

Hallett Gutierrez: All right, so today is Friday, November 15, 2019. I am sitting— I am Anna Hallett Gutierrez class of '21, and I'm sitting here with Helene Tieger, class of '85 and Christopher Wangro, Chris, class of 19—

Wangro: '79, though I graduated in '80.

Hallett Gutierrez: Okay, thank you. So this is part of Bard StoryCorps, we're currently at Chris' house in— or cabin in Woodstock, New York and we're just sort of going to get started with your time at Bard. So I guess, you know, what— when you think of your time at Bard, sort of what sticks out to you?

Wangro: I think, when I think of my time at Bard, what sticks out to me or what I think of is not the education as such, but at the time in this sort of wonderful place. Like the whole thing sort of seems like some sort of madcap adventure and lovely, like a lovely adventure. — although I spent a lot of time in Woodstock as a kid, I was a city kid. And going to Annandale, and I can tell you at some point (if you want to know) so I think my admissions story is worth telling, how I ended up there. (Everyone's heads are shaking!) But ending up in the *place* the incredibly beautiful Bard and surrounds and living in places like Tivoli and Barrytown and all that, and being surrounded by lots of other sort of creative lunatics; it was just sort of a wonderful time and it was a time to; you, there couldn't hardly be a more nurturing landscape to sort of grow up and play in. I feel like I played for four years or five years or more, because I stayed around after because it took me a long time to graduate.

Tieger: Do you want to tell us more about that admissions story?

Wangro: Well I was never going to go, to go to school; I had no desire to go to college. I was not college-bound. I went to a very cool progressive High School in Manhattan and like all the schools it was very college focused, and all my family went to college. I had no desire, I wanted to go to clown school. I had done clowning, and all that. And then, you know I had a really good friend, most of my friends at that point had actually gotten into school, I hadn't even applied anywhere, and I had a really good friend who was going up to Bard in the spring, I don't really remember, it was either spring or fall, I don't know, I think it was spring but could have been fall; some lovely day, and she was going up for I think there was an instant admissions thing. And she was like, "come up with me" and I was like, "yeah, sure, I'll get on the train and come up with you." So, went up to Bard, took the train up the Hudson, nice start right? Got to Bard. She went off to do her admissions thing and I started walking around the campus, found some people, got stoned, walked around Bard, went *fuck*, this is college? I'm in! I'll come here, this is great! And yeah, it was. And then, I went and did an instant admission thing; I had terrible grades in terms of actual grades, but I don't think, actually I doubt Bard is anything like this anymore, but if you'd do a little digging, you'd see that in circa 1975, which is the year I graduated high school, Bard was definitely looking for people, especially people who could pay tuition. My parents had, I paid full tuition. Which at that point I think was \$7000 ladies and gentlemen. Right, less than I'm paying now to put my toddler into preschool and it was at that

point still one of the most expensive schools in America. Anyway, so, they were like, Oh you do a lot of theater and you're a clown, you're in. So it was a different kind of experience.

Tieger: Did your friend end up going to Bard as well?

Wangro: No, she didn't, she didn't.

Tieger: That's funny.

Wangro: Yeah. That's the way it is.

Tieger: So did you do the instant admissions that day or did you-

Wangro: Yeah

Tieger: Just decide- you did?

Wangro: No, no. That day.

Hallett Gutierrez: So you just walked in and said I'd like to do it?

Wangro: Yeah, yeah, something like that, I mean to the best of my memory. I don't know about you but

Hallett Gutierrez: Wow

Tieger: So it's like the Immediate Decision Plan, does that ring a bell? I think that's the name that I remember.

Wangro: I think it was called instant admissions, but I don't remember. So it was one of those weird things, like Hey! I came back to the school and said, I came back to my school and to my parents and said, I applied, and they were like, *what?* And so yeah, I went to Bard and instantly started having a pretty good time. I'd say freshman year is weird for everyone probably, but then you know, but I was then on a roll, and have been on a roll for years.

Tieger: So in freshman year you did live on campus?

Wangro: I lived yes. I lived in Tewksbury which at that point had no buildings nearby, it was an outpost. And it is as lovely today as it was then. But yeah, you meet a lot of people living in a dorm like that. So most people became really good friends.

Hallett Gutierrez: Did it have the reputation of being sort of like an eyesore?

Wangro: Oh yeah, you know, right, right. But also something to realize about Bard and you know this, I feel like there are more new buildings on campus, then there were buildings period when I was there. There were no sidewalks, there were no street lights, there was no; I was a film major here, and we met in an old *garage*. There was like one camera, you know? So I mean it was a very different school. You know, it was a very different thing.

Tieger: So, you're a film major.

Wangro: For a while, so I did enter as a film major, right yes.

Tieger: Okay. Do you want to talk about—

Wangro: It's not that interesting, I entered— I had done a lot of theater in New York as a high school kid, and was really into the theater, but I wasn't really into the theater, right? And you know, when I got to Bard I entered the drama department, it was very like the theater and that was not like my scene. I had a good time, but it wasn't my, in fact there was a fabulous woman, who you probably remember, named Natalie Lunn, Natalie Lunn who ran the technical department for the theater, and she lived in Tewksbury. She was sort of this great old battle-ax of a theater person, and we could all like go and drink bourbon and smoke cigarettes with her after, you know. And then there was a guy named Bill Driver who was a fucking legend, who was just great. He was a very, I wouldn't say— genius may be going too far, but he was a very sort of brilliant British director from the sort of Carnaby street era of London, you know, just gay and drunk and weird all the time. And he ran the theater department, and I was very close to both of them, in fact I lived in Bill's apartment for a while and— But other than that the department wasn't right for me, most of my friends were film people. And I also loved film so I— I moderated, do you still do moderations?

Hallett Gutierrez: Yes

Wangro: I moderated in film. And actually I moderated with a guy named Jamie Livingston, who you may know from the Photo of the Day Project, we'll get back to that. But Jamie and I convinced the school that we could do a co-moderation which at that point hadn't been done. So we made something like, I don't remember, twenty short films together

Hallett Gutierrez: Wow

Wangro: As our moderation

Hallett Gutierrez: So, how did that co-moderation work? It was like, you both worked on this and presented it as your team effort?

Wangro: Yeah

Hallett Gutierrez: And then they let you both through as—

Wangro: Yeah, exactly, yeah

Hallett Gutierrez: Very interesting

Wangro: Really interesting because they were terrible films, but yes. There were a lot of them. We made up for in quantity for what we lacked in quality

Tieger: Do you remember who was on your board?

Wangro: Adolfas for sure, probably, maybe, Tom no, Ken Ross maybe? And it could have been P. Adams Sitney, although, do you know who that name, do you know that name? P. Adams is a great character. I think P. Adams would maybe not have passed us, so I doubt that he was on it, but P. Adams was a visiting professor. He was— he was one of, he is still one of the great scholars of the independent American cinema, very serious, very sort of rabbinical, complete pain. The kind of guy who literally you know, said things that live on like, someone showed a film in class and he'd say, "More boring than a game of Monopoly"

(laughter)

Wangro: You know, that kind of shit, you know— just lives on. I remember, yeah, I mean literally, great P. Adams quotes. He knew a lot about movies but he was a totally ridiculous guy.

Tieger: Well, we can't just mention Adolfas and not say anything. What, what do you remember about Adolfas—

Wangro: Adolfas?

Tieger: Do you have any great stories for us?

Wangro: Yeah, I mean Adolfas, you, you knew Adolfas.

Tieger: Mhmm

Wangro: What was your major?

Tieger: Oh, I was a music major.

Wangro: Right, we could talk about Ben Boretz and Eli Yarden who by the way I just spoke to. No Adolfas was amazing. He was— he too was very serious; these guys came out of an incredible tradition of independent cinema. They treated it with great reverence and yet Adolfas was you know, sort of an irreverent character in general. And we were all irreverent youths, so he was a bit of a hero for everybody. And things like wanting to moderate together; you know, he didn't give a flying fuck, he was like, yeah sure, right? Why not? Just make movies, you

know, make movies that you want. There was a great guy named, god— Oh I know who was on our board, Warren Sonbert. Do you know who that was? He's actually, he was a very, sort of famous filmmaker of the same '70s independent filmmaker. Great films, beautiful stuff. Warren is an example of how he would teach us, Warren, you know, we'd all take our cameras somewhere where we weren't allowed to shoot as a class, and then we would go there and shoot until we were thrown out, right. Olana was one, there was like a Caldors or Safeway or something we all went to. Literally like they would, at that Safeway or Caldors, literally like rounded us up one at a time, you know, they put us in the security office and you'd hear like, "There's another camera in aisle seven, camera in aisle seven" right,

(laughter)

Wangro: Warren he's fucking— He's no longer with us. You know, Adolfas selected people like Warren and P. Adams Sitney and got them to come up from the city. Yeah.

Tieger: How did you raise money for the film department? Because there are lots of stories about how they, they really had no, they had no resources

Wangro: No resources, it was ridiculous I mean but you know the films we made were Super 8, so, later we got into doing some 16. Was, I think to it sort of, it was his thing about teaching and I mean it's really nice if you have a \$40,000 violin but you can have a \$25 violin and you'll get to learn. And I think those limitations teach you stuff I think if you don't have all the colors to paint with you can paint in, and you can do black and white. So I don't— we didn't raise money for the film department, I remember there were some various efforts but yeah.

Hallett Gutierrez: So then with your film moderation, is that what you ended up finishing with?

Wangro: No, oh no, that would have been too easy.

(laughter)

Wangro: I then after my what is it? What's your third year in school called? Is that your—

Hallett Gutierrez: Junior?

Wangro: After my junior year, I took off for a year. And I had— There were various people in Europe who were doing music and theater stuff there that I really wanted to go see and explore. And I went and I ended up like meeting people— like just having— I had a great European you know, year on the road and met people that were truly my gods and heroes that sort of took me in and I ended up working with people and playing with people and doing music and theater with folks. And then, actually had sort of a split with this music and theater group that I was working with based on a difference in— it was all very political. Everything we were doing was very political, but based on approach. And the approach, we were living in Holland, and the approach of the gang that I was working with was very much like (smacks ground) you know,

slamming people over the head with their, you know, “wake up you dumb fucks, how can you live this way.” And I wanted to embrace a much more welcoming and not subversive but inclusive kind of form of theater, and I didn’t know what to do. But it was why we broke, because this wasn’t right for me. And then when I came back, I had this idea that I needed to start a circus because I needed to do something for my senior project but I also needed to do— I needed to create a form of theater where I could, I could bring people to the fold, and I don’t want to go off talking about the circus for, you know, half an hour, but the circus for me was an incredibly populist form. I could tour the small farm towns of the region doing circus shows. Circus characters were iconic; we could create a lot of messaging within the context of a circus format, you could do— There was a lot there for me at the time. So I approached the administration at that time, going back to my project and what I did, and I said I want to be an interdisciplinary student, I want— Interdisciplinary then, I don’t know if this is still true, meant yeah, you’re going to do what you’re doing; you’re going to be a music and a poli-sci, you’re going to do painting and poetry. And I didn’t want to do that. I wanted to be an arts student. There were schools then like CalArts where you go and do all the arts. And they were like, nope, nope, I had to fight them for a really long time.

Tieger: Did they—

Wangro: Leon didn’t want it to happen at all, the dean, named Stuart something, he didn’t want—

Tieger: Levine

Wangro: Stuart Levine, yeah, he was sort of a big stick at that point and we fought about it for a really long time, and they finally said, well listen, first of all, you have to find an advisor who will take you on, and that was difficult. Because no one kind of wanted the political liability and Eli had been my advisor, but he was on a sabbatical so he wouldn’t do it, or well, couldn’t do it. And then a young film teacher called Tom Brenner who took on the project and then the administration in a way of sort of trying to hand me a— or actually handing me a somewhat impossible task, or a pain in the ass task, said, well you can’t pick and choose your divisions. You can’t say, I’m going to be a painting, sculpture, and dance. You have to do all of them, ADDFP, art, drama, dance, film, photography. I had to have a buy in from the head of every department, and I had to have someone from every department on my board. ‘Cause boards used to be three people, but I had like whatever it was, like eight or something. I know! And I had to have a project that satisfied everybody’s— and I did the circus, I did my first circus. And fuck them, I got a grant before I got a diploma.

Tieger: You got a grant as a student to create the circus?

Wangro: I got a grant after I did my first show. I invited people from the, what was called the Dutchess County Regrant Office, to the show that I did as my senior project show, and they gave me a grant, like in a week later.

Tieger: Who were the performers?

Wangro: There were like thirty-some odd people that were all students. You know, some of them—

Tieger: Like friends of yours or were you?

Wangro: Some of them, most of them were friends. I mean we were all, I mean, I don't know what it's like now, but everyone was friends, we were all, except for those few people who weren't, everyone was friends. And, you know, most of, I'd say a lot of them were really friends, really good friends, and then some of them were just people who I'd observed, it's funny I say this because there was a woman named Kathie diStefano who I didn't know at all, we were very kind of different in that way, you know there were some people who were like in totally different circles in school. But I had seen her, I think it was Bread and Puppet, or one of those companies like that came to Bard and I saw her like just dancing her little tuches off and I just went up to her and said you know, "You should be a clown in the circus." And she was like Huh?— And anyway she ended up being a clown in the circus and this still— so then at one point I took the circus to Europe which we can talk about or not but I had a partner who was a very good friend of mine who was a Dutch guy who I had met doing music in Europe. And she is still married to him, and they are still clowning and doing circus stuff.

Tieger: What was her name?

Wangro: Kathie diStefano

Tieger: Oh that's Kathie diStefano

Wangro: Or Kathleen diStefano. I have an email for her if you're curious. We don't, I mean, we don't, we don't ever talk or anything like other than one or two emails between us in a million years but, it's just one of those things.

Hallett Gutierrez: So with the putting on of this circus, like what did it comprise of, like what did you have to do to sort of like make— meet all of these—

Wangro: Oh to meet all of the yeah

Hallett Gutierrez: —requirements

Wangro: It was all pretty natural, the only one that was difficult I think, that I thought was really forced was to do something with film and photography. Videophotography, not film and photography because it was kind of— Anyway we did, I wrote and created all the content, right, designed the show from the theater perspective, I led the band, so I selected the music and rehearsed, so the music part was covered, the sort of prop part and painting part satisfied the visual department, the acting and theater stuff was you know, self-evident, art, music, drama,

dance, oh dance, because there was plenty of sort of choreography, the whole thing was kind of choreographed. And then I don't really remember, there was something I did with video and we set up a camera, there was a screen in the ring and I really don't remember was it was but did something and the reality I think was, basically, despite the fact that the administration wasn't, was you know obstinate about it, that people were like yeah that sounds like fun and you know they sort of went with it. And when the show was good, and it was good. I guarantee you not every show I ever did was good, god no, done tons of crappy shows, but that show was great. It was just like the culmination of a lot of very spirited build up. And it was a beautiful day, and I did it, you know, right below Stone Row there's the hill and then there's the grove of really big trees? I think there's something in those big trees now, I saw them— anyway, there's that grove of really big trees so I built the circus ring in that grove of trees and everyone sat on the hill and it was like a beautiful Bard, you know, autumn day or spring, I don't know what it was, so it just had that right magic, you know? So at that point—

Tieger: That's fantastic. So really, one performance?

Wangro: Yep

Tieger: But then, the circus

Wangro: But then after that, I then had to write about— I wrote about the— I wrote about the importance of festivity in society

Tieger: (laughs) The importance of festivity in society. Are there any— is there any film left, or any photographs of that event anywhere?

Wangro: Of the actual first show? Yeah, sure, somewhere, yeah. I mean I have—

Tieger: That would be a nice additional file to include with our— when we publish this

Wangro: (coughs) Let's talk publishing you used that word before, and I was like, really, publishing?

Tieger: Well, just when you make it live

Wangro: And you make it live by putting it on your website? Is that how it goes?

Tieger: It goes onto Digital Commons—

Hallett Gutierrez: Digital Commons.

Tieger: —is the platform

Wangro: I assume it's fairly edited

Tieger: Yeah, uh, depends. You know, it depends. We don't do lots of editing

Wangro: No out there radioland?

Hallett Gutierrez: (laughs) So, with, continuing to talk about your time at Bard, do you remember any like favorite classes you did as you were going through the years, or favorite professors or, anything—

Wangro: Yeah, I mean I had a very, I had a very— had a great relationship with Eli Yarden who was— you know, there weren't classes as much as sitting around and drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes and talking about the world. There were— Jim Sullivan who was a painting teacher was also someone who was really fun to butt heads with. And I think we liked each other a lot and butt heads all the time and you know, 40 years later, or even five years later I knew he was right all the time. But, you know, that was good. He enjoyed the dance of it all as I did. Those were the people I was closest with, I was truly, Bill Driver was amazing as I said before and then the film people, we just had a really good time. Warren Sonbert someone we had tremendous amount of love and respect for and a good influence in the way he approached being a filmmaker. Warren essentially just traveled around the world and shot all the time and shot in 16 and then just made these sort of epic travel journals. Very personal film, just very very personal work, completely not commercial.

Tieger: You, you mentioned just before we started but if you started in '75 you mentioned that you were a freshman when Leon was a freshman.

Wangro: Yeah

Tieger: So what was that four years like as the college was adjusting to his new leadership style and what do you remember?

Wangro: Well, it was a battle, I mean, you know, the college had been, you know, something of a, at that point when I entered, something, I don't know if downtrodden is too strong a word, but you know, let's just say slightly shabby. But you know, shabby and very, very beloved sort of post-hippy generation kind of way. Stop and think about when 1975 was like you know, we think about the '60s but the '75 is basically still the '60s. And so it had that ethos and Leon came in as a sort of different type of leader. He was young and brash and had hair, and was arrogant. And then really, no one liked him. I mean, there was, you know, people, there was this thing that people wrote all over the time, all over the campus that said, "Leon is a wanker." That was a thing. Do you remember that? Was this in your era too? Not still I assume? No.

Hallett Gutierrez: No

Wangro: Leon is a wanker was like the graffiti, it was all over Bard. And, you know, I remember some incident that, it was in '79 because it was the class that I didn't graduate with that I always

consider my class. But the '79, he had said something about, I don't even remember what the quote was about, there being a cardboard cutout or something like that. You know the story, both of you are shaking your heads.

Tieger: Well, we have somebody who talked about that in their

Wangro: Right and then everyone would like wear a cardboard cutout. So Leon was definitely, especially with people like the film department people and the art department people, this was always a constant battle, always constantly battle. That's why I said to you before, when we weren't on tape but it's just remarkable to see the incredible work that Leon has done. And I have no idea whether I think it's good, bad, or otherwise. But it's, it's remarkable, and the place is completely transformed. And it's damned impressive. And there's been a lot of things that are clearly really cool. I don't know the man, but you know, hats off.

Hallett Gutierrez: Going back to your time were there, do you remember there being like any special events, like, what was life on campus like? Especially when you were living on campus?

Wangro: You know, I just think of life on campus as again sort of lovely and fun. When I think back about Bard, I do not think about my classes at all. I'm sure that I'm not the only one, I'm sure there are lots of people who do remember Bard as their— I don't think about the classes at all. I think about life on campus, you know, I think about you know, helping each other do wacky projects, whether that was making films or doing you know happenings and performance art and you know, playing music until five in the morning. And just always that kind of just sort of creative energy going on with all of these people. And being stoned a lot, I don't know if you were stoned a lot, you don't have to say yes or no, but in my era, everyone was pretty stoned a lot. And jeez, life, I mean we spoke about events, but I don't think about events so much, I think about being in like you know, one in the morning, looking for one of the three pianos on campus and seeing if you could like actually find one that was available or getting in a car with three of your friends, stoned, and driving to Vassar, and sneaking on to the campus so you could play in their, in their rehearsal rooms, right. Because, because they had lots of pianos down there, you know, it was just those kinds of things. I mean there were a couple of big I mean, you know I spent a lot of my life booking concerts and and producing festivals and stuff after Bard, and I did do some early bookings there. We booked Machito with the whatever it was called at that time, so the Latin club Machito I don't know if you know who that is but, worth listening to an amazing, amazing Latin musician. Then we had the, oh, there was a guy named Hal Hisey that we worked together and Hal and I brought up, oh what's the name of the incredible rockabilly group, anyway. I mean but those were the things it's a stretch for me to think of those. I can remember them, they were great Jeanne Fleming who you probably all know about who's at Rokeby still; Jeanne took over the Halloween parade from her husband Ralph Lee she had been married for a while to Clark Rodewald who was also a Bard professor and Jeanne at that time was just beginning to create various kinds of big pageants she now does the Sinterklaas and other things here. And Jeanne and myself and a few others worked on a couple of very big pageants at Rokeby which were incredible things.

Tieger: That was after Bard?

Wangro: No, during

Tieger: That was while you were at Bard.

Wangro: Maybe it was while and like; I lived in Barrytown for a year after Bard. I kicked around up here for a year or two after because in part because I was doing the circus and a lot of the people in the circus were here. So I was, I don't know, it's very hard for me to remember actually whether those things were before or after, but there was a very good guy who was in my class, we were very tight, a guy named Steven Esteban Tetro who actually died at one of those extravaganzas. And so that kind of put a damper on continuing them. It wasn't due to anything at the extravaganza, he was so manic, he had been treated, in and out of institutions, he vanished, they found his body in the river. More on that later, but that was kind of like the end of my I think for a lot of people

Tieger: That performance was on the campus or?

Wangro: No, no it was at Rokeby

Tieger: Was it at Rokeby? It was at Rokeby, okay. Oh, God.

Wangro: Well, he was the first, you know?

Tieger: Yeah

Wangro: Right I mean it's kinda remarkable how many of those people you turn around and like oh, gone, gone, gone. But

Tieger: Mm-hmm. Do you want to talk more about Jamie Livingston?

Wangro: I'm happy to

Tieger: Yeah?

Wangro: So do you know who this is?

Hallett Gutierrez: I don't think so

Wangro: I love the way your eyes widen, when you're like whaat?

(laughter)

Wangro: (unintelligible) It's a really good facial thing you do. Jamie was my best pal. We met at, we met in Tivoli, no, in what do you call, Tewksbury. He recognized me because we actually

went to the same grade school, I did not recognize him. But, you know. And he came up to me, he was, he actually entered second semester. He was this funny little guy and he, kinda goes this funny little guy and he came up to me and said, (unintelligible) We became instant buds and from that point on, literally we lived together, traveled together, worked together so. And at that, at some point during I don't know, I don't know what year it was, I could figure it out, whether it was his sophomore year or whatever, we were all getting SX-70s which was the hot polaroid camera at that time, and everyone was shooting and Jamie just started this practice where he would shoot one photo a day. I think he probably started this in his senior year. And the photo of the day, it was like a thing. Like, you know, and it could be anything. It could be like, he bought a candy bar and you know, he liked the way the light was hitting on it and he'd shoot it or it would be like some wonderful time we were all having and he'd take a picture of all of us on the lawn and whatever. What was extraordinary about it was that he was, he adhered to the rule, that there was only one a day, and, and there were no do-overs. That was it. And pictures were of everything and anything, really, and he was a good photographer but it wasn't— It was kind of a thing, like, it was a thing like oh we're now going to go take the photo of the day and people always wanted to be in the photo of the day and all that. But, but it wasn't like a big production, it wasn't like a big you know, this is my heavy art project, believe me, Jamie had no theory behind this, it was just something he did. But he did it for twenty years. He did it until he died, and you know, we were taking photos in the hospital you know, when he was like in a coma.

(coughs)

Wangro: Don't let it getcha

Hallett Gutierrez: Excuse me

Wangro: If I can live with it, you can. So it was, I mean I can show you some photos but it was kind of an incredible thing, you know Jamie it's incredible for a number of ways I mean, just because he did it, it's incredible because it documented this era. Especially the early photos in New York you know, this was like— Jamie moved to New York in '80, back to New York, he was a city kid too, and you know especially since it documented the '80s, New York, downtown scene, like what it looked like, what it felt like. But it's also an incredible documentary of a life. So what was, what's remarkable about this and I feel funny talking about it too much because it's not my story, it's his, but, but in a way I say that, but in a way I also looking at the photos and it's the story of my life because we were together for so much and traveled so much that, you know, 80% of the photos, I was there, I knew who was, you know it was a good documentary of my life as well. But post his death, another fellow classmate named Hugh Crawford at, on the tenth— ten years after he died, Hugh and a bunch of folks decided that there should be a photo, an exhibit at Bard of the photos. And Hugh, who's always been a photographer, and a very tech-savvy dude, started to digitize all of the photos. And as he was digitizing them, as a tool for himself, he put them, he put all the photos online, on a website as a way of I guess storing them, each photo having nothing on it but a date. No title for the website, nowhere did it say Jamie's name, nothing, just like, photo, date, photo, date, photo, date. And one photo every day

for twenty years is a lot of photos, right? So a writer stumbled, as one stumbles in the interwebs on this website, and became fascinated with it. And tried to figure out what the hell it was. And somewhat obsessively went through all the photos from the circus days with me to like Jamie you know making a film in Afghanistan to like Jamie dying in the hospital. And this guy wrote this beautiful little article, happy to share it with you, about sorting this whole— and he got it, like he figured it out, he figured out really amazing sense of what Jamie's life was. And that article went viral as they say and started, I mean it appeared in a million places and then I think CBS did a story, like everybody— to the point where now, like the photo of the day— so there's an official website for the photo of the day and all that, Hugh actually this past year put a book out, I can show it to you. But like there are— like it's a thing in Southern China for teenage girls to find the day that their birthday, from the photo of the day and put them on their website, on their Facebook page. Like, there's like English comprehension tests in Spanish, in Spanish elementary schools or Spanish highschools where they have to read an article in English about the photo of the day and report about it. I mean it's a global phenomenon. It's totally bizarre. People are like, he's the inventor of the selfie, and it's just like, no, he just took a fuckin' photo every day. But it's become this thing, right? To which Jamie would marvel at because of that day, I'll be right back.

Tieger: Do you want to pause it

Hallett Gutierrez: Yeah

(audio cuts to Wangro)

Wangro: you made. And I know that it's on the shelf now so there is, there was recently

(rustling of box opening)

Wangro: (laughs) I don't look at this, it's here, I do not look at it. I don't need this in my life, but it's a little (book opening) Here you go. (unintelligible) Hugh had to make them just slightly smaller than real scale to fit them all in the book but—

Tieger: So, want to talk about what we're seeing a little bit?

Hallett Gutierrez: Yeah, so we're seeing a very large book, kind of coffee table sized that has nine pictures on each page of, with dates at the bottom corresponding to those photos, and these are the photos that were taken every day

Wangro: Before you turn the page, and again, not to. Here's, here are pictures of (coughs) I don't know what month this is, some summer month

Tieger: June

Wangro: In what is this, '81? Says '81, it says the year after, it would have been the second year of the circus, here is lord knows, I believe that, so this is all circus stuff this was a sun mask we made. A girl named Beth Lipton and another Bardie. Here's the circus team at that era, I think this is Barrytown, they're standing on top of my truck, my truck is still standing in the back here. This was the first circus truck, so these were, this is like—

Tieger: So this was your time, yeah

Wangro: Yeah, here's a circus show at some somewhere, and here's the crew. That is in fact, oh, no it isn't, let me see, is it? Uh, no, this is, here in the, where is this, clowns there's Kathie diStefano so you know this was like this was the this was the era, no tent there or anything I can just— It's silly to do this on tape, but here's, this just gives you a sense of, you know, here, for the people in the room, I mean these were the people doing circus performances or rehearsal stuff

Tieger: So let's, this is a beautiful book, we do have it also in the library

Wangro: You must have it in the library

Tieger: A couple of copies now, Hugh gave us one and we had, we got another as a gift but, (book closing) tell us more about the circus, so he, they say he was your, was he a participant in the circus too?

Wangro: Yeah, Jamie was a participant

Tieger: Or was he a performer?

Wangro: Jamie was not much of a performer, he performed music, but not so much in the circus. Jamie was never like a full time member of the circus, but he, Jamie was very physically adept, so he learned to stilt walk really fast and you know, whenever we were doing the shows he would show up and he would certainly help and he would stilt walk and sometimes he would play concertina or something and, but he would never, I don't ever remember Jamie like being a character in the ring. That was not his thing. He probably helped me make a lot of stuff, over the years, masks and other things like that.

Tieger: So when did it become the Janus

Wangro: (coughs)

Tieger: The Janus Circus?

Wangro: From day one.

Tieger: It was the Janus Circus at Bard?

Wangro: Yeah, yeah

Tieger: Okay, okay

Wangro: Janus being the god of doorways, looking both towards, two-faced, looking towards the past and towards the future. Only open at times of war. And of course back at Bard, we had a written manifesto, so the circus was a very sort of socially conscious, politically active kind of thing, you know, and to some extent the metaphor of being at war was not lost on us. It was an interesting time I want to say, I will say one thing about that era, and it's interesting because you're five, six, years younger. But I feel like the era that I was in at Bard was really, was the end of the '60s. And that I entered with a bunch of folks that, and with a bunch of teachers and professors that basically had sort of '60s and hippies values. And as I was there, there were a bunch of younger students, because I was a senior and maybe a year or two after I was hanging out, there were a bunch of younger students who were coming in who had much more of what I would consider '80s values. People who were, interested in making money, and people, and I'm not putting it down, I'm just saying it was a noticeable, it was a notable thing, you could see those folks, people who were not as involved in a certain political correctness or political sense of the world as we were, they weren't so bothered. And also, culturally, musically, especially musically, the music I was involved in was very, free jazz, experimental and avant garde music and even in the rock world it was very progressive and exploratory, complicated, complicated free music, difficult to play, and the '80s scene came in and it was like three chords, loud, right. There was a very, it was a marked change.

Tieger: Do you know Art Carlson?

Wangro: We played music together forever. Yeah and everyone noticed the picture of Mark Kirby. Do you know Mark Kirby?

Tieger: Mm-hmm.

Wangro: Yeah, Uncle Kirby was there. Yeah no, Art and I were you know, really good buds. We lived, he lived under me for a year in Stone Row, yeah, it's amazing that Art's still kicking around Tivoli.

Tieger: Yeah

Wangro: It's also amazing to me, and I say this Art, with all due respect my brother, that you know, Art ended up being smart, because he was truly one of the smartest guys around, he was smart enough to decide to be a fucking house painter, and just chill out in Tivoli instead of trying to be like, you know, an overachieving striver. You know, and it's interesting to me I know Art is somehow involved in Bard now, and does alumni stuff and all, to some extent, well, anyway

Tieger: Well, he shows up in most Bardians, he jumps into class pictures whether or not he was in that class or not

Wangro: (laughs)

Tieger: So you'll typically find Art in the Bardian

Wangro: Good, I have, anyway

Tieger: Well, tell us more about the circus itself, life after Bard, so you still have the circus, you've graduated, you're graduating,

Wangro: Right

Tieger: You say you stayed in Barrytown for a year, how did you keep the circus going? Was it all through grants?

Wangro: It was all through grants, and of course part of my manifesto if you will was that we would never charge an audience member to see the show. God forbid. So it all had to be, all the shows had to be sponsored and free so, it did get more and more grants, or larger and larger, if not more and more, and also a few commercial sponsors, I mean, literally got money from Mercedes Benz, I have no idea how we did that. And yeah, and I worked, and I remember there's, I was cleaning up my stuff at some point not so long ago, and I found a, oh what was it? A Rhinecliff newspaper, because we had done a show in Rhinecliff.

Tieger: Wow, I didn't know there was a Rhinecliff newspaper

Wangro: Right

Tieger: There's a Barrytown newspaper

Wangro: Well there was then, right? I mean, you know, I don't think it was internationally distributed, but so we did a show and there was an interview with me in Rhinecliff and in the article I talk about how we basically got all of our props and materials from the dump. And that I had gotten, recently gotten a thousand dollar, a thousand dollar grant and you know, \$1,000 now, you've got to be kidding me but you know, first of all, it was a bunch of Bard students, I mean, everyone was getting some money, but people weren't really doing this for a living, right? And you just did what you had to do. We were making props out of rubbish and

Tieger: So cool

Wangro: (laughs)

Tieger: That's so cool

Wangro: That's not unusual, it's what most young non-profit theatre companies would do right? Before you leave, I would walk you around the back, so you can see the truck I bought for \$400, that was our main—

Tieger: Does it still run or is it—

Wangro: Oh no, it died in like '80-something

Tieger: —an art piece?

Wangro: And it's, I store lumber in it, but it was an amazing— The truck itself is part of my Bard life, in that you know, it was having an original milk truck. For the tape's sake, it was a eighteen foot drum and aluminum body milk truck that I bought, because as I was driving it down (whispers) what was that, what was that road (speaks normally) Rokeby Road we saw a double rainbow as I was test driving it. And, oh, we gotta' buy this, so— But then to have a truck like that, which is basically a movable party, right? So I had a piano in the back of the truck, and I had some lounge chairs, and you know, I'd be like, let's all get in the truck and drive somewhere, that's what Bard was like.

Tieger: Yeah

Wangro: Right

Tieger: You talked about the, something about the circus being, you liked it because it was a welcoming, inclusive form of theater

Wangro: Yeah

Tieger: And

Wangro: Well it also could be subversive, but keep going

Tieger: And subversive, okay, well I thought maybe you might want to talk about your work after Bard and how those thoughts carried sort of through and thinking of your giant rabbits and

Wangro: (sighs) Well, I mean it's funny, I mean, I don't know where to go with that. I mean I was just, I was asked recently to give the commencement address at the FIT graduate design, whatever, commencement, graduation

Tieger: Yep

Wangro: And I'm— I said yes, because I'm sort of flattered and I would kind of like the challenge, but I have no clue what to say. It's just I have no, I have just no, I'm totally stumped. And it's coming up soon and I'm like, oh, what do I do? And part of it is because they're sort of

asking that question and I'm asking, what's that through line between all that stuff that you've done. I think some of it is about using events or sort of large scale artists, that you could consider an event as a way of creating community and bringing people together and that the joy I've always had in doing that, and I mean, that sounds kind of hokey, but it's true. I mean, the joy of doing it, it's just fun, it's just fun to bring people together. Whether it's 50 people at a party or 50,000 people at a concert. And you know, sometimes there's a very pointed reason for doing so, you know, I've done a lot of socially relevant, socially driven, culturally driven events, but sometimes it's just you know, revolution for the hell of it, it's just like, come on out and have a good time you know, because if you can bring together especially a large crowd, you can bring 150 to 400,000 people together, if you bring 10,000 people together, there's a certain kind of strength in building that kind of community, that kind of shared experience that, you know, sometimes it's downright palpable, bringing people together in that way, I think it's really important. Not to go off on a whole other subject, but I was just talking about this the other day, you know, one of the real travesties, if I should say that, tragedies, is in New York City now is that really post the Giuliani administration, and I'm not blaming only Rudy, who you know, we've known was an asshole since he was mayored, not only that he's an asshole now, is that there's, they've clamped down in ways for large crowds to exist. When I was, I was for a good while the director of special events, we would do shows for 200,000 people, right? That doesn't happen anymore. And even if people want to do a protest, a march or a protest rally like the climate march which I also worked on, you know there were an estimated 300,000 people there, it was probably many more. The fight, that we as the organizers had to have with the city for that to happen was extraordinary. You know, and to me, this, the ability for people to get together, and it is almost always entirely safe and entirely well handled it is so rare that there is an incident at an event like this. Yes, someone can have a heart-attack, right, someone can have a heart attack on the subway, but the idea that there's going to be a robbery in the middle of a crowd of 200,000 people, or huge fights break out almost never happens, right? So, you know, crowds have been self-policing and these experiences are joyful, so it kind of, you know doesn't happen, so there's this, there's this thing that New York City has done, which is to make these happenings smaller and smaller and smaller and harder and harder and harder to produce. And I just think it's a- it's such bad cultural politics that-

Tieger: Do you want to do it anywhere else? Is it easier to do it other places,

(crosstalk)

Wangro: Oh I've done it other places, the last-

Tieger: Or is it just the world we're living in?

Wangro: No, I mean the last big project I did (coughs) I don't really produce anymore, but the last big producing project I did was in Cuba. And I was asked by a Cuban-American foundation to help them to produce the first, to do this big music festival. Long story short is we ended up not doing the big music festival as envisioned, but we produced the first major American artist in Cuba, and by Cuban authorities count they had 450,000 people in Havana so you know, put

that together again with a shoestring, because we didn't bring in— we brought in DJ gear, from the States, so little that basically myself and my technical manager carried it as luggage, and everything else we did with Cuban, Cuban talent. Cuban sound technicians, Cuban structure, everything. We put it all together from the island. And believe me, they had less money to do their shows than we did to do the first year of doing the circus. It was incredible, I'll tell you a story you know, that's maybe not worth recording time, but the first day— I had been to Cuba a few times in working to set it up, and I put together a crew, with a couple of Cuban guys, we put together this crew that was going to build the stage and the guys come in and they had a bindlestiff. You know what a bindlestiff is? Do you know what it is? Bindlestiff is if you're a, like, picture the classic hobo, and they've got a stick, and they've got that thing with the kerchiefs tied, that's a bindlestiff. They literally had a bindlestiff and they put it on the stage deck, and they opened it up, and it was full of like old screws, and rusty nails, and a few pieces of like bolts and they were like (taps floor with hand) that's what we got. They didn't have a ladder. When we were building the sound towers, they had scaffolding. So we would build the scaffold, put a speaker, or whatever, adjust it, and take down the scaffold, move the scaffold to the other side, build the scaffold, yeah. It's amazing, it's amazing. It's just, it was just extraordinary to do it. After you know, because I've done, you know, spent a lifetime doing these major events where you know, where there's whoever it is, whoever the money behind it is, is, you know, and especially doing corporate events you know, some big brouhaha for Amex in Times Square or something, where you'll literally blow through 12 million dollars in seven minutes worth of stunt, right? No, it's criminal. It's totally criminal. But I did all that stuff, on one hand so I could do all the stuff I was doing for people like the United Nations on the other, where they had no money so you just you know, you work it out.

Tieger: Well, I guess we should, we should mention the fact that you, that you came and allowed us, you gave us a very nice gift of circus books, because circus is certainly part of your whole life and thought, and that the absent, the now graduated Celia Faux did a nice job  
Wangro: She did

Tieger: —making, curating an exhibit for that. But, sadly, the Surrealist Training Circus did not perform that night because it was pouring.

Wangro: It was a bad night. It was bad timing, it was a graduation week, it was raining, it was you know, whatever, it was fine.

Tieger: Yep, yep, yep.

Wangro: It was all good, I hope people enjoyed it

Tieger: Thank you

Wangro: I hope the books get used

Tieger: I'm sure they will be, they're now in special collections

Wangro: (coughs) Yep

Tieger: And—

Wangro: I read recently that there was another Woodstocker who gave a really great book donation to special collections. Lawyer, what's his name? Really

Tieger: Are you talking about Alan Sussman

Wangro: Yeah

Tieger: Who has the whole collection, the Sussman collection

Wangro: Yeah, yeah

Tieger: Absolutely, yeah

Wangro: Yeah, amazing collection

Tieger: Amazing collection

Wangro: I was just reading about it, yeah

Tieger: Come and visit

Wangro: Right, right

Tieger: We'll have an exhibit

Wangro: But he was a Woodstocker

Tieger: Woodstock and New York, yep

Wangro: Yep, yep

Tieger: Yep

Wangro: Well, any other, any other thoughts or questions?

Hallett Gutierrez: I mean, I guess at this point, unless— is there anything else you'd

Wangro: Nope, nope

Hallett Gutierrez: –like to add?

Wangro: I will say one thing that I think is nice and I think this is not, I find that it's not that common for a lot of other people. And it may be partly kinda' who I am, right? But I feel like there are a lot of people I met at Bard, who I'm incredibly close with, at that time, and then don't see them, you know, that's just the way it is, but I still really feel like they're family. I still really feel like they're family, and I still feel like, those bonds are so close, maybe that's common, and maybe it's not. I mean I– there was someone who I was really close with at Bard who actually entered a, a sort of spiritual cult for, and vanished, and vanished! In like you know in '86 (in a way or something) he just like, whoah, where'd Richard go? Uhh heard he went out to California, joined this– Totally did, vanished. When Jamie died, and I tried to find Richard to just let him know, couldn't find him. You know, due to the modern miracle of the interwebs, you know, couple years ago, Richard Klein, appeared on the internet, and I was like holy shit! You know, by noon that day we were talking, you know, he's out in California, and we've become friends again. And I feel like Richard is you know, I've now seen Richard once you know, for a few days, since, but I still feel like Richard is truly one of the best friends I have, and there are a few other people like that from Bard who just like, those times, those bonds, were just, you know, it's hard to beat. That's a nice place to end.

Tieger: It is a nice place to end.

Wangro: Thanks

Tieger: Thank you so much

Hallett Gutierrez: Yes, thank you