

FLARE-UP TOUR WITH DAN GLASS (ACT UP LONDON)

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

Dan Glass

It's a real honour. And thank you so much for coming on such a hot day. I'm really curious to hear your stories as well. I was just saying to Natasha, it's so nice to be somewhere where we can speak from the heart. And I really encourage everyone to share too. Similar to Diego, I'm part of ACT UP, which stands for AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power. By the way, if anyone's got any questions or needs any clarity on anything, just ask. AIDS... Jump in as well, Diego, if you want. Who's heard of ACT UP? Tell me a bit what you've heard about ACT UP.

Audience member

Paris.

DG

Paris. It started in New York, but they're very active in Paris.

Audience member

Yeah. Okay. Yeah. In defence of HIV and positive people, regulation and legislation.

DG

Well, we've got ways. We've got ways. ACT UP Paris were kind of immortalized in the film, *120 BPM*. Such a beautiful film. Yeah. What else have we heard about ACT UP?

You're also welcome, anyone's welcome if you want to bring in the name of someone who's not physically with us, but spiritually with us, if you want to bring it together and honour them and bring them into the tour, you're very welcome to name them as well if you like. I'm sure you've got a few friends. David Wojnarowicz, do you want to say a bit about him?

Audience member

Activist, multidisciplinary artist, photographer, poet, HIV positive, probably neurodiverse, am I right? Yes. He was the partner of Peter Hujar and he documented his passing in the last weeks of his sickness. There was a very good exhibition last year at Raven Row of their work together.

But I feel like he's more like well-known and influential in the States. And I think he has like some area of the Whitney Museum that is just dedicated to him. But I would love him to be more well-known on this side.

There's not a lot of recognition about this figure. And I think he was like one of the biggest, like Nan Goldin and like people and things that we hear about constantly. I feel like David, because he was sort of like a problematic revolutionary a little bit, like a stirrer and a shaker. He kind of like passed a little bit.

DG

He was most one of his most famous pictures was when he was wearing "if I die you can bury my body on the steps of the FDA" leather jacket and one of the actions, tactics that ACT UP used in political funerals where people died, he literally taken their bodies in a casket, maybe even seen it, in a protest down the road or one of my, it gives me the shivers just thinking about it, the ashes actually in 1992, maybe before your time, when they threw, they took the ashes of their loved ones to the White House gates in an act of rage and grief and chucked their ashes over the White House gates to bring the war home. So one of the tools that active have used is grief as a tool for alchemy and transformation and change.

And I think I said, I've been positive 21 years. Actually, when our mutual friend Ellie, when we lived together in uni, and I didn't know really fuck all about HIV at the time, apart from, anyone else in London, or any EastEnders fans? Mark Fowler, was my icon. He was the character in EastEnders, the London character who got AIDS and kind of made it famous in the UK. So that was my main favourite reference, maybe not the healthiest one. I didn't know really anything and I had a boyfriend from Act Up Paris actually at the time who I hadn't told about my diagnosis and I was really nervous and I went, he came round to mine and I said, listen, there's something I've got to tell you, I know how to say this, I'm really sorry and I can leave, I don't know how to say this. He said, what is it? And I said, I'll HIV positive eventually after a lot more stuttering. And he said, "Don't you be so fucking patronising". It's not up to you to, as a gay man and as a human on the planet, it's not up to you to teach me about HIV. It's up to all of us to teach each other about HIV. Now get your clothes off and get in my bed.

And then we had a great night and the next morning he was like, watch this about ACT UP, read this about ACT UP. Everything changed. And then I realised it's not my issue, but all of our issues to deal with. And then from 2014, we reformed ACT UP in London. It was active in the eighties and nineties. And it's ACT UP's 40th anniversary next year. And I've been busy with one project, we'll talk about more, creating a calendar for ACT UP 40, speaking with ACT UP Paris, ACT UP chapters in Warsaw, Florence, Dublin, Berlin, South Africa, New York, I mean tons in America, Montreal, getting iconic pictures of different protests and building a candidate to celebrate them and agitate for more because our goal, which is for healthcare for all, is far from being done.

So to get involved in ACT UP, everyone is welcome. Obviously in the current state of things in Britain, the ability to protest isn't that easy. And obviously we're a direct action

movement, but we're much more than that. We do a lot of shows, we've got a theatre show in development, World AIDS Day shows, we do many. And build coalitions as well. Just a few of our coalitions that we've built over the past years have been Docs Not Cops, which was actually one of our, five of us protested outside the Home Office in 2016 against doctors being forced to introduce kind of very xenophobic legislation that people would be forced to bring their passport to the surgery. So people weren't going because they were scared of being sent to the Home Office. And so a coalition was built out of doctors who said, no, we're not going to become border officers. And it's now a thousand strong coalition of doctors and healthcare workers who refuse to bring in the xenophobic kind of infrastructure into the health system.

Another coalition is the Fund Healthcare and Warfare Coalition, which started soon after October 7th, 2023 and is part of Palestinian liberation, Jewish anti-Zionist, health care workers who work from all across the world, not just looking at the decimation of health infrastructure in Palestine, but across the world where health service is specifically attacked. Catwalk for Power, which is Act Up Women, doing fashion shows whereby being on the catwalk, they're declaring their status. It's so beautiful and full of pride. It's a coalition building is what we build. So yeah, art and honesty has always been at the heart of what we do. This is why when you got in touch about the exhibition, it was a joy to do.

Any questions so far? I'll shut up now because we've only got 45 minutes to do the tour. But I just wanted to, well, I don't have to read this. Maybe who likes reading? Any readers? Yeah? Okay, great. Do you want, and you're welcome to close your eyes, get yourself centred if you like. Obviously, I don't like it when people say Pride, it's Pride Month or Pride season because, you know, but whatever, it is. So we'll take that as well.

Okay, so you want to add something. Add something, sure, yeah.

Audience member

I also think that Pride Month, well, everything is connected, right? At the end of the day, like a little bit of like disability, queerness, trans people. At the end of it, there's like, as you say very well, like they're all interconnected. And we cannot forget about our trans sisters and brothers who I think we stand on their shoulders, Sylvia, Marsha P. Johnson, these people who just like threw some breaks around so we could have like the rights that we have today and I feel like also you just need to be remembered and July 25th is the trans liberation protest in London and I think at this point it's even more important than going to the corporate pride for the gays so we already have rights.

NH

There's a banner making workshop always here as well if anyone can come join.

Audience member

Especially now that Mr. President of the United States and all this like angry middle-aged white men want to take everything away because they feel threatened and they would like to actually be a part of it, but they can't. So yeah, it's a good reminder to just like talk about that.

DG

Yes. And everything the States do we'll follow. I mean, the establishment will.

Audience member

When I told about my diagnosis to my trans friend in the States for the first time, I was like, I need to tell you something. It's very hard for me. She was like, I thought you said... I thought you were going to tell me you had cancer. Like, this is just...

DG

Oh, wow.

Audience member

She was just sort of like, This is like, okay, but you're not going to die, right? Like, it's fine. It's not like in the nineties... Yeah.

DG

No. No. So yeah, this is from Derek Jarman. It's such a beautiful quote.

Audience member

Pride, it's called Pride. Understand that sexuality is as wide as the sea. Understand that your morality is not law. Understand that we are you. Understand that if we decide to have sex, whether safe or unsafe, it is our decision and you have no right in our love making. Derek Jarman, rest in peace 1994, age 54.

DG

Yeah, thank you. So yeah, let's hold Derek Jarman's spirit about understanding that our sexuality is as wide as the sea and I think there's something really beautiful in that. Yeah. Thank you. Should we go down?

NH

Okay, so this is the beginning of the exhibition and there's numerous kind of visual relationships between the works. The exhibition has nineteen artists in it all working around chronic illness, neurodivergence and disability. And it was important for us to have relationships across time as well. So, there's Derek Jarman is one of the elders of the exhibition and then Felix Gonzalez Torres also. And some of those relations are embedded in artworks by contemporary artists like Benoît Piéron, whose work here is, I

always get this title slightly wrong, *Pillbox of Dungeness Seed Bombs*. So, he gathered plants from Prospect Cottage in Dungeness, which was Jarman's home, and then put them in these seed bombs that you could actually plant. and they would grow, but sometimes they would be toxic plants if you ingested them. So, it's that double-edged sword of like pharmaceuticals that promise to heal but might also give you kind of side effects.

And then the colours behind the pill box refer to Derek Jarman's book *Chroma*, which was a book all about colours and a kind of autobiography of his illness. And then it introduces this idea of crip time as well. So, we've got the days of the week and the times of day that you would take your pills. So that's a different definition of time than the kind of standard, linear, capitalist, productive sense of time that we all sort of live under. And that idea of crip time works through a lot of the works in the show as well.

DG

Thank you.

Mariana Lemos

Actually, I saw that the Prospect Cottage has just opened an Open Call for Residencies.

NH

Yeah. So if you're an artist or a maker, apply, imagine a whole chunk of time.

ML

Actually, Benoît was in residency then a few years ago. That's where this artwork originally was made. Benoît is based in Paris.

DG

Wow. Who here and share as much or as you like, reclaims or owns being disabled. Self describes as being disabled. Yeah, yourself, yourself. Yeah. Do you mind sharing a bit about your empowerment journey with that, where you're at with your ownership of disability?

Audience member

It's difficult, but it's been a year since I've been, you know, one year. So I don't know if I can talk about empowerment, but I kind of, I feel like these illnesses of the on crip time is a bit like ups and downs, and in this moment I'm up, so it feels a bit empowering because I'm understanding more about how to work with my thoughts rather than... feeling completely betrayed, which was sometimes it's present, but it was a big part of the beginning of the journey. Yes. Yeah, but it's still, it depends, but I'm learning more since when I got like some pharmaceutical help as well that has helped me to stay out of the pain and fight some anxiety with my mind.

DG

Yeah. How beautiful. Thank you for sharing. All power to you. Can everyone hear, by the way? Yeah. Wow. Long, may the transformation continue. Who else wants to share about their relationship with crip connection, crip ownership?

ML

Well, for me, it's definitely this show is a big coming out, isn't it?

I mean, I've been working with this subject for a long time, but to have the opportunity to do it here, in London, felt particularly celebratory.

I know, yeah, seeing the positive side of finding community through that experience as well.

DG

Yeah, and turning it into a source of like pride and connection, yeah. Is there crip pride that goes on?

ML

Not that I'm aware of.

DG

I hope so. Well, thank you. Well, HIV is recognised as a disability, but also recognised as a manageable condition. And do jump in if anyone else wants to speak about HIV reality. It's recognised as a manageable condition, but manageable in this current political context. You can't look at anything in a vacuum. And with this political landscape and the threats to the NHS, with everything, my specific work, a lot of what ACT UP do is not just look at what's going on in London, but internationally. With the cuts from USAID and foreign aid in the UK, 23 million people will die by 2030 because they don't have access to HIV medication.

So, we're an international solidarity union as well and spiritually believing that we're all interdependent. If I'm healthy and have access to medication, I'm not truly healthy if someone somewhere else in the world doesn't have access because it doesn't enable our goal of access to health care for all. So, we really do see all of ourselves as connected and all injustices as connected. So, disability is very, you know, seeing it just on paper is not in truth when it comes to how we exist in our lives. So, I'm very much on my own journey with it as well and getting as much support and leaning into it as I can. Any reflections on this piece?

NH

Do you want to talk about that?

ML

This is Caroline Lazard, whose face... That's a Lizzy Rose.

NH

Hello.

ML

Carolyn Lazard is based in New York, and they were part of a group called Canaries, which was a group of artists that were providing mutual aid to each other, and a lot of interest or work comes sometimes from that idea of access and politics, especially in the context of the US. And through that mutual aid process, they also... key to the group was to make art, so co-creation. So, there's a few other artists in the show that were part of that group. And it kind of reflects this kind of crip network that has become quite strong in the US and we wanted to show that and show how they also relate to artists here in the UK that have started to get together also and kind of be in conversation remotely across space. Because I guess if you are in isolation, for example, it doesn't really matter if your peers are next door or across the Atlantic.

But this work specifically, it's criticizing this idea of the medical space having these distractions, artworks or fake windows to take you away from the treatment, from the place where you are in the hospital or in this dentist, for example, usually have these in the ceiling. And a lot of the artists in the show criticise this. They don't want to have anything that takes them away from the experience of being in their bodies and the reality of being ill. They just want to live with the bodies and the embodiment experience they do have and make art and be in that space. So, I think this is the kind of inverting of that fake outside world. And it's meant to disorientate you and question this artificial world.

DG

Yeah. Please do share thoughts.

Audience member

That's very because I guess coming from the US, the idea of health care and access is so different from here. And back in the day when I was working in some medical stuff, I worked for an HIV specialist, in the late nineties. So, in terms of patients that had access to some of that medication and the patients that did it based on insurance. So, I think the economics of medicine and accessibility in general brings like a different perspective kind of now that I'm here. So, is HIV medication, does that cover NHS?

DG

It is. Yeah. But one thing we always say is living with it's more than minimum. Medication is the bare minimum. We say it's not just pills into bodies. It's looking at things holistically. And you know, to give an example, back in the day in the eighties and nineties, people living with HIV in the UK, not everyone got social housing. Ken Livingston introduced that. And one of the most inspiring things for me is the project Housing Works in New York. It was born out of the ACT UP Housing Activist Caucus and is now the biggest social housing project in the whole of New York, not just for people living with HIV but social housing in general, saying, of course housing is one of our fundamental needs.

And yeah, so not just seeing it as medication, healthcare, everything around that, nature connection being a part of that. And you know, the first things that get cut is one, so many projects which look at things holistically. I remember when I was first diagnosed and found the Helios Foundation gave massages and Reiki for 10 pounds for people living with HIV which is brilliant. So look at how we actually can calm our nervous systems. So I think for me this was what this represents how we look at things on a holistic level and on a nature level. What can we get from, with and connected to nature as well for our own healing?

Audience member

I was just thinking about what you said about people not having access to medication but I feel I'm thinking also again like there's this, I don't know if it's like the right word to use, but misconception about HIV, of like unprotected sex or whatever, we just keep forgetting about the ancestors, right? The sex workers, the people who are addicts. We're talking about the word that my therapist used that I just cannot forget, that kind of like encapsulates all of this, which is scarcity. And there's a lot of that, that connects, I feel like it's the tip of the iceberg in a way. When we think about scarcity, we think about basically people with just no identity. And people who have to navigate a world where they just don't have a card with a name, or they just basically cannot even open a bank account. And that leads to a series of issues that if you don't fix one, it's going to be one after another.

And in my personal experience, HIV was just kind of like the tip of the iceberg, and then you're like, oh, CPTSD, ADHD, all this kind of like big capital letters. It's more like an identity sort of like series of letters that kind of like defines a little bit of who we are at times. And again, we're just like, I feel like scientists are trying to figure out what is what and everything kind of like overlaps. And this is very strange. Some people say it's genetic, but also environmental, the circumstances of what you go through cannot affect if your mom was undiagnosed in the sixties and seventies. Maybe your grandmother also had it because she was dealing with the patriarchy and dealing with raising six kids by herself.

And then it grows, it grows, it grows, it gets bigger. There's a lot of it behind that we still don't know much about.

DG

Yeah. And then that begs the question of do we let ourselves be defined by, actually, because when I say, once you open the Pandora's box, you see all the connections and it's a lot. So, I don't know if I'm there yet, but it is, we see everything connected. Shall we go to the next one?

NH

Yeah, well, maybe we could briefly talk about this before we get, or do you want to talk about this one when we've gone through? Maybe we should have the experience of walking through the curtain before we...

****sound of beaded curtain swishing****

DG

Are we allowed to take pictures?

NH

Yeah, of course.

DG

Yeah. Wow. Are people happy with pictures? Would you like to share a bit about this? Then I can jump in about Jarman.

NH

Yeah, so this is Derek Jarman's painting *Act Up*, which was made in 1992. So this was post his diagnosis with HIV AIDS and it was part of a series of works that were all made at this scale and had this like very dense kind of brushwork and scrawled phrases added and he talked a lot about anger as being this motivating factor in the creating of this work and this rage around his diagnosis and around the kind of social lack of reception to the plight that so many people were going through. Jarman was a very active member of Act Up and he was one of the most vocal kind of people in the UK at the time about HIV and AIDS.

And interestingly this work was shown in an exhibition in Manchester when they were first made that was under the title "Queer" and it caused quite a lot of controversy because it was one of the first times that word had been used like in a kind of public domain. And in Manchester there was a conservative mayor. So, there was a lot of kind of storminess around that. And there's a kind of interesting twin kind of trajectory

around the word queer and the word crip as well. So yeah, that's very kind of ripe context in the show. Yeah.

DG

Thank you. It's incredible that you've got this.

NH

Yeah, we were quite emotional when it came into the gallery. Actually, it's weird because Jarman was obviously an amazing filmmaker and a lot of people know his work as film, but to see something that has his gesture and like his body so present and knowing that he died like two to three years after making it is yeah, it's very touching.

Audience member

Was it in a collection?

NH

It's actually with Amanda Wilkinson, his gallerist, who knew him when he was alive as well. So she's the kind of custodian. Yeah.

DG

George, would you like to say anything? It is really emotional that you've got this.

ML

I was just thinking about what you were saying earlier about, I guess, misconceptions about contagion and all of these works, including the slugs and the Jamila Prowse's film, and then Jesse Darling's tiles.

They're also thinking a little bit about this marginalisation, feeling like not respectable as a sick body, you know, kind of sitting outside of society and using that to think about sexuality, erotics, the turning around when we're disgusted to something sexy. So, for example, with the slugs, it's like the slime becomes glitter. You know, there's something about the slug upstairs is rotating because it's meant to be in a kind of disco ball. So, all of these works have that aspect, including the curtain, which we'll tell you a little bit more about. Because the idea of the curtain is that your body has to touch the curtain, there's this tactility, and again, with Jesse Darling being able to be like his body's present is very important to us. Do you want to explain a little bit about the curtain?

NH

Yeah, did you want to read something connected to this piece?

DG

I can read this after.

NH

Okay, so this is a work called *Untitled (Chemo)*. It was made in the nineties also by a Cuban American artist, Felix Gonzalez Torres, who also had AIDS HIV and sadly passed away from the condition. And yeah, it's such a beautiful work. It's a number of a series of curtain works that he made and each has a different title and different colours. So there's a blood one and there's a gold one and there's a green one and a blue one. They all have slightly different titles. And for us to stage the work, we had to speak to the foundation and then they give you these set parameters. So, then you have to find silver, white and transparent beads and the conditions are that the work must fill the whole portal, so the exhibition visitors have to move through it. So, there's this like haptic touch orientated relationship.

And with Gonzalez Torres, there's a kind of little playfulness in the titling in that he says untitled so that you can project whatever you want to on the work. But he's also given us chemo. So, chemo was a kind of treatment used in the early days of AIDS and HIV. And you could read the white beads as being maybe like white blood cells. The way it also kind of cuts space means that there's always a before and an after of moving through the curtain. And whether that is pre-diagnosis or post-diagnosis or being alive and being dead, this kind of sense of transformation as you walk through it is very active. And Gonzalez Torres was part of Act Up. He was an active activist in his time, very vocal. So, it's a real honour that we have this work in the show.

ML

And there's also the glitteriness.

NH

Yeah, this queer aesthetic of the...

DG

Oh, I love that.

Audience member

What's his first name? I'm sorry.

NH

Felix Gonzalez Torres.

DG

And he, well, I looked up one of his quotes and he said, oh, it's so beautiful. "Above all, above all else. It is about leaving a mark that I existed. I was here. I was hungry. I was defeated. I was happy. I was sad. I was in love. I was afraid. I was hopeful. I had an idea,

and I had a good purpose, and that's why I made works of art." Rest in power, Felix Gonzalez Torres, died 1986, age 38.

Wow, for me those words are so much oomph. and so much presence and so much purpose. And that's, life is for more than pills into bodies, we're not just statistics. Each and every person, like you were saying, has a story. I don't know if people have seen the film *United in Anger*, which is an amazing film about, oh, you'd love it. It's an amazing film about the American HIV activist movement, well, mainly ACT UP. And one of the things that Sarah Shawman and Jim Hubbard, the co-producers, explicitly decided to do was put the birth and death dates of every protagonist speaking in it to show, to just really accentuate their life and their death because you saw how young a lot of them were.

And every time we do that, you know, I'm kind of in the middle generation of people involved in the movement now. And as a facilitator, I have to hold these intergenerational conversations between the older generation who've got a whole system of dead bodies and friends in their soul. They're coming with so much grief. But the younger generation, believe me, also have valid grief because of deaths due to suicide, chem sex, transphobia, you name it.

And I remember one conversation, I think it was our second meeting of ACT UP after we reformed in 2014, two of the elders, one of them was a bit upset. He was like, what have you loved to the younger generation got to be grieving about because you don't know how many friends we've lost? And I'm like, hang on, hang on. It's not the impression in the place. We're all part of the same struggle. We've got to listen to each other about what's going on. And I find the intergenerational process as we're looking at in our show is so beautiful because we get to understand each other's realities and work together and listen.

Before ACT UP, I was involved in getting back together with the Gay Liberation Front, who started Pride in the UK, inspired after the Stonewall uprisings. And I remember another intergenerational conversation with them, and they're older than ACT UP, they're like 80, 90, most of them have passed around. And I remember one conversation with them, they were trying to get their head around pronouns. They were like, we really support it, but we're just fighting, and they're not going to have dementia. They were like, they were really trying hard with all the pronouns, but when we were fighting gay encapsulated epithy. And I remember saying to the younger generation, they're not being ignorant, they're not being dismissive. It's just trying to get their head around it. And so it's all about how in our fabulous, brilliant community, we can support each other to be more expansive when it comes to disability consciousness and all intersectionality. And make our human stories abundant rather than just statistics. Anyone else want to share any thoughts or reflections?

Audience member

I just hope it's funny that you use the word abundance.

It doesn't look like the opposite of scarcity.

DG

Yes. Yeah. How we become self-actualised and full of pride. Full of pride. Jonathan Blake, who actually gave me this. Has anyone seen "Pride the Musical" yet? It's out. It's out only for another couple of weeks. Jonathan was an original activist with lesbian and gay support, the miners, immortalised in the film *Pride*, which is now in a musical in the West End. They're in the National. You seen that? Jonathan's a legend. He used to be patient #1 and is still an active part of ACT UP. And he is always talking about how we can be our full selves. If you're looking at it from a psychodynamic model, it's like the fundamental will of human needs. How we can become full, abundant people and become the kind of protagonists in our own reality rather than subservient, dismissive little post-it notes on the establishment's board.

Audience member

I think this reminds me of what you were just talking about, intergenerational, because I feel like I sit, because of my age I sit somewhere in the middle, like on the cusp of both. But I think I see this and it's like, there's such a history with like pink, right? So, in terms of like logos and... what the pink means, right? And then just seeing this and it's kind of like, it has the pink, but it has this blend of other colors. So, I think this reminds me, we were just talking about that, and I saw that it was just like new colors coming out.

NH

I have a theory about this as well. My theory about this, and the gallerist herself said that it was probably not right, but I'm going to share it anyway, is that in the latter years of Jarman's illness, he started losing his sight, which was the reason for the iconic film *blue*, because blue was the colour that he could see. And I think his sight might have started to be going at the time when this painting was made. So, the way in which you'd get this scar of colour across the centre focus and the way that the brush strokes are so broken up and kind of gestural, yeah, and that he's kind of scratching his agency to it, to me, sort of makes sense. But personal reading, not verified by any external source.

ML

I guess backed up by accounts where he, I think it's in the *Chroma* book, describes that fuzziness in the colour.

NH

And the fizzing, yeah, fizzing in his vision, yeah.

Audience member

It looks like it's like catching fire.

Audience member

It's got so much energy.

NH

And the idea of visibility is important in the show as well. Like we didn't want anyone to stand in for their disability or stand in for their illness, touching on what you were talking about, whether HIV is an identity or not. And opacity or the right to withdraw is an important part of a lot of the works and the kind of visual means that people use in the work as well. Yeah, the right not to have to stand in.

DG

Explain that a bit more.

NH

Like, that's why there's very few bodies in the show as well. It's quite abstract, quite conceptual, because we didn't want people to have to represent their disability and be counted as only that. It's more about artists dealing with structural conditions or that as a position for making art that has certain specific aesthetics or shared metaphors such as water runs through a lot of the work. So, we're going to have a roundtable event in July that is going to look at definitions of crip and cripness or crip as a methodology within visual art and the kind of aesthetic forms that it produces. So that's been the kind of focus of the show and that's really cued by the title *Flare Up*, which is about light and visibility and celebration and affect.

Audience member

How do you represent a visibility that kept me invisible?

NH

Yeah, exactly. And how do you represent, I think this is why I was so struck by starting to work in this area, was that like having gone through a period of kind of chronic ill health myself, I lost all ability to use language to describe daily experiences. And you get that medicalised language imposed over it and it's so insufficient.

Audience member

And it comes from like the words come from like the eighties.

And then it's strange when you say that you're like, but we're still abiding by those rules and those words.

NH

Yeah. So, to find these artists who have found visual and poetic language for kind of these kind of states, it's so inspiring and encouraging and enlarging.

DG

Yeah. I really appreciate what you said about that. Finding language and having space to describe our experiences of disability. One thing a friend said to me in ACT UP a while back is 90% of the efficacy of social transformation is relation. And I've noticed that yes, of course, the direct actions that this is a kind of honour to, it's part, it's very much a sense of ACT UP's iconism, but it's having a cup of tea with your friend when they're depressed, is going to the doctor with them, whether it's their diagnosis or to get mitigation, whatever. It's helping each other with working out the benefits that we should be entitled to. It's the 90% of the efficacy of social transformation is relational. So, in Act Up, whilst we support each other with the projects, the movements, the actions, it's about the friendships and the connections and everything built behind the scenes, which is the kind of building block so that we can take the action that we need.

ML

The reason why we wanted to show their turn and Felix Gonzalez Torres was exactly what you're saying. A lot of our younger artists would look at these two artists as like, you know, they gave them reasons to survive as artists, you know, that they created that relational understanding, even across time, even without, that's I guess the role of art as well, is even without the person, the direct relationship, you have a relationship with the artwork and the practice and what that means to you and your diagnosis. And in the case of Benoît, for example, who grew up in France, learning about Derek Jarman in the UK as the first artist and popular figure coming out publicly like that. You know, it was a huge influence for someone else, which I think is really special.

DG

To own it, be public about it, yeah. And to honour the next scene, one of the actions that we did in, I can't remember, 2018 I think, with Freddie Mercury's biopic, we invaded the red carpet at Wembley Stadium because they completely got rid of most of the AIDS and the queer stories of Mercury. And we utilised that to, A, highlight that, but to say, hang on, it's not something to be sentimental about. At a time we didn't have access to prep. So we made it like the reality is now. And I think it's so important that icons like Jarman or Mercury or others, that their legacy is true, of who they were and what they fought for and lived and died for, as well as what it means to them.

DG

Well, I've got, let me just say one thing. So this, there's a lot of Derek Jarman. This is my last word. There's a lot of Derek Jarman in there, as well as ACT UP history. But one thing that we, one conversation which I'm so glad that I got before he died. So, before the Gay Liberation Front, there was the Homosexual Law Reform Society who were active around the Wolfenden Report, which in 1957 pushed for the sexual events that happened in 1967.

And the last, something he said I just wanted to end here because obviously this is Pride season. And he was an essential part of pushing for the homosexual law reform campaign and the Sexual Offences Act. Here we go. And this is the last interview happening. He died in 2022. He said that, "remember that in the early 1930s, Berlin was the gay capital of Europe. And look what happened by the end of the 1930s. What is required for a healthier, happier 21st century is nothing less than a sexual revolution. The journey to liberation isn't as smooth as we want. We have to keep active." And I'm preaching to the choir because we all are. But he said, "I am glad that history is being remembered. It is very important. People should know that history for the pathways ahead." So thank you.

NH

Thank you so much, Dan.

DG

We have meetings every month. The next one is July the 6th and we've got plenty of things to get involved.