[Begin transcript]

Okay—so, I just started recording, uh, for the interview, um… Just for the start of the interview, my name is Sofia Rodriguez, um, would you be able to say your name?

Yeah, I'm Christopher Jones.

Okay, great. Um, and we're doing the oral history—this oral history interview—just about, kind of, your, um, place here at the university as well as, like, the surrounding community. Um, would you be okay with starting right now?

Yeah, yeah.

Okay. Um, so, to start off, um, just can you tell me a little bit about your journey to becoming a professor here at the university?

Sure. So I started grad school here, in 2017, the fall of 2017, and um, was in the studio art MFA program, and I finished that, uh, degree in spring of 2020, and then, basically, immediately was, uh, hired as a lecturer here, and, um, the person who I work with, Liza Sylvestre, who, we cofounded this Crip*, Cripistemology and the Arts, um, creative research lab, um, we had started collaborating, in grad school, she was also a grad—grad student, um, kind of one year above me in the grad program. And so, when we s—a, a little bit of a shaving off of the edges of the—of the story here, but when we finished our grad program here, um, we had started work already on our kind of creative research project, and um, so after about a year of being a lecturer, I was teaching, um, art studio courses in the, like, new media program, we, um, were hired, um, to basically do our creative research project full time and, um, both of us are research professors in the College of Fine and Applied Arts now. And so we, uh, we have our own classes and are working on a remote masters program and we do lots of other, uh, aspects of initiatives and events and things like that too, like grant-funded projects but um… but yeah, sort of a weird, um, transition I guess because we were both grad students here, and then were kind of briefly lecturers teaching on our um, kind of whatever—research creative focus, new media like, filmmaking, performance based classes, but then pretty quickly started, um, just teaching our own classes here as, as res—research professors and then that's what we, we do now. Yep.

Yeah.

Hm.

Um, so, what do you think have been some of the biggest successes and challenges of, like, directing the initiative?

Um, I think, uh, probably the biggest challenge… Well, maybe it's kind of twofold. One, is really… needing to sort of convince some people to care about disability at all, really, um, but then maybe, more specifically related to that, is to understand how the knowledge and experience of Crip or disabled-identified individuals or artists would be a valuable perspective to share, or that actually might contribute to knowledge. It's like almost always treated or seen as a deficit, so especially in art, um, that was—that was a really big challenge right away, because, you know, say professors or artists might, um, allow or understand how disability could be, like, part of the subject matter of somebody's work, like they could make a painting about their disabled experience but, they would never—they wouldn't really be able to understand it as like an actual, like the generator or the motor, within the work itself or, that it could even be the medium in which they were working. Um, so I think that was maybe the biggest challenge, and um, at the same time I guess, students and younger people feel very primed to embrace that, or they, they already had some sense of that, um, as real, or they had a relationship to, to that experience, so it was really more like um, systemic or structural that we were, needing to, kind of, keep explaining why, uh, disability isn't just an exclusively negative pejorative kind of thing, um, if that makes sense.

Yeah. Yeah, definitely. Um, yeah. Um—

That's, that's ongoing, I mean, that didn't like—we didn't like, succeed in how it's done, like, we—that's like, sort of a perpetual problem but, yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. So, within, kind of, uh—I know you talked about the students a little bit, um, but kind of within the fine arts department or just the general university committee, uh, how do you think the initiative has connected with the, like, queer and disabled community?

Um, well. I think, and this is also maybe like a generational thing too, though, queerness, has, has historically always been sort of close to um, disability community, that I think that, um, kinda younger generation or, or my generation or Liza's generation has maybe like a bit older than um, the undergrad or grad student body—um, that that— that was folded much more kind of seamlessly into our experience. I came to, um, disability culture, Crip culture, um basically because of a kind of overlap between my gender experience or my experience with sexuality and my experience with disability, so, um. So I think it's it's, mmm, you know it—it's, it's, interesting how, I mean, I guess it varies for the audience in, the kind of academic space or, um, these sort of larger institutional spaces, we often need to kind of talk about it or re-approach it as something that's like, joined together, or, or overlapping or intersecting, but, um, it's interesting how like, with the students or, um, we have like an internship group that's essentially like a little, um, uh, it's sort of a cultural building space, really, um, that that's not even really something that needs to be acknowledged outside of how they're—how they're acknowledging it in their own experience so, there's, uh, so much, really, kind of natural intersecting between, for instance, like trans experience and um, disabled experience, especially like chronic illness or, or whatever and, um… and that has been backed and supported more and more as there's so much great, like, writing and scholarship in that space too that, um, we're finding, like, more students um, arrive, in our classes or participate in our initiatives *because* they've experienced

those, like, more intersectional kinds of scholarship, really, which is, which is awesome, um. But yeah, anyway, I guess that is to say that personally, for Liza and I, those things were very much intertwined, and so our motivation or our interest in, uh, creating the initiative in general like, or the, you know, Crip* as a—as a project, which really, like the asterisk is such, uh, the kinda operative or, like, important, um, addition to that term, and part of that, or a lot of that is to do with a kind of, um, relationship to queerness too, like, what is the kind of elsewhere or, um adjacent, or, uh, like sort of even disparately kind of connected, um, piece that is influencing or informs our experience of um disability, so we try to take or, I, I'm really interested in taking, um, an approach that is really embracing like, like, trying to make those connections between um, things that we might not understand as, um, adjacent or kind of connected pieces rather than, like, trying to really teach a kind of, like, canon or um, establish like a, a core curriculum of like, "this is what disability is," or "this is what, um, a Crip identity is," or—and then "this is what queerness is," sort of separate from that, we really like to try to establish our kind of spaces like, at those—at the point of intersection between those, I guess, um… If that makes sense.

Yeah. It definitely makes sense. Um, so you said something about an internship group. Uh, could you like, elaborate more, or go into, like how that works and what it is?

Yeah, um. So, we have uh, a really large amount of um, of registered students with disabliities on campus, over three thousand with DRES, um, and we don't have a disability cultural center. Um, so, just as like a point of reference, University of Illinois Chicago has less registered disabled students but they have a, a really like, floursihing, wonderful disability cultural center. so, when Liza and I were starting our kind of creative research lab and teaching classes, one of the things that was kind of most, mm, at, at times it could be distressing, at times it could be, uh, just seemed really important or kind of stood out I guess, is that we would have disabled students in our courses, and get a really strong sense from them, either that they were articulating it or that it was sort of clear in the space that they were occupying in class, that within their programs or within their, um, departments they were basically on the margins, they didn't—they weren't really in communication with other disabled, um, students, and um, even though the like, um, uh sports programs around disability here are really strong and have like a really wonderful history, in the like, creative arts or fine and applied arts, or humanites or whatever, um that that whole kind of student body, there wasn't really like a space for them to, um, connect around and that became… Liza and I didnt really set out to try to create a, a, you know, a cultural space or, or a cultural center for um, disabled students necesarily but it became one of those things that seemed important in some way, and so we created the Crip* research internship program basically as a way to—it's a bit different, maybe from how other internship programs might work where a student is working kind of one-on-one with a faculty, we work collectively, so, um, typically we have between kind of like six, ten, twelve, interns every semester, and we meet weekly all together and, and make kind of collective decisions about um, both kind of like, what the group might need, and some, so some weeks that's basically just just talking and being in community with each other… Um, other weeks it might be talking about, you know something that's going on in like, the news or in culture, or um, talking about, like what, like you know, watching a film, or you know, doing—you know, doing something, um, like more kind of like, light and social together. But then over the course of each semester we, we

work collectively to plan a kind of event or, some sort of an output, so, um, last year the internship group designed an "Instances of Ableism" survey, um, so they created a set of questions and a, a web form basically, for students or faculty, or really anybody who um, interacts with the university in any way, even like a visitor, in which they could report or reflect on an experience of ableism that they encountered, um, while on campus, or like interacting with the university. Um, so they made that, that was something that was kind of like, driven, we make, you know collective decisions about these things rather than like, it's not something that I would, or Liza would like, prescribe to them, they, it's—it's very much driven by what they want, or what they see kind of missing from their experience as students, um.. So then we took that "Instances of Ableism" survey and we also have created, um, this uh, Risograph booklet and an archive of these statements, um, that all begin with "an accessible university means dot dot dot," and then um, you know, fill in the blank, and they had contributed, like what their idea for an accessible university is, and some of that is very practical, like um, you know, uh, every video is captioned, or there's ASL interpretation in every class, and some of it is kind of more speculative or, um, uh, abstract or conceptual, and, so they kind of combined those two, uh, things that they they made together and then wanted to have a kind of launch event for it so, we screened, um, uh, this great sort of, documentary art film, called *I Didn't See You There*, uh, it was made by Reid Davenport, it came out last year, and we sc—we screened it and did like kind of a launch event for, for it so. Anyway, that's all to say, that's like one example of one kind of output of that, um, that research internship program, but each semester is different so, like this semester we're working on, um, an event to sort of celebrate like, disabled joy. That'll take place um, via Zoom in a couple weeks here, but then also they're doing a, a kind of in-person iteration of it on the quad so um, at a different time so uh… Anyway it's sort of evolving still and um, it's a little bit strange because, you know, Liza and I are you know, we're, we're sort of just—just two people or two faculty, so we can't create an entire cultural center in the way that we would want to see here at the university, um, but we're trying to create that internship space—or we've used that internship space as a kind of makeshift space or like, initial kind of space to point towards where like, that cultural center, um, might evolve, so. It's also like, a way for us to help students—connect students with opportunities whether it's like, grants, or residencies, or um, programs or whatever so um… It's, it's I don't know, it's kind of a weird jumble of like, resources that Liza and I can provide and what we can kind of make happen, but also n—being in touch with a need to just be in community and like, um, have a good time, and do things that are enjoyable as like, um… I mean, this is true for, for all students really, but especially disabled students, you know, the academic semester schedule can be, really, a difficult thing, so, um, we try to kind of balance that and have it be a space of like, rest and enjoyment rather than, you know, high expectation of, of producing something or output is something that… Anyway, that's maybe a, a ramble but *[laughs]* yeah.

No, that's great. Yeah um, yeah, that was a—that was a great answer. Um, do you have an idea of um, how you decided on, like, organizing it in that way? Like, it seems like it's very um, sort of community based and building connections in between people, um, and rather than, like, focusing on, like, rigors of um, an—maybe another internship that would be more like, um, focused on, like, amount of work or something like that.

19:20

Yeah. Um, yeah thats a good question, um… Well, I mean, a lot of those, like, ways of operating collectively are drawn really from like historically developed, like, Crip-disabled strategies, so like, for instance, um like, beginning or leading um, a meeting with like, an access check-in at the beginning where, um, it often—initiated by, like, the, you know, quote end-quote kind of like, leader of the meeting, whether that's like, me or Liza or whoever, to sort of share like, well, what a—what access needs do I have right now, or what—what might be some barriers or just the—basically anything in and around the issue of access that we would wanna name, so that might be like, well, um, you know, for Liza, who's a deaf person, it might be like, "Well I'm kind of tired right now, and so my, you know, ability to kind of, comprehend or fill in the gaps of like, Zoom captions or read lips, like, is a little bit diminished, so bear with me, um, as we, you know, have—have conversation, or you know, for me it might be, you know, I'm experiencing sort of like in—you know, increased levels of anxiety, so if I'm like, not making sense when I'm, uh, talking or I'm starting to sort of circle around things or something, like—please, like, uh, you know, ask me a follow up question, or I'm happy to try to clarify, um. And for other—you know, somebody else, it might be like, "I, you know, I need to keep my camera off for this—this meeting or, or whatever…" Um, so, anyway, sorry, that's [laughs] so this is like a, um, a practice that's been used in, uh, like, Crip-disabled cultural spaces as a kind of primer or, like, a beginning to a meeting, and that can often—those conversations aren't really just about, um, like, identifying like, distress that's going on or something, it's like—it's really to begin, and sort of focus the reason for meeting as something that's not supposed to be at the expense of our bodies or our experience or whatever. It's more supposed to be a nurturing or supporting environment, so those like access checks can often, then, lead to conversation like, um, it might transition very, kind of, naturally into talking about, um, you know, what's going on with your research or your area of study or something like that, or uh, an idea of what, what—what we could do, or an observation about, kind of, environment or like, experience as a student might, you know, just come right out of that—those access checks at the beginning, so. Anyway, um, so that—and also the kind of, collective decision-making—some of that comes from the kind of, like, historically developed, like, crip-disabled cultural spaces, but then me personally and Liza as well, really, like, I think that, um, one of the ways that, uh, well, we—I mean, we use the term Cripistemology quite a bit, which is basically just a portmanteau, or a combining of Crip and epistemology, so like, just ways of—ways of knowing, disabled ways of knowing, um. So like one—one of the things that I think those—Cripistemology asks us to sort of, take stock of, or, or challenge, in some way, is a kind of structure of authority or, um, what the role of a faculty or institution or a leader of a space is. And rather than kind of, um, setting—setting a standard and then measuring everybody's ability to sort of, try—you know, meet that, or approximate that—that it works much better, it's much more in line with some of these principles to, um, you know, that access and, um, and kind of critical or creative environment is, like, a really relational thing, so we're all kind of sharing in, in, um, what access needs are in the space or, you know—what this internship group is, um, is it's not just like, "I decide what we do and then you do it, um, and then I measure, you know, I grade you or like, assess you based on how well you're able to do it," that if were all kind of, deciding those—the direction of, of what were doing, or um, whatever, then it becomes something that's very much shared, or there's like, a collective

investment in, in what we're doing in a nice way. Um … Shoot, I feel like there was a second part to that question that I was thinking about… But now I'm forgetting, um. [laughs]

Oh, um, no, it's okay. Um, I think you kind of covered all of it. The question was about, um, your—the development of, um, the teaching style or the organization style of the initiative.

Oh, right, yeah.

Yeah.

Yeah, I guess that's probably it.

Yeah, yeah, exactly, um. So, um with the growth of the initiative, how do you think your, sort of, way of doing things, um, and your—the way you organize, uh, sort of, your teaching, has developed alongside that initiative, or how has it changed? Um, has it been influenced at all—

Yeah.

—by the initiative?

Yeah, um… Oh, and that actually, that maybe connects to what I was maybe thinking that I had forgotten, but, um… Well, I mean, a lot of what Crip* is, or it's become, it—it began with conversation between liza and I about it, as, like, queer disabled students, and what was lacking or what we wished could have been possible, or what the collaboration between the two of us enabled that wasn't, you know, that we hadn't experienced before, so I think that, really, like, um, the initial idea with the—with Crip* as a project, was really just to—a desire to sort of, enact or to, you know, test out these sort of, ideas, really, um, and it began with, uh, a—a couple of things, really, like, um, uh, both sort of, like, seminars that we developed that sort of center around, you know, our expertise or this kind of, um, Cripistemology and the arts, sort of, area, um, or sort of discipline, or emerging discipline, um, but then also we were very interested in how—because of, of what it gave to us, really, which was that approaching creative production or creative research, um, fr—in, like, through this kind of Cripistemological lens was a way to really, like, easily or smoothly work in a kind of transdisciplinary way, like, where programs or, um, you know, the structure of a college would kind of separate or divide all these different disciplines, and then within those, you know, within the disciplines, like, painting would teach itself in a specific way, and then, you know, new media would be over here teaching itself in a different kind of way, and a part of that just, you know, by virtue of the structure, is that they're, like, imagining themselves as separate, like they have to—they have to understand how they're not the same thing. And for Liza and I, as artists who were transdisciplinary artists, or even wh—kind of an annoying term, but what we call, like, "post studio artists," so, we came from like, studying kind of pretty traditional mediums, like, you know, video making, or performance, or with Liza, like, painting, um, but then our practices would just move with the research and and the a—whatever was created or what we'd be doing was really determined by that, by the research. So it could be all, uh, lots of different kinds of things. We wanted to create classes, or

a program, um, or a kind of cultural space that fully embraced that, and, um, that used that kind of Cripistemological, um, lens or framework as, like, fully as the kind of, uh, engine for the thing, where our experience in programs or, or the reality of programs, really, like, across the country or the world is that, um, you know, Crip-disabled knowledge, or perspective, or queerness or whatever is kind of, more of, like, a special—special topic or, like, a niche focus in those, um, those disciplines, rather than, like, the, the um, the engine or like, the thing behind it so, um… So anyway, yeah, I guess that's maybe a long way to say that it—the project began as a way for us to kind of test out those ideas in some sense, and then, um, like, we, you know—we were just talking about the internship program—basically every aspect of the project has sort of expanded or unfolded in a very like, "Oh, well, that's like, a very logical kind of, like—yeah, we, we should do that—that would be interesting to try, you know, to do that…" Or um, for instance, it—you know, that, what I was saying about the transdisciplinary, um, approach, uh, you know, right away, we were kind of like, "Well, it—this would be really interesting, especially—and what we were talking about a while ago where, like, this barrier was always that faculty or, or whoever really wouldn't understand the value—they don't really kind of get the value of a Crip-disabled perspective, they maybe, it—maybe, like, wouldn't appreciate the value of, of disability at all, or maybe their appreciation would extend to, like, "Well, we need to, like, if somebody needs an ASL interpreter, we can, like, get an ASL interpreter." But it wouldn't be like, definitely wouldn't be understood as a kind of transformative or, or sort of significant contributor to what their discipline even could mean, um… So, like, right away, we were like, "Well, it would be really interesting to like, go around the different, um, units in the College of Fine and Applied Arts and do sort-of collaborations with each of the units. So, like, what—what is, sort of, Crip* times dance, or what is Crip* times art and design a—or landscape architecture, or architecture. And so, like, right away, we were like, "Well, wow, that would be kind of a fascinating—we should totally—that would be a great thing to do and benefit…" Like, it could be a collaboration where we could, kind of, create or form or, like, speculate on, well, what could this discipline enable in those disciplines, and then what's that sort of shared space? So that's sort of how the kind of "Cripping FAA initiative" was, you know, was borne out of that, so… Anyways, sorry these are just, maybe, random examples of like—and maybe the thing that Liza and I really like, maybe both publicly but also just, like, secretly to—to each other that, like, it was borne out of just conversation between us and about responding, like, she—a shared space, um, between the both of us and, um, my work was, you know, responding to hers and and vise versa, and that then basically… Everything that we've done with the project has just kind of grown out of that, that, in a very kind of, like, site-specific way and, um, it's been strange too, because I mean, we're—we're artists really, like, that's our, our primary, uh, discipline, or that's like, how we understand our—ourselves, or our [laughs] careers in some sense, and that this has become this, like, large institutional project that, you know, is comprised of classes and initiatives and, like, all of this kind of structural stuff, and I mean, we've had the privilege of presenting it as kind of an artwork, but that's something we touch–we touch base on with each other relatively frequently, is like, that we're using a lot of, kind of, art strategy to do sort of institutional or like, structural kind of work, um, so like, where I used to do a lot of like, site-specific sculptural installations, like, you could see like, since like, sort of, I don't know—you know, coming out of that, something like a site specific response to, um, these concepts or like, principles or something so, anyway. [laughs] That's like, a long answer to your question, but yeah.

No, no, that—yeah, all of this detail is really great, um, yeah. So you talked about, um, sort of the, um, different fields or departments connecting like, uh, Crip* plus like, dance, how do those like, intersect, so um, is there one intersection between the initiative and um, a—an artistic field or an artistic subfield that you, like, remember as being really outstanding or, like, you never even thought that those types of connections would be made?

Yeah, that's a good question, um… I think they're like, all really surprising in different ways, the—I think some of the ones that—and this is like, I mean we've done sort of like, smaller—we, we're very slowly working our way through all of the units of the college, I guess. I should say that, like, that initiative this year—for the full year, we're, we've been, been collaborating with the School of Music, so everything is like, Crip* times music right now, and then next year maybe, I'm not positive, maybe theater or whatever, so… But we've been, uh, we've done sort of like, little, smaller tests and, um, some of that kind of sketching and stuff so far, but anyway, um, to answer your question, I feel like it, the—it's maybe the—more challenging, but sort of interesting or rewarding to collaborate with the disciplines that I kind of, like, personally know the least about initially, or like, what—well, maybe even initially feel kind of stressed, like, "Oh my gosh, like, what do I know about landscape architecture? I, you know, I don't know anything, what am I gonna—what are we gonna do—"

Yeah.

—And then it's—because then it's like, so exciting to realize how much overlap and connection there is with those disciplines and, um, and then I think that's like, that's what gets passed on to the students, or that's how we try to, like structure the class, is like, through that kind of excitement, 'cause those are the really, like, they're very intuitive or exciting places to sort of intersect the two sort of spaces or disciplines, so like, um, so if that, for instance, with that, uh, the professor Mary Pat McGuire in the Landscape Architecture Department and I collaborated on a class around, um, climate, um, design called Designing with Climate, um, I guess it was maybe two years ago now, something like that? Um, anyway, uh, you know, that was one that I was, like, very nervous about and, like, I really do not know that much about climate science, I don't know about landscape architecture practice, but it ended up being like, really fascinating to, um, talk about, um, there—there is like, a really exciting, emerging, um, Crip-ecology space and a lot of, like, really, um, fascinating writing around basically, um, like, disability experience or the disabled body and environmental disabling, essentially, so like, you know, whether that's pollution, or um, uh, like, environmental racism, or like, all of these really interesting things, and then the projects that came out of that were these—they were really fascinating, where what might have been a process for students, for these landscape architecture designers, where they would propose something, or come up with something that was a solution, I don't know how you exactly you would describe it, but a sort of like, a prescriptive, like, a solution at a distance. Like, you see a problem that exists over there, and then you kinda, like, write a prescription for it, and you know, like, "Oh, that'll solve it," or something. And instead, we, like, were able to take up these really interesting approaches where, you know, it was sort of like, feeling your way through or like, taking it up through like a— [distorted], or like, thematic kind of approach to

climate or, um, uh, whatever, rather than a kind of, like, a really kind of like, economical or like, um, broad-strokes kind of way of, "Well, let's, well, we can solve—we can solve, you know, climate crisis in *this* way," and instead it was sort of, like, uh, even about responding to the kind of human experience of, um, climate or climate crisis or whatever, so… Anyway, that was a really interesting collaboration, and I think maybe because it was a discipline that I was very initially, like, very unfamiliar with, and, um, and didn't understand, well, what does like, you know, our—what does an art practice like mine, like, have to do with designing for, you know, designing like a seawall, or something like that, you know, I just didn't—like, I was nervous about it, so that was, like, a cool thing to find. But then, I mean, that said, like, we're collaborating with, you know, the School of Music this year as I was saying, and Liza and I, uh, I was mentioning Liza as a deaf person, but a lot of her work has been engaged with sound and captioning and description and, like, both of our, our collaborative work too, so that was like, very adjacent, or we felt like, very interested or excited to do that collaboration as something that was like, really familiar to us, but it's still been interesting or, um, I don't know, new or something in that way—

Mhm, yeah.

—does that answer your question?

Yeah, yeah, absolutely. So, um, you mentioned that you and Liza kind of were maybe

Wait your audio—I can't hear your audio or something—

Oh, okay uh—can you hear me now?

No, still, I think—hope it's not on my end.

Okay, um, oh, it says my mic is picking it up on my computer.

No, nothing, I'm assuming you can hear me but—

Yeah.

See—can you try saying something again?

Uh, yeah, can you hear me now?

Yes, yes, yes, okay. So my headphones decided to stop working, uh, [laughs] sorry—

No, that's okay! Ah, it's good. Can you hear me, um, well?

Yeah, yeah, all good.

Okay great, um, so, I just wanted to ask a little bit more about, um, your development as an artist, um, in—

Mhmm.

—in the, as—as the initiative developed? Um, like, how—how did you view your own art, or how did your sort of artistic, um, focus maybe develop or change, uh, as the initiative sort of grew and went on?

Yeah, um, well, so I think, mmm… So what I did—I went to undergrad at UC Davis, and there I, um, I double majored in art studio and, and this thing, it was a department called Technocultural studies, like "techno-culture," it doesn't even exist anymore, um, and it was kind of, like, a weird buzzword at the time that—but it was actually, like, it's, it's, I didn't really even think about it when we were, like, starting the Crip* project, but the—my experience with that technocultural studies department was so formative and exciting because basically it took, really, a field that it—it wasn't a field that existed and maybe not a field that existed or it's become like, something else, but they—that department brought together these really exciting, um, professors who were doing like, really vital work in like, surveillance studies, or like, computer music, or like, creative programming or, um, whatever, like, they, they were all together in this department, um, and it like, really influenced me in terms of like, what I wanted my artwork to be, um, where like, the studio program was much more kind of like, "Well, pick—like, do, you know, you either do painting or you do sculpture, like, you do video-making," like, you pick—you pick a medium and then you work within that medium and then build a kind of, like, gallery-based career out of it. And, um, I just didn't wanna be doing that, and I really didn't kind of understand, like, how I was going to, sort of, make my way through the world, or like, where my work would go, because I didn't, um, didn't feel like I wanted to, or know how to, kind of, interact with like, a gallery system—

Mhm.

—Like basically making studio work and selling it. Um, so, anyway, I like, kept developing my work and it, um, sort of changed and evolved, you know, from like, performance and video-making work to like, sculpture and, um, other kinds of stuff, and, and that basically—that continued through grad school… In grad school I was doing, uh, making kind of—began doing sort of ceramic work and making kind of painted sculpture pieces, um, and then that evolved through like, turning into kind of, like, performance or like research-based work where the output would be sort of, like, performance or, uh, basically like, files, like, you know, images and pieces of writing and drawings, and yeah, so that sort of… I don't know it, it kept evolving, and I was like, interested in exploring things, like, on my own, really, but was also frustrated with the way as, like, a solo artist you are kind of—any work that you make, really, is sort of interpreted—you can't remove yourself from the context of the work, like, it being interpreted in relationship to you as, like, an individual person, or your biography, or like, what you seem like or something, and I couldn't figure out how to, kind of, get out of my own way about it, like, I—what I was doing with the work was, mm, sort of misinterpreted or, um, it, maybe it just like, wasn't clear I don't know,

that—that's like, maybe a silly way of—what I should just say is that it wasn't really working, or I, you know, I didn't feel like it was working, and I really, like, wanted something different out of, um, my practice, so, anyway… I… Basically, this is like, a really long way to say that, uh, I started working more in, like, less traditional studio ways, so more like, we [distorted] I was working on kind of like, longer writing projects that, um, were sort of combining elements of, like, the sort of, creative research that I had done before, but also kind of, like, critical writing or art—art critical writing, um, and then like, in grad school I started collaborating with Liza, who, um, codirects Crip* with me and, um, we, uh, connected a lot over a kind of interest in description and language and relationship to, kind of, images. She's done, um, a lot of work with, uh, captioning, like, creative and critical captioning, and that work was like—it has been really successful and cool, and so I sort of, basically, I started kind of collaborating with her, um, we made work together, but I also was, um, what would you say… Mmm, not being like, a producer on her work, but kind of like, trimming or helping kind of like, edit or drop things, and I'd never really—I'd collaborated with per—you know, performance or video or something, but, um, I never really like, experienced a kind of collaborative relationship that was like, so, um, generative and exciting, so I really, like, I really—that in it sort of answered and enabled so much of what I felt like was missing in, like, my solo studio practice to, like, work with another person and really make, make something together that existed at, like, the overlap of our two experiences, or our two practices, rather than, like, "I came up with this idea and you're just gonna help me do it," or vice versa, um, so that basically, that—I don't know, that, I guess that's to say our—the collaboration—working collab—collaboratively with Liza, um, coincided with us, us also, like, developing Crip* as a project, so it was all kind of, like, a shift to, um, a collaborative or transdisciplinary kind of mode, um, with our work, so, um… And I think in—since then, like, in the years that we've been doing this, um, I like, I do my own work… We, we, you know, we do different things with the project and, um, we also have our kind of, like—we have our distinct practices, artistic practices, but also, like, writing or whatever, but it's been really, I think, really wonderful to, uh, just, I don't know, contribute to a kind of collective practice rather than, you know, it can be very, like, stressful or the opposite of, I guess, like, generative, or like, um, enabling in a creative way, um, to like, be so kind of, like, well, "What am I gonna do? Like, what's my, what's my work like, what's next for me?" So like, working in that collaborative way and, um, like, co-authoring things, like making work together, having exhibitions, like, where making, you know, where making work together, um, has like, been basically like, the transition or like, where my practice has gone and, you know, with that I have been much more interested in, um conceiving of projects that, um, do that. Like, they are kind of like, collectively generated projects, so, um, like, for instance, we just finished this, um, basically a film project called the *Blue* Description Project where we took this famous Derek Jarman 1993 film *Blue*, which is a very kind of like personal film, uh, about, you know, basically, his experience with HIV/AIDS related complications and, um, his experience as, like, a queer person in Britain at the time, um, that's a, you know, a famous work, and we collectively generated a creative audio description track and captioning track for the film, so it's kind of—its been an interesting project because there, you know, it doesn't really belong to anybody, the, the sort of platform that the work is even built on is somebody else's work, like, it's a film that already exists and then, um, the descriptions, the audio, like, the visual descriptions of the film were like, basically crowdsourced. We, like, solicited descriptions of this blue—there's a single, um, "Yves Klein blue" tone that

makes up the entire film—it's just like, sort of a solid blue, um, for the whole thing, there aren't, like, other images happening in the film. So we solicited, like, you know, you know, hundreds of descriptions of this blue, um, this blue tone, or the visuality of blue, and sort of edited and pieced together, um, the audio description track from there. But anyway, [laughs] sorry, I'm like, going off on this too far again.

No, no, it's okay.

But, uh, that's to say, like, that project—that project, like, a really recent project is really exciting to me, in that, like, um, where I am in it personally, like, you know, where—where does like, Christopher Jones exist in this work, you know? It belongs to so many people, this project, and even though I kind of like, conceived of it, or edited it, or like, produced it in some way, and are like, kind of responsible for, you know, uh, managing it in some way, it doesn't really belong to me, and that's like, really, a nice—that's been, along with the Crip* project in general, um, like, really fulfilling and exciting, to make work or understand, like, my art practice as something that's about like, kind of creatively intervening on structures that enable other people to do things that's not really like, just—it doesn't—not something that keeps pointing back to me or something. Um, does that make sense? [laughs]

Yes, absolutely. Yeah, that's fascinating, um, yeah. Um, so you were talking about, um, like, these projects that you're making and, um, I was just curious, like, is there, um, one or um, more, if you want, examples of an individual, like, intern who you were really impressed by, or who really sort of, um, made you think in a different way, or sort of added to the way that you—or helped you also develop and then—as you were helping them develop?

Yeah um, yeah, uh… Gosh, I mean, really they all do, uh… Like, I, I'm a person who, you know, my whole life was like, very informed by like, very acute, like, social anxiety, and, um, like, kind of connecting with people and understanding like, how to participate in like, a group setting was like, just always very difficult and, um, so I think that, like, getting to be part of, like, those like— the internship group experience, or like, work one-on-one with different grad students, um, and undergrad students on their projects has been really awesome, I mean, outside of even just, like, a sort of traditional teaching environment, it's so cool because basically every student is bringing something to the conversation that, like, I'm not, you know, I'm not even capable of doing, you know? It's not—they're not doing work where I'm like, "Well, I can do this and I'll tell you how to do it better," basically, like, that's not, like, our relationship, or that's not my, like, job as a faculty. My job is to, like, help them connect with what they're doing and help kind of develop their critical lens, or their material sensitivity, or help kind of like, fuel what they're doing, so, um, yeah, really like, every—that's like a really annoying answer, I guess, to just say, like, everyone, but um, yeah. I mean, there's, um, one of our grad students that we've worked with for a while, she—their MFA show is up at the Krannert Art Museum right now and, like, that's, that just comes to mind, both because that show just opened and we've been talking about that work for like, years now, but it's also—it's work that's so, like, far away from something that I could make, or it's—our conversations over the years have been so wonderful, and, like, I've been able to, you know, help them and as their—a committee member or a faculty, that's

advising them, being able to help shape that work in a good way, but I get so much out of those conversations, too, um… That's a little late, I guess, but the—their work works with, um, they're doing all of this really interesting, like, math language, um, it's like, really even difficult to describe—basically writing, like, a book with—that's sort of like, a math textbook, like, advanced math textbook, but it's like, breaking down, like, portraiture and, like, abstract art into, um, these kind of like, math equations, like these mathematic principles and stuff, which, I mean, I'm having a difficult time describing, cause it's so, like, not, you know, I really could not be, like, worse, in terms of like, a math discipline, but, um—

That's okay!

—but it's like, uh, but you know, anyway, I guess that's just like, the—the example that comes, really, like, um, I've gained like, so much in working through that and developing that work with them and, um, and that's like, another sort of—similar to what we were talking about with the landscape architecture example, where I think initially, I was like, "I really don't have any idea how, you know, Crip-disabled epistemology relates to advanced math equations," or something, but then, like, through that work together, it's, um, and especially because it's like, a way of understanding or processing the world that comes from, from their experience that I would, you know, I would describe as a Crip-disabled, uh, or like, like, even kind of Crip-queer like, influenced perspective that, um, that way of processing the world, or explaining things, or exploring. Through that kind of, you know, these advanced math equations have everything to do with this discipline that I'm invested in as well, even though it's something that feels so, kind of, the opposite end of a kind of spectrum from where I'm at, so… Anyway, that's—that was sort of the goal from the beginning, is like, how do we make these connections between really disparate ways of being, um, and like, create things, or like, collaborate in a space that brings those, like, or acknowledges how actually close in proximity they might be to each other, or, um, whatever… I don't know if that [laughs] if that answers your question, but I mean, also like, the, um, the internship group I think, in particular, and actually a lot of the work that, um, undergrad students that, that we've worked with, have been like, particularly fulfilling because of how, like, socially engaged and, um, I don't know, like, yeah, their sort of, ability or interest in, mm, creating those kind of, like, collective efforts, like, is really exciting, and I think, um, you know, when I was that age, the kind of like, dominant tone or like, vibes in undergrad was not a kind of collective, um, like, caring, invested sort of a thing, it was very sort of like competitive and you know, based around a kind of like, indescribable coolness as like, the most, you know, I don't know, it was just very like, not, um, not particularly like, sociable or something, so I feel like I learned—I get so much out of basically like, being there and like, helping shape and enact what they wanna do, but also like, you know, I'm not—I'm not there to tell them what should be done, like, they know, and I'm like, learning so much from that, so, um, anyway, yeah.

Yeah, that's great, it sounds—it sounds really wonderful, that exchanging of experiences and of creative ideas. Um, okay so, um, we're coming up around to the end of the interview. I have kind of just one more question, um, for you, and that's: Do you have any plans for expanding or changing the initiative right now, in the future, and like, could you, like, just go into them a little bit?

Sure, um, so, we, we received this pretty sizable grant from Mellon Foundation a couple of years ago, to develop and kind of expand on some of what we were doing, and through that we've created a couple of like, certificate programs—a certificate program for, on the undergraduate level, and then one for the kind of graduate or like, professional level, that is, you know, kind of connects like, these class offerings and that—they accumulate so that students can work towards the certificate, um, but that has been the sort of sketch for developing, um, a Master's program, like a Crip* Master's program, and also an undergraduate minor, um, so that's kind of like, where we're focused, or what we're working on right now, um… and like, I guess one of the, mm, key qualities to the Master's program development is that, um, we want it to be like, an entirely hybrid or remote Master's program, in that, in the connection to principles of accessibility, that often relocating, or being synchronous, or existing in like, a specific location in the world is a, you know, is an access barrier for students and so, um, like, we already—and I'm sorry for just jumping around, but all of the classes that we offer are, are offered—our like, our seminars, for instance, are offered both as synchronous and asynchronous, and in-person and virtual, um, so that—so we have students kind of, like, in all those different spaces, and it becomes, like, part of the class to connect them. So that's kind of also, like, where that Master's program is going to exist and, um, in that sort of like, entirely hybrid or virtual or asynchronous kind of space, so I'm really excited about that, that's sort of—I mean, we have a couple more years of development with that before it's like, fully, fully live, but that's kind of like, where—where things are going on the graduate level. And also the sort of key or exciting part of that is that with, like—we're still keeping this certificate program going on that's sort of more geared towards, um, like, professionals or like, people already working in the industry, to come and take a kind of series of courses to broaden their perspective or, um, like, find connection between what they knew and this, like, cripistemological kind of space, so maybe that's like, a museum professional, like, a curator who wants to come and take a series of these courses that we've developed to broaden their understanding of access or what a Crip-disabled perspective could contribute to like, their curation or something, um. So—and the reason I mention that is because, and this is like, sort of a boring, like, revenue-based feature, but it's one that's important to us—is that, like, money generated by people coming through and doing the certificate program will fund, like, Crip-disabled scholarships for that Master's program, so students that are involved in that Master's program, it will be basically free or tuition-free for those students. So that's kind of like, all of what we're doing now with that, and then, um, also with, on the undergrad level with the undergrad minor, we're taking that internship program and we have an advanced study class as well, and then we're kind of expanding that a bit, creating like, a couple of additional classes to be able to offer an undergraduate minor. So yeah, I don't know, that's kind of like, what's on our mind, it's just like, a lot of development with that going on, so that's maybe like, the biggest expansion, and I guess that's also because, um, uh, what do you say—the certificate programs are—they're not like, uh, degree-generating, so you can earn the certificate, but it's not, um, something that goes on your transcript in like, a really, um, like, a concrete, you know, substantial way, and especially, you know, the amount of work and rigor that goes into the work that, like, the undergraduate students are doing across the internship and across the advanced study and everything really is, like, worth and worthy of like, a, you know, a transcriptable degree effort. So that's kind of like, where, where that—another one of

those areas, I guess, that's just sort of been expanded naturally, like, um, you know, this should be, um, a more kind of, fully realized space that students could even come here to pursue, rather than just a kind of thing that might benefit students that are passing through or whatever, so, um, yeah, I don't know, a bunch of other things, but that's kind of like, the big thing on our mind right now, I guess. Yeah.

Yeah, that sounds very exciting, um, yeah, and I'd love to see how that develops, uh, even though I'm not in—within the fine arts department, so, yeah.

Yeah.

Um, okay, well, um, I just—those were all of my questions. Um, do you have—I just wanna like, give you space to add anything if you want to? Um…

No, I mean, aside from thank you for your thoughtful questions, they're really, um… Yeah, it's nice to—nice to talk about the work in that way, usually it feels like, more kind of like, stop-and-go and difficult to really just get into the exciting parts, and I just appreciate the, your questions and that they're leading like, right to the parts that are like, really exciting and, um, things that we're like enthusiastic about, so, yeah, thank you.

Oh, yeah, of course! Um, the program is very interesting to me, um…

Good.

Okay, well, um, I will, um—this was a great experience, by the way, um, thank you—

Yeah, you too.

—for taking the time out, I know we had a little bit of, um, schedule difficulty but, um, this was a really great experience, um, and I'm so grateful for you to make the time to, um, do the interview.

Oh, same, thank you. And yeah, we have, um, our like, newborn baby happening, so sorry about the—that's like, thrown all kind of scheduling into a weird space, so thanks for bearing—

Oh yeah, no, don't worry about that at all, and congratulations, that sounds amazing!

Oh, thank you!

Um, okay, well, I will send you the final, um, agreement form for the Student Life and Culture Archives—

Okay.

—and you can just take a look at it, um, and if you don't want, um, the recording to be put in the archives, that's totally fine, um, you can just say that you didn't want to, but if you do, then you can also like, check which parts of the interview, um—what kind of recording you wanted to be like, put in, like, anonymous or however you want…

Gotcha.

But yeah, I'll send that right now, um—

Cool.

So yeah, um, I think, I think that's it for me.

Cool. Yeah, thank you, thanks for talking and yeah, let me know if there's anything else you need but, yeah, thanks, very enjoyable. [laughs]

Yeah, of course, um, for me too. Okay, yeah, okay, well, um, I hope you have a great day. Bye!

Bye!

[End transcript]