



Issue:

Daddy
Issues

the spinning wheel, Katrina Kipping, 2022

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Summer 2022

Contributions to this *Issue*: are from community members around the United States and from members of **What Would An HIV Doula Do?**

What Would an HIV Doula Do? is a community of people joined in response to the ongoing AIDS Crisis.

We understand a doula as someone who holds space during times of transition.

We understand HIV as a series of transitions that begins long before being tested and continues after treatment, and beyond.

We know that since no one gets HIV alone, no one should have to deal with HIV alone.

We doula ourselves, each other, institutions, and culture.

Foundational to our process is asking questions.

Learn more at hivdoula.work



Sur Rodney (Sur)

Visiting my Mother, I have a vivid memory of her standing at the top of the stairs and shouting “Watch the AIDS!”

I was at the bottom of the stairs about to open the door and leave. The way she structured her sentence had me realize how nervous she was.

Tongues Untied is a 1989 American experimental documentary film directed by Marlon T. Riggs, featuring Riggs, Essex Hemphill, Brian Freeman, and members of the Other Countries writers’ workshop. The film seeks, in its author’s words to, “...*shatter the nation’s brutalizing silence on matters of sexual and racial difference.*”

The film blends documentary footage with personal accounts and poetry in an attempt to depict the specificity of Black gay identity. The “silence” referred to throughout the film is that of Black gay men, who are unable to express themselves because of the prejudices of a white and Black heterosexual society, as well as the white gay society.

Distributed by Frameline California Newsreel. Released October 26, 1989 (American Film Institute Video Festival). Running time: 55 minutes.

In one of my curatorial adventures for the Visual AIDS 25th Anniversary exhibition in 2013, something occurred to me.

In one of my curatorial adventures for the Visual AIDS 25th Anniversary exhibition in 2013, something occurred to me. I would be looking at some artwork created by artists who were of a generation that followed the generation of artists I remembered watching more than two decades earlier. So much to be learned about our experience of living in an HIV/AIDS world in the 1980s. Some things have changed within or without our awareness that HIV/AIDS is still ever-present in all our daily lives — whether we test HIV+ or not.

Kris Nuzzi, my co-curator, suggested I look at a video created by an artist living with HIV/AIDS from Canada. What I saw stunned me. The artist who created the video was born in 1983. He was diagnosed with HIV in his late teens. But the video was made when he was a preteen, more than a decade earlier. In the video, he is a child pretending to be an adult telling of his deceased wife giving him AIDS and cursing her in her afterlife. The video is recorded by his preteen girlfriend who is interviewing him as if he were on a television talk show. The video was re-edited with titles as a 5:35 minute video in 2010, years after the original video was shot. A video still from So... when did you figure out you had AIDS? became the image for the announcement card presenting the exhibition NOT OVER: 25 Years of Visual AIDS, in 2013.

Sur Rodney (Sur), Curator's Note, 2022



Vincent Chevalier, "So... when did you figure out you had AIDS?" (video still), 2010

**Her gay uncle died in the hospital
she would later be born in.**

**I remember in the 1980s when it was ignorantly believed
that homosexual men were ALL carriers of the
HIV/AIDS virus.**

**There was a call to have ALL homosexual men tattooed
and quarantined in concentration camps to keep the
world safe from the spread of AIDS.**

November 13

Anonymous

November 13

11 months after we lost you

Last night, in my dreams, I ran to you and jumped in the arms that used to be so weak. You caught me and held me like nothing could weigh you down. I knew then and I know now that you are alright. Your strength and energy have been restored. And although it hurts to not have you here, I know that where you are now is better. I miss you Dee, and as that sad day approaches you made it your business to calm the emotions that continue to stir within me. I will forever be thankful for your friendship.

It undoubtedly saved me from a lonely childhood. THANK YOU DEE! <3



A GOOD DADDY
HAS A PLAN FOR / AND ACCEPTS
AFTERCARE.

Theodore (ted) Kerr

200 m

I Broke Two Teeth Last Year

Molly M. Pearson

Two of the three of you are dead.
One if you is somehow
(You really don't know how)
Neg and a shell of yourself.
Three parents with two kids.
Who fucked,
Who married,
Who are you?
To me, I have to explain. We were illegible
When we were whole. And now we are
Grainy sickly sweet memories I try to climb into,
Aching to lose myself in the pleasure
You shared. It's a struggle for me
To let go the way you did. Losing
Two, really all three of you,
Keeps my jaw clenched, knuckles white,
Even though I know, because you taught me,
Release saved your lives.

PrEP Talk

PrEP: Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis is an FDA-approved anti-HIV medication that keeps HIV-negative people from becoming infected by preventing HIV from crossing into healthy cells and replicating.

PEP: Post-Exposure Prophylaxis is a medication that is for an emergency situation to prevent HIV contraction after a possible exposure. The regime must begin within 72 hours of possible HIV exposure. **PrEP and PEP are for all sorts of people of all genders and sexual orientations.**

Learn more at [cdc.gov/hiv/basics/prep.html](https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/prep.html)



courtesy of the Pearson family

On Researching via Visual AIDS

Anonymous

In 2019 I conducted research for an exhibition at a well-known institution that would primarily feature artists who passed away from AIDS. As my job was mostly administrative, I took this research opportunity very seriously, spending the summer pouring through digitized archives and utilizing friends, scholars, texts, and similar exhibitions from the 80s to the present as resources. I am especially thankful for the wonderfully thorough and free Artist+ Registry on Visual Aids which served as my main resource to discover lesser celebrated makers. As a for-profit institution, our goal was to pair the lesser-known artists with big players so there was an opportunity for income. The gallery liked to maintain a level of scholarship, while also making a hell of a lot of money, with even the very cheapest works starting at \$10,000. When works cost more, your clients must be richer. After a certain threshold, clients may no longer be doctors and lawyers, but instead CEOs, heiresses and heirs, and in select cases even royalty.

I researched artists who had not been widely celebrated, who I believed in, yet would also match the taste and sensibility of the institution which had a clear bias towards minimalism and figuration. From researching, it was clear what was excluded from many major institutions in the dialogue of artists who passed of AIDS: women involved in Act Up, transgender artists, gender non-conforming artists, and People of Color. An initial list of 300 artists was narrowed down to a few dozen. Though pitched as a group exhibition, the project ultimately manifested as a series of smaller solo exhibitions after I had left the institution. One artist I brought to the institution's attention became the subject of a book published by the institution, giving a platform for his legacy and writing to live on. I knew this artist was the perfect fit because he was friends with another artist the institution worked closely with who consistently brought in a significant income with big, impressive paintings.

I made the decision to leave this institution after not being seriously considered for three internal hires. I was given no credit for my research even though many of the artists featured came from my initial suggestions. I was, however, invited to the after-party which was both considerate and uncomfortable. I felt slighted walking around a show, spotting works I had suggested and artists I had introduced. I talked to a senior staff who confused a 2013 work titled *For the Record* by Fierce Pussy for a Félix González-Torres work because the work featured a clean stack of newspapers with variations on the phrase "If he/she/they were alive today..." The curators hired by the institution for this series of exhibitions were thoughtfully considered, and every curator put on a respectful and insightful presentation of artists gone too soon. I wish I was given some credit for my research, as this institution is one of the most well-respected—the sort of place people may say they are involved in and suddenly their research, practice, existence, or contributions to the arts are taken seriously. At the after-party, I immediately ordered a scotch and met one of the curators who was very friendly. He joked, "Well, let's get another round! **Daddy** (insert institution name) is paying for us." This institution is the ultimate **Daddy**, and there are things **Daddy** likes and things that displease him. I must deceive **Daddy**. I am afraid to say **Daddy's** real name in a negative light because **Daddy** is far more powerful than I. I love and hate this Daddy—I've got some **Daddy issues**.

Before I left, I made sure to take all of my research with me as many works I loved did not make the final cut. Eleanor Kipping's publication gives me a platform to highlight one work that I wish had been shown, that tangentially relates to Eleanor's work *Daddy Issues*.

Robert Blanchon was an artist invested in the history of conceptual art and the politics of AIDS at the height of the crisis. In a 1992 work titled *Protection*, Blanchon pairs a letter disclosing his HIV diagnosis to his religious parents with his mother's lengthy response.



The medium of the work was a correspondence itself, transporting the viewer into a time and place, to two people talking, and to remember an artist gone too soon.

If anyone knows a way to help put together an exhibition of important artists who did not make the cut to be shown at the institution, who passed from AIDS (Ronald Lockett, Ray Navarro, Tessa Boffin, Kwong Chi, Chloe Dzubilo, and many more) please contact me via Eleanor at eleanor@eleanorkipping.com. She will put us in touch.



Just Call Me Daddy

Alexandra Juhasz

I had a boyfriend in California who wanted me to call him **Daddy**. I learned to try this on, even though it wasn't really my thing. Inside our back and forth, it wormed and warmed into new resonances, because it excited him. That said, in a similar scenario I'd never want to be called Mommy. Gross.

What did our use of "**daddy**" have to do with the AIDS crisis, race, gender, class, or sexuality? What does it have to do with either of our fathers?

When uttering the word I never once registered ghosts or even whiffs of the two straight men who begot us: one, a Waspy, distant, alcoholic businessman, and the other, a Hungarian Holocaust survivor, bon-vivant, and professor. While these two men may have loomed large in our psyches they were never summoned to the bedroom. Rather, the word created a creative canopy for the two of us: white, cis-gendered, middle-aged, variously educated, upper-middle-class, straight (in this context, and regarding this, adaptable), HIV-negative though sexually active (this too, of course, volatile).

Me saying **Daddy** while he wanted and waited for it was an interactive play with power and vulnerability, touching both the superficial and unplumbed depths in what might otherwise appear to be a normative interaction.

But there were scare quotes everywhere. In my reading, it was he, who as **Daddy** felt most vulnerable while I scored power when having the wherewithal to say it, whether I meant it or not.

The race, gender, sexuality, or HIV status of any particular partner is not exactly what makes sex straight, safe, or satisfying, although these features are part of the picture. Rather, our sexual selves are fashioned by our discrete and changing desires in conversation with another and our unique lived proximities to and/or interest in delight and danger, illness and addiction, shame and hope, self-love and self-hate.

All of this is shaped and constrained by our inherited identities, the

repressive systems that surround us, and the ways we try with one another to stretch, resist, refine, and renounce.

I say no to so many awful straight white men all the time, yet I said yes to **Daddy**.

AIDS, COVID, menopause; the ways we hold, shed, and honor gendered and racialized roles under a specter of fear and joy; in one moment, and through one word, these can become the laser focus that signifies and offers a new interpretation between two people. He could be **Daddy**—and less and so much more—as long as I spoke it into being, and so long as we pretended it was true.

Like this work?

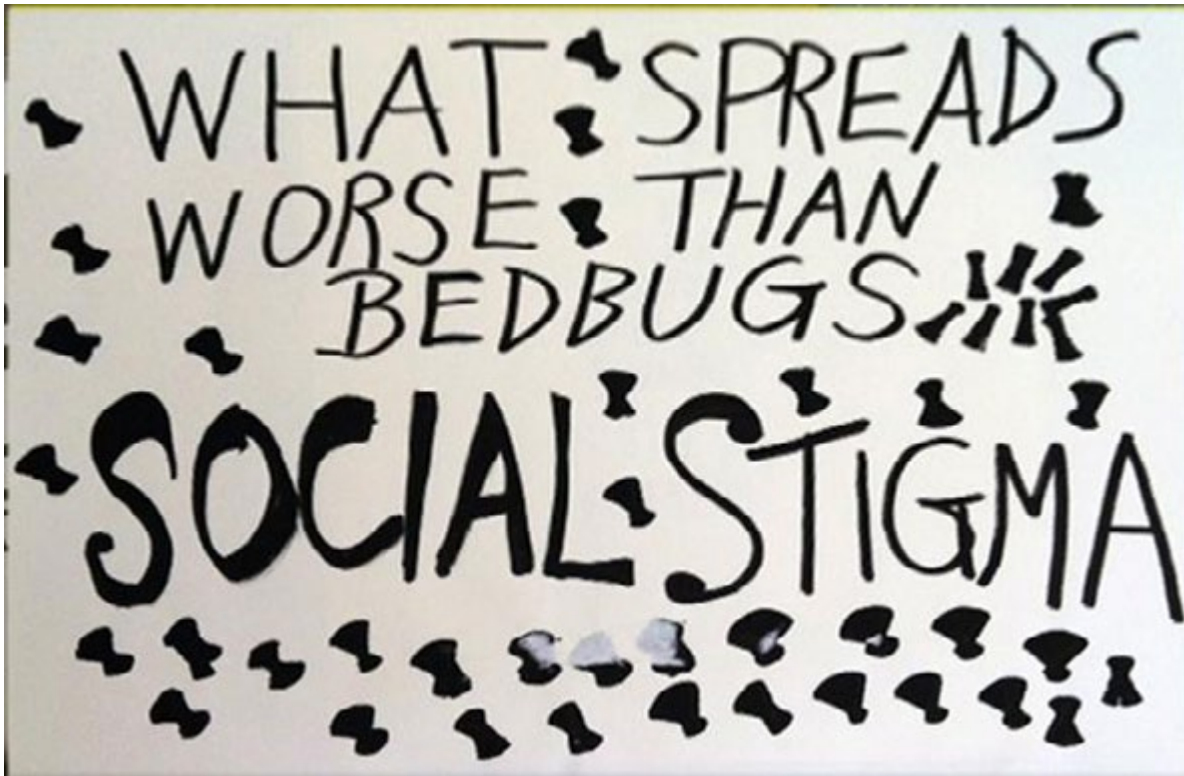
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Chloe Dzubilo, *Untitled (Social Stigma)*, ca. 2008, ink on paper, 18" x 24"