

Maxwell Cloe: And so let's talk, scoot over to, *Polari Codes*. I saw this one was in conjunction with *forest cruise* so I'd love to hear a little bit more about how these ones came together.

Carmelo Amenta: Yeah. So this, this happened in the spring of 2019, actually like more like winter. I was still working on *forest cruise* at the time and then I ended up getting bronchitis that moved to my heart. So I was like in and out of the hospital for like a month. And my cardiologist said like, "you can't go on hikes anymore. You can't do can't smoke cigarettes. You can't drink coffee. You can't drink alcohol. Like you can't walk up a flight of stairs." I was like, "what the fuck am I supposed to do? I'm making work where I have to carry twenty pounds with like camera equipment in these mountains and Appalachia and like these parks and all these spaces." And he's like, "yeah, if you do it, you'll probably have a, a heart attack." I was like 24, 25 at the time. And I was like, "oh, I don't want that." So I went back on again, like some work that I was working on in high school – or not high school, undergrad – where I made this work about like the relationship with my dad and used his photographs from the time when he was my age. These photographs are my father's photographs, where I conflated them with these high res screenshots or scans of bandanas that represent like the hanky code, right? So like you're conflating these really grainy, blurry photographs of my dad and his friends and like this homoeroticism and like homosociality and like kind of forcing them to be queer by chopping off their heads and like focusing on the groin and then putting these high res bandanas of queer codes right on top of them as well. I think they work for like - *Polari Codes* and *forest cruise* kind of work in conjunction with one another, not only because they were like in a show together. I had a show, I was working on a show at the time up at Adrian College in Michigan and it was this duo show with an old studio mate of mine. I was like, "all *forest cruise* will be is like - I have like 20 photographs of *forest cruise* to put in the show." I was in the hospital. So I was like, "alright, I need to make some more photographs. How can I do this without getting more sick?"

This work kind of came into fruition and it kind of went on hiatus a little bit. Like I stopped working on it around the summer of 19 to start working on other things and figuring out what my MFA thesis was gonna be. I like always have wanted to really get back into *forest cruise* and *Polari Codes* and make them better, and make more photographs for them but I just really have never gotten around to it since then.