

**NEW YORK CITY TRANS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT**

**GAGE SPEX**

**Interviewer:** Aviva Silverman

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**Transcribed by** Jamie Wild

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Aviva Silverman: Hello, my name is Aviva Silverman, and I will be having a conversation with Gage Spex for the New York City Trans Oral History Project. This is an oral history project centered on the experience of trans-identifying people. It is 12/2/22, and this is being recorded in my bedroom. Hello!

Gage Spex: Hello!

Silverman: Hello! Could you introduce yourself?

Spex: Hello, I am Gage Spex, and I am here in Brooklyn to have this conversation. I'm very excited to be considered in this lineage of history and moment in time, and here we are. Let's talk about it.

Silverman: Let's get into it. Well, I loved our little warm-up, so I was going to ask you again, what are you wearing?

Spex: I am wearing all black. I am wearing a Tom Ford dress that is sequined. It's like sporty, and then a lot of fake leather.

Silverman: Where did you learn about fashion?

Spex: Since I was a child, I always loved dressing up, and I also was drawing all the time and watching old movies, and just got really obsessed with women's wear specifically and 21 women's fashion. From a really early age, just doing all the research I could as a kid about designers and fashion history, and I was really obsessed with mostly the 20th century, but even before that too, like lots of things like corsets and bustles, and then 20s and then 60s, got really into historical fashion stuff.

Silverman: Was there a movie where you saw someone arrive, and it was some sort of turning point for you, where you were like, I need to be like this person, or I want to dress like them?

Spex: As a kid, I was really obsessed with specific Hollywood movie stars, so Judy Garland was always one of my favorites. And then, yeah, just really old movies at the beginning. My parents wouldn't let us watch modern TV, so it was a lot of black and white movies, so I feel like even Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, seeing those types of big gowns dancing and swirling around with feathers and Sigfield Follies kind of stuff, that was really amazing. I also had paper dolls of Judy Garland and each different thing, or even Marilyn Monroe, I think. So just different outfits that they had from different iconic movie moments.

Silverman: So cute. What was their stance with, as you say, modern TV?

Spex: My parents?

Silverman: Yeah.

Spex: They just, I think, were really not about violence, and yeah, I think that they just thought it was too gruesome, and I think that they just wanted to keep it more curated, and also I think they

were like, okay, old movies are safe. We don't really have to be worried that this kid's going to see something.

Silverman: And what was it like where you grew up?

Spex: I grew up in Western Massachusetts. I was adopted originally from Columbia, and then grew up in Western Mass in Springfield. And what was it like ???

Silverman: Yeah, anything. Just like, what was your childhood like, what was it filled with?

Spex: I had a really good sort of fantasy childhood, and my parents were very supportive, and then also very protective of me, and I didn't really realize that at the time, but then looking back, I'm like, oh, you were really, they did a good job of being protective of me, because I was so innocent, and free, and they were really able, they were really very chill about me expressing myself however I wanted to, so like, as a kid, I was like, I'm a little girl. I'm, you know, that's what I am, you know, and they kind of always let me wear whatever I wanted at home, like, so we would do a lot of dress up, and I would be wearing dresses all the time, and things like that, but they would never let me like, choose my clothes to like, go to school, and I was always like, mad at them about it, and then like, looking back, I'm like, oh, well, that's cool, because they actually kind of like, created this sort of time period of like, where I could just sort of like, do what I wanted as much as could, and just sort of not know about the sadness of the world, and homophobia, and transphobia, and all that stuff, like, until later, and then I was like, starting to be like, why am I getting weird looks when I like, bring dolls to show and tell, you know, and I was like, oh, that's not like, what every little boy does. I guess, you know, but I don't know, I was a very like, quiet kid, and shy, like, I was, I was really shy until I was like, even in my early 20s, like, it was like, had a hard time talking to people, 69 and like, even would sort of have like, a kind of speech impediment, impediment, there you go, where it was like, I couldn't really get things out, because I was just too nervous to like, talk, and so I'd like, triple my words, or like, kind of stutter, and then, you know, I only, I had like, one best friend for a really like, long time, probably until I was like, 12 or something, like, and it was like, me and my friend Lily, we just would create our own fantasy worlds, and it was sort of like, we were best friends, and that was sort of like, all we needed, you know, we would have other friends at school who were like, want to be friends with us, and we'd be like, um, we're kind of good, we got this, like, sure, we can hang out a little bit, but like, you know, we're satisfied with 78 world that we have here, you know, but yeah.

Silverman: And how was your adoption explained to you?

Spex: Um, I was, since I was a kid, I always knew, um, and I also, some of my, like, I remember going to my, um, citizenship thing, which I guess is, I don't even understand how it works, but I guess it's when you're like, three or something, like, you have to wait, it's not like, right when you're born, like, you have to like, wait for like, kids for work to go 83 through or something, so I remember specifically being at this thing that I had to go to, so it was like, they had already sort of discussed it with me, that I was like, born in Columbia, and you know, so it was like, I guess it's sort of, it must be a little hard to like, try to explain that to a child, but I feel like it was something I just always grew up understanding, and so, but then, um, when I turned 18, like, they actually gave me this really big, um, like, envelope with all the adoption stuff, and that was like, a lot of information, and I was like, oh, whoa, I thought there, like, I was like, I knew everything, and then I

was like, oh, that's actually a lot of info. But yeah.

Silverman: Yeah. Um, and also, like, what, in what way this was your, um, childhood shaped by your class or religion? Was there, like, specific ways your parents lived that shaped you?

Spex: Um, my, so my parents, um, in 1978, I think, or maybe earlier, bought this house, it was a Victorian house, and it was, I think, like, \$15,000, and really, like, sort of run down, and needed a lot of work, and then they fully restored it to, like, it looks, it's basically, like, a house museum now of, like, 1887, or, like, Victorian times, and so I grew up in their, sort of, work-in-progress house, and it was finished when I was probably, like, five or something, so it was, like, I grew up in their creative process of that, and, um, also, I just grew up, basically, kind of, like, in 1887 aesthetic, and it was very, um, over-the-top, like, really wild, like, Bradbury and Bradbury wallpapers that are, like, really tripped out in, like, the sky, and, um, kind of, like, Masonic, like, angles and stuff like that. It's, it's very beautiful, and very colorful, and a lot of different textures, so I really feel like that really shifted me aesthetically, and, like, really opened my mind to, like, the creative visual possibilities, um, but also, I think that, like, even growing up, and because of that, with my parents' house, um, people sort of had a different perception, because it's, like, and even it's sort of similar with stuff that I've done, like, having the dream house, um, and having that be, like, this big opulent kind of space, people give this very different perspective on who you are, how much money you have, based on it looking very opulent, but my parents did it all, like, on a budget, or on a dime, or, like, it was a lot of furniture that people were throwing out in the 70s, so even though it has this really grandiose exterior, it's not really representative of their financial situation, so it's always been a little bit, like, confused, like, even growing up, I think people had, like, a different perspective on who I was, or, like, what, how much money my family had, I guess. Um, what was the other part of that question?

Silverman: Um, if there was, like, a religious or spiritual nature to it.

Spex: Yeah, and then my parents, um, actually were very atheist, um, but their families, my, the only religion that I really grew up with, with my grandmother, was, um, Quaker, so when we would go to visit my grandmother in Pennsylvania, we would go to Quaker meetings, and I think that that was also very, um, like, really shifted my understanding, and I really respect it, I still think it's a very beautiful way that they do it, because it's a very, like, you just go and sit until you quake, so it's like you're sitting in quietness and silence with a bunch of people for, like, two hours, and then, you know, someone literally could not talk the whole meeting, or, you know, maybe there's, like, but it's, like, a lot of quiet, and then all of a sudden someone's, like, will stand up and be like, I just saw this flower the other day, and it really made me think about blah, blah, blah, you know, and so it's very, um, I like, I like how simple it is, and I really like the, um, understanding of quietness, um, and I think that that's continued into my, um, own spiritual experience now of, you know, I don't really have, like, a religion necessarily, but I love, like, a lot of different things, you know, like, Buddhism also is very beautiful because it's so, like, quiet and meditative and things like that, so it's, I think that there's a lot of, like, beauty in silence and stillness and then really taking your time and not feeling like, even in the conversation, you have to always be talking, you know, I feel like it's beautiful to sort of just, like, let things slowly occur.

Silverman: Yeah, um, we were speaking of silence, which is interesting since you are so much in the nightlife scene that is not really focused on a silent, contemplative self, although perhaps

there is some sort of, like, interweaving of that. Um, yeah, I wanted to know, I mean, we're taking a little of a bridge, but how did you come to New York?

Spex: Um, I came, so I was in, I always thought growing up that I would be in New York City. I was, like, my parents were kind of annoyed with me when I was going to look at colleges because I was, like, I'm only going to Parsons. That's it! And even when I was, like, a really young kid, I was, like, I want to go to FIT and become a fashion designer. That's it! Um, and then, yeah, and my parents were, like, please just look at other schools in other places. And, um, I ended up going to San Francisco, even though I got into Pratt also. Um, so I sort of took a very, like, a six-year detour to New York, but I always knew that I would end up in New York. Like, that was my dream, and, like, so I'm living my dream currently. And I got here, uh, when I was, like, 25 or 26.

Silverman: Wait, so, okay, so first you went to SF.

Spex: Mm-hmm.

Silverman: And what were you doing there?

Spex: I went to art school there.

Silverman: Which one?

Spex: CCAC, the College of Arts and Crafts.

Silverman: And what were you doing there?

Spex: Um, I went as a fashion student initially, and they kind of changed the program there. They were, like, I went because they were, like, it's an art fashion thing about sculpture and, like, avant-garde artistic fashion. We're pushing the envelope. And then I got there, and they're, like, we're restructuring everything, and now we're going to be competitive with Otis and Parsons. And I was, like, oh, wait. And they would always, they had, like, a lot of issues with me, and they were always, like, that's too costume-y. That is not, um, consumer-friendly. No one's ever going to buy that. It's too out there. And so they just didn't know how to handle me. So I ended up, um, becoming an individualized major, and it was, like, you know, I made my own major of, like, it was a mix between the art, like, the art and design worlds there. And so I really ended up finding a lot more in, um, there was, like, performance and, um, sculpture and installation that I was, like, way more into that. And I felt like within the sculpture department, they were able to understand anything that I was doing with clothes. And, like, I would just get a lot more feedback, and, like, that was much better for me. And then I also, they even had Butoh classes there. So I just did a lot of Butoh also while I was there, which was amazing.

Silverman: Has that carried through in any ways that you perform?

Spex: Yeah, um, but I think, you know, for me, I did, I started doing ballet as a little kid, and, um, I think since I was, like, 4 till 12, I did ballet. And so it was, like, I've done a lot of different dance. So it's, like, all the dance kind of, like, went into its own, like, it all got amalgamated together. So it was, like, a mixture. It was, like, did ballet. Then in high school, I did, like, breakdancing and funk

dancing and, like, popping and locking and all that stuff. And then, and then I did Butoh. So it was, like, a very funny mix of a lot of different things.

Silverman: And what else influenced you at that time?

Spex: Um, in which time?

Silverman: In school or in the greater SF community?

Spex: In San Francisco, it was amazing. Like, I definitely felt like it was, like, a calling, and I was supposed to be there at that specific time between 2003 and 2009. And it was sort of the last hurrah of San Francisco, in a way, where, um, there was an amazing live music world and very DIY culture of amazing artists. That's where I met Raul, Daniel Vez, and Ilan, and a lot of amazing artists and performers, Heather Streisa, Mona, like a lot of different amazing people. And so there was a lot of bands and a lot of, like, I also, when I was going to San Francisco, I was like, oh, it just happens to be a gay capital. That's also great, you know. But it took a minute to find the gay world. But then it was very queer. It was very explosively in-your-face, like, kind of disgusting, filthy, like John Waters, kind of, like, really trashy makeup and trashy hair and, like, glitter and excess and fur. And so that really was a really great place. So sort of, like, not punk, but very glam, or mix of the things. And so that was a great time. And then it was time to go. It was time to go when it was time to go.

Silverman: How did you decide that?

Spex: Um, I just could feel it. And I was really sad because I just was like, I knew in my core that I was like, okay, I need to keep moving. And I also feel, I still, I felt it then, and I still see it now, that I feel like San Francisco is kind of like an island that, it's amazing what happens on the island, but it's like only people on the island know what, knows what's on the island. It's sort of, it doesn't have a big international reach. It's not like New York where, like, for art, it's sort of like, art or fashion, it just sort of like stays there. It doesn't really go much further in a certain way. So I felt like very limited in what I could do. And I really was like, okay, it's time to go to New York because there's just a lot more possibilities of, like, engaging in a more international, worldly way with art and different things like that.

Silverman: Totally. And where did you land when you came here?

Spex: Um, I landed in Crown Heights, um, at Union and Nostrand with my friend Dominic, who I'd met at Queeruption in Barcelona. And then I ended up living at a I, I moved around a lot when I first came here. It was sort of like, lived in like five places in like two years or something. It was kind of crazy. And, um, there's like an amazing house called Infinity Rainbow that was like, a lot of queers had started it. Sienna Shields and, um, our friend Cheetah had started it and Posey lived there. So I ended up living with Posey and Granny there. And it was beautiful. It was like a huge Victorian house again, um, right by Prospect Park. And it was wild and four floors and 20 people. It was, it was sort of like amazing, but then also a nightmare because it was too many people. And it would be a little bit like bad girls clubs, screaming fights and stuff like that. So that also ended in chaos.

Silverman: Was there like a certain kind of, beyond people being queer, was there like a certain

politic or like a, an expression that drew people to living there?

Spex: Like, um, it was very like, well, I guess it kind of started off 200 as more like friends and family curation. And then it sort of unfortunately took a turn to, towards like money. And it was sort of like, you, you're like, who is this person in my house? Why are you here? And they're like, I live here now. And you're like, who are you? Like, does anyone know you? Like, where did you come from? So that was sort of like the end where it was sort of disastrous where it wasn't any, it started with, you know, like, like many things, more utopian queer dream of like family and friends and, um, artists who were like collaborating, you know? So that was like the idea and there was definitely some of that still, but yeah.

Silverman: And so in what ways were you exploring kind of that vision of like deep collaboration and having that sort of?

Spex: With Posey and Granny, it was definitely like, we were really good friends and had made a lot of things together. And also our friend Trip lived there and our friend Dominica. So it was, it was really beautiful. It was like a lot of different types of art always being made. It was like, it wasn't just one thing at any time. It was sort of like a lot of very multifaceted artists. So it would be like sewing and then also painting and then everyone also made music also. So it was like, there was always kind of this constant creation occurring.

Silverman: And who's the audience style of this creativity?

Spex: Um, I guess just really live our extended queer family and friends. Um, but it also was, um, going off into different, each person had their own sort of different, either established world or not, you know? Um, and people would be like DJing at like parties and clubs also. So it was a mix of like stuff that was involved in the house, but then, you know, people doing art shows at different places or.

Silverman: And around what time was this?

Spex: Um, that was around 2010-11 I guess, 2010.

Silverman: Okay. And then where did you go after that?

Spex: Um, so then after that I ended up living with Mel and in Bed-Stuy and it was sort of like a more lesbianic punk den. Um, and they had all, um, had this place called Loft, which was above Goodbye Blue Monday, which was all like, had, it was sort of like, it was almost like a squat, but it wasn't a squat. It was like, they probably had really cheap bread, but it was just like a big loft that a lot of people lived at and they did a lot of punk shows. And that was also a really cool time, but they had also, we had lost our queer house. They had lost that. And so then we were, ended up living in Bed-Stuy in this apartment together. Um, and that was sort of, I was really just trying to figure out then, and it was like really struggling and had no money at all. And it was like, what am I doing with my life? Like, is there anything that's going to happen? Or like, what do I do? Like, how do I even survive in the city?

Silverman: How old were you then?

Spex: Um, I guess I was like 26 or something.

Silverman: So what types of jobs did you do?

Spex: Um, I was a masseur and, um, I was doing a lot of different gigs at the time that were, um, like nightlife stuff here and there and sort of weird odd jobs really. Uh, but yeah. And then I think I actually had started at that time working as a host. I'm trying to like remember when exactly that started. I think, yeah, I think I had started doing that. So it was like, I was starting to do more nightlife hosting. Um.

Silverman: And how did that happen?

Spex: I was really surprised to be honest. I didn't know how any of that worked financially as a business here when I moved here. And like a lot of people, I just sort of went to these clubs. And also the thing that had happened in New York City was that I had left to go to Europe and I had stopped in New York on the way. And I was sort of like checking out. I was like, maybe I want to live in New York. And it was so boring. Like it was one of those things where we'd be at a bar and like someone would come and tap you and they'd be like, excuse me, will you stop dancing? And I would be like, what, what, what are you talking about? And they were like in New York and then they like point to the sign and they'd be like, look, and it would be like, say like no dancing. Like even at the cock, they had like a big sign behind the bar that said no dancing, but then there would be like go-go dancers that were allowed to dance because they were hired. But like you couldn't dance because of the cabaret laws. And it was, I was just really surprised by that. And it was totally a turnoff coming from San Francisco. And then I was like, went to Europe and was like at Berkheim and like, you know, so I was like really in a big like party world already of like dancing and loving to go out and be like crazy dancing everywhere. So then, but then when I came back to New York, it was sort of like this sort of Technicolor bomb had gone off in the city. And it was like, all of a sudden it was like full fantasy and there was just so much happening. And like Suzanne had started Greenhouse at Van Damme. And so that party was really wild. It was sort of like the, the comeback of like gay clubbing and drag queens and I don't know, club kids, I guess. And so that was really like, I was like, oh my God, what is happening? This is amazing. And like a lot of people, I was sort of fooled by it. I was like, wow, everyone's just so fabulous. Wow. This is so crazy. Everyone looks so good. Like, and then, and I was like, wow, everyone has bottle service. They're so expensive. Wow. They have so much money and they're just giving me free drinks. That's so cool. And then I realized later that it was a job and that like those people who are dancing or like in these crazy outfits, a lot of them were getting paid to be there. And then I was like, oh, and then basically because I was already, like I was already at that time, I was always, and even in San Francisco, like I was 24 seven wearing crazy looks like all the time, like daytime, nighttime, it didn't matter. I would just be wearing the same thing all the time. But everyone was like, thought I was always going to a party or like dressing up or something. But I was like, no, this is just who I am. And so it was like, because of that, it was just a very natural fit. And you know, I was always dancing. So people like were like, oh, like it's just, they were like, oh, you should be a host at this party. And I was like, oh, you're going to hire me to come to the party that I was already going to go to. And then you're going to let me have lists for my friends to get in and give me bottle service. I was like, that's the dream come true. Thank you. This is perfect. So it just worked out very organically. And I was like, thank God I am getting paid for just living my life. And so that was



really amazing. And I definitely started like, it sort of started off a little slow. And then once I was trying to get booked by Suzanne, that definitely changes everything. Because then people see you working with sort of like one of the sort of top echelon moments, and then they're like, they want you to host other things. And so it's just sort of like snowballed from there.

Silverman: And how did that change your relationship to people in the community? Or did it change your relationship to people in the community?

Spex: Um, I don't know. I mean, I think that I think that for me, it seemed like a very natural progression. But then it was a thing where I could see along the way and also looking back, that it started shifting things. Like anytime money gets involved, or something turns into a job, it starts losing parts of its magic in a certain way. And I wouldn't say that it was like the magic was immediately lost in any way. But it was sort of like, it was like the hourglass had sort of gotten turned. So it was like slowly, the sand was emptying. And, you know, it was like, you know, but then, honestly, that sand is still going. And it took a while in a certain way. Like in, you know, there's always magic in a certain way. But it just, it did change dynamics. And it also is the thing where, when you're in a position of power, in a certain way, it's like, people want things from you, or like, you don't know what people, like, how genuine people are, like, people are messaging you a lot, because they know that they can get into the club for free. Or, you know, people just do start treating you a little differently, because they want something from you. But I also was just very happy with being able to, like, sort of have that possibility of being generous in that type of way. And also helping to, like, really make sure that my friends were getting taken care of. Like, a lot of times, I think also at that time, too, to be honest, it was sort of like, even, there was a lot of difference in the nightlife world, then, where it was a lot more segregated, and like, different world, different world, different world. So...

Silverman: What was the world you were part of, then, if they were segregated?

Spex: For me, I was really like a cloud jumper. Like, I have always been a person who, like, fits into all the worlds. And I, like, love traveling from world to world to world to world. And, but I was sort of one of the, like, it wasn't like everyone would do that. A lot of people would just be, really know what they wanted to do, and that's the only thing that they would do.

Silverman: And was it segregated by a venue, or a type of party? Like, what was the..

Spex: I would say it was very, it was like race and gender, to be honest. And also some, it was very class, classist in a certain way, I would say, more so. Which I always had issues with. Like, I always was like, this is weird. Why did, I don't know. But I had also come from San Francisco, which was very separatist. So it was like, in being raised by lesbian and trans separatists, I was very, like, aware of, like, the importance of that also. So it's like, I can, and I still see that it's like, like, there are certain moments where, you know, even just with gay people, sometimes you don't want to, you know, it's like, it's important for you to have your own world. And, you know, there's different growths that can happen in different settings, or like, where people feel more or less safe or free. So I think that that's, it's still important. But definitely at that time, there was like, a lot, like, the gay world, gay man world, and then the lesbian world, and then the trans world were not, like, there wasn't much crossover. Like, there weren't things that were bridging those worlds together, or bringing people together. And people had a lot of more issues with each other, you know, and

like, they were like, mad at each other. And like, you know, like, gay men, a lot of times, would like, talk shit about lesbians. And it was just always like, I was like, always surprised. Coming from San Francisco, I was like, what the? I was like, you guys are really not aware. Like, what the hell is happening?

Silverman: What was it like in SF?

Spex: I mean, San Francisco, just like, amazing. Like, it was like, I'd been in so many queer places that had been just so aware, and much more radical, like, much more aware of politics, and gender, and racism, and stuff like that. So coming to New York, it just felt like I was actually surprised with how sort of like, basic people were in certain ways. But then also, it was like, a much more diverse world than San Francisco. Also, like, it was much more like, POC. And I was so happy to be within that, you know, like, being Colombian, I was like, Oh, thank God, like, okay. This is like, great, you know, so I actually was like, I was more hanging out and much more sort of like, like, most of the time, it was sort of like, very queer, POC, trans, little enclave, specifically, that I was sort of amiss. But then it was sort of like, and that was sort of like this sort of little microcosm of hat, that grew and grew and grew. So now, at this point, it's actually, like, you know, it's sort of like the seeds of the spectrum that grew. And now it's much better. But yeah.

Silverman: I have a question. I know, we'll get back to a broader sense of this. But it's been discussed in other interviews. And I'm curious what you think about the door policy at certain queer parties where they're like, no, you have to pay this amount of money, like just like a tiered relationship between trying to kind of like balance or keep out or gate keep certain groups from coming. And I just was curious what your opinion was.

Spex: Well, we definitely also had a hand in doing that, more so. With the Spectrum and the Dreamhouse, we definitely were. You know, I think that we were also just very aware. And when you have a business, you start seeing really, who is, who is spending the most money on drinks, who is actually paying at the door, you know, so it, and you start really, it's like the club, the club is like a microcosm of reality and like the world at large. So you start really seeing the inequalities and like the fucked up shit that's going on, you know. And so definitely, we also wanted to, you know, we really, it was a mixture of a lot of things. It was mostly to do with safety. And we had, it was like simultaneously, unfortunately, it was like fucking, excuse me, like white gay men were the people who were spending the most money. And, but then at the same time, it was like our problems were mostly with like amab cis men who would create issues at the club, and we'd have to kick them out. Or like, and there, you know, and it was like having to deal with people getting sexually harassed at the club a lot of times, and women not feeling safe specifically. And, you know, it was like, we never wanted that. So it's like, I definitely felt like that was a good solution of being like, you know, having a tier of money. And specifically, we did have Dagger and then Buffet later that were specifically more for femmes, women to feel safe. And so that definitely was like, we were like, that definitely was like, we were like, yes, that's going to be, I don't know, I think it was like \$50 or like \$100 at the door.

Silverman: Do people pay that?

Spex: Sometimes people would! Yeah. So we were like, thank you. And then, you know, maybe we

were also like, this doesn't mean that you're not going to get kicked out, though. Like, we will still kick you out if you're being crazy. So it was sort of like the beginning of, yeah, like, now seeing like nowadays, and like door, like conversation, it was sort of like a way to sort of have a little conversation for people.

Silverman: Right. Okay, so you are starting to host and learning about kind of like the landscape of all these different parties, and like the ways in which people were divided and or coming together. And then how did it shift to you hosting your own or creating your own space?

Spex: Um, well, that kind of happened very, somewhat accidentally. Because where I was saying I was living at the lesbian enclave moment, I really had like no money at all. And I also knew that I was like, kind of like looking for something else. And I also have always been a person who like, just like looks up things, even if I'm not really specifically like looking for like, like I would have just been like looking literally at commercial listings on Craigslist. And I ended up having a like going over to my friend Nicholas Gorham's house. Her name's Nicola now. And I was at her house. And she started talking about, we were just we were both performer, performance artists. And we were both sort of talking about how hard it was for like, affording rehearsal space and just sort of like the issues of trying to struggle to like make creative performance work without having a space to create it. And like, we were like, it would be so great to like have a space that we could like rent out or blah blah. And we were just started to just got on this like conversation of like, wouldn't it be amazing to sort of do this and like we were talking I think about like, you know, places I had seen or like we had been to in the past. Like I had been to a lot of places sort of in Europe that were kind of like that and inspirational in that type of way. And New York is just so like harsh and expensive and all that stuff. So we were like, just sort of like talking about it. And then I was like, you know what, I actually saw this place on Craigslist. And like, let me show you it's like right here. And so we pulled it up. And it was like had this phone number on it. And I don't know if like I would have done it without her. Like she was sort of like the little catalyst who was like, let's just call them right now. You know, and I was like, oh, oh, yeah, let's just call them right now. You know, so we just sort of like did it and we called them and then we ended up having like going to see it like the next week or something. But it was like in the post it was it was very perfect. You know, it was like it literally had these two pictures from before they had painted it and then after they had painted it. So it looked very confusing. It actually looked like it was sort of double the size that it was because of that. Like it sort of goes like, oh, it has like four rooms, you know, but it was actually pictures of the same room. But it was like dance mirrors, like rehearsal dance mirrors, just wall to wall, big mirrors on both sides. And it was just looked really crazy in the picture. So and then when we went to see it, like we were like, oh, my God, this is actually amazing. And we really were wanting to start it as a more of a performance art space and rehearsal space that was really like a queer community space. And that was really the focus. We weren't really even thinking about parties, to be honest, even though in my life, in my sort of, I guess, like manifestation brain, I had always wanted to throw my own parties. And I'd even started throwing parties when I was in college in Marseille, in France, at a club. So it's like I had already started throwing parties and I'd always loved parties. And I was working in nightlife at that time already. So then, well, we ended up, we had to like, we, since we had no money, we had to like figure out how we were going to get like the deposit and stuff like that. So we literally had to borrow money from like our daddies, basically. And so we had to, she borrowed it from her ex-

boyfriend and I borrowed it from my friend, Michael Warner. And he's a queer theorist. He's amazing. And he's always been really supportive. And so he lent me the money. And so we just ended up, and it was really cheap. Like I think it was like \$2,100 a month. And it was just sort of like for the outdoor room and the little backrooms... initially. And so I guess we both had to, I guess we both had to borrow \$2,000 to do it, you know? So somehow we did that. And then we got the place. Like it really happened very fast and it was very surreal. And we were just sort of like, okay, we did this. We borrowed the money, but we also still have no money. Like, okay, we got to like get on figuring out how to make this money and making it sustainable. And so we were like, I was like, well, I know what we could do. We could throw a party and make some money. And so I started, that's how we started.

Silverman: That's amazing. Can I ask you a really basic question? What do you love about parties?

Spex: I think what I've loved has changed a lot over time, but like, you know, I do think that at the core of it and what's always stayed the same is just it being a space for, like, I love people to, I love seeing people like let go and have that type of release where they can just fully lose themselves on the dance floor. And I love that in any type of art. You know, it's like, that's why I love art. Like, it's like, I feel that way, like in drawing and painting sometimes, you know? And I think that, but a club is such a cool thing because it is like a sort of like a consensual but organic collaboration of people where it's like a lot, like everyone is a part of the creation and the creation is happening like in the moment, if not like choreographed, you have no idea what's going to happen. And so it's like, and everyone is their own character or, and so it's like seeing the interactions that happen. It's just a very beautiful moment and seeing people being able to let go and then, and feel, I guess at peace a bit and feel safe and like, sort of like, just like love and being loved and like loving other people. I think that's just really gorgeous to see that come together. Yeah, there's like a lot of healing that can happen.

Silverman: Lovely. Okay, so you got the space, you got the money, you decided to throw this party, and then how did it flow?

Spex: Well, I mean, that was the thing where I didn't really know how it was going to go and, but it happened really fast. Like, it really was, we were, we were just in the right place at the right time and knew the right people.

Silverman: Like, it was like second time you've said that in this interview in this interview. There we go. Blessed.

Spex: Yeah. And so we, yeah, it was like the first party, I think, was a New Year's party? And it was like Will Out of Magic was DJing. You know, it's like, already was like the most, one of the biggest DJs was already DJing there and for like \$50 or something. You know what I mean? It was like, we had no money. So it was like, we didn't even know how to pay people. It was like, we were just figuring it out as we went. And it was mostly, especially at that time, it was like, everyone who was doing it was just, it wasn't like they were coming to an established club and doing it. They were doing it because it was like, we were all friends and all believed in doing it and just were having fun doing it. And so it was, it was, it was pretty magical.

Silverman: And how, how was the ride? How many years did it go on?

Spex: It definitely, well, the first place lasted for, from 2011. We started it until 2016. A long time. Yeah. And then, so five years, I guess. And then the second place lasted for like three years, 438 I guess. It was like 2016 to 2019. Yeah. And then we're still throwing parties here and there and everywhere. But there was a lot of like, sort of like arcs in it. You know, it definitely was sort of like, went from that like, really beautiful, very DIY moment to like being like, oh, we're actually making a good amount of money. This is the business. Like we have, you know, it's like the business was growing and I was learning it. We were learning it as we went. Like we had to figure it out. We had, we didn't know how to do it.

Silverman: And how did that go?

Spex: It was great. It was a great learning experience, but you know, it was also, we were, we learned a lot from our mistakes too. So, you know, it had its ups and downs and definite like learning moments. And I was really young, you know, I really didn't, I didn't, I didn't understand a lot of different things. So it was like, I learned a lot through the whole process of, about myself and then about like dealing with different people and, you know, just figuring out how to make things happen and how to make sure that people could be paid appropriately as much as possible. You know, and so it, I don't know, it had its fluctuations and the first spectrum was like really a success story. And if it, like we left because the building got sold or like seized in bankruptcy court from our landlord, but like, it's sort of like that could have continued going on for a while, but also the building was once again falling apart. It was kind of dangerous. It was actually good that we got out when we got out. And then that kind of similarly was the case with the second one, but the second one was also like more of like, like the first one was like DIY success story of like queer opulence. And then the second one was more like what happens to the, the queer dream when it becomes capital, capitalist and has to like survive. And then it's like, you see the downfall of that.

Silverman: And how did that shift? How did it become more focused on that aspect?

Spex: Just through pure survival because it was so expensive. The second place was like, you know, as it started at like \$2,100, that place then was like, you know, it probably, well, it was like, uh, like \$13,000 a month, give or take some, like we were supposed to pay property taxes and stuff. It was a nightmare. It was just so hard to be consistently making so much money. And then that, and also it was like the, the space itself, like more than doubled. So it was like our capacity grew and it was like, we were, um, really just pushing it to the limit of like, you know, with like the scale changed so drastically. There had to be so many more people working there to make sure that everything went okay. And like, even just the amount of bartenders, the amount of security people, the amount of door people to deal with that amount of people was really wild. And it was extremely stressful.

Silverman: How do you deal with your stress?

Spex: Um, I hope better now than I have in the past. I don't know. It's once again, that's also been a, a very big learning process of having to realize that I'm not superhuman and that I have to ask for help and I have to like, I can't do it all myself. So, um, but with stress, I think that like for me, it's, I have to remember to do like a lot of self care and a lot of like, you know, finding those quiet moments and giving myself enough time to like slow down also and not just be consistently

moving at like the speed of light and just like go, go, go, go, go. Like there was so much time that I would have to be like working like all day and all night, you know? So, so now I have a better handle on it and I definitely don't think that I would ever go back into that type of situation in the same way that I did do the Dreamhouse at least. And even the Spectrum, like I, you know, I'm just in a different place in my life now and I'm like, I can throw parties without having a venue and having to do all the things that a venue does.

Silverman: Um. And you mentioned before like themed parties, like Dagger and Buffet. Can you describe what they were based on?

Spex: Um, so we actually started, the first party that we started throwing that was like my, my dream baby, um, was Over the Rainbow. And it was, um, each time we would do a different theme. Um, and we, um, at the beginning it was just the rainbow. Like I, I really wanted to see, and it was sort of like this really fun art project for me. There was almost like, um, it was like research about colors. So it was like we went from red through the whole rainbow, ROYGBIV. And, um, with each one I really wanted it, like I was in this very, um, it was very like, like, what's it called? When you do conceptual. It was very conceptual art kind of thing moment in a way that now I don't really do that type of like, like deep heady conceptualness within a party anymore. Like maybe I would do that more again at some point, but it was very lofty and ambitious at that time looking back at it. And it was very, like, I wanted to have like each one deal with like these deeper sort of like metaphysical ideas and perceptions. Like I always wanted, even if people got it or not, like that they would be in this space that was like, like surrounded by like these really deep thoughts, you know? So it wasn't just like a surface, like I was sort of like really annoyed with just like surface parties and like surface culture and all that stuff. And then also even with in nightlife, it was like always a photographer anywhere you went, it was like too much, like actual photography and like flashes. And you're just like, whoa, like, can we just do something that's more experiential without cameras? And so anyway, the first one was like called Rubedo, which is very like one of the alchemical phases of the alchemical process. So it was like the beginning of like the magnum opus. And then it was just sort of like kept going into different things. Like I think the yellow one was like Bifurcation. And it was like, it had like Claude Chun on the flyer. And so it was like this very deep idea of like Bifurcation and like gender and androgyny and stuff like that. And we had another one. Then later after we had gone through the rainbow, we started doing ones that were like, like Hypercube, which is like this sort of like quantum idea, you know, so it was like a lot about space time bending, realities, dimensions, chakras, you know, things like that. So I always just like, like, it was just always exciting to sort of think up these new things. And then also just like have a project for myself or like people really live for like, you know, everyone loves a theme party, so they would be able to like, get ready and get into the theme. And the performances would always be a little bit like we had a mermaid one and Angelina even like wrapped herself in cellophane as a mermaid, you know, so it was just like, there was a lot going on. And it was very out there. And like, I love that. And that continued until we ended the Dreamhouse. And then there were these other parties that were more specific, like the Dagger and the Buffet were more, more like, those other parties were like full spectrum. And then those parties would be more sort of like specific to different communities within our community. So it was like, we also had, um, there's Buffet, but then the other one was Banquet. The gay man one was Banquet. So it was like sex parties. But, um, you know, we, people always were like, wanted us to do like, like everyone inclusive sex party. And I was always like, you know, you guys, I can see this going very wrong. And like, I don't think we're there yet. Like, I wish we could say we were

there yet, but like, it's not like that. So it was better for us to keep that a little bit more specific. And, um, yeah, those were great. And especially Buffet was an amazing production of so many people coming together and having little vignette moments, like Boot Shining Station and just different, like people getting suspended and having rigs. And I don't even know what some of those things are called, like the cross thing. It was really cool. And just sort of to see and create that type of thing. Like the gay mans one was actually a little bit basic, unfortunately. And I was sort of like, well, this isn't, this isn't giving me much to like, get excited about. You really don't have to do much setup. People are just happy to do whatever, wherever. But then the Buffet was really like, everyone was really focused on the production and ike, putting it together and making it happen. And I always love when people are really much more involved in, in the creation of an experience. It's really fun.

Silverman: Wow. I mean, I could go in about Buffet. I was- Okay, well, um, we just become a little, to peel back a little. I was just wondering, in the landscape of all of this, and I know you are a constellation of a thousand things. But I was wondering just for this project, how you would describe your gender as you feel now?

Spex: Um, well, for me, I've always been very gender fluid. For a while, it was like gender, gender flux. But, um, and I think that like, for me, I definitely sort of found my, found my people found similar souls and people with similar gender identities, like through San Francisco and like, traveling a lot of queer communities internationally. Sort of before people were talking about like non binary stuff and things like that, which I'm really excited that people are more aware of that. And that that's more of a casual option these days, because it was, um, it's just, the landscape has changed in the last 10 years, for sure. And, you know, since I was a kid, I definitely was like, I was like, I grew up as a little girl, and I always was like, I'm a girl, like, that's it. And my parents were sort of like, they also did, there was not much, I don't think that they, there was not other kids that I knew at the time that were like that, like, around me and like, or parents who, like my parents could like my parents could talk to about that, like, there wasn't that much dialogue going on. So my parents did a pretty good job. But I definitely think that if I had grown up at a different time, there was a huge chance that I would have, you know, transitioned at age 13, immediately, like, no thought about it. But because I grew up at, at the time that I grew up, it just wasn't necessarily an option. And I also had to really, like, go into full on hiding, you know, at age, like, 12, or 13, like, I had to, like, full, like, fully go in the closet, and, like, create a completely different character, who I was, you know, of like, being a boy being a man, you know, and having to pass in that type of way. So, and out of survival, you know, and I definitely had, you know, dangerous moments, like, and got beat up and, you know, got a lot of shit for who I was. So, you know, but at this point, and in over the years, I've really sort of like had different sort of ebbs and flows over the years, and even for myself, and who I am currently, and it's been like this for, you know, I think kind of like my whole adult life, it's been a thing where the sort of, like, gender flux is, like, literally, I never know how long it's going to be where the sort of thing changes. And sometimes it would be, like, very, like, in the day, like, my gender changes, like, three times. And then sometimes it's, like, you know, for, like, weeks at a time, I'm, like, sort of, like, oh, this is my gender right now. And then it will change, like, overnight in a way, or, like, in some moment. So it's, like, it's a very, it's sort of, like, we'll have, like, smaller intervals or longer moments. And more recently, I definitely sort of decided post-pandemic, I was, like, you know, pandemic was the time to think about a lot of things. And that was definitely one of those things where I felt like I had been sort of, like, even though I've been very, very expressive and not, like, afraid of being who I was in a certain way, I

felt like I had never really sort of sat down and really addressed it. And I was, like, I need to, like, really get this together. Like, I need to actually, like, really meditate into this, really sort of go through that process of sort of self, like, being, like, what am I scared of? Like, or what am I not scared of? And definitely, I felt like, well, I ended up, when I came back from the pandemic, I went to Callen-Lorde and got, you know, my checkup, whatever. And then they're, like, do you have any other questions? And I was, like, well, I wanted to talk to you more about hormones. And they were, like, and they're, like, oh, like, they were, like, about to get up to leave. And then they were, like, oh, okay, hold on. We're going to sit down. This is actually going to be a longer conversation than we planned. And so then we had this conversation about stuff. And I was sort of, like, well, you know, this is sort of, like, my gender is, like, you know, not, like, not binary. It's very androgynous, blah, blah, blah. And they were, you know, they always ask, like, what do you want? Like, what, where do you want your body to be? You know, things like that. And then they told me that there was this other option I had never known about called raloxifene, which is, it's not estrogen, but it's a thing that's, like, more neuro. And so it actually is very androgynizing. And it's something where you don't develop breasts. And I was, like, oh, that's, that's amazing. Like, that's actually exactly what I want. Like, and I never knew that that was actually a possibility. And so I was, like, sign me right up. I'm, okay, give me the pill. Here we go. We're doing it right now. And so I started doing that more than a year ago. And it definitely was, it's been an amazing process that definitely I was sort of, like, not sure of where it was headed. Because for me, it was, like, I was, like, well, there's actually a good chance that at this point, like, this is the tip of the iceberg. And then, like, two months, I might be, like, okay, time for my top sur- or my boobs. I mean, I need breast now, you know, and that I was, like, maybe going to go full fish, you know, full cis woman ahead, you know. And then, you know, but then I, it didn't really sort of end up that way. Like, but I was sort of, like, okay, like, let's, I'm going to be fully open to this process and see where, where my ship is headed. And then, ironically, the ship sort of actually went, like, full circle for me. And in the long run, I, it's, like, a thing where I definitely am still just gonna, I feel very fine and happy doing this.. drug, I guess. But, and I'm going to continue with that. But at the same time, I do think that what it ended up as was that I was, like, oh, I actually knew who I was, and I'm still that person. And I still feel the same way of my gender, which is, I'm just going to accept this. Like, I am a very androgynous person, and my gender does shift a lot, you know. And so it's, like, I'm just going to sort of be in this more androgynous space and just accept that for, that's what I was doing before, that's what I'm doing now, you know. It's, like, and not putting labels on it, you know, is good for me, you know, not being, like, like, you know, a part of me could be, like, I'm actually a woman, but I'm actually very, like, for the most part, I'm very butch, and, like, like wearing a lot of sports clothes. And then occasionally, I'll, like, dress up at night and, like, put some heels on and put some eyelashes on and call it a day, you know. But, you know, it's, like, I don't even want to, like, even describe it like that anymore. And I think that what I also realized was that I just have had, like, a lot of fear, and up into that point of, like, it was sort of, like, I killed off the last sort of, like, internalized transphobia within myself, finally, which I didn't really realize I still had any of it. But it was, like, a thing where I was sort of, like, I think I really was a little bit afraid that I would just fully transition to be a woman. And then I was, like, once I finally was, like, accepted that as a possibility, and I was, like, that is totally fine for me to do if I want to, and, like, let's just embrace this process, it changed a lot. Like, I just sort of was, like, able to just, like, let go of, like, that little last remnant of fear or something within myself, and I just feel, like, so much more, like, whole or, like, who I am and just, like, I'm confident in my life, you know. So I just am very happy with that. I'm like, okay, at least, ironically, I'm like, oh, we got somewhere, but then I'm like, oh, we got back to sort of where I was, but that's okay, here we are, you know.



Silverman: And how has that gender journey coincided with your dating life or hookup life?

Spex: Um, for me, definitely, it's the thing that, like, I thought about so much, because I do think that, in certain ways, some people's presentation or gender works better with their sexuality than other people, and for me, it's, like, I don't think that my, unfortunately, I think I fall into the thing of, like, my, um, sort of, like, gender experience really is not that connected with my sexuality, like, and I wish it was a little bit more aligned, you know, um, but it's just not, so for me, it's a little bit, um, strange, because it's sort of, like, I definitely feel like a lot of times I have to be sort of, like, in drag to do, ironically, in drag to, like, have hookups or, like, find lovers or, like, that kind of thing, which is, that kind of thing, which is, ironically, like, male drag, you know, so it's, like, I have to sort of, like, it's sort of, like, de-transition-y for me in a way that's, like, a little bit annoying and just sad that it's, like, I guess it's a New York thing, too, because that's where we are, because indefinitely other places I've lived, like, in San Francisco, it was not a problem, like, you know, or, like, Europe, there was so much of the time before I moved to New York where it was, like, I would be, like, making out with someone and we were both in, like, like, fully painted a color or, you know, it was just, like, not, it wasn't, like, like, New York moving here at that time was very masc for masc and that was just really unfortunate to me and definitely was detrimental in my, like, mental health at the time and having to sort of constantly do that sort of weird, like, hiding yourself again thing is never fun.

Silverman: Like code switching

Spex: Yeah, you know, it's just, like, it's sort of, like, I feel like it's unfortunately a little bit unhealthy sometimes, or it was for me, and, but at this time, I, at this point, I actually think that, ironically, in the process of doing this gender exploration and research at this point, I really feel like it has freed me up because I think that actually in getting to know who I really am and really live my full truth and be just who I am and just accept myself for who I am and not feel like I have to change myself for anything and just be, like, well, someone's interested in this, that's great, and I feel like it actually has sort of switched the magic a little bit, too, so it's, like, I definitely have been, I've met a lot more people who are just more interested in me for who I am, so it's been interesting because I think that there was actually a thing that was, like, like a mental, like, disconnect before that that was just sort of, it was like the magic wasn't happening, there was, like, a disconnect going on, and then now that I am more embodying who I truly am, it's everything's working better. It's cute.

Silverman: I love that. Yeah.

Spex: And also in a way where people, I've, you know, it's like with lovers, like, I've had more conversations about gender, too, and people, I think, like, I'm really excited for 2023, 2022 it's, like, a time where people are a lot more aware of that kind of thing, and so I think things 653 have been changing a lot in New York.

Silverman: Yeah, how does it feel, like, being at this age and this time in concert with people of Gen Z that have access to everything, that have been able to kind of, like, experiment and go in as, like, children and babies?

Spex: It's amazing, and it's, like, you know, there's a little bit of sadness in it, like, you know,

there's, like, some, like, little tiny regrets, but overall, not really. Like, for me, I'm, like, actually just very inspired by it and, like, really amazed, and I love, I love, I love seeing people's truths or identities and who they are, and I think that it's really exciting to, like, I love, I love trans experience. It's really exciting, and to me, these days, it's, like, walking around, it's, like, most of the time, I don't even really think about gender anymore, and so, actually, a lot of times, I'll actually, like, it's, like, I'm not trying to, like, clock anyone, you know what I mean, or something, and so it's, like, a lot of times, I'll be, like, oh my god, wait, oh, I totally didn't realize you're trans, or, like, it's, like, it'll be, like, an afterthought where I'm, like, oh, wait, whoa, I forgot, oh, whoa, oh, or, like, the opposite, like, I've had friends that I thought were trans, and I was just, like, oh, yeah, she's trans, and then, like, it was, like, oh, you're not trans, oh, shit, you know, like, that's so funny, like, oh, oh, wait, um, yeah.

Silverman: I guess, in relating to that, like, your evolution, how have you related to the scene that you've been in as it's changed through all these different spaces, now having kind of a decentralized space, is there ways that you, yeah, just, like, relate to the people in it and the ways that you approach it differently?

Spex: Um, I mean, I think it's always been the learning process, and so it's, like, I feel, like, even, um, just more, um, I feel, like, I guess, at this point, I feel more excited to sort of, like, let go of, like, you know, needing to be the person doing something, just excited to, like, go and see what new people are doing, new things, and just experiencing those, but then, at the same time, a part of me, too, is sort of, like, oh, yeah, I can always, you know, part of the beginning of what I did was seeing what was missing and being, like, oh, or, like, hearing people also, like, like, hearing people, um, complain is actually always amazing, because you can see what people want, and so, like, listening to people's complaints, or, you know, even, like, at the beginning, I was, like, like, hearing myself complaining, and I was, like, oh, like, instead of just complaining, I'm going to just do something about it, like, people, a lot of times, complain, and that's it.

Silverman: That's, like, an incredible instinct to be, like, and I'm going to fix that.

Spex: Yeah, there's, like, why not do something about it? Like, I don't want to hear you all talking about that anymore, like, why doesn't someone just do something about it, you know, so, like, that was just fun to do, and then, once again, still, I'm, like, oh, yeah, maybe, oh, actually, okay, I can see what's missing here, so, like, let's just, I'll just do that.

Silverman: What are some visions coming up that you want to explore?

Spex: Well, once again, I do think that what's missing, again, is, and things go in these, sort of, like, patterns, or, like, ebb and flow moments, and so, once again, I think, sort of, what's missing is people dressing up, people having these, sort of, like, dress-up parties. There are, like, not that many people who do that anymore, like, honestly, kind of, like, Suzanne is still the only one who is doing that, and then there will be some other things that are, like, fetish parties or something, but that's, sort of, different, I would say, and so, we're doing our 10-year anniversary for the Spectrum, and it's over the rainbow again, which we have put on pause since we had the last space, and at that time, we also, sort of, stopped that because it had been, like, there were more people doing dress-up parties, and it was, sort of, like, had lost its mystique or magic, or, like, it was, like, more people were doing it, so it was, sort of, like, there wasn't the need for that

anymore, so I was, like, well, let's just have a party, and it doesn't have to be a theme anymore, but now I'm very excited to do that again, and I, you know, I just, I love having more fantasy, I love having, like, I don't know, themes or ideas or, like, just putting that more creativity into it, and so, so I'm excited for that.

Silverman: What are, I don't know if you can, in this moment, but what are some, like, iconic parties that you remember having, or that surprised you when you threw? You're like, oh, people really turned out for this.

Spex: I really, well, there's, like, so many, but I really loved our, we had a Let Them Eat Cake party that was, like, Marie Antoinette kind of themed, but it was, like, Marie Antoinette, but then, like, about butts, like, cakes, you know, and so the flyer was, like, cakes and butts and big wigs, and so we had, like, like, sometimes just, like, the, the decorations would be, like, more successful for certain things, and it was just, like, you know, you're, like, you get on a roll, and you're like, well, I'm really excited about this, like, and, like, I just like the really weird things, too, but that one was really fun, because we had, like, mannequins, but I had done all their hair with, like, packing stuff, so it was, like, all taped up, but, like, these big white wigs, and it just, like, looked really good, and everyone who was dressed up looked great also that night, and then we also had one around that time that was macrophilia, which was super random, but I really wanted, like, it was sort of, like, it's actually a fetish, so it's, like, about, like, giant worship, or, like, really big people and really little people, and there's, like, a lot of animated porn that's like that, too, where, like, some little guy is, like, crawling into someone's ear or something, or butt, you know, so that was a really fun one, and we had, like, my friend made a giant hand coming from a skylight, and then, actually, this girl showed up who was literally seven feet tall, and she was, like, she was, like, I am so excited for this theme, because this is actually what a lot of my work is, and I was, like, it was just so cool to, like, just see it actually really come to life in that type of way, and also, you know, for her, like, to hear her be, like, thank you so much for doing this, you know, it was just really cool to have that type of, like, realizing that you're doing something sort of bigger, and that it's just really sweet.

Silverman: Right.

Spex: We also had a turnip one, and there were literally bags with turnips hanging from the ceiling, and it was, like, turnip, and that was the one that Bjork came to, which was super random, and I was, like, this is the weirdest one for you to come to, and but, like, of course you're here, and there are turnips and cages in the ceiling.

Silverman: Yeah, how do you negotiate, like, fame and celebrity, and kind of, like, all the ways that that also is a part of party culture and social life in New York?

Spex: Um, I think that we've, we've navigated it in such a, like, just chill, organic way, and, um, or me, New York has always been a place, like, even when I first came here, it was, like, immediately I just was, the people I was with brought me to, like, John Cameron Mitchell's New Year's party, and it was, like, I was there with, like, all these celebrities immediately, like, Keanu Reeves, like, tapped me on the shoulder to go by, you know, it was sort of, like, one of the things where I was, like, oh, this is just what New York is, um, from the beginning, and then doing the party, it was such a strange thing to sort of see, like, these celebrities come in and out, and, but it was also amazing, because even within our world, what we really, what I really loved creating was a space where

people could just be themselves, and where it was really chill, and, like, a lot of times it was really dark, so people, like, wouldn't really see people, and it was, like, a lot of times people would be coming from after work, so there would be, like, drag queens after work who were still on drag, or definitely, like, um, like, then as our friends started getting more famous, too, we would have, like, a lot of friends who were actually famous at that time, or still are, who would just be there, but it was, like, they could also just be, like, I'm not, like, putting on a show right now, like, I am literally just chilling, and I can just be myself now, and not be, and it was different than if they were at a mega club in Manhattan, or even in Brooklyn, you know, it was just, like, it would be different, it was more familial, it was more, like, hanging out in a living room, or a house, rather than it being, you know, and even some of the times, like, I was, like, starstruck myself, like I remember one time, it was when, um, Shannon from White Asylum and Bunny Michaels came at the Spectrum, and I was, like, ah, I was, like, oh my god, you're here, you know, and it's just, like, it's really cute to, like, look back, because it's, like, I'm better friends with them now, but it was, like, at that time to see how cute and, like, starstruck I was of them was just really adorable, like, looking back.

Silverman: Totally. It became this, like, magnet towards all the things that you often wanted to kind of encounter.

Spex: Yeah, in a certain way, it was just, you know, and I mean, it's sort of, like, you're, like, whoa, my reality is bending, like, Bjork definitely broke my brain that day, where I was, like, what is happening? I was, like, wanted to run in the opposite direction, I was so scared, but then I was, like, okay, just walk. I was, like, I literally had to be, like, do not turn around and run. Literally make your feet walk towards the bar and take care of the situation. This is hospitality. You can do this.

Silverman: And I know that, like, a lot of parts of nightlife include, like, drugs and substances, and I'm just wondering, like, what your experience with them is like and how that has kind of, like, shaped and or changed you throughout the years.

Spex: Well, I had, no, no, totally, yeah. I, so I started actually going to parties at the age of 14 at raves in Massachusetts, and there was a really big rave club where I grew up called Asylum, and it was really crazy, and it was 16 plus, but it was, like, had, it was, like, two floors, it was giant. It was, like, thousands of people could fit in there, and they had, like, you know, trance room, a jungle room, a happy hardcore room, a house room, like, multiple rooms for different types of music, and they, I don't think that they served alcohol because it was 16 plus, so they only had drugs there, and so I started doing drugs at a really young age, like, like a euphoria doll, and so I was, I did drugs, like, you know, as a kid, like, as someone that's that young, like, I think, like, a lot of people, I didn't know, you don't know how much is too much, you don't know how to dose yourself, you just do what other people are doing, and it's very strange, so basically, I kind of had a, I had, I had, by the time I was in my 20s, I had sort of gotten, like, by the time I moved to New York, I was, like, done with drugs. I was, like, oh, I did that, like, already, and so it was, like, I got that out of my system really early, and that was really lucky for me in doing, like, I don't think that the spectrum in the Dreamhouse would have been possible if I had been doing drugs at that time, you know, and, you know, here and there, I would maybe do something here and there, but it was very different, and, and looking at it now, it's definitely a little bit strange, but it's sort of, like, I think that it was a very, like, non-judgment zone in a certain way. It was sort of, like, you, you know, everyone's adults, and we'll try to take care of each other as much as possible, but to each their own, and, you know, pick your poison if you want to, and here we go, you know, it's a

party, so I definitely think that I could have been more aware in a certain way at the beginning of it, but I also think that we were pretty still aware and on it as far as, like, safety and harm reduction and care for our community in those ways, but at the same time, we also created something that was super headless. It was, like, headless horsemen of the apocalypse in a certain way, where it did become more and more excess-oriented, and it was underground, so it was, like, there weren't security guards, there wasn't, and, like, I, I love, I love freedom of things, you know, I don't like policing of stuff, and so that was really a dream come true in certain ways, but then, you know, like, looking back, it is pretty enabling, and it does have its sort of, like, ups and downs, and it's also, like, you know, getting older and seeing, like, my friends and family get older, it's, like, a lot of people struggle or are struggling with substance abuse or addiction, and it's really hard to watch, and, you know, it's, like, I've been around people also, even since, like, I was a teenager who have been addicts, and, you know, I've watched people struggle, I've seen people die, or, like, I haven't physically seen people die, but I've lost friends, and so that's been, that's definitely been rough along, along the time, and for me, it's, like, I drink too much, that's a thing, but I've also gotten better at figuring out my limits and figuring out, like, moderation more and more over, you know, it's, like, and that has had to be of, like, a very intentional shift within myself of being, like, okay, wait, like, I'm not in my 20s anymore, like, I need to figure out, like, what I'm doing and, like, who I want to be or, like, what I want to do, and, like, I've had moments of being, like, oh, I'm not drinking right now or I'm drinking now, you know, and so for me, though, through that process, it's actually been more of a thing about figuring out moderation for myself rather than being really polar, because for me, I think that's when it gets a little bit more dangerous of, like, being, like, I'm sober, and then it's, like, all of a sudden relapse, and then you're, like, blacked out, and then it's, like, crazy, you know, that's sort of, like, I'm, like, okay, let's do something a little bit more in between, yeah, find that sweet spot moderation.

Silverman: Yeah, wow, okay, and just to bring into this moment, what other forms of, like, creative expression are you interested in exploring, and because the club is decentralized, you're hosting these parties, yeah, are there just, like, other, because what I'm gathering now is you are, in yourself, an artist and explore so much through your own fashion and dance and, like, theatricality, and also you hold this container, like, you just are a host and hold, like, space, and so there's, like, this range, and I'm just wondering, yeah, within that range, what other, kind of, forms you're looking into or wanting to create?

Spex: So, right now, I've been, like, since the pandemic I started, because I was in a place where I didn't really have, like, the ability to, you know, make large scale things or whatever, I was, like, okay, like, I need to, like, scale down and, like, also scale back within dimensions, you know, I've gone so far, like, I started off with art as, like, drawing, painting, and then I've gone so far into the direction of, like, multi-dimensional ephemeral art and performance and, like, we don't even want to document it, it's only in the moment kind of thing. That was, like, hold on, I'm gonna, like, okay, I need to, like, go all the way back to the beginning and then also think about things that, like, I was, like, you know, I think I'm more, I guess getting older, it's, like, you're more aware of mortality and you're, like, what do I want to leave on this planet? So, like, figuring out, like, I'm, like, oh, I want to, like, create some physical things that, like, could be here in, like, 200 years in the museum and someone can look at it and get inspired by it. So I started painting again and then I've been working on these sculptures also and it's, like, I've been doing a lot of performance things here and there still, but I'm definitely more excited about trying to have more time and space to really do things that are more, like, working on some things that could be shows of, like,

in a gallery and I don't have to be there physically on stage at all. Like, they can just exist. People can go see them and, you know, I've also been very inspired by artist friends of mine and seeing other people's processes and being, like, you know what, like, that's really cool that, you know, I feel like so much of the time and within the club stuff and even performance stuff, it's, like, you're at the center of the thing and it couldn't happen without you being in the center of, like, spotlight thing. So it's, like, to take that out of the equation completely and not having to be there is, like, an amazing new thing and I feel like it opens a lot of, like, freedom to me and I just, like, love textures and stuff and even with, like, I sew a lot of costumes or things, like, clothes. So I started also taking my sewing practice of, like, the way I would sew to make a garment but then doing it in a not-garment way. Like, so it's more of, like, a fabric sculpture, actually. So it's, like, I've been working on that kind of stuff more. So just really kind of, like, taking little parts of my process and then expanding them a lot. Like, really just expanding. Being, like, oh, like, this was, like, the beginning of something. Like, let's just keep going, keep going, keep going, keep adding, keep sewing more and more and more, you know, and just until it's done.

Silverman: So I'm very excited.

Spex: I think you've seen some of that. Potentially.

Silverman: And a few last questions. So because the Spectrum has been so wide-ranging, so many people have come through throughout the years, how would you want the story of the Spectrum to be told?

Spex: Well, actually, it's funny that you say that because there are actually a few different things that are kind of in the work, potentially, about my friend is writing a book that started as a thesis for Yale and now is getting, there's a publisher and so they're working on that right now. And I just had a meeting talking to Journey about this book project. And she, and it's interesting because she's been talking about different possibilities. And so what she wrote was really just about the first Spectrum space. It didn't go into the Dreamhouse space at all. And so it's, like, I definitely, I'm more of a person that's, like, in the moment and I want to focus on the future. So it's been interesting to have these conversations with different people about that type of, like, archiving and seeing the importance of that. And also because, you know, I'm the person with probably the most memories of it, you know, that, like, I gotta work on that while I'm here, you know. So it's interesting. I do think that it's, like, a bigger, like, I do like the thing of it being, like, the Spectrum and the Dreamhouse sort of, like, together. I do think that it's sort of an interesting, it's an interesting story of, like, success and failures of queer dreams and, like, sort of wishing for utopia within a really flawed world that's, and realizing in some ways, like, it's not that possible, but it's also possible because we created that fantasy anyway. But I don't know.

Yeah, I feel like it will be interesting to see how different people do it because I don't think that I'm, you know, it's like I can be a part of the process in a certain way, but it's like that's not, like, I don't want to, like, now be like, okay, what I have done in my life is, that's it. And now I'm going to now spend the next three years looking back on that and, like, only working on that. Like, I don't think I'm the person to be, like, then, like, going to, like, make a movie about it. You know, like, someone, it takes someone else to do that and have that interest. And, like, you know, I have other friends who are, I think, think Gaia, they are interested in that type of reminiscence and history and archiving. So yeah. That's cool. Good job.

Silverman: Okay, so in wrapping up, are there any kind of, like, last thoughts or things that feel important to say for this particular interview?

Spex: I do think that kind of going in along with art stuff, looking back on everything, I also think that it's sort of interesting because I think it is sort of like an unintentional art project that I did. You know, like, there's a lot of, you know, like, art as social practice kind of thing that, like, I definitely started, you know, sort of after the fact. I was like, oh, this is so interesting because it is sort of like this very, it's sort of like, it is, like, I've been thinking about it more as sort of like this long-term durational installation performance kind of thing that happened. And so, I don't know, I think that that's something I've been sort of dissecting of, like, being like, and also just seeing the way that it has shifted in the way that New York City has changed and people's awareness within social context, I guess.

Silverman: Yeah, it's like, had to be shaped and reshaped so many times through the, like, the obstacle course that is New York City.

Spex: Yeah, and then it also gives me a lot of, you know, my, this experience was one that is, like, in a vast sea of so many other experiences like that. Like, there's so many people who've had different kinds of, like, spaces or events or, like, that kind of stuff that is not me. So, it's, like, from before and even new people doing it now. And so, it's like to, like, it gives, my experience gives me respect for those other people's experiences with the way that they're figuring out their things or, like, they're creating new spaces for whatever needs to happen now. And so, it's cool for me to watch different people do stuff. Like, I'm very excited for, like, the next generation to continue

Silverman: What advice would you give them as someone who's gone through that?

Spex: Don't start a venue. No, I'm joking. No, do it. No, please, please start a venue. Yeah, I feel like there's definitely been people who I, who there's been a lot of conversations about, about people wanting to do that kind of thing. And I feel like I was so lucky and had a lot of support, you know, with people who could, like, lend us money or different things like that, which was really helpful. And I feel like, you know, it's helpful. But yeah, I mean, I'm always available to talk about that with anyone if they want to. Or also, it's like, you know, people, it's so funny, like, sometimes, like, we were standing in line and someone was like, I want to buy a club. And I was like, what? I was like, you want to buy a club? I was like, okay, we can talk about that. You know, I was like, what, what's your number again? You know, so I think that, like, who knows? We'll see what's possible. But it's always what I have told other people. And this kind of thing with that is just keep your ears open. Because it really is like, if you want to do something, it might really be right there. You just have to be open to it and like, and pay attention. Like you have to be like, keep your eyes and ears open. Because what you're actually looking for might literally be sitting next to you on the subway. And if you have earphones in and you're just looking at your phone the whole time, and you're not paying attention, you might completely miss it.

Silverman: So you're just like raw dogging, you're just out there with nothing.

Spex: Yeah, you gotta. I mean, who knows? You just gotta be like open to the possibilities and not be scared of like talking to people.

Silverman: Well, it just makes me or reminds me of how you're like, I love when people complain, it like gives me a lot of information around like what's missing.

Spex: Yeah, exactly. Yeah, do something like you're complaining. Just what do you want to do about it?

Silverman: On that note, period. Love that. Thank you so much. I also just want to add that you helped shape my entire 20s.

Spex: Oh, thank you.

Silverman: And that that space is so meaningful for me. And I am just like in love with you being a part of the archive because you created such a such a moment in like our social life and history.

Spex: Thank you so much. So thank you. I think we all created it together, to be honest, in a way.

Silverman: I love that, but you know.

Spex: But yeah, exactly. I really yeah, I know. I thank you. I will take I will take credit for that. Thank you so much.

Silverman: Okay bye, bye!