

- 00:00:01:00 **LAUREN CORNELL:** Hi. I'm Lauren Cornell. I'm the director of the graduate program, and chief curator here at CCS Bard. Thank you so much for being here. It's my pleasure to introduce Every Ocean Hughes, an artist and writer who's been based in Stockholm since 2014, but is in the Northeast of the US now because she is currently a Radcliffe Fellow at Harvard. So in the past decade, Every's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Kunsthalle Lissabon; Secession, in Vienna; Participant Inc.; Art in General; and the Berkeley Art Museum. She's received commissions for new performance and installation from Tate Modern, The Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, Portland Institute of Contemporary Art, and The Kitchen. And her work has been featured in multiple biennials, including those—this is not the entire list—in Gwangju; Sydney; The Whitney, in New York City; Manifesta, in Spain; and she and I worked together at the New Museum Triennial in 2009.
- 00:01:03:25 So in the aughts, before moving to Stockholm, Every lived in New York City. Reflecting on that time in a conversation with the curator Xabier Arakistan, Every wrote about how in her early years, she had had one foot in a theoretically- and politically-engaged practice via the Whitney Independent Study Program, and another foot in the queer pop punk scene. In the same conversation, Every said that after the ISP, she took a long trip alone and then came back to New York and co-founded *LTTR* with artists K8 Hardy and Ginger Brooks Takahashi, implying that she brought these two fields together in this project. So CCS Bard has all five copies of the journal *LTTR* in our archive, thanks to our director of library and archives, Ann Butler; and also all copies, alongside documentation of the printing and related events, is also online on the *LTTR* website.
- 00:02:03:05 The titles of the five *LTTR* issues, printed from 2002 to 2006, veer from manifesto to philosophical directive. *LTTR 1* was *Lesbians to the Rescue*. *LTTR 2* was *Listen Translate Translate Record*. Issue number three, they gave up on the acronym and the title was *Practice More Failure*. Number four was *Do You Wish to Direct Me?*, and Number five was *Positively Nasty*. *LTTR* came to understood as an argument, an argument about a generationally-inflected take on feminism in the US at the time, one that prioritized friendship, sex, and pleasure in art, and also centered nonbinary, queer, trans identities in coalition that was distinct from feminist art coalitions in the past. I ran that definition of *LTTR*'s argument past Every and she said, "Do you use the word intersectional here?" And I said, "Yes, we do." So she'll expand on it differently.
- 00:03:07:21 In the same interview I mentioned above, Every says that she grew up inside of *LTTR*, and that her understanding of what art can be and why she was allowed to be an artist comes from her experience in that project and with that community. That's a quote that I like because I think we all have that experience with something. But I raise this prehistory with *LTTR* after the long list of Every's solo artist accolades because the collaborative nature of her practice continues to be so important and foundational to what she does, even if it's an object. And also because as curators—this talk is part of CCS Bard's Speaker Series—we have so much to learn from that aspect of her practice. Of course, as curators, collaboration—so building communities, networks, audiences, coalitions around ideas and art—is essential to what we do. We couldn't do what we do without that. But what's so remarkable about Every's community building is that it is often done around imagining the impossible or the unthinkable or unspeakable, of trying to set in motion radical alternatives to our present and future. *LTTR* helped bring a generation into focus, and other projects of hers have also helped give name or language to collective forms

and tactics in art.

00:04:34:22 Another defining project of Every's was a travelling exhibition called *Ecstatic Resistance*, which was staged in 2012, and again pushed pleasure to the center of artistic strategies. Every described *Ecstatic Resistance* as a project, practice, partial philosophy, and set of strategies. She goes on, "It develops the positionality of the impossible alongside a call to rearticulate the imaginary. *Ecstatic Resistance* is about the limits of representation and legibility, the limits of the intelligible, and strategies that undermine hegemonic oppositions. It wants to talk about pleasure in the domain of resistance, sexualizing modern structures in order to centralize instability and plasticity, life, living, and the self."

**EVERY OCEAN HUGHES:** It's ambitious.

00:05:25:08 **LAUREN CORNELL:** "It's about waiting and the temporality of change." It is ambitious. "*Ecstatic Resistance* wants to think about all that is unthinkable and unspeakable in the Eurocentric, phallogocentric world order." That's a big one. So, but out of that big statement, I want to pull out this notion of the temporality of change, because that, as I understand, has become a focus in Every's work in the last decade, in projects that encompass poetry, which has been something consistent in her practice [for] many years, performance, and objects, particularly via the concept of liveness, which is going to expand upon. I'll also add that this concept of liveness is also at the core of the practice of Ian White, the late British artist and curator whose papers were accepted as part of the CCS Bard Archive last year. Hannah Mandel, our archivist, just finished the finding aid for them. And I mention it because Ian was a great collaborator of Every's. Also of mine. And his archive here creates a link between her work and us, because you can study her performances with him there.

00:06:35:12 So I'll end on a note about liveness and one last quote from Every. In a site-specific performance titled *Uncounted*, she wrote, "I believe in an alchemy of time, that a certain combination of words, a length of inaction, a discomposed room, or with some such cypher, I believe we can make time." So thank you for making time.

**EVERY OCEAN HUGHES:** Thank you.

**[APPLAUSE]**

00:07:07:14 **EVERY OCEAN HUGHES:** Hi, everybody. It's a very special experience to receive a formal introduction from a good friend. So it's fun. Also, I just think it's fun to say that Lauren Cornell is in Issue 1 of *LTTR*, and that's the other way we know each other since—that was 2001, so quite a long time ago. I want to say I've only been here for a few hours, but it feels good. It's really nice. I was, you know, as Lauren mentioned, living in Stockholm for several years. And as I kind of inched my way back to being in the US, it feels really good to show up to places and have friends and feel connected. So thank you. Thanks for having me. Also, I want to say this presentation is going to be way too long, and sometimes I'm going to feel my way through it. I'm going to bring up certain projects and maybe power through them a little too quickly; but that's just an opportunity for it to come up in questions, if it's interesting for you.

00:08:23:27 **[CLIP PLAYS]**

00:08:59:14 I like to start in song, and also end where we're going to begin. This is part of my most recent work, which is called *Help the Dead*, which premiered in Bergen and Berlin earlier this— or I guess last summer. And it's also part of the larger research project that I've been doing at

Radcliffe. *Help the Dead* was the first in the series, and I'm currently working on two more projects related to this area of research. So I began the research project about three years ago. I had originally called it *Queer Death*. And then kind of over time, I was starting to feel that each of these words was like a monolith that needed to be pushed over. So I did that. I have pushed it over. *Help the Dead* kind of sprang up in that space. And so I'm working, developing the vocabulary that is going to further the project.

00:09:59:24 I also— I don't consider this a formal artwork, but I consider it a part of the project, which is that I changed my name around the same time. So when you see the name Emily Roysdon in that project, that's what I used to be called. So yeah, that was kind of the same temporality. The project is a lot about asking questions about self-determination, mutual aid, the fantasy of continuity, finitude, accountability, and end-of-life aesthetics. And although this is the current work and I'm kind of starting in the end, it's because I want to think that these things are also present in my earliest projects. So we're going to look through this lens backwards. These are my two friends who are the stars of *Help the Dead*. Colin Self is with their back to you; and that's Geo Wyeth.

00:10:59:19 But before I'm like knee-deep in death practices—but don't worry, we will get there—I'm going to talk about some old projects first. You can be excited for that; it's coming. This is my very earliest project. It's the David Wojnarowicz project. And I did it when I was at the Whitney Museum. I had studied international politics, critical race theory, and the history of social movements, as an undergrad. I went to a hippie college called Hampshire College. I loved it there. And it was the kind of environment where I could change my mind at the last minute, and I did. So my mentor—I'm not sure if I can claim that formally, that relationship. But someone I love, we can say, and whom I was learning from—he died. And he had been— His name was Eqbal Ahmad, and he had been great friends with, like, Frantz Fanon and Edward Said and Noam Chomsky, and he was teaching, like, international politics. And I met him in the pool at Hampshire, and I was like, "This person is special." I did not know what was going on, but I knew something was going on. And so I just, like, chatted him up all the time and we became friends. I studied with him formally for just one year before he died. But it was that rupture, it was his death, that kind of sent me into another space, which is when I began to make art projects.

00:12:30:19 So I made a project. To finish Hampshire, you just had to convince a team of teachers that, you know, it was a viable decision, and I moved on. And then I went to the Whitney program right after that. And this was the first work that I made there. So again, thinking through those kind of early phrases that I just presented about *Help the Dead*, like, they're going to resonate here already, from my earliest work. And some of you might recognize the shape of this. The project is a— I appropriated the form from David Wojnarowicz. He made a mask of Rimbaud, the French poet's, face; I made a mask of David's face and reconceptualized the project. So David's was about his identification with Rimbaud; mine about my identification with David. And again, it was really this thing about kind of inhabiting my inheritance. So moving to New York, as a, like, a young queer artist and thinking about the generation that had died just before I together there. And also trying to figure out if I was going to live as an artist, really. David was the first person who made a space in which I felt like I could also be an artist. And it was a lot of his rage, actually. Maybe some of you saw, we had this big show, well, at the Whitney last year. So, but this was really one of the first things that really turned me on and made a space for me. And the other thing was, like, I really love, like, early dance photos. So like, the still photography from the Judson era. Those were kind of my two feet at that time, and that's what kind of propelled me into making art projects.

00:14:20:04 So this is one of the— This, I'm only going to show two images here from this project, but that's

- 00:15:28:23 twelve silver gelatin eleven-by-fourteen-inch prints. The strategy, you can see in these two images is, so if David is photographing down at Coney Island at a cruising spot, I evoke, you know, to pier and the water. But this is a cropped advertisement masking development in the East Village. So it's like kind of his images with a difference. And here in David's image, if it's, you know, maybe heroin, that's testosterone. So there's, like, a likeness and a difference in that strategy.
- 00:15:09:24 This is *LTTR* Lauren spoke so kindly about. And yes, it's how I grew up. I mean, it was like the biggest pleasure. I still love it. It's inside of me in very important ways, and it made space for a lot of us. This is Issue 1. Oh, yeah, there's another of the David Wojnarowicz images. And there you can see a same and difference thing, too. That's *Listen Translate Translate Record*, which is the shape of a record, an LP sleeve. And that's a poster that unfolds. It also had a— With *LTTR*, there was always an edition of multiples, like mostly handmade. And some of the collating parties, like when we sat around making up the journal together, were some of my favorite times. So one, two. Three over there is *Practice More Failure, Do You Wish to Direct Me?*, and *Positively Nasty*. So we started it with K8 Hardy, Ginger Brooks Takahashi, and myself; and then Lanka Tattersal and Ulrike Müller joined for issues four and five. The few important things to say about the project are that it was based on consensus decision making. And whatever money we together, we shared, you know, equally with everybody who was participating. This was one of the collating parties.
- 00:16:43:15 This is one of our events. So this is, like, typical *LTTR*. We were invited by Art in General. You know, the offer was \$200 to use their windowfront space for two weeks. And we said, "We want to use all three floors for a month." And they were like, "Okay." But they still gave us 200 bucks. You know, so I say that because it's like, what's the offer and what's the response? You know, you have to negotiate and ask for more. But so this is in their main space. And we have Eileen Myles, Jack Halberstam, Gregg Bordowitz in these images. And pardon me because these are legible images. I think I was shooting these and like, so it's a little bit harder to show you the dance parts, you know, because they're like really low light. But we tried to do these events were things like a speaker is right after a music performance, and follows like a dance event; that all these kinds of different formats rubbed up against each other and shared space. So this was the explosion for *Practice More Failure*. I guess— it says down there it's 2004. That's just a bit of the energy. This is a bit more of the energy.
- 00:17:59:01 Yeah. That's just like— That was the vibe. That's why that's in there. How's that feel, Lauren? This is another kind of the events that we would do. So that's a good joke, isn't it? So this was at Printed Matter. And we made these, like, little bookmarks, which came with Issue 4. And so people would go around the bookstore and tag it. You know, you would put, like, the author and title; and then somebody could browse the bookstore by seeing where somebody else had already been. And yeah. And we also did a block party there. We shut down. It was when it was on, like, 21st Street. We together a permit to shut the block down and do an all-day event, which was also very fun. And also, usually when I talk about *LTTR*, it's like, so absolutely crucial how many people participated in this project. In fact, usually when I give an artist presentation, I talk about other people as much as I talk about myself. I'm trying to negotiate that now—like actually right now in this talk—because I also want to talk about the newest work that I'm doing and that'll take a little time.
- 00:19:12:13 But *LTTR*, it had this kind of editorial group of which I was a part. But it was also really a very wide, broad-based community. And people who showed up really felt like they were part of the thing. It was an open call. So we would write an open call, send it out, and whatever came in. And that was just such a huge pleasure. It was also the first place I ever wrote. So I wasn't a

person who was writing privately before I was writing publicly. I kind of found the impulse when I knew what my audience was, when I was writing for an audience, when I was writing for other people that I wanted to imagine a relationship with and I wanted to ask questions to. So this was my first. "Democracy, Invisibility, and the Dramatic Arts." You can see when was Lauren was quoting my *Ecstatic Resistance*, I was very ambitious and young. So this was the first thing I ever really wrote. It was in *LTTR*. And then this was actually from the last issue, and it's this Eqbal Ahmad. This is the person I mentioned earlier. I wanted to kind of bridge my early education and this idea of, like, resistance and rebellion that Eqbal was speaking of. He wrote this in the context of the Algerian Revolution. Very different. But I was really interested in his knowledge and what it would mean to resonate in my community and in our times. So I wrote a forward to this and brought it into the context of this community.

00:21:01:19 Which— Yep. So I mentioned the writing projects, which brings us to *Ecstatic Resistance*. When we were doing *LTTR*, we were the young feminists. You know what I'm saying? It's like, you know, what it means to be called that, to call yourself that, changes every few years. *LTTR* was from 2001 to 2007 or something like that. '6. 2002, '6, something like that. So it was a while ago, it was a long time ago, and it was some early years. And we were young and energetic and willing to call ourselves all of these things. So we were playing with identity markers. We were very attuned to honoring our elders, so the people who'd come before us in the feminist art movement and the AIDS activist movements. And so in that way, they recognized us and we recognized them. So like, people would call us up. They're like, "You want you be on this panel? You want to come over for dinner." And we're like, "Ye-es." And so when I was doing a lot of that talking and thinking about my community in relationship to their, I was using this word, "ecstatic resistance." And so I was invited by this very unusual, very interesting place called Grand Arts, in Kansas City, Missouri. Interesting and unusual because it's in Kansas City and they had so much money. Which never happens, you know? You never get that call. I mean, you rarely get that call. And I got that call, and they were like, "What are you thinking about? What do you want to do?" And I wanted to take this seriously. I was like, "What? I'm using this word, but what do I mean when I say it?" So I took their offer and actually kind of ended up redistributing that wealth, in that I made this diagram. I didn't do it really strategically, in that I was like, "I'm going to—" I did it to understand the idea. You know?

00:23:20:12 So this is a little gold disc. It's a— Ooh, hi. It's a screen print. So it's like a six-color screen print with chine-collé. So these are paper inlays. Movement, MVMT. There's like a gold dot at the middle. And that is inside of these two pyramids, struggle and improvisation, that mirror each other. Inside the field of the impossible, the imaginary, which cut through. Plasticity exceeds the circle. Strategy grows. And then these RGB dots, like an old projector, an old TV. To me, that was like the idea of intelligibility and visibility. How do you, like, make something? So, telling communicability and the unspeakable. And that is all in the field of pleasure. The pleasure [inaudible]. So I made this in order to kind of break down what I thought I was talking about when I talked about ecstatic resistance, and I wrote an essay, which Lauren quoted from. And then I curated two shows, one in Kansas City and one at X Initiative, which was a space in New York. I think it was just there for year. In the old Dia building on like— I don't know, wherever that was, in the twenties. And huge. It's basically huge, huge, huge. So this is the work of Juan Davila, a really incredible Chilean artist who was, I guess, in exile, living in Australia. This work, some of this work, this paintings—these are prints—he hadn't shown in the US since the eighties. And so his gallery actually paid to ship these over. And the reason he hadn't show was because he made a portrait of Pinochet that was very controversial, we'll say. And there's a print of that in this lower side. So this is like a six-foot print. It's very large. So that's Juan Davila. There's A.L. Steiner, Yael Bartana, Sharon Hayes, Ulrike Müller. Jeanine Oleson is in this show. The Canadian filmmaker who made *Solidarity*. I love that movie so much and I don't—

**MAN:** Joyce Wieland?

00:25:45:26 **EVERY OCEAN HUGHES:** Yes. Who said that? I love Joyce Wieland. Yes. Yeah. So this was the version that was at X Initiative. Ian White was in this. In the performance program, Wu Tseng, Zackary Drucker. Lots of great friends and great artists were in this project. Yeah. So that's something we can talk about, is the essay. So I like to make posters. I like to think about distribution. That's obviously inherent in the *LTTR* project, in that it's a periodical. But ever since then, I have continued like the poster-making project. And so with most of my exhibitions, there's something that you take home and you live with, if you're interested. This is in English/Spanish, because it was in *Manifesta* in Murcia, Spain. And I commissioned— Well, all those artists that I spoke before, I commissioned their work, Grand Arts commissioned work for *Ecstatic Resistance*. But this is the writing of Catherine Lord, "Old is the New Queer." And then Dean Spade and Craig Willsie. Dean is a lawyer and an activist and founder of the Sylvia Rivera Law Project, and Craig, who is a radical something. He's amazing. He just quit his tenured job, which is why I leave an open space there for him to figure out what he wants to be now. You know, so again, it's like distributing my text, but also building context for it. And when people want to— This text has actually been translated a fair amount. It's really fun. To German, Maori, Czech, other— What else? Yeah, Spanish. Yeah. So people can— I used to kind of micromanage the posters because I love making posters and, like, graphic design. But in the end, I just kind of would let people make their own design, what makes sense for their space and their context. But I distribute it as this poster.

00:28:10:21 This is related to the first image when you walked in. I guess some of you are going to recognize that. It is the piers, the west side of Manhattan. It is a postindustrial zone and a very important cull hotspot. So it's fun to, maybe even for those of you who are familiar with this place, to give a little bit of, like, a history. Which is that, like, how did this come to be? So you know, there are these old industrial piers that you can still see out there and that you can imagine were in the places like this. And that's, of course, related to the river and Manhattan's old functions and histories. But what happened, how it became a countercultural space is that they built an elevated highway there, which is now the West Side Highway. But they tried to build an elevated highway and as soon as they did, it broke. So parts of it fell down. Like the off ramps were too narrow and cars got too big too quick, so it just became dysfunctional. And that kind of— It created a barrier to the space. So I was interested in this, amongst everything there, but one of the things was this West Street, which is what it used to be called and which parts of it still are called when it's not the West Side Highway but it's West Street. And this idea of crossing West Street, what's that choice? So you had to make a choice. You had to want to go there or need to go there to cross under this potentially dangerous, like, obstruction, in order to get to the piers. And some people will know that this was a hotspot of gay life and marginal lives, outsider lives. All kinds of things happened there. And I was interested in that crossing.

00:30:16:18 And I was also interested in it as a space of an unmarked memorial. If you have been over there, you probably haven't even noticed this really shitty AIDS memorial. So that's my official opinion. It says something like, your friends went out to sail and they didn't come back or— You know? It's like, whoa. And it's invisible. So I was attracted to this in a very personal way because I grew up in a landscape on the water and it had these pilings. And so this, like when I first got to Manhattan, I was always walking over there to kind of smell that brackish water. And then I was like, "Oh, something's going on over here," you know? And like, you know, but when I was going there—so that's the early 2000s—like, it was still really populated with— Young queer kids from all of the boroughs would congregate there. And some of that still happens, but it's been really wildly gentrified, and I'm sure all of you know that. All of these things, like my kind of— All of

those things came together in this space.

00:31:28:12 And I was also thinking— Yeah. I was thinking about all that. And so the other thing I'll say is that the reason that they leave them there is not because they're beautiful, which they are, but it's because if they raze them, you know, there's like a hundred years of pollution in the sediment. And also, there are fisheries between. Like, lots of fish come and lay their eggs in there. So I also thought that was an interesting kind of resonance. Like, how does this image appear? How do these materials remain? You know, it's like New York, of course, they would just kind of like do what they're doing now, which is, like, cover them or remove them somehow. But also, I don't have to explain this image to you, but its relationship to, like, decay in the image of the city. So this is a book that I made in relationship to those photographs. West Street. See, that's me. And that's Alvin Baltrop. So these are Alvin's images. And he was shooting down at the piers, I think for fifteen years, at least. And in his lifetime, nobody would publish the images. Alvin was, like, I think he was in his mid-forties probably when he started shooting there. He died young, so I think in his sixties. African American man. And the reason I found out about the archive is that a friend of his submitted to the last issue of *LTR*. And I had already been interested in the piers for all these years and I was like, "Whoa, what is this?" And so I became friendly with that person and her role of, like, these stories. Which is that Alvin, during his life, nobody would publish them; that they said, "You didn't— these are so good you didn't take these." Things like that. And that he'd gone to, like, every kind of like, you know, art book publisher, photography publisher, and nobody would publish them. So I was invited by the Printed Matter book fair to make a publication. And so I thought, I'll publish them. So it's an accordion-fold book. You know? Like it can stand up, accordion fold. His images are on and a half sides, and then mine are on the last quarter. And I wrote a text that bridges. So when his end and mine start, there's a text that arises. Yeah. You know, I love the work. It's since been seen a lot. I think Douglas Crimp, around the same time or just after this, published in *Artforum* about Alvin. And so his work has definitely been seeing the light of day in the last ten years. But I was happy to make this connection between our projects.

00:34:17:19 This, I just thought was fun. Oh, yeah, it's not— Anyway, I took a boat out. This was right after— Yeah, it was right after the Republican convention was in Manhattan. And so it was like it was illegal to take a boat like this close to the waterfront and in between the piers. But I found this kind of guy with a Maine—he's from Maine and he had an independent spirit. Because I was calling everybody. You know, like, "No, I'm not taking you out there." And this guy had this little boat and he was like, "Yeah, alright. It's weird. Let's do it." It was raining. Which really works for me. You know, I really like— In that larger image when you come in, I love the way the horizon disappears and things like that. But— Oh, here it is. That part of the image. The funny thing about this is that I did it at a very busy time in my life, and I never really finished it. So I've been returning to it. And also, as the way that it resonates with my *Help the Dead* project. So I think I made like four or five prints. This is a silver gelatin print. But I've been returning to it and I'm trying to finish it as a series. So it's in my life again and it's fun to return to.

00:35:41:29 How's everybody doing? Sometimes when I'm up here like this, I'm like, why am I talking so much? And then I'm like, that's because I'm supposed to be talking. But it's like your whole life, you know? This is MPA. Very good friends and artists. And this was coming out of the piers project, where I was, like, spending a lot of time down there and thinking about what that place is and the idea of a city. What does that space provide for that's not provided for within the usual limits of the city? This is Stockholm. [inaudible]. I'm going to talk over this. So this is— You see that wiggle? You can see that shadow there. This square is one level below street level. To me, as an American, I'm like, "That's a panopticon situation." You know, you're one level below street level. There's not that many ways in and out. And I say that because this is the site of all

political protests in Stockholm. They either start or end there or the whole thing happens there. This is where people demonstrate. So I was fascinated. I was like, "Whoa." I'm not sure here, we would protest in the place you told us to, that was contained. You know, and— Yeah. So it's very interesting. It also was built around the same time that the social democratic state was consolidating itself. Oh, you want me to talk into this thing.

00:37:34:10 So it's this kind of pattern—I'm telling you all these things—this white and gray/black patterning. When you're on the subway, sometimes just a few, a very small section of that pattern will indicate Stockholm city, if you know what I mean. So that square represents the idea of the city. It's the site of political protest. All of these things were coming together for me. And I was coming out of the piers project. I was thinking about, like, use and regulation in a city. So I was fascinated that this place was used the way it was designed for. You know? I'm most often interested in, like, this kind of when people repurpose or improvise and things like that. But they use it in this direct relationship. And then this idea of the abstraction of the place, the design of it and things like that. So what I did was I invited MPA over. And I wanted to focus on, like, what is the vernacular of the space? Which is all of these people kind of like walking across it. It's the central train station; it's in the middle of the city; it really is in the heart of the city, as I'm trying to articulate. But all these people, they're just constantly walking across it. So I took that most vernacular movement and focused on it and made it a struggle.

00:39:11:19 So this is MPA trying to walk on her side. So I'm just standing above—that one level above there, you see—one level above, shooting straight down. And I didn't let her practice. I wanted her to be thinking about how to do it while she was doing it. There are very specific things like keep your feet flexed. You don't want your butt to go out too far. And you know, so it was this idea of turning this vernacular thing into this image of struggle, and having it in the context of the city. So it's two channels. It's installed like this, on these two low boards side by side. And of course, that echoes the shape of the square itself. And then this is from Art in General.

00:40:03:12 And then here's the poster that went with that. *Sense and Sense*. Consensus. You know, thinking again about the political context of— What do they call it over there? Normativity. And you know, this kind of thing, a square. So thinking about, like, this language of abstraction, and of course, the idea of a public square. I was bringing those things together. And then these— I brought in a few references of others artists. So that's Jimmy DeSana—I love that work—Agnes Martin, Howardena Pindell. This is just funny to me that I put captions on there that say, like, you know—They credit the artist and it says "courtesy of," but of course, I did not ask anybody for permission. But I just thought that just, like, would maybe help. Oops. Yeah. So that's *Sense and Sense*.

00:41:05:16 All of this work was, like, all so close in time. This is at The Kitchen. *A Gay Bar Called Everywhere (With Costumes and No Practice)*. You can see this no practice thing is something I like. So these were all people who were in that performance. The idea is that all of Susan Sontag's whole life happened in a gay bar. So everything that she wrote about and the things she learned, her sense of, like, ethics and politics and performance, that she learned that from a gay bar. And so I gave that prompt to all of these people and said, "What would you perform for Susan?" And the idea was thinking about performativity, thinking about our community and the institution of The Kitchen, which is the one that had commissioned me, thinking about feminist intellectuals. And Sontag lived right near there, you know. So it was like a very kind of local project. So I took this prompt and I built this set. This one. These are kind low, lower, and lowest. And you could lift it up and it became a screen for projection. And this is the bathroom. Because you know, a bathroom's important at a gay bar. And yeah. And so all of these people made their kind of different contributions and performances for what was happening.



- 00:42:38:16 An important thing to say is that nobody else knew what anybody else was doing. You know? Like, so I wanted them to be kind of watching each other while we were onstage. And I had the order of things in my underpants, and I would be like— We were all walking around— And everybody was onstage the whole time. So it would be like, I would get it out and I'd be like, "You're next." And like, when these two were on, they wanted us to do certain things when they did certain things. So I'd be like "When they go over there, we're supposed to drop." You know, but we were all kind of like picking up on each other's cues like, live. Oh, that was Aretha Aioki, Dean Daderko. There's MPA again. Will Rawls and Barbara Hammer. This one was fun. We did it two nights in a row. I kind of thought about doing a ten year anniversary. Yeah.
- 00:43:44:29 So this is a few years after that, I guess. This is in Portland, Oregon, at PICA, their time-based art festival. Which, if you're interested, is one of my favorite things that happens in the States. It's an excellent festival. I was lucky to be a part of it two years in a row. They gave me a commission. So the first year, I made this, and was doing a series of conversations that were kind of like a research and development. And then the next year, I had an exhibition. So this is the beginning of the *Uncounted* project, which I worked on four to five years. It's a text. And this shape you see here kind of became the recurring pattern. Whoa. Became the recurring shape of the project. This is called *Reading the Shade of a Pink Triangle*. So a pink triangle, many of you are going to know, it's used in the Holocaust to identify homosexuals. It was adopted and repurposed by the AIDS activist movement and has long symbolized gay power. So I'm using this kind of pink triangle, maybe thinking about the idea of queer ties, and thinking about to read someone and throwing shade, you know, in the kind of vernacular lingo. So Reading the Shade of a Pink Triangle. And this was outside the performance venue. So it was like to get to the performances on time, use this thing.
- 00:45:27:29 So I took that shape, which is, again, an upside-down triangle, with the waves on top, really thinking about kind of surface and depth, and also the waves of like, the waves of history, of social movements. You know, there are waves of things. So I put all of those ideas and kind of made this short[?] little shape that I traveled along in the project. It's ceramic, in that I wanted each one to be distinct, rather than, say, doing like enamel-coated steel or something, where they'd be identical. Each one is special; but they also repeat themselves. So this can be up to fifty meters long. It can cover that wall. And it creates another horizon. And the clocks actually work. I had a friend, like, try and theorize why it was that time, and then I was like, "Uh, that's what time it is." You know? Like— But they really defeat themselves in repetition, you know? And that was part of my interest. And so I also, in the *Uncounted* project, wrote a text that I'll read you a part of soon, and used it as a script for performances and exhibitions over several years. So this is one of the performances at the Tate. That's Ain Bailey a British DJ. And she writes about music culture. So whenever I go to a different place, I think like, how can this have a different resonance through that person's practice? This is in Berlin at Kunst [inaudible]. Yeah. So I did these— I think there are nine or ten of these performances. And the text has twenty-three pieces. And so the way that the project would work is I would give it somebody and say, "You can choose one and then make a performance in relationship to whichever—" How long have I been here?

**LAUREN CORNELL:** We're at the hour mark now.

- 00:47:47:10 **EVERY OCEAN HUGHES:** Oh, okay. Gee. Well, I was going to read that, but maybe I will just e-mail it to you. This is, again, how it distributes as a poster. With the *Uncounted* project, I made clocks and calendars. These were the calendars. Abstractions. I'm not going to talk about any of this—sorry—because I want to get to something else. These are photograms made in the darkroom. This is the exhibition at the Secession. The costumes. This is a publication. All these

great people. Same call-and-response structure. That's my beloved grandmother.

00:48:40:20 This gets us to where I wanted to be. So with the Queer Death kind of *Help the Dead* project, also one of the things I did was interview Barbara Hammer while she was dying, and made a website for this project. I worked with this really great designer named Bryce Wilner, who created this structure for— When the letters overlap, you see you get a complete letter. Barbara's blue and I'm black. And so they layer on top of each other and you see this accretion of time. So when it's taken her a long time to write back, you see that. And also, her language was— She was losing language as she was dying, and there's a way that we tried to incorporate that, also, in the visuality of the project.

00:49:34:22 This is Geo and Colin. And if I could maybe just take a few more minutes of your time, I will ask you all to come up. You want to bring a chair? So I wanted to talk about the new project a little bit. And as I was talking to A.L. about, I am a little bit allergic to video documentation. And so what I decided to do was to bring the text into the room. And these two are going to read it for you.

00:50:38:29 **PARTICIPANT 1:** When I said, "Help the dead," I meant you.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** I meant you and me.

**PARTICIPANT 1:** I meant you.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** When I said, "Help the dead," I meant you.

**PARTICIPANT 1:** I meant you and me.

00:40:03:12

**PARTICIPANT 2:** Help you help me.

**PARTICIPANT 1:** I commit to you.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** Help you help me.

**PARTICIPANT 1:** It takes energy to die.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** It's effortful.

00:41:05:16

**PARTICIPANT 1:** Either our own body...

**PARTICIPANT 2:** ...in conflict...

**PARTICIPANT 1:** ...shuts us down...

**PARTICIPANT 2:** ...or another body...

**PARTICIPANT 1:** ...in conflict...

**PARTICIPANT 2:** ...shuts us down.

**PARTICIPANT 1:** Either way, there is energy.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** It's a lot about circulation.

**PARTICIPANT 1:** Blood and bodies.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** Flow and conflict.

**PARTICIPANT 1:** Systems and socialities.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** When circulation stops...

**PARTICIPANT 1:** ...we've lost the heart.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** The energy...

**PARTICIPANT 1:** ...the effort...

**PARTICIPANT 2:** ...the space in time...

**PARTICIPANT 1:** ...has to be protected.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** Help her.

**PARTICIPANT 1:** Space [inaudible]. What sounds?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** What smells?

**PARTICIPANT 1:** What are the aesthetics of your dying?

00:51:31:24

**PARTICIPANT 2:** She was about six days in...

**PARTICIPANT 1:** ...to actively dying.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** Not eating.

**PARTICIPANT 1:** Not really by choice, as you can think of it...

**PARTICIPANT 2:** ...but the whole self shutting down.

**PARTICIPANT 1:** The body didn't need food anymore.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** Energy and circulation.

**PARTICIPANT 1:** And the soul is letting go.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** Actively dying.

**PARTICIPANT 1:** And then family visits.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** Loud.

**PARTICIPANT 1:** Loudly visits.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** And by visit, I mean...

**PARTICIPANT 1:** ...arrive.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** Arrive and act sad.

00:51:55:09 **PARTICIPANT 1:** One throws a fit.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** Says, "Oh."

**PARTICIPANT 1:** I was sitting right next to her and she looked right through me.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** Sobbing.

**PARTICIPANT 1:** She looked right through me.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** I had to gently, hand on her shoulder, remind her that our dying beloved was blind...

**PARTICIPANT 1:** ...not looking right through you.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** Seven years blind.

**PARTICIPANT 1:** It's a drama.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** At the end of that day...

**PARTICIPANT 1:** ...when the quiet returned...

**PARTICIPANT 2:** ...and we could work on the dying again...

**PARTICIPANT 1:** ...turn to the task at hand...

**PARTICIPANT 2:** ...she rolled over...

**PARTICIPANT 1:** ...and gave me space.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** I laughed and laughed in love.

00:52:27:05 **PARTICIPANT 1:** I asked if she was playing dead.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** She giggled.

**PARTICIPANT 1:** A last self-defining act.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** Playing dead to make space to die.

**PARTICIPANT 1:** I read somewhere that theater is about how people don't get along.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** Well, I read somewhere that accountability is about how people could maybe get along.

**PARTICIPANT 1:** I read everywhere about extinction.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** I read everywhere about public, political death. The sharp edge of the space is the center of the space. Dying and dead, you need to be washed and buried.

00:52:59:19 **PARTICIPANT 1:** I read somewhere that in the beginning of the crisis, it cost more to bury AIDS patients. The funeral industry added tax for their own wretched fear and bodies were buried deeper. They were buried deeper, buried deeper.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** Can life grab life from below?

**PARTICIPANT 1:** Yes. Yes, the dead act. The dead live on. We need them to tell our stories.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** On the spectrum of alive and dead, dead is not the opposite of alive. It's not a binary or a simple biological fact. It's a complex social choice. What is dead? What do we let die? Who do we let die? Who do we actively harm? What do we actively extinguish?

**PARTICIPANT 1:** These choices on this spectrum, beyond this binary, this body appears to be less than fully alive.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** We land in a fantasy of continuity, a habit to imagine that the future will be like the past.

**PARTICIPANT 1:** But we've lost control, and lose it all the time, like your body stays the same. It does not. Like our climate won't change; it's already a lot.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** So many deaths in what is called one life. So many adaptations.

**PARTICIPANT 1:** The aesthetic of death...

**PARTICIPANT 2:** ...poetic...

**PARTICIPANT 1:** ...how you put things together.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** A death.

**PARTICIPANT 1:** How you put a death together.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** Put a death together, make a ruin.

**PARTICIPANT 1:** Put a death together, how to continue being a weirdo in decline.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** On dead on.

00:47:47:10

**PARTICIPANT 1:** What do you arrive with?

**PARTICIPANT 2:** What to hold in the mind when you know you're about to go?

**PARTICIPANT 1:** Toni Morrison said the soft as cream.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** She wrote, "Was it hard? I hope she didn't die hard. Soft as cream."

**PARTICIPANT 1:** Being alive was the hard part. Soft as cream.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** Soft as cream. The first time I met Jerrigrace, she interrupted my conversation to tell me she'd changed her name eight times already. Later, she said one of her angels was a comedian, and I knew I'd have to see her again.

**PARTICIPANT 1:** Several months later, I followed through and became her student. I arrived in an American hippie enclave, surround by nature, women's symbols, baskets, soft clothes, and signs in the bathroom to only flush if it was important.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** A group gathered. The first introduction stated clearly, "This is a movement, a grassroots, unregulated, eco-activist movement, actively working against polluting industries and systems of death. Actively working toward a culture of sustainability and mutual aid."

00:55:36:05 **PARTICIPANT 1:** We are told embalming is violent and toxic. Industry burials pump resources of steel and cement back into the ground from which they were once extracted.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** We are told the body is a story of parts. It is usually a random fail that leads to death. Dying of old age is actually an extreme story.

**PARTICIPANT 1:** We are told it is the dying person that's teaching us.

**PARTICIPANT 2:** The unexpected is what will always happen. Arrive open. Not knowing is the most intimate and honest thing you can do.

**EVERY OCEAN HUGHES:** Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

00:56:19:10 **EVERY OCEAN HUGHES:** So I thought that was going to be the middle of the talk, but really it's the end. That's five minutes from a sixty-minute performance. And it's the world that I'm living in now. That's Jerrigrace, that's me. I volunteered to be shrouded. But I'm working with Jerrigrace. I'll just say one thing, which is that inside this kind of Queer Death project, I'm focused in two directions simultaneously. I'm working on a project that really looks at the corpse. You know, the material thing that is left. And what we do with that says a lot about culture. On the other hand, I'm working on a project that looks at the mystery. Which is, we don't know. You know? So I'm really wholly involved with these things at the same time. Jerrigrace is part of the corpse project. As you can imagine, she's like the avant-garde of home funerals in America for the last forty years. And she is fun. Okay.

[CLIP PLAYS]

00:57:17:26 **EVERY OCEAN HUGHES:** So again, that's Colin Self and Geo Wyeth, and I wrote the words and we figured out the music together. And it was one of my favorite projects that I've worked on. They were really extraordinary. And we're going to continue doing a project around— We have a bunch of kind of dates coming up. So I hope you get to see it at some point. I'd love to see you there. And thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]