DAY WITH(OUT) ART

In 1989, to make the public aware that AIDS can touch everyone and to inspire positive action, Visual AIDS presented the first Day Without Art—organizing museums and art institutions nationwide to cover up their artwork, darken their galleries, and even close for the day—to symbolically represent the chilling possibility of a future without art or artists. Since then, Day With(out) Art has grown into a collaborative annual project in which organizations worldwide present exhibitions, screenings and public programs to highlight work by HIV+ artists and artwork addressing current issues around the ongoing AIDS pandemic. *STILL BEGINNING* is the 30TH annual Day With(out) Art project.

VISUAL AIDS

Founded in 1988, Visual AIDS is the only contemporary arts organization fully committed to HIV prevention and AIDS awareness through producing and presenting visual art projects, while assisting artists living with HIV/AIDS, and preserving the work of artists with HIV/AIDS and the artistic contributions of the AIDS movement.

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VISUAL AIDS PRESENTS

STILL BEGINNING



RADICAL BEGINNINGS
ACTIVIST RISINGS
COMPULSIVE PRACTICE
EVERY TEN MINUTES
RED RIBBON
NIGHT WITHOUT LIGHT
POSITIVE ACTIONS

THE 30TH ANNUAL DAY WITH(OUT) ART
2019

STILL BEGINNING

A DOULA'S GUIDE TO WATCHING EXPERIMENTAL VIDEOS WITH VISUAL AIDS

Since 1989, Visual AIDS has been inviting art organizations around the world to participate in Day With(out) Art, a day of art-based action around the HIV/AIDS epidemic. This has taken many forms: distributing AIDS awareness broadsides, temporarily removing artwork to illustrate loss, and creating events that bring people living with and impacted by HIV together. In 2010, Visual AIDS began harnessing the power of video for their annual program by commissioning and distributing meaningful, engaging, educational, and at times challenging video content. In 2017, Black artists looked at the role HIV plays within their lived experiences, and last year, community-based AIDS organizations made videos that focused on their work and the people behind the scenes.

This year, for the 30th anniversary of Day With(out) Art, Visual AIDS is focusing on the fact that for many, THE AIDS CRISIS IS STILL BEGINNING. The phrase is borrowed from artist and academic Gregg Bordowitz, who offers it not as a denial of the progress that has been made, but rather as a reorientation of what Visual AIDS has often said in the past: *AIDS is not over.* This is particularly true when we consider the ongoing work to defund healthcare in the US, attempts by the Trump administration to redirect funding for HIV care to ICE, and the dissolution of the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS. *STILL BEGINNING* challenges the idea that a historical moment is over and asks: For whom has there been progress? At what cost? How long does progress last? And what role does our past play in our future?

These are some of the many questions that inform and reveal themselves in this year's Day With(out) Art videos. Upon multiple viewings, the seven rich and intense videos use content and form to invite us to question what we think we know about HIV and open up community conversations for multiple points of view. We are invited to witness the contributions of Chloe Dzubillo (1960–2011), Keith Cylar (1959–2004), and Sian Green, individuals working in tandem with larger collectives to provide a bounty of skills and tactics still needed now within the crisis. Other videos focus on harm reduction, cruising, nostalgia, and capitalism through poetry, documentary, collage, and memoir.

Needle / Syringe Exchange is a process where people exchange used needles for new needles. Needle exchange is an example of harm reduction, which focuses on reducing harm, rather than enforcing abstinence.

Pharmacide can be understood as the act of murder through prescription medication, specifically through its overuse or misuse by innocent patients. Related is the term **pill fatigue** which is a condition where people will chronic illness stop taking medication because of the stress and monotony of constant pill swallowing, thus resulting in an issue with adherence: the endless task of doing what you don't want to with a regular rhythm (taking meds). (Source: Urban Dictionary)

Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) is a daily medicine for HIV-negative people to lower their chances of getting HIV. To learn more about PrEP, including where you can find it in your area, visit: PrEPLocator.org

Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) is an antiretroviral medicine that greatly reduces chances of transmission if taken within 72 hours of exposure. PEP should be available in all emergency rooms.

Redlining is the systematic denial of services to residents of specific neighborhoods (often racially associated), either directly or through the selective raising of prices. While the best known examples of redlining have involved denial of financial services such as loans or insurance, other services such as health care or even supermarkets have been denied to residents. (Source: Wikipedia)

Stigma is a mark of shame or prejudice. People living with HIV experience stigma in many ways, including in their intimate relationships. When something like HIV is stigmatized, it can distort factual information and trigger certain behaviors and attitudes, such as:

- Thinking that people deserve to get HIV because of their choices
- Refusing to provide care or services to a person living with HIV
- Socially isolating a member of a community because they are HIV-positive (Source: Center for Disease Control)

Undetectable refers to how regularly taking HIV medication can lower the amount of HIV in your blood (aka your viral load) to an undetectable level. People who are undetectable cannot transmit the virus to others. This doesn't mean you no longer have HIV—it means that by continuing your plan of treatment, you can live with HIV by managing your health on your own terms. (Source: Housing Works)

GLOSSARY What words, terms, and definitions would you add?

Anti-Racism is defined as the work of actively opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic, and social life, in opposition to individual racist behaviors and impacts.
(Source: Race Forward)

Harm Reduction refers to strategies that aim to reduce the harms associated with activities deemed by the culture to be dangerous, such sex and taking drugs. The contemporary concept of harm reduction emerged out the early 1980s at the beginning of the HIV epidemic when healthcare workers started to provide clean syringes to people who inject drugs rather than solely trying to achieve abstinence. Other examples of harm reduction include condoms, PrEP, and seat belts. (Multiple sources including Avert.org)

HIV Criminalization refers to laws that punish perceived or potential HIV exposure and alleged nondisclosure of HIV status prior to sexual contact (including acts such as biting or spitting that cannot transmit HIV). HIV criminalization has resulted in sentences up to thirty years and sometimes requires sex offender registration, often in instances where no HIV transmission occurred or was even likely or possible. (source: AIDS Watch)

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a virus that attacks the body's immune system, reducing the number of CD4 cells (T cells), making people more vulnerable to other infections or cancers. If not treated, HIV can lead to AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome). People are diagnosed with AIDS when their CD4 cell count drops below 200 cells/mm or if they develop certain types of illnesses.
(Source: Centers for Disease Control)

Intersectionality "is a lens through which you can see where power power comes from and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It's not simply that there's a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LGBTQ problem there. Many times that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things." (Source: Kimberlé Crenshaw)

Narcan (Naloxone) is a life saving medication that reverses the effects of opioid overdose. It only works on opioids (heroin, prescription painkillers, fentanyl).

Investigations into identity and an abundance of intergenerational dialogue unites all of the videos. As a group of people who believe in the power of community and culture to improve the material conditions of people living with HIV and other impacted people, we value cross-cultural and intergenerational dialogue as a way of creating bonds, sharing information, and tapping into our collective and individual power. Visual AIDS' video programs echo this, especially this year. When seen all together, the works within STILL BEGINNING put forward the value of sharing across experiences and time.

We hope that you come to the videos with this idea of conversation and dialogue in mind, watching with questions, ideas, and other people. We have worked with Visual AIDS to make this guide, providing context for each artist and video, offering prompts to keep the conversation going, as well as additional resources. We know that not every video will resonate with everyone, and invite you to take your experience of each video—positive or negative—as a starting point to consider the multiple ideas and artistic intentions in each piece. Discuss your thoughts and reactions in community and visit the Visual AIDS website to watch them again. We believe in the power of culture to make the world a better place. THE AIDS CRISIS IS STILL BEGINNING and always will be, until we have a cure, healthcare, and housing for everyone.

— What Would an HIV Doula Do?

For direct links to the resources listed in this guide, go to VisualAIDS.org/stillbeginning and click on the "Resource Guide" tab.

Bold **keywords** are explained in the glossary at the end of this guide, along with other important terms.

A Doula's Guide to STILL BEGINNING was created by the What Would an HIV Doula Do? Collective for Visual AIDS, with crucial input from students of the Fall 2019 class "Life During Memorialization: History and the Ongoing Epidemic of HIV/AIDS in the USA" at The New School, as well as artist Lucas Michael and gallerist Jackie Klempay.

DERRICK WOODS-MORROW
MUCH HANDLED THINGS ARE ALWAYS SOFT



Before smart phones, late 20th century gentrification, and the legalization of same sex marriage in the US, queer people used to cruise more often, looking for sex, friendship, and companionship in public. Through a network of agreed upon geographic locations (such as parks), visual clues, performative gestures, and eye contact, strangers would navigate the thrill of attraction, the threat of homophobia, and the risk of getting caught in pursuit of connection.

In *Much Handled Things Are Always Soft*, the personal, racial, and systemic dynamics of cruising become visible: in 1970s Chicago, civically engineered policies of segregation such as **redlining** caused the neighborhoods of Black people to be cramped and densely populated. In the video, artist and long-term HIV survivor Patric McCoy describes how parks provided an outlet for men to come together and find space for their desires beyond labels, identity, and the confines of the compressed urban setting. "The park was their outlet," shares McCoy, "for men who now would be called gay. But they didn't use that term at that time… it was more active verbs, 'I'm just messing around,' 'freaking out.' It didn't label the person, it was more of 'What I am doing,' and 'I can do something else later.'"

McCoy's photographs appear throughout the video as Chicago-based artist Derrick Woods-Morrow and a small crew of Black queer men erect a memorial to cruising, holding space for all that is in danger of being lost among a generation made cautious by the impact of HIV and AIDS. As the credits roll viewers are left to wonder what will become of the memorial? What is the state of cruising now?

QUESTIONS

1. Nguyen describes the contributors for his video as "queer and trans gaysians," both claiming and challenging language around identity. What moments in the video destabilize expectations and stereotypes about the desires and experiences of queer Asian men?

2. The lack of representation of Asian Americans in film and media has recently been discussed more in US culture. What impact does a lack of Asian representation have for the history of AIDS? How might the stereotypes mentioned above intersect with HIV and AIDS in Asian American communities?

3. To create *I Remember Dancing*, Nguyen asked friends and colleagues to send five "I remember…" phrases about the past 30 years and five from 30 years in the future (2049 looking back on 2019). Consider the role of the past, present, and future in how you and your communities construct an understanding of history and a sense of now. What do you remember about the past? What would you remember about the present?

RESOURCES

+ To learn more about how Nguyen thinks about the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality, read his book *A View from the Bottom: Asian American Masculinity and Sexual Representation*. For the month of December, you can watch *Maybe Never (but I'm counting the days)* online – see the online version of the resource guide for a link.

+ Read Joe Brainard and Shane Allison's versions of *I Remember*.

+ Asian people are often excluded from the AIDS story in the west. With friends, change that. Begin by learning about the work of a few amazing people starting with activist Ivy Arce, whistle blower Shuping Wang, curator Leeroy Kun Young Kang, performer Tita Aida, and add other names and stories to this list.

NGUYEN TAN HOANG
I REMEMBER DANCING



To make *I Remember Dancing*, Nguyen Tan Hoang invited a group of friends to share "memories about gaysian identity, HIV/AIDS, safe/unsafe sex, intimacy, desire, danger, risks, regrets, longings... from the past, in the present and the future." Nguyen is an artist and scholar whose work examines the intersections of race, sexuality, and pornography, often focusing on the experiences of gay Asian American men.

The emotionally charged collage of memories, fantasies, and faces that appear onscreen explores the desires, losses, and experiences of gay Asian men. The video challenges stereotypes and responds to a lack of Asian representation in cultural narratives of HIV. At one point the flow of recollections becomes overwhelming, forcing us to acknowledge the fact that the video does not provide a comprehensive or complete account.

The video's form comes from *I Remember*, a memoir by poet and visual artist Joe Brainard about growing up in the midwest and living in New York in the 1960s and 70s. (Brainard died of AIDS-related pneumonia in 1994.) *I Remember Dancing* also echoes a 1996 video by Nguyen called *Maybe Never (but I'm counting the days)* that reflects the shifting field of possibilities and constraints brought on by the AIDS epidemic: "I've never given you a blow job in an elevator. I've never showered with you after hot sticky sex. I've never held your hand in public. I've never erased your message from my answering machine." Two decades later, *I Remember Dancing* supplements these regrets with recollection and nostalgia, leveraging memory to further illuminate the present.

QUESTIONS

1. How do you feel about McCoy's statements about invisibility? Consider talking to someone born at a different time and place than you to discuss your feelings about cruising and the video. Who has the privilege to determine their own visibility/invisibility? How is the act of being witnessed impacted by race, gender, sexuality, disability, class, religion, privilege, etc?

2. McCoy values the park scene because it doesn't require people to claim a sexual identity in order to participate. Thinking about your own experiences with HIV education, testing, and treatment, in what ways do these services ask people to claim a sexual identity? How might the way these services are advertised or framed prevent people from accessing them?

3. Bathhouses, cruising parks, and other places for public sex were once more abundant within queer communities. In the 1980s, they came under attack by public health authorities who deemed them dangerous places of HIV transmission. Activists understood them better to be places of information sharing and collective care. In thinking about online and offline spaces in 2019, where do you go for community, education, and the possibility for an erotic charge?

RESOURCES

+ For more about community, public sex, and the state, read the book *Inventing AIDS* (Cindy Patton, 1990); the online guide *How to Have Sex in a Police State* (Anonymous, 2015); and the article *Hunted by the State: HIV, Black Folks, & How Advocacy Fails Us* (Timothy DuWhite, 2017).

+ For more information about history, HIV, and Black communities, read *Evidence of Being* by Darius Bost and go online to visit The Black AIDS Institute, the African American AIDS Activism Oral History Project; and *"I'm Still Surviving": Oral Histories of Women Living with HIV/AIDS in Chicago*.

SHANTI AVIRGAN
BEAT GOES ON



How is change made? What makes a movement? What does leadership look like? These are questions central to Shanti Avirgan's video portrait of AIDS activist Keith Cylar (1959–2004). Using only archival footage, Avirgan invites viewers to witness the creation of Housing Works through the life of Cylar, one of the organization's co-founders (along with Charles King, Eric Sawyer and Virginia Shubert). From the front lines of direct action planning to local news sets and the opening of a new residence for people living with HIV, we see how Housing Works grew out of ACT UP into an organization rooted in speaking truth to power. We witness Cylar and Housing Works bringing people together to dance and to protest in the streets. And we learn how Housing Works understands housing as healthcare—the idea that health comes from the stability provided in having a consistent place to rest, sleep, and be in community.

With *Beat Goes On*, activist, filmmaker, and producer Shanti Avirgan tells the intertwined stories of Cylar and Housing Works in reverse chronology. Instead of providing a linear plot that resolves in a moment of conclusion, we begin with a picture of community in action, protesting, celebrating, and sharing space in a building they made for themselves. Starting with Cylar's funeral and rewinding through time, the video ends with a personal reflection from Cylar about what catalyzed him to take action. The reverse chronology helps us think about how Cylar and Housing Works' activism is still beginning, rippling into the present. Today, Housing Works is a major New York AIDS non-profit with global reach and influence, and the building we see in the video is known as the Keith D. Cylar House.

QUESTIONS

1. Towards the end of the video, Brown describes Green and her advocacy and anti-stigma work as a "key" to the epidemic. "It won't be the providers, it's going to be the Sians of the world who will really be the ones to turn this epidemic around." What work do you think advocates like Green can do that doctors, service providers, and HIV organizations can't?

2. As a person living with HIV, early internet guru Kiyoshi Kuromiya used both a paper newsletter and the web to harness community and share information about HIV in the 1980s. Decades later, Green does the same. In thinking about a legacy of tactics, where do you get your information about HIV? Online or offline? How does that impact how you understand the epidemic?

3. The medical definition of AIDS excluded women until 1993, and to this day many women have to demand HIV testing because medical providers do not acknowledge the impact of the virus for women. How does this historic and ongoing dismissal of women within the HIV response impact Green and her peers? How does it impact you?

RESOURCES

+ Check out Sian Green's blog at SeasonedGracefully.com.

+ Learn more about the work of the Institute of Women & Ethnic Studies at IWESNola.org. Positive Women's Network is an allied national organization that empowers women living with HIV as changemakers. Learn more at PWN-USA.org.

+ LOVE POSITIVE WOMEN is an annual call to action for public and private acts of love and caring for women living with HIV between February 1–14, established by Visual AIDS Artist Member Jessica Whitbread in 2013. Learn more at VisualAIDS.org/lpw.

IMAN SHERVINGTON
I'M STILL ME



"Hi, would you like to take an HIV test?" are the first words we hear from Sian Green, an activist, mother, and woman living with HIV in New Orleans. Throughout *I'm Still Me* we get to know her HIV-related work and her struggles living with the virus. We see how the internet has been a source of pain and healing for Green. Early on she shares how an ex-boyfriend disclosed her status online without consent, and later, how she turned to blogging to find community and purpose.

The video is made by Iman Shervington, the Director of Media & Communications at the Institute of Women and Ethnic Studies (IWES), a national non-profit health organization in New Orleans that uses community-engaged research, programs, training, and advocacy to improve the mental, physical, and spiritual health of women, their families, and communities of color. Black women are disproportionately impacted by HIV in Louisiana—over 78% of new female HIV diagnoses are among Black women. In the video, Angelita Brown, Director of HIV/STI Initiatives at the Institute, explains how HIV can negatively impact the ways that African American women are able to get and keep housing, find sustaining and safe romantic relationships, and find and keep employment, among other things. Green works with IWES to address this inequity with prevention outreach in New Orleans, but also by helping to build community with other women living with HIV online.

QUESTIONS

1. "It wasn't enough just to protest," Cylar says at one point, "we had to provide the services ourselves." Given that the health care system in the US is in no better shape now, what are the implications of communities taking care and service into their own hands? Are there limits to what a community can and should do for itself? What responsibility should government have towards a nation's inhabitants?

2. Many treatment centers, housing services, and other resources for people living with HIV have a no drug use policy, creating barriers for people who need care. Housing Works uses a **harm reduction** approach, meeting drug users where they're at and addressing the reasons that people are using. In the video, Cylar speaks with frankness and pleasure about drug use. In thinking about AIDS history, your own experience, or what you saw in the video, how do you understand drug use and the AIDS epidemic to be related?

RESOURCES

+ Learn more about Housing Works history, meet more of the people involved, and see related ephemera at HousingWorksHistory.com, a project by Gavin Browning. More resources about Keith Cylar are available on the Visual AIDS website.

+ VOCAL-NY (Voices of Community Activists and Leaders) is another organization that believes that housing is healthcare. To learn more about their work, watch the video that VOCAL-NY made for Day With(out) Art 2018 on the Visual AIDS website.

+ Want to learn more about your rights as a person who uses drugs? Check out the International Network of People who Use Drugs (INPUD), "a global peer-based organisation that seeks to promote the health and defend the rights of people who use drugs" at INPUD.net

VIVA RUIZ
CHLOE DZUBILO: THERE IS A TRANSOLUTION



Meet Chloe Dzubilo (1960–2011), a Lower East Side legend who made the world a better place through art, activism, and community building. See her in action as she performs with her punk band at CBGBs, provides trans wellness education with pioneering AIDS worker Arlene Hoffman (1967–2006), and interviews transwomen and sex workers on the street in order to educate healthcare providers about the needs and concerns of impacted communities.

Dzubilo didn't separate her activist work from her music or personal life. Throughout her practice, you see the connecting threads: a commitment to **anti-racism** and the power, autonomy, and self-determination of transwomen.

There is a Transolution is directed by artist and activist Viva Ruiz, who uses visual art, performance, and community cultivation to eliminate the stigma around abortion in the US. With deep respect for Dzubilo, whose friendship helped shape her own practice as an artist and activist, Ruiz makes poignant use of never-before-seen footage recorded by influential activist and organizer Kelly McGowan, Dzubilo's partner in the 1990s. In a time before cell phone cameras became ubiquitous, McGowan's camera provides a valuable record of Dzubilo's life. We also see how Dzubilo, Hoffman, and collaborator Richard Alvarez leverage the power of video to make a platform for the voices of transwomen and sex workers at the 1998 US AIDS Conference, where they educated HIV doctors from across the country. The closing credits shed light on the legacy of Chloe's collaborative work, an ongoing transolution, always in practice, and yet still beginning.

QUESTIONS

1. A brief requiem for friends and artists that George has lost to the AIDS crisis takes a special place in the video. He names Ross Laycock, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Gordon Kurtti, Brian Taylor, Richard Hofmann, Valerie Caris Blitz, Juan Mendez, and Hugh Steers. How can we see this political and personal video as a meaningful tribute to his friends? Can we see this as a tactic of memorialization amid the AIDS crisis still beginning? Can an artwork be a memorial?

2. The video ends on the topic of capitalism. After watching *The Lie*, discuss with friends the connection between the "almighty green" (money) and the "American dream" George is talking about. For you, what is the American Dream? What can be done to redeem the dream from what we could argue George sees as a nightmare? Do you think that capitalism and the idea of the American dream have always been at the heart of the AIDS crisis?

RESOURCES

+ Want to think more about the political and economic connection to HIV through the lens of race, pharmaceuticals, gender, and other issues? Visit TheBody.com.

+ Karen Finley, Pamela Sneed, Essex Hemphill, and Timothy DuWhite are a few examples of artists who use poetry to explore the personal and political connections of HIV. Search online to learn more about their work and read their poems, such as *The Black Sheep*, *Funeral Diva*, *American Wedding*, and *Joy Revisited*, in relationship to *The Lie*.

+ To learn more about health and inequality, check out these books: *Infectious Ideas: U.S. Political Responses to the AIDS Crisis* by Jennifer Brier; *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* by Dorothy Roberts; *The Collected Schizophrenias* by Esmé Weijun Wang; *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure* by Eli Clare.

CARL GEORGE
THE LIE



Elision is a term that can refer to the process of bringing abstract or seemingly unrelated things together for further exploration and impact, revealing connections and meaning that might not be immediately obvious. It is a helpful word to describe *The Lie*, the hypnotic and alluring video poem by Canadian born artist Carl George, a curator and an artist specializing in experimental film and collage.

The video is built around a poem that describes the artist's disenchantment with the American Dream—the idea that anyone can access a good life in the US if they are determined and work hard. To illustrate the poem, George shares a bounty of visual culture including images of AIDS activism, the 2008 economic crash, US white terrorism across decades, the current humanitarian crisis at the US borders, child labor, the corruption of the Catholic church, biased media, whistle blowers, and clips of Condoleezza Rice on the topic of the Iraq war and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez on the issue of justice. Some viewers may find some of the images, although on screen for a short time, triggering nonetheless, including pictures of starving children, and self immolation. Together, these clips reveal the long-standing and ongoing inequities of capitalism plaguing the US during George's time in the country.

George has provided an annotated version of his poem on the Visual AIDS website. In subsequent viewings, download the poem, read along, and begin to name the images, connect the dots, and consider the relationship between text, images, performance, and impact.

QUESTIONS

1. Punk is a way of life that questions authority and centers community care. In the video, Dzubilo begins to play her AIDS song "Kaposi's Koverstick," introducing Hoffman as a cover girl for Kaposi Sarcoma (an AIDS-related skin cancer that causes red and purple marks), turning pain and stigma on its head. How do Dzubilo's music and AIDS activism embody the values of punk?

2. Dzubilo interviews women who share experiences with discrimination from medical staff, police, and others for being trans. Today, we see more trans representation in the media, but has that made a positive difference in how trans people are treated within the ongoing response to HIV?

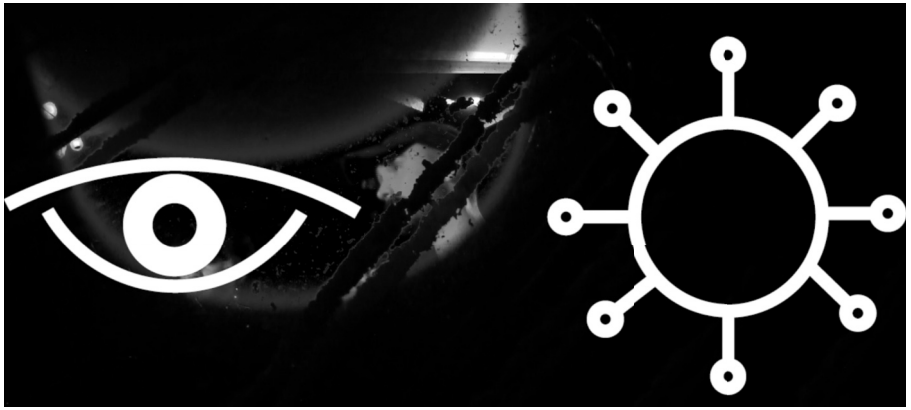
3. Chloe passed away in 2011, fifteen years after the first antiretroviral medication was developed to treat HIV. Though this medication can be highly effective in treating HIV, it is not the end of the story. The word "**pharmacide**" is introduced in the video to name the compounding factors that can complicate long term HIV treatment: medically mismanaged pain medication, depression and **pill fatigue** (the mental health impact of taking daily medication), drug interactions, and transphobic doctors. As the AIDS crisis continues to begin, how do we make space for people facing these long term complications of living with HIV?

RESOURCES

+ To learn more about Dzubilo's work as an artist, visit her artist page on the Visual AIDS website and read the PDF version of Visual AIDS' 2014 publication *DUETS: Che Gossett & Alice O'Malley in Conversation on Chloe Dzubilo*.

+ Search Transgender Law Center and Positively Trans on YouTube to see a powerful suite of community made videos about the experiences of trans and non binary people living with HIV.

JACK WATERS/VICTOR F.M.TORRES
(EYE, VIRUS)



Conversations are often a mix of what is said, not said, and expressed between the lines. As people attempt to listen, learn, and relate, we bring our thoughts, fears, and influences together. An effective and self-consciously chaotic illustration of conversation is *(eye, virus)*, a video that invites us in as artists Jack Waters and Victor F.M. Torres discuss condoms, **PrEP** (an HIV prevention medication), the opioid crisis, and overdose recovery tactics such as **Narcan** (a medication that reverses the effects of opioid overdose), while navigating pleasure, risk, and their own sexualities and HIV statuses.

As they talk, text from a community discussion about HIV borders the bottom of the frame; clips of interviews are spliced in; and footage from a concert and harm reduction training recedes and reappears on the screen. The artists intentionally provide too much information, forcing viewers to make decisions about what we pay attention to and recalling our oversaturated media landscape of "fake news" and misinformation.

At one point Waters, a major influence in the East Village art scene and a long term survivor of HIV, begins to explain the life saving role that AIDS activists have played in eroticising safer sex. The clip cuts short and switches to the voice of a young harm reduction worker from Philadelphia whose passion about testing and community care is infectious. This collage of voices—bringing together sex, drugs, and risk reduction strategies that communities use to focus on pleasure over harm—is a crux of the video, an invitation to listen and ask more questions to keep the conversation going. To read the text from the bottom of the screen, visit the Visual AIDS website.

QUESTIONS

1. Waters and Torres discuss how they take the same medication—Truvada. For Waters, Truvada lowers the amount of HIV in his blood to an undetectable level. Torres is HIV negative and takes Truvada as PrEP, for prevention. Torres says "I am exactly the same as someone who is undetectable." Debate this with your friends. Consider the long term impacts of medication, **HIV criminalization**, insurance, **stigma** and other factors that may impact how you feel about his statement. Is it true? How is being **undetectable** and being on PrEP the same? Different?

2. As you watch the video a second time, listen for all the ways we hear people disclosing: how they came out, why they do harm reduction work, and the time they told people they were were on PrEP. Consider the role disclosure plays in your life, and ways that you and your community can best receive disclosures. What do you need to feel safe, and heard? What do others need?

3. How are HIV and AIDS related to the overdose epidemic? What do fentanyl testing strips and Narcan have to do with condoms and PrEP?

RESOURCES

+ Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) is a daily medicine for HIV-negative people to lower their chances of getting HIV. To learn more about PrEP, including where you can find it in your area, visit: PrEPLocator.org.

+ Narcan (Naloxone) is a life saving medication that reverses the effects of opioid overdose. It only works on opioids (heroin, prescription painkillers, fentanyl). For education and access to Narcan check out the provider's website: Narcan.com.

+ Harm reduction refers to the use of things like PrEP, condoms, and Narcan to lessen the social and physical consequences of human behaviors like sex and drug use. To learn more about the practice, go to: HarmReduction.org.