



Visual AIDS presents **COMPULSIVE PRACTICE** for the 27th anniversary of Day With(out) Art

COMPULSIVE PRACTICE is a video compilation of compulsive, daily, and habitual practices by nine artists and activists who live with their cameras as one way to manage, reflect upon, and change how they are deeply affected by HIV/AIDS.

Featuring **Juanita Mohammed**, **Ray Navarro** (1964–1990), **Nelson Sullivan** (1948–1989), the **Southern AIDS Living Quilt**, **James Wentzy**, **Carol Leigh** aka **Scarlot Harlot**, **Luna Luis Ortiz**, **Mark S. King**, and **Justin B. Terry-Smith**.

Curated by **Jean Carlomusto**, **Alexandra Juhasz**, and **Hugh Ryan** for Visual AIDS.



Filmmaker and COMPULSIVE PRACTICE co-curator Jean Carlomusto in her video archives.

"There are people in that space who I love, and who are not on earth anymore. I feel it important to at least be guardian to one copy of their legacy."

– Jean Carlomusto, referring to her video archives

"An obligation to the future, certainly in relation to AIDS, or at least our experience of AIDS, is an obligation to the past. They are enmeshed in these really heavy ways. For us, a lot of the tapes are about people who died, or people who are sick, and managing their past, not even our own. We are responsible for these other people... We have started to realize that our practices of saving other people's work is not unlinked from the practice of making the work in the first place."

– Alexandra Juhasz

"It just makes me think that I should be archiving everything so much better, and thinking about inheriting the archives of other people just compounds it. It's a sense of an obligation to the future. Because I love all of these materials and I'm so excited to get to show them."

–Hugh Ryan

COMPULSIVE PRACTICE

From video diaries to civil disobedience, holiday specials and backstage antics, Betamax to YouTube, COMPULSIVE PRACTICE displays a diversity of artistic approaches, experiences, and expectations. The compulsive video practices of these artists serve many purposes—outlet, lament, documentation, communication, empowerment, healing—and have many tones—obsessive, driven, poetic, neurotic, celebratory. COMPULSIVE PRACTICE demonstrates the place of technology, self-expression, critique, and community in the many decades and the many experiences of artists and activists living with HIV/AIDS.

COMPULSIVE PRACTICE highlights subjects ranging from historic actions against government neglect to contemporary issues such as Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and living with an undetectable viral load. Altogether, the program charts over three decades of AIDS-related video production in the face of the ongoing crisis.

Featuring work by **Juanita Mohammed**, **Ray Navarro** (1964–1990), **Nelson Sullivan** (1948–1989), the **Southern AIDS Living Quilt**, **James Wentzy**, **Carol Leigh aka Scarlot Harlot**, **Luna Luis Ortiz**, **Mark S. King**, and **Justin B. Terry-Smith**.

Curated by **Jean Carlomusto**, **Alexandra Juhasz**, and **Hugh Ryan** for Visual AIDS.

Visual AIDS presents COMPULSIVE PRACTICE to mark the 27th anniversary of Day With(out) Art. On December 1, 1989, the first Day With(out) Art was created by Visual AIDS as a national day of action and mourning in response to the AIDS crisis.

Visual AIDS utilizes art to fight AIDS by provoking dialogue, preserving a legacy of those we lost, and supporting HIV+ artists, because AIDS is not over.

View and share this video online at:
www.vimeo.com/visualAIDSnyc

#VisualAIDS #DayWithoutArt #CompulsivePractice



Juanita Mohammed

Love is you,
Love is me,
Love is everyone,
Love is not hate,
But love is friends loving friends,
Love is brotherhood,
Love is women loving women,
Love is men loving men,
Love is women and men loving each other,
Love is NOT hate."

– Youth poem in Juanita Mohammed's
Homosexuality: One Child's Point Of View, 1993

Juanita Mohammed is a community video artist and activist. She uses inexpensive camcorder video technology to respond to the needs of those who matter to her. In her work at GMHC in New York City, Mohammed makes educational videos for and about the AIDS community. In her personal video work, she looks to her friends and neighbors to find stories that are not typically represented in the media. Read more about Juanita's work on the Visual AIDS website: visualaids.org/blog/detail/wave

Discussion Question: *Juanita was an active member of WAVE, Women's AIDS Video Enterprise, a pioneering project designed to empower women of color to produce their own educational media. How does this feminist and activist creative practice inform the content and approach of her videos?*



Ray Navarro

"Instead of just being grabbed by a TV camera and shown on the news, another way to do it is to pick up a camera rig yourself and to shoot yourself, your friends, and other people you're involved in organizing efforts with, and getting that stuff on the air."

– Ray Navarro, quoted in an excerpt from his memorial video, 1990

Ray Navarro (1964–1990) was an artist, filmmaker and activist. He attended Cal Arts in California and moved to New York in 1988 to go to the Whitney Independent Study Program, and soon joined ACT UP (AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power). He was also a member of DIVA TV (Damned Interfering Video Activists), a video-documenting affinity group of ACT UP. DIVA TV documented public testimony, the media, and community activism to motivate the fight against AIDS. Navarro died of AIDS related complications at the age of 36. See more of his work on the Visual AIDS Artist+ Registry: visualaids.org/artists/detail/ray-navarro

Discussion Question: *ACT UP's Stop the Church action was one of their best-known and most controversial protests. How does Ray's performative intervention as Jesus Christ both play with and intervene against the use of religious imagery for moral messaging?*



Nelson Sullivan

"Here is the new us, in there [pointing to camera]. You can see in the inner circle there, that's everything in there. From now on I'm just going to do videos inside there, so I can take that place somewhere else. We can talk to everyone who is watching and everyone in the background too, and see it ourselves in there."

– Nelson Sullivan, in *Lisa E's Positive Me*, 1988

Nelson Sullivan (1948–1989) was a video artist in New York City during the 1980s. Nelson lived in a large townhouse at 5 Ninth Avenue in the Meatpacking District of New York City and his houseguests over the years included Lady Bunny, Michael Alig and the Club Kids, Sylvia Miles, Albert Crudo, and John Sex. Decades before the invention of YouTube and selfie sticks, Nelson Sullivan obsessively carried his camera all over NYC. He documented both the exceptional and everyday lives of the creative individuals with whom he came in contact. Nelson Sullivan died of a heart attack at the age of 41. More of his work is available at youtube.com/user/5ninthavenueproject

Discussion Question: *Nelson Sullivan's obsessive videos are a precursor of today's selfie culture. How do Sullivan's videos incorporate political messages? Could his strategies be used today on Instagram, Snapchat or elsewhere?*



Southern AIDS Living Quilt

"I wasn't told I had HIV, what she told me was 'You have AIDS and you are going to die.' I knew nothing about HIV. As a matter of fact, I thought I was the first woman in America with this disease. I didn't even know that other women had it, because nobody was saying anything. And I vowed at that moment that there would not be another woman who would get her diagnosis and not know another woman who was positive. That if I had to be that face, I would be that face. I do it to put a face to this disease. That way, everybody will know that it looks just like them, or somebody they know."

– Gina, Southern AIDS Living Quilt, 2008

The Southern AIDS Living Quilt is a project that illustrates the growing impact of HIV on women in the southern U.S., particularly women of color. Using video testimonials, the Southern AIDS Living Quilt shares the personal stories of women living with HIV, their families and health care providers throughout the region. The stories underscore the critical importance of making HIV screening a routine part of medical care in order to ensure earlier diagnosis and prevent the spread of the disease. Over 100 women are represented on the Southern AIDS Living Quilt from 13 southern states, viewable on YouTube: [youtube.com/user/SouthernAIDSQuilt](https://www.youtube.com/user/SouthernAIDSQuilt)

Discussion Question: *Today, HIV disproportionately impacts women, people of color, and people living in the southern U.S. How might race, class, gender, and geography impact someone's experience of HIV?*



James Wentzy

"I was born and raised in the Northern Great Plains. When I came to New York in 1976, I fell in love with the city and stayed. When I tested positive for HIV antibodies in 1990, I turned towards activism to learn all I could. What AIDS activism taught me, fundamentally, was empowerment. We are not passive participants in this plague."

– James Wentzy, in *Holding Steady*, 1995

James Wentzy is an AIDS activist and documentary filmmaker associated with ACT UP throughout the 1990s. He has been producer, director and editor for the weekly series AIDS Community Television (aka DIVA TV) since 1991, producing over 160 documentary programs, his own feature-length documentary *Fight Back, Fight AIDS*. He has documented over 700 hours of actions and demonstrations, conferences, and the communities' cultural and artistic responses to AIDS. His footage frequently appears in others' media documentaries. He worked as video archivist for the Estate Project's AIDS Activist Video Preservation Project at the New York Public Library. See more of Wentzy's work on his Vimeo page: vimeo.com/wentzy

Discussion Question: ACT UP affinity groups such as DIVA TV reclaimed the production and distribution of narratives around HIV/AIDS by taking direct action in public space and centering the experiences of people who are most directly affected by the virus. How might these strategies of self-representation and civil disobedience be used in today's political climate?



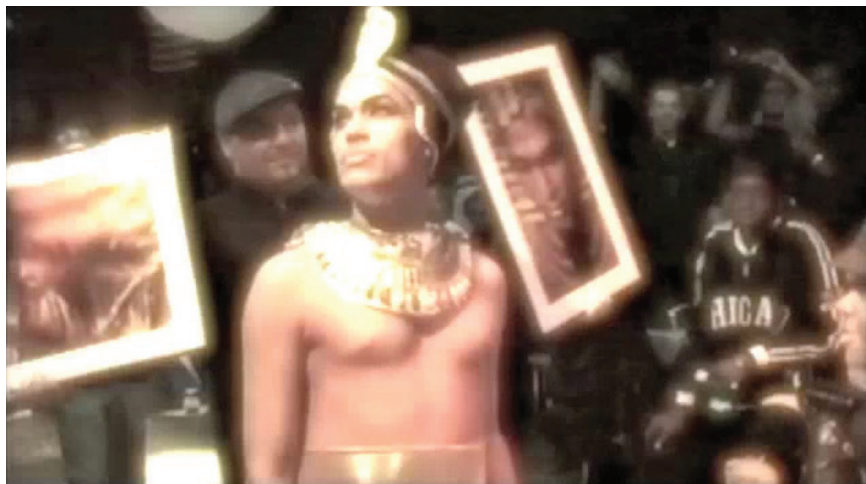
Carol Leigh aka Scarlot Harlot

"I don't recall when I first realized that I was an obsessive person, but my obsessiveness came to full fruition around prostitution and sex worker rights. Basically we are trying to teach people in general about sex, we are sex experts, so as a working prostitute, I'm trying to get my video around and promote safe sex. It's a very positive approach to safe sex, it's very celebratory, and I know it really reaches young people because it speaks in a language young people understand."

– Carol Leigh aka Scarlot Harlot in *Whores and Healers*, 1988

Carol Leigh aka Scarlot Harlot has been working as a sex worker/prostitute activist and artist in the Bay Area for more than thirty years. Since the late seventies, she has written and performed political satire as "Scarlot Harlot," and produced work in a variety of genres on queer and feminist issues including work based on her experience in San Francisco massage parlors. A "mother" of the sex workers rights movement, she is credited with coining the term "sex worker." Her recent work and archives are available at sexworkermedialibrary.org

Discussion Question: How does Carol Leigh's work promote safer sex without relying on shame, stigma, or abstinence? Why does she think sex-positivity is a more effective approach to sexual health?



Luna Luis Ortiz

"The way that I think about it is, everybody is made to live, everybody is made to die. As long as you touch somebody before you go, that's all that matters. That's what I said, as long as I touch one person's heart, that's all that matters."

– Edwin Revlon

"And you're already done that, and you still have a long life, girl."

– Luna Luis Ortiz, in *The Luna Show with Edwin Revlon*, 2014

Luna Luis Ortiz was born in New York City in 1972. In 1986, he was infected with HIV at the age of 14 from his first sexual experience. In 1988, he began his journey as an HIV awareness spokesperson for youth living with HIV at the Hetrick-Martin Institute, and has worked at GMHC since 2007. He then studied photography at the School of Visual Arts and has worked with the photographers David LaChapelle, Lisa Ross, Shedrich Williams and Nan Goldin. *The Luna Show* is a webseries about the voguing scene and the people involved in the House/Ball community, one of the communities hardest hit by the ongoing HIV/AIDS epidemic. *The Luna Show* has been viewed by 2 million people worldwide and is available to view on YouTube: youtube.com/TheLunaShowNY

Discussion Question: *Luna's involvement and intimacy with the ballroom community give his videos candor—they are by community and for community. What other community-based resources and responses can you think of? Why might these be effective for education and outreach?*



Mark S. King

"As HIV+ people, we are symbols of something larger, our very presence is a statement, especially in these days of increasing HIV stigma. We made HIV more than just some nebulous concept. Our presence said 'This is HIV,' it looks like me. I am not a label. I am a person. My accomplishment was really simply about being open about HIV and speaking out about it, and I am certainly not the only one doing it."

– Mark S. King, in *Gay Parade Tips from a Poz Grand Marshal*, 2013

Mark S. King has written about living with HIV since testing positive when the test became publicly available in 1985. His blog, www.MyFabulousDisease.com, chronicles his life as an HIV positive gay man in recovery from addiction. He is also the author of *A Place Like This*, his memoir of life in Los Angeles during the dawn of the AIDS epidemic.

Discussion Question: *How does Mark use humor as a tool to defuse stigma, and what is the effect?*



Justin B. Terry-Smith

"I don't know how educated you are on these subjects of HIV. I don't want you to be afraid of me. You can hug me, you can kiss me, you can be around me without getting HIV. There are certain things about HIV that I don't know if you do know, I don't know if they teach it in class. But know that I love you, very, very much."

– Justin B. Terry-Smith, in *Justin's HIV Journal: Justin's Little Brother's Find Out About His HIV Status via MYSPEACE*, 2009

Justin B. Terry-Smith, M.P.H., is a noted HIV and gay civil rights activist and the creator of "Justin's HIV Journal," a popular blog in which he shares his trials and tribulations of living with HIV. A U.S. Air Force veteran, Justin resides in Laurel, Maryland, with his husband, Dr. Philip Terry-Smith, and their sons, Lundyn and Tavis. Presently, Justin is working toward earning his doctorate in public health. See more of "Justin's HIV Journal" at justinbsmith.com

Discussion Question: *YouTube has created a new platform for self-representation, testimony, and community-building. Taking Justin's work as an example, what can we learn about the usefulness of this platform for new video-makers and audiences, particularly from underrepresented communities?*

Videos in COMPULSIVE PRACTICE:

Juanita Mohammed, *Two Men and a Baby*, for GMHC's *Living with AIDS Show*, 1993
Juanita Mohammed, *Homosexuality: One Child's Point of View*, 1993
Juanita Mohammed, *Caring Sequence: Iris de La Cruz*, for GMHC's *Living with AIDS Show*, 1993

Ray Navarro's Memorial Video, 1990
Ray Navarro and Catherine Gund, *Bleach Teach and Outreach* (for GMHC's *Living With AIDS Show*), 1989
Ray Navarro, *Jesus at St. Patrick's Day Parade Action*, DIVA TV, 1989
Ray Navarro, *Condom PSA*, 1989

Nelson Sullivan, *Susanne Bartsch's Love Ball*, 1989
Nelson Sullivan, *John Sex Bad Boys*, c. 1989
Nelson Sullivan, *Lisa E's Positive Me*, 1988
Nelson Sullivan, *Downtown Recording Session to Fight AIDS*, 1988

Southern AIDS Living Quilt, featuring Gina, 2008
Southern AIDS Living Quilt, featuring Thomascene, 2009
Southern AIDS Living Quilt, featuring Vivian, 2008
Southern AIDS Living Quilt, featuring Mildred, 2000
Southern AIDS Living Quilt, featuring Sigga, 2009
Southern AIDS Living Quilt, featuring Tania, 2008
Southern AIDS Living Quilt, featuring Vonda Lee, 2009

James Wentzy, *Holding Steady*, 1995
James Wentzy, *Day of Desperation*, 1991
James Wentzy, *The Ashes Action*, 1992

Carol Leigh, *Whores and Healers*, 1988
Carol Leigh, *Mom PSAs*, 1987
Carol Leigh, *California Prostitutes Education Project*, 1991
Carol Leigh, *Just Say No to Mandatory Testing*, 1989
Carol Leigh, *Blind Eye to Justice, HIV Positive Women in California*, 1998
Carol Leigh, *Collateral Damage: Sex Workers and the Anti-Trafficking Campaigns* (work in progress)
Carol Leigh, *Bad Laws*, 1987

Luna Luis Ortiz, *The Luna Show #115: Benefit Drag Show for M.A.C AIDS Fund*, 2009
Luna Luis Ortiz, *PrEP in the Ballroom Scene*, 2015
Luna Luis Ortiz, *The Luna Show #157: My Life, My Way with Jaszi Khan*, 2011
Luna Luis Ortiz, *The Luna Show with Edwin Revlon*, 2014

Mark King, *My Fabulous Disease Intro*, 2011
Mark King, *Gay Parade Tips from a Poz Grand Marshal*, 2013
Mark King, *When My T-cells are Old and Gray*, 2010
Mark King, *The 'My Fabulous Disease' Holiday Spectacular!*, 2011

Justin B. Terry-Smith, *Justin's HIV Journal: I have HIV First Entry*, 2008
Justin B. Terry-Smith, *Justin's HIV Journal: Justin After the HIV Meds 2 Months Later*, 2008
Justin B. Terry-Smith, *Justin's HIV Journal: Justin's Little Brother's Find Out About His HIV Status via MYSPEACE*, 2009
Justin B. Terry-Smith, *Justin's HIV Journal: Justin and husband Phil ADOPT son*, 2014

COMPULSIVE PRACTICE Visual AIDS Day With(out) Art 2016

Curated by Jean Carlomusto, Alexandra Juhasz, and Hugh Ryan for Visual AIDS in conjunction with the exhibition *Everyday* (through December 10th at LaMaMa Galleria, NYC).

Editing and additional camerawork by Jean Carlomusto

Camera and sound by Kyle Croft

Music by:

Night City, APM Music, LLC

Jesus Gerdel, Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema, Media Scoring, Brooklyn College, Supervised by Jonathan Zalben

Visual AIDS thanks all of the participating artists:

Mark S. King, Carol Leigh aka Scarlot Harlot, Juanita Mohammed, The Estate of Ray Navarro, The Estate of Nelson Sullivan, Luna Luis Ortiz, the Southern AIDS Living Quilt, Justin B. Terry-Smith, and James Wentzy.

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All images and videos courtesy of the artists and estates.

Additional Resources

Find HIV testing in your area:

hivtest.org

locator.aids.gov

More information about PrEP and PEP:

avert.org

pep411.com

Further Reading:

Visual AIDS Website: visualaids.org/blog

The Body: thebody.com

Plus Magazine: hivplusmag.com

Art & Understanding Magazine: aumag.com

Positively Aware Magazine: positivelyaware.com

Long Term Survivors

- Let's Kick ASS—AIDS Survivor Syndrome: letskickass.org
- The Silent Struggle of HIV Treatment Adherence, by Mathew Rodriguez on thebody.com
- The POZ 100: Celebrating Long-Term Survivors on poz.com

Women Living With HIV

- Positive Women's Network: pwnusa.wordpress.com
- The International Community of Women Living with HIV (ICW): icwglobal.org

Trans People Living with HIV

- Why Transgender Women Have the Country's Highest HIV Rates, by Sunnive Brydum on hivplusmag.com
- DUETS: Che Gossett & Alice O'Malley in Conversation on Chloe Dzubilo available at visualaids.org/store

HIV Criminalization

- Sero Project - Fighting Stigma and Injustice seroproject.com
- The Center for HIV Law and Policy hivlawandpolicy.org
- Criminalization 101, by Sean Strub on poz.com

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.

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 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.

To learn more about Visual AIDS programs, please contact us or visit us online at visualaids.org

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