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Oral history interview with Julie Ault, 2017  
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# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Julie Ault on November 14 and 16, 2017. The interview took place in Brooklyn, N.Y., 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.

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

## Interview

THEODORE KERR: [00:00:00] This is Theodore Kerr interviewing Julie Ault at a friend's home in Brooklyn, New York on November 14, 2017 for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Card number one. Hi, Julie.

JULIE AULT: Hi, Ted.

THEODORE KERR: Okay. I can hear my headphones.

JULIE AULT: Can you hear me okay?

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, do you want to just describe the room in a sentence or two?

JULIE AULT: It's a nice house. We're on the top floor. The windows are painted with white, and they frame the gray cloudy sky outside.

THEODORE KERR: Beautiful. Something that I think is good to do is just think about who is going to be listening to this, and just think about audience. Do you have audience in mind?

JULIE AULT: I don't know. Are they online, these oral histories?

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

JULIE AULT: Then it could be anyone, you know.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. Is there anybody that you hope will listen to it?

JULIE AULT: I haven't thought about it that way, no.

THEODORE KERR: Okay. And then sometimes, especially when talking about HIV/AIDS, for me, I like to ask people if—do you believe in spirits, do you believe in ghosts, are people here with you?

JULIE AULT: You want to ask me that right at the beginning? [Laughs.]

THEODORE KERR: I mean if it—

JULIE AULT: I'm just kidding.

THEODORE KERR: Okay. [Laughs.]

JULIE AULT: I don't know that humor translates into typed transcripts.

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

JULIE AULT: But I really don't know how to answer that. I mean, I'm here by myself. But of course we're a compilation of our personal histories and collective histories. But I don't have any one in mind or any audience or ideal reader in mind.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, I was thinking about it a bit. I was like, "Who's going to find this? And what's going to be the special thing that makes this the transcript that they [00:02:00] read, or the audio that they listen to?" And I was thinking obviously it'll be people who know and care about your work and want to know more. It'll be people who know and care about Group Material and want to know more. And then I was thinking it'll be people who care about HIV/AIDS, either because they've been deeply impacted or they feel like they've been deeply impacted. So I guess those are some of the people that I've been thinking about.

But I'm always surprised doing some oral histories. Some of the people auditing the clips have said how much they mean to them. So I forgot to think that the audience is also everyone involved in the production.

JULIE AULT: Right. And I think—that's why I probably haven't thought about who, because mostly I would like it to be a meaningful conversation in the present tense for us, and draw things out, and, you know, achieve some kind of contextualization and bringing together of information, memory, atmosphere of what I imagine to be the times that you're going to be asking me questions about. But first of all, I just think it has to be meaningful for me and for you. And everything else is gravy in a way. Because if it is, then it will build a constituency. And I'm sure that this program of important oral histories has a constituency already and will keep building one. So to add to that is an important thing that I take really seriously.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. What I appreciate about the process with you up until now is that you've been very clear, and—"excited" isn't the right word. But maybe—yeah, clear about stuff that you were interested in me knowing about. And checking in about that[00:04:00]. And I think that's a really good—that was meaningful for me.

[Referring to prior email exchange between Theodore Kerr and Julie Ault, about source material Theodore Kerr should review before the interview. Julie Ault writes that one such exchange was as follows: THEODORE KERR: My sense is you like a conversation, and that conversation is loosely defined for you. So without making too much work for you, is there anything you need / want me to do before the interview? JULIE AULT: What comes to mind immediately is Group Material's work, *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material*, and the documenta booklet regarding *AIDS Timeline* are helpful. The booklet I did on Felix Gonzalez-Torres's clock collection and related Ph.D. writing where AIDS is concerned, Felix Gonzalez-Torres monograph, and other things. -JA]

JULIE AULT: That's good, yeah. Was it different than how you begin some of the other—or you would begin a conversation like this usually?

THEODORE KERR: Somewhat. Yeah. If I think about the interviews that I've done for this project specifically, some people have been very—one or two people have been very close to me, and I know their work and them very well. And so that was about thinking about, like, "What do I know that I take for granted?" Like, "How do I approach this with all the knowledge I have in my heart and mind?" And then with people that I've never met before—and I was familiar with everybody to a degree. So with people that I was familiar with to a degree, it was kind of parsing through, "What are the things that I need to go into the interview knowing, so that they feel that they're going to be—that I respect and honor what we're hear to talk about? And what things is just like actually let that come out if it comes out?" But no one was as, I would say, helpful and clear about the things that would be good for me to know beforehand.

JULIE AULT: That's good. You know, I mean, I didn't want to give you too much. But I'm aware of the problematic of coming to a conversation, and I don't want to fall into just stating facts that can be found in other places. The general subject terrain, or what I expect to be the subject terrain, of our conversation is something that has been a layer or—sometimes in the foreground, sometimes in the background—for a long time in my work. And the collective work, and work that I've done individually.

So I feel like [00:06:00] that's a good starting point. Not that you have to know all of it. But otherwise we don't use our valuable time necessarily. I mean, we're dipping in without having a grounding or something. So I like to think of it more as, in general, maybe a more guided curatorial than a cafeteria-style taking some of this, taking some of that. And I wasn't—I'm not aware to what degree you've prepared, or are you in-quotes supposed to prepare or not.

Because I know the oral history is so much about the—I mean traditionally it's so much about the person giving the oral history. And that the interviewer recedes a bit in that, or is not as much of a figure. And so that's why I felt like I have—I didn't know your work. But I looked up a little bit before. And then you sent me some things which were helpful. Unfortunately I didn't get to read them all. But it's helpful to have a grounding, you know.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. Also you said something that is something that I think a lot about with these oral histories—is, like, for some people HIV/AIDS is something they think about every day, maybe all day. And for other people it was a period of their life, or it is a period of their life, that can be discrete. I always want to make space for people to show up in relationship to HIV/AIDS how they want to show up.

JULIE AULT: Right.

THEODORE KERR: Is it something that's constant? Or is it something—

JULIE AULT: Right. No, I think that's good, because also if someone's agreed already to do the oral—or to be part of the project, the oral history project, then there's a willingness. And it sounds like you're making space for it to be on their terms, which is good. [Laughs.]

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. I think it's good. [Laughs.]

JULIE AULT: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. I think it's good. And I think same thing, like, some [00:08:00] artists are well known for specific things, but that was maybe a very short period of their life.

JULIE AULT: Right. Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: When there's other things that they're actually much—that there's maybe something—there's something to be said for the things that aren't known. And so I hope that—I'm saying that because I think that—I want us to be able to talk about other stuff, like—

JULIE AULT: Right. Yeah. No, and I think—I mean, if there's an implied question in what you just said about, for some people it's with them all the time and for some not, for me it's both. I mean, it was not an incidental period. It's not over. And at the same time, certainly, you know, psychically, I'm not in HIV/AIDS all the time. But I don't feel things as ghosts as you suggested, or you used the word earlier, either. And I don't feel haunted.

I just feel like we're—I'm composed of everything that's happened. But the period of first-wave AIDS crisis and its effect on me and the communities that—you know, circles of closeness and communities—is probably—I mean, that's one of the most major things in life. So it's not that I want to put it away. It's not that it goes away. But it's not with me every minute either. Or let's say it's not with me in the same way, obviously. It's something that shifts and recedes and comes to the foreground. Sometimes I want to forget, sometimes I want to address it more. And sometimes if I try to forget it, it comes back, you know, or comes forward, of its own, so to speak. So I'm open to all of it.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. That's beautiful. I noticed in lots of conversations that you have with people, either you or the other person starts with a quote that seems meaningful. [00:10:00] And it's usually from the other person. And so—

JULIE AULT: Okay.

THEODORE KERR: —in honor of that—

JULIE AULT: That's great. [Laughs.]

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. I wanted to—there's something that you say in both your dissertation and in the *Show and Tell* book [*Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material*]. You write, "In retrospect I believe describing Group Material during the years since it ended has been much about concealment as exposure." And I was wondering: Is that also true for just life in general, not just describing Group Material, but maybe other parts of your life as well?

JULIE AULT: You know, I don't have a—I'm not sure. But I don't have a theory. I was speaking in relation to Group Material when I said that. And I think it's a nice formula, kind of. Concealment and exposure. I was thinking about—I mean, I was reflecting on what had happened in the representation, the live representation of Group Material, that I was doing. I can't speak for Doug Ashford, but I think we had some similar tendencies. But the live representation of Group Material that I was doing for maybe 10, 12 years after it ceased its activities—that concealment and exposure became clear to me, that binary became clear to me, only when I started working on—when I dared actually to look into the file cabinet again, and to think about, okay, now it's time to be putting this material in different hands, the material traces of Group Material's practice and processes, to put that in a proper archive, and to take it basically out of my and out of other former members' hands, so that it could become research material that people work with however they want. You know?

And it could—I wouldn't say it speaks for itself, because I don't think materials do speak for themselves. But that people could interpret and piece together information [00:12:00] and take from it. So it was when I started to—when I decided to go back into, for myself, understanding also what was Group Material, what happened, what did we do, what were the purposes? And to go back into that atmosphere of the group, it was something that was a real jolt. Because the very first materials that I started to consult and look again at—say, letters or correspondence from the first year of the group, or look at whatever document I put my hands on, I was shocked that the gap with not only my memory, but with the stories that I had been telling was so severe. Right?

And that was really interesting to me, that gap. And so obviously I got interested in going—I mean, really diving in, you know. But I'm always reluctant to apply lived experience in one case to make it a theory. You know? I pretty much do theorize [laughs] or live through understanding through lived experience. I build on experiences, but I don't think that it serves you to take that lens of concealment and exposure and then say, "Okay, that also applies to former relationships, you know, like to other forms of past experience and my memory and

representation to myself and others over time of those things." It doesn't necessarily apply. But in the case of Group Material it was pretty clear.

[They laugh.]

THEODORE KERR: I guess one of the reasons I was curious to start there is because I was [00:14:00] wondering: What are ways that you engage, think about, even theorize your life before Group Material?

JULIE AULT: Well, blissfully, I didn't have to.

[They laugh.]

JULIE AULT: You know? I mean, I didn't theorize it. I was in it. Group Material began in 1979, so—let's see, I was born in '57. So I was 22. And I had moved to New York in late 1976. So the years before Group Material consisted of, I'm guessing, two-and-a-half, three years. I don't know if it was that neat. But a couple of years, two or three years, in New York. One year, or maybe nine months or something, living in Washington, DC, which is where I went when I left Maine. And then before that, growing up in central Maine and in a suburb of Boston, Massachusetts.

So I think it had to do with—I wasn't in a—it had to do with my age, for one thing. But had I gone to college and wanted to be this or that and had a clear path of scholarship, I might have been aware much earlier in life. But I think that my political consciousness and consciousness of myself was something that came much—it came from when I moved to New York, and in the—I always say that New York was my school, and Group Material was the classroom.

Certainly, I had—I mean, before that I don't think I—I didn't have a lot of questions. It was just, like, I want to get out of Maine, I want to leave home. I left when I was 17, as soon as I finished [00:16:00] some schooling. At that time, that would have been '75, late '75, fall '75. The mid-'70s in central Maine were economically depressed. And people lost—like my aunt had lost her job, and she never really got another job her whole life. I mean, she had piecework here and there and stuff, but she didn't get another one. And I had been working at a supermarket, and then—I can't remember the details now why. I guess because I decided to move and things. But my goal of going to Washington, DC was really just to get out of Maine, go to a city. And that city was a place where I knew I could get a job. And by "job," I mean, you know, I worked at a dry cleaner during the day. I worked at a takeout place two or three nights a week. And then I did some ushering at the Kennedy Center a couple times maybe. I don't know whether it was three times a month or something. But jobs that were not careers, is what I'm saying.

And believe it or not, the mid-'70s, it's like, there just were no jobs in central Maine. And I also wanted to leave. So Washington, DC was where a couple friends lived that I had met in Maine [Yolanda Hawkins and her boyfriend Havard -JA].

THEODORE KERR: Do you know why you wanted to leave Maine?

JULIE AULT: I mean, it's not like there's "a" reason. But I think wherever I would have grown up I would have wanted to leave as soon as I could, because of having—I mean, whether it was genetic, social, whatever, I don't know. But an independent strain. And I didn't have any real focus there. [00:18:00] It would be too complicated to go into it, but I was just very anxious to get out of family life, the family structure, the house. And then also to get out of Maine, because that was obviously part of it. So I can't say, "If I had a different—growing up would I have loved Maine?" To me, New England, it's not my favorite place. My energy level is kind of low when I cross the state of Maine line. [Laughs.]

THEODORE KERR: You feel it.

JULIE AULT: I do, yeah. I mean not always. I like aspects of it, of course. And there's close ties. And I am a Mainer in many ways. Or Mainiac, as some people call it. But it wasn't even an issue. I didn't ever consider staying in Maine. I just was always looking to get out. And the minute I was a teenager or something I was—let's just put it this way: I was looking to get out [laughs], however that can happen. Get out of the immediacy of what was at hand.

THEODORE KERR: I think it's interesting, because I had a dissimilar experience. I didn't know I wanted to get out, and I very much bonded with my hometown. And it wasn't until I tricked myself into getting to New York that I realized how much energy I had put into trying to justify staying. And so I think it's—

JULIE AULT: What was your hometown?

THEODORE KERR: Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Edmonton is a blue-collar city. And depending on who you are in

the world it's either very north, but if you're from the north it's not very north.

JULIE AULT: It's not? Oh, funny.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

JULIE AULT: Yeah, I think of it as north of course. And know the Edmonton Mall by reputation.

THEODORE KERR: Oh, you do? Yeah. Please note I'm smiling big, because I spent most of [00:20:00] my youth in West Edmonton Mall.

JULIE AULT: Oh, really?

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

JULIE AULT: I have a photograph that Vikky Alexander gave me that she had done a series in—I don't remember—I'm guessing the late '80s. She did a series of photographs from the Edmonton Mall. And I have one, yeah, that was a gift, and I like it a lot.

THEODORE KERR: Oh, great. Makes me happy. So you never even—you lived in your family home in Maine, and then you—did you live on your own or with roommates in Maine?

JULIE AULT: No, because I left fall '77, I think. Probably the summer I was working. No, '75, sorry. So probably during that summer I was figuring out where to go. And there were starts and stops. But I didn't move into an apartment or live with friends, either an apartment on my own or move in with friends. I had spent a lot of time at friends' homes, and probably—I mean, I don't remember the details, but for sure overnights and things. I had met Tim Rollins, who's from Maine. I met him in 1973. So I was 15, I guess. And Yolanda Hawkins, who was from Washington, or had grown up in Washington, and she was also in Maine at school. So I met them. But Tim and I became very close friends. So I was spending a lot of time hanging out with a group of people that were living on their own. But I still—I mean, I was underage for one thing. And I hadn't flown the coop that much. I mean, I still lived at home. But yeah, no, it was always clear to me that I would leave where I came from.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. [00:22:00] Did you like school? I feel like—

JULIE AULT: No.

THEODORE KERR: Because—was it the people? Was it the way of learning? Was it the structure of it?

JULIE AULT: I couldn't really tell you. I mean, in Winthrop, Maine I don't think it was a particularly—I mean, I didn't experience it as a good school or—there was no art department. Which isn't necessarily a litmus test for me. I kind of took that on, but it wasn't like I was concerned at the time. I wasn't concerned when I was 12, 13, 14 about the fact that there was no art department. But there wasn't.

I don't remember connecting with—I couldn't even tell you teachers' names. I mean, I had some friends. But I more or less was interested in things outside of school. And pretty quickly, you know, as I came of an age where I could—I don't know what age it was, maybe 12, 13, where I would be out on my own a lot. I was less and less interested in school.

And then—because I'm sure you're going to ask me, I'm going to cut to the chase. I went to the first two years of high school at Winthrop High, and then I was able to make a deal with the assistant principal, can't remember his name either, of the high school. The deal was I would take courses at University of Maine at Augusta, which is about 15 minutes' drive away. And they had an art department, which was kind of a prefab building at the time. But nonetheless they had an art department and an electronic music department. They had literature. [00:24:00] They had all these things that didn't happen in Winthrop High School. And in Winthrop High School it was more focused on traditions, you know, kind of gendered traditions of like sports and jocks and home economics. So I made a deal with the assistant principal that I would take courses at the university, and if I took enough and got passing grades, at the end of two years they would give me my high school diploma. And that happened.

THEODORE KERR: Great. [Laughs.]

JULIE AULT: Yeah. So I was able—that was a moment where it was intuition that the situation wasn't—or maybe I analyzed things without knowing it. I was young, but I realized the situation was not good for me. As I recall my mother was supportive of me going, but I brokered the deal with the assistant principal by myself, because I remember being in the office and things. It was a key movement in life, because when I did go to University of Maine at Augusta, I met Tim Rollins like almost immediately. And I always credit Tim with saving my life. I think that's a little [. . . dramatic -JA]. You know, I mean, I probably would have been fine if I lived in Maine and had a

different life. But it felt like he was saving my life, because he was opening the window onto a whole 'nother, like, world than—that I had an inkling I wanted to leave Maine, but I didn't know to what. You know? And that still took me years to figure out.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. I'm always curious about people's—like, what was inspiring them. And I don't mean in the big I. This isn't an Oprah moment. I'm just like—what was informing you? Because even—you were—in this, you were talking about, like, was I figuring things out, [00:26:00] how did I know? The question I'm curious about is, like, how did you know what you knew at 17? What do you think was informing you?

JULIE AULT: Can you be more—refine the question a bit? When you say, how did I know what I know, what area of life are you referring to?

THEODORE KERR: That's a nice prompt to rephrase the question. Where were you getting your information about life from? Was it the media? Was it your family? Was it older friends? Was it walks in the Maine countryside?

JULIE AULT: Right, okay. No, I was not a Thoreau.

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

JULIE AULT: I was pretty—I think I was getting—it's hard to remember. But as a surface answer, I was getting information from being in a family that the larger family had lots of differences. My father's—they were all from Maine. Ancestors. But my father's side of the family were largely Republicans and really into local politics and had nice living situations. Land, you know, family land, houses, and stuff. And as I recall, I think of them as being more from, you know, a moneyed family. They weren't farmers, let's say.

My mother's side, they were farmers. And that was further south. Still in central Maine, but they were from the New Gloucester area. My father's family, I believe, was from Auburn area. So it's not so far away. But on my mother's side it was more of a very old-fashioned farm. [00:28:00] I mean, not everyone was a farmer eventually. My grandmother worked at a—she did sewing and what's the—she was a seamstress but there's—for a department store. So she did a lot of fixing things and hemming and sewing.

THEODORE KERR: Oh, wow. Like a tailor? No.

JULIE AULT: Not a tailor exactly. But she was the in-house seamstress for Peck's Department Store in Lewiston. But there was a very old-fashioned—everyone in the family on my mother's side did everything themselves. They made their own clothes, they—and I mention this because it was inspiring. It was more inspiring, indirectly and directly, to me than the other dimensions of the family. So they made their own dresses. They didn't wear pants, the women, at that time.

And my great-aunt and great-uncle, Aunt Jo and Uncle Carl, I spent a lot of time with them and with my aunt Dot and grandmother. My aunt Dot, who was my mother's sister, and Nana, my grandmother, lived together. And Aunt Jo and Uncle Carl were brother and sister and they lived together all their lives. And just to portray a little bit, you know, Aunt Jo and Uncle Carl's house. It was a big farmhouse with no central heating. There was a woodstove. There was not even a fireplace, if I remember correctly. But there was a woodstove. And they made mattresses from goose down. You know, you make the quilt by hand, you—I mean, Aunt Jo had a machine at a certain point. But this, I think, was ultimately very influential on me as a kind of independent—what looked like an independent, self-sufficient life.

And then on the other hand, as a teenager, I was very excited about the coming [00:30:00] of mall culture that was happening in Maine. Not by me exactly, not where we lived, but—so I was excited by the languages of promotional and commercial culture. And I worked at a supermarket for a couple years when I was 15 to 17, four days a week. I liked the packaging. The whole—you know, I just liked the sociality of the marketplace, let's say.

I was informed by media some. I was always into TV. Watched a lot of TV. I don't remember listening to radio. You know, reading the newspaper, that came more moving to New York. Before that I probably was looking at the local *Kennebec Journal* or something. So I think it was a mixture. Whatever I knew, or didn't know, or knew consciously or unconsciously, was a mix of the culture, the immediate culture, the larger frame culture, that I would have access to through commerce and music.

I was always into music a lot, and listening to albums. One of the first bands that I was really, let's say, obsessed with was Alice Cooper. When I was a teenager, my father used to take me—probably took me and my brother, I don't remember—to Alice Cooper concerts, and then drop us off and come pick us up, like, hours later and stuff. So I was informed by, you know, mass culture, or popular culture. But very spotty. You know, very spotty. And I probably did see Maine as being narrow-minded compared to just the inkling I had of a larger view. [00:32:00] You know? And it was narrow-minded.

THEODORE KERR: Alice Cooper came to West Edmonton Mall and bought pants from the store I worked at, and he wanted to wear them to his concert, and so my coworker had to put her hand down his pants to take out the security tag.

JULIE AULT: Oh, wow.

THEODORE KERR: And it was like—it was a big story for a long time for all of us. [Laughs.]

JULIE AULT: Yeah, that's funny, that's great. Yeah, I mean, I loved to run the malls. I mean, there was only one mall. Portland Mall was the one that opened. It was big. And you had to go with your parents. It's not like a—I mean, when I was a little older I did get a license. I started driving when I was 15. I think even though my friends were older—once I started going to UMA, University of Maine at Augusta, I had a car. You know, I worked at a supermarket, so I had some money in my pocket. I didn't have a heavy-duty supervision with my parents. So I was going around, and I would take a group of friends to the—we would all go to the movies, but I would drive or something. So there was a freedom that was happening, but it was very much identified with what's possible, when I met Tim, and what that opened up onto.

So probably if Tim would have said, "I'm going to go to North Carolina and study biology," I might have thought, "Maybe I would like to do that too, or be in that milieu." You know? But Tim had talked about New York. And really it was just the idea of city, rural. Now I'm quite attached to the rural, but I see it as a real—I'm really lucky that I grew up sort of in city and rural. Because the first few years, I was born in—I always like to say I was born in Maine but I wasn't. I was born in Boston. [00:34:00] So the first—I think when I was 9 or 10, we moved back to Maine. But we spent a lot of time—we went to Maine from Boston. Brockton is where my parents lived when I—

THEODORE KERR: Brockton?

JULIE AULT: Yeah, it's a suburb. And we spent a lot of time in Maine. And I feel like I spent summers there, but I couldn't have. It probably was just a couple weeks at a time. You know, maybe a couple times each summer.

THEODORE KERR: I'm going to go meta just for a second, as someone who cares about archives.

JULIE AULT: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: I'm wondering: Where do you see people's family history and early history? Is that of value, do you think, in archives?

JULIE AULT: In archives?

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. Or I'm interested to think—what would be a different way to ask the question?

JULIE AULT: Okay. Take a second.

THEODORE KERR: No, I'm wondering if you have a different way.

JULIE AULT: Oh, I see. Oh, I thought you meant you needed time. I mean, it's kind of a truism you can't ignore or escape. Of course what you're born into, the context that you grow up in, make a huge impression. What one does with that at whatever point in life is, to me, important. I don't always find my own or people's family histories that interesting. When it comes up organically, and I see a connection or something, I'm interested. But I don't think there is a place that's a fixed place in one's shifting identity or in the personal construction or the persona construction.

Family has been—my family structures, I've realized probably [00:36:00] later as I got older, I realized more the influences that are not—and I can't put my fingers on those. But the influences that are—they're neither good nor bad, they're influences. So they're multidimensional. But I did find it important to leave. And, you know, my brother had a different response. He lives in Maine. He's older than me. He lives fairly close, and has stayed close by where he grew up and stuff. A lot of the Aults still live in Maine. There's only a few that got out.

THEODORE KERR: And is there still the tradition of—I guess, I was really moved by the idea that the siblings lived together. They stayed together as units.

JULIE AULT: Aunt Jo and Uncle Carl?

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

JULIE AULT: Uh-huh [affirmative]. Well, it was not a pretty picture [laughs], so—

THEODORE KERR: Oh, okay.

JULIE AULT: I mean it was, but they stayed together because that was the tradition. Family looked after each other and stuff. But Aunt Jo—we have a term we used to use a lot: sputtered. And Aunt Jo sputtered about Uncle Carl all the time. I mean, I shouldn't say it wasn't a pretty picture. It was a great picture. But it wasn't like that was the top choice for either one of them, I think.

But yeah, family. And also Aunt Dot living with my grandmother, Nana, her whole life. Until Nana died. That was, I think, quite normal. Or quite usual. You know, I'm never crazy about psychologizing myself or others in a quick way. I think it takes years to really be able to—if the goal is even to understand something—to understand it. But my mother was a [00:38:00]—she left her family. She was quite anxious to leave. She was the oddball. The maiden name is Tufts. She was the oddball in the Tufts family, and the one that left. And I was closer to her family—I think even now more emotional content for me, in Aunt Jo, Uncle Carl, the farm life, Aunt Dot, Nana, the ways of being that they had—than she ever has had. And she's 88 now. So the reason I said, you know, about psychologizing is that one could say I followed in my mother's footsteps, but I don't think so. My mother did that, and I did that. You know?

THEODORE KERR: Right. And is it T-U-F-F-S? Tufts?

JULIE AULT: What? Oh. T-U-F-T-S.

THEODORE KERR: Ah, Tufts, okay. Sorry. [Laughs.]

JULIE AULT: Tufts, yeah. Yeah, Tufts.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, I appreciate the comment about the psychologizing of people as well. Yeah.

JULIE AULT: Yeah, I mean you can tell I want to say something. Because I think about it in relation—when I write. You know, in historical representation, if I'm researching someone who is no longer living. Their life, their work. And writing, you know, I think is—I've had occasion to realize that I got it all wrong, or I got some things wrong. And I think it's just part of our—maybe even more so our current culture than it was 10, 20, 30 years ago. That we short-circuit information to tell the story. Whether it's to ourselves, about ourselves, or other people's stories. So I'm very wary of psychologizing [00:40:00] also from my own lived experience. Because I could tell you this story or that story. I could try to say, "I'm this way because of that." But I really don't know. There's so many co-factors. And I think the backdrop or the lens that we try to portray through, I want it to be open. I don't want it to be defined. And that includes, if I'm talking about my own experiences, myself, whatever, or others. I think it's a cautious territory.

THEODORE KERR: This morning, before I left my house, I was reading—there's two interviews with you and Marvin Taylor, and I can't remember which interview this is in, but he says something about like, "History is messy, archives should be messy, and narrative is not."

JULIE AULT: Right.

THEODORE KERR: And I was thinking about how—well, sometimes narrative is a vehicle. It's almost like it's a genre.

JULIE AULT: It is, yeah.

THEODORE KERR: It's the thing that we need, or that we think we need, sometimes, to get the messiness into the world, or something like that.

JULIE AULT: I mean, I don't—yeah, I couldn't generalize. But I think narrative is clearly a thing, you know, a genre or a format. A formatting. I don't think we need it, but we've invented it. Or somebody—it's been invented, and we use it all the time. And it's been played with, it's been subverted, it is constantly. But the older I get, I do become more—circumspect? Is that the right word? I mean, I've just become maybe more—what's the word? Nuanced [00:42:00] about—and specific about enacting narrative in a certain situation.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. I wonder, can we go back and just get a little specific on some things that I think could be fun or interesting?

JULIE AULT: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: You talked about Alice Cooper. But I wonder if there's other musicians and bands and albums you want to—

JULIE AULT: Oh. Yeah, I didn't think about—I haven't thought about that in a long time. I mean, I was into a lot of different music as long back as I remember. But Alice Cooper was—for some reason they came to Maine and played. I liked concerts. And that's an easy way to get in when you're young and a fan—you know, you want to

be a fan, or I wanted to be a fan of something. So I went to see different concerts. I was into a lot of music that I think—I guess I don't know how you would characterize it. I liked Alice Cooper. I listened to The Who, and Led Zeppelin some. But I wasn't committed to that—I mean, Alice Cooper I stayed with for maybe five albums or something, probably '72 to '76 or something like that. But I wasn't that committed to—if you want to call it rock or something. I needed more of an edge, you know?

And I was into dance music and disco. I don't know when disco started. But I was into dance music that became disco. In Maine, when I still lived in Maine. And my mother, I think, liked James Brown. I remember in Brockton still, so that was probably the mid-'60s, listening to James Brown on the phonograph.

[They laugh.] [00:44:00]

JULIE AULT: You know, it was mono then, it wasn't stereo. So there were a lot of influences. And I got into listening to a lot of black female vocalists, probably, you know, mid-teenage years. I was totally enthralled with Betty Wright. I mean, I wish I would have thought of that because I feel mentally saturated generally. So it's not easy to just pick out, "Okay, who was I listening to?" But maybe I can fill it in later.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

JULIE AULT: But Betty Wright certainly comes to mind. And James Brown. And Alice Cooper. And then, you know, there would have been a lot of other—I mean, I had the Blind Faith album. There was only one album they did. There were a lot of—I was into music, let's say, and music culture. But not so much reading and studying it. It was more like I just—excited by it.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. Dancing?

JULIE AULT: Yeah, yeah. I remember—I mean, I didn't do things like go to high school dances, really, and—

THEODORE KERR: Because you thought they were nerdy?

JULIE AULT: No, I just wasn't—I was more outside.

THEODORE KERR: You were out in the world.

JULIE AULT: Yeah, I was hanging around in front of the drugstore on Main Street, which was where people hang out. And then you go to parties. But there were—as soon as—I'm guessing I was maybe 13. You know, I went to parties. I was around music. People danced, you know. And more like when I was 15, once I started going to UMA, I also got my license. My driver's permit, got a license, got a car. Or inherited an old Pontiac from my father.

And I would go out with people. We would go to bars. And I [00:46:00] probably looked—I mean, I don't think anyone cared. I wasn't 18, but I remember going to clubs and bars. There weren't that there were so many. But there were places. There was one place also in Winthrop. And I hung out with an older crowd that drank and hung out and listened to music. We liked Sly and the Family Stone. And, you know, Rod Stewart. I mean, it was all over the place. A lot of it was also jukebox, what's playing on the radio. Rolling Stones. You know, "Angie" [laughs], whatever. I can remember hearing that on the radio. It's whatever was playing on the radio that you got attracted to, what was on the jukebox.

I wasn't into country music at the time. Later I got into country music. But probably I wasn't because I was looking to get out, and country was more identified with rural. My mother was into country music. So I remember going to—whenever a place opened there were—I don't remember a lot of bars or clubs, but there were. And I remember dancing in Maine to, you know, Donna Summer and stuff. But it could have been on a visit later, because I did go back for one week—well, two weeks. Two separate-week visits a year for a while.

THEODORE KERR: I'm going to ask you just to move your microphone. It somehow shifted. So if you just want to pop—yeah, exactly. Or—yeah. Rubbing against your sweater.

JULIE AULT: Is that better?

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, thank you. I love what you said: You don't know when disco started. But I wonder when—you don't have to answer this, but I need to ask it. When did disco start for you?

JULIE AULT: Yeah. Well, I do remember when Esther Phillips' "What a Diff'rence a Day Makes" came out. And I don't know. I mean, I could look it up. But maybe [00:48:00] it's '75. When I moved to DC there were—clubs were going strong. And I was going mostly to, like, gay clubs dancing and stuff. I can't remember the names. I can't remember the names of some of them in DC, but there was a strong dance culture. And also in New York there was a strong—I mean, I was really going out a lot at night with friends, Tim and others. But I think Esther

Phillips's "What a Diff'rence a Day Makes" strikes me as one song. But there was dancing obviously before disco, but there was something that was pre-disco that seems to me it was dance music. Might have been R&B. I don't remember what we were dancing to.

THEODORE KERR: And when you picture the dancing in your mind, is it that your bodies were moving differently?

JULIE AULT: What do you mean?

THEODORE KERR: When you think about dancing before disco and dancing after disco.

JULIE AULT: Oh, no, I just think about—I mean I wasn't dancing at home. Until then, when I lived in DC. Even then I had a room in a house, so I wasn't dancing at home. I started dancing in clubs.

THEODORE KERR: And do you remember things you wore? The way you—was a look important to you?

JULIE AULT: Yeah. We always dressed up. I dressed up for going out. And I probably—I mean, I had a lot of different—I didn't have a look. But there were periods that I was also attracted to certain styles of music, and it could be different things. In New York I also—I mean, it sounds—it doesn't quite sound right to me to say I was into punk or something. But I went to a lot of [00:50:00] punk gigs and things at CB's and Max's Kansas City. I was into the Fast. They weren't punk, but Miki and Paul Zone. And other bands—I was totally into the New York Dolls, and loved David Johansen. And you probably—I can see there's no recognition.

THEODORE KERR: I didn't know who Dave Johansen was. I know my face betrayed me there.

JULIE AULT: That's okay. And I'm not going to explain.

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

JULIE AULT: But I loved David Johansen and still do, he's done amazing things. Like very different roles and stuff. But I dressed up, and I remember going out with friends, you know, Tim and others, and we had our glitter period. I can remember some high shoes with sparkles on them. I would say more of a glitter thrift store period. I had a period where Yolanda and I both bought a lot of vintage clothes, and they were really cheap then, and it was fun. You know, we would have a 1940s look or—mixed with a little bit arty or something. And then when I moved—I mean, in Washington it was more disco. I was going to clubs with friends that were disco. It was disco. You're listening to Gloria—I mean, all—whatever the hits were then, 1976. Gloria Gaynor, Teddy Pendergrass, or Melvin—Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes. Whatever the big hits were. That's what was played and it was deejay stuff. So I was dressing up probably, you know, in the disco vocabulary then.

And then in New York I got more into [00:52:00]—I don't remember the disco thing being—maybe it was just already—had become kind of too codified or routine or formulaic or something. But I remember some disco. But then also more—I mean punk was happening and then new wave, no wave. And because I was going places, I would—I say "I" or "we," because I don't know. I mean I wasn't going by myself. But we, say, a group of friends, which probably included Tim and—Tim Rollins, maybe Mundy McLaughlin a lot, and whoever else—we would go to a gig at—or see a band or something at CBGB's, and then afterwards go to Crisco Disco, because that was an after-hours. So they opened much later. So that would be in one night, and that all was fine. It wasn't like I was anti-disco or hated disco or hated punk or rock or anything. You know, there was no hate [laughs] involved.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, yeah. What you're saying also is that you weren't part of a musical camp that detested the other musical camp. You were open.

JULIE AULT: Although there were lots of, you know, bumper sticker things about that. You know, like, hating disco. But no, I was moving in and out of these things. And my friends were too. We were in a good moment in New York, you know. I mean, I think we knew it. But there was also—there's a fair amount when you—I shouldn't say for other people, but for me there's a fair amount of getting blurry. You know? Like, I wasn't going to school, I was just working at jobs and living and hanging out with friends. And didn't have a [00:54:00] lot of aspirations. So getting blurry. I was happy to get blurry with drinking and drugs and stuff. So that was part of it. That was part of it too. But going with the flow. And I think we knew we were in a good—or let's say, it felt like a very rich period to be able to—I mean, for me to be able to move to New York and support myself.

I worked at Baskin-Robbins—was I think my first job in New York but I'm not sure the chronology. I worked at Baskin-Robbins for quite a while and then I worked at a telephone answering service for quite a while, answering phones. And then doing—I mean, I always had full-time jobs and sometimes extra job as well. But to be able to live in New York, share an apartment with friends, go to clubs, go to music stuff, go to gigs. I mean, Tim and I went to see Van Morrison at the Palladium. We went to—I went with someone else to the first Clash gig in New York, which was—I don't remember the name of the place now, but it was in Midtown, like Times Square.

To be able to support yourself, do these things, and be part—even just as someone who's in the audience, to be part of all this stuff that was happening, music—and art. I mean, I was tagging along for a lot of the art. Tim was really focused on that. And his friends who became my friends. So it felt like definitely a good period. Now also, you know, it's possible to look back and I think of the term that Edmund White used to describe the pre-consciousness-of-AIDS-happening period [00:56:00] or pre-HIV, as the Sunlit '70s. It did feel like there's a real—there was a liberational air. You know? On so many counts, you know. Of course on other counts there—it was not like it was Edenic or something. But there was that—

THEODORE KERR: What's that word?

JULIE AULT: Edenic.

THEODORE KERR: What does that mean?

JULIE AULT: Like Eden-like. [Laughs.]

THEODORE KERR: Ah, okay, I've never heard it.

JULIE AULT: Think it's a word, I'm not quite sure.

THEODORE KERR: Oh, it's a word. It's beautiful.

JULIE AULT: I just used it, so it must be a word.

[They laugh.]

THEODORE KERR: It's really beautiful.

JULIE AULT: But I think of that more in retrospect. Because I came across that term reading—I can't even remember what I was reading of his, but it was definitely related to the casualties of AIDS. So the time before, the Sunlit '70s, really strikes me. And I can't say I was a happy young person in New York. I mean I was doing a lot of stuff, but I was also aimless. I didn't have—probably caused some kind of anxiety that I didn't understand what it was, that I didn't really have a direction. You know, it's not always—it wasn't great to be directionless, because you also just fall into things, you know, that are not your direction. Or even a good direction.

THEODORE KERR: Did you feel the people around you had direction?

JULIE AULT: Yeah. I mean, mostly people were—my friends were more—not at the jobs. But my friends—like, I lived—Yolanda and Tim and I shared an apartment for some years. And yeah, they had direction. Tim had gone to—he moved to New York to go to School of Visual Arts. And he basically said, "I'm going to move to New York, go to School of Visual Arts, study with Joseph Kosuth, and become an artist, and [00:58:00] become a well known artist." And he did, you know. Within a very short time of him moving to New York, he was studying with Joseph Kosuth, and he worked for Joseph some. That's just an example, but Tim was quite a model. Not one that I followed, but one that I was around, and close with.

I would say most of the people, they were going to—most of my friends in that circle that then—circles fed into becoming Group Material, most of them had gone to art school or were in art school. And so there was, I would say, a direction. And maybe more so then—a lot of art schools have proliferated in that—this was a long time ago. '77 is—what—'87, '97. It's 40 years ago. So it's a whole different field now. But I think there were less artists, less art students, et cetera, at that time. So maybe, to me at least, it felt like they had direction, you know? I think they did.

So I was around a lot of people, yeah, that were going to school or had just finished school. But in the jobs, I also met friends. Some of them were artists that were doing jobs. And then some not. I can't remember the gamut, you know? But I think I enjoyed, and it was healthy to not go right into the art field. I enjoyed my jobs and the sociality. The sociability of working in an office or even working with a team dipping ice cream. And when it gets crowded and [01:00:00] stuff.

THEODORE KERR: Oh, yeah, totally. Especially this time of year, I really miss working retail. I loved the camaraderie of a bunch of us on a sales floor together and—

JULIE AULT: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: It's quite—

JULIE AULT: It's special. It can be special, you know?

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, yeah, and the people you meet, the people I met through those jobs are people that I may not have met and had as intimate friendships with. They were very much structured around the job, but they're in my mind still.

JULIE AULT: Yeah, no, also in the answering service. I was in the answering service business, if you want to say. I just worked as an operator. And sometimes as a personnel manager, as one of the chief operators, whatever. But I was doing that for quite a few years, and I couldn't tell you how many. But there were two different answering services. I mean, one that I started with that then was bought by someone else, and I worked for the new people too. So two different incarnations of the same answering service, maybe even three, I can't remember. Yeah, I guess there were three different versions.

And I met people, yeah, in these circumstances. You develop rapports, you meet a lot of different people. And I always appreciated that about all the jobs I had. I think after the answering service I worked for a frame store, Chelsea Frames, for a long time, several years. So it wasn't until my—in my early 30s I stopped those kind of jobs, you know, and got different kind of things that seemed to have a bit more of a relation to what I wanted to do in life, on a career level.

THEODORE KERR: With the call jobs—that fascinates me, because—like, were you—so [01:02:00] basically the job was there weren't answering machines, so somebody would call in and say, like, "Tell the doctor to call this patient at this number."

JULIE AULT: Yeah. The customers were people that had—you answered their phone line, or you more often—I mean, there were two different kinds of things. One was people would have phones, and they were—we had a switchboard for, like, keying in. You know, so when their phone rings three times that means they're not answering it, so we would answer it. But then they might pick up, and then you could hang up, you know?

But then the majority of the answering service customers at the time—and this was the late '70s and went into the early '80s—but the majority of customers would be people that didn't have a phone and needed—or were not home. Had a phone maybe, but needed to be reachable. So the idea was, "How do you get a message?" Consider, like, actors, actresses going out for auditions all the time. Or anyone who's out working or something. It was pre-answering machine. So it was very typical to, in the city life, if you need to receive—know who called, right?—receive messages, it was then you had an answering service or a message center.

So we had, you know, maybe—I don't remember how many, I'm guessing. Around maybe 1,000 customers that they would all use the same phone number. But you just say, "This is my phone number." So I could give the phone number, and you might say extension 583 or extension something. Or it might just be your name. And as people that answered the phones we would have an index with all the names. So we could look up and just say, "I'm sorry, so-and-so is not here right now, can I take a message?" And people didn't [01:04:00] say, "Is this an answering service?" Once in a while they might, but it was just a routine way of getting messages, you know. And people having someone to answer, leave a—a place you could leave a message when you weren't around. And a lot of people didn't have phones, so the answering service was how they knew—how they communicated with people.

THEODORE KERR: And did you take down the message verbatim? Or did you create a language?

JULIE AULT: I think we pretty much took down the message. Probably each operator had a different style. But most messages would be—the majority would be a name and a phone number, you know? But if there's—I mean, there were messages that were more specific than that. I remember writing long messages. And you could take it verbatim, or probably shorthand it a bit. I remember all kinds of things where you might put something in quotes, or you might say, "The person said exactly this." They might have instructed me to say. You know, "Make sure you tell them exactly." And then, you know, there was a—I mean there's also a zone of human error, just like there's a zone of machine error that seems just as large if not larger than human error. But in those days you could misfile a message. And that message could be a callback for an audition for an actor, who then she might get really [laughs] angry. You know, because you screwed up a chance that she had. So the message-taking did feel that—there's consequences. It wasn't a sloppy thing. You had to be on the job.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. I hadn't thought about the role of the message-taker. It seems like such a fascinating time. And you would get to know about all these different lives. Or [01:06:00] maybe it was quite routine, I don't know, but—

JULIE AULT: No, I mean I won't go into it, but you do get to know. And you get to know some of the customers. And also if someone's calling three or four times a day to check their messages, you develop rapport with people. Not just with the people you're working with, but with the people calling in. And, you know, there were many messages. Many customers, and also many messages that open up onto particular storylines or something. I mean, there were well known people that had answering service where I worked, that I didn't necessarily know at the time. Larry King was a person who had an answering service for a long long time. But

there were actors, a lot of actors. There were drug dealers. There were—yeah, people that one would know in the public realm somehow. Privacy was extremely important. You know, to not gossip. I'm sure people did. But to not tell stories or gossip about, you know.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

JULIE AULT: Because that's like someone hearing your answering machine now. You know?

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, or hacking your phone and reading your e-mails.

JULIE AULT: Yeah. And we were also—I mean, it was a different—it was an odd thing when you think about it, because someone calls in for their messages. I'm in a busy room with four other operators and I'm reading messages to someone. And it could be, "Oh, and your sister called, and said your mother died." You know, it could be—and it was things like that sometimes. Because there just wasn't a way to reach people all the time, that we have—we take it for granted now.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. And it's both this weird combination of personal, because there's a person involved, but impersonal, because [01:08:00] there's no—what can you do? "Your mother died." You as the operator are not going to go over and console [laughs] the person.

JULIE AULT: Right.

THEODORE KERR: I was wondering if also at this time you were thinking about gender and sexuality. Were these concepts your—

JULIE AULT: Oh. What do you mean?

THEODORE KERR: Were you thinking about what it is to be a woman? Were you thinking about the different ways people were being sexual?

JULIE AULT: I mean, I think it was part of life. You know, I wasn't thinking about it, that I'm remembering. I don't—I can't think of—I mean, sexuality and—yeah, I mean it doesn't—nothing's sparking from what you—the way you asked. Not that I couldn't think of—if we go into it, it might come more. But I don't think I was having a lot of consciousness about gender and sexuality. Although I was, you know, sexual and had a so-called gender.

[They laugh.]

JULIE AULT: You know?

THEODORE KERR: But you weren't—it wasn't—as you moved—because also, like, the arc is quite interesting. To go from rural to DC to New York. Those are different—you were seeing different versions of what it is to be a woman, what it is to be a man, and what it is to maybe not fit into those things. And I was wondering if there was any memories of either your own self-realization about what it is around your own gender, or if you were noticing other things. Just to also get a—it doesn't have to be an epiphany. Just to get a sense of the time, too.

JULIE AULT: No, I mean I didn't—I've always been in the—I don't know, it sounds—I don't know how to put it [01:10:00] in a way. But I've always been—wherever I am, I've always not been in a narrow group of people or a narrow way of being or something. So I always—I don't know. In Maine, you know, I might be hanging out or spending time with my grandmother and aunt picking strawberries one day, and then hanging out or doing something very different with my friends—with Tim or someone, you know, other friends. And then still other kinds of things, or—I don't know how to describe it, except that I would say that anyone that I felt a rapport, or came in contact with—I mean, not everyone obviously. But the people that I developed some rapport with, however temporary or situational, I would treasure all those versions of being. You know, it's not like I was looking for a model of how to be a woman or something. Or rejecting a model of how to be a person, a woman, whatever.

I mean, I recognized things like—let's see. I mean, I don't think I liked real macho behavior. I recognized that. But I don't remember being around super macho behavior that much, you know? So yeah, I couldn't—there wasn't really a consciousness. But I've always been noticing. I mean, I'm observant. So whoever—you know, you make affinities without knowing why or whatever. And I had—as long as I remember in Maine [01:12:00] after leaving high school—in Maine since, I've always had a lot of different kinds of people in life age-wise, whatever, sexuality, gender. Even political background. [Laughs.] Just always not one thing or the other. I've never really been in a particular gang or something, or identification. I think I was always attracted, or I've always felt somewhat fluid in my ways in the world. And then attracted to that. So I don't know. I'm trying to think if there's—maybe you or I will come to another—to get at what you're getting at. You know?

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. I don't know if I really—

JULIE AULT: Or if there is some—

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, I don't know if there's a there there. But already there's answers in your answer, right? Like, what I'm hearing is that it's not like you had never heard of homosexuality until you got to New York.

JULIE AULT: No, yeah. I had gay friends in Maine. In Augusta, Maine. At school and outside, dancing friends and club friends. Trying to remember. I had more gay male friends than female. In DC I had all kinds of friends. I don't really like to parse it out, you know. But you're right, yeah, it wasn't like New York was like, "Wow, there's this and that here, I never heard of that." It wasn't like that.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. I really appreciated when you said that you were observant. [01:14:00] I think that in that, you're saying from early on it wasn't—you didn't need a big city to be observant. You didn't even need to get out of Maine to be observant. So there's answers.

JULIE AULT: Yeah. No, I mean when I first met Tim, he cut quite a figure. He was wearing platform shoes, had long hair. He was in his—he was wearing like a suit jacket with tons of pins and things. Not messages, but more like thrift store pins or something. I think his platforms were black-and-white polka-dot if I remember correctly. [Laughs.] And, you know, it was really like, "Oh!" I mean, I was interested. And he just started talking to me and started talking with him, you know. I was maybe—let's see. I'm thinking.

There were a lot of people actually when I was still in high school and hanging around with like a bit of an older crowd. There were a lot of people into motorcycles then. I mean, a lot of guys with bikes. But I don't remember them being particularly awful or macho or something. A couple friends that were getting drafted, or looking at that, and going to Canada and stuff. It was like a hippie, post-hippie period. I'm just not good at periodizing. But there were—people were living all kinds of ways. And from as soon as I could leave and be out on my own, which meant walking home from school, because my parents were both working—I would walk home from school, I think by myself, I don't remember always hooking up with my brother or something—I just always met lots of different people. Sometimes on the street, sometimes [01:16:00] more of a structured situation. And I was comfortable with it.

THEODORE KERR: Are you a good conversationalist?

JULIE AULT: I like to talk, I like to be in conversation. Not always. I also like solitude. But I think I go through—I mean, I alternate between social surges. And I really treasure dialogue and conversation. But as it's accumulated over the years, you know, the accumulation of life experiences, dialogues, conversations, work, lives, relationship, everything, I think I still treasure conversation and dialogue, but I'm probably—I need more of not-conversation-and-dialogue as well.

[They laugh.]

JULIE AULT: I need more solitude, more also myself not—I don't need to say what I think all the time, or externalize, you know. But I really do—I think if you had asked me that—I'm in a kind of too-much-ness period. I think we all are, culturally and stuff, right now. But if you had asked me that question two years ago I would have said, "Dialogue is my favorite thing in the world." And conversation as well. Or maybe four years ago. Now I would have to say that dialogue and conversation in the sense that—not just any—I mean, it's two things: Not just any conversation. Sustained conversation that can become dialogue is something that's really I think at the heart of how I think and work. But also the incidental conversation can be very fulfilling for me. Not so much what I say or what the other person says, but the dynamic. I always [01:18:00] feel—I sometimes live—I mean, in Joshua Tree. And that's getting more crowded now but it used to be pretty rural. And I spend a lot of time in a more secluded area also. And I don't ever feel, "Oh, I wish I had someone to talk to." If I go down to get a coffee or if I stop at the grocery store, I have someone to talk with. We talk about the—I'm always in incidental conversations. And sometimes they're—it's not that I get to know the people, but those incidental conversations might occur regularly because of geography or community or something. I like those also.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, I want to ask you about question-asking. I'm curious about—is—do you need more water?

JULIE AULT: I do, yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Okay, so let's pause and get some water.

JULIE AULT: Okay.

THEODORE KERR: And maybe just take a break.

JULIE AULT: Let's take a little break, yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Sounds good.

[Audio break.]

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, I want to ask you about questions. You were talking about—I think you used the phrase incidental conversations. Let's start there. What's an incidental conversation?

JULIE AULT: By incidental, I mean not that it's meaningless but that it's an incident. Say I go pick up some stuff at the Stater Brothers supermarket down in Yucca Valley near Joshua Tree. It's likely I'm going to have a conversation with the checker. And maybe I'll have a conversation with someone else in the store. You know? An incidental conversation could really be anything, but I would say in those situations I'm a good conversationalist because—or let's just say I'm present. I can't remember one—I mean [01:20:00] it's more about—I can't think of a particular—I mean I can think of a conversation. But it's not so much the content of the conversation, it's the quality of the exchange and the fact that I don't know the person and they don't know me doesn't matter. And if they knew a bigger version of me, or I knew more about them, we might not even have a conversation. But it's the idea—I mean, I'm open, and people talk to me. Sometimes I think my face looks like it's open or something.

[They laugh.]

JULIE AULT: If I go into a bar people talk to me, you know?

THEODORE KERR: Oh, wow.

JULIE AULT: If I go in—I mean, people talk to me. And I talk to them. And I also like—I mean not going into a busy bar or something. But I enjoy conversations that can happen when you're just spending time with friends or hanging out in, say, a bar. You can't do that in a restaurant, but a place where people are there to kind of entertain each other. I appreciate that desire even. You know, that people are willing to spend time hanging out in a bar entertaining each other. Whether it's silly stories or—I mean, if I take a taxi, I'm going to talk to the taxi driver probably. Not always, but a lot of times. So I enjoy those incident-oriented exchanges, you know?

Sometimes it's a deep thing. It can be. Recently with the fires in California, you know, you go into the grocery store—I wasn't near the fires, but when I had been up in Oregon there were bad fires there too. There's so much disasters and violence and violence of opinion going on these days. I would also bring that up at the checkout or something. And I remember I did [01:22:00] have a conversation with a checker at a grocery store recently about the fires. And then she said, "It feels like everything is on fire." And then we started talking about fiery rhetoric, you know. And I appreciate these conversations because they're sort of reality checks too. I'm not saying I'm looking for someone that agrees with me. It can be—or that—I mean, I don't even know what the same, like, shared opinions would be, because I don't have a lot of fixed opinions. You know? Obviously I have some.

[They laugh.]

JULIE AULT: I think Trump should be impeached right away. But, for instance, I appreciated Larry Flynt's—what he—you know, he put up 10 million—he announced—he put up \$10 million reward to anyone who would have information that concretely led to the impeachment of Donald Trump. I thought that was brilliant.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. Because this is a conversation, what I'll say is I don't know if there's ever going to be a thing that will impeach him. I think he got elected—

JULIE AULT: We're not going to talk about—

THEODORE KERR: Okay.

[They laugh.]

THEODORE KERR: Good, agreed.

JULIE AULT: If you want this to continue to be a productive conversation, I think we should really not talk about—you know, I just have to say.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. Yeah, no, that's good.

JULIE AULT: Because you get lost in chaos so quickly.

THEODORE KERR: I think so.

JULIE AULT: And pessimism. I do. So—

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, and I don't. And I've been noticing that lately. And what a real difference that can be. And how we have to take—how I have to take responsibility in conversations with my optimism. I have to remember that it's not a universal.

JULIE AULT: Right, yeah.

THEODORE KERR: And it helps to listen better. Or it helps to listen clearer when I remember that people are coming from different [01:24:00] points of view. Obviously.

JULIE AULT: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: The reason why I asked about the incidental moment was I was curious about your relationship to questions and how you even formulate a question, or if a question is needed to start a conversation.

JULIE AULT: No. I mean, I often might start an incidental conversation with a question. But it's really—I don't necessarily formulate them. You know, it's more of an organic thing that's like a hello. Or how do you get into something, or show that you're open to talk, you know, and that you're not on auto-mode or something. Questions—I mean, I value the form of—or the potential of the form of—the question. And that opening up onto inquiry as a form. I value that in work and in a lot of areas. But I sometimes think questions—I would say I value them more in work. And I think questions are really difficult to construct. I mean, in a certain way.

For instance with an interview format or something. If I'm interviewing someone, it's not that I want a brilliant question or something, but I have to rehearse a question in a sense to know what direction I would like to prompt the conversation. But then, I only want to ask a question that's a real question. Not that I know the answer to. Because otherwise it's not vibrant. It's a [01:26:00] rehearsed dialogue, or something like that, an acted out—but I've always valued the kind of conundrum question, like the not-easy-to-answer question. And I get that from—I got into valuing that when I went back to school in the mid-'90s. I went to Hunter College and studied political science—or majored in political science. But I was trying to get a degree. I needed to get a bachelor's degree. And I was also interested in seeing what that was like, the political policy field.

I took one course on Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, there's two volumes. If I'm remembering correctly, one was written in 1830, the other was 1835. And the whole course was about *Democracy in America*, and the professor was an older gentleman, who it seemed like his whole life was about de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. He was a scholar of it. And it was new to me, this kind of seminar situation. It was a seminar. Keeping in mind I hadn't spent a lot of time in school, certainly not as an adult mind or something. And the only thing we had to do every week was to read a certain amount of Tocqueville, and whatever the segment was, formulate a question that would then be guiding this part of the seminar. And it had to be a good question, obviously. So [01:28:00] it was really interesting to formulate a question that opened up lots of possibilities while not losing direction altogether, and that wasn't easy to answer, but a question that was a real question that could also go to the essence of the—in that case, an object of study. And so I got to really appreciate questions. And I do have a mind for psychic and psychological—I don't know if I would say psychoanalytic. But, you know, I like how the mind works. So questions are naturally, I think, an important material.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. I think a lot about generous questions. And I agree that a generous question isn't just one that somebody can answer. It's one that actually invites someone to do the work that they want to do to think about something.

JULIE AULT: To think. Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: I think it's one of the nicer things we can do for each other is really be witness and help each other in that way.

JULIE AULT: Yeah. I mean, sometimes a question can really—when I was studying later, in whatever years that was, like 2008 to 2011, I was working on my doctoral studies in Malmö. And I studied with Sarat Maharaj, and Gertrud Sandqvist ran the program. And Sarat was the key figure, but Gertrud as well. Although she wasn't there as much. But Sarat would sometimes, you know, just ask a very—a disarmingly simple question in response to a lot of research and work that was in progress. And I remember [01:30:00] once presenting or bringing to the table a lot of material, thinking in process, writing, whatever, however I presented it, that had to do with—at the time, it had to do with this work I was doing around Corita Kent's work, Sister Corita.

I was involved in organizing a small exhibition in the museum. And it was the first—actually, I had done shows of Corita's work in a museum before, but not like a small solo show. So this was a different thing. And it was at the Ludwig Museum in Cologne. And they have a strong Pop art collection, and Corita was not in that, or something. But I was very aware that—in what I was working on, I was aware that I was helping to—or that I was participating in potentially bringing Corita into the Pop canon. And I accepted that that was a good thing. I

thought of it as a positive move for her work, which had had—and in many ways probably still is, not necessarily for the worst—marginalized.

And I remember Sarat just—he looked at all this research. He listened to the presentation. And the only thing he asked me is like, "And is it good for her to enter the canon?" I said, "What do you mean?" And I started thinking, and he said, "What gets amputated [01:32:00] from Corita to do that?" And that just opened up so much, you know. And so the simple, disarmingly simple questions that cause rupture and reflection and maybe rethinking, I think are really valuable. Not that I want to do those all the time. And I'm not inviting you to—

[They laugh.]

JULIE AULT: —to stump me with a really tough thing. But I do appreciate, since you brought up the questions. I do appreciate the field of possibility that arises in a conversation. An incidental or a deep dialogue, or just in dialogue with oneself. You know, to pose difficult questions that look like they're not that difficult. You know?

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. So that people can actually take them on. Also I think a good question honors and respects that people are doing work on themselves, that they are having these internal dialogues. And my assumption is that most of us, even if we don't know it, are doing some sort of work. And so the question says, "Here's a space for you to talk about that out loud."

JULIE AULT: Right, yeah.

THEODORE KERR: I think we should go back a little bit in time, and go back to maybe a New York apartment in the 1970s, and just—let's think about that kind of season before Group Material coalesces into something. And is it even—here's an—I don't know if it's a possible or impossible question. But do you remember kind of the last moments before Group Material became a thing in your life?

JULIE AULT: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I mean pre-Group-Material-becoming-a-thing, there was a lot going on. So— [01:34:00]

THEODORE KERR: What does—what's a lot going on?

JULIE AULT: Well, I mean, I was living [laughs], so there was a lot of different things. Relationships—I would have to really—I mean I'm—what are you wanting to get at? Like the pre-formation-of-Group-Material? Or the how did we live? Or what we were looking at? Or—

THEODORE KERR: Or just—no. It's nothing even that deep. I just want to honor that there was like one second before this formation that then came to take up and occupy a lot of your space and time. That there was like a sliver of space before that. And I just wonder if it's even interesting to think about.

JULIE AULT: I guess—now I mean I can't really—I mean, Group Material cohering and formalizing in a sense—you know, of course it was in retrospect a big thing. And I mean, I didn't know how long I would be involved or something. And even at the time we pretended it was a big thing. We wanted it to be a big thing. You know, you get enthusiastic and do something. But it wasn't the only thing in life, of course. So I guess that's why I got a little confused, like how to position my thoughts in there.

Because 1979, it wasn't—I mean, it was also a gradual thing. Even though there's a moment where a group of people say, "Let's do this, let's make it a group," some of us had been doing—and in different configurations—had been working together, or doing things together. Meeting together, making things, whatever. Not the same kind of cultural production, collective production, that [01:36:00] Group Material got into. But there were—it wasn't a before and after that was—

THEODORE KERR: —concrete?

JULIE AULT: Well, it wasn't as clear-cut as—I mean, you could say it was a big thing, or I could say that was a real benchmark, but at the time I don't think—you know, it was one thing among many. It definitely had—it took some focus. But it wasn't like it took over immediately, by any means. And there were other things going on in life. But I mean, I was—I can't speak for everyone in the group. But I was working. I would have been working then at MetroLines Answering Service. I mean full-time, you know, more than full-time.

And I think it—let's see, 1979. I just can't remember exactly the dates. But I had been living with Yolanda and Tim, and we had a three-bedroom apartment. Our place was really a kind of—we had a lot of meetings there. I mean, Group Material used to, but also just we hung out a lot. This group of friends. And some other friends and friends of friends that also became the core members at the start of Group Material. We all hung out, we listened to a lot of music together. Tim and I were always into music, so we had a great stereo. I had a big record collection. And we would have parties, dance parties, go out. There was a vibrant, engaged everydayness, I

think, you know, that was part of the apartment, the group of friends.

And then I start—at a club, Tier 3, down near the Mudd Club, I met [01:38:00] someone. I met a guy that then we went home that night and then, you know, started hanging out and then got together. So after a while—I don't remember exactly when—I moved out of the apartment. So I was—if—you know, I just can't remember precisely. Did I move out before—no, I don't think I moved out before Group Material started. But then in that first year of Group Material's activities, I definitely was not living at the apartment anymore. So I would be going to the apartment. After five years of living there or something. So that was a different thing too, you know. It changed the configuration. Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Earlier you said something about—you didn't use the word listless. You talked about how your friends maybe had some direction, and that you didn't have the same relationship.

JULIE AULT: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: And I was wondering: Did that slowly—did that feeling ever change? And if it did, did it change during that time? During the late '70s, early '80s.

JULIE AULT: No. I think with—I mean, I always had these vague notions—it'll sound corny—but of wanting to be better myself. But I also was pretty content to just go and experience what I was experiencing and go to work. I mean, work was hard. And then when I got involved with someone more deeply and he was working hard, you know, it was like we lived in a tiny, tiny room in an SRO apartment. And I had lived in a bigger apartment. Tim and Yolanda and I had this—it wasn't—I wouldn't say it was a nice space. But for the time it was a really good situation. So I wanted to also have [01:40:00] better finances and things. But I didn't really know how to go about it or make the choices that would mean going to school, if that was the path. And I wasn't really seeking to be an artist per se.

But when I—the person that I met and started—and then moved in with, he was—I mean, you know the name. His name is Andres Serrano. And he—but at the time he wasn't an artist. He was working delivering Chinese food in Queens near LeFrak City. And then after being together for—whether it was a couple months or a few months—I remember he showed me some photographs. They were kind of street photography, you know, pictures of people in the street that he had taken. And he said, "You know, I used to take pictures," and he would like to do that again. And then he started really focusing on it. I mean, he was still working full-time to make money. But I think—and when I say—you know, I didn't really have—I didn't develop my own thing, but I really got involved in what Andres was doing. And moving that forward for him to do. I liked the work a lot. And where—like his point of view, and what he was playing with at the time, which at first was just—was simply taking pictures, not staging pictures, but taking pictures of places and people and things. But I think—I mean, I was—we fell in love, so I felt that he had an interesting point of view, you know.

And then I did—I think I put a lot of energy into that. Working with him to develop—because I also thought it was really [01:42:00] great that he wanted to. And I saw immediately this—something in his compositional focus and his interest that could be interesting. But it wasn't like we—he or I really—it wasn't like he said, "I'm going to be an artist," or calculated anything. It was just he's got a dream I don't have. [Laughs.] You know, and he's got a point of view.

And I remember actually during those early—in the first year of Group Material or something, Andres used to nudge me a little. Like, "You should have more ambition than Group Material." Or like, it's a—you know, "Do something more." Because I wasn't the leader of the group. Tim was really a force. I mean, I was there since the beginning, but I wasn't driven and articulate. I had—you know, I participated, I had ideas. I had comments, things to say. But I think someone like Tim—I mean Tim was, and some of the other members of the group were, much more conscious. I mean, "educated" might not be the right word, but they knew what they were doing in a sense, you know, and had the desire to really make Group Material—Tim especially—make Group Material into a voice. A platform and everything.

THEODORE KERR: How would you describe your relationship to art around that time?

JULIE AULT: [Laughs.] I don't know, that's kind of—that's—I'm going to—I think that's too hard.

THEODORE KERR: Is it too vague?

JULIE AULT: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

THEODORE KERR: Do you want—

JULIE AULT: For me it is.

THEODORE KERR: Okay. Yeah. I guess I'm curious, like, was going to exhibitions a thing that was important to you?

JULIE AULT: Not on my own. But I went with Tim. And I mean, we went to a lot of things. And there was a certain point that I did—I'm sure I did start going to exhibitions [01:44:00] on my own. But I think I was shy also. You know, in those—I felt uneducated, let's say. Because I didn't—I wasn't one of the—I was probably the only person in the group who didn't go to art school, you know, and who didn't go to higher education at that point. So I was a bit flippant about it or, you know, "Okay, I don't have it." So I think I was probably more—I was more—I was comfortable in a lot of situations, but probably not in the art field as much, because I didn't feel like an insider or anything. I'm talking about the early—that particular period. Circa 1979, 1980, '81, something.

So I probably—I wasn't taking it in in the same way. But I was—what I was—when Group Material started and we had this concrete situation of doing exhibitions, and in essence putting together—organizing exhibitions. You know, you have to have ideas, and you want to. You have ideas, and you want to throw them into the mix. And also I probably didn't think of it as research at the time, but go see things. Bring ideas to the table. So I was doing it, but a lot more gingerly, I would say. I wasn't religious about going to shows or even—I mean, partly it was also time. Even at that moment when there weren't as many exhibitions or galleries or things to see, I wasn't going every—to all the museum shows or—you know, I wasn't as aware as a lot of people. But I think also I had—I really had a strong footing in [01:46:00] popular culture and music. And just other focuses.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. My sense from reading and having interviewed Doug [Ashford] and just being alive and now having a chance to meet you is that there's also like a certain sensibility that you must—obviously you're not the same person you were back then. But there must have been a certain sensibility that you brought to the group. And Doug specifically remembers like you being a force from the beginning. So your relationship to art maybe is—

JULIE AULT: Well, yeah, and also Doug came in in '82 or so.

THEODORE KERR: Ah, sorry, yeah.

JULIE AULT: So he—I was a force, you know, then. I don't know that I was a force, but I was a force then because there were only three of us.

[They laugh.]

JULIE AULT: You know? So I would of course—if I spoke I would have been a force.

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

JULIE AULT: But, you know, I was a strong presence by then. Also it was a smaller group. After the first—I don't know exactly, I would have to look at the book to detail—but after the start-up period, before we got a space. When we were talking and working and everything. And then the period where we did have a space, which was at least nine months, if not a year, I couldn't tell you for sure. But they—I mean, a lot happened in that period. And the group had started as a larger group, and then it became a smaller group. And that changed everything too, the dynamics of it.

But Tim really—Tim was a force. Not only Tim. There were others. Marybeth Nelson, and Patrick Brennan, and myself, Mundy, Hannah. Mundy McLaughlin. She's from Canada. And Hannah Alderfer, Peter Szypula. There were others but I really think Tim was a strong force, and Marybeth Nelson was [01:48:00] too. Tim was special in that he had the enthusiasm, the energy, he had ideas, he had critical facility, analytic mind. I mean, he really had and has it all. And emotionality. I mean maybe none of us had emotional intelligence at the time, because there were a lot of fights and things. And I don't think we—you know, we were learning. We didn't know how to be with each other in these situations always in the most productive way. But Tim was—even for someone to have ideas and follow-through. Overview and ideas, and analytic and historical consciousness. It was really—that to me set the stage for whatever happened with Group Material over the years. Even when Tim wasn't actively involved anymore.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. I have to admit I'm both excited to talk about this period but also a little nervous.

JULIE AULT: No, we can—actually, I would be very fine to skip around. A lot of—I've read a lot of oral histories. And also, you know—often there's more of a tendency people have in situations like what we're doing to speak chronologically or reflect on processes chronologically. And I'm fine to break that. It might even be better. Chronology becomes clear. And also if it's not clear, there are other sources which I can state, you know, where one can find the chronology for instance, or a chronology, of Group Material. Or chronology of my practice in and out of Group Material, and things like that. [01:50:00] But I'm happy to have something that moves around more.

THEODORE KERR: Okay, yeah, me too, because I'm actually more interested in how these—just the impacts and your experiences of these things as a human being named Julie. You know, I think that's much more interesting for this conversation than the facts. I totally agree. There's lots of resources. So I'm interested in this—the relationship of the group dynamic on the formation of you as a person. And was that—like, did you—I'm interested in the how of the shifts from working more than full-time in a city during the period. What was the phrase that Ed White used? The—

JULIE AULT: Oh. The Sunlit '70s.

THEODORE KERR: The Sunlit '70s. To me what's really interesting is how do you go from a person working more than full-time in the Sunlit '70s to then being part of this group that then takes on, you know, really important and meaningful questions during complex times.

JULIE AULT: Right. Well, I think one of the—maybe not the impact. But what happened regardless of what else was going on in my life or new relationship and things is that Group Material became an outlet and a venue and a voice. And I would say—I mean, of course there was—I was—there was me the individual. But I wasn't exercising a voice before Group Material. And I think I always preferred, yeah, dialogic and collaborative and collective. Not blind collectivism or something. But maybe I never—I wasn't [01:52:00]—I didn't necessarily believe in, for myself, like, the individual voice. If that makes sense.

So Group Material, it's not that I just jumped in or something. But I was one of many. And Tim and I were like best friends. So I was very—you know, if you wanted to look at it hierarchical, I was in the hierarchy from the outset. Even though we weren't really functioning in a hierarchical way at that point or ever, there was always personalities that take charge, let's say. And sometimes in there I think my asset as a personality or sensibility in the group was what I didn't have. You know, that I wasn't art-educated. That I wasn't, you know, initiated. That I wasn't jaded. I wasn't this or that. Not that I was totally stupid or naive. But I was down to earth. And I wasn't aestheticized [laughs], let's say, or into—I wasn't a part of the history of aesthetics or any—I didn't have that.

So I had more, let's say, an organic approach. Gut reactions to things. And that was probably an asset in the discussion. But for me, really, Group Material, the impact, how that impacted on me, was that it did—not immediately but slowly—became my education, where I found my voice, where I put my voice, where I was bringing all my ideas to. Because that was more of a person to me than say an individual Julie Ault as an artist or voice. Group Material—not more of a person, but more of a [01:54:00] structure, you know, more of an entity, really.

THEODORE KERR: It provided more of an entity for you? Or it was more of a force?

JULIE AULT: It provided more. But I think I also just—you know, I didn't—for whatever reason I just—I wasn't one of those people who said, "Oh, I want to be an artist, and I'm Julie, I'm an artist." You know? I just didn't think that way. And I don't know why. But I didn't think that way. So it just was Group Material made sense to me as a place to develop, as a place to be, and a place to participate. The group entity. And I was very comfortable with we. Being a we. [Laughs.] And not hiding behind it. But I liked the we. I loved, you know, the—I don't know how to put it. It just felt very active, it's how you developed thoughts. In dialogue with others.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. I like a we as well. I am a social learner. But I'm also a social doer. I find myself in groups and I can read one—let's say, for example, I can read something by myself and go, "Okay, that's in me." But if I read it with someone then I have questions and it just maps differently.

But what was interesting, what you were just saying is—the question that came to my mind is like: But you cared. You know, you may not have had these things that other people in the group had, but you cared. And where did that care come from?

JULIE AULT: Well, yeah, I had the—I think that's something that's a feature of what I do and is personality or whatever. But I had the capacity to be moved. And to really—and to—whatever that is. [01:56:00] I get enthusiastic. I am moved by things and events. And I think that's probably where Group Material—it was the people that—working with this particular group of people. There was already—with the majority there were already care if you want to put it that way or friendships. You know, relationships. But also I cared about—I'm not using a precise term, but issues. There were things that felt important. And I started to—in New York, living in the city, I started to see those as social issues or political issues. And through Group Material, of course, that became even more apparent. And maybe some people would have already learned these things in school, you know. But I wasn't a good student. I didn't stay long enough. And I just always got by. So I wasn't really learning in school the way that I would then carry that knowledge with me.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. And I think something that your work speaks to, and the work of Group Material speaks to, is there's more than one way to learn. Especially about social issues. School is but one. And also going back to care. Is it also about care for the people that were in that room? Is it that like, "I believe in Mundy, I believe in

Tim, I want to see what happens there"?

JULIE AULT: I wouldn't have thought in those terms. I think care was just a given, you know. But care wasn't—I wouldn't have used that word myself as a mainstay of the group or something.

THEODORE KERR: What about support?

JULIE AULT: Mm [negative].

THEODORE KERR: No.

JULIE AULT: No. It's like it's just—I mean, the group changed, you know. So [01:58:00] I think affinity. I've used the word affinity when I was also reflecting back on Group Material. And I think that's something that I still feel is a really important drive. Finding affinity, feeling affinity, and then acting on those affinities. And so that's—there were affinities in the group and then that we made—you know, that the group generated or something. But I can't say it was based on circles of care or something. There were friends and friends of friends. But we were in our—I was 21 and then 22 at the beginning. So it's not like I had the most evolved idea of friendship at the time. Or care even.

But I mean, in some ways—yeah, I mean, I would have to just put it back to Tim also. Because I trusted. Tim is a person who really motivates others and believes in. He was that way for me when I first met him. He's kind of a born teacher. Good teacher. And he just—he galvanizes people and helps—or he helped me and has helped others, I think, to really see their own spark. So I trusted Tim in this. And some of the people in the original group I was—we had some good times, and good work together and things. But I wasn't close with everyone. You know? Although I did tend to be friendly with everyone.

THEODORE KERR: Right. In a document that someone else wrote about Group Material the word collective is crossed out and somebody's written the word collaborative.

JULIE AULT: Yeah, we always used the word collaborative. I mean, I say always—I can't remember which document. But it might have been—it would have been someone [02:00:00] writing a brochure for a show. Like, it must have been a museum, a museum document. Because otherwise we did—I mean, often we just did our own whatever. I mean for many—for the first—you know, for years we wrote our own press releases. And that was also a site of meaning. So we activated those things like press releases or blurbs. We used those too, to try to describe ourselves, or describe our purpose to ourselves. You know, but I don't know if we all would have said that. But I know I definitely thought collaborative was more accurate than collective. Or collaborating. We always talked about collaborating. I'm not sure how far back using the word collaborative goes, because as Sabrina Locks, who you probably saw—I mean, she did the project in the *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material* book. I met her. She became like an intern basically when I was starting to work on the archive and the book, and then she had brought up this word collaborative. And I think she wrote about it in her—

THEODORE KERR: —in her essay.

JULIE AULT: In her thing where she writes about how Group Material used the word collaborative as a noun, and that that was—like, it isn't really a noun. [Laughs.] Or there's not a history of it being a noun, or something. But it still makes sense. And I guess, it may not be accurate in terms of dictionary-sense or meaning-sense, but it makes sense to me that collective was a little bit too unified or unified-sounding. Like a collective agreement, or a collective has this one thing. And Group Material, it was a collaborative. And collaborative, [02:02:00] to me, implies individual, or like perspectives, facets making up. Like collaborating together, some kind of working together that doesn't necessarily result in a collective—it's not the same thing as a collective. There's some room there, I think.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. I think it also—the idea of work is somehow involved in collaborative too. Like, something is going to come of it or—

JULIE AULT: Process, yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Process, yeah. Yeah. A conversation or something. Yeah.

JULIE AULT: Or that work has been done, even. A collaborative—that there's been collaborating. You're a collaborative. Collective—I mean, collective is a fine word. And we often talked about collective production. But it seemed worthwhile—it still seems kind of worthwhile—to retain that word collaborative.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. Kind of an important feature to me of Group Material too, is just the attention to—no attention to detail would be too small. Like, it seemed like everything was worthy of consideration. And you hinted it a little bit. Like every blurb was a chance to think about "What is a blurb?"

JULIE AULT: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And I want to just say also a chance to learn how to write a blurb, or how one might interact with others to write a blurb. Because a lot of—I mean, a lot of things that were written, the paper trail at the beginning of the group, things were coauthored. Some things Tim wrote and then other people weighed in on. Some things other people wrote. But we all had to learn how to do everything. We weren't the kind of [02:04:00] group that functioned according to specialization, like, "Julie, you're good at painting walls, you paint all the walls," you know. "Tim, you're really good at publicity, you do all the publicity." [02:04:12]

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JULIE AULT: [00:00:00] We didn't make it super-democratic like we all have to take turns. But it just wasn't that kind of specialization model of interaction. Which would be I guess more of a corporate model or something. It was more—opportunity also. You know, like, I didn't know how to speak to a person who was a journalist or an art critic. Or didn't have—I mean, a lot of us I think, we were naive enough that we would just say, "Let's do it, let's go for it," and do these things. But also it was an opportunity to learn how to do it all, you know, from installing an exhibition and thinking in terms of a composition that could be a whole space and with all these different elements and materials and voices coming together. But also writing a press release that didn't compromise what we wanted to say, and we weren't—none of us were writers. So I felt it was really a great laboratory too, to learn how to do things, basically.

THEODORE KERR: So that attention to detail also—it seemed, if I'm hearing you correctly—also came from questioning how to do things, and then slowing it down and asking each other.

JULIE AULT: Right. Well, questioning—I think Group Material, its formulating—us formulating it, or the formulation of Group Material, was a giant question mark. Or a complex question. Because we even said at the outset, "We invite everyone to question the culture that we've taken for granted." You know? And it was more than that, but that's the short version. And [00:02:00] we were posing some ways of doing things or propositions, but we were also constantly questioning in those propositions, and questioning ourselves. Because if you lose that reflection and the critical reflection on what you're doing, then you're lost. [Laughs.] We felt that way at the time. And I still think I adhere to that more or less.

THEODORE KERR: And so in this way of being collaborative, you were both creating and collaborating. But you were also taking in stuff too. So whether it's in your relationship, you were taking in—you and your partner were looking at art. And you were looking art now both—I just am trying to wrap my head around, like, how fascinating your experience of art during this time would have been, because you're both experiencing it with someone you really believe in, and at the same time working in a collaborative.

JULIE AULT: Well, Andres never looked at other people's art.

THEODORE KERR: Okay.

[They laugh.]

JULIE AULT: I mean, I think he had all he could do to just keep the focus. He wanted—I mean, not that he never looked at other people's art. But he wasn't going to a lot of exhibitions. When I was in that period that we're loosely referring to, I was going to exhibitions and digging into things wherever it was, you know, looking at things, and being attuned to finding things, let's say, that were of interest to the group, and to what I thought we were doing. I wasn't going around and doing that with Andres or something. That would have been Mundy and I, and Tim and I, and other people in the group. And then when Doug joined, there were things we all did together, things in smaller variations, or whatever. And we brought different things that we were [00:04:00] paying attention to as well, to the group.

But I think—so it wasn't a kind of—I don't know how to put it. But it wasn't—however I narrated that, one couldn't really look at it as a one-to-one situation where, say—I mean, don't take the Sunlit '70s [laughs] and then see that as a, like—and then all the things that were going on in alternative art culture at the time, and music, and then I just—Group Material started. Group Material was one of many collaborative and group entities and spaces and structures that started, that founded themselves, in the '70s and '80s.

So I wouldn't want to portray all these things happening as though it was really this—I mean, it was a rich era, but it wasn't like, we were just, like, consciously, "Okay, let's look at shows, and we're going to exhibitions." And we—I mean, I didn't—Andres was an artist, or he was becoming an artist, and I was working in Group Material, but first and foremost we were not. We were doing our full-time jobs respectively. And surviving and living. You know, so it wasn't like artists doing these things together or—you know what I mean?

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, no, it makes perfect sense. And I think also the challenge of what we're doing here is, how do we capture the—"banality" has a judgment to it. But how do we capture the quotidian, if I'm even saying that word right—like, that kind of like slow inching that's—because I feel like I've spent a month with you during

this month of reading [00:06:00] and looking. And I guess I also want to put on the record that a lot of my information is coming from the things I've read, but also just going through the files at the Fales Library.

JULIE AULT: Right.

THEODORE KERR: And that that has a certain effect on it. On my—you know, there's something about looking at pages that have been accumulated that creates a certain way of being and a way of thinking. But yeah, I guess our challenge here is: How do we communicate, yeah, that slow inching of change?

JULIE AULT: Well, I don't—right. I don't know that we can communicate that. Or it's actually not my goal to. I'll say something when it's feeling too short—we're short-circuiting things. But it's not my goal. I just don't necessarily believe that we can communicate these complicated co-factors and processes in time, in different times, and do justice. But I think people can maybe, by the things that we talk about and the un-smoothness of trying to encapsulate—you know, I don't really think this can be encapsulated easily. So maybe people can recognize that in their own lives, like, yeah, you can—it's not—there's not one thing leading to another leading to another. If one wants to map it, you end up with things like chronology and "What were you doing then?" and "What was simultaneous?", et cetera, et cetera.

But I'm actually more—at this point [laughs]—again, at this point in life [00:08:00] and having done a lot of work that deals with history, you know, histories that are important to me, histories of practices I've been involved with, as well as personal history, I'm more interested in un-mapping those things. You know? And looking—you know, not creating a coherent picture where you can say, "This led to this led to this." Because I'm not really sure about that. I was thinking in advance for us talking about how convoluted some things seem to me. In fact, even more so because I've done work on them. You know, so there's like, for instance—I mean, I don't know. I wouldn't say Group Material in general. But I have worked on the archive and then the *Show and Tell* book, and really got invested for a certain period to understand and attempt to convey Group Material's work in a baseline way and not an interpretive way.

But using that as an example, like, I have memory. I have lots of memory, right? And consciousness about these things. And then about Group Material. But I also have various outside views from working on Group Material. There's things I've read, which—I mean that happens all the time. I read things and I don't have those—I don't mean this to sound totally gnarly, mentally. But I don't know—did I experience that or did I read it? And partly it's the accumulation of experience and memory and information and the saturation that comes with that over time. But when I was thinking about us talking, I was already thinking I wouldn't know [00:10:00] how to say something is precisely true. I mean some things are, obviously. But there are times when I read something or have a thought, think, "Now was that my thought, or did I experience that, or did I read it about Group Material, or did it really happen?" And this is just the reality, you know? So as you've probably seen in some of the work that I've been doing—and specifically in something like the *Show and Tell* book or the book on Felix's [Felix Gonzalez-Torres'] work—I'm not opting for, let's say, a streamlined version of anything. I mean, I did use—chronology is helpful. But even within that I think it's important to branch out from what the chronology appears to create.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. And I think un-smooth, you used that word today. And I love that word, un-smooth. It really is—it brought me joy when you said it, because that's exactly what—I mean, I've learned a lot of this, or I'm having to learn a lot of it, through HIV work, because the smoothness of the narrative that gets told is actually quite violent. And so something like the *AIDS Timeline*, even though the timeline can suggest a type of chronology or something like that, is actually an un-mapping. For me. This is my interpretation, I want to be clear. I'm not trying to define it.

JULIE AULT: Yeah. No, I think that's—using—I think your use of the word violent is good, because that's something I've felt more than known, but then have learned as a way of knowing it too, is that history-writing is violent. [00:12:00] And history can be—I mean not—history is not—I'm not saying the past is violent. But history-writing is violent, or can be. And I think I am maybe hyperconscious, at this point, of not feeding those short circuits that are so much a part of promotional culture. I mean, really I don't know how to say it other than our culture now: short-circuiting is where it's at. And short-circuiting nuance and information. And I just—I don't want to—and I think in historical representation there's obviously—you know, there's been the violence of omission, the violence of smoothening. [Laughs.] You know?

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative]. Yeah, so for me, my first interaction with the violence was the violence of omission. And I really thought that that's where it started and stopped. And now I've come to understand that that is a hugely important part of it, and then another layer of violence is what is lost with omission. Like, omission isn't just about identities. It's, like, the tactic.

For me right now, I'm really focused on when you don't include people you also lose their point of view and their tactics for survival. And that's been something that—because then you're also—not only are you—it's

disrespectful and violent towards the past. You're also—what does that tell us in the present and the future? Like when you drop the importance of trigger tapes in the 1980s to distribute HIV information. You know, you can't tell someone what a trigger tape is now, and assume they'll understand it.

JULIE AULT: Yeah. It just takes too much description and explaining and contextualizing to detail everything. [00:14:00] You know, as much as—we mentioned the violence of omission and violence of history-writing. At the same time, I don't have a formula or really know how to do justice to history. And even to my own experience. That's why I questioned—and I know it's getting a little meta—but I questioned, "Do I really want to convey that?" Because I don't know. It's not just a momentary thing. But I'm not sure that we can. And maybe we don't have to.

Sometimes I'll work with—when I've worked with students recently, sometimes someone will really get stuck on, "But I want to find a way to convey the emotional content of this incredible experience." And I'm like, "Why?" You know, I mean, I know there are reasons but let's talk about your reasons now. You know? What's the purpose of that? Why is it not enough to have had the emotional experience with whoever you had it with? Or, I mean, just to really look case-by-case at things. Yeah, we'll get into some of these questions I think also talking about conveying what it felt like to be in the arms of the AIDS crisis first wave in New York, and how much to conceal or reveal, and for what purpose.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

JULIE AULT: But I don't mean to throw you off totally. We can also take a break maybe, because it's feeling like it's that late afternoon moment where there's no lights on, the—and I wouldn't mind having a sugar rush.

[They laugh.]

THEODORE KERR: I love a sugar rush. Okay, I'm going to press pause.

JULIE AULT: Okay.

THEODORE KERR: Okay.

[Audio break.]

THEODORE KERR: [00:16:00] So we're going to jump-cut a bit. And without preface I'm just going to ask: Do you think about zeitgeist? Is this an idea you think about?

JULIE AULT: No.

THEODORE KERR: It's not a word.

JULIE AULT: I mean, I don't. It's a word I've heard. I kind of actually don't even really know what the definition is. So I don't think about it. [Laughs.]

THEODORE KERR: Do you think—one thing that I'm interested in is, at the time that Group Material was forming—and as you've said in this interview—you all weren't alone. There were other ways of people coming together to be.

JULIE AULT: Right.

THEODORE KERR: And what do you think was feeding this or informing these ideas, these desires for people to come together in collaborations or collectives?

JULIE AULT: Well, I think there was a lot of dissatisfaction with the way things were happening, business as usual or so. And I know for Group Material, there was a dissatisfaction with the individuals in the group with the idea that you go to school and figure out what your voice is going to be and then it's a done deal and you exercise your voice and that's your individual practice. And there's a lot of, you know, the social—the exchanges and the sociality of working together in a school situation. There's a kind of community there. And communities are parts of our lives anyway. So the idea of the individual artist and the hierarchy through—you know, the [00:18:00] different hierarchies that were at work in say the late '70s according to the biases that were evident in culture generally were also in the art world. So it felt like—I think to many, it felt like a place that needed to be opened up. And the art field needed to be made realistic. You know? And we needed to make our own structures for working. And restructure things.

Group Material, you know, there were moments where I think some of—I'll just say we for shorthand. But there were moments where we thought we could really effect change. [Laughs.] Not just in the model of what we were doing, but in the cultural industry. And that all these different models and all these different—these ways of

working that were collaborative, that were socially engaged, that registered politics openly. Not necessarily overtly, but—as political art, but that registered politics as a fact of their being. You know, that these things would have lasting structural effects on the art industry or the cultural industry. And, you know, it's hard to say. [Laughs.] I mean, I think in some ways yes. Not Group Material, but all the different entities and groups and structures and events. Sometimes it's really about events. Not a lasting structure. That they have had effects. But, you know, in a certain way they also—it seems that the art world functions as—and that museum culture although opened up in [00:20:00] some ways still functions according to its own insular rules or—so there was a sense, I think, of cultural democracy. In the cultural field, in the field that we were working. Which we often said, "Okay, that's our trench." You know? It was a responsibility to bring our social desires, which implies also political desires, and aesthetic workings and desires, into an admixture and to bring them together.

And at the time—it's a bit hard to portray right now, I think, at this vantage point for people that didn't live through that period. But the art field didn't—I mean, on the one hand, it felt like a place of possibility, but it also was a much more homogeneous animal, you know? And so it felt like we needed to shake things up for ourselves to function in it. I think a lot of people felt that way, not just Group Material. To create different modes of representation. I mean, there were so many agendas. I could get in a jumble, and I don't want to do that, because there's places where these kinds of questions have been taken up accurately, or with some thoughtfulness. Not just me speaking off the cuff, like, okay, there was feminism and there was civil rights. There are all these movements. And then cultural politics had to happen in a certain way or—it was a time of [00:22:00] need really to—for these things.

But Group Material—just to say that Group Material wasn't acting in a vacuum by any means, you know? But every group was—every situation was different too. So Group Material is maybe—you could remark on the fact that it lasted a long time. And that with different incarnations, different participants, different dynamics within what we called Group Material, there was nonetheless a 16-to-17-year—history?

[They laugh.]

Or there were histories that accumulated to 17 years. And that's a fairly long time. And also to function as a collaborative for a long period without the accoutrements of an institution, and without the restrictions of an institution. You know, we could basically decide as we go, and there were tendencies in Group Material's lives of maybe more significant period or lesser significant period, a period of self-parody or whatever, or formulaic thinking or doing. But it was still up to us. You know, we weren't really under—it was, I mean, I wouldn't say autonomous, but it was up to us to decide which direction. To keep going, to not keep going. To reinvent ourselves or not reinvent ourselves. And that was pretty great situation. But I don't know. I think it was also of its time.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Also it seems like a through-line [00:24:00] is a grappling with art, which to me suggests that some if not a majority of you all have a faith in art, or had a faith in art, or had an intense relationship.

JULIE AULT: Or, you know, that was the place we found ourselves. I don't know. Because I don't want to talk about—I don't want to generalize in a way where, when it—speaking as though it was this moment of Group Material where there were certain—because there were—if you look at the *Show and Tell* book, I mean, one of the goals was to also make this data evident because—like, who was in the group, the different configurations of the group, when, how did this person enter, how did that person leave. To really convey the accuracy of this thing called Group Material, that it's a series of configurations and movements within a structure that various aspects of that structure also changed. So that's different and that's one of the—you know, that's important to me. To think of Group Material as these different things. It isn't just one thing. And—I lost my train of thought.

THEODORE KERR: I was listening [laughs] and what I liked that you were talking about, and what it made me think of, is that you can't easily pinpoint what Group Material did. Right? It's like, you organized exhibitions, that was a huge part of what you all did together. But the way you said it, the idea of expressing data or making data visible, is also something that if people don't walk away understanding then it's—I like it if people walk away understanding that that's something that Group Material did, was this expression of data.

And my mind jumped to thinking about the exhibitions that you organized [00:26:00] on your own and how it seems to me that it was important—I mean, from reading things I understand that it was important for you to be called an organizer, not a curator. And we can talk about that. But it also seemed to me that it must have been, for lack of a better word, interesting for you to be navigating these exhibitions as an organizer in and of yourself. Not with a group.

JULIE AULT: Yeah. Let's see. It's true. We haven't—I agree that it's difficult to succinctly state what Group Material did, or the forms that it used or anything. But as we were talking about exhibitions—and exhibition, the idea, or the temporary exhibition that is composed of—that isn't singly authored, that's composed by a group,

and of a group, you know, that has a lot of—or has a variety of perspectives, ways of working, information, and forms, or something, was something that Group Material really developed over time as a medium to work in. And the temporary exhibition as a kind of forum of voices speaking in and near, around, and to a complex of issues. Right? And articulating and raising issues, questions, and then speaking to that.

So in other words, the idea of an exhibition [00:28:00] as a discourse, you know? Not necessarily representing a discourse, but forming a temporal discourse, was something, yeah, that the group—different people in different Group Materials [laughs] developed over time. But it really took hold. And in some ways it even became, I think, formulaic at a certain moment. Which doesn't mean that that negated it. It was just almost like a movement inside of the—inhabiting this medium. Or enacting the medium. And finding the medium still useful over a long period of time because the temporary exhibition—I think we used to even call it in the first year like, the "thematic exhibition" that was a temporary exhibition that brought forward also some of the tensions between culture and politics that at that time in the late '70s may seem through historicization as if they were in the foreground, but they didn't necessarily function in the foreground.

So the form, the medium, the way of working really took hold in me, and in some of us in Group Material. It was something that I felt that I—I mean, there was no question that I wanted to continue to work in that way after Group Material, after Group Material was no longer active. But it took some time to feel comfortable to do something in the exhibition form. I mean, actually, it happened pretty quickly, but it took time for me to actually feel comfortable working in that. And to exercise different aspects of thinking and exercise [00:30:00] different kind of aesthetic muscles and aesthetic allegiances. Maybe different—you know, just to have a different approach. Not for difference's sake, but because now I wasn't a group, I wasn't putting my thoughts into the group process, but I was going to be—I mean, I did also exhibitions from after Group Material and with other people. And projects with other people. But I wanted to develop an individual voice. And even if I say that, I'm thinking, "Well, that's not exactly true, Julie."

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

JULIE AULT: Because I wanted to develop—I wanted to continue to work and do shows and express things through the exhibition form. But the exhibitions that I worked on were not my voice. They were multi-vocal. They continued to be multi-vocal as Group Material's were. But in a different way. So I was interested in continuing with the form. But figuring out the subject terrain that really moved me that I wanted to do something in that form. Not just to use it for the sake of.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah. And whether it be in book form or in exhibitions with Group Material or exhibitions with other voices afterwards, I think that idea of un-mapping is still so strong. And one of the—it seems to come up a lot, is the idea of like, the organizer, whether it be Group Material or you, is also the audience. And I think that is something that I personally learned from Group Material, this idea. It's not the idea like, "Make the show you want to see." [00:32:00] It's that it's a collaboration. And so you're not just thinking of making—it's not a play. You're not putting on a play for somebody to come in. It's that you're building a circle and you just happen to have the access to the work to put on the walls. And something that it seems to me Group Material was part of—

JULIE AULT: And you have the—yeah, you have the access. But maybe also that you have the motivation and the time [laughs] and the passion to dive into what it is that's being investigated, or where the inquiry is. Or where—what it is you want to broadcast. But it—you said something. My mind is getting—oh. My mind is getting a little foggy. I lost my train of thought. Ask me again. Or what—

THEODORE KERR: Something that you said sparked something interesting in me. This idea of like, exhibition as service. Or organizer as being of service to the community. Because you said the organizers have the time. And, I think, also the point of view. I don't want to—there are points of view being argued. There is something being expressed. And so there is a way in which if we think about the *AIDS Timeline*, like that is a real service. That was a service to the community, and it continues. It's still something that—we'll get into it more later. But it's not an easy—none of them were—none of the expressions of it are easy. And any lasting textual version of it is still not easy and will still jar [00:34:00] some people, will still open some people's minds, will still—and so I just—I wanted to make the point that an exhibition as an act of service—

JULIE AULT: Yeah. I mean—I agree. I mean, I think the idea—you've mentioned circles before. And that is something that is very strong, I think, in the exhibition-making in Group Material—and that I've been involved with, or enacted, after Group Material—is to create a context that investigates a circle of affinity. Or, you know, where—for instance, if it's a show or project that I'm doing where I find affinity, but where I also am sure that there is affinity for a lot of people. And that can be through an artist's work or a community or conveying a context or a cultural moment or—I mean, it could be a lot of things.

But you mentioned something. I can't remember your precise wording now. But just to say that the exhibition is

itself an investigation. A research. A process. A set of social relations. A set of social processes. And *AIDS Timeline* may be a good example of that, or model of that, for us to talk about. But I think in my experience that's really always the case too. That an effective—for me to do an exhibition or a book and have it be effective, you know, it needs to be vital. And it needs [00:36:00] to be a vital investigation where I'm then sharing what I'm learning as well, and not just telling this or—and I think the social process involved in exhibition-making, at least in the ways that I'm familiar, are equally important to the resulting exhibition.

What happens after that—if I glaze over a little, it's a little hard to think about, at this point in 2017, about the reception of *AIDS Timeline* in 1989. And understandings of it now or over the last years. I mean, I'll get to it. I'll [laughs] try to tap into some of these things in our discussion. But it becomes kind of abstract. You know, because the process of us—Felix, Doug, Karen, and I—in the core group of Group Material at the time, in 1989 when we did *AIDS Timeline*, and then other collaborators You know, Larry Rinder, who asked, invited us to do a project at the Berkeley MATRIX Gallery. Richard Meyer, who was then an intern, and working in the MATRIX Gallery, but he was in his second year of studies at Berkeley in art history. And other people. Sharon Siskin, who was an artist community organizer at the Rest Stop in—now I don't remember if it was Oakland or—it wasn't Berkeley, or San Francisco. But I'm just starting a little list because you can go on.

Those exchanges, and [00:38:00] the process of the exchanges that then resulted in *AIDS Timeline*, within the group and outside of the group, and with all the artists and then also gathering information, data, et cetera. But whatever the exhibition would be, the processes involved in the making of and cohering this thing—those were vital. Right? And those were equally important to the result. But also the result, *AIDS Timeline*, becomes a thing. You know, it becomes, okay, "the *AIDS Timeline*." Or for me to address it, I have to get a different vantage point really. Because it also is an artifact in a sense at this point. It doesn't exist as an exhibition. It was a temporary exhibition. And as that it was also a temporary display of a convergence of social interactions and political interactions and information. So when it's an artifact—whether in memory or reality, right?—it's a fixed thing. It's different than—I mean, it's a fixed thing and it's also—it's an object almost. And I don't want to convey it as an object because it was really a—it was an in-process thing too. It was an open-ended—the *Timeline* even changed over time of the first knowledge of HIV—or before it was HIV—and then the extension of AIDS as an epidemic changed from the first time we did—I mean it could be going on now. [00:40:00] It would have different dates at the so-called starting point and current point, if the *Timeline* were happening now.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. I'm making a bunch of skeptical faces because I'm really glad on the record that you're saying that you don't want it to become an object. And for me there is—I'm glad you're saying that because I don't—because that means you understand that some people will think of it that way. But in my mind it's impossible to think of it as a calcified thing because of the work that Group Material did to keep it shifting and to keep it—and then the discourse that it created, whether it was in reviews or other people taking it up. But also your own practice, both within Group Material and then on your own—you're talking about the social affinities. But—and—yeah, push back of course. But it's also about the physical and poetic affinities. Especially like of the—I'm thinking about your show at Artists Space or your more recent stuff with the Whitney Biennials. There's a poetic-ness of putting these objects together and the affinities that come from that. And so there's a way in which I understand why we're saying that these things aren't objects. But there's also a way in which a lot of your process, to me, seems about helping us understand that objects aren't solid.

JULIE AULT: Right. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I understand what you're saying. I think poetics are unavoidable. And, I mean, that's good. [Laughs.] You know, it depends where you find them or draw lines or something. But—yeah. Maybe "object" isn't the right word.

But I'll give you an example with *AIDS Timeline*. *AIDS Timeline* is probably—I mean, [00:42:00] it's the exhibition, it's the project that former members of Group Material have been asked repeatedly to reconstruct, to recreate. And former members—myself, Doug, and others—decided—Karen [Ramspacher] agreed—decided not to do it. But I can only speak for myself specifically at this point, but there was a fear that despite the value of the *AIDS Timeline*, and the service, let's say, of this kind of articulation of the events and decisions and things that came together that—as we all always put it in Group Material—that created the epidemic or allowed it to become an epidemic—to try to do this, make this apparent through bringing together information and art and artifact and document on the *Timeline*, it—

[Audio break.]

So despite the—if we were to recreate or, let's say, allow an institution or someone to recreate what was the *AIDS Timeline* at a certain moment, it would be still. Right? And it would be—to me it would be an exhibition that's an artifact, not an exhibition that is speaking in the present tense to the present tense with the desire to have an effect in—like in that speaking, in that speech itself. Right? In that broadcasting, in that making visible. Now it's history. Right? Now, I don't know, maybe it's getting—maybe I'm [00:44:00] getting too fine-tuned in this. But to my mind, if someone wanted to recreate the *AIDS Timeline*, it wouldn't be asking Group Material to recreate the *AIDS Timeline*, it would be making a new *AIDS Timeline* that is in the present tense and with

whatever scope and focus that the group of people with a desire to do that decide. So it would be more about a method and, you know, embodying a method and a form but in vital present tense ways.

And one of the problems for me about the idea of—I was going to say—I'll let the slip [laughs] come out—of Group Material becoming artifact—of *AIDS Timeline* becoming an artifact, is that it doesn't have the atmosphere of the times. And that people without a guided narration, without someone writing something or a narration that feeds and says, "This is how it was"—which I wouldn't want to happen either, you know—it doesn't have the dimensionality of, "Okay, what was it like"—I mean, this is just examples from the *Timeline*: "What was it like in 1989, in the rising death toll environment, to walk into a museum and see a Safer Sex poster of a gorgeous nude guy with a hard-on, next to information from GMHC, next to a news write-up, next to a clipping about Ryan White's family house being burned?" [00:46:00] You know? You have to know what these are.

But just as a kind of shorthand, that's not something that can be—I mean, I don't think you can convey context that way. One could do it poetically. That's not something that we've had the chance to do, or have chosen to do. But so, for me, it's like as much as it's a—you know, there would be a real value. And there's value to seeing recreated exhibitions, artworks, et cetera. But for me the loss is too big. What's not there. And even the people. You know, what's not there. So then it's like, well, it would make more sense to do another project.

THEODORE KERR: Especially about something that's urgent and ongoing that is fighting to be seen in the present.

JULIE AULT: Yeah. And also I think there's a way that things like *AIDS Timeline*—this is not to, like, dishonor the history or undermine the work at all, but I think there's a way that cultural acts or actions—not just Group Material, *AIDS Timeline*, lots of things—get fetishized. And it can become a way of not doing something else. Or say like—

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JULIE AULT: You know? Do you know what I mean, though?

THEODORE KERR: Oh, absolutely. And you've written about this or commented about this. The way in which Group Material was sometimes—oh, I think you wrote about it in your letter to say goodbye—to say no more.

JULIE AULT: Okay, yeah.

THEODORE KERR: It was like, there's a way in which Group Material was sometimes being used to do the work that actually museums should have been doing. And it makes sense that now you would also still believe that to be true. Like, don't—there's an easy way to do things and then there's—

JULIE AULT: Yeah, and it's also, I think you're—exactly. And that models—sort of the limitation of models. I mean models are necessary. I mean, I want models. [Laughs.] You know, it's really [00:48:00] necessary. But not—I mean, to build on, and build on in the present, and with different circumstances. Because the model, or, let's say, the Group Material, the activities of Group Material, the output of Group Material, and Group Material as a model, were all within certain sets of conditions. Right? Those conditions are different now. So it doesn't work to use a tool from 1979 to do something now. Maybe. Or, I mean, that's just a silly analogy. But you know what I mean.

THEODORE KERR: But I think you're getting at something that we're actually seeing real with AIDS culture, is the way in which people want to use something like, for example, ACT UP as a prescription on how to deal with this historic moment that we're in. And it just doesn't work that way, because 1987 is different than 2017. And I think your word model is really good. Things can be a model, of course. But they have to inspire us to think about the present, not be stuck in the past. So not a prescription.

JULIE AULT: Right. Yeah, and to build on or be—yeah, influenced by, learn from, certainly. But I think—yeah.

THEODORE KERR: I feel really good about ending here. How do you feel?

JULIE AULT: Okay, that's fine. Yeah, and then we'll pick up next time.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, I feel like we just went up a ramp.

JULIE AULT: Yeah, that was good. Yeah. There was some faltering. Well, you can shut it—

THEODORE KERR: Okay, yeah, I'm going to shut now. Okay, thank you.

JULIE AULT: There— [00:49:32]

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THEODORE KERR: [00:00:00] This is Theodore Kerr interviewing Julie Ault at a friend's home in Brooklyn on November 16th for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Card number two. Hi, Julie.

JULIE AULT: Hi, Ted.

THEODORE KERR: I'm going to start by reading two quotes. The first one goes, "Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity. It is given to very few minds to notice that things and beings exist. Since my childhood, I've not wanted anything else but to receive the complete revelation of this before dying." And that's Simone Weil. And then another quote comes from a worksheet that Group Material made public, or a form that Group Material invited people to respond to. And the first question is—that Group Material asked—was, "How does AIDS affect you and your lifestyle?" And someone wrote, "It comes right home and sleeps with me."

JULIE AULT: Wow. Well, those are really [laughs] both intense and beautiful quotes. The second one comes from—the worksheet or questionnaire was a questionnaire that we distributed to friends, colleagues, and friends and colleagues of others, when we were working on what we called the Democracy Wall for the exterior of showing *AIDS Timeline* at the Berkeley Art Museum. So there were a whole set of questions that we posed to people that we knew were engaged, involved, and living with the AIDS crisis and/or HIV/AIDS. And then also posed some of those questions on the street [00:02:00] to strangers. And the one you've chosen is not from a stranger. [Laughs.] But thank you. Those are great quotes. The Simone quote also reminded me very much—and I don't have the particular quote—but of one of the cogent philosophical observations of Henry David Thoreau. Maybe I'll find it and send it to you.

THEODORE KERR: Okay. Thank you. We talked a little bit—like literally a few seconds before we pressed record—about how to start today. And we thought that it might be good to talk about like, how did HIV appear in your life and in Group Material's life? Do you want a prompt? Or do you feel—

JULIE AULT: No. And actually—and one thing I want to add, because we have this opportunity with two separate meetings of talking, and a day in between, actually. You know, I thought about things, and thinking about, "What did I say? what did I leave out?" Which is an inevitability, omission. But I was reflecting a bit on when you asked me about certain things from what I think of as my deep past. For instance, the late '70s and early '80s, but especially the late '70s, that pre-Group-Material-forming period. And I talked about our—mine and our strong involvement—interest and involvement in music. And then also you asked for a portrayal of that pre-GM period.

And I was kind of struck afterwards by how vacant [laughs] I felt. You know, I couldn't really answer those questions. And so I was thinking about it a little more. And I think partially—I mean, I have a lot of dead zones in my mind, and I think, you know, it's memory. But [00:04:00] partially also, I realized that one of the things I've done in practice is to work on exhibitions and book projects that engage the histories that I was a part of, and the histories that the communities that I and we acted in, had our agency within, the communities were a part of. And so there's book projects, exhibition projects, where of course something like the portrayal of that period in New York and in the art field, the artists' organizations that were springing up in the mid-'70s and late '70s, and the economy, the kind of cultural economy of the relations, which were also between mainstream and so-called alternative, which was also leading to why Group Material started.

These things are committed to print already and committed to exhibition. So for instance, the exhibition at The Drawing Center, which was my first project post-Group Material, which we touched on a little, but I don't think I even spoke to it. But *Cultural Economies*. And the subtitle was *Histories from the Alternative Arts Movement*. And then the book that came out of that, *Alternative Art, New York*. These projects investigated and recuperated some of the scenes that you're talking about or asking about. And so I was thinking also this happens to be in relation to Felix Gonzalez-Torres, the work, the history, the history of the relationship. And there again there's a publication on Felix Gonzalez-Torres that I edited and organized. And as well with *Show and Tell* and Group Material, I think I told you the other day that I sometimes glaze over a bit when talking about Group Material because it's a subject that I and others have addressed a lot, [00:06:00] a lot, a lot.

But the *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material* book. I mention it because these books or exhibitions—but particularly books I think, because they're conservative in the sense that they conserve and preserve the subject, the history from a perspective at a time—these books have become the locations where I deposited memory, and deposited moments in a sense, and the arranging of cultural moments. And so in a way it's a self-preservation. Like once the book is there, you know, I don't have to have this [laughs] in my mind all the time anymore. And in another way, you know, those projects are a way of taking the time and the conceptual labor to do the deeper investigation of what that meant, and what these events and actions meant and conditions meant, whether around AIDS or around other issues.

And so not to say this as a cop-out, but I realize that there's a kind of disconnect sometimes and—maybe something we'll take up another time in our conversation. But I'm really actually interested in the function of the

book and the—particularly the book. Not so much the exhibition, because that's a temporary, vivid arrangement of material. But the archive is another. Organizing the Group Material papers at Fales, which we did a few years ago, and depositing something like all the traces. Not the full *AIDS Timeline* exhibition, but the traces of that. It becomes this fragmentary mapping and un-mapping at once. And I think the archive also—even this conversation is an invitation to dig into the archive, to dig into other places. [00:08:00]

So I didn't—you know, I was at first thinking—just to show you [laughs] where my thinking was going. At first I considered, like, "I have to look up: What was I listening to at that time? What were Group Material—what were we playing? What were we going to see and stuff?" And I thought, "But this is—that's for myself to feel secure in memory." But there's no need to [laughs] list the music that we were listening to. Except to say that Chaka Khan was my favorite vocalist. And Rufus was a big deal, when Rufus started, and then Chaka Khan when she did her solo career. And [laughs] I'll leave it at that on the music.

But I would love to talk with you sometime about the idea of things—how it works that things that are lived experience and documents, traces of experience, conditions, et cetera—when they're not brought together and organized into a narrative, say a book or a set of narratives, they seem to have a different—I have a different relationship to them than when they've been brought together. Not to say streamlined, but brought together into some—there always is some form of narrative, you know?

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, I think—thank you for sharing that, and I think we're setting up some ways that we can talk today. Because I am interested in returning to the idea of mapping and un-mapping. And I want to introduce also the idea of, like, monumentalizing and un-monumentalizing. Because I think they're related, especially in the work of Felix and Group Material, both separately and related. And I think we must have said the word on the record for one second last time. But the word intersectionality, which always gets—which currently can seem like a new word, but has [00:10:00] been around for a while. And something that even if the word seems new, the practice is at least as long as the AIDS crisis is, if not longer.

JULIE AULT: Oh yeah, I think—yeah, there's a new—and I'm not up to date. But I know there's a new version, a new usage of intersectionality, and often I think when things become—I'm not saying it's a buzzword. But when I have the sense that it might be a buzzword, I glaze. But certainly intersection and intersectionality were things—are methods as well as—I mean, modalities that have been with us a long time, you know? Maybe named during Postmodern culture. I'm not—the, let's say, high time of Postmodern culture. I'm not sure. But thanks for bringing it up again, because I think I might have winced last time when you said it.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. I mean—yeah.

So let's begin with thinking about the way in which HIV came into Group Material's world and your world. You've said, I think, already maybe on the tape, is that it wasn't—it didn't—it wasn't a project first.

JULIE AULT: Right. Well, an analogy I think in a book form, [laughs] is Cynthia Carr's amazing publication, book on David Wojnarowicz called *Fire in the Belly*. I think it's *Fire in the Belly: The Life and Times of David Wojnarowicz*. And when I read—I've read that book a couple of times. And when I read it the first time I was really kind of awed, awestruck, by how Cynthia wove in [00:12:00] a sort of very foggy awareness of a new deadly disease. Or maybe not yet a new deadly disease, but a new disease. And then of a new deadly disease. Seeps into the narrative, and just appears like as blips almost, or asides. And then—and I couldn't tell you where in the book it starts but—and then it increases. Right? And gaps get filled in. There's awareness in David Wojnarowicz as narrated by Cynthia Carr. There's an awareness and then a consciousness of AIDS, and then there's the various narratives of how it's affecting everything around him, people close to him, the communities that he's a part of. And then it becomes the entire environment at a certain point in the book. And that's also—I mean, David Wojnarowicz was HIV-positive and then developed AIDS. His best friend Peter Hujar and many friends.

But so, it's a different thing than Group Material or my, let's say, experience, because it didn't become that environment that then my life ended within. You know? But I think the way that AIDS—that read very true to me. And I remember—you know, I don't even remember where the first glimmers of something going on were. And I couldn't tell you if it was 1983 or 1984. But one of the founding members of Group Material, Patrick Brennan, died. And I hadn't seen him for a little while, and it was relatively [00:14:00] sudden. It was probably '84. And Tim Rollins and I talked about it. We were told that he had died of leukemia, but we speculated that it was that new thing. And I think it was. But I didn't know his family, so—and then there were things in—I mean I couldn't tell you exactly what media sources, but there—and word of mouth. Community. Like, the relay of things reverberating, you know, news reverberating in a community.

But in my memory, and in my purview, Patrick was the first person that it was like, "Oh, wow." And then Miki Zone, who was not—I mean he was a friendly acquaintance. He was in a band, the Fast. He died in '86. And I remember it was announced somehow. And I wasn't following the news fully. And I wasn't a big—you know, I

didn't read constantly. I read a lot of popular, like, magazines and such. I didn't read the newspaper every day. Or if I did, at that point—I'm almost embarrassed to say that I read the *Daily News* and the *New York Post*. And I read a lot of headlines.

But then over the years there were more. I remember very distinctly that in 1987—it would have been fall, late '87, after I had started a friendship with Felix Gonzalez-Torres, and he had become a member of Group Material, but it was just [00:16:00] kind of the beginning part. I remember in my apartment one day, he said that Ross Laycock, his boyfriend, was diagnosed. And I don't remember whether he said positive or AIDS. But Ross had—one of the first things he had was KS, which was a feature of the times, and a lot of—I mean, Kaposi's sarcoma. I'm sure you're well aware, but it was quite common that people that were positive and that developed AIDS-related illnesses, KS could be one of them. And that had these dark lesions on the skin, and could really take over or be minimal or so.

But I remember when Felix told me that, I knew what it meant—or, let's say, [laughs] I didn't really, but I thought I knew what it meant. And Felix was very optimistic, but it was a—I mean, it was a huge blow. But at that point also I don't think it was—people were trying to believe that it wasn't fate. It wasn't a fate that—it wasn't what people sometimes called a death sentence, which I don't really like the term in relation to a virus. But it wasn't—it was unclear, but it was—you know, there was such fear. And I remember the Liberace *People* magazine cover, because I bought it. I always bought *People* magazine, and then saved things for Group Material if they were of potential interest. And the *People* magazine cover was quite beautiful. It was a picture, a lovely picture, of Liberace in full gear. And it had his birth and death dates. And that was 1987, the death date. I don't remember when he was born. [00:18:00] At some point, we were kind of monitoring what's—I mean certainly hearing by '87. ACT UP started '87 or '88? I can't—

THEODORE KERR: '87. Yeah.

JULIE AULT: '87. Hearing a lot. But there wasn't a coherent sense of—at least in my mind. Maybe in other people in the group there were, but—there was more coherence. But I—not for me. There were other—I mean, it grows. It's like the—actually one thing that I remember very distinctly was the 1987 Helms amendment. And that came in response—Jesse Helms, the senator, North Carolina, for, what, four terms or five terms or something. He introduced an amendment to stop any public funding, federal funding, going to GMHC and any other organization that was doing AIDS education in terms of safer sex. And I remember that. I mean it was in the newspaper, it was on the news. But I remember it also because it was quite a—there were only two people that voted against it amongst Democrats and Republicans, and one of them was Orrin Hatch, who's Republican from—is he Utah? I can't remember now.

THEODORE KERR: I don't know.

JULIE AULT: He's still there. He's been around a long long time. And Orrin Hatch is a conservative. He's a conservative, he's not one that I would expect to vote against it. And he—I read his dissent, and I probably saw it on C-SPAN or something at the time. And he said, "What are we doing here? If [00:20:00] we withhold this education we're actually—we're causing deaths." It was amazing. And then—and just to think about how this had reverberation in art. Louise Lawler did a piece that—I hope I'm not short-circuiting. But she did a piece that was a set of photographs of Dixie cups—or not Dixie cups, plastic white cups. Like very institutional-looking. Which—and if I remember, it was about the Helms amendment. And it was like 100 cups, or 98. Maybe it's 98. And then two were treated differently. And then I had a conversation with—I ran into Louise and asked her, "Have you read the transcript from this debate? It was amazing." And I remember sending it to her, and we talked about it a little.

So, you know, there were conversations everywhere. There was fear brewing big-time and increasing. But those are my initial memories. And then Bill Olander was a friend, William Olander, who was originally in Oberlin. I guess I met him when he—we met him, Group Material met him, when he still was curator at Oberlin at the museum there. He contacted us, I think, probably in 1985 or so. And Bill was, I mean, a really wonderful person and curator and activist curator and extremely smart and kind, everything. And fierce. And he had a lot of interest and support for Group Material, and Andres Serrano's work and others. And he was a strong voice when he moved to New York [00:22:00] more so. He became a curator at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, and then Marcia Tucker eventually appointed him senior curator.

But that was for maybe—I'm guessing he moved to New York '85 or early '86, and he died in March '89. So it was for a relatively short period. But within that period he certainly brought in his work, his exhibitions and also the commission that he did for the windows where he invited the *Silence = Death* collective to get together and do something in the windows on Broadway that the New Museum had as a display site in their building at the time. So he certainly brought a lot to the fore. Because I think probably other people being—that speak to this in this oral history project will talk, or have talked, about the windows project which was called *Let the Record Show...*, and then out of it came *Gran Fury*. It engendered *Gran Fury*. So Bill was a big—I mean, I think Bill Olander was

really a strong—in the arts community, a very strong voice that we respected a lot. And also worked with him and were close friends.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. The first time I ever heard of Bill Olander and his work was—David Deitcher told me the story about how, I think, Group Material ensured that there was a ramp so that he could come see the exhibition at Dia.

JULIE AULT: Yeah. Right. Yeah, I mean, also I met and—I'm going to say I-slash-we.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

JULIE AULT: I-slash-we met David Deitcher through Bill. David and Bill were best friends. And I believe they went to school together. I don't remember the details [00:24:00] right now. But David became a close friend. And also, I mean, it's funny how when someone dies, often you locate—you attempt to locate some of their qualities in friends, mutual friends and such. And David had some of the qualities as an art historian, as a very engaged, politically minded art historian, that Bill did. And then David ended up writing about Group Material for the *Democracy* book, which was something Bill was going to do. But he didn't; he was too sick to take it on when it was coming up. But yeah. I mean we'll get to that I guess. Maybe we'll circle back to the situation.

Or we could go into it now. Because that was 1988. The end of 1988, beginning of 1989—it spilled into January—was the fourth exhibition—or the fourth arm of the project called *Democracy*—that Group Material did at the Dia Art Foundation when it was downtown on Wooster Street. Well, one of its spaces was on Wooster Street. And that fourth segment was called *Democracy and AIDS: A Case Study*. And it was literally meant to be a kind of case study. Not a documentary case study, but an investigation into the ways that democracy failed its citizens, on so many obvious levels, through the lens of the AIDS crisis, and AIDS becoming a crisis, developing into a full-scale crisis, and the reasons for that. So with that project [00:26:00]—starting with the dedication, because that was at the door—we dedicated the entire *Democracy* project to Bill, and then we had this ramp. Well, you know the story. But [laughs]—

THEODORE KERR: It's a nice story.

JULIE AULT: Yeah. But I think Doug told the story too.

THEODORE KERR: Oh, did he?

JULIE AULT: I think. Or maybe not. But we built a ramp because Bill was very sick then. So he was coming to the opening. It was a very intense energy of the period and the fact that—I mean, for many reasons it was intense. I don't want to make it that it was only intense on one account. But it was an intense period because Group Material was doing these projects at Dia, which is extremely public and unusual. I mean, that was a very unusual temporary union, right? To be working with Dia in some ways.

THEODORE KERR: Should we say why it's unusual?

JULIE AULT: Prior to that, Group Material had had its own space for a year when it started, and then had more or less worked in, beside, or parasiting onto, or being invited into existing structures, whether they be artist-run spaces or artist-founded spaces like Artists Space. And there were—PS 1, I mean, there were lots of different places, university galleries, places where we had done projects. And also, I want to add that Group Material's idea of the exhibition extended from almost the beginning, from 1981, to intervening in the public discourse, the commercial discourse of advertising culture, with—let's put it in quotes—exhibitions. So kind of distributing an exhibition into bus signage [00:28:00] or on subway—in the subway cars. The advertisements that are in the cars. Using billboards. And even inserts into newspaper. And back of buses.

So this was—when I talk about Group Material's medium being the temporary exhibition, it wasn't always an interior exhibition, or even a place where art is expected to be seen, an art space, but they varied a lot. And kind of always alternated in a sense. But so something like Dia—not to belabor it, but it was thought of as a very elite institution, and a high—people, all of us also, perceived it as a high economic, high elite institution that would normally have no interest in what Group Material was doing or so. But there was a shift in Dia's direction, and in their formation as an economic entity and such in the—I think it was in '87, under the direction of Charles Wright, who was the director at the time, and Gary Garrels was the curator. They consulted a few people, including Yvonne Rainer, about how to contemporize in a different—in an engaging way, and I think probably a socially engaging way too, that was in step with the times. And a number of names came up. Group Material was one. Martha Rosler. I don't know if they were already working with Jenny Holzer or not. But there were a number of artists that then realized projects in the Dia program.

But it was—especially, I think, this was the first project that Group Material was doing [00:30:00] explicitly in the arms of the AIDS crisis. And speaking to that in the ways that we did. And there were a lot of tensions I think at

the time. You know, it was a very difficult period. We were all angry and suffering and very emotional, and that's a fuel. That's a strong fuel. There were a mixture of responses, emotions, analyses, et cetera, that all were fueling the agency that people engaged or found for themselves in different ways. And some of it was AIDS activism and ACT UP and other community organizations. PWA Coalition was an amazing organization. Michael Callen. And then there were—I mean, there were lots of organizations. I won't even try to mention even a couple because there's so many. But then there were people that were doing—they found their agency where they work, which was—for us it was in the art field, and making exhibitions, making projects, speaking, exercising our public speech, and our visibility as well, that way. To use that visibility and to use the opportunity of an exhibition and a roundtable discussion and a town meeting at Dia Art Foundation—this so-called elite institution—to bring to the fore AIDS as the subject, as the lens.

And then, of course, there were friends and colleagues that had died, that were dying, that were ill. And we didn't know—nobody knew, you know, for sure. And you don't want to predict what's going to happen with someone's health path. But things were looking bad and things [00:32:00] were looking very bad for Bill. And so that night of the opening of that show, I think there were a lot of expectations, outside and in the group, and exhaustion [laughs] on a number of fronts. It was also the end of the project. And it had been a four-month or five-month—but we decided, because Dia didn't have a quick turnaround schedule—normally they did exhibitions that lasted a year. And we wanted to mirror the commercial structures where something happens and changes quickly. So we did four projects in four months.

THEODORE KERR: Oh.

JULIE AULT: Yeah, and so it was an exhausting period as well. And then Bill was coming to the opening, David was bringing him. And it was exciting also. He was going to meet Karen Ranspacher, who had been working at Dia as a curatorial assistant to Gary Garrels. And we really got along great with Karen, and she was also—in addition to working as a curatorial assistant—had become fully engaged with activism. She embodied and embodies activism. So she was working—she was part of ACT UP, and a very vibrant individual in ACT UP. And also in WHAM!, the Women's Health Action Mobilization. Now I can't—reproductive rights.

And so Karen was also—she was virtually working with us on particularly that exhibition, *Democracy and AIDS: A Case Study*. I was excited for her and Bill to meet. But I hadn't seen Bill—I saw him quite a bit, or frequently, when he was really ill, before he went back to Minneapolis, which was where he [00:34:00] passed away, with his family. But I hadn't seen him for a few days, and he was really—you know, it was getting hard for him to talk. He was in a wheelchair and stuff. So it was very—believe it or not, there weren't access ramps at the time. You know? So we [laughs] went out and got wood. As I recall, wood. And it couldn't have been Masonite but maybe it was plywood. Double duty plywood. I think. Because we didn't buy something already made. It was to really fashion this kind of—I mean, immediate access. Because otherwise it would have been more difficult for David to bring Bill in, for Bill to enter. And it would become a thing. You know?

THEODORE KERR: Did they get to meet? Karen and Bill?

JULIE AULT: Yeah. That was very brief. I mean, Bill was—it was a lot for him to take in. You know, he was seeing the exhibition, he was seeing it all, there were a lot of people there. And this is kind of a good story so I have to tell it. Because I don't think it's anywhere. [Laughs.] But Marcia Tucker was the director. I mean she was the founder and director of the New Museum at the time. She was who Bill worked with and for. She and Bill were close. And Marcia was on sabbatical away from the—or not sabbatical it's called, but she was away from the museum for that semester or season.

THEODORE KERR: For research or for health? Do you remember?

JULIE AULT: No, she wasn't sick at the time.

THEODORE KERR: It wasn't health, okay.

JULIE AULT: This was 1988, and that was much later when she became ill. But it was for research. She was often going to Santa Barbara or—I don't remember actually if it was for research or whatever. But she was away. And she wanted to come to the opening. She knew. I think I had told her or someone told her that [00:36:00] the entire project was dedicated to Bill. And she really wanted to see the show, and she had seen the other shows. And I see this woman in the distance in the gallery space. And I know it's Marcia. I mean, it looks like Marcia, but she's wearing a wig and sunglasses and a kerchief over her head, trying to disguise herself. Well, because not only was she supposed to be away, but she didn't want to talk to people. You know, it's like, she was beleaguered, let's say. And I see her. And this woman, she came over to me. And between her teeth she said, "Julie, it's Marcia."

[They laugh.]

JULIE AULT: And I was like, "Oh, Marcia! You had me fooled."

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

JULIE AULT: But it was kind of—it was very sweet. And she wanted to be there for Bill too. You know?

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. I think that exhibition, and then of course—what I have the most access to is the transcript of the town hall. So that's my entry. And also an article that David wrote, the one that Bill had maybe started.

JULIE AULT: On the whole—yeah, yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, "Social Aesthetics."

JULIE AULT: "Social Aesthetics," yeah.

THEODORE KERR: This quote I think is quite helpful from David: "More valuable as an opportunity to investigate the terms of this conflict than as an attempt to reconcile the two sides of the argument."

JULIE AULT: Say it again. More valuable?

THEODORE KERR: So I think he's talking about the exhibition.

JULIE AULT: This exhibition.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

JULIE AULT: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: So: "It's more valuable as an opportunity to investigate the terms of this conflict than as an attempt to reconcile the two sides of the argument."

JULIE AULT: Right. And is there more context? Did he say what the two sides of the argument are?

THEODORE KERR: I think it must have been the tensions around art and activism and the different calls for response and how—I think as specific as it is to that project, it also speaks to, I think, Group Material's [00:38:00] way of working. I don't think Group Material was about giving audiences resolution but rather—

JULIE AULT: Right. I mean, I think in general—well, I'll keep on this project. And let's say AIDS project. There were certain of the—we did maybe seven or eight projects that the topic and subject terrain was AIDS and its effects. And there were some of those projects that did attempt to—maybe not reconcile, but for instance *AIDS Timeline* had to be an indictment of the government, and in many ways of public of opinion and such. But this project was the first one that we did.

And I agree, you know, it wasn't—I mean in fact we were showing the terrain a bit of the—I don't really like to call it a divide, because I think it was in some ways a false divide, and the, you know—activism and art and the divide of politics and aesthetics, that's very very old, historical. In some ways it's an illusion, in some ways it's not. But it's very tricky to talk about. I think in that period there was a kind of bluntness, the way that some people talked about it. Like, "activism is good, art is bad." And not that simple, but that's how headlines function, you know, and slogans function. But with the show, what we were trying to create in the exhibition—if I remember correctly, if I remember anything—is an environment where again all these ideas and emotions could be brought into a mix, [00:40:00] and a variety of—it's hard to put it.

It wasn't just a variety of responses to AIDS. Because there was that. But also a lot of the artworks that the group brought into that exhibition, and into relation with each other, were not made in relation to AIDS. There were overt works, there were covert works. There were works that had nothing to do on the surface with that. There were symbolic, there were concrete, there were abstract works, figurative, media works. And I think the idea is it's in a sense subtle in some ways, because it's when the AIDS crisis is for us and for our communities—was becoming the environment of everything. It was taking over the psychic environment, the physical. It was becoming the environment, the framework through which daily life exists. Right? And it's like—you know, it really is, I think, like being—I have never been in a war, but it's the closest I've been to when you have the sense you're in a war. And that war is also with society, and with mainstream society. And there's a disjuncture between not just you, but all—like everyone you know, and the communities that you're part of, your circles of closeness, your colleagues, that are experiencing—and then there's all the rest of society and population that don't seem to care. I'm not saying they didn't care. But that it seems to be a real disjuncture.

And in that sense, I think [00:42:00] the curatorial approach that we used was: Anything can come into this and

be seen through—a beautiful piece by Mike Glier that's a figurative drawing, done with tenderness, of a man's head and some of his limbs, that has a different meaning in this context. Andres Serrano's piece, which I can't remember which—I can't remember which. It definitely wasn't *Piss Christ*. But it was an immersion. One of the pieces where he immersed a figurine, which was—I believe it was the remnants of a cross, a crucifix. So it was very ghostlike and immersed in a golden fluid, which was both visceral, as the title probably had "piss" in it. So it was bodily, and it was also ethereal. He didn't make that with AIDS in mind, necessarily. But I think we were showing how the lens can encompass, and does encompass, culture in general. You know? And then looking at things—how do I put it? Like, when you think back—or when I think back to Vietnam War era—and there's been a lot of exhibitions since then that try to look at, say, how Minimalism was also about the war, or in relation to the war. It's like—

THEODORE KERR: Of Vietnam? Or HIV?

JULIE AULT: Vietnam. Yeah. That when you—we didn't have the distance at that time, we weren't looking historically. But there's all kinds of [00:44:00] relations that are subtle, covert, explicit, implicit. And I can't say what work was made—I mean, some work is clearly made with AIDS as its subject matter or coming from AIDS. But I can't say, for instance, that Serrano's work wasn't. I think it was, but it wasn't explicitly. It could be read that way, or not. But it was to—the exhibition really, it did two things.

And I have to mention that we took on that bifurcation, that division, false or otherwise, in the exhibition because the room, which is about a 40-foot-by-40-foot square, was bifurcated by two long tables that we put together. Just office tables that made about 16 feet. And on either side of those tables were flyers, broadsides, pamphlets, information that was mostly coming from AIDS activists, and community organizations that were working with health care and AIDS, et cetera. And then at either end of that table were many hours—there were big monitors that had video programs on them. And a lot of work at the time that was explicitly directed to the subject was done in video format. So there were several hours of videos. And this was in the center of the room. And then the so-called fine art, or the artworks that defined themselves as artworks, were on the walls. Right?

So it was—the room was activated by the activist traces. And information. Information was really important. We have to remember, like, getting information [00:46:00]—to be able to go into any gallery space or public exhibition space at that time, and pick up 40 leaflets. They would give you the landscape of what's happening in treatment, like with Treatment Action—I don't know if TAG had actually started at that point. But what's happening with treatment research at that point, what's happening in ACT UP, what's happening with GMHC, what's happening with PWA Coalition. Pick up the *PWA Coalition Newsline*, pick up a poem from Iris—I can't remember Iris's last name.

THEODORE KERR: De La Cruz?

JULIE AULT: Yeah. De La Cruz.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

JULIE AULT: Pick up the *Denver Principles*, a copy of the *Denver Principles*, from '83. Pick up all these things. That's no small thing. Right? Now some people, you know, I think, just—I mean, it's a truism: Art is not enough. But of course—and Gran Fury had put out this wonderful call to arms poster through The Kitchen, *Art Is Not Enough*, I think around the same time. And some people focused on one thing or the other. I couldn't tell you the experiences that people had in the exhibition. But the exhibition was definitely—it wasn't a declarative, it wasn't a reconciliation. And it was for everyone. You know? It was for everyone, including ourselves. So I think it was actually—I mean, it was really important that it be what it was. And then there were other projects that are informed by what it was and also what it wasn't, you know, and what the criticisms—not so much the—let's say the blunt criticisms like, "Dia is a rich place, why is Dia doing this? This is art, what does that have to do—it doesn't do anything." [00:48:00] I mean, if we believed that we wouldn't be in the art field. You know?

THEODORE KERR: Right. And that's one of the legacies of that time and that movement, is that art was doing work.

JULIE AULT: Yeah. It was doing—I mean, yeah, and it does do work. I mean, Bill for instance—and another person who came into the picture around then for us and me, and I think Gran Fury and a lot of other colleagues, was Frank Wagner. For curators like Frank Wagner and Bill Olander—they believed in the power of art, the communicative, persuasive, informative power of art, even in ways that I can't say I do every day. You know? Which was great. And so no question, I'm going to—they were intent on using whatever voice and space they had to address these urgent concerns that were happening.

THEODORE KERR: I want to go back and talk about Karen for a second, because there must have been a moment where she went from a, like, virtual member to member.

JULIE AULT: Right.

THEODORE KERR: And was it during that exhibition? After? It doesn't really matter, I just want to—

JULIE AULT: Well, no, it's fine. It was right after. And I think—I mean, we might have discussed the potential. It might have started as jokes, like, "Wow, you should really be part of the group," or "You're functioning that way with your ideas." And Karen always had a lot of—the group at that time of *Democracy* project was Felix, Doug, and myself. [00:50:00] And Tim had kind of ushered us in, but he left the group to work exclusively on Tim Rollins and KOS at that time that we took on the Dia project.

So we might have joked with Karen, and we probably talked about it internally. But the idea was to wait until after, because—also not to lure her away. We couldn't offer a salary. We weren't offering—I mean, we weren't offering the things that Dia could give her in terms of security, a salary. And she had studied art history, I believe, in some capacity, and was at some point in her early life looking to go into that field. So we were offering something very different, which was to become a member of Group Material—and we don't know where it's going to go, but you see what we do—and to join, basically.

And so it would have been—I know we waited, and it would have been after. And then she came into the group. I mean, she had a yes ready. And maybe we had even discussed that we were going to ask her, or something like that. But not to put her in an awkward position. She was young too. So not to put her—I don't know, I don't think it was her first job, but it was one of her first professional positions like that. And so we didn't want to put her in an awkward position of, "Which hat are you wearing now? You're working for the institution—you're assisting the institution—or you're working with us."

THEODORE KERR: Right. Like, where's that suggestion coming from? [Laughs.]

JULIE AULT: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, or also if issues come up where there's—I mean often in projects with institutions—I mean, I won't say often. Always there's a zone of compromise. Not to put Karen in an awkward position of being the person who would mitigate that compromise or relay. [00:52:00] So we waited till after.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. And if I understand the timeline correctly, at this point, Group Material then becomes the four of you.

JULIE AULT: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Is that—yeah. And I don't want to put you in a position where you have to talk about who did what and all that stuff. But I do think it's nice to—more than nice, it's important to put on the public record Karen's [Karen Ramspacher's] contributions. Because I think sometimes she gets forgotten or—

JULIE AULT: Yeah. It's the reader or the viewer that forgets. She doesn't get forgotten in the historical representation.

THEODORE KERR: Absolutely.

JULIE AULT: Because—also I mentioned *Show and Tell* or the archive, because those are locations of locatable Group Material history or something. And Karen, she's all over there. But I think often—it's the way promotional culture works. People tend to mention Felix Gonzalez-Torres. And there's so much misinformation out on any subject. And I've seen it on Group Material. But I agree. I mean, Karen—it's also not just her importance. And I wish I would have mentioned every name. But anyone that wants to know, it's easy to find out. And not kind of just accept the larger names or the more known names or something.

I think one of the things we did in *Show and Tell* was to—I wanted to really register who came into the group at what time. And you have to really have to look then, because we don't explain it, but there's effects. Who comes into the group, in where the group goes, what does the group do, does the focus change, what methods are—what modalities are enacted that—or get a backseat—that might have been different before. And also just, not so much like Karen [00:54:00] came into the group and that changed it in a certain direction. It's not that simple. It's about the mix, the dynamic of a certain group of people at a certain time in their lives and in culture.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. And I think the conversation that we were just having about the—the very rich conversation that one can have about the relationship between activism and art as both—in all that—is something that Karen—that you all bring up in your work and something that Karen was definitely a part of. Like it makes sense that at that point in history you all would have been working together in this way.

JULIE AULT: Yeah, I think so too.

THEODORE KERR: And I think also—I agree that it's up to the reader to not forget things. Because also in the Fales, you know, Karen is there as much as anybody.

JULIE AULT: Yeah, yeah, it's just—you know how these things work. It's always—I find it endlessly disappointing how the short version of things—and that's why I almost refuse to speak in blurbs. Because the short version of—especially historical representation—it leaves so much out. It's just not right. And of course history-writing, history-telling, storytelling, it's not that it's all fact. I mean, a lot of it is fiction, and I don't expect that it would be accurate. But I like to be accurate when possible.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. Yeah. I think also some mistakes that I certainly have made is that we do—I have put someone in the activist or artist category. And Karen was someone that I understood to be an activist first, because I saw her in ACT UP demonstrations. And so I think what this time in history is also good is—like, just complicating simple narratives, and remembering that a lot is going on at [00:56:00] any given moment, and during a time—you said this beautiful line, "HIV was the environment of everything," that things were—that was one environment, and also we can't forget there was a President people didn't like and there was wars.

JULIE AULT: Oh, there were all kinds of—not just didn't like. A bad President. You know?

THEODORE KERR: Right, thank you.

[They laugh.]

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, it wasn't that he was dislikable.

JULIE AULT: A destructive. There had been years of destruction of social policies and health care policy and education and everything. We start to see the long term effects maybe now. You know? I mean other long term effects, consequences.

But Karen's energy was great. And I think that's something—we all have—I think the energy was really good between all four of us. And you have to remember with the *Democracy* project, that was Felix's first big project too in—I mean, it was kind of a big—I wouldn't say a shake-up because it was smooth how it happened. But Tim had been, really to me, the primary founder, even though it was a collaborative that was founded, of Group Material. And in 1987 Tim left the group. And he felt comfortable to leave the group because Felix was coming in, but it wasn't like Felix was replacing Tim.

THEODORE KERR: Right.

JULIE AULT: And we didn't know. I didn't know. Tim and I are very close friends for let's see, 45 years. Right? And I didn't know that he was going to leave until he said, "Now I'm going to leave." Because he wanted to focus on KOS. Just like when Felix stopped being active in the group, it was because he had something else he wanted to focus on. Karen's focus was activism. I would say—I mean, I would never try to label her or anyone else. But her focus was activism, [00:58:00] and she was moving away from the art historical and the curatorial fields. So Group Material was in a sense an ideal mode or vehicle also for her transitions. I think. Yeah, it was good.

And the projects that we worked on after *Democracy*—I don't have the material in front of me to remember exactly, but we worked on several AIDS-related projects for the next couple of years, three years, I don't know. Not exclusively. We worked on other projects too. And they were always a mixture of topics, projects, engagements, and modalities really. So it's not—I mean Karen was part of—for the next three years or whatever, she was part of all of those. And we all bring different things to the mix. That's the beauty, I think, that I still treasure about collaboration, collaborative practice, and dialogue, is you just don't know where it came from anymore. But an idea goes through all these different filters, and the conversation, and the experiences of the person, each individual, and everything they represent, all the voices they bring to their voice. And then you get something, like a Group Material project or whatever. So that was exciting to have—basically Karen was a new member then. But Felix had only been there a year.

THEODORE KERR: And that things are happening at the same time, and it's not like there's neat start and finish lines.

JULIE AULT: Right.

THEODORE KERR: My sense of the *AIDS: Case Study* project is that because it was multifaceted—like a book doesn't publish itself, and you don't put everything on hold because you're still waiting for proofs.

JULIE AULT: Right.

THEODORE KERR: So I think there's a [01:00:00] way in which, like, other things are influencing.

JULIE AULT: And Group Material was never—I mean, it was like all the, let's say—I put, like, all of my certain kinds of energy into Group Material, but I always had jobs too. And other aspects of life. I think we all did. And other interests and relationships. It's not like Group Material was everything. You know? It was everything in

terms of the artistic practice, the social artistic—or social aesthetic practice. I wouldn't know what to call it exactly.

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.] Who knows anymore?

JULIE AULT: The practice. And that project—one of the great things about Dia as a venue for us—there were many great things about it. And also working with Gary Garrels and Charles Wright. But Gary was the curator. Gary is now—I believe he's the chief curator at San Francisco Museum of Art. Or Modern Art. And Gary was wonderful to work with, really supportive, really a great filter, never judgmental or saying, "Oh, that's a bad idea," [laughs] or something. But how do we help you to realize a project that you didn't think you would ever have the means to realize, but also conceptually. You know?

And we lived it. I mean, Dia became our office. They welcomed us so thoroughly that it was—you know, we were all working, we didn't have much money, any of us. And we would just take over their conference room for our meetings. They would order us pizzas. Joan, who was at the desk and ran the dance program, would be like, "Oh, you guys are hungry." She would order us pizzas. I mean, we used their office as our office. We [01:02:00] did shipping for Group Material things from their office and received—I mean, it really became a host in the full sense of—not just for the project, the exhibitions, the town meetings, the thing, but for the duration that we were working on the book, which then took a couple years longer. And they just, you know—I mean, Gary was a really great—probably really one of the most engaged curatorial experiences I saw in our experience.

THEODORE KERR: Wow.

JULIE AULT: To date certainly. And then one of the great things about the visibility of Dia was that, you know, lots of people went to see whatever they were doing. We wouldn't have had that kind of access. By then the largest audience we would have been able to have access to was by being in the Whitney Biennial in 1985 for the project *Americana* that Group Material did. And that was when Mundy McLaughlin was still in the group. So that was Tim, Mundy, Doug, and myself.

But then when Dia happened—and actually, sorry. In 1987 we did a project for the *documenta*, I guess it was 8, that Edward Fry had invited us to take part in, and so we did a project called *The Castle* for that. And that was a large audience, obviously. A stage, a large stage, to be acting on. But people would—like Frank Wagner came and saw the exhibitions. And I don't know if he saw all three or just the last one at Dia. But then he made contact and wanted—and he was organizing—Frank organized a show called *Vollbild*, which is AIDS world—it translates into AIDS world—

THEODORE KERR: Isn't it full-blown? AIDS world full-blown?

JULIE AULT: Full-blown AIDS world or AIDS world full-blown, I'm not sure.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, I'm not sure but full-blown is [01:04:00] so important there.

JULIE AULT: Yeah, full-blown. Yeah, you're right. And that was the first exhibition in Germany and also in Europe that took on the subject terrain of AIDS. And so he invited us to participate in that. We met Frank. That became a 25-year relationship. And I worked with Frank on many occasions. Also I worked with Martin Beck and we did projects with Frank. Frank was a close friend. Group Material did a project called *Democracy Poll* with Frank and RealismusStudio, which was the entity he worked in at nGbK.

THEODORE KERR: Oh, okay.

JULIE AULT: Which is neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst, in Berlin. So there were, like—I mean, that just opened the door to exchange and working relationship and friendship for years. But also that's where we met Larry Rinder. He saw *AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study*, and I remember, vaguely and distinctly, sitting—Doug and Felix and Larry and I having a meeting on these folding chairs in the little hallway next to the exhibition. And he had just seen the show. He made an appointment. You know, we met him there. And then he invited us to do a project—I think he wanted to—probably just, "Could we redo this? Could we restage that exhibition at Berkeley?" He was the curator of the MATRIX program at Berkeley at the time, Berkeley Art Museum, which is part of Berkeley University. And we brainstormed together. And at the time Group Material had never repeated a project [01:06:00] because the projects were always contextual. You know, they were specific—I don't want to say site-specific exactly, but they were time-specific, institution-specific. Community—

THEODORE KERR: Momentarily specific.

JULIE AULT: Yeah. Momentarily and community-specific. And there were so many things, and we weren't interested in redoing projects. And we were growing all the time. We didn't want to do a project again, because that would be—at least it felt at the time that that's not growth, or it's not rethinking, and not taking the

specificity of a new situation and all that implies, a new situation into account. So I remember it was on the spot that we had the idea of doing a timeline, and it was not—I mean it didn't come out—it didn't hatch as a full idea, like, other than *AIDS Timeline*. I remember that, because we didn't want to do the same show again, and we thought about, "It's a university." And it was very specific to a university setting, and what we and I imagined a university setting to be, which was that a university audience would tolerate a lot of information better than an art audience, or an exclusively art audience or something. And that a university would be the setting where one could investigate information and cohere information in a way.

I remember I was talking about it and saying, "Well, what about a timeline? That could be important." And feeling it out: A timeline. Okay, an AIDS timeline. The history of AIDS. For us to look into, research: What are the co-conditions, what are the conditions and events and policies, everything [01:08:00] that cohered into a context, a social context that produced the AIDS crisis, and what are the responses to the AIDS crisis and to AIDS, and what have they been since as long as we are—were at that time—able to trace things, which was starting with the CDC taking note of the immune-suppressed—circumstances of immune suppression. And I think it started—this was in 1988 and '89 that we were working on the show. So it started—or on the project. So it started at that time in 1979, I don't know what date the CDC identifies now as being—I think it's probably changed. [Laughs.]

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

JULIE AULT: A lot. I know it's changed a lot but—

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, but also what's—

JULIE AULT: Not just the CDC, but—

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. What's worth diving into at this moment, though, is that you all—like you said, it was a co-examination. It wasn't just, "What did the CDC tell us about the history?"

JULIE AULT: I mean we felt—not ignorant. But you have all these—at that time we had pieces of information. We were all avidly reading and listening and aware—going to—aware of certain media or reports, information. And so the idea was, if we put all these things together and we didn't even know for sure where we were going to look—you know, that came over time, like, "What are the arenas that we look at?" But the information-heavy and the timeline as a structuring device of information, the trying to figure out the history, those things were the starting points. You know?

THEODORE KERR: And I can assume that you had done one timeline [01:10:00] before.

JULIE AULT: Right. We did a timeline exhibition, or used a timeline as a structuring device for an exhibition, in 1984 at PS 1, and it was part of a larger initiative called *Artists Call Against U.S. Intervention in Central and South America*. And Group Material's project was called *Timeline*. And the timeline was structured around all the occasions—not declarations of war, but all the occasions that the U.S. had militarily intervened in Central or Southern America in recent history, you know, recent being over 100 years or whatever. And I don't have the information in front of me right now, but there were a lot of interventions. And we got that initial diagram or the idea came from a diagram, which was a list of interventions that CISPES, the Center in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador, had made. And we saw that and then did this project.

So I won't go into too much detail into that project at this moment. But yes, we had done a timeline and that's where—I mean, the timeline—that's the only timeline project we had done. And in my memory of that discussion with Larry—all of us and Larry—I remember the timeline wasn't part of our repertoire, but it was in my vocabulary. And it was also in—and probably in Doug's and Felix's, but—you know, it was also in that period in the later '80s [01:12:00] we were approaching this decade assessment that happens at the end of every decade and stuff.

And I remember seeing things like—I mean, it's probably all—you know, for decades it's been around. But seeing in media—because I used to read *Newsweek* and *Time* magazine and all these mainstream, not highly critical, not super nuanced newsmagazines, because I wanted to know what's happening on a more popular level, and I also liked reading them. And they started probably in the '70s already—maybe it was the '60s, but I wasn't reading it then—to do graphs, to try to do a visual diagramming of things. And timelines had by then or were becoming more prevalent as a media construction. A kind of an, "Okay, what happened in that decade? What does the '80s represent? What did the '70s represent?" So it was also a very legible form. But I think the idea of an AIDS timeline, that obviously wasn't a—you know, that was—I don't know what to call it, but it wasn't [laughs] a ready form.

THEODORE KERR: Correct. Yeah. And the idea of a timeline both is a way to make sense of what's going on in a—I'm using quotes here—linear fashion, but it's also an argument that you can't, or that it's endless. Or at least

the way that Group Material constructed *AIDS Timeline* in my reading is a gesture towards: There's so many factors.

JULIE AULT: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

THEODORE KERR: And in your speaking of it right now, you've spoken about how of course it includes the science and the CDC [01:14:00] information, but it included other things as well. And you've hinted your ingestion of pop culture was important. And that, to me, must have been noteworthy or even stunning for people to think about HIV in relationship to *The Empire Strikes Back*.

JULIE AULT: Right, yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Or to just the history of the U.S. government's actions. And was this something that you had to amp yourself—that you as the we had to amp yourself up to put out into the world? Or there was never a doubt that this was a—you're making the form and did you ever doubt that the form was going to be legible at this time?

JULIE AULT: No, but all things happen under the process. Right? And I couldn't convey to you what the processes were. I don't even think if all four of us were alive and sitting here that we could convey what the processes were. It's difficult to see where there's a beginning of an idea and all that.

But with the *Timeline* that we did in 1984, one thing that was a liberation of that, or a liberatory aspect of that—curatorially speaking, artistically speaking—was that the works were selected—they were contemporary and historical, and that we—again, we were not selecting works to illustrate anything on the timeline. So there was no one-to-one relationship between, let's say, a statistic, a fact, the statement of fact that might be registered textually on the timeline, and then an artwork or an image or a document or a book or anything that would be put on the timeline.

In the case of [01:16:00] the 1984 project that we did, you know, that really felt—to use the—yeah. The linear device as a structuring device and as one layer of information, of dates. In that case the U.S. interventions. And then in the later case, each year on the timeline or the range of knowledge about the virus. And then the AIDS crisis and up to 1989 and after, when we did it subsequently. But that structuring device is something that I think was a horizon line. It creates a horizon line for all the disparate kinds of information and material and images and visuality and messages and analyses, everything that we had the liberty to bring together. And so it's really more spatial than linear. And more dimensional than linear. However, I think just in terms of how an exhibition communicates, the—I have to interrupt to just say the [laughs] wind is really wild out the windows here.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

JULIE AULT: So the branches are going crazy, it's quite a vision. [Laughs.]

But there's a horizon that's created that one can use as a way to focus. To focus on that horizon, to see what's below or below, but also to liberate yourself in a way. And all the material—I don't know what to call it. Elements? Let's say elements. And they [01:18:00] were varied. You know, documents, newspaper clippings, elements of popular culture, posters, information that we had researched that we digested into text, statistical information, clothing, an ACT UP t-shirt, or *Silence = Death* t-shirt when that first appeared. There were books, artworks. Artworks of all media. There was also—at that time it was a very old-fashioned tank of a computer program that was a work by someone. So there were all kinds of elements. And those things speak to—they speak within the timeline, but they don't get stuck there. In other words, you're outside of the linearity of, I think, the media version—media versions of timelines are often on pages. You know? So that's a different thing, that's graphic, right?

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

JULIE AULT: And it's contained and it's graphic. This had the sense that it was growing. And also the architecture of the space at Berkeley, it had a lower ceiling that got progressively higher.

THEODORE KERR: Oh, wow.

JULIE AULT: And I think on one occasion—I didn't mean it facetiously, but it really was like the room was made for *AIDS Timeline*. Because as the number of cases and deaths grew, and the epidemic grew, and the information grew, it expanded into the space. You know? Or the information that we gathered together expanded into the space. So it's both. It's a funny thing with a timeline in an exhibition space, and the way that Group Material implemented and organized the material. It's a funny way how it acted because it wasn't—yeah, [01:20:00] it wasn't a declaration even then. It was up to each individual viewer to make sense and interconnect

disparate pieces of information and read the timeline. And everyone reads differently and has different emphasis. But we wanted to make something for that setting also that one could have a sense of things if they went in for a half hour, or you could spend two hours, or you could read everything and watch all the videos and watch Bob Beck's [*Safer Sex Preview Booth*]*—go in his video booth and watch all those videos. And you could spend a lot longer.*

So there was kind of a small, medium, and large version of viewership in mind, or user-ship in mind also. Where the timeline becomes useful if someone has only 20 minutes. I mean, a lot of people spend less than that on an exhibition, you know? But hopefully the exhibition would also stop you in your tracks and you would make time. Or get sucked in reading—whether you're reading about how Reagan cut the education and health care budgets and increased—by what percentage he increased the military budget the moment he was elected. Or you're reading about the CDC's definition of—I think first it was called GRID and then AIDS, and how the definition—and who was included and who was marked by that definition—was being put out. So there were also within the timeline—within the exhibition let's say there were a lot of narratives that built, and came in and out of focus, and then interconnected with other narratives.

And the community responses that were registered in the project were very important too. [01:22:00] The four arenas that we researched and drew from to compose the exhibition as a whole—when I say timeline I think sometimes it sounds like I'm just talking about the text that was at the center of the timeline, but the exhibition as a whole—were governmental statistics and policies. So some of that was statistical information and some of that was really clippings, research, looking at congressional—bulletins? What do they call them? When they release the congressional reports, you know, if something is argued in Congress. Media representations during the development of the AIDS crisis.

So that had a lot to do with stigmatization of people with AIDS, of people affected by AIDS. And the media representations across a range of media: mainstream media, gay media, more marginal, local, more—you know, then things like *Time* magazine, *Newsweek* magazine, registering when was the first cover of a mainstream magazine that was devoted to AIDS, when was the first article about the disease and not much was known, which—and looking a lot at San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley, the Bay Area, because also the specificity of things was—the specificity was important because that's where the exhibition was happening. And so we wanted to research—can you still hear me good?

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, I'm going to ask you to just pop it to the side.

JULIE AULT: Sorry, I had to change position.

THEODORE KERR: Of course. While you were seeing the trees, I was seeing the shadow of the trees dance on you. [01:24:00]

JULIE AULT: Oh, wow.

THEODORE KERR: It was quite beautiful.

JULIE AULT: It's really amazing light right now.

But the specificity of where we were mounting this exhibition, and so who potentially are we speaking with? You know, that was important to take into account. And also in terms of community responses, grassroots and activist responses. So that was a big part—I think that was the third arena. I'm numbering them mentally. So there were governmental statistics and policies, media representations. And media representations also explicitly and implicitly took up public opinion and the stigmatization was very strong.

And this was an arena that had to really be articulated strongly, I think, to show that AIDS also presented a crisis of representation. And that it was how much was allocated by an agency or by the medical industry or a health care agency, how much was allocated to finding a cure, to understanding the disease, to education, was directly—on a number of fronts—was directly related to how people affected by AIDS were marked, and how it wasn't presented, represented, or understood as something that affects everyone. So that was another arena.

And then the fourth arena, what was it? Have to look. Oh, yeah, that was the fourth. The fourth arena was, [laughs] let's see, [01:26:00] medical, scientific, statistical. Oh. The medical and scientific industries was its own arena. So there's government and policy and statistics. CDC falls under government, right? Center for Disease Control. And then there's the medical and scientific industries and how the pharmaceutical companies acted. How—you know—and what was being developed.

And also specific treatment information. At the time, I think AZT was one of the primary treatments that was offered. And then probably pentamidine. What was—yeah. Pentamidine was possible treatment—was a treatment for—or a prophylaxis against PCP, the pneumonia that often people that were immune-suppressed

got. And anyway, I'm not remembering it all. But that information was registered also as an educative thing. It's not like everyone knew.

THEODORE KERR: No.

JULIE AULT: By any means. Even how AIDS is—at the time there were a lot of misunderstandings of what it means, you know? I mean, there still are I'm sure.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

JULIE AULT: But, you know, these were the times of rubber gloves. The cops were wearing rubber gloves when they took away ACT UP members to arrest them, civil disobedience and such. So there was a lot of—there was so much disinformation and lack of understanding, lack of apprehending the information. That was the headlines everywhere, that was the prevalence, that we felt a real [01:28:00] obligation with that project to be as factual as possible. And also to indict the government, to be really clear.

But still the viewer, reader had to make the connections between elements. So it wasn't a statement. It was an invitation to put together things and come to the conclusions. Obviously you couldn't come to totally different conclusions. It was within a scope. But it felt like our most didactic exhibition in a certain way. But also the artworks—there was a lot of art. I mean, I can't say what was more prevalent. It was a total mix of artifacts, documents, textual material, and artworks in different media. And so, I mean, that was another—we didn't see that as a place of research in the same way, but we were selecting works that would speak indirectly. Sometimes they spoke concretely to a given situation and made a real direct link or so to another piece of information that would be nearby.

THEODORE KERR: Also design seemed important. There's choices about what typeface to use for the years, or how to even put things on a wall together.

JULIE AULT: Yeah, and the design of information is a big—it's a layer of content, of information. It is content itself. So that was for sure a subtext, I think. There's a lot of subtexts within. There's also different kinds of collaborations within the *AIDS Timeline* project. I'm focusing on the 1989 one because [01:30:00] that was the first, and in my mind—in my opinion—it was the strongest.

But there were collaborations in terms of meeting—learning about, meeting organizations, community organizers, activist organizers, and artists in the Bay Area that we didn't have access to before and wouldn't have. But then Larry Rinder and Richard Meyer, who was an intern, and he became Group Material—like a research assistant to the project. So he worked with us directly. But he was an intern, I think, in Larry's program. Or maybe Larry and him decided, "Let's work on this project." Richard Meyer is a wonderful art historian and professor now, but he was young. He was second year in grad school I guess. And so Richard and Larry—and I think Larry also reached out to other people to make a kind of itinerary of artists and organizations that we could visit on our trips, our research trips out there. So we—

THEODORE KERR: Was that something you all requested? Or that was something that he took on? Or—

JULIE AULT: We requested it. I'm quite sure we requested it because—and I mean, he may well have suggested it simultaneously or something. Or might have been a discussion like, "How will you interact with the local—the geographic community and the communities of concern here?" So it's possible that—I mean, I'm sure it was a conversation, but it strikes me as something we did—you know, I wouldn't say routinely—but regularly. So we asked to visit different people. I remember [01:32:00] Larry took us to meet artists as well as organizations. One artist I remember in particular he took us to meet was Nayland Blake, who was curator at New Langton at the time, and a really wonderful person and artist. And that also—it's just like a door opens to something else. And long term friendships and working together, but also including one of Nayland's great works in the *Timeline*, which was, I believe, the first artwork on the *Timeline*. It's a piece that he did of five copies of the paperback *Future Shock* by Alvin—can't remember his last name.

THEODORE KERR: I can't remember.

JULIE AULT: Toffler? Alvin Toffler?

THEODORE KERR: I'm not sure.

JULIE AULT: And *Future Shock*, I believe Toffler—I think it's Toffler, we'll have to check, T-O-F-F-L-E-R, perhaps. He defined—like in the blurb or whatever on the book—he defined future shock as what happens when changes happen too fast in society. So Nayland was doing these kind of time capsule pieces, culture capsule pieces, where he would enshrine a set of paperback books that had a theme into a Plexiglas box, almost like an archival situation. But then you could hang it on the wall. And we chose that one, *Future Shock*, that seemed to really be

appropriate or apt in that situation at 1979, when the CDC first started registering the cases of immune suppression, extreme immune suppression. [01:34:00] And that kind of—it opened the door on the art path of the exhibition. That opened the door. So, I mean, it's not illustrative by any means, but it also—*Future Shock* became a kind of caption for what was to come, or a caption for viewing the exhibition, and in its own right could be a point of entry into any number of discourses.

THEODORE KERR: And administratively I can imagine that a Group Material show is complex. How do fees work? Is it that individual artists are—are there individual contracts for individual artists? And if there's payment, is that being metered out per artist or per organization?

JULIE AULT: I don't remember it being that complicated on that level. I mean, we didn't do contracts. Contracts weren't a common—I don't think Group Material even had a contract for a project or something. It wasn't—that's, in my mind, a kind of unfortunate recent and current development of museum culture and university cultures, because of fears of litigation and et cetera, et cetera. There's contracts for everything. But it wasn't like that then. And I couldn't tell you if every project, every artist involved got paid something. That was something that the NEA, National Endowment for the Arts, and NYSCA, the New York State Council for the Arts, demanded or required of anyone they funded, any entity they funded. And it's something we certainly believed in. But we wouldn't have been able to do that unless we had either those funds or the hosting institution would take care of things like that. But I think probably—I mean, the economics was the least of the organizational stuff. [01:36:00]

THEODORE KERR: Thinking back at the Oakland exhibition, I can't help but think about tempo because even though the whole exhibition is an invitation for people to enter as they wish, there's also the tempo of your—the creation of you, we. And I think it's good to think about, like: What was media consumption like? What was the editing process like? Going to Fales, there's folder upon folder of clippings. There's folder upon folder of drafts. I don't know if you would call them drafts of what the text—

JULIE AULT: Process documents, yeah. I think "drafts" is a way to put it, but "drafts" can suggest that there's a linearity to the refinement of a text. And I think it wasn't. I wouldn't put it that way, you know. I think it was probably more a case of—yeah, like a working document that is contracting, expanding, changing, and that the four of us would—and with Richard Meyer—would send around to each other, and modify over time.

Now when I say document I'm talking about the drafts of the *AIDS Timeline* text. So to clarify, there's a text that we cohered which—we didn't write it. A lot of—I mean, there had to be some writing involved, but a lot of it is just taking information that—digesting it, you know. Or maybe even just quote it, or something. And then some of it has a little bit of writing involved. But it's not—you know, this isn't really writing so much as juxtaposing information in a textual form. And they tend—let's say the entries in the textual timeline tend to be from a couple sentences to a couple paragraphs, [01:38:00] but usually it's short enough that it could be a couple sentences or a paragraph. So someone could take it in rather quickly, you know.

And the process was messy. Which just reflected how we were working. I couldn't tell you at this point—I think each of us were—all five of us, including Richard, were collecting from all the arenas, but we probably—all the four arenas—but we also probably each had taken a focus. And then there were certain, like, allegiances or expertise if you want to call it that, you know, within the individual members. So Karen was probably—she had more access to and was bringing more of, let's say, the activist flyers or something. Or information about—there was a lot of information on the *Timeline* about the founding of ACT UP and the processes and how did it work and what did it do, what was it doing. It was only two years at that point.

I was looking a lot into community organizations and grassroots activism like PWA Coalition and others. And popular culture. Felix had a real—I mean, he was always clipping. He was avidly clipping the *New York Times*. Which at that point maybe was a little bit slightly more trustworthy record, or narration, of events than I would see it now. Or maybe we just believed it could be at the time. But he was constantly clipping from the *New York Times*. And Felix also—I also read *Harper's*. We both read *Harper's*. And probably [01:40:00] Doug did too. I'm not sure.

And Felix would often make notes and highlight things in the Harper's Index, which is at the front of every issue, which is a lot of statistics and percentages, and it's really interesting, you know, visually also. And he was probably doing that for the dateline format pieces that he did since '87. He started doing those. And then also for, you know, general use in his work and Group Material. Felix read a lot of—he was mining a lot of—not as populist maybe as the magazines I was, but I think he generally was looking at either *Time* or *Newsweek* or both.

THEODORE KERR: Doug or Felix?

JULIE AULT: Felix. Felix. Not Doug. I was looking at those and then also *People* magazine, the *National Enquirer*. Like, I also always—I think of it as media. I always wanted to see what the opposition is doing, what the other side is doing. So I would sign up for mailings from things like the Christian Action Group or Christian Action Coalition, Donald Wildmon's American Family Association, and get these things, which are a kind of media, you

know? And then Doug was also—and we were all looking at critical theory and a lot of writing about representation and AIDS and racism and homophobia and sexism and how these all come together in this particular frame.

I think Doug was probably mining a lot—I don't know if it's media—but mining a lot of the more—journals. I don't know about academic journals, but critical theory [01:42:00] and things. And also in the forms of journals. And at that time, I have to say, I remember magazines like *Vogue* and *Bazaar* would have relatively interesting articles about cultural phenomenon, media. I think it's safe to say we were all looking at cultural studies, you know, and material culture as a constant source and relation or something.

I can't tell you what Richard—I don't remember anymore what Richard would have been bringing. But I know a little about this, what we were looking at from experience, memory, but also in cohering the Group Material papers in the Fales archive. Like what people saved. I had some boxes where it was really just—I used to have these file cabinets that I would just throw any interesting advertisement. I clipped a lot of ads. So, I don't know, when Calvin Klein had a controversial—before it was controversial—but I would have clipped those ads, and then you can pull them out later. Because there's going to be articles and critical inquiries around those. Or the Benetton ads from, I think, the early '90s. I don't remember. There was the famous Benetton ad campaigns, one

THEODORE KERR: Like the David Kirby photo? Or no?

JULIE AULT: Yeah, one of them included the image of a man on his deathbed. Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Therese is the photographer and David Kirby is the main subject.

JULIE AULT: Right. Yeah. And so I had—and maybe there might be doubles. I don't know if Doug did that. Or Felix as well. But I was combing mass culture magazines and stuff. And so I would clip those ads and just throw them in the files and throw a lot of things in files that I probably didn't [01:44:00] even label them, but it was just source material. And then when we were working on a project, you go through all this stuff, and you never know what's going to speak to that. Or it's also—yeah, it's like reference. It's your reference material in some ways.

But I remember because—the archive, putting that together—that none of it was categorized or labeled. And Marvin Taylor advised to respect original provenance. And that the way that it was kept, just as this jumble of flow, just a flow of stuff, to keep that intact, rather than try to separate things out and say "advertisements" or "AIDS-related" or, you know—I don't know, "feminist theory-related," or whatever. Because also these things are all interrelated, you know? And so the pool of sources reflect that. And I think you see it with the clippings and things. We probably organized a lot of clippings and articles and Xerox copies, as we called them then, of things to put them in project files eventually. So *AIDS Timeline* wouldn't be mixed with *Americana*. But it's still a jumble.

And some things were used, some things were not. Some things were never referenced. The downside of the way we did things at the time, in terms of giving a longer life to the *Timeline*, our version of an AIDS timeline, was that we didn't really take note of where things came from. So it was a cut-and-paste without footnotes. [Laughs.] And that was problematic only when—I mean, I think it would be problematic now. At the time [01:46:00] people didn't, you know, attack you for everything, like, "Where did you get that information?" You know, it was just accepted: This is an exhibition in an art museum, there's a kind of artistic license to say what you want, use information and material how you want. But I don't know that a museum would allow us to do it that way now.

The only problem that emerged was that Larry was talking with the editors at University of California Press, because they were interested in the show becoming—the investigation becoming a book. And it would have been great, you know, in a certain way. We would have to rethink because that's a different format altogether. But it was something we were interested in developing. But at the same time we realized the minute we went back to our material and stuff that we wouldn't be able to—that's an academic press. You know, we wouldn't be able to supply the sources and footnoting that is necessary. And to start doing it all from scratch, it's a different project for different people. It's not our project. You know, that wasn't what we were doing or how we worked.

THEODORE KERR: And the different impetus and the different, again, tempo.

JULIE AULT: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Because it seems like you were—it was a longer term project of grabbing and saving. And then I also—

JULIE AULT: And implementing. Yeah. Like contextual things. You don't—I mean often—I think Group Material's project as a whole can be split into the different projects and exhibitions, public works, whatever, book

publications. But, you know, it was really ongoing. All the sources, the flow of information and analyses and interventions and things that we took stock of. I mean, they were at our hands. So we might use, let's say, a bumper sticker in three projects over time. And it changes the meaning depending where you put it, [01:48:00] and also what is the frame of the project.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Should we take a break to get more water?

JULIE AULT: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I think that's a good idea.

[Audio break.]

JULIE AULT: [Laughs.] Hopefully you—oh, sorry.

THEODORE KERR: Oh, you're fine.

JULIE AULT: Go ahead.

THEODORE KERR: So thinking about—we talked a little bit about the tempo on the creation side. I'm also curious about the responses the *Timeline* engendered for people who weren't involved in the creation of it, and the different experiences of encountering the *Timeline*, whether it's in the gallery, and then beyond. And I was wondering is now a good time to talk about the different—we just mentioned that—

JULIE AULT: Different—yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

JULIE AULT: Well, the tempo. I mean, reception is always something I think that's really—I mean, for me it's hard to project what people—how people experienced it. There was a lot of good feedback, if you want to—I mean, that's a very brief version, it's almost meaningless. But there was a lot of good feedback in the sense that Larry and company told us how many people spoke to them about it or really spent time, a lot of time, in the exhibition. And there were some letters to the museum. There was one letter I remember said something to the effect of, "What a surprise, what a welcome surprise, it was to see an exhibition dealing with—addressing contemporary, like, current, social, political issues up front in the Berkeley Museum." And the letter implied something to the effect that they usually don't do that. You know? Maybe the Pacific Film Archive did, I'm not sure.

But so there was a lot of feedback. [01:50:00] The thing that I did hear, I remember, was there were people that used the exhibition in a brief way, like I said. We had designed hoping that one could go and get a general narrative from a brief visit, or spend time. There were students in the university who came and visited the show over and over, and there were people that took notes and things.

So there was of course a press reaction, and that was good. And then we were told—I don't even remember where, maybe someone from the NEA called me—but we were told that someone from the National Endowment of Arts had gone to do a site visit to the show to see—I mean, to judge, basically, "Is this something that we should be funding?" Group Material, in other words. Because Group Material was receiving—for several years we were receiving not a great amount of money but maybe \$10,000 a year from the National Endowment for the Arts.

THEODORE KERR: Can we maybe take a break?

JULIE AULT: Yeah.

[Audio break.]

JULIE AULT: Okay. So the NEA had—we were told that the NEA had sent a person to do a site visit. And coincidentally, Group Material's funding dried up after that, from the NEA. We didn't get funding again after 1989. And that has a number of reasons. I did talk to the—I can't remember who she was. The woman that was—will speak to people, you know, that have applied for funding and get some comments from the panel when you don't get funding if you want them. And I think what she said was that—it was right after [01:52:00] *AIDS Timeline*—but what she said was that people believed that Group Material had achieved a level of success by doing the show at Dia that we didn't need funding anymore. And I said, "But that's not true. And we didn't get any money. And we need to do our—continue." And the fact that that was the excuse given—and the fact that it wasn't true, but there was no recourse—made me all the clearer that it had to do with *AIDS Timeline*, I think, specifically.

And you have to keep in mind that—or one has to remember that the culture wars as—I mean, I don't like the term so much, but it's been called that. It's been dubbed the culture war. That started—that phase of culture

war, in 1989—with the attacks on Robert Mapplethorpe's work and Andres Serrano's work. And specifically it was attack on Andres Serrano's work *Piss Christ* that had been made in 1987 but was shown in 1988, I believe in Virginia, as part of a traveling exhibition for Awards in the Visual Arts. Donald Wildmon from the American Family Association became aware of the existence of *Piss Christ* and that Andres had received an award from AVA and that AVA gets money from the NEA. So you see how the trail is—how it's traced to someone to attack or so. They organized a huge campaign and contacted members of Congress and brought it to Jesse Helms's attention, et cetera, that basically—you know, their version of it was that [01:54:00] the government is funding *Piss Christ*. You know?

And also Mapplethorpe. It was specifically the *X Portfolio*, which is engaging homoerotic imagery and was going to be shown at the Corcoran within a larger retrospective of Robert Mapplethorpe's work called *The Perfect Moment*. And the Corcoran got wind. Christina Orr-Cahall I believe got wind of what was brewing in Congress, and that it was going to become an issue, and they canceled the show. And then Jock Reynolds, who was the director of WPA, Washington Project for the Arts, took the show instead. So the show happened, the Mapplethorpe show, with huge turnout of people to see it.

But these were the two. Mapplethorpe and Serrano were the two figures, the two kinds of work, that were denigrated and were attacked and used as kind of political footballs in Congress and by conservative—I mean, specific. I don't want to say the conservative right or the conservative Christian right. But specific organizations and individuals in that realm. And the culture war resulted—that culture war resulted in eliminating within a couple of years the category of public funding for individual artists altogether from the NEA, as well as crippling the NEA's budget—I'm not aware to what degree proportion-wise it's come back or so—and putting strict limitations on the scope of the agency.

So starting in 1990, I believe, there was another Helms amendment. Helms had a lot of destructive [01:56:00] amendments. And that amendment was stipulating a rider to the NEA funding any contract between them, the NEA, and an organization or an individual being funded. You had to sign that you would not promote, disseminate, or produce materials which may be considered obscene, including but not limited to depictions of sadomasochism, homoeroticism, and sexual exploitation of children, or individuals engaged in sex acts and which when taken as a whole do not have serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value. So that's in quotes. That was the rider attached, amended to NEA exchange. And I believe we might have been—Group Material might have been going to get some money for money. Because I remember getting this in the mail. So there was a—and a lot of people weren't signing that. But you wouldn't get your funds if you didn't sign them.

But this was all—I don't want to say there was a pinnacle of the AIDS crisis. But 1989 was a profound year. And I think of it as a kind of pivot, but I can't say from what to what. It did—there was a lot going on in more private circles, then the larger circle, the cultural circle, the country at large with AIDS, and with the attacks on certain kinds of art and expression and practices.

In my view, the NEA and a lot of [01:58:00] people in the museum field, they didn't have a strong—they didn't make a strong debate. They were in the weaker position. We didn't really ever turn it into a real debate. It was something that—especially around Serrano and Mapplethorpe, it became immediately headlines. There were media—it became a media circus. And it stayed a media circus for a very long time. And it's difficult to have a nuanced debate in a media circus and in a cultural moment when people are afraid for their jobs, their funding, their—I mean, artists in general were stigmatized. You know, it was like, "This is the moral decay of society, is contemporary art." That was what was being put forward. And it was very strong. You know, it wasn't just art. It was happening across American culture.

THEODORE KERR: And it was then having a profound impact then on the work that was going to be produced, and maybe even within a group like Group Material, how you approached work like—

JULIE AULT: I mean, think it did have a—yeah, it had a profound effect on what we can then with hindsight kind of periodize as the early '90s in terms of practices in visual arts, media arts. And then also difference and identity coming to the fore in a more, I don't know, critical and lasting way, or something. Or outspoken way.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. Or highlighted way.

JULIE AULT: Yeah. Highlighted, definitely. But that's really the culture war, the [02:00:00] NEA, the getting rid of the support of individual artists, all these things. I mean, this is a much larger—that's a whole other oral history basically.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, absolutely.

JULIE AULT: But I wanted to mention it because it was going on. And even in *AIDS Timeline* we did—even though we had never done repeated exhibitions or projects before, for *AIDS Timeline* we felt, and we learned from others, that the need was great for the information and for activating this information. Because the exhibition—

the qualities of it, the modality of it, and the intent—it was activist. It was our activism, you know? And so it wasn't in the street. It was inside of university or museum. But it was very clearly activism.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. And can I say—

JULIE AULT: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: It did go to the street then. You know what I mean? Like, there's an artwork made in the last few years by an artist named Shan Kelley and it says, "My art won't fit in"—no, "My AIDS won't fit in your museum." And he's talking about his experience of living with HIV. But speaking with you over the last few days, I think you can see *AIDS Timeline* as an example of, like, your collective AIDS would not fit in a museum.

JULIE AULT: Right.

THEODORE KERR: You were literally inviting people to take it out of the museum. And that—

JULIE AULT: Right. Well, and to carry it inside of them. You know, the information, the analyses. I mean, hopefully—we did believe, and I still believe, that an exhibition can be transformative. You know? An experience can be transformative. So there was a perspective to the whole thing too. But with *AIDS Timeline*, while we wouldn't normally want to repeat something, it made [02:02:00] sense as a way of distribution of the information. And we had invitations to do *AIDS Timeline*, specifically, on two more occasions, and we did. We took those opportunities. And there were differences in terms of the time and locale, because it was over the next couple of years.

So 1990, a year later, we realized *AIDS Timeline* at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut [at the invitation of curator Andrea Miller-Keller -JA]. And alongside that, we had an invitation from Real Art Ways in Hartford, which originally came from Leslie Tonkonow. And then when she left that position, Anne Pasternak, who eventually became Creative Time director and Brooklyn Museum, took over. So we worked with Anne way back when. 1990. And for that project we knew we were going to have the *AIDS Timeline* in the museum. So we wanted to do a project on buses because there's—I don't remember the name of the bus line, but it's a particular line that runs through—it goes across all of Hartford. And so we thought, "This will go through all these neighborhoods, you know, different economic—it traverses the economic strata, the neighborhoods, et cetera." So we did a bus poster that went on the back of the buses, so you didn't have to be on it to see it. And I don't have the text in front of me. But we thought about the context, that Hartford at the time—and it probably still is—is the insurance capital of the country. There's a lot of insurance companies in Hartford. So we found a—Karen, Doug, and Felix and I kind of combed materials. And [02:04:00] it was another—it was something in the newspaper, and I don't remember which newspaper or who found it or if the clipping was something we just brought to a meeting, one of us. But it was a quote from—[02:04:12]

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JULIE AULT: [00:00:00]—George Bush, who—the father, who—

[They laugh.]

JULIE AULT: —who gave a talk. And I believe it was at—it was not a high-profile talk. It was at a meeting of insurance directors or insurance agents, or this insurance association, federal association. And during the talk—and this is information that's buried in the report on what's going on with the then-President. He said something like, "Like many of you, Barbara and I have had friends who have become sick and died of AIDS." I'm paraphrasing. "When our friends and loved ones become sick we don't do this. You know, we don't do this, we don't do that, and we don't cancel their insurance."

And we thought, "This is great." Like take that, just those words, those two sentences, where he's—didn't have a policy that was effective but—on AIDS—but he was announcing that actually it's a personal issue for him and Barbara Bush. And this is a personal and—from the highest voice supposedly in the land—this is a pronouncement. We don't cancel their insurance. Like, we don't redline. We don't do this. And when you isolate those words and when you found a—we got a—through different photo agencies you can—pictures of the President are usually—you can use them for what you want. You know? I mean, when they're from the White House or something. Because we own them, right?

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. Right.

JULIE AULT: So we found this out. We found a picture with him holding his finger up as though he's giving a talk. And then, you know, used his words to make this announcement in a certain context where it would have a more profound meaning. [The actual quote that we used on the bus poster is "Like many of you, Barbara and I have had friends who have died of AIDS." "Once disease strikes, we don't blame those who are suffering . . . We

try to love them and care for them and comfort them. We don't fire them, we don't evict them, we don't cancel their insurance." -JA]

You know? And [00:02:00] hadn't caused even a blip in the media, in fact. So that was a—that poster was very effective, we thought. And we made a brochure that went along with it, which was—we produced a lot of these brochures. And Mary Anne Staniszewski wrote a text researching the insurance industry, and how it had—a lot of, you know, the majority of the insurance industry had tried to not support in their health care people—and in their insurance carrying through—people who were HIV-positive or they thought potentially HIV-positive, because of their ZIP code or something. So that brochure had a lot of information in it. It was a good—and we then had that handed out at lunch hour at different insurance companies. So this was a project that went along with the *AIDS Timeline* at the Atheneum. So it was a kind of multi-operation thing to have going.

And I should mention that when we did the Berkeley *Timeline*, there were other elements not as prominent. We ended up talking about the exhibition a lot because that was the most prominent. That was a huge substance. It was the primary element. But there was also the democracy wall on the outside of the museum, which gave the building itself a kind of a multi-vocal facade, talking about AIDS. And that was quite profound at the time too, and some of the statements were. And then we invited Gran Fury to do something in the gym. There's a big gymnasium, a very jocky gym, on site in the campus. And I don't remember who exactly worked on it, but we were friendly with John and colleagues. You know, John Lindell [00:04:00] and Tom Kalin and Donald Moffett and Marlene McCarty specifically. But it might have been Tom and John who worked on it. But I believe we showed Tom's *They Are Lost to Vision Altogether*. And there might have been a couple of other videos that were then programmed for going on in the gym. And then Gran Fury did one of their page works, graphic works, for the *Daily Californian* as another branch of the *AIDS Timeline* project. And the *Daily Californian* is the student newspaper on campus. So there were these different—you know, we tried to—for each of the occasions we wanted to activate as many distributional circuits as we could.

THEODORE KERR: And you're not thinking the metaphor of, like, infection? Like, because this is—

JULIE AULT: No.

THEODORE KERR: Okay.

JULIE AULT: No.

THEODORE KERR: That wasn't—because in retrospect that's what's—

JULIE AULT: I never even thought of it until you just said that.

THEODORE KERR: Okay.

JULIE AULT: Yeah, no, no, not at all. No, it was really more to do with platforms. Getting platform. Having the opportunity to use platforms for distributing information, and awareness, and also just for distributing, for saying, "This is a place to talk about AIDS." You know? "It's not a place we don't talk about AIDS." You know what I mean?

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

JULIE AULT: And so it wasn't a metaphor for the virus.

[They laugh.]

THEODORE KERR: Was it an outlet for a sense of urgency, or sense of—

JULIE AULT: I think a sense of urgency. But that was a sense of urgency—a generalized sense of urgency that Group Material I think had for at least the first 11 years of its work, which was to almost always be [00:06:00] working with subject matter that was topical, and felt an urgency to us. Not always the same intensity of urgency. Certainly not that, like, *AIDS Timeline* or other projects around AIDS had. But a lot of Group Material's work engaged topical issues that were affecting us then. You know? And affecting culture then.

So I think the other thing, it's not just urgency or topicality, but really Group Material's project—although there's a focus often on the exhibitions, and the exhibitions I think were very effective, a lot of them, and that was an effective medium that we developed and activated. But as I said before, there were always exterior projects, interior projects, exhibitions that took place within a room, exhibitions that could take place across commercial space, exhibitions that happened that you might not even call exhibitions—but, say, a landscape of textual statements that we put illegally on a dilapidated department store facade in Union Square.

THEODORE KERR: In Union Square.

JULIE AULT: Yeah, and things like—so it was part of Group Material's way of working, and became part of our repertoire, to be inside and outside and public and private and blah blah blah. You know, all these things at once.

THEODORE KERR: And was it facilitating conversations within the group to talk about the impact that HIV was having, literally, on your personal lives?

JULIE AULT: You know, the—I think—I mean, absolutely in some ways. But then there's always—or there were always [00:08:00] things that are not—that we didn't talk about. You know? So I don't know, that's a little—I can't quite parse that out on the spot.

THEODORE KERR: I guess—so there's lots of output at this time, and there's lots of—you didn't say this word, but I would say there's a lot of generous space-making for people to talk about HIV. And using all these multi-platforms, to ensure that as many spaces as possible were spaces where people could talk about HIV.

JULIE AULT: Right. Yeah. No, I think that—I mean, that was an intention. And I couldn't—I mean, it was—I couldn't tell you how many people. Or if people were then coming to us that we hadn't talked to before. But it seemed like in some ways that's all we talked about for years. You know?

THEODORE KERR: Was it just about the work or—

JULIE AULT: No. Not the work. I mean the work some. But the subject. Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Right. And about, like, maybe personal fears or attending funerals or processing getting a test.

JULIE AULT: I mean you see the same people at memorials and homes and—

THEODORE KERR: —and at exhibitions and—

JULIE AULT: —and at exhibition openings sometimes. But I can't remember, or I'm blocking it or whatever. So—

[They laugh.]

THEODORE KERR: Oh, and I love that answer. That's my favorite answer so far. Yeah. I guess I'm also—you know, you mentioned the *Denver Principles* earlier. And I'm just thinking about like—I don't know everyone's status within the collective, and I'm not asking that question, of course.

JULIE AULT: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: But I'm just wondering, was there a way in which people were bringing their own status to the conversation as well?

JULIE AULT: I can give you an example with Felix, who was HIV-positive and got ill, and died early in 1996. When we were working on the [00:10:00] *AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study* exhibition at Dia, Felix indicated—okay, so that was '88 going into '89. And his boyfriend Ross Laycock was very sick at the time. And there were a lot of other people in his life and some shared, you know, in—Jeff Heyman was getting sick. And I can't remember what year he died. And others. Pasquale. So there were—Felix was very intent, and I think we did talk about it as a group, to not have any, like, violent or concrete depictions of people with—that were living with the disease, you know, where it's really—I mean, I don't think a lot of people wanted to do that. I mean, it wasn't something that—how can I put it?

Okay, here's a way to talk about it. He didn't prohibit it, but he was like, "I can't deal with that." You know? And we talked more about what we wanted to make the show be, and how we could do things like that. And I don't think any of us would have been necessarily drawn to illustrative, really hardcore images or something, but—and we didn't need to be, because it's all brutal enough. You know, you read something. You don't—you know, we just—and I bought into that too. And I think Doug. We all agreed, like, we don't need to do that.

But then Gary—I remember Gary Garrels took us to see David Wojnarowicz's show that was up. I'm thinking it was probably the end of 1988, and it was in a gallery on Broadway or around there. Because it was close. We were [00:12:00] all working at Wooster Street and then he said, "I have to show you something." And he had seen the solo exhibition. It might have been Doug Milford Gallery. And we walked over, and it was the show where Wojnarowicz had the piece with Peter Hugar. I mean, this was an amazing exhibition. Right? And the works in the show were very explicit. They were angry, and beautiful. They were some of Wojnarowicz's key works that we think about when we look back now and talk about his work that addressed AIDS so explicitly and complexly. Right? And humanly. And we looked at that show, and Felix was like, "I can't deal with it." You know? That was it.

And Gary was basically—he didn't say, "Don't you want to put one of these in the show?" But he was saying—

because the *AIDS and Democracy* had not opened yet. And we were—up until the last minute and sometimes even after a show opened, we might make changes. If we found something else to put in, or—I mean, it wasn't, you know, that it was all fixed. I mean, mostly fixed. But Gary knew that we still had time, we could do it. And I think it—and maybe we all spoke for Felix. We just were like, "It's a great—I mean, this work is incredible, but we can't put it in the show." Or something like that.

THEODORE KERR: And I think that enters the text of the *Timeline*. There's the talk about Nixon's photographs at the Modern.

JULIE AULT: Nicholas Nixon at MoMA, yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Nicholas, yes, yeah, thank you, Nicholas Nixon at MoMA. And ACT UP's response to that. And that seems to be part of this conversation as well.

JULIE AULT: But it was different of course.

THEODORE KERR: Absolutely. Sorry.

JULIE AULT: But that was I think—I mean, it was intuitive in some ways on our part, but also it was [00:14:00] sharing a personal need for Felix, you know, to not show work that would—I don't know. That would be explicit in that way, so—

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. I think it's really hard because there's a way you can intuit why that makes sense.

JULIE AULT: Yeah. And at the time, it wasn't even that much of a discussion. It was just clear that's how we were going to do it—and also respect what Felix was saying. You know? And so that maybe is a place where the personal in that way—like a personal discussion—or the discussion became personalized, with a consequence in terms of the exhibition, and a curatorial criteria almost. You know?

But I can't think—I mean, I'm not sure. It's funny, because Felix—I mean, I wouldn't say he hid it. He was somewhat contradictory. Or you could say it was contradictory how he either didn't talk about it or did talk about it, or hid it or didn't. And didn't make it an issue or sometimes it was an issue. And I was quite close with Felix, so I would see—I would witness him say something to a stranger that indicated that his boyfriend was sick with AIDS, you know, and I would be a little bit shocked or something. But then he would be totally—he could also be very, hard-core, or harsh. Like if someone would assume anything about him or his—so it was his choice. You know? That was all. It was his choice to share or not share that information.

And a lot of people [00:16:00] didn't—a lot of—so I've heard—a lot of people didn't know that Felix was positive. Because regardless of how his work was made in this context—and he spoke a lot about Ross and his work being really for Ross or coming from their—you know, the context of the relationship and things, and he spoke about—I mean, he spoke openly about a lot of things. Yet at the same time he didn't say, "Okay, I'm HIV-positive," or, "I'm getting sick." He wanted to do things fairly privately when the time came. And I could see, and I think probably—I mean, I'm sure Doug could see that he was getting infections and things. But still you never know. Right? And even then, it did seem that more people died than didn't, you know, that were HIV-positive. But then I knew people that didn't die. And then, you know—so we—I would never have said, "Oh, he's going to die." You know what I mean? "Felix is going to die." We would never take that away from someone. So whatever Felix wanted to do as far as the publicness of his HIV-positive status was really in his hands. And Group Material followed suit.

And the other people—let's see. At that time in the group, it was Doug, me, Karen. None of us as far as I know were or are HIV-positive. And then later on Jochen Klein joined the group in '96, and he died in '97. [00:18:00] But he also—I don't think—I mean, he didn't—it happened very suddenly. He didn't—I don't think he ever actually found out. Or he didn't get tested and find out that he was positive and then think about what's happening. You know? And he was living in London with Wolfgang Tillmans. He had moved to London, and was living with Wolfgang at the time. It happened quite—I mean, it seemed quite suddenly. I don't know whether it was weeks or—it was weeks that he got ill. And I had wondered, because Jochen had showed signs of infections sometimes. But it wasn't a discussion. Unless someone would tell me or it would be something that you're told in the group, you know, I would just never assume. Or bring it up.

THEODORE KERR: Do you mean you wouldn't assume either way or—

JULIE AULT: Either way. Yeah. Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. Yeah. Of course it's—that complexity and that personal identification that Felix rightfully asserted in his life then has now—it's complicated in the present moment. There's lots of discourse around people wanting there to be more obvious statements from the gallery about his HIV status. And there's

all those dialogues happening. And—

JULIE AULT: I haven't really followed that.

THEODORE KERR: Okay, yeah, that's—

JULIE AULT: Yeah. I mean only in a hearsay way. And that's nothing I could comment on, you know. But I'm trying to think about this. I speak from different places in relation to Felix because, I mean, the majority of our conversation for this setting is on Group Material's work and stuff. But I mean, that's [00:20:00] how I met Felix. Him coming into Group Material and stuff. But I wouldn't say my primary relationship with Felix was Group Material. You know, it was the friendship and stuff. And we were close and spent a lot of time. So that's a different subject almost. You know? But in Group Material, I don't know what Karen knew or didn't know. I think probably we all knew, but we just didn't talk about it. Which is fair enough.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

JULIE AULT: [Laughs.]

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. Yeah. I'm not someone who thinks that you have to tell people all your business all the time. [Laughs.]

JULIE AULT: Yeah. Especially now. There's no privacy anymore. It's very difficult. So it's a different landscape.

THEODORE KERR: And sometimes that's all you have. Yeah.

JULIE AULT: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: I am curious if you and Felix watched television together. Because you both seem to have a love of television.

JULIE AULT: [Laughs.] Hmm. Only—let's see, watched television? I mean, talk about television, like, "Did you see" that or that.

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

JULIE AULT: But since we lived in different—I mean, I lived downtown and he lived in Chelsea. Or when he lived on Grove Street, I lived in Brooklyn. There were different, you know—so we wouldn't have been hanging out a whole evening watching TV that I can remember that much. [There were a couple notable occasions when Felix and I, and possibly Doug and/or Karen from Group Material were travelling together ensconced in a hotel watching TV. I recall well because that was the case when Tianamen Square unfolded on TV, and the fall of the Berlin Wall. -JA] But sometimes when he was sick, and I don't mean with infections, but just the flu or whatever, I would take him some soup or go over and see him, and then we might watch a movie. But it would be more likely watching a movie. Because Felix—I mean, he watched television, I think, judging from what he's said in interviews or writing, in a different way than I did. Really, you know, like—oh, what's a—surfing through and, like, just this flow. This flow. Whereas I watch television in lots of different ways, but [00:22:00] one of them would be getting addicted to really bad shows as an outlet. [Laughs.] You know, and—

THEODORE KERR: That's another interview. That sounds great. [Laughs.]

JULIE AULT: Doesn't matter how bad they—so but there were obviously a lot of shared references in, let's call it, TV culture even if it's not TV specifically.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

JULIE AULT: *Dynasty* for sure. But we didn't sit and watch *Dynasty* together.

THEODORE KERR: But you talked about it?

JULIE AULT: Well, yeah, *Dynasty* was something. And that—

THEODORE KERR: And that shows up.

JULIE AULT: *Dynasty* has filtered into a number of places in Group Material's practice. And then there was an image—I mean, *Dynasty*, you know, we talked about it. I don't remember the high years of *Dynasty*. Probably Felix and I didn't know each other when *Dynasty* was going strong. And so we talked about it in the aftereffect. But certainly we had all seen it, and we used an image of the *Dynasty* family on occasions I won't go into, but in the work or so. And then Felix also used that same image sometimes for his lectures. A couple of lectures where

—it's quite interesting because Felix would never talk about his work in a lecture situation. He just delivered hardcore statistics and hardcore information about the social landscape and the political landscape and economic stratification and racism and, you know, everything that goes into that social landscape. And so he would sometimes show an image of the *Dynasty* family, you know, the actors, and they're posing.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, they're on the staircase.

JULIE AULT: Yeah, exactly. With Blake at the top I think.

THEODORE KERR: [Laughs.]

JULIE AULT: And then he would read his text or deliver the text, which was not what people expected from an artist coming to talk [00:24:00] about their work. And alongside that information would be the *Dynasty* image. And then he would say, "Next slide, please," and it would be the same image. So it would—and he would do that like five or six times. So it wouldn't change. And, I mean, that's—yeah, that's a great use of the *Dynasty* portrait I think, promo portrait. But also it says something about the distribution of information as an artist that Felix activated. I mean, not a separation, I think, of information from art. But this was his artist talk. That's what informs the making of the work. That's the background.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, I mentioned this in an e-mail to you. But to me, Jim Hodges and Encke King and—

JULIE AULT: Carlos [Marques da Cruz -JA].

THEODORE KERR: —Carlos's film *Untitled*, that was kind of an inspiration and also like—I think of it as like a cross-world gift to Felix really captures that really well.

JULIE AULT: Yeah, I haven't seen it in a while, but I agree with you. And that film, as far as I know—I mean, maybe I shouldn't say it because I don't know for sure. But I think it came out of an invitation that Jim received to give—to visit Pace in San Antonio.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, Artpace.

JULIE AULT: Artpace, I think it's called?

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

JULIE AULT: And to present a talk or a presentation of some sort on Felix's billboards. Because he—I mean, like Group Material—you know, there were a lot of points of contact between Felix's individual work, some of it, and Group Material, between dateline forms and timelines [00:26:00] and using billboards and things. And inserting a personal—not private, but personal—narrative into a public—I don't want to say a public space, but into a public. You know? And as far as I know, Jim was invited to do this presentation, and he talked to Carlos in the studio and then they just—and then Carlos and Encke came into it, and then it was suddenly turning into a major beautiful—what an homage. Like its own work.

THEODORE KERR: Oh, yeah.

JULIE AULT: A film that also was ultimately a gift to Felix and to his work, and to all of us in terms of—as you put it so well.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. I call it a people's history of the last 30 years of the United States through the lens of AIDS. [Laughs.]

JULIE AULT: Oh, wow. [Laughs.]

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. It's profound. And I think it's also a gift to people who can't quite understand Felix's work right away. And the beautiful—I would—maybe "boundaries" is not the right word. But the beautiful kind of construction of how Felix navigated his work and—I like what you say—his personal life in public.

JULIE AULT: And even—you know, not to take issue—I don't want to take issue with the way you put it. But just in terms of Felix. If you say people that might not understand his work right away, there's so many ways of understanding it. That's something he left open. And I think that's an important dimension of the work. It's innate to his work. You know, what he left open he chose to leave open. What he didn't, it was definitely a decision. And [00:28:00] I mean, I've seen all kinds of, let's say, responses and handlings of Felix's work that I might shudder or think, "Oh, this is so sentimental," or "This is so wrong." But I'm not—I'm wrong. Because it's open. It is open.

By "open," I mean it's constantly changing, and it's a relationship that the viewer has. We don't—nobody, no

authority, no one can impose that relationship on someone else. Especially in relation to Felix's work, because he built it in that you can't. You know, not easily. Although I still have seen things I—and I'm sure I'll see more—that I shudder. [Laughs.] You know, or just feel like, "Okay, I better not"—I mean, I don't want to engage it too much.

THEODORE KERR: Uh-huh [affirmative]. One thing that comes up when looking through the Fales is that there was lots of invitations for you all to be talking about—especially it seemed to me—the *AIDS Timeline* projects. And I was wondering, like, do you have recollections of talking about it in public, and people's responses to it in kind of artist talk settings or college or university settings?

JULIE AULT: You know, that's—I think you might have—we might have reached the limit of how detailed my memory can get for things that were not emotional experiences. I know—I mean, we always got a lot of invitations. Or many years, got a lot of invitations to do presentations or talks. And I think—and mostly we wanted to do them collaboratively and to always show—we also a couple times taught together and stuff. I think there was a very—I remember only the [00:30:00] most general atmosphere that the talk that Doug, Felix, Karen, and I gave for the opening of *AIDS Timeline* at the Wadsworth Atheneum was very—it was active and well—I mean, when you say well received, not like a lot of people clapped, but it was really engaged. And it—

THEODORE KERR: Like you felt like there was a—

JULIE AULT: Yeah. And that we were all bringing different things. Which happens anyway. But it felt—that sticks in my mind as a particularly vibrant dialogue and presentation. And also the fact that it was happening the day of the opening. People are there for the opening, they're seeing the show, they're hearing the talk. It's demanding on the people doing it, but it's—because you're finishing the show, you're already exhausted, and you're going to do a public talk. But it's still—it's a great thing for those that wanted to get a fuller view into what they were looking at in the exhibition.

THEODORE KERR: And it seems like we should just naturally jump into the Whitney Biennial.

JULIE AULT: Oh, right. Yeah. [Laughs.] I have to fill in a little. Because after the Wadsworth and those two projects, we did one more *AIDS Timeline*. That was for the Whitney Biennial in 1991. Lisa Phillips, who we had worked with before, in 1985—or let's say another incarnation of Group Material had worked with in 1985 when we did *Americana*—she invited us again. And specifically, it was to have *AIDS Timeline*. And we went through the motions of, "We don't do shows again" or whatever. And then—and we really talked about it within the group before saying yes. And we decided we can't—I mean, it's there. We have to redo it, reversion it, [00:32:00] think about the space, the context, also the—you know, it's 1991 now, instead of '89 or '90. And it's New York. So we took all these layers into account in terms of the selection of material, artworks, et cetera.

But we decided to go ahead and do it because it was a platform. A really visible platform, where a lot of people would be seeing this. And it meant something to have that on the ground floor gallery when you walked into the Whitney Biennial. You know, that was a very strong—also from the museum—a strong message if you want to call it that. You know? That it was also in a sense—I mean only because of—I think the decision to put it there was because we needed a contained space, and we wanted the space that Group Material had inhabited in 1985. But it made it almost an anchor that then reflected. Or once you've seen that, you know, you carry that in the whole show. The whole Biennial or something.

THEODORE KERR: And in terms of process, as a collaborative working group—did you check in with each other after things were done? Would you process like, "What worked well? What didn't work well? What would we"—

JULIE AULT: I mean, not in a formal way. But I think that always happens unless you're not talking to each other anymore.

[They laugh.]

JULIE AULT: And we did. Yeah. You know, *AIDS Timeline*—I think it gets maybe too specific at this hour of the day to go into how did this all—it's also—it's all memory. You know? Like how did this play out for the group? Or what did we think about each incarnation? I think it's great, I mean, I think it's really [00:34:00] important that we did all of these.

And my personal favorite is Berkeley because of many things. Larry Rinder was really engaged. Andrea Miller-Keller at the Wadsworth was also really engaged. It's a different setting, a more conservative setting. A more conservative museum and town, I guess. But Berkeley being the first, it's like—I mean, for one thing, the excitement of developing something from scratch was a factor. Larry's engagement was great. And the university setting was something that was special, and I think made a lot of sense, because Group Material always had—there's an educative intention in all the work. Not didactic educative necessarily. But there was an educative dimension there.

And yeah, it was great to be showing in the—doing something in the museum at this university. And then Richard Meyer was also wonderful to work with, and that was a revelation. And then we would have to—that's a whole 'nother discussion, but we didn't even get to talk about some of the community organizations that we worked with in Berkeley, like the Rest Stop, Sharon Siskin and the Rest Stop, and Art Positive—or Positive Art rather—that Larry introduced us to and that ended up doing all these amazing *Life Masks* from people with AIDS. And that's now in the Fales collection. And that's an aftereffect of the show.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, and those masks were—so if I understand correctly, that was a project that she was doing already.

JULIE AULT: She and a collaborator were doing this.

THEODORE KERR: Was it [00:36:00] Nancer LeMoins? Does that—

JULIE AULT: I don't remember.

THEODORE KERR: Okay.

JULIE AULT: I don't, sorry.

THEODORE KERR: I can look that up, yeah.

JULIE AULT: But they were doing this project which was in the community organization in—I think they went around to two places. There was one in Oakland and maybe one in Berkeley, I can't remember. But I knew Sharon. And we met Sharon. And so I—for shorthand purposes I'll say Sharon and company. They were doing this project which was for all the different people that were coming through this grassroots organization and also that was health support, et cetera, information support. They were offering this situation to make a life mask, right? And this is a time also when a lot of people that were coming through were then dying. But they didn't call them death masks or think of them that way. It was something that would express—each individual would express what they wanted to in the mask. And it's also in a sense a gift. Like something that is left behind, right?

And so they were doing this project. And we were just so taken. Larry took us to visit the Rest Stop. And I don't remember where that was. And we were taken with the project, with the place itself, the atmosphere that was created there. It felt very warm. Not sentimental but warm, like an embrace. And we were used to, I don't know, Bellevue Hospital, you know, or something. I mean, in terms of—I mean, I'm just trying to make a contrast, like a kind of dreadful institutional setting and then this very special atmosphere that I think was created by the larger organization but also by [00:38:00] Sharon and her collaborator and what they were doing, what they were making. Anyway, I don't remember all the details.

But the masks, we thought about and we asked Sharon could we—would it be possible to show some of these masks in the *AIDS Timeline*. And I wish my voice could express the visual, but it was a really powerful aspect of the *Timeline*. I'm guessing maybe 20 masks or something, each one extremely unique and with its own properties and expression of personality and aesthetics and message sometimes, communication. But I'll mention the fact that the masks—that's kind of a great aftereffect is working on the archive, the Group Material traces that are housed in the Fales now, in Marvin Taylor's Downtown Collection.

There were two by-products of that that are related. Sabrina Locks was a—I mentioned her yesterday or the other day. But she was a student, a curatorial student, at Bard, in their program. And she became an intern working with me. And then we had a good dialogue. And she had some—you know, just a really productive relationship and it was growing. And I asked her to continue working on the archive, and she got specifically interested in *AIDS Timeline*. And over time she just wanted to turn it into a curatorial research and to look into *AIDS Timeline* through the fragments that are in the archive and to try to understand the project, the impetus, [00:40:00] the conditions, the results, the effectivity of that project, and to understand it only through the paper and visual trails, and the artifacts and artworks that are very fragmentary that were a part of the timeline that got saved. Or not returned to people.

And so I thought that was a fascinating project. And she ended up doing that as her thesis exhibition. It was called *Vital Archive: Revisiting Group Material's AIDS Timeline*. And it was her thesis exhibition to actually borrow a lot of the elements, these fragments from the—becoming the archive, and restage them along with her research. And one of the great things that she did—and then we worked on how to develop this as something that could be in the book *Show and Tell*. Because that book was happening alongside the making of the archive. In a sense as a kind of baseline guide almost, you know, to—and an invitation to dive into Group Material and the archive more. But so Sabrina ended up interviewing—I think it's maybe almost 20 people that had been—maybe it's not 20, but 15 or so people that had been—about their involvement in *AIDS Timeline* 20 years after the fact.

And they're great interviews. And then we digested that, and have sections that are in the book as an essay in a

sense. She introduces it. Sabrina has some traces from the *AIDS Timeline* material itself. And then these interviews [00:42:00] that look back to what it meant to participate, what it meant to do that, what was the situation. The range of people she interviewed were, like, artists that were in one or more of the *AIDS Timelines*. So for instance Tom Kalin, John Lindell, Mike Glier. She interviewed Larry Rinder, Richard Meyer, Andrea Miller-Keller. I don't think she interviewed Lisa Phillips, or didn't get ahold of her. I don't remember which. She interviewed—oh, I can't remember his last name. Edd [Russo, -JA], who was one of the [ . . . exhibition designers -JA] at the Wadsworth Atheneum, who had gotten really excited about the exhibition and we had a good installation period with him. She interviewed one of the—can't remember his name either right now, but someone who wrote a review, a lengthy review of *AIDS Timeline* at the time, in Berkeley or in San Francisco, an art critic.

So it was really to get all these different coordinates reflecting back on what—she interviewed Steven Evans as an artist and curator. And Steven had done a work for *AIDS Timeline* that was in each of the *AIDS Timeline* that was also, I think, a really important work, element, in the exhibition. And it was called *Selections from the Disco*. And in discussion with Steven—you know, we had seen some works that he had done, and he was a friend, and doing things in Group Material sometimes. But he developed it for *AIDS Timeline* that he would choose a disco, a dance hit, from each year of the timeline, and then this becomes another, like, narrative, you know, another text that's—

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, another timeline.

JULIE AULT: Another timeline. And it really situates you.

THEODORE KERR: It really does.

JULIE AULT: I was talking the other day a little bit about my [00:44:00] early forays into dancing and just going to clubs and dance culture and disco. And, I mean, I know all the songs. And I knew all the songs of course. A lot of people did. And it also spoke in some ways to that Sunlit Era. The abandon, the freedom, the dancing, and the exuberance of that. And when that's sort of at a—they were reproduced directly on the wall, the song titles, at the floor, where the wall meets the floor. So when that's the grounding throughout the *Timeline*, it was a really amazing artwork.

THEODORE KERR: Actually he's the reason why I asked you about disco. Your ongoing curatorial—I don't know if you would call it—your ongoing friendship and relationship with him I think is quite strong.

JULIE AULT: *Tell It to My Heart*. [Laughs.]

THEODORE KERR: *Tell It to My Heart*, exactly.

JULIE AULT: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: And also he has a gift for finding the texts that will break your heart.

JULIE AULT: Yeah, on a personal note Steven gave me a couple works years and years ago from the disco series—oh, sorry.

THEODORE KERR: It's okay.

JULIE AULT: Steven gave me a couple works years ago from the disco series. And one of them is *Tell It to My Heart*. And another one is *Macho Man*. No, wait. I'm getting it wrong. It's actually—it's a duo which is—and I chose it. I mean I didn't choose the titles but I chose this work because I loved it so much when he said, "What would you like?" And it says, "Macho Man," and then underneath, "Tell It to My Heart." And those are two different song titles. And that combination really worked for me. [Laughs.] I loved it. And then he gave me another piece that is also—these are—it's vinyl lettering that gets directly on the wall on a rectangle that's painted so it's isolated [00:46:00] from other things a bit. Or marked a bit. And the other one, which I've never installed, is one of those heartbreakers. It says, "No More Tears Tears No More Tears." And it's three different songs. [Laughs.]

Yeah, I think the vinyl is probably no good anymore, I would have to reorder it to install it, because this was probably 15 years ago or something, more. I don't know. But yeah, and then that's—I mean, it happens in my life and my practice I suppose a lot, is that there's these reverberations and echoes, whatever you want to call—and reunions, I like to think of them. So when a group of us who were researching the work, artworks, that have come into my—that are my collection, so to speak, over time, which is mostly—a lot of it is through work and friendships and intimacies.

It's definitely an interesting collection that speaks to time. Relationships and time. And a group of friends and

colleagues and closenesses. We organized this project around—the starting point being—that collection. And ended up—the people that organized it are Martin Beck, Jason Simon, Scott Cameron Weaver, Danh Vo, Heinz Peter Knes, and Nikola Dietrich, and myself. And then two other people came in to help, but ended up working a lot with us [00:48:00] in the catalogue and, like, editorial collaboration, Amy Zion and Rasmus Røhling. But the six of us that primarily organized the whole project then came—it was really difficult to think of a title. And I think it was probably Martin and Jason that were talking about it and then came to it. But it was, "Well, what about *Tell It to My Heart*?"

And I mean obviously it was right—it was the right title. And that was the title of the project, the show. But then the last version of that show—because there were three iterations of *Tell It to My Heart*—Stefan Kalmár wanted to stage that [final version -JA] at Artists Space. And there was a lot more. It wasn't with a museum. Artists Space is a different kind of entity than the museum, the—what was it called? The Kunstmuseum in Basel. I mean it's not called Kunstmuseum. I can't think of the name of it right now [Museum für Gegenwarts-kunst Basel -JA]. And in Lisbon, the place that we did the show [Culturgest -JA]. But I said something to Stefan like, "You know, I really always wanted it to be called *Macho Man, Tell It to My Heart*." Because that's complete for me, you know? It's sly, it's strange, you know, it's a contradiction in a sense or seems like it might have some contradictory undertow.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. And sexy and sad.

JULIE AULT: But it's wonderful. And Marvin Taylor actually writes about—in one of the essays that he did for *Tell It to My Heart*—the wonderful dimension of that, but in relation to AIDS. But so Stefan was like, "Well, then, perfect, we just call it *Macho Man*. We do the full title." So we got to do that. But Steven, that was one of the things. I didn't actually—that wasn't in [00:50:00] my collection, that entire disco—*Selections from the Disco*. I have the two pieces I told you about. But the *Tell It to My Heart* project also, the collection was a starting point. And we were quite free in how we branched out from that. And one of the things was realizing Steven Evans' piece that was in *AIDS Timeline* was a really important work and that it would make so much sense to ask him, "Can we redo that and distribute it?" It wasn't a timeline, *Tell It to My Heart*, but redistribute it throughout *Tell It to My Heart*. And we did, and I mean it's just really beautiful. Echo and reunion and regeneration of the piece. And the dialogue that it has, continues to have, with other work in my collection—but also it's a community of voices that it has a dialogue with.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, yeah. And selfishly, it deeply connects to the conversations that we've had over the last few days, because there's a way in which, for some people, HIV is periodized in the '80s and '90s, but of course that's not on-the-ground truth. And a show like *Macho Man*—the many experiences of the artwork and the friends related to the artwork are in the exhibition, including HIV/AIDS. And to me that's the ultimate. When HIV is woven into the fabric of everyday lives, that to me is—that's profoundly correct, if there could be something correct. And so—

JULIE AULT: Well, it's reality. You know? [Laughs.] I mean, yeah, correct is fine too.

[They laugh.]

JULIE AULT: I didn't mean to correct you but it's reality.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. But it gets dismissed all the time. HIV gets invisible-ized on purpose all the time. [00:52:00]

JULIE AULT: You know, there's—I'm going to say this on the tape, but I feel like there would be a lot more that we haven't gotten to yet. But I also feel like it might be—I'm not saying we have to end this minute, but it might be a nice way to conclude this particular conversation as an oral history or whatever by just signposting what we're not going to talk about. We don't have time. What we won't get to talk about. Because it can't go on and on. That's not fair to the readers or the other participants or anything.

[They laugh.]

THEODORE KERR: Or to you.

JULIE AULT: Well, I mean I wouldn't mind but I wouldn't be able to do it necessarily all today. But I think in a way it's quite nice, and in keeping with my general way of looking at things, to leave with something that's open-ended. You know? And to—yeah, to mention things like: 1996 was a pivotal year, I think, in many ways, but not least of which the protease inhibitor drugs were introduced. And AIDS seemed for those that could afford the drugs and for many to become a manageable disease. As opposed to a life-threatening and probably life-taking or life-ending situation. And that's a whole big discussion, and opens onto discourse. Ongoing discourse. Because 1996 is also—let me get this straight—it's 20 years ago that that happened.

And in relation to [00:54:00] Group Material's work and, I mean, just things that we've been talking about—like Felix died early 1996, Group Material dissolved. Or, I wouldn't say dissolved. That's not right. We stopped being active in the present tense except for—we stopped doing projects. We stopped meeting. We stopped being active except for eventually looking at our own history and still activating our own histories, not in group presentations but individual presentations that I did after and Doug did for a long time. But I mean, I know, like, 1996 is a pivot year on so many levels. And then, you know, there would be—I'm sure you have more topics and issues, also including the present tense of the AIDS crisis and what Sarah Schulman calls ongoing AIDS. But I just don't see how we can—[laughs] I mean, I think we can state that these are things. I don't know that we can go much further. What do you think?

THEODORE KERR: I absolutely agree. And I think naming the things that we won't get to is a good idea. One of the pleasures of speaking with you is—because I think there's a lot of thinking that you have around what is an exhibition, what is a book. And I think these are desperately important questions for how we then are navigating or not navigating histories of HIV/AIDS in the ongoing moment.

JULIE AULT: Right.

THEODORE KERR: And so, yeah, that's a topic that maybe we'll have another time in another way. But it's not a part of this now.

JULIE AULT: And I think the oral history project in itself is really—I mean, obviously it's [00:56:00] valuable and there's been other oral history projects, like—you'll have to remind me the name of it. The fantastic ongoing project that Jim and Sarah—

THEODORE KERR: Oh, the ACT UP Oral History Project.

JULIE AULT: Yeah. Is that the title?

THEODORE KERR: The ACT UP Oral History Project, yeah.

JULIE AULT: Yeah—that are ongoing. These are really important because it also raises the question of the responsibility of memory. You know? I mean, I—who said it? I think it was—oh no, I'm not going to get it right. I want to fill this in later. Because whoever wrote it or said it, it's important to state who that was. But it's a theoretician and it's either—yeah, okay, I'll fill it in later [Paul Ricoeur -JA]. But said the mind and memory are inseparable.

THEODORE KERR: Okay, so let's remember to fill that in. I'm just saying that again.

JULIE AULT: Yeah, and I'll look for the exact quote if that's not it. But, in other words, memory is always there. It's thinking. You know, it's not—I mean, you can't separate it from other mental activities of course. And this is a truism. It's I guess a physics thing, I don't know. [Laughs.] Or biology. But I often think as I'm working—because I've also done a lot of work, or continue to do work, that is situating in the present and the past simultaneously and negotiating things between or at the same, et cetera. And I often wonder, like: Is memory personal? Is it communal? Is it collective? And what's the responsibility? And in a certain way I also want to finish [laughs] with some of these things, and I know there's no finish. But that's also honest. It's a personal desire to, I think—[00:58:00] it's an idealistic, obviously impossible, thing to go to a place mentally where there isn't that memory, where you don't have the personal history. And where you don't—not just the painful aspect, but where one is more mentally liberated.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

JULIE AULT: But I mean for the time being, you got to work with the memory. [Laughs.]

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. Yeah. While questioning what is the memory and—

JULIE AULT: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: Have you read *Tangled Memories* by Marita Sturken?

JULIE AULT: No. I'll write it down. *Tangled Memories*.

THEODORE KERR: It's about—*Tangled Memories*, and it's by Marita Sturken.

JULIE AULT: Marita Sturken, okay.

THEODORE KERR: And it looks at the Vietnam War and HIV/AIDS and how they've been memorialized.

JULIE AULT: Oh, wow.

THEODORE KERR: And she has a passage I think you would care about. She talks about the ways in which culture, specifically movies, can override people's own memories.

JULIE AULT: Uh-huh [affirmative]. Oh, I think that—yeah. That's a really—that's great. I'll look at that. That sounds—

THEODORE KERR: And it was actually—David Deitcher turned me on to that book, because that's—

JULIE AULT: Oh, really?

THEODORE KERR: —how he learned about screened memories, or screen memories.

JULIE AULT: Screen memory, uh-huh [affirmative].

THEODORE KERR: Yeah.

JULIE AULT: I would have thought it came from more psychoanalytic theory.

THEODORE KERR: I think it does, but I think she borrows. She's at NYU.

JULIE AULT: But that's great. That sounds—I mean, I'll look at that. I know you have something of a theological investment.

THEODORE KERR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JULIE AULT: And just as an aside—Daniel Berrigan, who I had endless respect for, and I got to know his work through when I was coming to Sister Corita or Corita Kent's work. But he also—I mean he was extremely enlightened, period. But I think he did some writing around AIDS and he was very sophisticated. Just, you know, in himself. He didn't carry, even from that generation—he didn't carry the biases [01:00:00] of his generation with him, but even into his 90s or whatever when he—someone at the Immaculate Heart told me a story, and I don't know if it's true, but it's an amazing story. I mean, it invokes Berrigan's spirit, I think. What was it? He had been diagnosed. He lived in—it's uptown. He lived in seminary. Jesuit. And he had been diagnosed with a form of cancer. And he started treatment and the doctors started giving him—I think it was probably chemo or something. And after a couple of treatments, someone found out that he didn't have cancer and said—and it wasn't that it had disappeared, it had been a mistake—and said to him, "We've made a terrible mistake, you don't have cancer." And he said, "That's okay. Now I know what it feels like to think I have cancer and to go through chemo." And it was just this amazing anointed [laughs] person.

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

JULIE AULT: But, you know, I'm kind of interested in that. I was just thinking when you mentioned the relationship between analyzing the memorialization and historicization of the Vietnam War and AIDS, first-wave AIDS crisis, if that's what it is, I was thinking of the relation with Berrigan too.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. I love some phrases that you've used. You've used, "in the arms of the AIDS crisis."

JULIE AULT: Uh-huh [affirmative]. That's—you know, I know where that comes from. Frank Wagner.

THEODORE KERR: Ah.

JULIE AULT: He used it and I loved it. I don't know that he wrote it, but he used it in person a couple of times. And Frank was very keen on and tireless in talking about art, educating, giving tours [01:02:00] of shows, really providing guidance to viewers and readers and stuff. And he had talked more than once to me, and probably to others, about work made in the arms of the AIDS crisis. I was always struck by that, so I've adopted it.

THEODORE KERR: It's really beautiful. It's really beautiful. And then, do you say the first wave? Is that the term? The first wave of the AIDS crisis?

JULIE AULT: Yeah. Is that not correct?

THEODORE KERR: That's beautiful. No, I'm naming things that you've said that I think—

JULIE AULT: I don't know where it—but I think of it that way.

THEODORE KERR: Yeah, no, it makes perfect sense. I think about—I do the—yeah, we don't have to get into that.

JULIE AULT: Yeah.

THEODORE KERR: So thank you.

JULIE AULT: Thank you. [Laughs.]

THEODORE KERR: Yeah. Yeah. Any last words? I mean we've had a nice little wrap-down.

JULIE AULT: No, I think we're good.

THEODORE KERR: Okay. Okay. Thank you.

JULIE AULT: Thanks. [01:02:56]

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]