

Landlords shut off the heat in apartments of tenants with AIDS

i can't remember where i read this

They turned the city over at market rate

Everything we do gets in on history

Now: a figment

Utopia: a compulsion to keep remaking this world

I was intrigued by some guy on the telephone. Arthur's name was
Charles, then it wasn't. He was in the Gem Spa buying an ice cream

My name wasn't Charles, then it was

Accept a fragmentation of a person

We moved around it in different directions

Secrets he didn't have

That was how we met

Writing a diary. Every day thinking of how to write songs that say
thank you

Or what's gonna happen

He looked “weird” when he danced, but that didn’t bother
him. He was imagining what the disco was like. A packet
of scented dust he kept in his pocket

i look weird when i dance, but that doesn’t stop me. i could
dissolve in a mass of sweat and breath. Mesh, blue lipstick.
Latex, sequins. All my friends at once

The words are never in the place you would expect them to be

His question was what made them get out into the sticky. What pulled them apart into sound

i overheard a sense of feeling safe, fell on my face lovedancing, feeling for my glasses along the collective

You could pick the needle up anywhere and put it down, and it always sounds the same. His question was what's with this kid standing against the wall untouched everyone

i look weird because i'm imagining what being then, being sure sounds like. Extendable structure. Dipped in and out of at will

The children of the Gallery were in no doubt that this was fabulous

His question was an account of our bodies entangled in sound

Partygoers gave themselves up to a heady cocktail of collective motion

If he were alive today he'd be going dancing later

The way people actually speak music through the dancefloor

They insisted on gloves and a medical mask

Elastic around the ears

Untouch across the room

Believing it wouldn't happen to you

It was hard to go out to a disco and start dancing

The way medicine was going, his faltering voice

People were always living in hope

When the eerily empty dance floor became

too much to bear. He seemed so real to me

it was like, that's not gonna happen. If we're alive

then, we'll see ourselves historicized

early. His question was how

we learn to see our atmospheric preconditions

In 2019, Gilead prices Truvada at \$21,000 a year

An HIV-positive prisoner gets a felony charge

for spitting on a deputy jailer. A pop star

throws a PrEP-themed dance party

What is I doing here. Who would i know

if i opened my mouth. The questions

because i don't know how to answer them

i go standing in where i am right now

now I'm heading where you were
to nothing i'm more gone
cause it's no more fun outside you now
going down making friends
through the Pines i forget

driving sixteen miles there looking
I'm looking away when we talk
for something the pattern of
I don't want our bed in the sky
to do the quiet week

what I'm doing to find you
I did before untouch
and that's all too in it
I see driving anyone was

and I wonder flips over
at all where I fell off the path
would be lying in the reeds
if I can't go sand spills
and find each step i meet
you there

It had to happen; I was going to meet him because I kept going back. When interviewing Arthur Russell, think fishy, and if you don't think fishy, think wet. He loved the sound of rewinding tape, and I learned to love that sound too. World of Echo didn't address AIDS explicitly. Oceanic formlessness. Casio keyboards on sailboats. In the gentle undersea rhythms of a coral reef, the Blue Tang displays his dreamy colouration. I would carry his cello

If he were alive today, i could have met him by now. If you want

to reach my world it's full of pleasure. His question

was afterlife transmission, ongoingness of the disco

PrEP4ALL activists dig up evidence of Gilead's public

patent violations. The CDC maintains that HIV

cannot be transmitted through saliva. PILLS

COST PENNIES / GREED COSTS LIVES. Your whole

body's got to lose. HIV IS NOT

A CRIME / CRIMINALIZING IT IS. Every sense

and notion before you [inaudible at 2:36]. IF I DIE

OF AIDS—FORGET BURIAL—JUST DROP

MY BODY ON THE STEPS OF THE F.D.A.

Get on up and do it again

Notes:

The version “The Sound Was of the World Already” included here is an excerpt from a longer work. It incorporates a significant amount of text from other sources:

Wild Combination: A Portrait of Arthur Russell. Directed by Matt Wolf, 2008.

“Q+A: Tom Lee on His Life with and without Arthur Russell.” *The Fader*, 2008.

Frank Owen, “Echo Beach.” Interview with Arthur Russell for *Melody Maker*, 1987.

Tim Lawrence. *Hold On to Your Dreams: Arthur Russell and the Downtown Music Scene, 1973-1992*.
Duke University Press, 2009.

Fierce Pussy, “Get Up Everybody and Sing,” 2010.

“How We Do Illness: Twenty-One Questions to Consider When Embarking on AIDS-Related Cultural Production.” *Triple Canopy*, 2018. A conversation facilitated by Corrine Fitzpatrick and Ted Kerr.

Signs from protests against HIV-criminalization and pharmaceutical price-gouging, 2012 and 2019.

Dinosaur L, “Go Bang,” 1981

David Wojnarowicz’s jacket, 1988.

Suzy Q, "Get on up and Do It Again," 1981.

Loose Joints, "Is It All Over My Face," 1980

Sylvester, "Be with You," 1982.

Arthur Russell, "Losing My Taste for the Nightlife." Recorded over the '80s, released posthumously in 1994.