***To Begin, Again: A Pre-History of the Wex, 1968-1989*, Exhibition Preview**

Featuring a conversation with Stephanie Blackwood, Julian Myers-Szupinska, Jerri Allyn, Mark Allen Svede, and Daniel Marcus

Kelly Kivland: Hello, and welcome. I'm Kelly Kivland, Chief Curator and Director of exhibitions at the Wexner Center for the Arts. I use she/her pronouns. I have short light-brown hair. I'm wearing a gray wool sweater, and I'm joining you from my office at the Wex, which has a light gray bookshelf behind me. I joined the Wex in August of last year, 2021. And I just wanted to say, I'm thrilled that this is my first introduction. It's a fantastic exhibition, and you'll be hearing more about it in just a bit.

I'd like to first acknowledge that the land, the Ohio State University occupies is the ancestral and contemporary territory of the Shawnee, the Potawatomi, Delaware, Miami, Peoria, Seneca, Wyandotte, Ojibwe and Cherokee, specifically the university resides on land ceded in the 1795 Treaty of Greenville and the forced removal of tribes through the Indian Removal Act of 1830. We want to honor the resiliency of these tribal nations and recognize the historical context that have and continue to affect the Indigenous peoples of this land.

Opening to the public tomorrow, *To Begin, Again, A Pre-History of the Wex 1968 to 1989*, represents a milestone in the center's history as the largest presentation of Ohio state's permanent collection to date. During the 1970s and 1980s, the Ohio State University emerged as an unlikely laboratory of avant-garde culture, offering a platform for dialogue and experimentation across media. The creative ferment shaped the orientation of contemporary art on campus and in the region ultimately inspiring the creation of the Wexner Center in 1989. This selection of works, augmented by loans from institutions and individuals across the country. And even in our backyard offers, a unique opportunity to engage the vibrant and galvanizing role played by the arts in culture on The Ohio State University's campus and in our wider community.

This evening, we're thrilled to feature some of the key figures involved during that time. With us will be Jerri Allyn, Stephanie K. Blackwood, and Mark Svede, who are part of the community. I'm sorry, Blackwood, who are part of the community here in the 1980s. They are joined by art historian editor, Julian Myers-Szupinska, and my colleague and curator of the exhibition, Daniel Marcus.

Jerri Allyn is a featured artist in To Begin Again. She's also an activist and scholar interested in civic engagement through projects that provide forums for multiple voices. Exhibited internationally, she has been the recipient of multiple residencies and grants for her work and the Wex will host a performance by Allyn this April.

Stephanie K. Blackwood's career has included extensive community experience, community relations experience, excuse me, starting at The Ohio State University, where she worked as the Assistant Director of the Gallery of Fine Art. Stephanie credits eight years at Ohio State for sparking her lifelong love of the arts and her commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusion and equity. She is currently the Senior Director of Engagement and Major Gifts at the Ms. Foundation for Women. And a reflection by Blackwood is featured in the forthcoming gallery guide for *To Begin, Again*.

Julian Myers-Szupinska is an art historian and editor based in Los Angeles, a scholar of contemporary art exhibitions and the politics of space. Myers was founding faculty in the graduate program in curatorial

practice at California College of the Arts and was senior editor of Exhibitionist, a journal of exhibition making. Myers-Szupinska is also a featured author in the *To Begin, Again* Gallery Guide, contributing an essay that gives focus the idea of the laboratory as a concept that is closely linked to our ongoing mission here at the Wex.

Mark Svede teaches contemporary film in Ohio State's History of Art Department. His publication and curatorial activity focuses on modernists, Soviet era, and contemporary art, film, and visual culture in Latvia, where he worked as an acquisitions agent for the Dodge collection of nonconformist art from the Soviet Union, which is now at Rutgers University. Svede was on the three-person curatorial team for University Gallery's final exhibition, AIDS: The Artists' Response, and aspects of which are featured in *To Begin, Again*.

And moderating tonight's panel is my colleague Daniel Marcus, Associate Curator of Exhibitions at the Wex. On behalf of all of us here, we are incredibly thankful for Marcus's dedication to conceive, research and bring forth this important history of not only the greater influences on campus, but also here in Columbus, all of which led to the opening of the Wex. He also has reignited the community who was active during the 1970s and '80s, some of which I hope are joining us here tonight.

And special thanks are also in order for our colleagues at the Wex who have made tonight's program possible, specifically, given all the travel and weather challenges we should say over the last several days, I'd like to thank Emily Haidet for her thoughtful and impeccable intention to every detail that went into tonight's program, Emily Oilar for coordinating the various logistics involved and to Dionne Custer Edwards for leading and guiding with such grace, all elements of tonight's program. Thank you as well to our colleagues in Tech Services, Marketing and Communications, Visitor Experience, and to our Interim Co-Directors Megan Cavanaugh and Kelly Stevelt.

Before we begin, I'd like to just acknowledge and thank our sponsors. Support for *To Begin, Again* is provided by Ohio Humanities, Cardinal Health, Joyce and Chuck Shank, Reed Arts, Nancy and Dave Gill, and Larry and Donna James. The Wex's exhibition season is made possible by Bill and Sheila Lambert, the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Carol and Dave Aronowitz, Crane Family Foundation, and Mike and Paige Crane. Free Sundays are made possible by American Electric Power Foundation. And this weekend we welcome you to the Wex to visit the exhibition and we are pleased to share that the galleries will be free on both Saturday and Sunday. Thank you again for joining us. And I am pleased now to turn our attention to Daniel Marcus and our panel participants.

Daniel Marcus: Hi everyone. Thank you so much for joining us this evening. My name's Daniel Marcus. Everyone calls me Danny. I encourage you all to do the same. I use he/him/his pronouns. In my mind I have curly hair. I like to think that it's sort of Dylan-ish. It's probably closer to Cat Stevens. That's what I have received from the public. It's brown. I have a beard, I guess, a mustache as well. I'm wearing a kind of a striped Oxford shirt and I'm sitting in the Wex's conference room with a bookshelf behind me and everything is gray. That's the Wex. We have a lot of gray here.

I want to just quickly extend a thanks to Kelly for that introduction. And I just strongly echo her thanks to the whole team in Learning and Public Practice for making tonight's event possible in all senses. I also want to thank the exhibition, the exhibition crew at the Wex, our team, everyone who's worked to install the show and to make it what it is. I'm not gonna thank everyone individually, but there's a whole world of folks here who have just labored intensely to make this show the best that it can possibly be.

And I'm just so grateful to them, especially for coming in during the last two days of treacherous weather. So really hats off, and I'm just thrilled with their work.

I'm just gonna kind of kick things off here by first of all, inviting my co-panelists to join me if you all will, just so we can have faces on the screen. And I am also going to briefly say just a little bit about the exhibition, and then we'll kind of pivot quickly over to a discussion. I just wanna say at the outset that the conversation tonight is really meant to kind of unfold one of myriad facets of this exhibition. It's as Kelly mentioned a show that's concerned with two decades of history, and as with any project that attempts to get its hands around such a large topic there are many directions one could go, there are many deep dives that one could take. And I'm thrilled with the constellation of panelists here and the particular deep dive that we're gonna embark upon.

Let me just very quickly though, share a few slides just to kind of orient viewers tonight. Actually, let me remember to share my screen in doing this to orient viewers tonight, just to give you a rough sense of what this exhibition is and what it tries to do, and then we'll get right into our conversation. I have on screen a slide that shows the artist, Elizabeth Murray, speaking to an audience that's seated in a gallery, and the gallery, we'll talk about that gallery quite a lot over the next couple minutes. Behind Murray is a painting hung on the wall and in the crowd, there are students and also some of the staff from the gallery, by the way, as I go along, when there's an image on the screen, I will describe it at some length for those who would require that additional accessibility feature, so I'll be reading these image descriptions as best I can. If I'm flipping through slides as well, I'll say flipping through slides.

The exhibition looks back to a moment in the late 1960s and the early '70s, where much of the ferment and the energy and the excitement around contemporary art at this particular university, at Ohio State, originated. And it surveys again activities on campus around and about the arts, but really focused on one institution in particular, the University of Gallery of Fine Art. It's not a kind of romantic title, University Gallery. It has a certain bluntness to it, but it is in many ways, the protagonist of the exhibition. University Gallery was the Wex's predecessor, it was founded in the mid '60s but really got going in the 1970s, in the middle of the 1970s during the tenure of its first director, Betty Collings, who you see here depicted looking somewhat skeptically at Murray, but with close attention focus and I'm sure interest.

Collings led the gallery through its first five years of expansion, as it grew from a kind of appendage of the division of art into an independent art center in its own right. And I use that word center kind of advisedly, and it really was a hub of activity and happenings and visiting artists talks such as Murray's, but also a hub of collecting. And that's a story that this exhibition really tries to tell. And the collection is very much featured in the exhibition. So the show runs through Collings' tenure and in a certain sense, divides in half in 1980, when she leaves the gallery and a second director comes on board.

And that second director is Jonathan Green, on screen right now, you're looking at a photograph, a black and white photo of Green standing with arms outstretched in front of a large V-shaped pyrotechnic sculpture by the artist Dennis Oppenheim. The two beams of the sculpture are supported by large springs and anchored to the ground at a 90-degree angle. And at the end of each beam is the shape of a human hand. Smoke drifts from the hand at the right, these hands carry pyrotechnics, and they've just been exploded. Green's posture mimics the shape of the sculpture.

Green's tenure is very much at issue for the panel discussion tonight, in the sense that three of the five of us engaged Jonathan very closely at various moments. And Jonathan's legacy, I think, again, it has impacted all of us in various ways and is a model as well. So the exhibition is focused on the University Gallery and on doings at the University Gallery. It is also truly a prehistory of the Wexner Center in that it tries to kind of unpick the origin story that precedes the Wex and that story is the story in so many ways of the University Gallery.

This is actually Jonathan Green at the groundbreaking ceremony for the Wexner Center. Green played a a leading role in the kind of buildup to the Wex. And that was a main part of his job as director of University Gallery was preparing the way for this new expansive paradigm breaking architectural project. But at the same time, he led an exhibition program that is of interest to me personally and will be very focal for our conversation tonight. This slide offers an installation view of one of the exhibitions that Jonathan organized at University Gallery. And it really bears his thumbprint. He had a real sense for expanding the boundaries of art in all senses.

This slide shows an installation view of the gallery during the exhibition, *Writing on the Wall: Works in Progress by New York City Graffiti Artists*. And you see in this photograph, a canvas panel painted with numerous graffiti tags, including "*Zephyr*," "*New York City*," and "*Fun Gallery Rocks the House*," the panel's been pinned to a white wall inside a museum gallery. In the background a man is exiting the gallery. So again, I'm doing no more here than kind of offering a thumbnail sketch of the exhibition. I just wanna make a plug for the show though, this motif of having a large graffiti panel painting hung on a wall pinned in this precise way. If you visit the show, you'll see something a bit like this. And we're very excited by that.

I'm gonna stop my share and just kind of refocus so that we can begin our panel. And I hope for those interested in the show, come see it in person. And I think much of that history will unfold for you in the galleries. Just to kind of start us off, the questions that we're gonna ask in the next hour really have to do with the experience of all of the panelists either directly as folks involved with the University Gallery in various ways, or in Julian's case, as someone who's delved deeply into the gallery's legacy and into the early moments of the Wex's emergence. And we wanna think with each other and talk amongst ourselves here about the particular model of programming that the University Gallery developed in which, and in which we all have a common stake.

I hesitate to define that model as a laboratory, although if attempting a laboratory program involves taking risks and undertaking experiments, then I think in many ways that does some justice to the program at issue, but quickly, just so we can lay out some of the groundwork. I wonder if I might just invite some of my co-panelists here to identify themselves and to describe sort of how they came to the University Gallery and what it was like in the moment that they were there, that can be a kind of nuts-and-bolts question, but it can also be sort of atmospheric. Stephanie, I wonder if you might kind of launch off if you don't mind.

Stephanie Blackwood: Happy to do that. Thank you, Danny. And thank you for the work that has been invested by the staff at the Wex to make this happen. It's a real thrill to be here with my panelists, especially my dear friend, Jerri Allyn, who I met during my tenure, working at the University Gallery. I think I'd like to provide, because my path into the arts was a little bit

unusual, I wanna provide both a look at what was going on at Ohio State at the time that the Wex got started, as well as what it was like actually to be in that hub as you called it.

So, I came to Ohio State to work in Athletics, believe it or not. And from there moved into Central Administration where I was Communications Specialist for the Vice President of Business and Administration. Both those departments were extremely hierarchical, top-down management, nobody stepped out of line. We reported up, we listened to our chiefs tell us what to do from the top down.

The University Gallery was the antithesis of that. It was not just the hub you talked about, Danny, it was a hive of energy and creativity. It was non-hierarchical. It was consensus based. And no, it wasn't exactly, but there was a lot of seeking of consensus and seeking of opinions from everybody. And when I say all were invited to share their ideas, I'm talking about Martha, who is the Administrative Assistant, Ben and Jim, who were the installers, all the graduate assistants, the art faculty was involved and invited. Jonathan Green had a gang of art colleagues from the photography department, from the film and video department scattered throughout the College of the Arts. They were all sought. He talked to people from all over the country, included in that gang were some people that went on to have profound impact. Allan Sekula, Sally Stein, Vince Leo. It was talking all the time about what we could be doing.

And that seeking opinion was a perfect reflection of what had happened in the seven-- started happening in the '60s and '70s in the culture at large, when a generation said, no, I'm no longer gonna believe and do what you ask me to do. I'm gonna ask the questions myself. I'm gonna seek my own guidance. We're gonna create movements. And that culture, that bubbling of energy and ideas and new ways of thinking and creativity, that was at the heart of what University Gallery was tapping into in my experience. So, I think I'll let Mark throw, he came few years after I was there. And I really look forward to hearing what he has to say about the experience.

Daniel: We keep muting and unmuting. Mark, do you wanna--[pause]

Mark Allen Svede: Sure, again, thank you very much for putting this together and thank you for including me in this amazing company. And I feel like my participation in University Gallery came from yet another perspective. I was a student who was accessed to the organization quite organically. I had a mentor who proposed when University Gallery had contacted her about curating an exhibition of East European art. She said, I have a master's student who should do that. And the fact that there was a master's student considered as a guest curator by University Gallery by Jonathan, said a lot about the egalitarian nature of that organization.

And that very exhibition, which was about the opening of Soviet society under Glasnost had a live satellite hookup from the Soviet television programs that were particularly the most liberalized mouthpieces like Reyna. And so I was brought on to supplement an ambitious film program and to provide some wall work for this. So it was not just the domestic social activism that interested Jonathan Green, but the international scope of things.

Later on, I became part of the curatorial team for *AIDS: [the] Artists' Response*, which was the swan song of University Gallery. But in between that time, I was still a graduate student in the History of Art

program. And it was interesting to hear the ferment that not only put together this institution, first with Betty Collings, as you point out in your excellent essay about this process, but also then Jonathan and the photo and cinema kind of diaspora, all of that was very much integral to how the university was reckoning with change at that time.

So, while I would have professors talking about contemporary art in survey courses, as a student, I would go over to University Gallery and look at an actual Frank Stella assemblage, which was much bigger than the slide that was shown in the lecture room. It made it very tangible, very palpable, and also just the talk of how this university environment, which by the 1970s had become somewhat placid had been much more energized in the very beginning.

We were told that the Oval had been normally a traffic circle and that part of the impetus to paving that and making it a pedestrian mall was the fact that the bricks were being torn up by the students during the unrest in 1970. And that just the same sensibility that said we need to make this, we need to pacify this space also turned down the idea when Betty Collings proposed with Robert Smithson, that the entire Oval become a land artwork, where the various trapezoids and triangles between the sidewalks would become elevated and canted that became an issue for public safety and twisted ankles, that sort of thing.

So, when it came around to working at the University Gallery, I had this sense of it as a very engaged place. And like Stephanie said, a team of co-equals, the exhibition curator could tell the guest curator, I think your setup is a little too pedantic, and we don't wanna really hang the works that way. And it was okay. And that was part of the process.

Daniel: I just, I have to get in quickly, 'cause I very strongly suspect that Betty might be listening in. It was Robert Irwin who proposed that project.

Mark: Irwin.

Daniel: On the Oval, shame that it did not come to pass. Just so those out there listening kind of have a sense of where some of these markers touch down. I just wanna say quickly this history of student activism and just kind of the whole unfolding of the story of a kind of generational revolt in many ways. And certainly, a kind of change of consciousness initiated in the 1960s and carried through the 1970s that has a lot to do with the story that this exhibition tries to tell and very emphatically the moment at Ohio State is in April, 1970, there's a really massive student uprising that sort of change is the course of the cultural life politics at the campus thereafter that.

That's a major kind of moment, I think in OSU's history, but there are other, there are other kind of threads of activist activity that persist and grow and amplify through the 1970s and 80s. And one of those threads runs through the department of photography and cinema where Jonathan Green had, originally, he was hired to be part of that department and then kind of transitioned over to the University Gallery.

There's another thread though that I think informs very strongly a project that Stephanie, you organized. And that Jerri was a participant in not only in Columbus, but as it toured the nation. It's an exhibition called *RAPE*. And it was dedicated to the memory of Ana Mendieta, the artist who was killed by, I guess we have to be very careful about this; allegedly killed by Carl Andre, her partner at the time, shortly before the show opened.

Stephanie and Jerri, I wonder if you would kind of recollect for us what that exhibition was and how it operated. Maybe also, it would be helpful. I think for listeners and viewers to know something about the context of that exhibition, what was happening around and about both the University Gallery, but also Jerri what was happening in the world of art practice that you were coming from? I think many people would be very surprised to know that the first national touring exhibition organized by the Ohio State University was also the first national exhibition to really a call out and draw a kind of urgent attention to the crisis of sexual violence. Steph, do you wanna take that?

Stephanie: Thanks, Danny. I think you captured just in your last statement, a lot of what was motivating the organization of *RAPE*. It was a profound experience. I will say that, and I can remember being in a discussion, an all-staff discussion, and sexual violence on campus was a part of what we were talking about. And Jonathan just casually said, we should do a show about rape, that's where it started. And from that moment, the exhibition seemed to have its own life and its own energy.

Among the more profound parts for me as the curator, I also need to drop in when Mark used the word that he came to the gallery organically, I was actually loaned to the gallery by the Office of Business and Administration. It was a loan [smiling], and Vice President Jackson said to me when I went, make them notice us, the call was to make the arts communities on the east and west coast, and throughout the country, know that something was happening in Columbus.

Now, I think Jonathan was perfectly capable of that but I got to be his sidekick and the person who did a lot of the organizing and for that I'm ever so grateful, but initially in particular, some of what made it so profound was that the art was actually selected by Barbara Kruger and Jenny Holzer, two of the last century, and this century's most monumental women artists, feminists, visionaries, and Susan Brownmiller, who wrote the seminal book *Against Our Will*, which was the first to define rape as a weapon of war.

And so, these three thinkers and leaders sat in a room, sat in Barbara Kruger's loft in New York City and reviewed the art that had been submitted after a national call. We didn't have a huge response. We had around a hundred artists who submitted, I think that's a reflection of the fact that art about sexual violence was not something that was generally exhibited. So why would anybody create something that had no chance for exhibition? And their challenge was to pair the national artists who responded with Ohio artists because the mission of the soon, three years later to be opened Wexner Center, was to bring attention to Central Ohio as well as to be a showcase for national thinking and artists.

And from the very beginning, it became a show that captured the attention of the campus and those groups that were focused on violence, sexual violence and women against rape, the rape victim support services. And it was of great interest by the art community of Ohio as well. The Ohio Arts Council was very much a proponent. So, we had this sense that although we didn't necessarily know what would

come of this, we had a sense that there was a compelling need to do the show. And of course, that compulsion was a big part of what made Jonathan such a tremendous leader in his role as executive director of the Gallery of Fine Art.

I think I'll let Jerri bring to the fore some of her thinking about what the experience was like to be a part of the show.

Jerri Allyn: So, thank you, Steph. So, my time in the art world was spent building an alternative art world, alternative spaces, which began at the Women's Building, a public center for women's culture in Los Angeles. And if the dominant art world wasn't gonna let women and artists of color in, we were gonna, we were gonna build our own [laughing]. So, in my mind, it launched the do-it-yourself movement, which has only strengthened over the years.

And I've worked at High Performance at Franklin Furnace, at El Museo del Barrio, the Bronx Museum of the Arts, Venice Arts. So, I've worked in this alternative arts scene. And a few years earlier, '85 launched the *RAPE* exhibition. In '79, the woman's building and a whole cadre of artists and part of Ariadne, Susan Lacey, and Leslie Labowitz launched a show about incest, a yearlong program about incest. So, there were multiple, multiple shows that happened. It wasn't national, but there was an exhibition called *Bedtime Stories*. And there was also, I worked on, it was one of the participating artists and producer of *Equal Time and Equal Space*, which was a six-system video installation set up like consciousness raising group. The audience sat in between the monitors and the head of each woman who participated, told their story about incest. And I have not, I did not experience incest. I did, I was gang raped when I was seven. So, I was one of the camera people.

So, I was heartened that there was still, that there was more interest in this. I mean, certainly I loved learning about artists that were dealing with the subject matter and really taking on challenging subjects. I did not know that it was quite frankly [laughing] that because I am a radical queer feminist and kind of traverse in those circles, I did not know it was such a loaded issue until Stephanie and the press people got in trouble for calling it *RAPE*.

And so that that was fascinating and a whole different… like there had to be a shift in publicizing the issue. Though, I will say that in '75, when Brownmiller published her book *Against Our Will*, and I forget the subtitle, maybe "*Women, Men and Rape*", rape was barely, if it was spoken at all, it was whispered. So, it was barely, barely talked about. And so that was, it was great that there were other universities taking this on.

Daniel: I mean, to me, there's so much in that, and there's so much we could do here together to kind of continue to unfold that particular exhibition. I wonder just to pause on that one thought though, about getting into trouble.

This goes back to or connects to a conversation that the five of us have had once or twice before, and that Julian and I have both kind of been thinking about as we kind of, Julian has been an interlocutor around and about this show from the get go, we've talked on the phone endlessly about University Gallery, and I feel sort of like, I must have been torturing Julian [laughing], the long year with my obsession with this institution and its history.

But it does come back to that idea and sort of the ideal as well of the art center as a laboratory. And I think the side of laboratory practice that is easy to kind of easy to gloss and sells easily has to do with innovation and forward thrust.

But there's another side of it that has to do with, just the explosiveness of laboratory materials. I mean, I wonder Julian, if you might kind of help us to see some of the projects that we've been talking about, or just some of the history at issue in terms of a larger trajectory of laboratory experiments, but also maybe even to pull a thread that Jerri offered us, a history of alternative spaces too.

I mean, the interesting thing is like, we're talking about a space, the University Gallery, I mean, it had a little gallery in Hopkins Hall and a bigger gallery in Sullivan Hall at a massive public university. It's not an alternative space by any stretch of the imagination. I mean, it is in the more institutional kind of spaces that you could conjure up. And yet we're also talking about this programming that is in very close dialogue with not just sort of an alternative cultural scene, but in many ways like oppositional culture. So, I just wonder if this strikes a chord, if there's something we can think about.

Julian Myers-Szupinska: Well, so, I forgot that I meant to introduce myself. I have short black hair and stylish glasses, and I'm in a rented room in Los Angeles with art leaned against the back wall behind me and an orange chair.

I'm really struck as I'm listening of the dichotomies seem to be at play between a kind what's been described by Mark and Stephanie and Jerri as a non-hierarchical space as consensus seeking, as egalitarian and as you've set out in your essay and in this conversation as something that's deeply connected to the 60s counterculture. I'm struck by the relationship of all of that to the way that the appearance of hierarchy in the format of the university sort of kinda creeps into the conversation at these various points.

The idea that Stephanie was coming from a place that was from an administrative structure that was deeply hierarchical, for example, and then this from what Jerri said, that in essence, there was this kind of interesting friction that appeared between the intentions of the organizers and the apparatus of publicity. That there's friction between like the radicalism of the exhibition and the way even to mediate that sort activity. So that's just a way of like, kinda like thoughts that I have knocking around.

Danny, in our ongoing conversations about the show and the history of the University Gallery, arrived at a prompt or provocation that was trying to unpack a phraseology that arrived into the institutional documents, as Jonathan Green in this kind of social context were beginning to look forward to the institution that would become the Wexner Center for the Arts which opened in 1989. A key kind of dyad that arrived into those forms of institutional self-descriptions was between the laboratory and the living art center. And Danny very generously gave me a folder full of internal documents that were part of this institutional self-conception that was being formulated in the early and mid-1980s. And so, my research-

Daniel: Just so archivists know, I gave Julian a digital copy. I did not provide one. We have an archivist and it's sensitive.

Julian: Yeah. Wrangling PDFs is my life these days.

And so, trying to think out and create a genealogy of how this term arrived and how it was deployed and used, what the term means as a form of institutional self-definition, what does it perform and what are the kind of frictions and possibilities within that idea? And it turns out that the laboratory metaphor that was kind of formulated in the moment of the very exhibitions that we've been describing, is one that is a really long and entangled history in the arts.

And that it embodies a kind of contradiction between enclosure and openness, put it that way, between a kind of activity that is self-relating, devoted to a kinda small group radicalism that only emerges into the world after it's kind of played out. And one that is rooted in the conception of the art center as such, which is devoted to a kind of outgoing form of experimentation that leads instead to publicness and activism in a very, very different way.

And to see the play, the central play of the institution as it was kind of taking shape was precisely between this kind of, the antipodes of these two impulses. One of which was very much part of this kind of small dispersive group. And the other of which was the way that this small dispersive group of the University Gallery then kind of related to the world of Columbus, the national and international communities. I don't know if that's an answer to your question.

Daniel: It certainly is. And I mean, it's also a really generous kind of unfolding of the laboratory model in its contradictory-ness, which I think is useful and helpful for the conversation at large.

It also does something that I think is useful for us, even just in kind of thinking about storytelling and bringing things out of this history that are themselves kind of made of contradictory impulses and elements. I think about on the one hand that that kind of openness to activist energies for example, being like such an interesting and important feature of the gallery, especially in the 1980s, the decade that concerns the five of us tonight.

I also think about contradiction though, that's born out as you say, like the nested of this institution at the university. And that kind of makes me wonder, I mean, it's a great opportunity, I guess, to think about a project that, as Mark already said earlier, was the final exhibition at University Gallery, *AIDS: The Artists' Response*. We've been talking about this kind of just in email lately, the question of was there a larger exhibition devoted to the HIV AIDS crisis in the moment of that crisis? I haven't been able to find one.

Mark, I wonder if you might speak a bit about the exhibition and maybe thinking with us about this kind of bipolarity, on the one hand an exhibition that is by its nature kind of bound up with an activist cause that you yourself were a partisan of, as were your co-organizers. And on the other hand, the institution and its own kind of momentum and weight, and especially in the very moment. *AIDS: The Artists' Response* opens in the very early months of 1989. The Wexner Center is going up. I mean, it's already largely constructed at that point. [gestures with hands as speaks]

At some point, the letterhead changes over and it's, the transition is really beginning and here is this project that sort of sits at the crux of this historical, one institution's ending and another beginning. Is that enough of a prompt to make it possible to say some words about that show?

Mark: Sure. I think as much as it would sound like a coda to University Gallery, the life and death nature of the issue for so many people who were involved with the exhibition and primarily the artists and community participants, [gestures with hands as speaks] but also the chief curator, Jan Zita Grover, was San Francisco based, one of the early epicenters of the epidemic, Lynnette Molnar, and I who were the local parts [gestures with hands as speaks] of the team, had recently experienced loss in our own lives. And so, it was all very palpable. So, the idea [gestures with hands as speaks] of this art center coming up in the midst of all of this was in a sense immaterial, though, certainly very salient.

The other thing I would say about how the activist kind of charge, or the torch was passed to us. At the time that there was the first talk about this exhibition was about the time [gestures with hands as speaks] that the design for the Wexner Center was becoming public. And as I mentioned to you, there was this incredible event on campus one morning, where once the Peter Eisenman design of the Wexner Center being at a 12 and a quarter degree offset to the campus grid had been marked on the grounds of the university by a red spray painted line, that drew a line between the axis of the Wexner Center and the football stadium and the bookstore on High Street, which was considered the commodification of education.

So, all of this was [gestures with hands as speaks] in everybody's mind where the exhibition differs from *RAPE*, I would say, is controversy was anticipated from the beginning because the stigmatization was so much a part of American culture at that point. And it probably was Jan and Lynette's genius before I even joined the team that the *Names Project Quilt* was going to be considered an integral part of the programming.

So it happened basically after the exhibition, as a hole opened and much of the programming happened, [gestures with hands as speaks] but that was a face of the epidemic that the community could at least embrace in a more sentimental, personalized way, rather than the politicized nature of how the epidemic was being ignored at the time. [gestures with hands as speaks]

That said, it was a much broader open call, national call. We had probably closer to 300 submissions to the exhibition, and in fact, so many and so many good submissions that the limitations of the Sullivant Hall space meant that we wanted to share the other potential participants through a constantly circulating slide projection that was in the gallery. And so, there were some odd personalities to be in that kind of secondary part of the exhibition. I mean, it was admittedly a secondary part of the exhibition, but somebody who's central to our sense of AIDS activist art, is David Wojnarowicz was a slide participant in *AIDS The Artist's Response*, but we involved the community, the AIDS Task Force in Columbus, there were 700 volunteers at the *Names Project Quilt*, and it had the university's highest administration involved in coordinating that. So, it really was. Circling back, it was held at the Woody Hayes Practice Facility. So, the Athletic Department had to sign on for this totally stigmatized social issue at that that level of engagement.

Daniel: Well, I'm really happy that we could draw out some of these histories. I mean, I almost wanna say buried histories, but that makes them seem like dead and done with. And I think these are in so many ways living histories. So, I just want to thank you all for this kind of round of

conversation. We're gonna switch over now to take questions. And just as a reminder, there's the hotline, but there's also, for those of you who are on Zoom actively, there's the question-and-answer option as well.

Julian: Danny, can I ask you a quick question before we launch in?

Daniel: Sure.

Julian: I wonder what is your sense of the relationship that struck between the University Gallery and the shift towards the Wex? You begin your essay with this really powerful image of the first, the inaugural exhibition at the Wex as [gestures with hands as speaks] being primarily a display of the architecture as such, and that is an empty building, which is this incredible kind of juxtaposition with the two shows that we're talking about today, which were deeply relying on open calls and were crammed with artists and works, slideshows that were devoted to kind of being this cacophonous activist response. And so, there's this really stark juxtaposition [gestures with hands as speaks] that you're making. So, what exactly do you understand the relationship between this moment that you're highlighting and the institution that you're now a part of?

Daniel: That's a great question. Maybe an inevitable question as I sit here in the conference room surrounded by Eisenmanian and gray. I mean there's a way of casting that image, the empty building, for kind of essayistic effect as a way of kind of signaling an absence. I mean, the University Gallery's legacy wasn't really on display in the birth moment of the Wexner Center. And I think to some extent that is true. The way that it's true is, has a lot to do with the collection actually that had been the nuclear center of the nucleus, I should say, of the University Gallery, really running right back to the era of Betty Collings' tenure as director.

I mean, her work was, first of all, her work was prolific. I mean, she generated out of thin air an extraordinarily vital program. But it's the collection that created this sort of need for there to be a museum that wasn't. There was no centralized space to show the collection. There were two separate exhibition spaces. There was no centralized, there certainly wasn't a kind of fully modernized space to store the collection. [adjusts glasses] And those functions passed right to the Wexner Center. And there was no disguising that, there was no ambiguity about that. The Wex has a vault that was built to store that collection. And it's part of Eisenman's designs.

But the building is the building, and the building is merciless when it comes to historical objects, there's so much natural light. And it's been my over the last year, I mean, it's really been this kind of incredible challenge to figure out how to use the building to show a collection that inspired the building, or at least inspire the center as such, I don't know to what extent Eisenman was aware of the collection, [adjusts glasses] or was aware of its particulars, I should say, but nevertheless, the building was not really made to be a traditional art gallery.

There's a way of emphasizing that I think is right. But on the other hand, I think of the projects that the Wexner Center did that even in that first moment, it's a bit fudging things to say that there was nothing in the building because there was an incredible installation by Julia Sure that took this surveillance camera technology and trained it on audience members as they traversed this highly spectacular space. So even in that moment, there is a kind of counter note.

And I think you could also say in like November 1989 for the first Day Without Arts, or the first Day Without Art, a project of Visual AIDS to sort of provoke awareness of the AIDS crisis by various sorts of museum interventions. At the Wex, there was a screening of Video Against AIDS, a project by Bill Horrigan, a collaboration with John Grayson that sort of it brought back in many ways to the fore, many of the artworks and artists that had been on view previously. I see Mark's hand, Mark, do you wanna jump in?

Mark: If only to provide a little bit of kind of background information of that transition. Certainly, the original intention was there was an inaugural exhibition intended for the Wexner Center. And then with a change of leadership, it was decided that there would be this big celebratory kind of blue-chip historical survey of the previous few decades. And that required a massive amount of curatorial effort at the last, 11th hour curatorial push. And I think and coupled with the fact that Peter Eisenman himself was incensed, that there was going to be any inaugural exhibition. He thought that the structure should be its own entity for however long, the first couple weeks, months, whatever. And the people were just to inhabit the glorious gesture that the building was.

So, it was a negotiation. So, in a sense, what ended up filling the galleries initially, or filling the pretty much empty galleries was like a deep breath between what University Gallery had done in terms of approach and what the Wexner Center's early approach was to forming exhibitions. So…

Daniel: Steph, did you want to jump in?

Stephanie: Can I say just a quick comment? We talk about this, I think that one of the things that was always a part of University Gallery's legacy, and that was intended to become a part of the Wexner Center under Jonathan's leadership was this tension, this frisson, [gestures with hands] between the inside group that was involved in the arts, and pretty much I'm gonna say it, everybody else.

There was not great buy-in at the university when discussions started about building this center. There was great skepticism. There was great resistance. And then it just, it rippled out into the Central Ohio community, because nobody wanted more, as Mark said, of what University Gallery had been doing. And yet that was the very thing that made [gestures with hands] Ohio State a great candidate for making them notice us.

I mean, in one of our earlier conversations we talked about the fact that the Artists' Response to AIDS maybe could only happen in Columbus because it was not in the politicized environments of the east

and west coasts where much of the leadership around HIV AIDS was happening. That maybe the advantage was we were in Ohio and nobody, and we took everybody by surprise.

But what I know from my firsthand experience of working with him is that Jonathan Green thrived on that puzzle of how do you move it forward through the resistance. It energized everything about what he wanted to do. And that it takes a rare leader to thrive on that kind of pushback, which is intellectual and artistic and political and based in funding, and you, you name it.

Daniel: Stephanie, that links so nicely with a question that I see in the Q&A, and I'm gonna read this question. Any one of you is welcome to answer this. This can go any which way.

Nicole Romey writes, "I'm really struck by the courageous thinking and programming at the University Gallery. I'm wondering if you could talk a bit about how arts institutions today could continue to shed light on social injustices in our community, despite inevitable institutional hesitations."

Would anyone like to take that on?

Jerri: I'll jump in, and I forgot to introduce myself too. So I am, I have short hair, that's dark on the sides and blonde on top. I have red glasses and I have a pink shirt and black suit coat.

So, I wanna note that at the beginning of the alternative art space, I'm gonna say movement, it was artists that stepped up and so the tension that comes from everybody and artists that don't have, I mean, there were artists that had access to money and were privileged, but a lot of artists do not.

And the tension that comes from institutions that are meant to serve a community and yet are funded, particularly the established institutions are funded by the few philanthropic people who have money, they're often, they may be involved in ventures, where they make their money, it's hard to, they get in trouble over where they make their money. Like the Hammer Museum in LA gets money from Chevron, the oil and gas manufacturer. And all of this like gets into issues related to climate change. But aside from what I'm struck by, so there's all those tensions of the few having a lot of money, and then the rest of us.

What I'm amazed by is, is that the do-it-yourself movements continue to happen. And in LA there's over are 25 alternative sites that some in people's homes, some in their backyards, like they're people, regardless of the funding, there is this desire to express oneself and to express issues of importance that continue no matter what.

And for instance, so bringing it back to *RAPE* and Danny had asked me a question at one point, or someone had asked me a question at one point earlier in the month about could a rape exhibition happen today? I think it would be easier to mount an exhibit today. And I think there could one yearly, even though stats on rape have declined, sexual violence seems to have increased and infanticide is increased. And Canada finally admitted a few years ago that their treatment of indigenous women amounts to genocide and the red dress movement that's carried on by indigenous women, it's actually been installed on the Washington Mall in DC. So that's like another alternative site.

So, I think that's, there's something there [gestures with hands] that fascinates me about people continuing to speak up and carry on. Particularly the visual arts data is, can be dry and it can be deadening, but the visual storytelling and storytelling in general and film and video, and these are all methods of, they move the heart and mind more than data moves, than some of the dreadful data that that comes on. But so, I think that's fascinating. And I'm also really curious and I think there are, I'm not quite sure how someone else brought up this issue about there's another question that says, how do models such as the Walker Arts Center, which is a multidisciplinary vision relate to the discussion so far?

These models had little to do collections and were conscious examples for the planners of the Wex. So, I think there are, I think again, university galleries and universities in general, as sites of where they're bringing people in constantly, it's a site of ideas. It theoretically is a site where anything can be discussed. There's library that have a broad spectrum of opinions and views. I think these are really kind of fabulous sites to keep.

I'm thrilled, Danny, that you're really like mining this and figuring out, you and your colleagues are figuring out how can there be some, how can there be a re-envisioning of the Wexner Center as possibly both blue chip, but also, including community voices.

Julian: I would love to underline some of what Jerri said. And it seems to me that the institutional form of the university art gallery is a really useful position from which issues like social justice might be addressed, precisely because you, the University Art Gallery exists at a kind of distance from the museum world, the privileges of the museum world, which are structured around collections, which goes for some university museums, but not all of them. They're structured on collection, collecting. Too, its separate, university art galleries are separate to some extent or another from the art market and that relative distance gives them space and room to engage with practices that are not easily commodified, that are linked to other departments of the university in various ways. It allows space and has done so historically I think, since the 1960s.

I mean, there are all kinds of complications to that sense of possibility that I have about university art galleries, the slow kind of heaviness of the implication of the institution with the university as a larger administrative structure. The university has its own kind of privileges and requirements and hang-ups that kind of come into that mediate and kind of come into play with what the gallery is able to do.

But I do see the university art gallery as at least potentially a kind of really important place where a kind of non-commodified sort of art can really take center stage. [pauses]

I guess I also can quickly answer the question about the Walker. I mean, Danny knows this history probably much better than I do, but the history does kind of go back to the Walker Art Center very, very directly. The Walker Art Center was part of a kind of wave of art centers established in the 1930s and 40s by the Federal Art Project. The Walker was just a collection, a gallery that rebranded itself as an art center and then expanded its remit in that moment. Mark?

Mark: I was just gonna say, and it's even more direct in that Jonathan Green's replacement came from the Walker Art Center. The founding director as it were of the operating Wexner Center came from the Walker. And he very clearly saw the Wexner Center as a [unintelligible], nothing more

than that. And in fact, the easy solution for doing these big exhibitions about the 60s, the 70s and whatever, was to access the university's collection. But they automatically said none of the university's collection was going to be included in those inaugural exhibitions. Also, none of the Wexner family pieces, the Wexner family initially said they had no interest in any of their work appearing in the Wexner Center context at any point.

That's since changed.

So, and in fact, I had worked for 20 years with the Dodge Collection and Norton Dodge, the founder of that collection wanted to donate it to Ohio State because his great aunt was the first woman to graduate from Ohio State. And Townsend Hall is named for her. And when I went to Robert Sterns and said, there's this $26 million collection that's being offered to the Wexner Center. He said, We have no facility for it. We have no interest in it" Which later on when the director of development for the graduate school heard that, the blood drained from her face. And it was like, we don't turn away that kind of a world class collection. So, there's been an ambivalence with collections or at least our own collection from the get-go with the Wexner. I''s a pretty rich vein for mining.

Daniel: Mine it we are, although that extractive metaphor maybe is not so appropriate to the ethical operation.

Caring for it is a big piece of it. I guess I wanna, I mean, there's a question lingering in the air about multi-disciplinarity that seems really worth thinking through as well. but there's also just that large and potent question about what institutions can do in a moment where, of course the question of how institutions might participate in struggles, anti-oppression struggles, struggles against racism, struggles of all sorts and on all sides, and in dialogue with activists. That's a very, that describes in so many ways the institutional conversation of the last two years, if not much longer.

And I guess I wonder if anyone wants to kind of, just kind of close us out with a further thought along those lines. And I don't know why, I think you might have something to say, Stephanie, but I just think again about something that you wrote in your reflection essay about *RAPE* and that has to do with the kind of the unexpected impact of seeing art on the walls in the University Gallery that directly addressed, not just the topic of rape, but the experience of rape.

And there's an anecdote where you talk about a student, seeing this work and, I don't wanna put words in your mouth, but I mean, he was having a profound experience and you've now then gone on in your career after University Gallery to work with and around LGBTQ rights and in all sorts of ways. And I just wonder if there's a kind of lesson or nugget that you would wanna draw out just as we close?

Stephanie: Well, I'm honored that you would ask me, amongst my colleagues, I know that we all have, we all have deep thoughts and feelings about this subject.

For me, University Gallery was, and I say this in my essay, it was transformative. And a part of what made it so, was to experience firsthand that there was no subject, no subject that was not worthy of consideration within the context of art, [gestures with hands as speaks] nothing was out of bounds. And that freedom, I think, is what universities are supposed to be. But in my own graduate school experience

are often more about protecting what has come before, rather than pushing out against what could be a inspiring new thinking.

And so that the incident that Danny referenced was that we had prepared extensively for what we couldn't possibly, and we were anticipating anything could happen in the gallery space because some of the images of artwork, in today's parlance, triggering. They were profoundly violent and cruel and deeply personal. And the gallery was open to students and people from the community and who knew what could happen. So, we had people on hand to intercede in the event that anybody became upset and needed support and assistance.

And I spent a lot of the time in the gallery because it was my job. And because I was amazed by the public's response to this show. I was there one day and a young man in camo, no doubt an undergraduate, caught my eye. And as he walked slowly and thoughtfully from work to work, he became increasingly agitated, breathing heavily, and his face was getting red. He was upset. I had no idea what was gonna come next, but I went to him and asked if I could help him in any way. And he kind of backed away with his hands up. He could hardly talk. And he said, "I just didn't know. I just didn't know this is what it was like."

And that to me is the function of what we were doing. That's the changing of hearts and minds that Jerri spoke of. He was having a moment of transformation brought as a result of artists honestly sharing their feelings about the experience of sexual violence. And that experience carried me through the next 40 years of my engagement with the arts. It's what I look for. How can this piece, this experience, this environment, how can it move me to a new place and a new way of thinking? [Jerri claps] And I will say that my dear friend, Jerri Allyn, is a lot of how I have continued to be able to do that. Jerri never stops questioning, never stops looking for a way to move people to a new place of being and seeing and feeling about other human beings and their experiences. And I'm so profoundly grateful that our lives intersected at the moment they did. And for the work they're all doing for this show.

Daniel: Well, I mean, the gratitude is mutual, and, on this panel, I would say universal and I'm personally so grateful to you for sharing just your experience with and around *RAPE* the exhibition. not just here, but also in writing, your reflection essay is just enormously impactful and stays with me. This is the decrescendo. This is the [unintelligible], but I just want to ask if there are last thoughts from other panelists, just as we go out?

Julian: Danny, can I ask or say something? I think I had this moment when the lockdowns began in 2020 of schools and museums, I had this moment of hope or, that what the result of that kind of pause might be, is a moment of reconsideration and of thinking about all of the things that a normal institutional world had gotten wrong, had relied on a kind of history of exploitation and things like this. And that the moment of closure might propose a kind of systemic institutional reflection on and a new beginning. And it seems to me that one of the things I think I lost some of that hope very quickly as I saw how things were gonna go. But I think that it's just to kind of think about the motivation of your show in vis a vis these shows from the 1980s as kinda itself being, not just a kinda gesture of history making for the sake of it, but actually trying to think of

another place to begin the process of being an institution. I wonder if you have any reflections on that?

Daniel: (I went for what I thought was unmute, but it was the leave button. So, I'm really glad I didn't click that button. Been a little awkward.) Yeah, I mean, there's a kind of, there's a way of answering that question, which would be just utterly straightforward to say like in the context of my work at the Wex, I mean, I joined in the midst of the pandemic in August of 2020, revisiting this history seemed like a starting place simply for me as someone who kind of bridges curatorial work and art historical work. And I teach in the History of Art Department, I have a joint position.

Also, I there's a side of it where like that sense new beginning was sparked by interest in the community of artists in Columbus, the interest in the Wex's collection. And I really have to credit Ry Wharton, an artist here, and a friend whose own obsession with the collection kind of colored my thinking as I started my job, but the better answer to your question, I think is it's like, it's not the particulars of the University Gallery's history. It's the method, it's kind of looking, it's not like looking at the past as it's sort of presents itself to be seen, it's sort of looking under the past and looking, I mean, Julian, you and I share a background as art historians trained at UC Berkeley. And for whom the idea of the social history of art is formative and meaningful.

And I think that sense of perspective I bring to this project and that's sort of, I don't speak for the institution in the sense that I can't say, and now the Wexner Center does X, Y, and Z, but I can just say in my own like attempt to kind of join the history of the Wexner Center and become one of its actors, I think all the time about how to center social history and the things that happen outside of institutions that shape institutions so profoundly, and the people outside of institutions whose absolutely heroic complicated, I don't want to paint everything with the rose brush or mixed metaphor or whatever, but that work, I think just also to link back to that thought that Stephanie offered about nothing being off limits.

I mean, within the context of art and the art world, there's even a sort of script for what's off limits, or what's off limits is often an artist's career that's under recognized or a practice that's sort of been forgotten or that's at the margins. In some ways I'm sort of interested in what's even beyond the margins. What's literally outside of art, what's outside of the professional sphere of art. And how do we find ways of opening up cracks to see through to that world, which doesn't benefit from the kind of the heroic narrative structure of art history.

I mean, people, just to kind of think about conversations I've had with folks absolutely through and sparked by this exhibition with folks in Columbus, for example like the members of the Columbus AIDS Taskforce were absolute heroes, just working, many of them were volunteers. I mean, just like the labor that was poured into this life-or-death struggle, deserves all of the accolades and all of canonizing mechanisms of the art world and of art history. I mean, and there's no script for that being provided, like that won't happen. And in some ways, that's, I don't even wanna say like, there is a way that we can just rejigger what art is or how institutions work to make suddenly all heroic gestures in the world at large canonized, it's not gonna happen.

But it's something as a curator I can try to do, I can try to find a framework for doing that. And the pandemic has been hard and there are days when I think there must be so much more that I can do. And then there are days when I'm like, this is one thing that I can do. And I have to say, it's not just one thing that I can do. It's one thing that this institution has supported me in doing, through thick and thin, and I'm just incredibly grateful for it. and I look forward to what comes of it.

And on that note, we are really at time. And so, I wanna say thank you to all who stayed with us and to all on the panel.