Hudson Area Library Oral History Project
Interview with Jonathan Osofsky
Conducted by Jasper Francis
May 15, 2026

[BEGIN STREAMING FILE]

FRANCIS: [00:00:00] This is Jasper Francis, and I'm here at the Hudson Area Library History Room with Jonathan Osofsky. It is Friday, May 15th 2026, and we're recording an oral history interview for the HAL LGBTQ+ Oral History Project in collaboration with OutHudson. Jonathan, I'm really glad you are here with me today.

OSOFSKY: [00:00:22] I'm glad too, it's been – we've been talking about this for a while, so…

FRANCIS: [00:00:24] [crosstalk] I know! [laughs] Could you introduce yourself, please?

OSOFSKY: [00:00:28] My name is Jonathan Osofsky, um… what else, what do you…

FRANCIS: [00:00:35] Let's get started with… where did you grow up?

OSOFSKY: [00:00:40] I grew up in a town called Ancramdale, which is about twenty miles from Hudson. Um, on a dairy farm… and it's a very small town. And at the time, in that era, there were lots and lots and lots of farms, but there are very few left. But my family has a dairy [farm], and has been there for a few generations.

FRANCIS: [00:01:18] Uh, tell me a little bit more about your childhood, growing up in the area. Did you like living on a farm, or was it sort of a…?

OSOFSKY: [00:01:24] When I was – I did, when I was young, I mean, I loved living on a farm. I loved animals, I loved being able to wander, you know… there were lots of fields and woods and places like that. So my – you know, in some ways it was very… idyllic. I mean, I wouldn't

characterize my childhood as idyllic, but the – where I was was very idyllic. When I was young, that really resonated with me. I liked to be outside, I liked to go exploring and sit by streams and watch water, and, you know – I was kind of a little nature boy when I was young.

FRANCIS: [00:02:18] Were you involved in, like, working on the farm – ?

OSOFSKY: [00:02:20] Mhm. Definitely, yeah, definitely. I mean, I grew up – from, you know, when you grow up on a farm, [laughs] you're kind of working on the farm when you're little. Um, you know, you feed the calves, I would spend a lot of time at the barn with my father and kind of follow him around… And then as I got older, you know, we – yes, I worked on the farm until I was a teenager in some form, you know, late teens in some form or another. And then when I left – when I moved to New York, I actually worked for the dairy too because we had a, um, a little store in Chelsea Market, so I worked there when I first moved to New York.

FRANCIS: [00:03:18] Oh, okay.

OSOFSKY: [00:03:20] In my early twenties.

FRANCIS: [00:03:24] Did you and your family spend much time in Hudson when you were young? Or –

OSOFSKY: [00:03:29] Not really, Hudson was kind of – we were more oriented, because we were right on the border of Dutchess County, so I grew up in Ancramdale in Columbia County, but I went to school in Pine Plains, which is in Dutchess County. Um, but I did come to Hudson occasionally. You know, both of my grandmothers would come shopping at the bigger supermarkets. We grew up in a small town, so there was a… you know, when they wanted to stock up – they both liked to cook – um, we would come to Hudson. And, you know, things like the DMV and stuff like that. But we were much more oriented toward the south, to Rhinebeck or Red Hook or places like that. But I did come to Hudson, and it was – you know, I remember it. I remember Warren Street, when I was a kid, being very, very different than it is now, obviously. Um, but I didn't spend a lot of time in Hudson. I also would, you know, I remember my

grandmother telling me about some of the history of Hudson, and some of the… you know, centered around the vice, and when Governor Rockefeller had – Hudson was raided and all of the sort of, quote-unquote corruption was eradicated. Or addressed, at least. But I didn't really spend – I didn't spend a lot of time here as a kid.

FRANCIS: [00:05:20] Mm. What was your school life like? What, uh, system were you in?

OSOFSKY: [00:05:27] I was in the public school in Pine Plains. I was a… you know, very intellectually curious kid. I was very creative, but I was a very… I wouldn't say that I was a good student. I was a good student in things that I was interested in, and sometimes a terrible student in things that I wasn't interested in. Um… and part of my backstory is that I had, from a very young age, I… wasn't diagnosed this until later, but I have Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, so that was kind of a… made my childhood a little complicated, and made school a little complicated. But um… but I went to public school for my whole education.

FRANCIS: [00:06:29] And, um, did you move to New York and start working in the storefront in Chelsea Market right after graduation? Or was there –

OSOFSKY: [00:06:37] No, so I – I went to school for, I actually, so I graduated from high school and I went to SUNY Purchase for film. Um, I did not last there very long, because I was… you know, just kind of a troubled – I had a lot of… stuff going on. With OCD, with my, you know, sort of emergent sexuality, those being folded together, kind of interconnected… Um, so I – when I went to college, it was the first time that I was, you know, away from my parents and away from grown-ups, where I sort of felt that I could kind of express myself in the way that I… felt, but I also started to experiment with, um, drugs and things like that. And so I was kind of a – kind of a, you know, it was not a good time. Um… but I – so I went to SUNY Purchase for film, I ended up not, um, completing that period of education. And then over the next, um, ten years I had – I got, unfortunately, deeply involved in heroin, and I was a heroin addict for about ten years. And kind of, you know, going to school, not going to school, wandering, kind of moving to different places – it was, you know, the zeitgeist in a way, the… that I felt like I was part of.

FRANCIS: [00:08:42] Sure.

OSOFSKY: [00:08:43] It felt very meaningful in a way, initially it felt sort of profound and radical and exciting. But it was really a nightmare, I mean it was… you know, not any of those things that it seemed to be at first. But for me, because I was such an anxious kid and because of my OCD, when I first experimented with it – and I never thought that I ever would, I was very… opposed to it. Weirdly. But it sort of slipped away very quickly because I was – I fell in love with this boy, and he was using heroin. And he, um… offered it to me, and I just, you know [laughs] all of my – all of my resistance, like, caved, and I began that adventure. Um, yeah.

FRANCIS: [00:09:48] Okay. Just for a little context, what years were – was that period? Between, like, graduating high school, Purchase, and –

OSOFSKY: [00:09:57] Right. So I graduated high school in – I was just gonna say my birth year accidentally, which is really funny.

FRANCIS: [00:10:01] [laughs]

OSOFSKY: [00:10:03] Um, I graduated from high school in 1991, and I was at Purchase [clears throat] from ‘91 to like, ‘93. But I was there also – I had, I actually ended up getting… this is a scandalous oral history. I ended up getting kicked out of school, um, because of drugs, but not because of me. It was sort of indirectly. But I ended up continuing to stay there and live there in my friend’s dormitory, and so I was kind of like a pretend student for about a year. And then I – at that time I was sort of spending more and more time in New York, and then I moved to New York with a friend in ‘92 or ‘93.

FRANCIS: [00:10:57] Um, was drug use a big part of the culture you were in at the time?

OSOFSKY: [00:11:02] Um, I think drug use was part of the larger culture. It wasn’t – and drug use, obviously, finds itself in queer culture.

FRANCIS: [00:11:10] Yes.

OSOFSKY: [00:11:12] But heroin wasn't really the sort of popular drug within queer culture. It was much more like – I was much more engaged with – with kind of rock and roll and, you know, youth culture that… and a lot of the people that we looked up to in the early '90s were all using heroin. And it seemed so, um, liberating and cool, and um – I mean, it sounds funny to say that now, um, but – you know, I really fell for that, that vision of it. And kind of philosophized around it and thought it was a kind of… radical strategy, to be a junkie. The problem is is that it–it kind of initially gives you a feeling that feels almost spiritual and feels almost profound, and for me with such extreme anxiety, it just eradicated all of my anxiety. So it seemed like this beautiful thing, but as I started to get deeper in, um, and people started to become concerned, I couldn't understand why they were concerned because I was, for the first time, able to experience a lack of anxiety. Um… but as I said, it's sort of a false… a false reality, it's an illusion. It, you know, kind of took away a lot of things from me.

FRANCIS: [00:13:10] Gotcha. Um, can I ask what the tipping point was for starting recovery and getting clean?

OSOFSKY: [00:13:15] Um, I mean, because this went on for a long time – and you know, I ended up living in London – I had a boyfriend who I met here but moved to London to live with him, or he would come here, or – it was so many, all these years progressed in which it just got harder and harder and harder, and there were definitely, in that period of drug use, multiple rehabs and you know, psychiatric wards and things like that. Um, but I think the tipping point for me was… I had just been using for a long time, and had experienced a period of being clean for about a year. I had, um… gone to rehab, and was waiting to go to a halfway house, and they sent me to this place in Harlem to stay for a few days until my room became available. And I ended up staying there because it–it was this sort of radical Catholic community for addicts, and it just – you know, in this period of my life, kind of not feeling like it had a lot of meaning, and a lot of discomfort and insecurity and trying to – it really spoke to me. And I had always had really complicated feelings – a really complicated connection to spirituality and to, you know, different religions.

[00:15:15] Um, but this was kind of exciting to me, it was like a Byzantine Catholic church – or denomination. This priest was this kind of amazing, charismatic, kind of radical… left priest. And he had, um, he had been involved with Dorothy Day who was the – started the Catholic worker, and other kinds of – other people that had been influenced by her and this idea, that, um, that this kind of version of Christianity was actually very radical. He wrote a book called, um… what is it called, it's like… it's based on the Little Red Book by Chairman Mao but it's like, um… oh, I can't remember. Something like – although I should tell you, it's really cool. Not Confessions, like… it was like "Quotations from Chairman Jesus," I think it was called.

FRANCIS: [00:16:33] Okay, that sounds fascinating.

OSOFSKY: [00:16:35] Yeah, it was really interesting. So I got very drawn into this kind of world, and it was – it kind of gave my reality meaning. He was also gay. Um, that's a whole complicated story too. But um, he was – you know, he had marched with Martin Luther King, and he had been involved in all these Civil Rights era, um, things. And he had started this community originally for priests leaving the priesthood who wanted to still have some connection to their… to their, um, religion. But it was – it was a very interesting… you know, I met a lot of really interesting people, like the Berrigan brothers and other kind of radical religious figures, and also people that were just activists and interesting people there. Um… the reason I'm telling this story is there was this whole year where I was there, and then it kind of – it kind of allowed me to have purpose and meaning and responsibility, and it allowed me to not take drugs. But it didn't, unfortunately – nothing was really changing, you know, deeper underneath, inside. Um, a lot of my, y'know, attitudes and behaviors and ideas still were there, but they were just kind of like, suppressed by having responsibility and feeling that I was part of something really… intense. Um, and when I left there I just… that sobriety had been so precious, because it was really just situational rather than doing work on myself to get to a better place.

FRANCIS: [00:18:43] Can I ask, were you raised in a Catholic background or religious family?

OSOFSKY: [00:18:46] No. So my father is – my father was Jewish and my mother was Catholic, and, um, you know, we were – we were exposed to both but we weren't raised in any specific tradition. We would go to Temple on high holidays and we would go to church on holidays or – my grandmother, my Catholic grandmother, I would – I spent a lot of time with her as a child, I sometimes would spend the weekend with her and I would go to church with her. But it wasn't anything regular, and it wasn't really… really… talked about, religion or believing it or – in the, in the family.

FRANCIS: [00:19:27] Sure. So, can I – what was the time period you were involved in the radical Catholic – ?

OSOFSKY: [00:19:35] So that was – the community was called Emmaus House, and that was – it must have been – oh, now my years are all weird. Um, it must have been… '94, '95 maybe?

FRANCIS: [00:19:55] Okay.

OSOFSKY: [00:19:56] Um, there were – there were multiple times there. So I was there for a year, I left, um, because… I had put the priest that I was referring to, Father David, on this pedestal, kind of, he was so [clears throat] interesting and inspiring to me. Um, but then… you know, this was a kind of a wild… reality, and so – and people are very human, and when you put people on pedestals, usually they have a propensity of falling off those pedestals if you scrutinize things deeply enough. And there was a controversy in which, um, he had seemed to have… been having a – some sort of inappropriate relationship with one of the people that had come as a – as a, you know, member of the community, an addict. Um, and at first, I was sure that it was not true at all. And then over time I realized that – I-I still, to this day, don't really know what happened. It's very interesting to think of it, and the reaction to it, in relation to what has come later, in terms of, you know, us as a society looking at power dynamics and… But it was clear enough to me, that, you know, that was the problem. That it was, you know, two adults, but it was someone who had power over the other person.

[00:21:55] So initially I was very… I didn't believe it, and I – and then over time, I started, like, little bits of information started to sort of pop out, and I realized that it was true, in some form or another. And… left, um, I left and went to live with one of the people on the board of directors of the - the community, who had been also – another really amazing, like, kind of New York activist icon. And I stayed with her and I tried to not do drugs, for – for, you know, I really had to be – it was a struggle again. And then one day I was walking down the street, I remember on the Lower East Side, and then I heard someone say my name, and the next thing I knew I was like, high as a kite. I don't even remember what happened, how it happened or why. Um, and then I was off to the races again. So that, um, was the beginning of – I'd experienced, like, life without heroin for about a year and my life had gotten so much better, and then all of a sudden I was back in the – in it, all over again. And so, um, you know, over the next six months it got worse and worse and worse, and that really became my, you know, bottom, as they say in recovery. Um, I can get – I can tell you that story or I can – I don't know how juicy [laughs] we should get.

FRANCIS: [00:23:52] [crosstalk] It's up to you, whatever level you're comfortable –

OSOFSKY: [00:23:55] Um, I mean – really what happened was it was very intense, it was – I left, and relapsed, and suddenly felt like I – like, "How do I get out of this, how do I get out of this?" And in a moment of real vulnerability I reached out to him…

FRANCIS: [00:24:13] Father David?

OSOFSKY: [00:24:14] Father David, who was so upset that I had left, but I-I went back. And then it just got really… complicated and bad, and then I became… like, the object of… um, you know, sort of – I don't know how to talk about it. I don't have the right words, because – you know. [pause] Yeah, I became, um – because it was so, like all situations in which there are power dynamics and sex is involved, it's very nuanced and complicated. But I didn't – I definitely had no power. He had all the power. And so I was in this weird position where inappropriate things were happening to me, um, and… it just – it started to get very strange, and – I-I remember I called my mother and said a few words, like – you know, I-I explained that like, I had to sleep in the same bed as him. And she immediately got her car and drove to New York

and picked me up and took me away. Um, and then it was a bumpy road for about… a month, and I got really, really bad, and then I ended up in the hospital. And that was the beginning of my sobriety.

FRANCIS: [00:25:50] And um, when was the hospital?

OSOFSKY: [00:25:54] Um, that hospitalization must have been in… in 2000 – yeah, the beginning of 2000.

FRANCIS: [00:26:07] So you've been sober for…

OSOFSKY: [00:26:10] For twenty-six years.

FRANCIS: [00:26:11] That's wonderful.

OSOFSKY: [00:26:13] It's crazy. [laughs] Crazy.

FRANCIS: [00:26:13] And that's – I am glad that your mother was in a position to help you out of that situation.

OSOFSKY: [00:26:19] [crosstalk] Yes, she did, definitely. Definitely. It was a crazy situation. Um… he's no longer alive, and I-I have, you know, he was an amazing person in many ways – I mean, it's complicated. I don't want to like, um, oversimplify it. But it was a very – it was interesting to see… it was, I don't mean interesting – I mean, the way that those kinds of dynamics can emerge. Um, I've always been very sensitive to them, like hyper – you know, hypervigilant or sensitive, especially after this. So, um… you know. He was a really complicated person. He did some amazing things, and he did some, you know, not-amazing things. Um, yeah.

FRANCIS: [00:27:17] Alright. Um, thank you for sharing all of that with me.

OSOFSKY: [00:27:20] Yeah.

FRANCIS: [00:27:22] So, after hospitalization and the beginning of your sobriety journey in 2000, how has that led up to returning to Hudson and starting Kasuri?

OSOFSKY: [00:27:36] So, um, let's see. So – I got clean in 2000, and that was a long process. I was, you know, in a rehab and then a – I went through a series of programs, that was maybe two and a half years long. So it was the hospital, and then the halfway house, and then something called a three-quarters house which is like a little bit more autonomous, and then I lived in apartments with other people that were in recovery, um, and… started to go back to school and tried to figure out what I wanted to do. And um, over the next – and then ended up going to Bard, going back to Bard. And in fact I'd actually, um, when I was first – my first time around, the college had – gotten into Bard and wanted to go to Bard, and – but ended up at SUNY Purchase. So – but then in some of the interim periods I did, um, enroll in classes and stuff at Bard. But this was me properly going back to school, and I was looking for somewhere to live, and I was working, um, with someone who lived in Hudson who said, "Oh, you should move to Hudson!"

[00:29:21] And… I think she probably… I think she helped me find an apartment and I moved to Hudson, and was at Bard for like, five years, I think. Um, and you know, was very devoted to – I studied art at Bard and had always made – had always been an artist, but I was – you know, had never, had gone to school but never finished school, or [illegible.] So going back to school at Bard at that time was *perfect*. I was – I was kind of, um, so primed for it, and I also had a lot more to contribute and, you know, was older and had experienced more and, um… So that was a really brilliant period where I was making a lot of work, um, getting a lot of attention and feedback and um, yeah. That was a really powerful period. Um, so I lived in Hudson and went to Bard, and at that time, there was very little connection between, say, Bard and Hudson or – you know, Hudson was in a weird way more insular.

FRANCIS: [00:30:57] Okay. What time period was this, just for context?

OSOFSKY: [00:30:59] That would be like, 2003 maybe, onward…

FRANCIS: [00:31:03] ‘Til around 2008?

OSOFSKY: [00:31:05] ‘Til around 2000… I mean, it slowly – I would say 2003 was – I mean, at the time I think that was, that was the era of, um… a lot of, you know, like, artists, musicians, you know, gay people – but not, not like it is now. It was much – it was a much, um, smaller community of people coming from elsewhere. Um… I was like the young one, [laughs] which is just so funny. I was like part of the young entourage, and there were very few of us. Um, but it was, it was a more… intimate circle of people, I think, that was… you know, kind of roving around. I remember one – I remember talking about gentrification in like, 2003, and people just sort of being like, “Gentrification? In *Hudson*?” Like, what? I mean, and it was already in motion, it just – the way that it manifested itself here at first was so… it was like, such a slow, slow process. Now it’s much more, um, accelerated.

[00:32:39] But, um… Hudson was great at that time for me to be in school. I had a huge apartment and a huge art studio above that apartment – you know, it was a very interesting time. Um, and then I – and then when I finished school, I decided to deal with some things, some health issues that I had, which… meant I was delaying, kind of – my plan had been to move back to New York, and then I just didn’t. I ended up staying here. And, you know, at the time it felt… now, a lot of people – there’s a lot of artists and there’s a lot of young artists that have, um, congregated here. At the time, it really was a place where you could find, like, a very cheap apartment and a studio, and there was a community of people that you would, you know, engage with. And then slowly more and more younger people started to move here, I would say in the like… mid 2000s. But even then, it really – it took a long time for it to be a place where so many young people come. I think it’s so interesting how so many people when they finish school end up coming to Hudson. That really didn’t – that really wasn’t a phenomenon before.

FRANCIS: [00:34:21] Do you see a connection between, like, the amount of young people and also sort of this transition that Hudson has made into being… the upstate gay community hub? [laughs]

OSOFSKY: [00:34:33] I know, it’s so funny because so many people have different thoughts

about that – what that means and if it's… a good thing or a bad thing, or who's, you know. I-I… I guess seeing it through – having experienced, um – I mean, there's always been queer people in Hudson, and in fact, in a way it felt more, like, radically queer in the early 2000s. And I'm sure at different times – because there wasn't, there wasn't, um, just the same networks of people. It was much more like, um… like I said, more insular, and there were always queer people, but more and more people kind of came. But I don't know, do people… yeah, I don't know, is Hudson like a gay – ? It's so funny to me. I don't know what it is, really, in that way.
Um, there's obviously, certainly, more – a lot more, you know, visibly queer culture in Hudson now. And I think yes, young people are – definitely, the younger people that have moved here are a huge part of that.

[00:35:55] Um, and… but I think it's interesting that the – I don't know how, like, I've always moved in different circles, like wildly different circles. And, you know, different age groups and, you know, circles of different age groups. So I… I never felt like the – I think that there is a separation between, say, earlier generations of queer people and younger people. I think that's probably a more broadly cultural thing, as well, I don't think it's Hudson particularly – I mean, but it is, part of it is, is like class dynamics and, um, you know, different… The older, you know, gay and queer people here tend to have more resources, and then are involved in different – I-I'm always kind of in-between all of these worlds in a very strange way. I-I sell very fancy Japanese [laughs] avant-garde clothes, but I feel, um – I don't, it's not a, it's never been about class. I mean, like – so I don't sound like I'm ignoring class – but it's never been about status or, um… That's not why I do it, or that's not what interests me about it. Um… there are more – there is a lot more money, there's a lot more resources amongst a larger segment of the population than there used to be. Um… but – what was the – ? I'm sorry, what was the question exactly? [laughs]

FRANCIS: [00:38:01] [laughs] Um, if you thought that there was a connection between, like, you know –

OSOFSKY: [00:38:08] Oh, the young people coming and –

FRANCIS: [00:38:09] Yeah.

OSOFSKY: [00:38:10] I think definitely – well, I think a huge part of it is that, you know, the-the – it's funny to say the younger generations – but the generations that sort of came after me, um, you know. I was definitely, like, the one person on the Hudson community board talking about, like, racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, and gentrification [laughs] in like, you know, 2002. That was not the way – that was not like, you know, our whole culture has developed into a place where those conversations are taking place on a much larger scale. I think that is because, um – and I think here, particularly, that is due to the influx of younger people who were being – you know, who were… involved in those, dealing with those issues.

[00:39:10] I feel like one of the big changes that I've seen over the years is that there's *so* many more groups of people working to address those things, rather than just kind of the - the early 2000s kind of… sort of obliviousness to them. Um, you know, I think of Kite's Nest and everything that Kite's Nest has done, um, and you know, all the forms that it's taken and all the work that it's done. I mean, that was a huge thing. That was – that was starting when I first came here, um, but, you know, now there's just a much larger group of people who share certain values and, you know… can get together and organize around them, which – early on, there was just much fewer people doing that. Um, so that's been – yeah, I mean, that's an interesting change in the dynamics of the town. But we are in a, you know, we're still in a period of – Hudson is always in a period of transition and there's always the ten – those tensions are always a big part of it. Um, so.

FRANCIS: [00:40:49] Mm. I do want to come back to this, but I want to backtrack slightly –

OSOFSKY: [00:40:54] [crosstalk] Yeah.

FRANCIS: [00:40:55] Is there anyone, um, when you were at Bard in school – is there anyone that you considered a very close friend, or professors that had a big impact on you? We've talked a bit outside of the library about your friend Celeste… [Celeste Dupuy-Spencer]

OSOFSKY: [00:41:09] Yeah. Celeste was – Celeste, who also lived in Hudson, she – Celeste and I were, um… We met… I can't remember if we met through – I think we might have met in a recovery context and then realized that we were both starting, um, in a few days at Bard, and focusing on art. And so we were really, really close for a – for a time. Um, and we were – we shared a studio at Bard and Celeste did absolutely, like, inspire me. There's nothing more brilliant to me than watching a really good painter paint, and the process of that and how – how it starts and stops, and how it changes completely and you – you know, you might look at one of her canvases and then, um, the next day it's completely different. But it's – it was such a rewarding experience for me, and helped me think about the kind of work that I did, which was very different than hers in a way, but also was – was very political and also was full of references and, um… like, an overabundance of visual information, in a way.

[00:42:50] So Celeste was – was an amazing person to go through that process with. Um, you know, we also had our… kind of complicated times and, um… Yeah. But very influential. Um, I had a professor named Paul Ramirez-Jonas, who's an amazing conceptual artist. He was very – he was a huge champion of me and my work, and he was amazing. Um, Kenji Fujita was also my professor that I really loved, and helped me, you know, sort of channel my work in a certain way. I mean, there were a lot of professors that were really supportive of me – um, Julie Pfaff, people like that. But I would say Paul was the most influential. I think he just understood what I was doing the most, and was really very supportive of that.

FRANCIS: [00:44:30] And you graduated from Bard in… 2008?

OSOFSKY: [00:44:35] Yes.

FRANCIS: [00:44:38] 2008. Alright, um, and going from there, how did you end up opening Kasuri and selling high-end avant garde Japanese fashion? [laughs]

OSOFSKY: [00:44:47] [laughs] So, Kasuri happened because a woman – I'd heard that there was this woman that was opening, um, a boutique, and I knew someone that was working with her. And I was at this period where I was like, "I'm going to focus on my art-making practice

again," and [clears throat] had been – you know, people like Celeste would, were sort of trying to coax me – Celeste and different professors and different artists that I knew, were kind of trying to, um, coax me back into making work and showing it. But as I said, I had gone – I had, after graduation, taken a little bit of… I had a health issue that I had to do a long-term treatment for. And, uh – and [inaudible.] So when I heard about this store opening, I thought, "Oh, well, I could help them, this is my sort of – one of my areas of expertise." And just, you know – but it'll allow me to work, it will allow me to focus on my… work, I'm gonna help them part-time. Um, but when I – when I got there, and got involved, um, there was a lot of work to do. [laughs] And there was a lot to figure out, and it hadn't really been figured out, and so I just kind of started to… figure it all out. And–and then… slowly, over a period of time, just became more – you know, I had wanted to do something like that myself, but I didn't have the resources.

[00:46:50] So it was amazing because, um, Layla… you know, over time, allowed me to create something really amazing. And, you know, just sort of gave me a free hand in that way. Um… I, you know, I struggled a little bit at first because I-I – there's always this tension between like, fashion and art, and fashion and art are always kind of like, brought together in certain ways that are often very, sort of facile and silly and superficial. But I, you know, to me – I struggled trying to find a way of, like, using that context as a means of expression. Um, but I – you know, I think I ultimately was able to reconcile my – I sort of felt like I had to keep art over here and fashion over here. Um, and then I sort of let go of that.

[00:48:05] You know, we grew and we started to get… recognition, and people appreciated what we were doing. And what we were doing was very different than most, you know, quote-unquote, "luxury boutiques," which was… we were that, but we were, we really wanted to create – I really wanted to create a space that people could come into and just experience the clothes, and not necessarily have the – I didn't want it to be exclusionary of anyone. And I'd – I had been in Hudson long enough to see how… um, that could happen, in a lot of businesses in town. And I had friends who would, you know, friends who would share their experience as a black person going into a store and being, you know, followed around or treated really poorly, or literally told that there was nothing here for them. And I was so shocked that that was happening here in this community that I knew. You know when I first moved to Hudson, it did look like this

idyllic kind of utopia of… all these groups of people together, kind of… But, you know, in – very quickly, I realized that was – there *are* lots of amazing groups of people here, and there are lots of amazing people here, and there is a lot of amazing interaction between different groups of people, but it was very stratified. Um, in a lot of different ways.

[00:49:46] And so that kind of, you know, was part of my vision of what I wanted to happen at Kasuri, which was that it wasn't just a place to come and buy expensive things, and also – but that it also, that we sort of created culture, and kind of, like, had different – you know, different people come and we had different kinds of programming. We actually did, with Shanekia [McIntosh] and the library, we did a fashion workshop with kids from the library that was so incredible – probably the most incredible thing I've done as–as Kasuri. Um – and just, you know, we also – I was acutely aware that we were in a location that was not in the middle of Warren Street, and we were at the bottom of Warren Street and we were, you know, in a – at 1 Warren, and we were across from the apartments on the waterfront, which – it was just a place where all these different, I didn't want to be, like, the fancy store that plopped into the neighborhood and was excluding everyone who actually lived there.

FRANCIS: [00:51:03] Right.

OSOFSKY: [00:51:04] Um, and so, you know, that was really like, my – was just as important to me as anything else that we were doing. I mean, that was if not the most important thing, it – there was a lot of, you know, people would be really intimidated to come in, but we created this really special… environment, where everyone felt comfortable coming in, and people would come in and just look at things, and experience them and learn about them. You know, that is my… dream for Kasuri again, to kind of… revive that, um, logic. Um… but I always loved clothes – I mean, I always loved fashion, but from a very specific angle. You know, I would say the fashion I love is often characterized as anti-fashion, or it's sort of antagonistic to the… certainly to certain aesthetic norms, but also just to the, you know, kind of, um, status driven… silly, never-ending, *marketing, marketing, marketing, money money money money!* Um… sort of roller coaster of a certain side of the fashion world.

[00:52:44] I mean – sometimes people think this is funny, but definitely a more intellectual fashion, but not necessarily like, intellectual in a… It doesn't have to be *serious* all the time, or austere, but it's just… you know, designers that think about what clothes mean and how they work, and how they operate in the world, and what they – what they convey, and designers that do try to communicate things through their clothes. So, um, when I was young, when I was a kid on the farm, I discovered – probably when I was about fourteen, I went to visit a cousin of mine in Boston and she took me to Newbury Comics, and I found an issue of i-D magazine, and it was like, "Whoa, this amazing world." But I was a kid growing up on a farm, but it just like – the world that was being shown to me was so resonant, and seemed so exciting and fascinating. I was definitely like a little – became a little Anglophile, and also a little, like, you know, I was – went through my punk era, I guess, and my post-punk era, and my New Wave era and my – [laughs]. I was always very into – like, a lot of who I am came out of discovering those–those magazines, which were very hard to find in, you know, if you lived in Ancramdale. [laughs] But I sort of would stumble across them in different places, and then it sort of started to inform me.

[00:54:29] And so really the designers that I love the most are the same designers that I discovered then, like… Rei Kawakubo, and Yohji Yamamoto, and um, Vivienne Westwood was huge for me. Um, yeah, so. I don't pretend that, like, clothes can change the world. I don't – you know, I really love when – we had this, once, Perfect Ten came to the store and we spent some time together for the afternoon, and I remember one of the girls looking at the price tag on something and saying, "This is how much it cost my family – my family had to find this much money to send my sister to school last year." And I thought, "Wow, let's actually talk about that." Like instead of just being like, dismissive or… I mean, there's a lot of – there's a lot to unpack there. And so I – those are the kinds of conversations that I love to have in the store, and I love to talk about and think about and, you know… try to find ways of, within our context of how we exist, you know, doing something productive around this.

[00:56:06] Um… you know, in the past we'd have fundraisers, we had – during the sort of height of BLM, we had a series of fundraisers where we took the, um, past season's clothes, and marked everything down eighty to ninety percent, and then made it so that it was based on resources. And so we would – no one was turned away due to lack of funds, and it was really incredible.

Like, that was – that's like my dream of – I wish the store could be like that all the time [laughs]. But it was so amazing because everyone who came and took part in this really understood it, and so, you know, if you had the resources you would pay – you know, someone might hypothetically – two people might get the same item, and one person might pay, you know, five hundred dollars, and one person might pay, like, twenty dollars. And that was a really exciting thing, and then we just distributed all that money to individuals, and some groups and people who needed it.

FRANCIS: [00:57:30] Yeah.

OSOFSKY: [00:57:31] Um, so… yeah. Being – doing what I do is interesting for me, because I think a lot of the time now, people see me as this kind of like… you know, bourgeoise gentleman, or something, but I'm really much more of a weirdo than they realize, and I'm much more complicated on all of those fronts than they realize.

FRANCIS: [00:57:57] Are there any projects or programming that you're hoping to put on in Kasuri going forward? I know right now you have the exhibition going on of archival fashion.

OSOFSKY: [00:58:08] [crosstalk] We have an archival exhibition with Y-3, which is great, and we definitely want to do more of that, more work with archives and with different designers. We're going to start film screenings again, which we used to do. Um, you know, we have some writers that are releasing books in the next six months, so we – you know, things like that. We're kind of – I'm kind of really looking for… things that we can do in the space to just, you know, utilize that space in a way that is – you know, just to activate it. It's really important that it remain a kind of… not just a store, but a place where A) people feel comfortable coming and exploring, and experimenting – I mean, that's really fun, when someone comes in and is not necessarily, you know, a student of any of these designers, but is willing to experiment and see how it makes them feel. I definitely want to do more, um, of the youth fashion sort of workshops, I've been thinking about that a lot lately, and who we can – how we can make it, you know, more expansive than we were able to in the past. Um… yeah, those are the main things I think, right now, that we're thinking of.

FRANCIS: [00:59:59] Okay. Exciting, I will keep an eye out for those. We are… mm, drawing close to the end of our time, but I did just want to kind of loop back around. In your first oral history that was done with Community Library of Voice and Sound, um, and you've talked about it a bit here as well, you talked about gentrification in Hudson and sort of the issues of class, and that was recorded in… we established, like 2018-2019, somewhere around there. Pre-pandemic, to put it lightly. And, um, I'm curious if you have thoughts to share on how that has changed in the last seven or so years, after the pandemic and the sort of… changes that Hudson has gone through. Because on the one hand, like you said, we do have, like… this wonderful politically active community, a lot of groups that are active like Kite's Nest, or the Hudson-Catskill Housing Coalition.

OSOFSKY: [01:01:03] [crosstalk] Exactly.

FRANCIS: [01:01:04] But, there is also… I think, just a problem of capital going on, and very very strong striations between –

OSOFSKY: [01:01:13] [crosstalk] Absolutely.

FRANCIS: [01:01:14] – the kind of glitterati and just sort of the working class of Hudson, I would say.

OSOFSKY: [01:01:18] Yeah, yeah.

FRANCIS: [01:01:19] And what you… think could be done, about that tension. [laughs]

OSOFSKY: [01:01:24] That's a really hard one, and I've been thinking about that a lot, lately, in terms of – I mean, one of the biggest issues in Hudson, I think, is housing, and affordable housing, and *enough* housing for people, because I think obviously as the – as the rents get higher and higher, people can't live here. So the people that have lived in the community for a really long time, or forever, or even people who haven't, but it just becomes, you know – um, it

becomes more and more, or it becomes less and less accessible to certain people, and I think that's really dangerous and unfortunate, and I think there's… you know, I think that's something that Hudson is gonna have to really figure out, and the people of Hudson are going to have to figure out, because it's not just going to be like a city – you know, the political system of class, sort of figuring it out. But, um, I think that's huge. I think there's always been… stratification here, but I think, like – you know, it sort of seems like gentrification is happening everywhere. Like, *everywhere.* I don't – I can't think of a place where I've been recently where it's not obvious that that's occurring.

[01:03:21] It's a – you know, it's a phenomenon that happens, obviously, but um, I guess the thing – you know, it's like… I don't wanna pontificate on it too deeply right now, because I need to – it's the sort of thing that I have to think about when I, you know, to articulate what I'm trying to say and not sound like an idiot, or not, um, oversimplify or… Um, but I do think that's a huge issue right now, and I–I know from my own, just my lived experience, that… I see how–how it's changed the sort of demographic of different neighborhoods in town. Um, and you know, it's… it's frightening, I think, to think things like, you know, people have lots of different thoughts about AirBNB, for instance, but I think that's one of, you know – that was one attempt at like, trying to address, you know, the rising cost of housing in a place where there's limited housing. Um… but it's sort of like the cycle just continues, I don't know.

[01:04:56] It's – it's… I mean, the key is there needs to be more housing. And good housing for people, because otherwise you just end up becoming too much of – you know, you can't… There was a period of time, for instance, when pretty much all of Warren Street was antiques stores. Like, it just – there wasn't very much of anything else. Now there is, but it – but I would like to see Hudson have, you know, the kinds of places and services for people that–that have complex, diverse, community needs. In the town, rather than having to go, you know, to Fairview or whatever. And there's lots of people doing interesting things, like Rolling Grocer's brilliant in the way of the, you know, cost structure and, um, things like that. But also it's a, you know – we need more of that. We need more things like that.

FRANCIS: [01:06:25] Okay. Thank you, I appreciate that. Before we come to the end, is there anything else you would like to share for the interview today – any people you'd like to highlight in your life, or just stories you'd like to share to kind of close us out?

OSOFSKY: [01:06:44] I wish I could – I wish I could think of something more now, because I feel like my – I feel like I thought I was gonna give like a really juicy, like, queer interview, but I can't really think of anything that I, that I, um… at the moment. Um… [mumbles]

FRANCIS: [01:07:12] [laughs] Well, I can always bring you back for part two.

OSOFSKY: [01:07:15] You can always bring me back for part two, I would love – I'd happily do it. We can go in as deep as you want.

FRANCIS: [01:07:21] Alright. Jonathan, um, thank you so much for coming to talk to me today, and for being so vulnerable and lovely. I really, really appreciate it.

OSOFSKY: [01:07:31] Thank you, I love that. I love sharing these things. I'm just more – I guess I'm a little more distracted than I was during my previous interview. [laughs] Thank you.