it's very slow, but I met some painters out there and became attracted to them. There was something very romantic about the paint and the—but you know, paint is expensive. I couldn't afford it. I could get my film and everything for free from Harvey [Laughs.] You know, it was like you learn how to get free stuff—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —when you're 18, and so film became more immediate and photography more immediate. I came to New York and I started, you know, getting to know writers and poets and painting became—I had a talent for it, and it came back to me.

THEODORE KERR: And had you only been to New York that one time when you went to the MoMA on acid?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah, that was when I lived there that summer. And you know that summer was—the trucks were still there, the piers were still there it was you know really—and I was 15. Hey guys, I remember, 15 years old, I was living out on Bank street in The Village and one day I walked out and I ended up on Christopher street, and there were all these people in the street and they were marching up, and so I just got with them and that was 1973. That was my first gay march; it was the Gay Pride March. It was just a little group, wasn't big, I just walked up Fifth Avenue with these people. And—[laughs]—into the meadow and all these like lesbians with like curly hair, you know, "Ahhh!" I was like 15-16 years old. I fell into the Gay Pride march the third year that it had happened.

THEODORE KERR: Amazing.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Right?

THEODORE KERR: And then what was it like when you came back, New York, had it changed much?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was a dump.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You know, like in 1973 it was disco, no not disco, but everybody was in like corky shoes. It was very Latino and it was very Laura Nyro, New York and kind of dark and oily. And in the '70s it was like a wasteland, it was bleak and everybody had left, nobody wanted to be here, it was urban decay. And it was wonderful and SVA was—School of Visual Arts—I mean, I walked into a painting class and I was painting from this guy that had studied with Mondrian, Michael Lowe, and he was like, "You know this is really good." He said, "You've been doing this for a long time?" I said, "No" and he said, "You haven't?" I was like, no, He said, "Well this is what you're supposed to be doing, this is—you got a talent here, this is talent, I haven't seen it in a long—this is talent." I'm like "really?"

And he was one of the first people, he was 80 years old, and he was hardcore like New York like '40s, '50s painter. He had the beret, white mustache and it was so, and he said, "No, you—" and I was surprised. I'm like, really?

THEODORE KERR: Surprised that it was you, or surprised at the word talent, or?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Surprised that an older man was coming up and said you're really good at this when I was just trying to—I wasn't trying to be good at anything—

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I was just doing it. It was new and it was the first time, and I had a touch. That's what it meant I, you know, it was—yeah, Michael Lowe.

THEODORE KERR: And it was helpful to you, obviously.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I needed that, that's what I was looking for. I got a lot of support at School of Visual Arts. From the painters, they saw talent in me that I didn't even see.

THEODORE KERR: And it was two years that you were there?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I was there for three and a half years.

THEODORE KERR: How was it?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Oh, it was amazing. Well, it was—that's where I met Keith, you know Keith Haring, Kenny Scharf, and all these people were there, it was an incredible group of people. And, it was a small group of painters, I mean, they really didn't have painting anywhere else. It was kind of the avant-garde place and they were—semiotics was just starting to come into existence and Bill Beckley, and, like, Keith and I were in this same semiotics class and we went down and deconstructed the gay male homosexual semiotically, like, you know, keys on the left mean this, keys on the right means this, the mustache is this, you know this we kind of like got, we started studying signs and sign functions and social cues, and it was very interesting, and lies, and it really opened me up.

And at that time my—Andy Rees, the dancer friends, were here and then we had, this is where it gets kind of confusing—all of these worlds were happening, and somehow my friend Andy got asked by Ann Magnuson, who went to high school with Tim Dunleavy, who lived above Serendipity's to do a piece for Irving Plaza, which was a Polish—a Polish meeting house, you know, Irving Plaza, the rock and roll place on Irving Place, it was a dusty old place, to do a piece for New Wave Vaudeville, that was a show that Ann and Susan Hannaford were putting on

and they were in the film department. And, so I did the set, and this was a time when Jim Jones had just happened.

THEODORE KERR: The massacre?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: The massacre.

THEODORE KERR: The mass suicide?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: The mass suicide. All I remember is doing a giant Kool-Aid packet, a purple Kool-Aid and that was [for the last act -FH]. Everybody did their Vaudeville act. Lance Loud, The Mumps, that whole downtown scene. Klaus Nomi, he sang, that was where he broke out, and Joey Arias was in it and Kristian Hoffman. And, you know, we did—it was a big, it was the you know the first, like, new wave, it had film and it had Patty Astor and it kind of—that was what focused New Wave Vaudeville. And we all drank Kool-Aid and died at the end, you know, that was very current and very pop and I remember—and that brought us—and so we're all doing that and Keith and I were hanging out, and they took us down to 57 Club, St. Mark's place.

But Susan, they said "Oh, come we have this little club we want to see if we want to open it" and so we went in, and I was one of the first people in that space to like—and I was like, "Yeah," and so then we opened that little club, and I sent Keith down there and then Kenny came and then John Sex came and Jean-Michel and Ann and it, you know, it was like and Andy and we were like these little group of people that were, you know, the Mudd Club wouldn't have us, Studio 54, it was—we were the rejects—

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —and socially we found each other, and it was the basement of Polish church and we started Club 57 and we started doing different shows every night. And it was all a very—School of Visual Arts was the core of and we'd all somehow been there, and this became like a free open space—and we rented it for \$25 a night.

THEODORE KERR: Twenty-five dollars a night, and how would you get the money for that?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: We would charge admission.

[They laugh.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, Keith Haring and I had our first shows together, and we'd charge 50 cents to get in [Laughs.] I mean Keith and I, yeah 50 cents. And I remember somebody coming out of the doors and saying, "That sucked" and I said, "Here's your 50 cents back, now get out of here!"

[They laugh.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But we were making money, you know, it was \$25—will we make it?—you know we might have to put in \$5 each. But it was—and it was anybody could do it, anybody could rent it.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And it was amazing, because it was so open because SoHo was such a closed system.

THEODORE KERR: You're talking about the art world at the time.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: The art world, and like CBGB's was too hard core and Max's was too, Max's Kansas City, was closing down and too burn out and so Irving Plaza, the big club, would hire us, like, I was, Keith and I did the back door, and John Sex did the back door and then other—and then I was stage manager and then we would do things, so it became this like enterprise where we were employed and expressing. And, somehow, I was going to school and working at the Factory on Union Square for *Interview* and Warhol, all at the same time. I mean it was kind of compressed, I guess, it was a very busy time.

THEODORE KERR: Right. And, like, do you remember how you felt, do you remember what life was like for you?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah, it was wide open, we were, we were wild.

THEODORE KERR: What does that mean?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: That means there were no limits, there was no consequence, there was something new every night, there was something new every moment. We were bad boys, and we were getting famous for it. And we were getting—we weren't special, but we weren't—we were different—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —and that was cool. And it was I mean there was a period, I mean there's always that period where something is under-coded and not formed and then it becomes coded, and then it becomes the mall, and then social things start splitting apart and, you know, the outside world comes in. But, you know, for a couple of years there was no hierarchy, nobody was doing it for money, we were doing it because it was like kids playing in the basement.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So, it was so freeing and accepting and fun, and William Burroughs one night, Kenneth Anger the next night, and it was also very educational. And then we'll do Lawrence Welk the next night, and Killer Tap Dance the next night, and then you know like art Live Art the next night, and then Art Show, and then Anorexic Party with like a rice on toothpicks with barf bag. You know we would—it would be like—it was like there was no limits—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —to—and we we're also playing on TV culture and making fun of what the American—we were critiquing our American experience, ours. Because we weren't like hard core heavy heroin, like, we weren't Patti Smith and that kind of Ramones and Patti Smith, and we weren't glitter rock Max's City. So here we were, we were all these suburban kids, and so we were making fun of all of what we grew up with. It was like an Americana that was different, it was our suburban history that we were playing on. And that became very freeing, and it was an establishment and, you know, people in New York City Ballet, we were like, "Oh, they're so uptight." So, we were—it was amazing. And then the B-52's, that was a big thing. The B-52's came to New York and they played at Irving Plaza, and that just turned us into the space age new wave, because we—our generation never really had an identity.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: There was the X generation, there were the punks, we weren't the punks, we weren't hippies. We weren't, you know, we were looking for an identity, and who knew we would be the identity of that time. But we weren't like, "Oh, we're the identity," we're like, "Oh, this is who we are," and then the outside world comes in, you know, something hot goes on and everybody's like "Whoa! We want a piece of it." Then it, you know, it had to get bigger and like Keith said to me, "Well, Frank it had to get bigger than that basement of that church." I'm like, "Why? Why?"

THEODORE KERR: Did you find yourself going to, like—how did you find yourself relating to the rest of the East Village scene?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No there wasn't an East Village Scene.

THEODORE KERR: So, this was before it?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah this was like 1977, '78, '79, '80.

THEODORE KERR: Okay.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: This was the beginning of the East Village Scene.

THEODORE KERR: Okay.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: The East Village scene there was like the burnout hippies, the junkies, the Hell's Angels, the Polish people.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And this is where we could live. I mean I lived on a loft on 27th Street, and then these people started living in the East Village, the East Village started—that was the happening of the East Village.

THEODORE KERR: It was like the seed.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: There was nothing there.

THEODORE KERR: There was nothing.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: There was nothing. I mean, it was burnout buildings, and it was drugs and it was like blocks

that were just like fallen down and abandoned. And it was dangerous, and it was dirty and, you know, we were taking our life, they're like, "You're going between 1st and A?" Like, Alphabet City was really; it was incredibly dangerous.

THEODORE KERR: And what do you mean dangerous?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Dangerous like you'd be killed. Robbed, killed. Like, New York was very rough back then. You kept \$20 in your pocket for the mugger, and the rest of the money in your shoe. Because you were going to get held up, that was—you were held up. You were held up.

THEODORE KERR: You knew it, you bargained for it, you understood it.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You knew it.

THEODORE KERR: It was part of your day.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was part of your day and down in the East Village, it was dangerous and junkies and, you know, and drugs and, you know, society, that was the Ghetto.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And we were like the—you know the—I mean it was pretty white, white suburban kids all of a sudden in the middle of a jungle. It was a jungle. And—

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah, it was burned out, there was nothing there. You know, the Polish restaurants; there was nothing hip about it.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And what was drug life for you then?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, it was definitely there. But, I think I was drinking and smoking pot, I think that's what I really liked to do. I think it kind of came down to drinking and smoking pot. I mean, cocaine hadn't really come into the scene yet, that was coming; that was coming. I mean, Quaaludes—San Francisco was all about Quaaludes and drinking, and marijuana was starting to be manufactured. New York—New York was really, I think was just, like, smoking pot, you could buy like nickel bags on 10th Street. There was the blue door and the black door, there were little stores, you'd put your money through a slot and they'd give it to you.

And then heroin starting coming into the scene, and there was the heroin group, and then, there was the pot and drinking group. I mean, what was great about Club 57 is, you know, we didn't have a liquor license, but we were a private club. So, you know, Ann, or whoever was managing, would go up to the store for liquor and would buy bottles of liquor, and we could go there and drink for free, so we were drinking. And cocaine came into a little later, like Studio 54 started happening and there was that whole side of like—Club 57 was a joke on Studio 54. I mean, I was working for Warhol, so I got to like enter into Studio 54 like carte blanche, the lines would part, and you'd walk in with Warhol and, you know, I went to the opening of Studio 54.

And, but see, at that period, everything was a club life. It was music and art and social celebrity all came together around clubs. It was different. And it wasn't gay and it wasn't straight and wasn't, you know it was, you would go—I guess there's still a big club scene here, I don't know I have been in it in 25 years, but at that point everything was revolving around the clubs. It was something happening in the—socially something was happening at night.

THEODORE KERR: Was it cross generational?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah, and all different social stratospheres. Like, Warhol was rich at that point—well, he was kind of struggling in the '70s. He was having to hock his portraits, and for like \$25,000 a piece, which to me was like an amazing amount of money, but, you know, then there was the Halston's and the Liza's and the Bianca's, and like there was this whole glittering kind of thing, you know Steve Rebel and all of them. And then we were like the little kids that had no money that were shopping at the Salvation Army, but yet, somehow, we could go [there and then come back here -FH]. There was the rock and roll and the Disco but, there were two different scenes. I mean, there was downtown and really uptown.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And they come together in the clubs.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Absolutely.

THEODORE KERR: And were you dancing in the club?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Oh yeah, absolutely.

THEODORE KERR: And were you seeing some of your friends who you had done ballet with? Who had moved to —

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Absolutely.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I kept with them. Andy.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Andy was a ballet dancer, and he ended up being one of the managers of Club 57.

THEODORE KERR: Huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And he's the one who brought me into Club 57—you know, he was really a part of that scene and other dancers and Lypsinka. John Epperson was the pianist for the ballet company, and we needed a pianist for Lawrence Welk night. So, we put him in Jane, I've forgotten the piano player, we'd put him in drag.

THEODORE KERR: But you would like watch Lawrence Welk together? Or, you had just performed the songs? What does Lawrence Welk—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: We did Lawrence Welk night. We did—

THEODORE KERR: Like did you dress up in the blue suit?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, I did the set—I did the set with the chandelier, and we had Kenny Scharf was Lawrence Welk, and we had all the acts come out and dancing and the girls singing. We did a whole—

THEODORE KERR: And what did you sing? Like the actual songs from the show?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: We would sing; they did Broadway [singing], "The sun will come out!"

[They laugh.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was a medley. I have all this on tape.

THEODORE KERR: No.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah. Well, this is what's the MoMA's [cross talk] going to show.

THEODORE KERR: Is that—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Lawrence Welk night and, you know, then we had the Disco, I mean you know it was, like, insane, we had like somebody come out and sing "Ben." Andy came out and sang "Ben" about the rat—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —[laughs] like in a suit. We did Lawrence Welk night. We did Lawrence Welk night, I mean, that's—

THEODORE KERR: Were you still, like you were in school, you said so what was like—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I don't even know, at some point I was in school or not, and we were all out of school. It was during—it was kind of a blur.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, I mean, it is a blur because, you know, in the context of now, we could understand that Club 57 was a social practice.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

THEODORE KERR: You know, but did you all think about like, "This is my art work, this club is my art work?" Like, no.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No. It was—no it wasn't like a strategy.

THEODORE KERR: Right. Yeah, you weren't trying to increase your brand.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: We were not branding.

THEODORE KERR: Right.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: We didn't even know we had a brand. Keith was like one of the first branders though—

THEODORE KERR: Oh.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: He kind of, like, got it, like "oh," and he went with the brand. He was, one of the—he kind of like—he was lucky that way. I was too, like, in the clouds, he kind of got the fastness and the immediacy. And I think that had something to do with that he was only going to be around for "X" amount of years, so the immediacy, he got it. Somehow, intuitively he got it. No, we didn't know, we were just making fun of everything, it was almost like we were making fun of what wouldn't accept us.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So, we just—so then that just became something, and then, all of a sudden, like Mark Shaiman and Scott Wittman, you know who they are?

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: They wrote *Hairspray*.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And, you know, *The Chocolate Factory* and, like, all of a sudden they showed [up]—somehow they got there, and then we started doing these wild like—*Trojan Women*, we did *The Bad Seed*.

THEODORE KERR: The play?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: The Play. *The Bad Seed* with Scott Covert as Becky Rockefeller as Rhoda in drag, and I did the sets and you know we did all of these—one night would be theater, or one—then, like, Alan Carr came down and wanted to take this. They did the Barbie musical and the Barbie, Hurrah, and it was like—so then Keith and I did a show and the gallery [people -FH] started coming down, and it just started, and then all of a sudden, we were hired to go to the Mudd Club, or we were hired to go to the Hurrah, or they wanted us. We became the avant-garde.

THEODORE KERR: Can we talk about how—what would an art show look like? Like, what did your opening look like? How long did that show run? Let's talk about it.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Two hours.

[They laugh.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, yeah, because you ran it, you went to school all day, Keith and I—you would show up two hours before, it would happen in the afternoon, I remember it would be light out and you would bring your art. You couldn't hammer it, and so you would have to tape it to the wall and it was a blue wall—[cross talk]

THEODORE KERR: What did you show?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Huh?

THEODORE KERR: What did you show?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I showed black mirror paintings. They were these very shiny black paintings that you think—you couldn't see your reflection in. They were kind of like anticipating the AIDS thing, there was kind of like a precursor. But they were, very black and—

THEODORE KERR: Wait, what do you mean? How?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, they were kind of a mirror image where you couldn't see your image.

THEODORE KERR: But how does that relate to AIDS for you?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Disappearing. The self disappearing, the people disappearing. The catching a glimpse in the mirror, the mirror's always the other side, you know you're always—And I even still deal with that [theme -FH], the picture plane is dipping into the other side—

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —that, you know, it's like the other side of death. I mean, because I was affected by all of that death. So, I think I've always—so that was like the other side, parallel universe.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And Keith did *Crawling Baby* with, you know, that was more—that was very timely. I think it was more accessible than what I was doing. I mean, now, in the long run, what I was doing was brilliant, it was just a little dreary—[laughs]—a little apocalyptic.

THEODORE KERR: And people came?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Oh, my God! Fifty cents a head. They paid it, and I think we even had enough for a couple dime bags of pot and some liquor, you know.

THEODORE KERR: How did you feel?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I felt jealous, I was the first person to see *Crawling Baby*. I saw it the night before, and I remember going and he was—Keith had somebody lend him the studio to do the show right before it and I remember looking up and seeing like Day-Glo paint, and I could see it out the window and I knew I was fucked. [Laughs.] You know, I just knew that he was a genius and I knew that he had hit it, and I was used to being the star—I was the pretty one. [Laughs.]

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You know, it was kind of like a shocking thing, like "Oh my God, Frank, this is not—you are not the star of this show."

THEODORE KERR: You're going to lose this one.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You're going to lose this one.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I did.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But, you know.

THEODORE KERR: So, you felt it at the time.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Oh, immediately. Because you know you see something that's so, I mean, like "Ugh!" And you know it.

THEODORE KERR: And it worked on you too. Like, that's what you're saying, it was powerful to you too.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, it was powerful in that way of like, "Oh, fuck your life is never going to be the same again."

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was so, and yeah. I mean, when, like, people see my work and they're like, "Fuck it's just stuff smeared up," and they get a sense of it and they get like, "Fuck I want to—fuck!"

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So, yeah, I mean it was—and Keith was a great, lovely, beautiful, open man and this was like such an extension of that. And I was still like veiling, like black mirror you can't see yourself, it was not about the identity, it was about the void of identity.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And he just broke through, it was kind of amazing to watch somebody just [*punch* -FH] break the mirror, very Tommy and The Who. Ann-Margaret breaking the mirror, the TV—

[They laugh.]



THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —with leather. Pork and Beans coming out and humping the white—

[They laugh.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —the white weenie chair, the white sofa. But he broke through, and, yeah, it was hard to be the first person to show against Keith. And I was kind of like the old guard and he was like the new, it was very interesting. I mean, in retrospect we're talking about minutes.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: [Laughs.] You know, we're talking about—we're not talking about like years, were talking about—that's how current time was moving so fast. We weren't thinking about the future, we were thinking about tonight.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: That's how the future was, going so fast.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And, but somewhere in there before that show, I got out of school, and I had a loft and I sold it to somebody for, like, \$2,000; you sold your fixture fee. That's something called fixture fee and I took that money, and I went to Europe.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I went to Europe and I traveled around Europe for three months, and I left and I think my show was after that, yeah—I think my show was after that, no, I don't—or I think my show was right—I don't even know, it was somewhere in there. But I went to Europe, and I saw all this great painting. And I saw the Velázquez and I saw the Monet and the Manet and all of the stuff in Rome and Venice, and I was just wandering around like, you know, like, no money, and I just saw painting and sculpture and sat in churches. I mean it was the weirdest—and I was just by myself, and I knew I had to get out of New York, and I just—and this became a problem because I saw this great work, and I felt this great emotion with this work and I didn't have the facility to make it.

Because I was doing installation and just—but I—like, Keith found a way to express himself very immediately but it wasn't about technique, it was different. Like, when I saw the great painting in Venice and Titian and here I am like, "Hey, I'm from North Carolina," you know, "Yee-haw!" And then, all of a sudden, I'm sitting in front of something, and I felt this greatness. And I've felt it with Keith too.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You know, I didn't know what it was but I felt it, but I didn't have the technical—I didn't know how to do it, but I connected to it. And so, I came back and I remember walking into Club 57 and Keith and Jean-Michel and Kenny were having a Day-Glo show that night and they were in there making it, and I knew I had missed it. I missed it by seconds. It was weird.

THEODORE KERR: You say "missed it" but also like—also it doesn't sound like that wasn't the track you were on, it's not like you were doing Day-Glo as well.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I was doing Day-Glo earlier than that.

THEODORE KERR: Oh.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah, I was doing very—yeah, I was doing Day-Glo stuff.

THEODORE KERR: So, "missed it" is true. Like, you do feel like—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, at the time I felt like I missed it but in retrospect I saved my life. I've had a long career; my paintings have developed and grown, and I found the freedom that I—it took me a longer time to get there. Like, I'm having wonderful success now. You know, I mean you know, that's amazing, at, like, 60 years old to be like, you know, like, I'm having world-wide shows and people are like freaking out and loving and paying, someone bought a painting for, like, \$250,000.

I mean "ahhh"—I mean, so I, you know, someone in the higher power was taking care of me saying, "No, Keith is

only here for seven more years: it's his time."

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I really understand that now. Like Kenny, Kenny kind of jumped on it and some and now, like, he's kind of coming—he's a survivor. And he's getting, you know, he hasn't gotten his due yet. But it was the thing of, like, you're together and it's all innocent and then the world starts making hierarchies out of everything, and you become commodified. And you become—you're famous and you're not, you're hip and you're not, you're socially, you know. So, me coming through it on the other side, I've had to build my myth. Like, my myth was always, I always—I've been writing these stories, and I want to do a book; it's called "It's Nobody." This is a funny story.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Warhol, we were—there was a wedding, and it was this very large woman and a very short man and Andy made a film called *Lucy's Wedding*. And so, we filmed this wedding and we went to the after-party and we were with Paige Powell, and we had to go to an opening at Tony Shafrazi. So, we flagged down a silver limousine, and I think Andy was there, Andy Warhol and Page and all of us, we got in the limousine and we go downtown and it has mirrored so you can't see in it, but we could see out. And it was an '80s opening so in front of, I think it was Ronnie Cutrone, and there were thousands of people out just like spilling out of the '80s kind of opening and just poured out of the gallery on to the street, and here we were arriving in this silver limousine.

And so, you could see people like, "Who is it? Who is it? Who is it?" And they couldn't see, so we pulled up right to the door, and so everybody is turned looking at the limousine like, "Who is it? Who is it?" and [they're -FH] like, "Okay, Frank, you get out first." I was like—[laughs]—I'm like, okay. And so, I open the door and you could hear "Who is it? Who is it?" And I opened the door and someone said "Who is it?" And I step out, and somebody from the back goes, "Oh it's nobody." [Laughs.] And, of course, Warhol gets out and there are all of us—and it's the crushing moment of like: "it's nobody". But yet, I was in the middle, I've always been in the middle of everything, like the middle of it, but never the star of it.

So, it's been a very interesting journey to get to where I am today to where, you know, I'm starting to be somebody.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, you get to be your own middle.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But it's me.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: This is my work and I'm not dreaming up these paintings. These paintings are an extension of me.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: They're not a construction of—you know they can—you could deconstruct them or you could, you know, critique them socially, politically, everything. There's reasons around but that's not where they're coming from, they're coming from me. I did a show in—I was in a show about AIDS in Australia, and they flew me there. And I was there for six weeks and I had never been out of the studio. I was, like—I'm a bit of studio rat. And so, I decided, what am I going to do? So I said, "Oh, I'll do watercolors." I mean this is, I'm so not watercolors.

THEODORE KERR: When was this?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: '90s I guess. This is, I'm jumping up—

THEODORE KERR: Yeah that's great.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —ahead a bit. And I've been diagnosed, but that's another whole story. But I started doing, like, I was set on a cliff overlooking the ocean in Australia, and I was like, "What am I going to do?" And so, I'm, like, I'm doing watercolors of landscapes, like, this is so not cool. And I started doing it and I was like, "I'll do—be this person and I'll be—" and finally, I'm like, "Oh no, that doesn't work, no I'm not Monet, no, that, no"—so I kept trying to do it like I had always seen what landscape was looking like, and at some point I said, "Ah, fuck it, I'll just make a Frank Holliday" and I did it. And it was a Frank Holliday and I didn't know that there was—because it would be [dismissed -FH] because you do this, someone's already done it, and really one of the first times I felt I did a Frank Holliday. I mean, it looked like just messy paint smeared up, but it was a Frank Holliday.

THEODORE KERR: Right, and to kind of use your language, like, you and the screen had a moment then, or you and the surface had a moment.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah, and it was, like, this weird thing of where I didn't have to do anything. It was like I just had to let it happen instead of, like, well, what does it mean and what has it done and who did this and why is it here, is it this, is it—

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —you know all of that stuff, you know because—yeah, it was an amazing moment and so I just started. And that's when all of this work started when I finally let go of all the is this the right painting, is this the one that's going to make me famous, is this in Art History the right one to make at the right time—

THEODORE KERR: Ugh.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —and I said, "Fuck it," and I just said, "I'm not going to show." And I stopped showing, and I just had been in the studio 12 years and, all of a sudden, here it's emerging again.

THEODORE KERR: Let's go back a little bit before—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yes.

THEODORE KERR: —we lose that's like a very good—I'm glad you told that story now, because then that helps to contextualize a little bit of what we're going to talk about.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Okay.

THEODORE KERR: So, you said you came back from Europe and Europe sounds like it was an amazing kind of like—was it a, like, transformative internal world-making trip?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yes. Yes. It was, it was—I felt like I felt like the first time I went to the Modern.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like that connection to a tribe and to like, "Oh, this is supposed to be what I'm doing." And then there I had the beauty, and the painting and the greatness touched me. And it was beyond me, it was—it took a long time, you know, it's taken a long time to be able to go back to Rome.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like, all these years later to be there and look at this painting that inspired me and now I'm living here and I'm painting here, and my paintings are, you know, I mean it was an amazing kind of circle to make and heal.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative]. Well, I wonder if part of the pain starts when you come back to New York. So, you have this beautiful experience and then you come back, and you know what's that saying like, "Wherever you are, there you are?"

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

THEODORE KERR: It's like you go, your definition of beauty is expanded yet again—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

THEODORE KERR: —and you come back, you go to the Polish basement, and there's your friends and you're like "eh" that train is leaving the station.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It has left the station.

THEODORE KERR: It has left the station.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah, it's left the station. I mean, I went on to make—you know, I got involved in the conversation—

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —but I wasn't, you know there's one, two, and three to make a wedge; there's always the first ones that emerge.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I truly think that, like, Keith and Jean-Michel were, and Kenny too, I think that was a very organic extension of them.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It wasn't a construction. I mean, I think Kenny's was a little more forced, although I have great respect for him, I do feel like Keith and Jean-Michel it was just an extension of who they were. There was no, like—there was no strategizing involved, it was an extension. That's why it's so truthful and honest, and I think it still—people really identify with it. It's funny on Facebook, Keith's older sister friended me yesterday—

THEODORE KERR: Wow.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —sent me a friend request. I'm, like, okay, that's kind of nice.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, that's really interesting.

[They laugh.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: His older sister, I mean, anyway. So, what were you going to say?

THEODORE KERR: Well, actually, you mentioned his older sister. What was your relationship with your family at this time? Like, were you visiting them, were they visiting you? Like, because you left the conservatory, then you went to San Francisco, now you're in New York.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I graduated from college

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: My father, you know, I was, like, drunk and my father was just, like, horrified. And my mother was like at the height of her alcoholism and my older sister was, like, you know, married and miserable and she'd have my little sister who was this beautiful, like Brooke Shields beautiful, but she was a little girl and she was—everybody had abandoned—I was in New York, my older sister was in—and this little girl she was living with these, like, two—my mother was alcoholic and my father was, like, very unhappy and, like, not—very angry and you know, it was—the dream was over, and she was, like, this beautiful little girl that didn't know what was going on. And I was wild, crazy, out of control, you know, they must have been horrified. Now remember, they came—and I graduated, but I mean that—school was kind of easy, you know.

THEODORE KERR: You graduated from SVA?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I graduated from SVA. Keith dropped out when I graduated, and Kenny went on one more semester. But, I graduated and I remember Lincoln Center, which is very bizarre: here I am graduating at Lincoln Center when that's where I started.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And so I graduated, we went out to eat and I remember—it was cocaine and me and my sister were doing all this, you know, we were, like, just eating steak and—this is one of my favorite stories. And we leave, and it's the night of graduation and we're eating in the theater district and my parents were here for like four days. And we're walking by this theater, and there was a crowd and there was a limo and there was a crowd. And my mother said, "What's that? What's the crowd?" And I look up, and it's Liz Taylor and Richard Burton are performing in the Noel Coward thing.

I said, "Look it's Liz Taylor, I guess Liz is getting ready to come out." And she's like, "Liz is getting ready to come out?" I said, "Yeah, come on." And so, I grabbed my mother, and I kind of jostled my way right up in—I got through the crowd and, all of a sudden, Liz came out and my mother was here, and it was like how the crowd did one of these, like, it kind of like picked her up and it, like, carried her and it put her right in front of Liz Taylor's face. And Liz stops and looks at her in the eyes, and my mother looks at Liz in the eyes and Liz says, "Hello." And my mother went, "Hello," and there was, like, this lingered pause that there was this, like, recognition. And then Liz got in the limo, and my mother turned around to me, and my mother touched her. And it was like this whole, like, it was like an amazing—my mother's dream had come true. And it was, like, just at the right place at the right time, and it just—they didn't pick me up, and I didn't get to touch Liz but my mother was, like, face to face and I saw them looking at each other, it was like the most amazing thing.

And then we took the cab downtown and her limo, she rolled down the window with a cigarette. [Laughs.] But it was a moment for my mother, she has Alzheimer's now and she doesn't know who I am. But that was a moment

it was kind of, like, it came full—her dream came true there was—she met Liz Taylor face to face. And it was like Liz kind of recognized her too. Was very strange.

THEODORE KERR: They saw each other.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well they were face to face.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Liz stopped like, "Do I know you?" Like, "Hello, hello". Like, you know, "I recognize you." It was the strangest moment but it made me so happy. So, yeah, I wasn't really seeing my family. I mean, I was, but I was like out of control. They did not understand—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —what I was doing.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I don't think anybody could.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But—

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, you were breaking through things in order to make a life for yourself.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah, and just, I mean, being involved in the intensity of the scene that I was involved in, you know. I mean, the family was the family and, you know, I would ask them for money—

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —and just keep me going.

THEODORE KERR: Were they still giving you \$200 a month?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No.

THEODORE KERR: Nah [negative.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No, but if I needed something, they would help me out. I mean, they would never leave me high and dry.

THEODORE KERR: And what was work like, like, just like, were you working odd jobs?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I was working as a bartender, I worked as a bartender at gay bars. I worked as bus boys at restaurants. I worked at Club—at Irving Plaza. I worked at—I worked for a warehouse on 57th street. I—you know, I did all these other kinds of jobs. [Laughs.] To, you know—but rent was cheap, and I would live with people and hustle my way through, do what I had to do.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, and what about—now it seems like you have a spiritual understanding or even a religious affiliation, but was spirituality or a religion a part of your life then? No?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No. No, it—no. No. It wasn't. I rebelled from the church. I was really angry at the church, and I didn't believe in the church. I was really angry at—I hated religion.

THEODORE KERR: Had you grown up in religion?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I grew up Presbyterian.

THEODORE KERR: Okay.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Very—church every Sunday, Sunday school, bell choir.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You know, it was—yeah, I grew up with—but it was Protestant.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Which was very confusing to me. It was—you know what I mean? When they told me, "Well, you know, God—you're predestined. You're already—God already knows whether you're going to hell or not, and he's playing a game with you." So, what the fuck?

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I didn't understand the whole—I was like, "Well, if Jesus died on the cross and forgives my sins, well, what the fuck? That's a free pass. Whee!" You know, there were too many contradictions. No, there was—I mean, I believed in, kind of, some hippie stuff, but no, I kind of—I believed in nuclear disaster. I mean, God is dead. I was brought up that God was dead and everything seemed to be that. It seemed to support that. It was the beginning of materialism, and it was the beginning—I think art was a god and religion. I mean, I think it's ironic that Club 57 took place in the church basement.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, whether we were like breaking into the church and bringing all the—

THEODORE KERR: Parishioners?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No, we were bringing down all the statues and stuff and dressing in the robes at night at Club 57 and—

THEODORE KERR: You literally were?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: We literally were. [Laughs.]

THEODORE KERR: Amazing. [Laughs.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: We filmed "Love Comics." We did a whole scene, the married scene at night when the Polish—we would—we could get up, do the bar thing, and we filmed the whole thing and brought the statues down [...-FH]. "Wow, look we're religious." You know, but that—we would make fun of religion. One of the nights at Club 57, we heard that they were going to raid the place because of noise and drinking, and so we said, "Okay, we'll have a revival." So, when the police come, we'll just be having Jesus! Hallelujah! And so, we had—we did a whole take off on Tammy Faye Bakker and Jim Jones and then we did the PTL Club and the P—the 5700 Club is what we called it. And, you know, we had set up like the interview and I was in the Moral Majority Singers and we would come out and do like [singing], "At the cruc-a, the crucifixion, the word of God's better than fiction." I mean, it was—so we had dances and we had the Moral Majority Singers. And Ann did Tammy Faye and we had Donna Summers come and she was saved. And we had all these people dressing up like celebrities and witnessing and the audience—I mean, we—it was packed. We—this thing went on for eight hours, and by the end we had saved everybody in the place. Everybody was saved. And it was like big revival—fake revival meeting. We have it on tape. Anyway, so that's—so we started making fun of religion.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative]. Yeah, and did thus God pass your brain, besides that God was dead and God was nuclear disasters?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, no, now we were dealing—now that we were making fun of it, we were going to be punished. [Laughs.]

THEODORE KERR: God might be dead, but now you're going to get punished. [Laughs.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah, but now with blasphemy.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Because we were like—but there was a whole thing on TV with all of that fake religion and Jim [Bakker -FH] and like the wigs. I mean, at one point we drove down to Tammy Faye, that religious place in Charlotte, North Carolina. It was—

THEODORE KERR: She had a center?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: She had a—God, what was it called? It was Tammy Faye and Jim had a big, huge compound.

THEODORE KERR: Oh, yeah, yeah, of course. Like yeah, it was like a TV—they had their TV studios there, but

also like their business there.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It's like Carowinds. It was like a—but no, it was like a religious theme park.

THEODORE KERR: Oh.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And God, what was it called? [Heritage Village -FH]. But we—

THEODORE KERR: Like Dollywood for Christians?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was like Dollywood for Christians, but it was—they had a mall and they had like this—you could go and buy her eyelashes and make up line and, like, do-rags and, like, religious this. And it was a mall, and they had, like, some religious—they'd moved this log cabin and you would drive through it and it was like all like Christmas. And we went at Christmas, and we were like tripping. And we went and we saw the story—an outdoor drama about the story of Jesus and they crucified him and then it turned Day-Glo and they flew him off. They literally flew him off. [Laughs.] They like put on him the cross and then he rode—they had him on strings and they flew him out, and he flew. It was like—we were like, "What!" Tammywood. Tammy—

THEODORE KERR: Stop.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was something like Tammywood or—yeah.

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So, we became—we kind of took on the religious institution, but it became like pop. It became like a symbol of deception.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, well, if it—your critique of the American Dream or of American suburbia—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Suburbia and—but then it was bigger. Like the—it was the beginning of the Moral Majority. It was the beginning of—you know, we were in the Reagan era.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And it became, like, a taboo, like Madonna. Well, like, Madonna was around all that too, and then she did like a—she did, like, Madonna with the—

THEODORE KERR: Her hair.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, not—that was early, her first album, but she was, like—all of sudden she had crosses all over her and we were, like, so pissed at her because we were like, "That's our shit."

THEODORE KERR: Huh [affirmative]. Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: She was like, "Oh, here's a nerve." You know, we can—that was really something that pushed—and I was painting at this time, but I was really involved in the performance aspect and the public performance. Because I think Keith, like, they were like—they kind of went off and were making all this money, and so I was like—I was left behind, so I kind of got involved with the more performance and video and the film and performing and doing—writing all this stuff.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. And set—you keep on talking about how you were doing all the sets and I wonder if you can spend a little bit of time talking about that world, because that is not a skill that everybody has.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, we're taking about sets. I mean, sets at Club 57 were like—we were—you would tie everything with, like, chewing gum and string and, like, everything—you would have \$25 to make a set, and so I would paint the backdrop and then I would—you know, I mean, somehow flat—I would make flats from the streets. I mean, we would create these installations. I mean, for me—

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: For me, I painted and, like, I come out of the Pollock performance, the beginning of performance art. So, I painted and yet for some reason I didn't have the technique to make what I wanted so—at the space in Club 57, I started to see them as installations. Like, "Oh, well, I can do the environment, the installation, and then I can have people moving through them." But they were looked at as sets, but I looked at them as, like, creating these environments of, like, the TV show or the Lawrence Welk with the chandeliers and, you know, all the characters and the costumes and it wasn't theater, it was performance art because it was a social critique, and it was totally improvised. And the sets were improvised and the lighting and, you know, so

we would take this space. You would have to go in there and install it and then it would have to be out at the end of the night because it would be—the next night would be, you know, Soul Night. Or Disco Bats or, you know, every night was different.

So, you really had to go in and do it and then people would interact with all the stuff that I would do. I mean, we had the Beach Towel of Turin or I remember, like—"do you lay on it or does it lay on you?" [Laughs.] But I mean, having to create that and then that was a very famous prop. And we would make movies, and I would make giant, smoking, Greek coffee cups. [... -FH]. That was the day John Lennon died. So, it became—it was before really installation, and it was before, like—but we didn't. I wasn't going, "I'm making installation." I was like, "No, we're doing this shit. We're doing Jesus."

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So it became this concept that was a community concept. It wasn't—yeah, I mean, that's how I related to it. I related to it really as installation with live people and then I would get in there and do my—you know, interact with it. But I would be more—I loved, like, creating these things and watching these things happen in it. And—but it wasn't really—it wasn't commercial.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was—

THEODORE KERR: Was it anti-commercial?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was anti-commercial. Because it was very—it wasn't slick and it wasn't Lloyd Webber. It was like anti—it was like—I'm saying, "It's like." It was living collage.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Living illusion, but slapdash, kind of vaudeville. It comes back to like the whole vaudeville, "Let's put on a show!" And okay, well, we'll paint it. We need a barn. Well, paint it red and put some lines on it and cut a door out of it. It was like amazing kind of—it was suspending your suspension of reality. It was much more open. It wasn't about creating something realistic. It was almost creating something anti-realistic.

THEODORE KERR: Right, and it goes back to your thinking on representation or, like—it's a barn. Trust me, it's a barn.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And everybody would believe it. It's a barn. Okay, it's a barn. We didn't have to prove that it was a barn.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was kind of anti-illusion.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh, uh-huh [affirmative]. I'm—no one's trying to trick you. You see what it is.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No, we see how bad it is.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, this is bad.

THEODORE KERR: Right.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And you're [made -FH] to see something—we're not pretending like this is—we're not trying to fool you. It's like no, honey, this is a barn.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But it's a piece of—you know, I mean, I remember one. I put hay all in it and, all of a sudden, we realized people were smoking and it was like [Laughs.] And when we tried to find a chicken, I remember running all over New York trying to find a live chicken that—we wanted live chickens running around during the performance. But we couldn't get them because it was a Sunday and the fucking place was closed down here that sold live chickens. There used to be a place that you could buy live chickens, but it was closed. So, that was—it was all show biz, but it—see, but then Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman came down there and brought a sense of Broadway.



THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And that was different. That was different. We were kind of—it was kind of Pop Art, like Pop Art. And you know, the Pyramid came out of that. I mean, I was the first one—they offered me the space of the Pyramid Club.

THEODORE KERR: Huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I was like, "I can't do it." [Laughs.] "I can't open the club." And so, they gave it to someone else.

THEODORE KERR: They—like after Club—like they saw the success of Club 57 and they thought—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, I was working at a gay bar as a bartender and I was dating this cop named Larry who was a cop in the Lower East Side and he said, "Hey, you know, you did this—" because Club 57 was still happening. He said, "You're—yeah." He said, "Look, I want to show you this space. Come down." And so, he took me down to Avenue A and to this Polish bar with like people smoking and drinking and like, you know, blah. It was like that kind of—and I remember him taking the lock and opening the lock and said, "Yeah, and you could like put a stage back here. Look at this big room. You can dance. You can put a stage here." I mean—

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I was like, "I can't do it." So, then they gave it to the next person. I was burnt out. But yeah, I looked at those performances and those installations and those—and what I—it was such—what I liked about it was so temporal. It was—it would happen.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And it would happen, and it was so anti-everything. I mean, even coming from ballet and the theater and all of this formal classical training to just kind of like "Ahhhh!" You know, it was—and it was—then that's—and I love performing and I love making art, and I was making painting at this—I was making that and I was showing down in SoHo and I was having a career at that too.

THEODORE KERR: Let's talk about that: we've lost that thread a little bit.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah, God, it's—I mean, I kept making art and I was on—I lived on 23rd street, the corner of 23rd—and I lived in a tiny little room and I started making these like very painterly, expressionistic kind of paintings that were very much about drinking. And my first painting I sold called *Pop Top* and it was about a guy—people with masks gone popping a beer and I did one called *Sex Change*. This was like 1980.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And those things of, like, people getting their heads cut off and *Peep Show* which was all about, you know, the peep shows on 42nd Street and they were very painterly, and like "Agh!" Like really—I did one called *Olympia*. That one ended up in a museum, and it was all about how the woman had turned into like this fierce, like, warrior, like, in the same pose as an Olympia. And they were fucking incredible, like a guy drinking with time bomb here.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, they were—and they were fucking incredible paintings but they were—they didn't hit.

THEODORE KERR: Where were you painting? Like, physically, where would you do the work?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I lived with this painter named Carl Appleshimdt on Lafayette and 4th Street. Well, actually, that—all that really—that work I was—I was literally in a studio apartment this big—that had a bed. It was painted and I slept in the middle of the floor.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: In a—on a futon that I would roll up. I would paint, and it was—I was doing huge paintings in this tiny, little space and, you know, it was not—it was like tiny. I mean, the paintings could hardly fit through the doors. And that's where I did those. And then I remember, like, Tony Shafrazi coming and him, like, putting them—and he has a couple of them and he—I mean, he came—I'm with all these really powerful people would come to this tiny, little studio apartment that's—you know, it wasn't about the glamour studio, it was about making the fucking work. Like Donald Baechler bought some. These are the ones that are going to be showed at Club 57.

So, I was there and then I got—the *Clock Tower* was—they gave me a studio in the *Clock Tower* and so I did that. And we had an affiliation with PS1 and I did a show. I did a show of, like, crosses. I had one of the museum rooms and it was an installation and I did like flying crosses of all these different—I dressed them up in, like, bras or, like, panties. It was like flying crucifixes—[laughs]—through the—it was kind of a—it looked like a train wreck but it was—you know, I think about—I dressed up flying crosses.

THEODORE KERR: On a canvas or they were—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No, they were, like, two by fours that—

THEODORE KERR: Oh, like you physically made—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Physically made crosses and flew them from the ceiling.

THEODORE KERR: Wow.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like this and dressed them up in clothes.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: That was my—[laughs]—and I had a—then I had, like, a record player—like an old record player—

THEODORE KERR: Turntable?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I put a disco ball on it.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And then put light on it so there were crosses, dressed up crosses. It was called *Crossover*. And so, there were dressed up crosses and then this disco light on a turntable that made everything spin around and I had, like—I had doors that you would look through and, like, Jesus would be, like, behind and, like, smiling so you'd peek and see Jesus and it was like a church. And I had, like, whale music—whale sound music. I mean, this was—nobody—people were like—people hated it. But now, I look at it. It was brilliant.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But it was too—it wasn't in sync.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, it wasn't in sync.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But it was amazing.

THEODORE KERR: And you felt good making it? Like you enjoyed the process presumably?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Oh, yeah. And Keith loved it. He bought—he took—I had chairs that I, like, painted these faces and, like, nailed them to the front of the chairs and then put panties on the—and had them, like, up on platforms. And he loved it so much he kept it above the studio, above his door at the studio.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: For all those years. And—

THEODORE KERR: Is it in photographs?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And Julia—I think Keith still has it. But they—for some reason, Julia disassembled it, and they can't find it.

THEODORE KERR: Huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So. But yeah. So, I didn't have a space, so I would—and that came out of the theater.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And so oh, you give me this space. Well, I'll come in here and just, like, make a mess and then that's the show and then, like—and then people would walk through the installation. I couldn't make any money.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Keith and all those guys had objects to sell and made money, and that was a dilemma. Like, what do I sell? And I constantly had to go to back to painting. And so, I did The Clocktower and the after The Clocktower, I moved to the building on 42nd Street on [233 -FH] West 42nd Street or 242 West 42nd. And it was a building, and it was Times Square and it was still, you know, hoes and pimps and it was right when crack was coming—starting to take off, and it was between 7th and 8th Avenue.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And there was a building of artists and Donald Baechler was there. Ronnie Cutrone was there. Mike Bidlo, Phillip Taaffe, Moira Dryer, Sue Williams, me, Mike Bidlo. And I mean, like these are just some of the names—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But it was—

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, sure.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: We were all—it was a building of, like, amazing talent.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And then, like, on the top—on the stairwell on the roof it was, like, crack—like. I say "like" a lot on this, can that be edited out?

THEODORE KERR: Well, it's valuable.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like, like, like, like, like for sure. Well, they were selling crack. It was like—it was the Taj Mahal of 42nd Street crack hierarchy and we would all go up on the elevator together and they would get off and sell their crack, but the doorman would only let certain people—you had to be a—you know, it was a certain class of crack dealers. And like Mary Boone would drive up in like her limousine and get out, and I remember being—Mary Boone and me and somebody else and then, like, this woman—it was in the summer and she literally had, like, fringe—she had no bra on. She had fringe that started here and hung down. And she was going to get her crack and we're all in, like, the elevator together. There was something amazing about like this—the high and the worlds existing together. And so, and Jack Pearson was—and was next door to me and it was an amazing—and so, I was there and I got a studio there and Christian—I gave it to Christian Marclay. He was there. Donald Baechler gave it to me. And so, I was there for quite a while but it was really the right before—it was the old 42nd Street.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was the last—before Disney came in. I would look out the window and see the Amsterdam Theater was boarded up. It was porno everywhere. And you know, that fed into my work, very—you know, and so it's an interesting time too. I do have photographs and work from that period.

THEODORE KERR: And was that most of your life was making art at that time?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I don't—well, what was I doing? I was working at the warehouse at night.

THEODORE KERR: Doing what?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I was the hooker booker.

THEODORE KERR: Amazing.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I would make art in the day and work there at night. Art and—

THEODORE KERR: You were surrounded by sex work.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: You say, "Yeah," because it was that time in New York or—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, all my whole life—

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, from a very early age I learned that it was a commodity.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And when I talk about that—

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: That it was something that I had that I could—you know, and this is kind of like an extension of my body that I sell.

THEODORE KERR: The paintings?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Spiritual body. I mean, it is a kind of a piece of me that I'm selling you.

THEODORE KERR: Absolutely, that's sacred.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And it's skin. I look at the canvas as a mirror, but also skin.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And the paint is fluids and sensuous and sexy and illusion and how sex is an illusion.

THEODORE KERR: Do you think you understood this when you were on 42nd Street for example? No?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Maybe a little bit, yeah. Yeah, I did because I did a whole—there was a—that I don't have any more of, that I don't know where they are, but I was painting about—and I wish I had these. I think there's maybe two in Texas. But they were—I went to Europe, and I noticed people on, like, all of these saints on high poles.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like, way up in the air. And I came back and I started painting about sex as a power position and about how when you're naked the politics change. It's like clothes is one thing, but when you're naked and you're involved in this, the power keeps changing. Like, who's top, who's bottom, who's the mistress, who's the master, what's the subversive. You know, I started painting like from porno magazines and I have some of these. I'll paint them on virgin white canvases with like a blue—I actually—one of them is going to be in the Modern. This is guy—Salome bought for a hundred dollars or something. It showed up when he found out that I was going to be in the Modern. It showed up. It's called *Pray and Whip*. And it's a guy that has on fishnet hose, and he's handcuffed and he's on his knees and there's a transvestite with fake tits and a whip and it's like a Picasso and it's going to be in the Modern.

THEODORE KERR: So, you're painting representational at the time?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I'm painting representational. I'm painting abstract. I'm painting whatever the fuck I want to paint. I always have. I'll go on body—I do bodies of work. Like, I'll paint the figure until it's exhausted and something comes out of the figure and that's kind of how I build to what I'm doing now. Like, this is the accumulation of all—this is abstract but it's landscape but there's figures. You're the figure looking at the landscape. You're the one confronting the mirror. Are you step—you know, it's all—but it's become much more—you know, it's creativity is like a funnel and, you know, you're on the top is—it's wide at the top and as it goes down it gets smaller and smaller and re-morphed. Like, the concepts get re-morphed.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: They're more synthesis of—They're more syntheses that have—like one group would be about the surface. One—so I would get a synthesis out of the thesis. And then so that—then I would like find my color and then that would be a synthesis out of all that discovery and then there would be the body. And was it the brush? So, like 30 years you're developing the purification of ideas and taking what is the root of a body of work and taking it to the next one and dropping it. Does that make sense?

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, that makes perfect sense. It's in religious—it's not quite the same as corn in the husk, but it's like this notion that like you're full and then there's that thing that's gold and you bring that with you and you let the less—the rest fall away.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You plant the gold in the next field.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And then that grows and then you take, you know, like the mutant and you take that and that's why it's taken me so long.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: The last thing I had to find was me. You know, the me was the thing I was always looking for, but I had to have the tools. So now, like, this is—the color comes from a place, the light comes—like, I got the Gottlieb and—

THEODORE KERR: That's an award?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It's an award. And you have to present 20 years of work—of your work and you have to—and I looked at all my work and it was all, like, all over the place and I had to go, well, they want 20—they're going to think I'm like you know, schizophrenic, like *Sybil*. [Laughs.] And this is very important because I looked at my work and I said, "Okay, what story am I going to tell?" And I tied it together through light.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I told—and even though the forms changed, I presented it how the light changed and how as my spirit was illuminated, the paintings were—as the darker, the darker when it was reflections—so I showed light and it didn't matter if it was figurative or abstract or sculpture or film. And I got it, you know. And so no, I—things like the sex in my work is the sensuous and the body and the fluids and, you know, I'm very [generous -FH]—I'll let you have it.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I'll let you have the paint. I'm not like stingy. That's the sex.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You know, it's almost like the cum.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Or the—I don't—

THEODORE KERR: Just the voluptuous on the surface. Like the body.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: The carnal.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: The carnal-ness of it, you know. Like I'm not being Puritan and I'm being—

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: "Ahhh." And that's how the sex translated it. It didn't have to be a picture of someone having sex. It wasn't what I was looking at, it was what you feel from it. And that was what—that was the progression of the work. So, I always let myself do what I wanted to. I've been very lucky to be free.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, I've had to do—I mean, I'm working in a whorehouse. I was—I don't even know what I was doing. I really don't. And I mean, I kind of just [made -FH] the money. I mean, I did what I had to do.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I did what I had to do.

THEODORE KERR: And what about—like who were you friends? Like, did—were you hanging out with people at

the time?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: At what point? I mean, as I always say, I've known everyone once.

[They laugh.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I'm going to have an epitaph. "I've known everyone once." You know, that's how—

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Because I've—

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: "I have known everyone once."

THEODORE KERR: Right. Well, we're chugging a little bit along chronologically. By now we're, like, seems like—well, you're in the building on 42nd Street.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: My friends were Harvey Livingston who was—I knew from home and he was like a big, freckled, red-haired, flaming—he did wigs at the Met. And he was just wild make-up artist, and Mike Bidlo and Phillip Taaffe, who's a painter. At 42nd Street. And at some point—see, I don't know because everybody starts dying.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And that's a big retreat in my story. We haven't even—

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like, people start dying and there becomes the fear and there's a retreat of the black cloud is following you and so people are dying. And so, I don't know who my friends were anymore.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I don't know—there's a period that I just block out that I don't know who was here.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I don't know who died. I don't know who—at some point—I mean, Ann and that whole Club 57—like Ann had gone to make a movie with David Bowie, and then she left and Keith was off, you know, being a superstar, and everybody's lives just kind of took and I ended up with—living with this guy Art Garibay. And it was a very volatile relationship and I found myself in a relationship that I had given up my career. It's odd that his name's Art. [Laughs.]

THEODORE KERR: I'm not looking at you right now.

[They laugh.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like I gave up my art for Art.

THEODORE KERR: How long was that period?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: About this long.

[They laugh.]

THEODORE KERR: How long was that period?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Three years.

THEODORE KERR: Three years.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yes. And then everybody and—it was three years.

THEODORE KERR: And did it mirror your mom and dad's relationship?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, it's funny. It's like it took me that long to tell my parents that I was queer.

THEODORE KERR: Huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: When I found—when we finally broke up—

THEODORE KERR: When you and Art broke up?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I was, like, crying and crying and crying and crying and sobbing and, you know, on for days and my father was like, "This was your roommate?" And I said, "No, Dad, this was my lover. I'm gay." And then it was oh, you know, "No, you're not."

THEODORE KERR: How old were you do you think at this time?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like 20s.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, I had—I don't know how I, like, kept—like, that was my internal homophobia.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Of, I never like, "I'm gay," was like—I was living this—somehow in my mind, I still felt, like, I don't know. I was compartmentalizing a lot of stuff.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And even compartmentalizing from myself, there was some homophobia. The—well, you know, it's like movie stars, you have to have the blank—you don't—once you define it, you're—people can't get past the labels, so somehow it wasn't safe to define myself in any one way.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Eventually I had to. I mean, I got sober

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And then I had to look at all of this, like—

THEODORE KERR: Well, there's also the idea that people compartmentalize to protect those around them that they love. Like, so often gay kids like go in the closet not for themselves, but for their parents.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But see, I was never really—I guess I was in the closet, but I was never hiding in the closet.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh, uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was just none of their fucking business.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Or it seems like it was hiding in plain sight, you know? Just didn't want to talk about it.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Oh, yeah. I just think they were in denial too.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, they didn't want a—I mean, this was still North Carolina. I mean, gay. I mean, the—you know.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: This was not okay. It was not understood. I'm—it's interesting. It's interesting how out I lived, but then how internally phobic and closeted I was, even to myself.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I never made a career out of it.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like—

THEODORE KERR: But during that time, were there people—I'm thinking about who was in the public sphere at that time that was maybe—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, Rock Hudson had just—and this was—there's also this period of like ACT UP and AIDS activism.

THEODORE KERR: But are we there yet?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I don't think we are.

THEODORE KERR: No, I don't think we're there yet. I think maybe we're—there's probably Liberace. There's probably the TV show *Soap*. There's probably—and maybe in the art world—like did people—do you think—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Queer politics hadn't taken off.

THEODORE KERR: No.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No, it was the '80s. It was like—Keith was starting to do—and Mapplethorpe was starting to show some stuff. And I was painting about sex, but people—I was doing people with erections on columns.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And about how alienated everybody is, but we're all—or either there would be a big ear and we would be listing, and it would be sending out ways of us helping to act and—

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Different sexual hierarchies. But that was before all of the sexual, like, queer politics and stuff so people were like, "What?"

THEODORE KERR: And this is where the different worlds like—it's interesting, right? Because in the worlds that you all were creating, sex was a currency, but in a mass culture, it was still very much repressed.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, it was repressed and the AIDS—AIDS was starting to appear. So, but started to become like—in the religious sense of a curse and there became this big backlash. I mean, we were dying and Reagan would, you know—the politics they were not helping, and we didn't know what was happening.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, it was very scary.

THEODORE KERR: When was the first time you like even heard or caught wind of something like that HIV was happening?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Gay cancer. I read an article. My—Henry Post, he was my boyfriend. And he was the editor of [*New York Magazine* ... -FH]. He was the one that exposed the Studio 54. Anyway, I met Henry at—Warhol had a show at the Whitney and I met Henry in the middle of the Mao room and I had a wild affair with him. And I really loved Henry and he was, like, number 37, you know, AIDS person. He was the first person that I know that died.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative]. And did you know what was happening to him? Like did you—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: We didn't know. We didn't—well, in Europe I remember—in Europe I met this guy, and I was reading—I met him and he'd started whispering about there's some really bad stuff going on in America. And I was like, "Oh, yeah, whatever." And I came back and Henry got sick and we thought it was, like, brain—it was like from toxoplasmosis, you know. They were trying to figure it out. There wasn't—it wasn't a disease yet. And he got the brain—he had to have brain cancer and, you know, we didn't know what it was. It was gay cancer. It was Henry.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was, I think, 1982 or 1983. And, you know, and for me that put the fear of God in me because, you know, I had slept with someone that was sick with this stuff and it was contagious and it scared the hell out of me.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It sent me even further into the shadows.



THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Even of myself. Like, because I just waited for the sword to fall. So, it was very early.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, it was very early. It was—and I just remember they thought it was poppers and Gay Men's Health Crisis wasn't—was forming and ACT UP wasn't—hadn't happened. I mean, it was—and Cookie Mueller. It was early.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was early.

THEODORE KERR: And what were people around you saying? Do you remember?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: About?

THEODORE KERR: About death or fear of sex. Or, like, I don't know, anything that—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, when Henry—we weren't—there was a weird thing going on, like, you know, you would get your gay doctor and they would treat you for, you know, like, the different diseases and then they started getting concerned.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And so then you would see more people, and then you started seeing people getting sick and then, you know, it started dawning on us that this was contagious. And it was scary because you didn't know.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You didn't—you kind of heard about it and you didn't know if it was contagious, you didn't know what was causing it, you didn't know if it was sex, you didn't know. And you had been involved in this lifestyle for so long and, all of a sudden, it was kind of one of those things of, like, too late. I mean, you know, it's like it's kind of like it gotcha! before you knew that there was anything to get you. It was scary and people, like, went into—it was kind of like Club 57 and that whole scene it was like a bomb went off and everybody just like—and then we would come together—we didn't know what to do. We were children.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: We were children and our dreams were—there was a monster in the house. And we don't know where it is. It was scary. Because it was—it—you know, it totally changed everything.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Did you go to the baths?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I did, but I wasn't a big bath person. I mean, I went, but I always felt—I was the kind of person that it was—I would go to the baths and then I would rebel against the oh, I'm supposed to have sex? I would like—I don't want to—I only wanted to have sex when I wasn't supposed to have sex. It was kind of like this weird—like there, it became—I mean, I went but I—for some reason, when I was younger it was—I didn't need the baths.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I don't know. It was just in that period of my life, I wasn't really a part of—I mean, I went to St. Mark's Baths, I went to the—you know, I never went to the Club Baths, I went to the—but I—there was something weird about it. It was—it seemed too obvious.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: For me, I mean, I think it comes from being closeted more, like, I wanted it to be, like, secretive and the baths it seemed too, like, structured.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative]. Too—like, yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, there was a hierarchy and then this, like, male hierarchy took and it was—and I never felt attractive. I always felt—I didn't feel like I was—maybe that it was that I couldn't be the star or something.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I wasn't the prettiest person there so I didn't even want to go.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You know?

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like I'd—one on one I could meet somebody and then I would be like the—

THEODORE KERR: You'd feel special with that—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I'd feel special in that unit, but in a group unit—I worked all that shit out later.

[They laugh.]

THEODORE KERR: I feel like we—there's lots of stuff to cover so—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Oh, yeah.

THEODORE KERR: I think we should wait for next session.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Sure.

THEODORE KERR: But is there anything that you want to talk about before we go or anything you want to think about that we should talk about next time?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I don't know. It's like we're, like, 1982.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: We hit on a lot of different stuff.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I'm kind of freaked out that I'm talking about all of this.

THEODORE KERR: Okay.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, I'm fine with it. But because this—it's the truth.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And it is difficult to, like—doing these interviews and stuff is like having to relive it.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I'm—you've taken me places where I'm like, "Wow, haven't been here in a while and what was I doing and—" I mean, it's been good because you've gotten me to open up into places that haven't become, like, you know, the YouTube version.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You know, because there becomes like the stories that you tell that work and that are the stories and there's other stuff—I mean, I like—you got me to talk about stuff that I haven't maybe ever talked about.

THEODORE KERR: Huh [affirmative]. And you feel okay?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, I mean, it's out there.

[They laugh.]

THEODORE KERR: You're still here!

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah, it's—I'm fine. No, I think it's good.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, I think so too. Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, you still have your solid stories.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah, just you lead it and I'll—I'm pretty open.

THEODORE KERR: Okay. Okay. Yeah, you are. Yup. Yup. And I think you're having good boundaries when you need to.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah, I mean, I know when I'm getting—I'm trying to protect certain people and protect certain things.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, I can feel it. I can feel when I get—

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: When I get up and I have to be more strategic.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, you're being a steward.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yes.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. Cool, well, then I'm going press stop for today.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: What time is it? Okay.

THEODORE KERR: 2:46. I'm always nervous to press stop but I do it anyway.

[END OF hollid17\_1of1\_sd\_track02\_M]

[END OF hollid17\_1of1\_sd\_track03\_M]

This is Theodore Kerr interviewing Frank Holliday on January 26, 2017 at his studio in Brooklyn, New York, tape two.

Good afternoon, Frank.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Hey.

THEODORE KERR: I wonder if you want to just share a little bit about the experience of being interviewed the other day.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I found it very informative and all sorts of stuff came up. I thought after talking to you, it should be called "The Long Shadow" because I feel like it has been this whole process of, like, the shadow that followed me, or that I hid in. And the work in being an artist has all been in the process of, you know, putting the shadow behind me instead of in front of me.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And it was really—is about I felt like I had lived in the closet, or I had lived so hidden for so many of my years, like, being in the middle of everything, but being—using either other people to shield me or either using, like, the construction of myself to shield myself. And, like, what a process that is—

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —how long it took.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I also I felt like, you know, art could be, like, the diary of an art whore, you know. It's—I felt like, you know, we've really hit on—I didn't realize about how much sex and commerce and all of that had taken part in my life.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, this is, like, an interview about being an artist, but I found it interesting that we were talking about life and how much that had a—to do with my work, whether my work was about that or not—

THEODORE KERR: Huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —coming to the realization of yeah, my paintings are still about that. It's the no-reflective mirror to the window to the body to, like, you know, being an older, gay man and not having the commodity of beauty that I have to create beauty to—

THEODORE KERR: Huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —it's kind of, like, the opposite. I grow older and the paintings grow more beautiful. It's kind of, like, opposite of Dorian Gray, you know.

THEODORE KERR: Is that something that you're—that you're conscious of when you're making work, or was that something that kind of dawned on you in the last few days?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, I've been dealing with gay men and aging beauty for a while in my work, like, having to validate why I'm—want to make beautiful paintings instead of socially conscious or conceptual, not-beautiful paintings. And I have been thinking about the idea about how, like, "image" in being a gay man is very youth and image, and is so important. And how as a gay man, I had very few role models to use, to, you know, the aging gay man. And being a [... -FH] not, you know, being—identifying with a group that's based on having sex with another man, it—things shift, you know, or my desires shift.

And so, you know, I've been [thinking -FH], like, why do I—why do I paint beautiful things? Why am I really interested in beauty and ugliness? And just talking to you, we talked about, you know, my grandmother and her flowers or dancing or performing or painting, and about how that's always been in my life and now it's coming through beautiful paintings. It's, like, in the art world, they always want you to, like, have a reason for doing something. And so, instead of, like, finding a reason and then illustrating the reason, now I'm letting myself do something and have the realizations around, like, oh, look what's coming out. What is it?

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And so you—the interview helped me. I was very surprised at it.

THEODORE KERR: Great.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But I was also, like, oh, my God. Is Trump going to come and, like, put me in a Concentration Camp?

THEODORE KERR: Right.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, I've never felt that before. Like, oh, my God, I'm disclosing so much information that, you know, they could—we got our self one. Let's get him. Get him out of here.

THEODORE KERR: You didn't feel that during Reagan or Bush?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No. No, I felt I could—we were fighting. This I feel confused.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And, like, where is—where—what could we do?

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You know, it's, like, I feel the—where are—where is the other side? Where are the lawyers? Where is—who's stopping? Who's, you know, it's scary and then, all of the sudden, I feel, like, oh, my god. I am a gay man. I am—I do need healthcare. I'm a sick gay man. I—it's, like, my—I live with a Mexican. Luckily, he has his citizenship, but it's really scared me.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It scared me a lot. So, I was, like, oh, my God. Am I telling too much? But then I guess I'm telling what I'm telling. I think you're a good interviewer. You pulled shit out that I've never talked about.

THEODORE KERR: Well—[laughs]—I hope it's okay.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It's okay.

THEODORE KERR: Okay.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, I just want—I just need some encouragement that it's okay.

THEODORE KERR: I mean, yeah, I—how can I explain this? So, I listened to it this morning to put all the key words in, and I can understand why you feel what I would call the shamesies, but it's such a beautiful, coherent narrative and it does start with beauty. And as much as sex and commerce is a thread, so is beauty and so is self-preservation and so is, like, wanting to swim forwards. You have this beautiful knack of, like, diving in and then knowing when it's—getting a sense that it's time to go and then moving forward.

And that's, like, a common theme in your life, and so I think it'll be interesting in this second half of the interview to see, like, where did—where did swimming take you and this really good thing that you do is, like, you'll go—you'll go to the past and then you'll talk about the present. And I think that that's really healthy, and I think that'll be good for your mental health going forward so you don't get stuck in nostalgia, which is, you know, a really shitty place to end up.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, I've done all that work.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You know, I've done all the past and made peace and amends with the past. And I'm not—I am headed towards the future.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You know, I'm—I did all of that work—

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —to be able to look back and—but not live there.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I've worked that out. So yeah, I'm—I've had to teach myself how to keep going forward, but, you know, spill all of that out in, like, a three-hour period and it's, like, ugh!

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I'm such a whore.

[They laugh.]

THEODORE KERR: I don't think—yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I'm just kidding.

THEODORE KERR: I don't think you're a whore.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I think it's important though—

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —because I think it's being a gay man to survive all of this and to go through the whole beginning of the move—from the beginning of the movement to really show that arc—

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —of what you really had to go through in order to get here.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, and you contextualize it along the way. You talk about how sex was an important form of communication in the communities you were growing up in. So, you put on the public record for historical information.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

THEODORE KERR: It's interesting to hear. It's—I'm sure nobody will be scandalized by it.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

THEODORE KERR: And it's historic information because people don't understand. If you're not—if you're not a gay man like us, it can be really hard to understand.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You're gay?

[They laugh.]

THEODORE KERR: Yes. It can be very hard to understand how these communities work, and it can be easy to judge it, right?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

THEODORE KERR: So Trump is never going to listen to this, but if he does listen to this, hopefully, he gains insights, you know.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I'm not going to count on it.

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But you know what I mean?

THEODORE KERR: Absolutely.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, I find the reason I don't really think he would do it, but I find it an interesting week to do this and how much of a change it feels that a shift in a new era.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And we—this is the beginning of it and we don't know what that is—where that is going.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And it's just—it's, like, why am I thinking about Concentration Camps? I mean, I did remember thinking about Concentration Camps. I remember we were at a gay march and it kind of—it was in the middle of the AIDS epidemic and it was down on Christopher Street. And everybody was, like, it felt like we were being pushed towards the water. And I turned to my friend and I said, you know, "There's a ship down there and they're going to load us all on the ship and they're going to take us out and dump us in the ocean." Because that was the atmosphere, then. And we were, like, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha. Yeah, history is a ship. You know, it was that kind of—we felt that before.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You know, and we were sick and we were the plague and we were—we were pariahs.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So, I mean, I—it's not the first time I felt this in my life.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But it's the first time I felt that this week.

THEODORE KERR: And I don't know if it's true, but you said it feels different.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It feels different, yes, because—I don't know why it feels different. Then it was about being sickness and the shame and not knowing and really being stigmatized for being sick and gay, and that it was, like, a Christian punishment and it was being—everybody was dying. So, it was different. Now it seems even bigger in a weird way, but not as desperate, but it's still, you know, I was, like, it's more like a slow death instead of, like, a—just when is it going, you know, because the whole AIDS thing. It was really scary. We didn't know.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Until what? Meds came out in '94, so before that, it was, like, tick tock. We're just sitting there waiting. Who's next?

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, I think a difference is—because a lot of people have been talking about how, like, the

AIDS activism movement can help us in this moment, and I think that's good to think about, but also the big difference is AIDS was something specific. Even though it was an umbrella under which lots was contained, there was specific targets, whereas right now, there's so many targets. There's so many moving parts and it's not clear.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

THEODORE KERR: So, I think that's a big difference. Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: And it's a question of humanity. I don't know. I wasn't there. I don't know if people were wondering about Reagan's humanity or Bush's humanity, but I definitely know that—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: —I question Trump's humanity.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yes, they were.

THEODORE KERR: They were?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: We were, like, how can you not do something? We put the quilt all the way down in front—I mean, it covered the whole mall, you know, in front of the White House.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was, like, the most devastating thing I've ever seen in my life and they're, like, oh, kind of, like, you know, oh, you know, dismissive.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like, let's pretend like it's not there. This doesn't feel like a death march. This feels more like a revolution in a weird way, but it's going to be hard to—I don't think it's going to be hard. It's just going to, you know, take organization and a lot of anger. Anyway.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, that was good.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So—and another thing, you know, in the high school thing, I do think it's important for my artist—my artist career is that when I went back to North Carolina School of the Arts—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —I had my last year there. We had the Reynolda Plantation. The Reynolda House is, like, in the '20s, it was Reynolds Tobacco—

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —and it was, like, a beautiful mansion.

THEODORE KERR: Huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And they collected all, like, Bierstadt, and all the Hudson River school and they had a Pollock. They had, like, a Rothko and it was this beautiful house with, you know, like, Church paintings and Innesses and it was the grand, like, Americana, turn of the century. And that's where I had—they include—they put English, art history, and regular history as one course. And that's where it was—it was in the living room of this place with all of these paintings around us and we would study the literature of the period, the history of the period, and the art history of the period.

THEODORE KERR: Wow.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And so we would get it all, like, the, like, what was—why was this happening and why was the art. So, I kind of was, in high school, we would sit there every week and take history in front of, like, these great magnificent, you know, Hudson River—American landscape paintings of shimmering light. And that was a huge

influence in my work and in my life. And I just thought that was a really important thing to remember, the American painters that I was subliminally influenced by.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like, they're talking about history and you're staring at, like, the glimmering sunset over the Andes.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative]. So, you're getting an education through all your senses.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yes.

THEODORE KERR: Huh [affirmative]. That seems important.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Very important, without even, like, it being—you're not even learning about it, but you're—the installation is around you.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And then, like, coming to New York and having to learn about all the modernism and, like, the conceptual art and the this, and the that, and the other, and how at some point, I had to return to my first real experiences of art, of, like, why did I make art? And what was that inspiration? What was that desire to want to make it? And I—and I returned back there or returned back to that place and those paintings, and remembering, like, I was just, like, 16 years old and just shimmering and in awe of this work.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And that—I had to return to love, in order to continue on.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, let's go backwards and forwards a little bit.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Okay.

THEODORE KERR: Our—the last tape ended in 1982.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

THEODORE KERR: I mean, when I was doing research, I came across this beautiful quote from—that you said in 1997, so I thought we could start with it.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

THEODORE KERR: In 1997, you wrote, "Although the diagnosis of HIV is a heavy moment in one's life, it is also a powerful moment, a reassembling of the self and one's identity. It's a moment of spiritual power."

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yes.

THEODORE KERR: And I wonder if you just want to reflect on that and talk about, like, where that quote came from. And then maybe we can work our way backwards.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, I didn't get diagnosed until 1994—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —and I was working for Disney.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. [Laughs.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I, you know, I had been—I hadn't—I wouldn't get tested. I just decided that I would die.

THEODORE KERR: Because you had a sense that you were maybe living with HIV?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah, I knew it.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I knew it. I was, like, well, you know, I'll just die. Everybody else has died and—

THEODORE KERR: When do you think you first, like, it clicked? You admitted it to yourself that probably you



were living with HIV?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I think from the very beginning of 1982, I knew that—I mean, I was, like, I mean, I was—knew all the people that were dying—[laughs]—and I had slept with all of them. So, it was—and then there wasn't a test and I was just so afraid. I was afraid of—I was just so afraid. It scared me and, you know, safe sex and I was, you know, I was practicing what I could, but I was too scared. I mean, I was a real chicken. I was doing ACT UP and I was doing all that, but again, it was, like, in the closet. It was the weirdest—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I just figured I would die. You know, okay, I'll die and what happened was, I think in '94, I was in Washington, D.C., painting a show for *Beauty and the Beast* at the Kennedy Center. And I would—they put me out in, like, the rain and I was—it was damp and cold and I was having to, like, spray paint the costumes. And I, like, was—had a fever and I was sick and I just remember I made a mistake and I was feeling so—I had, like, a 104 fever. And I spray painted Belle's costume with a black and I—they were so mad at me.

And I went back to the hotel and I—and I went to the—I went to the hospital and they told me I had the flu and to take some aspirin. I came back in the hotel room and then I was so sick, and I woke up, like, naked in the corner two days later.

And I just remember the last thing—the *X Files* was on TV and then—and I was covered in sweat. And I—and the phone was ringing and it was Disney going, "Where are you? Where are you? Where are you? We're going to fire you. We're going to—" I'm, like, ugh. And I knew—well, earlier I had—I had—I looked in the mirror and I had white spots on my tongue in, like, three weeks before. So, I kind of thought—I was, like, the shock of it, like, okay, I know I have it. And then I knew I was going to die. It was, like, this weird moment of something happened to where I knew I was going to die. I just knew it. I said, "I'm dying." And so, I decided—my first thought was I don't want to cause anybody a hassle of having to transport my body from Washington to Greensboro. So, what I'll do is I'll fly home and I'll die at home. Like, that makes sense, right? I have a fear of going back home in a body bag. It's, like, one of the things I don't—it's kind of embarrassing. [Laughs.]

THEODORE KERR: But it was easier to plan for death than to get tested?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Okay.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yes, it was. It was—it was easier to—yes. Well, but getting tested, what are they going to do, wipe you out with AZT? I had seen all my friends get tested and then they kill them with the drugs and I was, like, I didn't have health insurance. I didn't have, you know, I had nothing and so I went back to North Carolina and my little sister, like, took me. I was really sick and took me to the—to the hospital and I remember that last sunset. I—it was, like, going—the sunset was going and I was, like, oh, my God. This is the last sunset. It was, like, this weird moment and I got to the hospital and they, you know, put me in intensive care and there was all the tape, like, the wow, danger, danger. And they were all in their—

THEODORE KERR: Oh, wow.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —their suits and—

THEODORE KERR: You were quarantined?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I was quarantined and I was—and, you know, I knew it. I mean, I knew it.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I remember sitting in the bed—[laughs]—and the TV was on and the Tonys were on. And, you know, so I had been there and they had to put me in oxygen and, you know, it was, you know, they were trying—they were saving—trying to save my life. And I was looking at the Tonys and all of the sudden, these three doctors come in, like, in their quarantine space suits.

THEODORE KERR: Like, hazmat suits, yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Hazmat suits and they kind of, like, three of them and they, like, are up against the wall, like, all the way across the room. And they're, like, up against the wall and they're, like, "Mr. Holliday?" And I was, like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah." "We need to talk to you." And I'm, like, "Wait, wait, wait, wait. Liza's on."

[They laugh.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And she was. Liza was there and, "Liza's on!" And then they said—then they asked me, "Mr. Holliday, are you a ho, ho, ho?" And I went, "Am I ho?"

[They laugh.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And they went, "Are you a homosexual?" And I went, "Liza's on."

[They laugh.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like, really? You're going to—really? And I was, like, "Yeah." And they said, well, you know, we think you have AIDS and then we're doing the test. And they came back and I had 32 T cells.

THEODORE KERR: Wow.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like, I always think about it like pearls, some—32 pearls. And they treated me, but then they said, "Look, there's nothing we can do for you." So—

THEODORE KERR: What year do you think this was?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Maybe—we can look. It's, like, two weeks before the meds came out.

THEODORE KERR: So—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: '94?

THEODORE KERR: Well, we say that the meds came out in '96, but I think—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: '96. It was '96.

THEODORE KERR: Okay.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It came out in '96 and they basically said, "Look, there's nothing we can do for you. We've never seen so much virus." It was, like, millions of virus.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: "And you have the pneumonia, pneumocystis."

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: "And there's nothing we can do and so we're going to send you home with oxygen and you need to prepare to die. You probably have, at the most, three months to live." I was, like, "Oh, great." But it was—but, you know, I had done enough work to myself. I was sober. I had made amends. I had kind of made some peace with it and it was the oddest thing that this calmness came over me.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It wasn't, like, crying and tears, and I'm going to run out and use drugs. It was I had such gratitude that I was ready to go if I had to. I had done the work. The only thing that I resented was they sent me home and my—I had always given my mother the—I'd—the habit of giving her, like, cherry picking my work and giving it to her because I learned that if I don't give it away or I don't sell it, there's a possibility it may not exist. It may not make it through it and there was—I was lying in her living room on the couch with my oxygen tank. And there was all this beautiful work around and I looked at the work, and it was all so good.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And it had been so good for so long. And in my mind, it's, you know, up until that point, it wasn't the success of some of my friends and contemporaries so it was shit.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And it was a moment of, like, "Oh, my God. I've been a really incredible painter for all these years and this is what I'm leaving." And the only resentment I had is that I wasn't going to be able to take it as far as I could've taken it. I was, like, this is as far as I got and there's so much further to go.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: There was so much further to go and that was my only resentment, is that I couldn't—I

wasn't going to be able to take it to its maximum peak of my human ability.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: That was the resentment, but then I looked back and I said God, what an incredible life I've had. Look at all these people. I've known the greatest people of my generation and every generation. You know, and it wasn't—I was—I don't think it was a fluke. I think our minds and the creativity and they attracted, you know, it's, like, it's not because I'm stupid. It's not just because I was pretty or it was, like, there was other stuff going on in my life. I had been carried through everything. So, it was interesting. I found the death sentence peaceful, but the pain was watching everybody else suffer, and I didn't know that people cared for me so much. I didn't know people loved me so much and how upset they were.

THEODORE KERR: Starting with your family?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Family and friends and I mean, you know, we never tell each other that we love each other. We never show it and then, all of the sudden, they're, like, you're dying and that was—and I was sitting in bed, so I was, like, in bed having to take care of them. It was very interesting.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So, the spirituality was—that we—this is it. You got to do it. You've got to pay attention and that I was lucky. Okay, and so then I come home and I remember my older sister, Lynn, bringing me an article, that article with Dr. Ho. It said we found drugs. That was two weeks. I held out. I'm—must have a very strong constitution because I held out until two weeks.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: For two weeks before it happened, and all my friends had died. They didn't have this—it was, like, a window—a window of two weeks, which was amazing to me.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, it's surreal.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like, that's kind of calling it close or either you're the luckiest person around or—and the spiritual moment was you've got grace and you—how far can you take this?

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: How far can, you know, it's, like, you've been given another day. What can you do with your day to try to make it the greatest day and to—and then the paintings became about service. And the paintings, the work became about a gift, something I could give and it changed the work. And I wanted someone—I mean, what happened was I started going, "Would anybody looking at my work have any idea who Frank really was?"

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: "Would they know what I cared about?"

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: "Would they know what I thought was important? Would they—" and then the realizations were, like, this. I wanted it to be about, like, I had painted about death so much—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —that, all of the sudden, I started painting about what it meant to be alive. It's not, like, am I going towards death, what is that march like? Now it's, like, what is the difference between the doom of death and the gift of life and the aliveness? What is the mark? What is—I mean, I looked at a Velázquez once in Spain. And I was standing there, and there was, like, these brush strokes that he was so generous [with paint -FH] and letting us have, and I swear it looked like he just put down the brush and walked out. And he was so generous at giving us the humanness of him, his mark, his—I felt the presence of him. He wasn't trying to get rid of the presence. He was, like, this is my mark and I just felt it and it changed my work. It changed—it was a process where I started what does it mean to be alive? What is the sunset—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —that I saw? Why was that so important in my brain? Because that was something—and now the sunset and the sunrise become so important. It's another day that I lived and, like, the sunset or the landscape becomes my soup can. Like, I was always looking for my soup can. When everybody has the

landscape, and everybody has the sunset or the sun, and about how magnificent that is and it's so available to everyone. And so instead of—so it became, like, this thing of being generous in the work. It wasn't really about selling and it wasn't about showing it. It was about giving it. That was a spiritual awakening.

THEODORE KERR: How did you go from Lynn bringing you the article about Dr. Ho to painting again?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: God, Lynn brought it and then I'd spoke to my friend. I called somebody in New York. His name, Bill Cullum, and he worked for Dr. Sonnabend. And I called him and he said, "Frank, get out of that hospital. Get out of there. You're not going to die. Get your ass back to New York. I'll send you to see Dr. Sonnabend." And Dr. Sonnabend was a very, very important doctor. He's, like, the one who they Xed out and blackballed, but he had—was the one who saved all the blood that he noticed AIDS starting to happen. He started amfAR and all of these—and then because he's totally insane, they kind of, like, I mean, he was, like, the outspoken, like, we—and then, you know, the woman took over. And now he quit practicing and is in—studying music, but he was a great doctor.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And he was in a little, like, dirty brownstone in Chelsea with, like, you know, like, papers everywhere, and he saved my life.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So, Bill—I came back and he was, like, "Snap out of it." Like, Cher and I came and I went and he saved my life. But, you know, there was no medical so I had to, like, go onto ADAP and Medicare and basically be, you know, to go through that whole system of, you know, food stamps and no money. I had no money. I mean, it was, like, a very tough time.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And you're fighting for your life and you're having to, like, I would—wasn't I just in a limousine with Andy? And now I'm, like, in this, like, welfare line in order to get healthcare and save my life. And it was an intense time, so—but I never stopped painting.

THEODORE KERR: Oh, wow.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I was, like, free to go—[laughs]—to bed with, like, the, you know, I came back to New—I mean, I—that was my only—

THEODORE KERR: Like, you still had your studio on 42nd then?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No. No, I had a—there's a whole period that we're missing, but I left New York, and then I came back to New York and I had a loft on 10th Avenue and 18th Street. And it was, like, 2,000 square feet for, like, \$800 a month, and I—and I rented out a room for, like, \$600 a month. So, I was—I had figured out—and so I painted, but I don't even know what work I made. It—I don't even know what work I was making. I think it was a mess for a while and—well, I went to Australia. We talked about going to Australia—

THEODORE KERR: Oh.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —and then I had the real—the spirit, like, painting the sunset, like, a realization of who's Frank Holliday and this is it. And then comes—continue from there, to leads me to where I am today.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative]. So, that was before diagnosis? So, between 1982 and 1996, that's when, like, the—you know what a Frank Holliday is breakthrough-wise?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No, that was after.

THEODORE KERR: Oh, that was after.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: That was after.

THEODORE KERR: That's amazing.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: That was after because I was in a show about AIDS.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. In Australia.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I had—and I had done—well, I—when was—9/11 was—

THEODORE KERR: 2001.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: 2001.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I had a show. It was called *Trippin' in America*.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And it was, like, wild, like, it was in a breakthrough show for me.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I got *New York Times* and I had that show because I—Bill Cullum, who saved my life, brought Nick Debs, who was the director of Visual AIDS to my studio. And then he decided to open a gallery, and then he showed me. And I did this amazing show and then I went back to Europe and I went to Spain. And then I came back and I started doing—wait, that's not—that's not it all. I had three shows with him and—

THEODORE KERR: Was it Debs and Company?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Debs and Company.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And the first—I started using a computer. Somebody showed me a computer and I was—I quit smoking cigarettes and I had gotten sober because of my health, you know, and actually I was—this is all—I was six years sober when I got my diagnosis. So, I was sober and I had quit smoking cigarettes and I had started cutting up magazines. I was doing these paintings based on—I went to Mexico and I saw this wall of skulls that were stacked up and they were, like, trophies. And so, I started doing these geometric stacked skull painting that were geometric and painterly. And that was still about death and then I started taking them on the computer and, you know, you'd push a button and it was, like, de Kooning, de Kooning, de Kooning, de Kooning. And then they were photo realistically done. They were kind of amazing. I was selling all of them and then I found myself, like, I could teach somebody to do this and that's not where I want to be because it's so getting farther and farther and farther away from the actual touch. And so, then I started doing the eye paintings, which were about—I would use eyes—my eyes and put them in the painting. And so, it was, like, the people look—and I would use my friends that died.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I would—so people were looking at you. The painting was looking at you and then the paint became very thick and the body. So, it was, like, the body deteriorating and then the soul of the spiritual, the eyes, looking at you. And that show was probably one of the best shows I ever did, but it was the most unsuccessful show.

THEODORE KERR: *Trippin' in America*?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No, not *Trippin'*.

THEODORE KERR: Oh.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: This was called *The Rafa Series*.

THEODORE KERR: *The Rafa*.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: That was my boyfriend, Rafael, but it was so gruesome. And it was really about the pain.

THEODORE KERR: It sounds—yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was gruesome and haunting and it was too much. And the—this was the, you know, and so then I did *Trippin' in America*. I said no—Elizabeth Murray, who was a great artist, who was my teacher. She came to my studio and I had—they were just tumultuous—and she said, "Well, you know, these are incredible, but," she said, "I'm, you know, I see the eye and it—then [she said], "What's behind—go into the eye, like, don't be afraid to go through the eye."

THEODORE KERR: Wow.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Go through eye. What's—and so then I went through the eye and this was, like, going in to

Oz. It was, like, opening that door to—she said, "Go through it. Don't be afraid. You're, like, they're looking at you. Don't be afraid to go through the eye." And that was an incredible studio visit because she sat there and talked to me about how she's trying to make as many paintings as she can because she's getting older and she doesn't know, like, how many more paintings that she'll have to do. And then the last time I saw her was, like, two years later and she had been diagnosed with cancer and she was having a retrospective at MoMA. And all of her hair was gone, was off, and I hugged her at her show and that was the last time I saw her. I mean, we—and we—I talked about AIDS. And she said, "Well, you know, you're dealing with, you know, your mortality, too. Like, how many paintings do you have to go?" Keith talks about that in his diaries and stuff. Like, how far do—can I get? So then I did *Trippin' in America* and that was kind of the breakthrough show for me.

THEODORE KERR: There's lots there, whoa.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I know.

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.] A lot of times, people talk about once they get on the meds, it's almost like a Lazarus effect. They seem to, like, just, like, come forth anew and it sounds like maybe that's what happened with you. But do you remember that transition from starting the meds to kind of feeling quote, unquote healthy again?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No, because I, you know, I was—I'm so tough.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And my body is so resistant and I can—I can—I can—I'm—the only way that I would even, like, the only—I think I have such a tolerance for pain and taking it.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Taking it, taking it. I can take it. I can take, you know, that was my father.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You're tough. You can take it. Nothing gets you down. You will, you know, that it took me, like, you know, like, hours from dying to even, like, go oh, maybe I'm sick. I mean, so—

THEODORE KERR: Thirty-two T cells, yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Right, it was—I didn't know. I was going, like, I don't—you ain't getting me down.

THEODORE KERR: So you didn't feel sick?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I didn't feel—I felt sick for, like, two weeks.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But then I was so weak.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Coming back, it was—I was so weak. I didn't realize, like, the pneumonia takes a real toll on your body. The odd thing about that was, you know, I lost, like, 40 pounds. I was, like, 170 pounds and everybody was like, "God, you look great." I was like, "Yes, AIDS becomes me." It was, like, insane. Like, that's how crazy I am, is oh, look. I look great, but I'm dying. Oh, at least I'll be pretty. It was, like, and, you know, the—so Lazareth—but for me, it's been a slow Lazareth.

THEODORE KERR: Well, I wonder if sobriety was a different—was, like, a different version of that. Like, what made you—what led you to sobriety?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Death. Well, wanting to die. Just feeling like such a failure and feeling—I mean, I think it might've been the HIV and all of that, like, the body, you know, gets depressed and sick and it affect—your mind is—your brain is part of your body. And as it gets sick, it gets sick and, you know, I—all my—you know, it was—I had a lot to drink and drug over.

[They laugh.]

THEODORE KERR: Absolutely.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, I—to deal with the death and all of your friends and it's not a reality that you're

prepared for.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And the art world, it wasn't happening and so the, you know, your—if you're an alcoholic, it's a progressive disease. If you start at 13, by the time you're 33, it's progressed.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I wanted to die.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I kept waking up.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So I—some—I was going to kill myself and then somebody—I was the weirdest—it was—all right, I had a couple of shows in New York and I left town. And I moved—thought I'd move back home and I moved back to Greensboro, North Carolina. And it was a horrible—it was a horrible time, but I got sober down there and I was on my phone to the—my dealer and I said, "Well, you know, I think after six months," I said, "I want to come back to New York." He says, "Hold on. I have another call." Beep, beep, and then he said, "Oh, well, found you a place. It's a loft on, you know, 18th Street. It's, you know, \$900 a month and you can move in next month."

THEODORE KERR: Wow.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I was, you know, \$900!

[They laugh.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I moved back, so it was, like, I mean, I have been carried along and I have been taken care of, and I have been looked after and I have been shepherded.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You know, I—and sobriety was like that too. I mean, I was so angry and disappointed and tired and, you know, I was not a happy camper.

THEODORE KERR: And were you angry at the art world or at individuals or—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Everybody.

THEODORE KERR: Everybody.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah, I was angry at everybody.

THEODORE KERR: Like, people who had success, people who—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Mostly people—[laughs]—who had—well, just, you know, relationships and art world and AIDS and, you know, some really shitty stuff had happened.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And a lot of disappointment, and a lot of not being recognized or included or looked over or judged. The art world's very—I mean, I was looking for—well, I remember Elizabeth Murray came to my studio. Again, she was very important to me. And she said, you know, "These paintings are great, but I'm looking around." It was—I had, like, a mattress in the corner. And she said, "Well, so what else do you have going on?" And I was, like, well, you know, blah, blah, blah and I'm—maybe do this show and thinking blah, blah, blah and this—she says, "I'm not talking about art or the art world. What else do you have going on in your life?" And I was, like, it was, like, huh? And I said—and she basically said, "Get a life, Frank. Build something outside of this art world. Start with getting a couch."

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: "Get a table. You're alone. You're not—there's no nest here. You're not preparing for anybody else to share it. It's, like, you're living for this art and then everything is so dependent upon the art and it being accepted by this art world that is not a loving place. It is a business and it is competition." And it's, you know,

it's not let's hold hands and oh, I'll bring my friends along.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It's very competitive and disappointing and you're up and then you're out. You're in and then you're out or, you know, it's—and there's lots of—lots of stuff that happens. It's, like, some people get a lot of money and then they can make the production grow.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And then it kind of—and other people—and I wasn't one of the people that got a lot of money.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And it was, like, I was literally having to work at whore—the whore house to buy a tube of paint.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You know, and so there seems some unfairness there.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And so I was lucky and I got sober.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And was it a hard process? Like, did you go through AA? Did you have friends that—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No, I had AA. NA and AA.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Oh, it was just horrendous.

[They laugh.]

THEODORE KERR: It was a long process?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, it was.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah, it—

THEODORE KERR: Did your friend groups change before and after?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, I really didn't have any friends by the time I got there.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I didn't want any friends. I had pretty much pushed everybody out. You know, friends for me are—it's too painful.

THEODORE KERR: Right, especially at that time, it sounds like.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was just too painful. You—why get attached to somebody if they're either going to fuck you over or die?

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You know, but that was just my headset. I don't feel that way now. I mean, I'm—I have—I don't love people now, but I don't hate them either.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah, sobriety was difficult.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].



FRANK HOLLIDAY: And learning to make art was difficult.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Because my art was wrapped up in, like, drugs and taking drugs and needing drugs and thinking I needed the drugs to make me creative. And—which was a big lie, and I had to learn how to let go without them. I had to learn how to let the process happen without them. I had to pay attention to myself and my personal life.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And, you know, that was then. I had to sit in rooms and be vulnerable. I had to—but, you know, what was funny was I went to—I showed up at, you know, in the program and I wondered where everybody was. There they were. Everybody—there were—it was, like,—and they were, like, "Hi, Frank. We were wondering when you were going to get here." So, you know, it was kind of a movement at one time where, you know, everybody was—it was kind of everybody ended up there. The AIDS thing really forced people to either die or get sober or move to L.A., I always say.

[They laugh.]

THEODORE KERR: Which is a combination of both. [Laughs.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So, it was a process and then learning how to paint and to make art again and to, like, the drugs and alcohol had really robbed me and had me thinking that it was them that was responsible for it, that I needed that, that right? So, then that's a way and I, you know, I had to learn how to pay attention to myself again. That took a long time.

THEODORE KERR: Was it a similar relationship to sex as well after you got—after sobriety?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Oh, sex. I didn't, you know, I didn't really have a lot of sex in early sobriety.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Because the kind of, like, you know, kind of stay away from that because then you're, like, just acting out on somebody else. I wasn't in shape to have sex, so I—the sex kind of went away for a while.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And no, it was—no, I kind of—I mean I might have had some, but no, it wasn't—I was kind of too damaged to have sex.

THEODORE KERR: Its role—sex's role in your life your changed after sobriety.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: And then what seems amazing to me is you were diagnosed in 1996, and then the big breakthrough show, *Trippin' in America*, is 2001, and that's, like, I mean, that—those five years are so under discussed and yet it seemed like you were in a rare and important position to kind of talk about those five years. Like, what was life between diagnosis and then that show? Because that's also—we're talking about 9/11. We're talking about, you know, people getting on the meds.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, I remember as I talked about coming back here and then having to enter into the medical—the medical, social, medicine, welfare, and it was very eye opening to go to find—well, you can get—you can't have any money. You can't have any assets. You can't have anything in order for us to help you, but then you're put in a class of people that is not below you or above you, but socially, you're, you know, it was—I was with, you know, I remember, like, standing in line to get lunch at social programs and, like, you know, somebody turning to me and saying, "What are you in for?" Like, it was prison. It was a very odd, you know, I'm just a delicate flower from North Carolina. It was very eye opening to deal with—to have to come to terms with the reality that I had been avoiding all those—not avoiding, I didn't even know existed.

THEODORE KERR: Right, because your class difference before was, like, you were the poor one and you were dealing with, like, the Biancas and the Lizas, but now you're in a position of, like, you were living with people who were living in poverty, who had always lived in poverty.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah, I was, like, I was—I was, like, my—the bottom of where—what I thought was starving and horrible was, like, a movie star life compared to the people that I was now having to deal with. And so, accept that I was no better than, that it was—and, you know, going to AA and then being involved in, like, groups of people that also had problems.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: That also had defects and—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —assets and were not perfect and learning—I had to—I had to learn how to love myself and by the time I got there, I was so disappointed and so angry and so self-loathing that, you know, it saved my life. I—and I had to, like, come to grips with being sick and I also—I had almost died. There's a humbling thing to that and I got—and I got on, like, the—in the '40s, it was the PWA—no, the WPA and I always think the PWA grant. You know, it was—so I was on the PWA program.

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And—but, you know, they gave me enough money. For the first time in my life, I had a paycheck, you know. I—

THEODORE KERR: Steady income.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, but it was—I got to paint. I could—people were giving me paints and Visual AIDS was giving me paints and people were giving me paints. And people started being supportive to me again because I was—and it pissed me off because I was, like, a charity case. That really bugged me.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I—then I got into odds with, like, the AIDS community because they were, like, we have AIDS and they're, you know, I should be, like, famous. And I'm, like, why should you be famous because you have AIDS? You have to work and make great art. It's, like, you—it can't be just because you have AIDS, why should you be famous?

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And they didn't like that, but I just think that that in itself is discriminatory. Like, make great work and that's why I always wanted to—that's how I wanted my respect and any kind of notoriety to come because the work was great, not because of being a gay man or a, you know, whatever.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was something—that's something for me. I mean, I'm—God bless all of them that are—they work—they worked it, but for me, it was really important for—I've been around all these, like, really successful famous people. But I always felt like I didn't want to use them or snuggle up to them because of who they were. I wanted to be renowned for who I was—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —and what my contribution was.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You know, I guess—I don't know. I don't know why. Now I think, you know, I could've gotten 20 Warhols if I had worked it right, but, you know, so that became very important to me, but it also became very important for me to be humbled into Frank, this is the reality. You have so much more than anybody, so many other people. And it made me take notice of this—so many people. And, you know, working with people that were not from my background—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —working with really, really people struggling for their lives in sobriety and in the AIDS community.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And it kind of had to bring me down to earth in a certain way.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: That was—so I was dealing with getting sober and I was dealing with going to, you know, some—the programs and I—and people started coming in that I knew. And I started making really beautiful friendships because I was allowing myself to be vulnerable. I wasn't isolated. I was—people—I would say, "You know, I hate all of you and I want to rip your faces off." And they're like, "Want to go out to coffee?" You know, I was, like, what? I mean, I had been in such a sea of sharks.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like, I ran with—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —really great people, but very tough people. And, all of the sudden, there were these people, like, I could—people were, like, kind to me.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You know, they were kind to me and you were asking me about tenderness.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I think this was the first time I felt any tenderness because it wasn't about me being an artist and it wasn't about who I knew and it wasn't about—it was about who was Frank. And it turned into, like, my experience and all of this history could help somebody else. So, all of the wreckage of my past, as they call it, turned into strength and hope for somebody else. So instead of, like, the curse of the shadow dragging, it was—it became valuable.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And that was a big realization because I felt, like, a lot of my work, I had lost all my work and that has something to [deal -FH] with—if my work is myself and my body and I lose it and I don't take care of it and I—it doesn't matter. I mean, I felt such, like, such a failure—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —that I [hated -FH] the work out of me because it was never Keith, or it was never great.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was always shit.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And it was kind of a reminder of, like, how unsuccessful I had become. I can't believe I'm saying this. So yeah, that's when everything changed and so there was a lot to deal with in sobriety. And I had to get a job.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh, uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I had to go—I had to get to the point where I was, like, maybe I'm not going to be a star.

THEODORE KERR: Huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Maybe I'm not going to be a painter. Maybe I'm not going to be recognized. Maybe I'm not going to, you know, and so I got a—I got a job and I had to start at the beginning. And then I got sick and then I got on the AIDS—the AIDS program and that bought me some time. And I got well and I just, you know, the career kicked back in. I tried to make it, make it, make it, and then I, you know, and then I—Nick Debs and I mean, it kind of developed in there.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I met my boyfriend. I met my husband.

THEODORE KERR: During that period?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

THEODORE KERR: When?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I better know this.

[They laugh.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Nineteen years ago, so that's 19—

THEODORE KERR: Well, let's pretend it's 20 years ago, and so 20 years ago would be—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: '98.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: 1998 and that changed my life. I mean, I—and I was walking down—you know I was walking down—I'd been visiting someone in the hospital and I came down to Third Avenue; I either take a right to take the Twenty Third Street bus or I'd go left and take the Fourteenth Street. So, I took a left.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I saw this very cute guy on the street and I was like, "Your life is going fine. Do not stop, do not stop, do not stop, do not stop. Keep going, do not stop, just nope. No, no, no, no." And I said, "I'm just going to look back and see." And there he was standing there on the corner. And we've together ever since.

THEODORE KERR: In a relationship?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Wow. That's amazing.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Nineteen years.

THEODORE KERR: That's amazing.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Nineteen years. And yes—and that was at the beginning. And it was right—he came to my first show at Nick Debs, which was the *Wah Wah* series.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And that was what it was called and my mother was there. And he showed up in a red coat and my mother was, like, right on him. And he was leaving, and my mother ran out in the hall and said, "Where are you going?"

THEODORE KERR: Because she knew? She had a feeling?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I don't know. I don't know.

THEODORE KERR: I mean, she has good instincts.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Oh, she did. Where are you going? You're not leaving, are you? And he was like, "No." I mean my mother and Rafael just loved each other.

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: They, from the moment they met they were—they just—they were, "Okay. We know who Frank—we're like in this uh-huh—okay. I know what you're dealing with."

THEODORE KERR: Right.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: [Laughs.]

THEODORE KERR: Like they saw the projection of Frank. They saw Frank.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: They saw Frank and they also knew like what a handful I was.

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So, like my mother—"I know what you're dealing with. Don't worry, he's a nice kid."

THEODORE KERR: Right. [Laughs.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So, you know, Rafael entered into my life, and I had to learn how to let somebody love me.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: That was very difficult because I didn't not feel worthy of it.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And he taught me how to be loved and learned to love each other. That was a big lesson. And he had been diagnosed like the same week that I had.

THEODORE KERR: Oh, wow.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And almost died in Mexico City.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And so, in the beginning, we came back and we didn't really expect to live.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Because we had these medicines we didn't know that—what was going to happen. But he supported me in the work. And supported me in what I was doing. But between Rafael and, you know—there was that recovery period of where I had to go to meetings and other artists would help me. And go, like, put the career on the shelf. I was like, "No!" You know put the career on the shelf, it will come back.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I had to get help, even professionally.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I got a lot of help from people, from strangers.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: From strangers and artists and—I mean that is—that's what happened during that period.

THEODORE KERR: Was a lot of this made possible because of like the camaraderie in the rooms? But also like the social services that were made available and the camaraderie that could come from that?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You mean in the AIDS world?

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. Both the sobriety world and the AIDS world.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, they kind of—

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —they kind of like overlapped. Because there were lots of us that were sick and that were recovering and, you know, we find things in common.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, who knew. You know, it's like—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —I found a community.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, you know ACT UP, I went to a lot of ACT UP during that period, the earlier period. And there was camaraderie there, but it was still different. I mean, like, the sobriety and the AIDS kind of stuff it's about life. Not that ACT UP wasn't, that was about activism and, you know, I did tons of those, you know—

THEODORE KERR: Demos?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Oh, yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Die-Ins?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Die-Ins and St. Patricks and marching and flags and meetings and anger. And you know I mean that was good.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But this was different.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: This was about Frank and learning how to be a human being.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Which was very difficult.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative]. And did you go places like Gay Men's Health Crisis? Or—yeah?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah, I went to GMHC and the Gay and Lesbian Center, lots of church basements. It's funny, I want to write a play. I've always wanted to write a play [called *Church Basements* -FH]. Like, Club 57 was in a church basement.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I thought the first act would be Club 57, 1978. And the second act would be Club 57, 1998. And it would be an AA meeting with all the same people.

THEODORE KERR: Oh, uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Where it was, like, these people and then empty seats of the people that had died and, like—and I thought it would be interesting to, like, show that's there's still church basements.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean the church has a kind of a thread through this.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And it still has even though its—but they're always clubs, and the church basements.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I find it interesting that it has such a—it's such a social space. Even though it has dogma attached to it—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —it still is a service.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But yeah, I had to learn—well, this was when I had to deal with my homophobia.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Was getting sober and dealing with how much self-hatred I had. Because in the beginning, I went to straight meetings I wouldn't go to gay meetings.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I [slipped -FH]. And so, then when I got sober, I had to confront being a gay man.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: After all this whole like, "Hello, Frank." But really, I had to, like, deal with that self-hatred of homosexuality and, like, my self-hatred for differences and effeminate men and the different individuals within—like, who was cool and who wasn't. You know, it was like you had to let all that shift because those were the people that were saving your life.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And then it changed my whole idea about these gay men that were incredibly you know—

THEODORE KERR: Swish?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Swish and reading and—

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean—and I just—it just changed my respect for the whole community of how brave these people were. How brave these people were to be who they were and to take the shit and keep going. It was amazing to me. Because, you know, I'm from a white, you know, northern European, educated—

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —middle class suburban, given all the opportunities. You know, I'm not from the harder place —

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —that has really been discriminated against. And so, I was a man of privilege.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I didn't know. I mean, how was I to know that? I mean it was—I was pretty. You know, oh, Studio Fifty—you know, here—you know, it was all this—I was always—I was pretty. So, I got in everywhere. I was—I had a commodity. Now, all of a sudden, I had AIDS and I was AIDS. And I couldn't drink, I couldn't go to the nightclubs, I couldn't—I was a mess. I wasn't being invited to parties. My work wasn't great. So, all of those things fell away. So, how was I going to—I didn't develop myself, it's like Elizabeth Murray saying, "Get a life."

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: That was really the most—the wisest thing anyone ever—like, "a life?" [Laughs.] You know, what's that? So, I—you know, I—the first part of it was really living on art. Like, the art was going to save me. The art was—and then when that turned—didn't turn out, I started hating art.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I started hating the art and, you know, I had to learn—I mean, that's the [literal -FH] process —is I had to learn how to love art again. I remember sitting in here, and, I mean, there were points where I had, like, shows and I—had shows every other week and collected and invited to all the parties and, you know.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And you know then, all of a sudden, I wasn't being invited to all the parties. I remember sitting in here, making this painting and I made—I was sitting literally right here in this studio. This is how recent it is, maybe ten years ago, and I said, "Oh, my God, that is just so beautiful." And then I was sitting here, and I was aware that I was by myself.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I said, "Well, but nobody is going to see it and so, what does it matter if it's beautiful or not or? Or what does it matter no one's—I have no fans, I have no—I'm so alone here. I have my boyfriend, but he loves everything because he loves me."

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: That doesn't count. But—and then it kind of dawned on me, I was like, "Wait a second, I get to experience how beautiful it is."

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like, I'd been missing it the whole time of, like, what a privilege it is to sit in a room and make these beautiful things and have these beautiful moments.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And have these beautiful things that you get to experience and be a part of instead of, like, doing it for some else to say that its beautiful: that I get to have that experience. And that was life changing. That was—well, it doesn't matter if I show or if—it's like I get to make beautiful things, what a way to spend a life. What a privilege.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: That was interesting. That was the process too of letting—of going into myself and being—but I think recovery taught me that it was okay to be Frank, to be who I am.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So, that—and 9/11 was—I mean, I was sitting on my little patio and I saw the plane go right—I was on the Hudson River and I saw—I was meditating and "rrhhh"—and I looked, and I saw this plane going and then it went into the World Trade Center.

THEODORE KERR: Oof.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And then Rafael ran out and said, "Oh, my God they crashed a plane into the World Trade Center." And I was like, "What!" And so, then we ran down to the West Side Highway and we watched them collapse. We watched all the people walk up and it was bizarre. It was a very strange time.

THEODORE KERR: Was this before or after the exhibition?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You know, there's a painting that if you look online—it comes up on Wikipedia it's called "The Day After."

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: That was done the day after 9/11.

THEODORE KERR: Does it—is it—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It's, like, a big splashy one. It has like a—it's a big splashy one.

THEODORE KERR: It doesn't have a strong green pigment in it?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It might, yeah. Yeah, yeah, it does.

THEODORE KERR: Okay.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: That was called "Dayafter" and I was in the middle of painting the *Trippin in America* show and, you know, it was kind of, like, all about exploding.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: That show was all about, whoo. And somehow it resonated the zeitgeist.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I think that happened—my show was in October.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: October after September 11 was *Trippin in America*. And it kind of resonated. And, so, it was, you know, I was, like, sensing it.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I was sensing it. I guess intuitively I was sensing some kind of explosion.

THEODORE KERR: Well, what was the show about for you?



FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was about color and freedom and science and color theory and formal painting and chance and God, I guess.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: God had a lot to do with it.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Can you say more?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, God of, you know—God is—I look at God and it's like the spirit that—like, I can put a color here and a color here and I was pouring—there was a lot handless in my work.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was much more—I would pour something and let the paint do what the paint did, or let gravity do what the gravity did.

THEODORE KERR: And did you paint on an easel? Or was it on the wall?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I'd paint on the floor.

THEODORE KERR: On the floor.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And so, it was pouring and letting like nature like do its thing.

THEODORE KERR: But also a little bit because you said in the last interview, that Pollack performance—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

THEODORE KERR: —like you also came from that kind of school. So, that was part of it as well.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah, part of it, yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And it was like color—I would mix all the colors, and it would be very color theory. I was very, like, my studying color theory and the power of color and color field, and it was about expressing myself. Expression in the middle of you know conceptual photography world. In the art world, it was—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —it was not about expressing yourself.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And so, this was like—and it was also, like, Disney colored, like—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was other worldly. But it was also talking about painting history.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So, it was—you know, I was reinterpreting that light experience.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But through pours and more colorful painting. More colorful painting, hands-off painting.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I'm only asking about the shows so much because one, it seems, like, amazing that amid that historical moment that that show really, like, cut through the fog of 9/11 and made impact.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: And then also because I think that there's a way in which that show braids together stuff we don't talk about in this story of HIV yet and American history. And the ways in which, like, people who were on meds are now—you know, people could get tested because there was medication and medication meant so many different things.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

THEODORE KERR: And I think that doing these interviews and my own research it's like you were among a really powerful community of people who went through the dread of HIV, then went through meds, then went through sobriety. Like, you're not alone in that.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No, it was a movement.

THEODORE KERR: It was a movement. And you say that: you went into the room and there everyone was. And so, I think there's ways in which this show consciously or unconsciously was bringing together that movement. It's like all these people had been dealing with death for 10, 15 years, and now we're dealing with life. And it was hard, and you were all experiencing hard in a different way. You were older, you were gay men that were about to age, and you were dealing with sobriety, and you were dealing with HIV, and then 9/11 hit.

You know it's, like, it's a really heady moment for the communities you were a part of. And that show is a really interesting, like, happy beacon that speaks to all the pain that led up to it. Does that make sense?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yes.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yes, because it was like a bursting of a balloon.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like, ah! And it wasn't—but it was celebratory in a sense.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was celebratory and about freedom and, like, a release.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And then the "puhh." And so, everybody was like, "Um"—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: At some point—yeah, because at some point—I mean in sobriety, it was all about—it started, like, the first work that I could do, I couldn't do anything intuitive. I had to like copy photographs, or I was like putting photographs back together.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I was reconstructing the fractured self.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Who am I?

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Who is identity?

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Am I gay? Is it this—I'm a man. So, you know, I was reconstructing and then I had to copy it because I couldn't let any God out.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I couldn't let go and—let go and let God. That's one of the—

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But to let go and have the trust in the unknown. I had to, like—kind of, like, had to hang on to what I knew.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like, I can't invent anything. I just have to reproduce something and try to, like, put it back together.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And then there was a process of letting it go.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like, I'm free, I trust, I—it's a miracle. So, let's celebrate that.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And that's the path I've been on.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah, it's really amazing.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And it hasn't been—you know, I haven't shown in New York in 12 years.

THEODORE KERR: Huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, I'm not exactly popular here. But it's slowly—you know, I started showing in Singapore, showing in Italy, and people are starting to collect me. You know, so, I'll be showing this fall in New York and I'm in MoMA. All of a sudden, like, I'm in MoMA. A show in MoMA which is—you know, it's like—

THEODORE KERR: Right.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But it's not because I'm promoting anything.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It's because I'm painting and trying to be—make the paintings I need to make. I'm not even, like, trying to make the paintings. I'm just painting.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I'm not trying to make any kind of painting. Or make any kind of statement. I'm just—it's just coming out.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Which is amazing.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. It is amazing.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It started with *Trippin in America* and one part of the process was I would do a show, and it would either be accepted or not accepted. And then I would pivot, like, we were talking—

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And it was like—but it was all about the kernel. The kernel, the kernel, the kernel, and then, all of a sudden, like the *Trippin America* kind of came together. And then it continued to develop, it didn't stay. My whole thing is not letting it be a formula.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Because when it gets a formula it becomes—like, that's how I was different than these guy's I was always—like, I had a teacher named Lucio Pozzi and he taught me about the pendulum theory. Which is you do a black one, then you do a white one then, you do a gray one, then you do a blue one. And you keep swinging the pendulum, you do a figurative one, you do an abstract one, you'd do a—a painter—and so, you know the pendulum swings, and it takes a lot longer to get up and to get to the contradiction.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And then eventually it starts circling around—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —and, so, you've hit on all those points. Like, it took me—I've talked to him about it. It took like 30 years to get it to turn over to where I had all of these things that I had—that are now in my body that I found out through experience, that now come institutively with me.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And acting—

THEODORE KERR: Um-hmm.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —helped break through that.

THEODORE KERR: You know, let's talk about acting. When did that start for you?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, I've always been acting and dancing, but in sobriety somebody cast me in a movie, *The Fat Ballerina*, on Craigslist.

THEODORE KERR: Um-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I answered an ad in Craigslist. And I had always been back-up, you know, I performed with Ann Magnuson. I was always in the back-up. I was always the back-up singer.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I was always the friend of the pretty guy. I was, you know, I was in the shadow; I was always in the shadow.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I went and I did this part, and I really enjoyed it. I got to a point where—because I did the installations and the sets and the performing and the singing and all of this, I was kind of, like, not taken seriously. In an odd way.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like, you know he's not a serious—even though I was very serious.

THEODORE KERR: Right.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I just had many muses.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And in sobriety, I stopped many parts of my life to just do sobriety and just focus on painting. And then I answered an ad and I did this thing and I was like, "God, I've missed that." And it felt so good. And it was something about being in the real moment. Like, these are suspended moments.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: These take, like, months of moments—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —of moments of freshness—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —of intuition to build it. It's like doing a whole movie in one frame—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You have to live through the whole plot through one still, but it's over time.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And there was something so freeing about being, like, in the moment. Like, really alive in that moment again. And I'm like, "Wow I've really missed this." Because, like, there was so much of it before and then I just stopped. And that's how I got into it. And then I was like, "Hmm that's interesting, I like it." I said,

"Maybe I'll try to get another one." And, so, then I got another one, then I got another one, then I got another one.

THEODORE KERR: And these are plays or short movies or movies?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Just movies.

THEODORE KERR: They're movies?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And short movies and—

THEODORE KERR: Amazing.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And then I got another one. And I was like, "Well, the art world isn't really happening. I mean I'm painting every day, and I'm still developing this. But why is this door opening up for me?"

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was like, "This one was really easy." And I would say, "Oh, I got another—" so these actors like, "How in the fuck did you do that?" I was like, "It was easy." And, so, I let myself go through the door. And I was never a great actor. You know, it wasn't—and so then I went—I had this experience where somebody said, "Show-up with a black suit on the corner of Thirty Seventh Street and Third Avenue at 6:00 in the morning." Okay, it's a hundred dollars off the books.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I got on a bus, and I was taken out to like the meadowlands. With my black suit and, like, the women had curlers in their hair. I didn't even know where we were going. We get to the meadowlands, and they herd us in here and then it's like all this stuff going on. And then they put us in make-up. And then they pull me out and say, "You're going to be a reporter and you sit here by this boxing scene." I was like, "Great." And then this guy walks up and says, "You come with me." I'm like, "Okay." And then I go, and he says, "Okay, now you stay here and what's going to happen is Denzel Washington is going to come up to you—

[They laugh.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —and do this and you do this." And I was like, "Okay." And, so, then they did that. And, so, then that was done and finally I was like, "Oh, well this is a movie. Okay."

[They laugh.]

THEODORE KERR: Nothing like a commercial film.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No, this is not, like, an independent. And then the next—there was a scene and everybody was trying to get in the front of the movie, so I went all in the back. And I was like, "Alright, I already have some camera time." And then I was there and then, all of a sudden, this guy starts walking around, and he walks up to me and he says, "Hi, I'm—" oh, no, all at once—[laughs.] I'm sorry, I'm having a brain freeze. I am the guy who did *Gladiator* and—

THEODORE KERR: Russell Crowe.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Russell Crowe. Russell Crowe and the director was—

THEODORE KERR: Is it Ron Howard?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Not Ron Howard. But was the guy who did *Blade Runner* and the guy who did—oh,—

THEODORE KERR: He's famous.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Oh, incredibly famous. He's, like, the most famous director. I'm sorry, I'll think of it.

THEODORE KERR: Okay. I'm sorry I don't know it.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Um—it was—oh, I'll think of it.

THEODORE KERR: Okay.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Oh. But this movie was the gangster movie with Russell Crowe and Denzel Washington that took place here in the—I can't even remember.

THEODORE KERR: Wow. But you're in it.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, yeah. Damn it, where's my phone?

THEODORE KERR: I don't know.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I've got to know this—can you put it on hold for a second?

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, yeah, of course.

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Okay, what was the movie's name?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was—what was it—it was—

THEODORE KERR: *American Gangster*?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: *American Gangster* by Ridley Scott.

THEODORE KERR: Okay, so you're in that movie?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, I found out that I was in that movie when I was in that movie.

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And, all of a sudden, there was this guy walking around, like, in the back. Everybody—

[Cell phone rings.]

THEODORE KERR: Do you need to pause? Are you sure?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I got it. Everybody was, you know, running for the spotlight. And, all of a sudden, there was this guy, like, doing these shots. And he looked at me, and I was paying attention to him while everybody was looking there. And I was like, "What's he doing?" He's like, "Okay, I need you to—you come up here, and the shot is Russell Crowe comes out, and he comes up and talks to you and asks you a question, and you say, 'Blah blah blah blah blah.' And, 'Nah nah nah.'"

And then he said—then he moved the camera over there, and it was—I mean, it's like this weird kind of experience for me of, like, you just show up?

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Show up on the corner with a black suit at four—at three in the morning or four in the morning, and about how—if you're so willing, like, look what—all of a sudden, I was in this movie. And it just kind of—it—I mean, I didn't have, like, a great part. It wasn't—but it was, for me, a moment of, like, trusting and going and here you are in the middle of, like, this movie. And it was cool.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was just really—and here I was with Ridley Scott.

THEODORE KERR: Right.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like, not in my wildest—it's the same *Forrest Gump* kind of thing, right?

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like, you're working for Warhol, well how did you get that? I don't know. Your best friend was Keith Haring? Well, how? I don't know.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It's like it—the synchronicity and socially synchronicity.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So, I just kept getting films and then I decided that if I were going to do it, why not—I read a book on acting. It was the weirdest thing.

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, I read a book and it was like, by William Esper, and then I, like, went onto the internet. I said, "Oh, he has a school here."

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And so, I called the school up, and they said, "Well, you have to come and talk to Bill and to audition or talk to him." I was like, "Mmm, what the hell?" And so, I went up the next day, and I was in Bill Esper's office.

THEODORE KERR: Huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And he said, "Yeah, I would love to have you in my class." And I said, "Well, I don't have any money."

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I said, "But I'm a painter. Would you be interested in trading a painting?" And he said, "Let me see the paintings." And so, I showed him the paintings, and he took a painting, and it's hanging in his—in the lobby of the school now. And he took a painting, and he gave me three years of acting class, of the master himself. Like, my life is very amazing like that.

THEODORE KERR: That's amazing.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: So, you didn't start acting when you were in—you got serious about acting not in your 20s or even in your 30s. Like, you're serious about acting—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: In my 50s.

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.] In your 50s.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: In my 50s. That's like a career—"Oh, I'll be an actor." It's like—

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: [Laughs.] I'm just going to be an—but I was an actor with Ann Magnuson. I performed—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —and did performance work and all of that stuff was all—I was always involved in it, but I was never a star.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I was never—and Bill made me step in front of the class naked.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Literally?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, not literally, but—no, I was never naked. But, yeah, naked. Like—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You're there and everybody's looking at you and you're [doing -FH] exercises, and you're having to use your experience. And you can't fake it. There's a truth, like.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: What is true, and what is a moment? What is a real moment? And I had to learn things. I had to learn. And I started memorizing scripts.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And what that did is it took the words out of the painting.

THEODORE KERR: Can you say more?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It took the words out of the painting. I started getting involved with making a visual language, not a verbal language.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So instead of sitting here thinking about what it's supposed to be or the concept of the words or explaining it, I started going, "No, I can use words in the acting." But I can—in painting, it doesn't have to be about the words that I'm using in acting and the repetition and the script-learning kind of, like, exhausted my mind, like, with the language.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: To where this became really about my body in the moment.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And you would have scene partners.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And it was all about, if I say this and then you say this and then you react to this, and then you react—so it gets fresh. Otherwise you're just kind of like, not in the same room with the person. So, I kept painting, and what happened in the painting is I started treating—I started treating the blank canvas as a scene partner.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: To where, instead of illustrating, like, something—like, or trying to, you know, like, the sublime, like, trying to describe what the sublime is—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was literally—I would sit in a chair. You know, AA taught me to listen.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And, you know, to listen to the higher power and to, like, the void. And, you know, the self and which voice is you, and so—and you have to do it in acting, too. It's intuitively, like, paying attention. Listening.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: That's what acting—listening. And so, the—I would sit there, and I would not allow—like, Bill taught me in acting you don't move unless there's a reason to it. You know? It's like, if you need to pick up the glass, you move to pick up the glass. You don't, like, you know?

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It's like, there's a reason. Or if somebody calls you, you walk—you're—you know? It's like learning how to—and so with the painting, I would sit here until it said get up there and make—use red, red, red, red. And so, I would go up there, and I would get the line. And I would start literally making a line, like, instead of saying the line, I would make the line. And then once you get up there, any plan that you had, you have to improvise. Because the red goes into the yellow and makes orange, and, all of a sudden, you have orange and yellow and this. And so, you have to—

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So you have to play out the little scene—

THEODORE KERR: It's a game of improv, I guess.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah, it is an improv. And then you—then it spits you out. And so, you—I walk up. I get an impulse to walk up. And I paint it. And I take the line until the line's finished, and then the painting is—the paint is interacting with that and changes what I do.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I can't plan it.



THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And then it spits me out. And so, I change it, and then I sit back here and I sit and I wait and I listen and I look. And then something starts going, "Do this. Do this." So, it there's the line.

THEODORE KERR: And your hand is making, like, pulsating—is that a fair description?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah. Because it's a voice, like, "Oh, you should paint." Or, "Where am I? Oh. Red. Red." Or, you know, "White." Or—you start seeing something.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You start seeing—and then you get up—like I used—

[cell phone rings]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Oh, goddammit. It's like, you get something—you sit here and you say, "What am I supposed to do with the painting? What am I supposed to do?" And it's like, "Paint it white." "What am I supposed to do? I mean, I don't know." "Paint it white. Paint that corner white." "What am I supposed to—" "Paint it white!" Then you get up and you paint it white. So, it's like, the voice gets louder, and I've learned to pay attention to the voice.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: That when that voice says, "That's the lead to the painting"—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —and that's what has grown—made me grow into—so—and what happens is, these paintings, that's the aliveness of them.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So it stays alive.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And it's the response of me being in the room, like, "Frank was here."

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I'm—so it's living—and then, you know, we were talking about it being the body.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And literally, I had to treat it as another person that I was having a relationship and interacting. And you don't know what that relationship is going to be.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: That's how acting helped me.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: In the oddest way.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It also taught me how to stand in the spot—in a light, the spotlight—

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And that I wasn't going to die if somebody was looking at me. And I was being vulnerable to them.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And then the painting, I let it be vulnerable. And the odd thing is, that's what people respond to.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It's like in an actor, the more vulnerable somebody is, the more the audience can relate to it. And you allow people to experience what they won't allow themselves to experience, because it's too painful or it's too revealing. And that's great actors. They're open. And that's how I had to translate it into the painting.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, it's interesting how all these things have to—

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —go in, and now people respond to the painting, because they feel—I mean, I always talk about—I—for a long time, I made paintings so when you looked at it, it was like, "You're stupid." Or, "You're ugly." Or, "You're out of it. You're not hip." And now I'm trying to make paintings, when you look at it, the painting says, "You're beautiful."

THEODORE KERR: Oh.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: "You're beautiful."

THEODORE KERR: The paintings are more welcoming.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah, they're more like, "You are a part of this."

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And you are allowed to see what you want in it.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You see a cloud, you see a dog, you see a face, you see a this. It's like—in order for people to talk about the paintings, people come to modern art, and they get very afraid that they're not supposed to, like, see something. Or they're not supposed to—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I want them to be like these clouds where you—it provides this space where you do get to lose yourself and fall into them and enter into this other world for a second.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Where it does remove you from whatever. It's a service of release for people and identification for people. And people come in and say, "Oh, is it okay if I see a dragon?" I'm like, "Yeah, where do you see it?"

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Instead of, like, "A dragon?" So, it became a different—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —like, painting wasn't, like, a white privileged—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —socially hierarchical, you know, only for rich people kind of thing. I started making people—making people—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —or the painting for the human being. What is human?

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: What is it to be alive?

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: What is it—what is beauty? Why—you know, what is—

THEODORE KERR: How do we relate?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: How do we relate?

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: How do we—so it's been a process of me not caring if they're smart or not, or—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Not caring if they're intellectually astounded.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You know, or—but they are.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: They really are.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But I can't make paintings about that.

THEODORE KERR: Right. It's also, you went from trying to be hard or, like, knowing how to be hard to—like you said, being vulnerable or being soft or being effervescent.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, that becomes the strength inside of—like, standing there as a human being and learning how to be vulnerable in front of a group of people like addicts. And then—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —instead of, like, putting the facade and building the construction of who you think you want them to see, and then that does—you get further and further away from yourself. Or I found myself getting further and further away from myself because of the social construction that I put—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —between me and everybody else.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And it's been a process of stripping it away. And acting did that. I mean, I—acting and working and recovery—to where I'm okay to stand naked.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And to stand like, "This is who I am."

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: That—I mean, who knew that that would be the strength of it.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, because I have to say, when I was researching it and acting came up, I was like, "Oh, that's its own chapter within a chapter." But it sounds like it was a tool you needed in your toolbox that you never could have imagined. Like, it had its own experiences and rewards, but it was also part of the bigger project of expression and art-making.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, yeah. It was a huge part of it.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It really informed me—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —and I never went into it wanting to be a star. I just, like, I love action and it's like drug

addiction. Like, you're on and you have to—it's, like, this moment. And then to get that into the painting where the painting isn't dead, and it's an alive thing.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It's very exciting that it's an—it's not a dead thing. It's an alive thing. Like—and it's back to the thing of making, you know, I'm living. I'm alive. What does it mean to be alive?

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Not dead—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —or not smart.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It's like what is this thing that—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —it makes—

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —what are those moments? It's not the big parade. It's the—you know, the light on the lover's eyebrow when they sleep, and it lasts a millimeter of a second and you notice it.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And it touches you.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, those are the moments—it sounds corny, but—

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But I think those are like the—you cross a corner—there's a sunset. And the phone rings and you're like, "Oh." And then you look up and it's gone.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I think that that transitory thing is very important to me.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And in the work—like this work is very suspended.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And it looks like it's a moment, but it's the—it's fragments of—it's suspended moments over a period of time that, in the end, it's still fresh and looks like it was, like, immediate.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But it's not, it's timed.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It would take months to make, so that—but it's like, the freshness, the freshness—it's like—

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —compressing time into a moment.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative]. I'm also wondering about the listening, when you're talking about the, you know, the colors speaking to you. You did it at different registers, and I wonder if acting also helped you

hear things on a more subtle level, or on a subtler level? Like, you went from, like—"It's white. Paint white. Paint white. Paint white." And I wonder if it always has to get to the highest point anymore.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No.

THEODORE KERR: Okay.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No, in the beginning—now it's like—there were moments in here where it's like, "What am I going to do? What am I going to do?" And there was no one to call.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And there was no one to ask—I couldn't bring another painter to tell me what to do. There was nobody in the world that could tell me what to do. It's a very kind of amazing, like—there's no—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I'm at a place where I got to depend on—

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —and once I learned to listen, I recognize it. And, you know, I can sit here, and I'm like, "Okay, it's—get up."

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And so it comes much easier now.

THEODORE KERR: Is there also a voice that says it's okay to keep sitting?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, sit. Well, sometimes you have to sit to kind of, like, watch what your eye kind of focuses on. And you keep going back to, and you keep going back to, and usually what you keep going back to is what you have to get rid of.

THEODORE KERR: Oh.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Because you have to eliminate until the whole thing—it goes from pieces. So, it's a visual thing, so you have to kind of, like—

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —let your eyes relax and then kind of, like, find your eyes will go to what isn't working or what is working. And you start recognizing that, as—I mean, a lot of painters talk about it. I never understood is—at some point, the painting takes over.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And tells you what to do.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, Twombly talks about that all the time. He showed up and the painting, he said, "I don't know."

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I understand what they're saying, because if you're there—like, all this work, I don't plan to make any of this.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I didn't plan to make paintings like this. This is not a strategy. It's a development, and it's a consciousness.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And now I just—and it's a very freeing—when I went to Rome, I was in this little room, and I had to do this big show of 30 paintings in seven months.

THEODORE KERR: Hm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And that was really scary.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I just had to surrender to the process, and I made an incredible show. And then I come back here and each painting—it's kind of an amazing period.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Because it's—I mean, there's struggle, but it's—there's—my authenticity is here.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. A few years ago, you were part of an exhibition curated by Patrick Webb called—and I always get the name wrong—but the *Sword of Damocles*.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Damocles.

THEODORE KERR: Did I say it right?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yes.

THEODORE KERR: And that was a show that's based on, like, looking at painters who've had long careers and looking at early work, and then looking at work at that time—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

THEODORE KERR: —which, this show was, I think 2011 or 2012. And I'm wondering if that was something that you had already been thinking about, like, how your work had changed and how, maybe age and living with HIV and all the experiences had changed your work?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, part of my—part of a problem for me was I—my work always changed. And I did so many things that, from a collector, historical basis, they want painters to make the same painting your whole life.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Sculptors get different, performance artists get different. I mean, there's a total—but painters, they want a brand.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I refused to—I refused. Because I knew that I—I mean, I knew that I—there was so much to learn, and I couldn't, like, "Oh, I wasn't a"—I had to learn it all through experience. It had to be an accumulative affect for me. So, I don't think—that was a problem.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: That was a problem—

THEODORE KERR: The diversity of what you were working on?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —in my career.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, like, now it's kind of cool that, you know, there's kind of a thing of, you know, you can do whatever you want and it's—you're like, a modern artist now, to be able to do everything. But that—I've always done that.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And—but people—it was a real horrible marketing technique. But my model was always Picasso.

THEODORE KERR: Huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It wasn't Seurat. It was Picasso. Picasso, you know, he would go in. He would find it. He would

make the masterpieces and move on. He wouldn't, like, hang around to make another one. Because it's all about interest. It's all about not knowing. It's all about finding something. It's not—I like the adventure.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I like the not knowing. I like the discovery. And I think that's very American, of—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —the discovering and the reinvention, and the—

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And then eventually, it became a style. And it became, like—but it's a style based on me, not on an idea.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It's an extension of me.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It's an extension of my body, because my body makes them. My body makes all the stuff, and I just am kind of the intermediacy—the brain is just kind of—I'm just kind of here to, you know? And then the body—the mark is who I am, and the—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —brushstrokes are who I am. And this color is who I am.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And this space is who—you know? It's really—

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative]. Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —amazing.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It's amazing. It's amazing.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Because it's not—I mean, because I always had a hard time of "who am I?"

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Am I this? Am I this? Am I this? And everybody'd go, "No, no, no, no." You know? And finally, when I let go and stopped—I had to come to the—well, maybe—it's about having the privilege of being able to be a creative person and paint and maybe it really doesn't matter if you're a success. Maybe you've got to, like, be really grateful that you got to spend your life making beautiful things and exploring things, and—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —and being involved with incredible people and acting and, you know, knowing all these incredible people, and—I mean, that's been a life.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, it's an amazing way to be in the world, right?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah. And then, all of a sudden, my old dealer, Tom Cugliani, who I met in art school—

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —came back into my life, and he's like, "Frank, I love these paintings." And then he sold, like, 20 of them.

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.] Great.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, yeah.

THEODORE KERR: That's amazing.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And now, all of a sudden, I have a book, I have a second book. I have the museum show, the—it's like, everything is just happening, and what is interesting is that they're not changing.

THEODORE KERR: The works?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: They're evolving, but they're not changing.

THEODORE KERR: Right. You're not jumping to a different, like, type of art of a different—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I'm not chasing it.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, they say there are two ways of—you either chase the spotlight—

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —or you wait—

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —for the spotlight to come to you. And I kind of like—say, it's okay that I'm not—I may never be a star.

THEODORE KERR: Huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I still may. I mean, think—but it doesn't matter there's a privilege to making and to have it inside of you that it becomes so—it's not a torture to make this work.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Also, the curiosity is maybe just expressing itself in a different way. The expression of curiosity before was through form and being drastically different. But now maybe the curiosity is exercising itself through the depth of this expression, maybe. Or the way that your body knows how to work now, now it just wants to go deeper and maybe subtly to the left or subtly—like subtlety seems like something that's a powerful exploration for you now.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yes, it's like exploring yellow.

THEODORE KERR: Huh, huh, uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And then exploring blue.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And then exploring green. And then exploring yellow and blue. You know? It's like—there's—it's very—the power of color, the power of a maroon red going into an orange red, and what does that evoke? And, you know, then I know the whites. This is what the whites—so it's become very much like an orchestra.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like being able to—like in a great orchestra—well in, like in a dancer. You stand at the barre and you have to learn the steps. You have to learn them over through repetition, through repetition, through repetition, and then you're in the center and you're learning the different turns and the—it takes so much. And then some people get up to where they're technical dancers, to where they can dance everything technically. And then there are ones that are artists, to where they're not thinking about how to do something—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —their body remembers it, and the body knows how to do it, so you count on your body, and then you're listening to the music and you're interpreting your music and the body is taking you—it's showing up, because it knows—it's tuned.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Same thing with painting.



THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: My body is—that's who I am, is the way I make a mark, the way my body throws in and the way my body makes a movement in the color. The way I let you perceive a color or a surface or—right?

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So, it's joyful.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Because my body and my eye shows up. But I had to learn to trust that.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And that there's a process. I—there's a process. And there's always a part of the process where I have to have a sublime moment.

THEODORE KERR: Hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: That where is on the edge of disaster and the edge of failure to take that risk. You know? To take that risk and to have that excitement of—but everything, you know, like—and then, all of a sudden, you're back. You're pushed out of the painting and it's an incredible moment.

THEODORE KERR: Huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I think that's—you know, I have to get a thrill out of it. Otherwise, it's just making shoes or—you know, it's just like—

THEODORE KERR: Doing the dishes. [Laughs]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —manufacturing something. Right.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So—but the other thing is it takes—I have to stay really quiet.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And that's why I can't have a lot of people.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I have to—

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —be very concentrated and very quiet to hear the voice and let the body show up. And that's the cost.

THEODORE KERR: So what does that mean in terms of influences? Like, how do you let yourself be influenced, then?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I read and, like, in Rome I got to see great painting.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I got to go see great Caravaggio's a hundred times. I got to see Bernini's every day. And I started seeing [coughs]—the first time I went to Italy that time, it's like everything was great. And then this time, not everything was great.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And what made something great and what made something not great? And it wasn't a technical thing. It was a passionate spiritual thing. And this love of, like, wanting to express themselves and it was all this technical stuff. But there's something else about greatness.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: There was something simple and refined and hugely human.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And there was something in Rome that I noticed about, like, how gravity is always pulling us down. And how the humans are always being pulled down to the earth into hell or in—like, as humans, the gravity is so important. And then how effortless the angels are. And then it goes up, and there's this whole hierarchy that happens. And it is, again, I noticed how human everybody was.

THEODORE KERR: Huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like, what was the difference between divinity and humanness? And then what was the difference between hell and how—so then you're being pulled for hell, and you're being pulled to heaven.

THEODORE KERR: Huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And, like, life is somewhere in between here. That's the tension that we have.

THEODORE KERR: Ah [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It's dealing with the physicality and the past and the memory, the physicality of being alive. And then the divineness of letting go of the body and it being—it lifting higher.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: That's where I get my inspiration.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Sunsets.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I don't really look at a lot of modern work.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, I go to the Modern and I look—I always go there. I mean, when things are great, things are great.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It doesn't matter—I look at a lot of theater.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm, mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I read a lot of—you know, I—now music. Like, I listen to, like, opera and classical music because, like, I don't want to know the language. I only want it to be sound.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And there's something about sound that I want.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So I listen to music, and there's something about, like, how somebody sings and is open and it just, like, goes on forever. So, there's a—I mean, coming from, like, punk rock and all of that to being in this, like, kind of classical period—I mean, I was a ballet dancer. I'm a classical—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: My art, there's a classicism to it.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I've had to accept that.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm, mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: That's who I am.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I'm not like Britney Spears.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I'm, you know, different. And that's been—so I've gone back to classical things. And beautiful things and a lot of the contemporary stuff that's so idea-oriented just, it owns—I mean, it's interesting. And I look at it. But it doesn't really take me—some things do. Some installations take me places. And there's some great painters out there, I mean don't get me wrong.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But there's something about—one thing that was interesting in Rome as—my hearing aids didn't work.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So I couldn't hear.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I couldn't speak the language. The studio had no windows or air in it. It was like a cave with a—you know, there's like the asp of a church.

THEODORE KERR: Huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So there was all this sensory deprivation. And somehow, that forced it through the—the expression had to come out really through the painting. And I think that's part of it, is like the shutting down of everything so the expression comes out. Like, I'm not doing acting anymore—

THEODORE KERR: Huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —right now. I'm not doing movies. I'm just painting. And it's forcing it through this thing.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: That's—

THEODORE KERR: Is it a prism?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It's kind of like—yeah, that's a good way to put it.

THEODORE KERR: Hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I love that. It is a prism.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. Yeah, your body was making kind of a gesture.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It is like a prism. I love that.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And these paintings are like prisms.

THEODORE KERR: Hmm [affirmative]. Very much. Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I mean, it's like something about light, reflected light, about how transient light is.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah, heavenly prisms.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And the prism, the light comes through it a certain times a day and it illuminates and then it goes back to being glass. I love that whole, like—it's a moment and it's not a moment.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Prism's perfect.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: That's a great—thank you.

THEODORE KERR: You bet.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I owe you one.

THEODORE KERR: Well, it comes from the writer Christopher—no, Tim Murphy. And he wrote a book called *Christadora* that's out right now, and it looks at 40 years of life in New York with drugs and HIV at the corner of it.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Oh, my God.

THEODORE KERR: And the—he plays with time. You'll really love this book. He plays with time, and I asked him why and he said because he sees AIDS as kind of this prism through which people are working through. And when you're describing, it also sounds like you're working through prisms and, yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: That's interesting.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. Isn't that interesting? Because I think—and I think you have a—you're attuned to this. AIDS disrupts time, you know? AIDS really, like, I mean in the simplest level, young men went to old men. That's like, the way that everyone can understand. But also, even in your own relationship, too, how long you had to live changed that. And HIV, we were told, was something that killed you within 16 months once you were diagnosed. But now, people live 20, 30, 40 50 years.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: They don't know.

THEODORE KERR: Right?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: They live until they don't.

THEODORE KERR: They live until they don't.

[They laugh.]

THEODORE KERR: And so I think that's really interesting to think, too. Like, from your narrative, you didn't plan on living very long, and then you got HIV, so that was something that was substantiated by the world. And now here you are, and your life seems very rich and full in ways that I don't think you could have imagined when you were 30.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No. There was no place to go. I mean, AIDS was a weird kind of a relief.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Instead of like, you know—

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —the sword's going to drop, and then finally you get it. And once I had it, I didn't have to spend all my time pretending or—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —you know, waiting for the day that I would get it.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And then once I had it, there was a kind of a peace and a release to it. I mean, it hasn't been easy because, you know, it's just been—I mean, you're dealing with medical in your body and sticking and sick and this and pills and that and that. I mean, there's a whole—I mean, it really made me aware of the physicalness of my body.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh, uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And—but it also opened up the spiritual side of life, the spiritual side of what is it—what does it mean to be alive?

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah, and I think you're well-primed to think about, like, you know,

HIV is often transmitted at moments of pleasure. And so, what does it mean that this moment of pleasure then becomes this thing that's highly stigmatized and hurts your body, marks your body, marks you socially? You know? It's a very—it's, you know, it's a virus that's hellish. And then, as you're saying, it's also an opportunity to consider, you know? It can be an opportunity to consider things.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah. [Laughs.] Or reconsider everything.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh, uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And kind—and get to what you're going to—I mean, I forget that I have HIV.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative]. Often? Like, do you have to remind yourself?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, now, you know, the thing that's weird about HIV now is I'm getting older. I'm 60 this year. And the meds that they've been giving me have been changing my body composition.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And they've—I've been getting like—it's been—

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —and it's changing my energy. I don't have as much energy. I don't—I mean, I'm getting older, too.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative]. Right.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So I don't know if it's the meds, you know? And I'm—it's like I'm not—I don't have as much energy.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It's odd having a career burst at this age, when I need the energy of a 20-year-old to really do what I have to do.

THEODORE KERR: Right. Like, how many paintings? Twenty paintings in seven months?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No, 30 paintings in seven months. And we're talking about, like, 16 foot paintings. And they're so beautiful.

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I like—but I mean, you know what? I couldn't have done it. Something else came in there and pushed me. I really had to surrender to just the voice.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And the body. I had to—it was the oddest thing. And I had to, like—and to say that Bernini could make that or Caravaggio could make that, that I just had to surrender to it, and, you know, somehow—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —it happened.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And it will be shown at Villa Borghese.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And—but, you know, what else am I going to do? I mean—

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: This is my calling.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And this is—I got to live.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I got to do this. I got to, like—

THEODORE KERR: Huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —see—that was like when I was lying there dying, and I was like, "Fuck, I'm not going to be able to take"—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: "—this to its point." Because, I mean, I still had so much to learn and to get that body memory to where you're expressing yourself through the body and the dance and the music.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You're not just like, technically, like, make—you know? I can—this is how you do a pirouette. Pull it up. Turn.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Right? Or—

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: This color goes in, you know, it's not about technique.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It's not about the idea. It is the idea and the technique in order to express something about who you are and what it means to be human.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And that took me a long time.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative]. I think you'll like this. And maybe you know this already, like, the ancient idea of genius was, like, geniuses flew through somebody. So, you just—your job was to get as clear as possible so you could experience genius when you had it. And it seems like that's, like, a major kind of way in which you're arriving.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And the muse.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, the muse. That's the word.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, I do believe that, because I believe that—I also—and this sounds crazy, but painters come in and visit me in the studio.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I used to like, well am I thinking about—and then I'm like, no, like, no they're coming. They're hanging out. I mean, I feel like these—

THEODORE KERR: Like, spirits of painters?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, I don't like see spirits, but why am I thinking about this painter? Why is this friend here at this time in the day? Why is it when I'm opening up my painting and I'm at my most vulnerable and I'm in that mood that I feel all of the people here? Why is it that—oh, why is it that this is the—just ironic thing is why do I go to—with two actors, I take them to the Museum of Modern Art. I'm standing in front of a Pollock painting. Why is it that the phone rings and it's the Pollock Krasner Foundation saying, "We're giving you a grant"? And I'm like —

THEODORE KERR: Oh, is that how it happened?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah. And I said, "Do you know where I am?" They're like, "No." I'm like, "I'm standing in front of *Autumn Rhythm*." They're like, "What?" I's like, "Yeah, I'm standing in front of this Pollock, and you're calling me." You know? It's like—and then the Gottlieb Foundation, like, these guys—the Gottlieb is giving me money here.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Here. Do this. Do this. And then, like, all this help keeps pouring in. And then the—and then I'm in my studio and, like, people would say, "Well, you know, Monet." And I'm like, "Yeah, Monet." And it's like I'm not fighting. Like yes, this is the spirit coming through me.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And it is about—it's like a prism is clear.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm, mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And it's—that's why—it's like I have to be so—that's why even music, I can't hear words. Because the words remind me of things, and I just want to hear sound in its purity.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It has—like music comes through you and just builds wherever the boundary—it's boundless.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And that's how I have—I mean, it's kind of shaman-istically in a weird way.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You go in, and like I'm always talking about, like, going to the other side and grasping at the other side.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like, grasping at the other side. And that's my hands reaching in and pulling. That's why my hands are so important. I use my hands and you see my fingers. Because I want, when I'm gone, that Frank's hands—those are Frank's hands.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Those are Frank's marks. He was really there.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It's evidence.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And—but it's also evidence of the other dimension.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: The other world. And I mean, when I see great works, I think that there is a channeling through of something else.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. I think so, too. Yeah. [inaudible.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I think it's—and that's a hard thing to teach.

THEODORE KERR: Oh, yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But I try to teach that.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It's much easier to teach an idea.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It's much easier to illustrate an idea.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But I think that there is a thing of letting it happen—taking the assistance of the muse, and letting them guide you and help you and—

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And the, you know, the, you know, the painters coming in, and I—it's comforting.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like, I feel like Keith is sitting up there saying, "Okay, we're going to help you now."

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: "Go Frank, go. Yeah, this is it." Like—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And then I feel also like I've been pushed to the head of the class. Like all these spirits are pushing me forward, saying, "You're—we need you."

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh, uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: "Like we just show up and keep—you're doing—" and you know, it's like—you know. Next stop, Bellevue. But I do believe that it's—I think it's all a part of making peace with that. And, like, letting it go—something go through you. Like, it's not me. I'm not a great painter. But I'm—allow it to come through me.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, but I don't think you want to lose that other thread that, like, your body knows what to do because you've been practicing for so long.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yes.

THEODORE KERR: And so, like, you have a facility with your elbow, with your forearm, with your fingers. You know? So, that when the ghosts visit and work through you, you can comply.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yes. But my—I'm not my body.

THEODORE KERR: Yes.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, like, even, like, with the HIV is putting, like, like, it's like this—my body's changing. And I'm not my body, and where's my spirit? My spirit has been here. And it's like, the spirit has to come through the body.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I'm not my body, but the body is evidence.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, and you can't escape your body.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Not yet.

THEODORE KERR: Not yet. That's nice.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Not yet. But at this point, you know, it's the letting go of the body.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, you know, it's—

THEODORE KERR: Huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It's leaving evidence of a body in the air. It's like—

THEODORE KERR: Huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —leave, making air—

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So—



THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —because there's a spirit. I mean, I've had to deal with spirituality.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And that there is something other than just the chemical-ness of it.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I think in the painting of letting it happen and go through it and—the art world doesn't really like to hear this, but I don't—it doesn't matter. What I figured out is this is my contribution.

THEODORE KERR: Right. And you're part of the conversation that pushes back against it, right? Like, the art world doesn't like to hear that. Meanwhile, you're experiencing success now, and part of that success is based on the work you've done and the spirit that you're putting into the work.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yes, because—

THEODORE KERR: So it's an interesting dichotomy of, like, sure they don't want to hear it. But, yet they desperately crave it.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yes.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yes. And—well, yeah. It's the odd thing, but it's the—I mean, for so many years, I tried to, you know, make something that people would say, "You're smart" or "you're talented" or "you're brilliant." And this is not about that. It's just, I'm letting myself do what my body does.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh, uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And that is my talent.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And who knew that people would—started relating with it and identifying with it, and that it becomes something that only I can do?

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And that was, like, the goal.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But it sure as hell took a long time.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative]. Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You know what I mean? I'm so lucky I got to—that I still continue to work and be able to make paintings.

THEODORE KERR: Right, and that new-ness is coming out of you. Like, I don't want this interview to suggest that you've reached a plateau, and now you're going to stay at this space. It's like, this is an ongoing process.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No. No, no, no, no.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It's—every painting changes. Every painting is new. Every, you know, when I start making the same painting—I mean, they have a similarity, but I know when they're true. And I know when they only look true.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh, uh-huh, uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: There's a difference.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: There's a difference. And I know that. And it keeps evolving. And that's what's amazing. Oh, I know what it was. I think that when I started on that hilltop, I mean, on the cliff in Australia, I had been having to deal with my work changing all the time. And, all of a sudden, I was looking at the landscape and the light and the weather was constantly changing.

THEODORE KERR: Huh, uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I was like, "There you go."

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It's all—if I paint that which always changes, it's always changing.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So it's not a problem.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh, uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So there's something about, if I treat them like weather and like the storm comes in in one and then the light comes in another and then the cold comes in another, it's a constant change. And that's kind of like my life. The only way I've survived is to adapt and to change and to go with things.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I think that is a metaphor in the work.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I had—once I accepted that everything changes and I could paint that, then it kind of happened. And I think that's—other people sense that change.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Or like, how you look at it and you—after looking at it, you've changed.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Or you may come back to it as different.

THEODORE KERR: It's changed, yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So it's been a—quite—it's—and I also feel I'm only just getting to the good stuff.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative]. What's interesting in relationship to the interview and why we're speaking here is, like, there's all this change, and there's this evolution for you and this thing. And the world has started to come back around to history. You know? Like, there was a long period where people didn't want to talk about HIV/AIDS. And definitely there was, like, a backlash against artists who were open about their status and who did work around the virus. And now we're seeing—like in the last five years we've seen retrospectives on Keith, of course, but also on Gran Fury, and also on general idea and Frank Moore and there's all these movies, like, *How to Survive a Plague* and *United in Anger*. And there's this whole, like, re-visitation of the early AIDS crisis.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, yeah. I mean, there's a reconsidering. I mean, I think what happened is it was exhausting, and we were so torn up and it was so sad for us. And we were not equipped to—I always say, you know, we were going to funerals and burying people and taking care of people and dealing with this massive thing. And everybody else went to grad school. [Laughs.]

THEODORE KERR: Huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And we were kind of like, "Oh, my God what happened." And they came and went "huh!" and the art world was replaced with this not-AIDS.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And so then they didn't want to think about it.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, who does want to think about it?

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh, uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But then now, it's like—it's that's kind of fizzled out, and—

THEODORE KERR: What's fizzled out? The exhaustion?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, just kind of like, the academia.

THEODORE KERR: Huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like, the problem with the institution is we were out in the streets taking care and changing and burying people, and in the middle of all of this, and then there were people that went to grad school that were not having in the streets. They were smart. They went to school, and—

THEODORE KERR: Sure.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —and, you know, you don't want to come to New York. And "Oh, wow, let's go to the cool funeral." Like, a lot of people went to school.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And a lot of the jobs went to school. And then they—the institutions create people for the institutions that support the institutions. It's like an ongoing thing, and the art world was taken over by academia.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: The academic.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And—because I don't think AIDS was really out of—I mean, identity politics and blah blah blah. All that stuff, and semiotics, all that wordy stuff came out.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I think that, like, with AIDS, people had to heal a little bit.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh, uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: People had to heal, because it was so painful.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was so painful that we needed, like, some time, some distance from it to—

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —because it was horrible.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was horrible. I mean, oh, you know, at the Clocktower, David Wojnarowicz was right next door, and Nicolas Moufarrege—

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —was across the hall.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It was—we were all in it together. And so now, I mean, people are looking at it as kind of a heroic—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —a weird, heroic time.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, I haven't been included in the AIDS artists that much.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I really haven't. Like, the Bronx Museum, I wasn't included in that.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: A lot of the East Village shows, I wasn't included in them.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, I've really been omitted in a lot of it.

THEODORE KERR: Huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And that's been interesting.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative]. Is interesting a code for something?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Hmm?

THEODORE KERR: What do you mean when you say interesting?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, it's interesting to not be included in something that you were so involved with.

THEODORE KERR: Like, hurtful interesting? Or—?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, I find it interesting that—I find it interesting that all the curators, I'm being looked over. I mean, I still feel looked over in a certain sense.

THEODORE KERR: Mm, mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But I also know that in the long run, I will be known for who I am now.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, you're in an interesting predicament. Ah, I'm formulating this as I speak, but because of your kind of healthy—I don't need to call it healthy. Because you had a certain idea that, like, we don't need to be famous just because we have HIV. There's an interesting way in which that's manifesting where maybe you're being neglected in these retrospectives of the past at the same time that you as an artist in the current moment is rising.

And so, in a way—if I put words into your mouth, please correct them. But, like, you escaped the kind of ghettoization of the AIDS art world that could happen. And I don't know, I think that's interesting and worth considering.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Well, yes. I mean, I avoided the shelf. I avoided the graffiti shelf. I avoided the East Village shelf.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I'm always trying to avoid it.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But, I mean, I—

THEODORE KERR: Consciously? It was—not a strategy because you don't use that word—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No, I think it was intuitively.

THEODORE KERR: Intuitively, yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But I do think that with the AIDS, I never felt, I felt like I was a human being. I wasn't a disease.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I was a human being with a disease, and having the disease is the experience that I'm putting into the paint. It's more of an abstract, symbolic—like, there's AIDS in all of this. There's the sense of disappearing.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: There's a sense of—like I love Felix Gonzalez-Torres because, I mean, it's AIDS work, but not really.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh, uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It's like great, like, it transcends all of it. It was, like, such an extension of ideas. His ideas are so—

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —abstract and universal and big and profound and—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You know, I think that he's a great AIDS artist. He's like a great artist. I don't care if he's with AIDS or not.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It just, like, he touched—reached out and touched in such a personal way.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: In such a way that we can all relate to the transitoriness of life and the ironic-ness of—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I'm, you know, I'm painting about that, too. About how light comes and goes and—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —how we go from one—we go from solid to air to liquid to nothing to come back to—so there's a forever-ness and a never-ness involved in the work.

THEODORE KERR: Hm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I think—I love a lot of the people. I mean, I think—you know, I love that show up there. They were like—there's some amazing people. And that was where—what they felt about.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But I was never—the AIDS was translated in a different way.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. What's interesting about that show, though, that *Art, AIDS, America* show is like, there's some dubious curatorial choices in that.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

THEODORE KERR: And there's artists included that, like, it's a bit of a stretch. Like, a line often is like, we can look back and see that AIDS was an influence. And so, it's interesting—yeah. I think your thinking on this is really interesting. I mean, it dovetails a little bit with my own work, but how does culture inform people's knowledge of HIV/AIDS. And, like, what's the impact of that show?

So, it was a show that was heavily criticized by young, black people because they didn't see themselves represented in it. Yet, they're one of the largest communities impacted by HIV. So, it's interesting to think about inclusion and exclusion in relation to that, in relation to individuals' work who, you know, of course your work could and should be in there, and it's also meaningful and—

[Cross talk.]

THEODORE KERR: You don't know if it should?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I don't really know that it should.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Because I don't—I think that some people address the issue in a much more direct way.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I don't think I ever—I think my work—I've always made—like, if you look at my whole history that we've been talking here, I'm—my life is the fodder for my work, and it changes. It's always been a reflection of what's happening to me through culture.

THEODORE KERR: Huh, huh, uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: You know, like, as I experience something, it's—I've been in all of this, and the work has evolved through me actually showing up and being in the world.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And AIDS was a part of it, but you know, gay was a part of it—

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —but I wasn't making gay art.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh, uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: There was something—all of these things came through me, and I was all of them. But yet, it—I think there's something else that I'm trying to express about going through all of this.

THEODORE KERR: Do you want to talk about collaboration? Because I wonder if—

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Sure.

THEODORE KERR: —like, that could be a way—like, and I think, take it to the, like, stretch the meaning to its, like, furthest extent. Like, when you think about collaboration in relationship to your life and your work.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I think, you know, painting is very solitary thing.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I think theater is a very collaborative thing.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I think socially, like, AA and—

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —groups of people, that's collaboration.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like, you know, sitting around the campfire telling the stories and the myths and passing it down.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: This is a collaboration.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But as I was talking about earlier, the collaboration of all these other artists and all these other spirits and all of these other memories and forces and greatness and Bernini, that's a collaboration, too, that—

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —it's funneled through me. And it's not just me.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It's like people say, "How do you make that?" I don't know.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I just, like, show up.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So there's a spiritual collaboration that happens.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And then the collaboration, if I'm good, that transfers back to the viewer, and they have—they—you know what? I've—I don't want—I don't shut people out.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It's like, how do I leave enough space in a painting that somebody can enter into it and collaborate with an experience and have an experiential experience?

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like, a bodily experience. Like, oh, I'm going to fall in. Or oh, I'm being pushed out. Or oh, so that that becomes a collaboration of—including you in the process.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Instead of shutting you out of the process.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: A lot of art is hermetically sealed to where it really doesn't need a viewer to exist.

THEODORE KERR: Mm, mm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And it's been part—this is a strategy of, like, how do I leave enough room for somebody to project onto—how do I give enough space to somebody to be able to feel—to go into the painting?

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Without knowing anything about painting?

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Without knowing anything about art? Without knowing—you know, to just have an experience. That's collaboration.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But this is, like, a medium,—it's like a medium for collaboration.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Right? Or—I'm saying medium, but the middle—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It's that middle—I'm always talking about the painting being the middle.

THEODORE KERR: Right. It's not a wall. Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No. It's like, a middle—it's like a transparent illusion. And then, like, this. And then it allows a reflection that includes the viewer to look at it and have some experiential thing. And that's what I think life is about, is the experience of—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —something or—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —experiencing the sunset, or experiencing the orgasm or the sex or the tenderness or something or the harshness of something.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No, it's the experiential. So, you're allowing somebody to have an experience, which makes them aware of them being alive and of being in a body and being a spirit and in a body. And you are the figure in the painting, right?

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So that is collaboration for me.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Acting in film and all that is great collaboration. But what is amazing about that is action, you know the words, you know the this. There's thousands of people behind you. Action is the moment, and you have to be in the moment.

THEODORE KERR: Hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And you have to make the moment real. And you have to, you know, you have to respond. And it's all under, like, the spotlight. So, you kind of have to let go, and let the whole thing happen and be aware of the collaboration of the moment.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like, a moment-to-moment, things change. That's collaboration. Collaboration with a partner.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Of letting somebody love you, you love them. You take care of them. You share with them. You experience things with them. You look after each other. You hate each other. You—that's incredible collaboration.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I mean, I've had to learn how to not—I don't have to do everything myself.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Right?

THEODORE KERR: That's a big one.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like some—one of my sponsors, he said, "Frank, hang up the cape."

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And that was a big thing. Like, I was—I fought for so many years. I mean, I fought.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I had to fight. I had to fight my way through life. And there became a point where I take the cape off. I mean, I don't have to be Superman.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And the other people—and, you know, once I did that, other people helped me.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I didn't ask you to do this.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].



FRANK HOLLIDAY: I didn't ask for the Roman people. I wasn't—Singapore. I wasn't this—I was like, this is not in my plan.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So I—once just, like, the doors I walk through—I show up on the corner with a dark suit.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And then I—they dump me off at Grand Central, and I call my lover to pick me up. He says, "Well, what did you do today?" I'm like, you won't believe it.

[They laugh.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Right?

THEODORE KERR: Right.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Or here I am on first-class going to Singapore like, "What?"

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh, uh-huh [affirmative]. [Laughs.]

FRANK HOLLIDAY: So it's—

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It's—I think it's called attraction, not promotion.

THEODORE KERR: Huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like, attracting, like—

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: To attract—

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —is to give yourself and to—I mean, not in a superficial way, but in a, like, a magnetic way.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Like, I have to take care of myself and my spirit and my body. And I can't have a lot of people. It has to be very safe and not controlled, but protected.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Because I have to—I can't have all this shit in my head.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, you used the word "shepherd" earlier, and I think that's a good one.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Yeah. I—it's—the time is very precious.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh, uh-huh [affirmative]. Yeah.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And in order—I know that in order to hear it, I have to quiet things down.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Especially now.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I used to act and paint and teach and this—and I'm like, "What?"

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But now it's, like, you know, no words in the music.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: It's very strange.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: But then I think—I look back at my life and, you know, I've done everything to the max.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And it's such a nice place to get to this point to—it's very rich.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I feel very rich—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —In what I'm doing. And very—I like this, the quietness—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: —that it takes.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I don't—I long—like, I don't care anymore—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: I would like to be—well, as I said, I always wanted to be known—if I got any recognition, that it was because I did something really, you know, meaningful.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And true. Not, you know, I don't even know what I'm saying.

THEODORE KERR: So, I think we're done, but is there anything you want to say? Is there anything that you're like, "Wait, this has to get on the record" or—?

FRANK HOLLIDAY: No. I find it—I found this very inspirational. I find you very good interviewer.

THEODORE KERR: Oh, thanks.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: And I find it that your intuitiveness and the ability to, like, lead me through stuff has been very insightful.

THEODORE KERR: Mm [affirmative]. Good. I'm glad it was good. Because you went great places. What you said was super interesting, and I have, like, hundreds of friends who I'm like, I can't wait for this to share. Because you said lots of amazing things that are super helpful.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Thank you.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, thank you.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: Right on.

THEODORE KERR: Okay. [Laughs.] Well, love-fest, over.

FRANK HOLLIDAY: [Laughs.]

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]