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Instituting ‘Group Material’ (1979–1996)

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Remembering and Forgetting in the Archive: Instituting 'Group Material' (1979–1996)

Julie Ault

DOCTORAL STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN FINE AND PERFORMING ARTS, NO 8. MALMÖ FACULTY OF FINE AND PERFORMING ARTS, LUND UNIVERSITY, SWEDEN

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My PhD submission is made up of a constellation of three elements that form a body of textual material / theory and practice event / exhibition.

(1) A dimension of critical writing or dissertation that has two parts:

(a) *Retrospective / Prospective: Activating the Archive*, September 1, 2010 pp. 1–132

(b) an accretion of further analysis, *Archive, Archived, Archiving*, September 1, 2011. pp. 133–222

References pp. 223–226

(2) A testing of both archiving practice and its historical representation is carried out in the arms of the larger investigation, the book, *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material* (London: Four Corners, 2010 ISBN: 978-0956192813). *Show and Tell* demonstrates a primary analytic situation for the problematics of my research. [see Appendix B]

(3) An exhibition *Ever Ephemeral: Remembering and Forgetting in the Archive* (Signal – Center for Contemporary Art, September 23, 2011 – November 13, 2011, and the Inter Arts Center, September 30, 2011 – October 30, 2011). *Ever Ephemeral* encompasses the triple functions of producing, presenting, and testing research. It will bring together reference points, in the forms of artworks, artifacts, publications, and writings, which are evocative of key concerns imbedded in the subject terrain. These include the plasticity of history, archiving and unarchiving, ways art can give history form, and chronology and counter-chronology. The inclusions lay open specific dialogues, which have contoured the research arena.

Appendix A

The following textual components are part of the exhibition, *Ever Ephemeral: Remembering and Forgetting in the Archive*.

Checklist, *Ever Ephemeral: Remembering and Forgetting in the Archive* pp. 228–230

Alejandro Cesarco*, Present Memory*, 2010, text compiled by Cesarco, produced as booklet in exhibition. pp. 231–242

Time Frames: A Conversation, 2011, dialogue between Ault and Andrea Rosen about their decision to disperse Felix Gonzalez-Torres's collection of clocks rather than archive them when he died. The clocks have been gathered from their respective owners for the occasion of this exhibition. The conversation is a take-away booklet in the exhibition. pp. 243–256

Julie Ault, *4195.6 feet: Geography of Time*, 2010, text on James Benning (dir) *casting a glance*, 2007, produced as handout in exhibition. pp. 257–263

Julie Ault, *Historical Inquiry as Subject and Object*, 2010, essay on Group Material archive and book project, a take-away in exhibition. pp. 264–268

Doug Ashford, Julie Ault: Group Material. *AIDS Timeline* (Hatje Cantz, dOCUMENTA (13), 2011, ISBN 978-3-7757-2881-2) pp. 269–283

Rasmus Röhling*, Self-Titled,* 2009, text by Röhling imbedded in his work and a take-away in the exhibition. pp. 284–286

Julie Ault*, Roni Horn, a compilation*, 2010 [ongoing], text that derives from researching Horn's journals to compose a personal chronology of the artist; exhibited in relation to a set of artists books by Horn. Extract produced for exhibition. pp. 287–302

Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *"Untitled" (Portrait of Julie Ault)*, 1991, the loan form for the work includes the text, materialization specifications, and terms of agreement. pp. 303–307

Appendix B

A digital version of *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material* (London: Four Corners, 2010 ISBN: 978-0956192813). *Show and Tell* is evidence of a major test site for the problematics of my research. pp. 309–444

This body of research aims to illuminate the retrospective and prospective dimensions of archiving *in practice*. It investigates the consequences of registering previously unhistoricized art field events and practices into enduring public records. Additionally the research tests particular methods of historical representation that draw on the archive. Imbedded in this investigation is consideration of "exhibition" and "publication" as presentational forms for historical research. The liberties and limitations of each format are evaluated in the inquiry.

Retrospective / Prospective: Activating the Archive

Julie Ault

Doctoral research in Visual Art at Malmö Art Academy, Lund University
Submitted to Prof. Stuart Sim and Prof. Sarat Maharaj, September 1, 2010

My research is concerned with archiving and historicizing practices, specifically how histories of ephemeral, indeterminate, and peripheral activities in the art field are registered in the archive and shaped into historical representations. This research expressly takes up the challenge of creating fitting representational forms in dynamic with particular cultural practices that have not yet been formally historicized (for example the artist Corita Kent, the collaborative Group Material).

My aim in this writing is to trace the course of my doctoral research and analyze its process and findings. It is necessary to outline my previous historicizing forays in the archive alongside the specific endeavors of the research in order to chart the effects, problematics, and yields of writing peripheral practices into art history.

Given that my art practice involves a diverse relationship to form, this consideration includes probing the path of key production shifts, for example from exhibition making to publishing and from collaboration to independent work, as well as evaluating the liberties and limitations of each differentiation in format, method, and distribution mode.

Descriptive narration, empirical information, critical analysis, multifaceted reflection, and extracts from earlier essays that demonstrate my thinking in temporal contexts are joined here. Projects generated in the doctoral framework are delineated and cross-wired with prior endeavors influential on my thinking, the further meanings of which have been clarified within the research process.

Exhibition Enthusiasm

I love exhibitions and I love making them. For many years I began public presentations with similar declaration. Social spaces. Immersive contexts. Experiential systems. Model worlds. Aesthetic explorations. Educative environments. Intellectual and somatic stimulation. As a user I prize the medium for its communicative, pedagogic, and entertaining possibilities. As a practitioner I value the diverse activities and social processes that exhibition making encompass: the conceptual labor of identifying a subject and developing its shape; generating a structure; researching and distilling ideas and information; curating and editorializing; engaging symbolic, spatial, visual, aesthetic, and presentational issues; working with artists and other cultural producers and agents; collaborating with institutions on administration and realization; and documenting and representing after the fact. A thinking, finding, and formalizing process with exposure built in.

I delineated my cultural interest in the form at a conference in 2000:

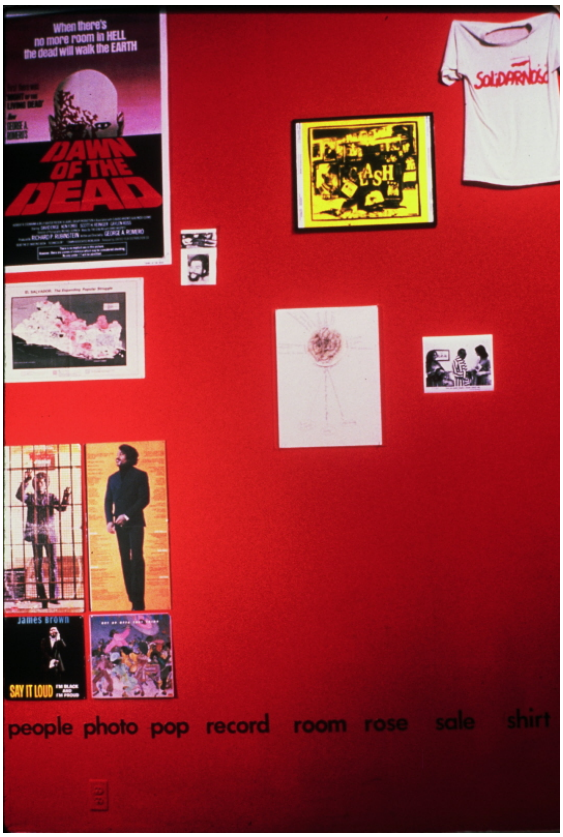
> Why exhibitions? Exhibitions are sites where art and artifact are made public, where social processes and contexts that art and other kinds of production come from can be described or represented to viewers. Exhibitions are social spaces, where meanings, narratives, histories, and functions of cultural materials are actively produced. They are intersections where art, artist, institution, and viewer meet.
>
> The field of exhibition making is an arena of action which I critically address through the practice itself. I want to challenge the division of labor between artists and curators through the methods I employ making exhibitions. Although my activities as an artist sometimes appear to mirror those of a curator, I don't call myself a curator for a number of reasons: because of its historical association to connoisseurship and elitism; in order to make visible a subjective approach which curators

don't necessarily avow; to emphasize exhibition-making as a form of cultural production; and to claim artistic license.

Distinct from common institutional or academic curatorial models, I view the curated exhibition as akin to an artwork in which every conceptual and concrete aspect involves choice rather than adherence to convention. Therefore I think it is crucial to approach exhibition-making activities newly in relation to the particular contents or material to be exposed. Display and presentational modes are necessarily flexible. My aim is to produce exhibitions and presentational environments which self-reflexively consider the context(s) the artworks / practices extend from, as well as the new context(s) being posited by / in the exhibition.[1]

My education in exhibition making began while working in the New York based artists collaborative Group Material (1979–1996). Within that framework I worked on nearly fifty exhibitions, including *Primer (for Raymond Williams)*, 1982, at Artists Space, New York; *Americana,* 1985*,* at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; *The Castle*, 1987, in *documenta 8*, Kassel, and *Democracy*, 1988, at the Dia Foundation for the Arts, New York. Since the group's dissolution I have independently and collaboratively organized another dozen expositions including *Cultural Economies: Histories from the Alternative Arts Movement*, 1996, The Drawing Center, New York; *Power Up: Sister Corita and Donald Moffett*, 1997, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, and an expanded version in 2000 at the UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; and *Outdoor Systems, indoor distribution*, 2000, in collaboration with Martin Beck, at NGBK in Berlin. In the last decade, together with Beck, I designed an additional twenty exhibitions including *The Rise of the Picture Press*, 2002, at the International Center for Photography in New York, and *X–Screen. Film Installations and Actions of the 1960s and 1970s*, 2003, as well as *Changing Channels. Art and Television 1963–1987*, 2010, both at Museum Moderner Kunst in Vienna.





Group Material, *Primer (for Raymond Williams),* 1982, Artists Space, New York



Group Material*, Americana*, 1985, The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York



Group Material, *Democracy: Education*, 1988, Dia Art Foundation, New York



Group Material, *Politics and Election*, 1988, Dia Art Foundation, New York



Julie Ault, *Cultural Economies: Histories from the Alternative Arts Movement*, 1996,
The Drawing Center, New York



Julie Ault, *Power Up: Sister Corita and Donald Moffett, Interlocking*, 2000,
UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles

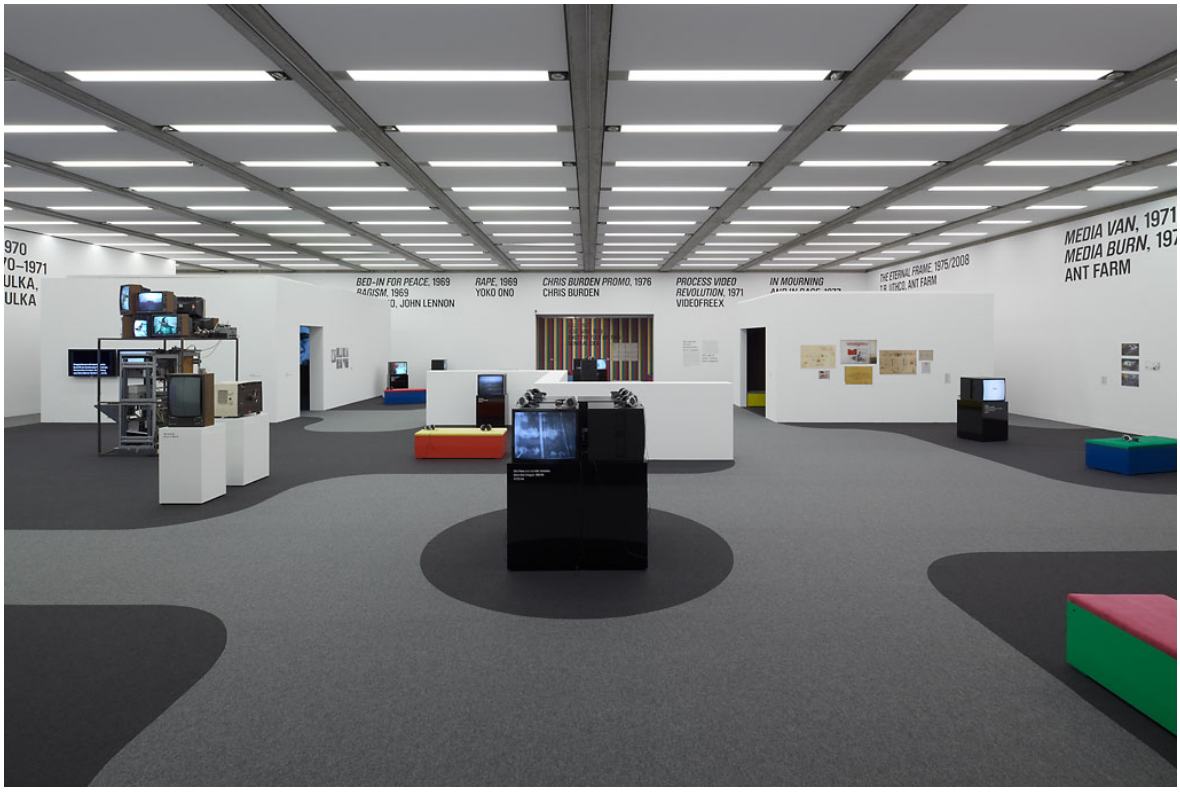




Julie Ault, Martin Beck*, Outdoor Systems, Indoor Distribution*, 2000, Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst, Berlin



Exhibition design by Julie Ault, Martin Beck, *The Rise of the Picture Press*, 2002, International Center for Photography, New York



Exhibition design by Julie Ault, Martin Beck, *Changing Channels: Artists and Television, 1963–1985*, 2010, Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna

Exhibition Ambivalence

In the spring of 2005 Martin Beck and I visited the Secession in Vienna where we were invited to create an exhibition to take place the following year. The situation was a blank slate; we could do whatever we wanted provided it was financially feasible. Neither of us had ready objects to show, nor a ready subject we wanted to address. Instead we spent some time in the main gallery in search of context, perspective, and inspiration.

A group of artists seeking to escape the dominance of academicism and historicism near the end of the 19th century founded the Secession, wanting to liberate display of art from periodized environments and produce an apt modern presentational context. The Secession exhibition hall is a quintessential white cube prototype. The gallery's cool blankness is a strong presence: a spacious symmetrical room with a gridded glass ceiling evenly distributes the fluorescent light it filters. The seemingly neutral white cube became the favored setting for modern art and has also been adopted widely by contemporary galleries and art institutions. The ubiquity of such spaces renders them nearly invisible, thereby consolidating their authority to reinforce and reproduce existing power configurations that undergird the production and circulation of art. The white cube has persistently been contested and subverted by both artists and curators in diverse ways. Deconstruction notwithstanding, the functionality of this codified type of space perseveres.[2]

As Beck and I entered the Secession's sizeable gallery to look around, almost immediately I had ideas of how to symbolically intervene and invigorate it, and in the process, challenge its acquired authority. Just as quickly, enthusiasm turned to dismay: *this isn't how I want to work – relying on a set of tested tools and devices that do the trick to transform a space.* The ideas were legitimate but that they were so readily apparent seemed problematic. I perceived the space in black-and-white terms as something to be affirmed or disputed. At that moment I realized I'd been making too many exhibitions for too many years. What was once a passion had inadvertently become custom. I had

internalized external expectations to deliver a dynamic and vivid exhibition product with inbuilt criticality. But I was not feeling it. A hiatus was in order in the near future.

Ultimately Beck and I fashioned an exhibition titled, *Installation*, 2006, which factored in this initial dispiriting experience. *Installation* highlighted the different branches of our practices, which include working both independently and together. Artist, designer, collaborator, curator, writer, teacher, historian, and editor suggest the primary positions and methods these practices embody. *Installation* brought diverse modes of authorship that customarily use disparate distribution circuits into dialogue within a coherent space articulated specifically for the Secession.

Beck and I had frequently used architectural alteration and color treatment to formulate a space, however, at the Secession we instead left the permanent walls "as is" to highlight the gallery's white cube status as both historical artifact of innovation and present-day policy. We mounted a series of photographs by Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *"Untitled" (Natural History)*, 1990, on the permanent walls. Using twelve elements the work photographically charts a lexicon of cultural roles ascribed to Theodore Roosevelt, which are etched in the exterior walls of New York's Museum of Natural History: Patriot, Historian, Ranchman, Scientist, Soldier, Humanitarian, Author, Conservationist, Naturalist, Scholar, Explorer, and Statesman. Superimposing the exterior of one institution onto the interior or another, *"Untitled" (Natural History)* points metaphorically toward the institutional framing of artists the Secession incessantly enacts. This inclusion also referenced the monograph on Gonzalez-Torres's work I had been editing that was being released at the same time of the Secession show, in order to underscore editorial activity as a facet of my practice which is entwined with the exhibition medium. *Installation* otherwise consisted of an arrangement of works – both individually and collaboratively authored by Beck and myself, which I won't detail here – and freestanding installation fixtures we fashioned specifically for the Secession which functioned as display architecture.





Julie Ault, Martin Beck, *Installation*, 2006, Secession, Vienna

Exhibition Anxiety

The incongruity between the principles I proclaimed – "exhibition is an open form to be constantly newly engaged" – and what had become my routine relating to exhibition space was a dismaying dilemma that I wanted to address. There were other dilemmas as well, which seemed beyond my control. I had become increasingly disturbed by the gulf between the enormous energy put into making exhibitions and their temporal life and somewhat random usage. Employing the exhibitory form to cut together and present intricate compounds of artistic production and information and to stimulate subtle thinking seemed out of step with the average brevity of viewing time afforded them. Decipherability is further rendered superficial after the fact. Circulation of ephemeral situations to secondary audiences is important but inadequate. One or two installation photographs generally stand in as iconic representatives, a far cry from the involvedness of experiencing an exhibition. For me, the communicative effectiveness of exhibition was in doubt. To some degree, I'd lost my taste not only for creating exhibitions but also for visiting them. Sensitized to their limitations and discouraged by repetitious experiences, my passionate regard for the form as a site of excitement and possibility was waning. Another factor, which has only become discernable retrospectively, is the multifaceted change in the culture of museums and display. Over time, some of the strategies I had applied in exhibition work with Group Material and with Beck, as well as many other artists' approaches, were being newly negotiated by museum curators, educators, and exhibition designers, which in a sense made "our" methods less necessary, changing the perspective for such work. The following discussion about one Group Material project and relevant cultural shifts observed several years later illustrates this condition.

Group Material had engaged the temporary exhibition as its medium since 1980 in part to posit exhibition as forum, a material and visual dialogue designed around a thematic. The group purposefully used a salon-style installation strategy to diagram combinations of art and artifacts as social bodies rather than emphasizing individual elements or advancing the notion of art as autonomous activity. Group Material often used material and color devices to create symbolic layers of meaning in its exhibitions, which also challenged the

supposed objectivity of curatorial activity and purported neutrality of the white wall. The following recollection of the *Americana* exhibition made for the *1985 Whitney Biennial*, provides an example of the collaborative's exhibition making methods in terms of both deep curatorial design and surface materialization:

> Since the Whitney Museum defines its biennial exhibition as a survey of the most significant recent art, its very structure raises questions about criteria for selection, the politics of inclusion and exclusion, and the consequences of museum validation. In Group Material's view, generally speaking, the Biennial [at that time] expressed an overdetermined narrow vision of art practices and production, manifest as a greatest hits of what had been previously validated through sales in the commercial galleries, with a trade-fair environment, and didn't attend to broader definitions of cultural production or social contexts. . . .
>
> We developed an exhibition titled *Americana* and engaged critically with notions of what American culture is and how curatorial practices have supported a monolithic notion of American art. Group Material decided to make a model of our own biennial, a *salon des refuses*, of what was significantly absent, excluded through curatorial business-as-usual from the Whitney Museum. *Americana* took issue with the exclusivity and whitewashed picture of American art proposed and supported by dominant cultural institutions such as the Whitney, and in a non-didactic manner opened curatorial practice to scrutiny.
>
> *Americana* included work by overtly socially engaged artists, many of whom were women and artists of color and popular "commercial artists," as well as store-bought objects from so-called low culture. In terms of the look of the show, it was designed to be dense and layered, viewed first as a whole (as democratic) rather than as discrete (autonomous) objects. Strips of Contact Paper, the inexpensive decorative self-adhesive wallpaper, in diverse patterns, mostly coded as "American," were laid like stripes from floor to ceiling, forming a ground of diverse

designs upon which objects were hung. Over fifty artists' works were selected for inclusion, as well as products from supermarkets and department stores. Store-bought items, such as a selection of laundry detergents, were installed in groupings that – with a degree of irony – demonstrated "freedom of choice." A television was hooked up which broadcast whatever was on major network programming continuously. A washing machine and dryer dominated center stage as the only other sculptural elements. A soundtrack made up of songs "representative of America" sampled from various genres was on continuous play. The total effect of *Americana* was over-stimulating with no space in the room left "neutral."[3]



Group Material, *Americana*, 1985, The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York





Group Material, *Americana*, 1985, The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

When *Americana* was shown in 1985 some critics regarded it as a pluralistic mess, and were particularly averse to the integration of popular culture and fine art. Furthermore it was characterized by some as a spectacle that did not belong in the Whitney Museum. For example Kim Levin lamented in the *Village Voice*,

> What is there to say about a Whitney Biennial in which the most provocative and subversive thing is a LeRoy Neiman hanging on the museum's walls? It's not the picture that's provocative but the perverse fact: the shock of schlock being sanctified, even if it is done tongue-in-cheek. What does it say about the state of our minds – and the state of art – that this is the hideous thrill of the day? Have we finally sunk so low? . . . If Group Material's titillating, weakly rebellious installation lacks the grubby strength of the Times Square Show nearly five years ago, it does provide a hook to hang this year's Biennial on: commodity time is here. It's nice that Group Material tried to outwit the Whitney curators with its laundry room, even if it ended up doing the dirty work for them.[4]

To which Group Material replied:

> Contrary to Kim Levin's assumptions, Group Material wasn't used by the Whitney to any greater extent than its resources and visibility were used by us to present a critical model of what we believe an American museum's biennial should be. . . . Does Levin really believe it takes a clever critic to understand how institutions manipulate the meaning and reception of culture?
>
> If you really want a "radical shakeup," why stop at the Biennial? The entire culture industry needs to be overhauled. *Americana* is but one small demonstration toward a program of cultural change. It was not designed for the Whitney, or for art critics, but for the large public which Levin contemptuously reduces to "students, tourists, novices, and art investors. [5]

Of course that was twenty-five years ago, and the contemporary art museum is, in some respects, a different animal now. During the 1990s and the early 2000s, in the aftermath of controversies over grants made in 1989 by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to exhibitions by Robert Mapplethorpe and Andres Serrano, which resulted in the field of contemporary art being branded as elite in the popular imagination as well as profound cuts in federal and state cultural funding, U.S. museum culture recouped itself in the public mind. The American art world of the early 1990s demonstrated an under-siege mentality where many arts organizations sought to counter the charge of elitism by proving their social value to larger portions of the population and quantifying that value by engaging underserved communities and marginalized groups as well as dramatically upping middle-class visitorship. Institutions competed for corporate sponsors and paying audiences. Strategies for reinvigorating and redefining museums and their programs were implemented. At the exhibition level, popularizing devices such as interactivity, social (sometimes called relational) aesthetics, educational arenas attached to shows, and exhibition design as seductive device, were all embraced. Compulsory popularization has produced a mixed bag of results: lively atmospheres that are often incredibly crowded (the overpopulating of the museum); new publics for art; perpetual expansionism in the form of new buildings galore by celebrity architects; a multiplicity of visitor engagement, appreciation, and education programs; and more. These tactics have effectively drawn ever-increasing attendance at contemporary museums. New York's Museum of Modern Art is a prime example. Following its lavish expansion / renovation by architect Yoshio Taniguchi, finished in 2004, visitorship rose dramatically – reportedly by about a million visitors annually, as did the price of admission, from $12 to $20. Formerly a destination to behold curatorial depth, scholarship, and innovation – from the work of Alfred Barr in the 1930s to Kirk Varnedoe in the 1990s, MoMA's transformation to some degree deprioritized scholarship in favor of marquee appeal, monumentalizing, and spectacle. The MoMA effect treats every show like a blockbuster, from the Bauhaus (*Bauhaus 1919–1933: Workshops for Modernity*, 2009–2010,[6] to *Marina Abramović: The Artist is Present*, 2010. The lines outside and the always-crowded galleries attest to its mushrooming popularity. This mindset of growth changes the way museums view

themselves, their personnel, and their viewers, and both subtly *and* dramatically reshuffles priorities.

As a consequence of these circumstances, exhibitions are commonly called upon to seduce and entertain viewers not only through the collection and interpretation of art and artifacts shown, but through aesthetic address – the creation of an object theater or spectacular environment, created with spatial and architectural techniques, alluring signage and way finding devices, textual and audiovisual interpretation and contextualization, graphic and photomural tools, wall treatments, customized display structures, and creative lighting. Exhibition design is symptomatic of this shift of attention to broad audience and has become prevalent to both positive and negative effect. In this set-up, viewer experience gets designed, if not engineered, on every level. On the positive end, presentation is being consciously attended to, distinct from bureaucratization of mechanical modernist style installation ("widely spaced at eye level"), which was *de rigueur* for some time, and it is often done so intelligently, with captivating results. On the negative end of the scale there is a fair amount of exhibition design that appears to rely on superficial use of color, graphic, and referential installation treatments to simply jazz things up.[7] I perceive a discrepancy of intentions between "deep design" developed as content *from* an engagement with subject matter, material, and intangibles, exemplified by Group Material's *Americana*, and superficial referential stylization imposed *on* a subject, that can result in as little as pulling colors from works to use as backdrop color or to create a sequence of colorful rooms. The current exhibition *Leon Golub: Live & Die Like a Lion?*, 2010, on view at The Drawing Center is a case in point. The exhibition consists of over fifty intimate drawings Golub made during the last five years of his life. A deep rust color that frequently occurs in the drawings has been used as a paint color to cover the gallery walls entirely. The small-scale drawings were then mounted equidistantly around the room on a uniform eye level. The compelling works are terribly undermined by the bold color, which there is no apparent reason for. Does such treatment stem from insecurity about the work's ability to captivate viewers? This is but one very simple example of the tendency to "jazz things up," "make works

sing," "tweak the work," etc. through "design motives," in a bid to prove to viewers the museum is not the stuffy elitist white-washed place of yesteryear.

The institutionalization of exhibition design is a sign of the times, and to some degree reflects legitimate efforts to revive and disseminate exhibitions and combat the highbrow stiffness implied in modernist style presentation modes. Witnessing this development has been exciting and disconcerting in equal measure, and has been a strange counterpoint to the methodical engagement with exhibition as context, and with display as discourse that I have been involved with over time.

Professional Paradigm Shift[8]

I have learned to heed such junctures of doubt like that encountered at the Secession as indication of an approaching production shift – in that instance, from creating exhibitions in art spaces to pursuing the portable enduring form of publication. But more on that advance later.

Around 1990 I experienced a work crisis that led me to act on the elusive dissatisfaction I felt putting my energies into the art field at the time. My interest in art had in large part been for its perceived radical potential and social agency. However, I had been feeling increasingly uneasy about the way politics were sidelined and timidly registered in art institutions – how cultural politics functioned as a kind of compensation. I often reflected on Group Material's complicity in this cultural scheme.

A year later, when Group Material reconfigured the exhibition *AIDS Timeline* for the *1991 Whitney Biennial*, my frustration with this circuitry and our function reached a zenith. Whitney curator Lisa Phillips, who we likewise worked with on *Americana*, invited the group to restage *AIDS Timeline,* in the Whitney's lobby gallery for the *1991 Biennial*. The exhibition was initially created for the Berkeley University Art Museum in 1989 and re-versioned for the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford a year later. *AIDS*

Timeline was composed of art, artifacts, documentary material, and information cut together in a chronologically structured tracking of the AIDS crisis in the U.S.

Group Material was then composed of Doug Ashford, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Karen Ramspacher, and myself. We were somewhat troubled with the Whitney's embrace of *AIDS Timeline* in light of its institutional silence on the subject to date. Optimistically the Whitney curatorial team was sincere, but we could not help feeling Group Material was being asked to take care of their need to acknowledge the AIDS crisis, in lieu of ongoing responsiveness or a deeper commitment to addressing how AIDS was transforming society and culture. Felix and I had some misgivings about repeating the show, preferring to develop an altogether different strategy for addressing the subject of AIDS in an exhibition format, one that might, for instance, leave out artworks per se in favor of something more strictly informational. Karen and Doug were amenable with regenerating the *Timeline* and reluctant to beginning a project anew. However, it was important to all of us to use the platform one way or another. Unable to agree on a fresh start we opted to reconfigure *AIDS Timeline* one last time, reflecting the recent development and local specificity of the pandemic and responses to it. The exhibition was eagerly received; it was no doubt worthwhile, but the group's practice did not develop through the rather perfunctory process. The situation was draining and highlighted Group Material's stasis as well as individuals' discontent. *AIDS Timeline* at the Whitney was the group's sixth AIDS-related project in four years, which combined with personal situations and losses as well as other activist community involvements, produced a kind of emotional burnout and overload. We discussed taking a time-out to digest recent cultural shifts and to reinvent our practice, but it was difficult to actually get off the treadmill we'd been on for so long to make such a clearing.



Group Material, *AIDS Timeline*, 1989, University Art Museum, Berkeley



Group Material, *AIDS Timeline*, 1989, University Art Museum, Berkeley



Group Material, *AIDS Timeline (New York: 1991)*, 1991, Whitney Museum of American Art

I had been working in the collaboration since 1979. In need of change, and disillusioned with what I thought at the time to be the art world's shallow co-opting relationship to sociopolitical practice, I enrolled at Hunter College in 1991 to study political science. The move was fueled by the fantasy of transitioning into politics proper, where I imagined a more rigorous context of ideas and collaboration existed, and a keener sense of cause and effect would be discernable. Coupled with a yearning to escape the art industry and its machinery that I was ambivalent about, made for a ridiculously naïve idealistic outlook going in.

(The decision to go back to school coincided with personal change as well. Since 1980 I had been married to Andres Serrano, the artist whose photograph, *Piss Christ*, 1987, channeled the outrage and rhetoric of Donald Wildmon, director of the American Family Association in 1989. Wildmon launched a national campaign against public funding for the arts using Serrano and Robert Mapplethorpe's exhibition, *The Perfect Moment*, as emblems of what he and many others perceived as the disastrous affects of governmental funding on the fabric of American society. Wildmon alerted Republican Senators Alphonse D'Amato (NY) and Jesse Helms (NC), and the NEA became the subject of heated debate in Congress and in the news. For many months beginning in May of 1989 the controversy and Andres Serrano were discussed in the New York Times on a daily basis. While the art world largely defended Robert Mapplethorpe's rights as an artist, Serrano lacked reputation, market or other support structure; many art world spokespeople seemed unable or unwilling to advocate on behalf of his work. Christian groups lobbied hard and made it clear to museums receiving public support that were they to exhibit Serrano's work, they would be boycotted and memberships would be cancelled. Serrano and Mapplethorpe were used as political footballs. The pressures of the situation and the elongated period of debate it ushered in are difficult to convey. Witnessing up close how Serrano's work and words were distorted in the media, the collective imagination, and even in the art world was demoralizing to say the least. It also provided an education into how publicity culture works. Publicization impacted Serrano dramatically as he went from being a relatively unknown emerging artist to an (in)famous one overnight. I won't detail the affects on him or us personally, but the circumstances

sent us in different directions and we decided to part in 1990. My general art field disenchantment was further deepened by the NEA debate and the instrumentalization of an artist I was close to for the so-called Culture War. I suspect this fueled my desire to go into seek mode and return to school.)

At Hunter College, I was surprised by the conservative terrain of the political science division, which appeared to be largely a state department and national security feeder, and by the cynical attitudes I encountered while working for two local politicians, first on policy research, and then in constituent services. While working as a research intern in New York State Senator Roy Goodman's office, I was instructed to plow through various media reports and topical literature in search of problems that could be developed into research topics for the office. If an issue was then pursued, the goal was for the office to publish a report on the matter that Senator Goodman would present at a press conference, garnering news attention for his role as a community advocate. Identifying the right kind of theme to take up was tricky business; it had to be newsworthy, of interest to Goodman's Republican constituency, with perhaps a touch of controversy. School dysfunction, environmental protection, landmark or land use debates, healthcare – all fine, us research assistants were told. "But don't look into AIDS, unless it has to do with children, AIDS babies are ok."

Working at ground level constituent services for City Councilman Antonio Pagan was marginally more elevating given that an individual's problem, for instance housing or utilities related might get temporarily solved, but this was primarily an exercise in navigating the intricate purview of city agencies in order to trace responsibility for specific problems. For example, toxic emissions from a restaurant affecting the residents in the apartment across the alley were surprisingly not the responsibility of *any* agency whatsoever because the fumes fell between the oversight cracks of the Department of Environmental Protection and Department of Buildings – they both thought it was the other's dilemma.

An anecdote is not an argument, but these glimpses into the realm of politics deflated my idealism to the point that ultimately I concluded that mainstream electoral politics were more cynical than anything I'd experienced thus far in culture. Of course this was only an impression and was not anchored in any substantial experience or critical truth. The political field at large is obviously far from monolithic, but I was fixated on mainstream politics, which are more methodologically homogeneous than the expanded political field, which includes para, marginal, alternative, and anarchistic activities and structures. My generalization was absurd, and in hindsight it appears I used my "findings" as an alibi upon recognizing I lacked the desire and ability to effectively fit into the highly codified field; the idealistic attitude and arty style I brought to the table were grossly incongruent. The option I neglected to seriously consider was channeling my cultural and political interests into *political culture* in one form or another rather than focusing on the *politics of culture*. Nonetheless, I went running back to the art field to do precisely that, with nagging though relatively diffused disquiet in tow.

After several years of one foot in one foot out, and a handful of projects, I initiated the disbanding of the group in 1996. At the time it was composed of Doug Ashford and myself; recent collaboration with two newer members since 1994, Thomas Eggerer and Jochen Klein was by then waning. Felix Gonzalez-Torres, who was a colleague in Group Material as well as my closest friend for many years, died from AIDS-related causes in January 1996. (Felix's death at the age of 38 subtly influenced my professional decisions for a long time thereafter, a thread I will pick up shortly. For one thing, I adopted a more 'if not now when' attitude and enacted changes I had long contemplated.) The letter I sent Doug captures my thinking on stopping our collaboration.

> Group Material has to formally come to an end. We've been in death throes for five years, despite some OK projects and travels. Group Material has been in a state of dissolution, not as we positively framed it – reinvention or shift. From my perspective we have not had a sustained vital satisfying practice for a long time now. Rather, we've been upholding a fiction of continuity. I have turned this situation around in my

> mind excessively and every which way, but always arrive at this same conclusion. It's necessary to articulate GM's ending.
>
> Perhaps some of our confusion about continuing has come from being in between a group, a community, and an institution, and not wanting to lose histories or possibilities. . . .
>
> I'm clear that I do not want to work on any more projects as Group Material. . . . Neither do I want to negate GM's history. I believe the best way to honor that history is to not allow it be watered down by doing lower-level, less compelling work. . . . Holding on to Group Material as a practice and identity obscures the necessary processes of identifying other ways of working.[9]

With Group Material's ending, I had the illusion of liberation. I was also paralyzed over how to proceed working. I felt self-conscious and didn't want to be the one doing the solo album after the breakup that sounds reminiscent of the group only not as good. On the other hand, all my ideas and energy had gone into the collaboration for sixteen years, so I soon grasped that Group Material ending need not require I amputate my ways of thinking and working or switch gears altogether. Rather, I needed to shape new work structures, including individually, and possibly find new forms, while accepting that whatever was ahead extended from Group Material and was likely to overlap methodologically, as well as stylistically, to some degree. Naturally his didn't happen overnight, but was a process of realization.

Finishing at Hunter College I became nervous about the question rumbling in my head, "what's next?" (So anxious in fact that I withdrew from school for a semester, toying with the idea of not finishing at all, until a close friend in academia poked through my ambivalence and convinced me I should get the Bachelor's degree I had been working toward.) While visiting a show at The Drawing Center one day I ran into Ann Philbin, its director, who asked exactly that, "what's next?" At a loss, I simply said I had no idea. She suggested I work up a proposal for an exhibition project for The Drawing Center, as part of a competition for a substantial project grant offered by the New York State

Council on the Arts NYSCA). That proposal was selected and I embarked on the research and exhibition project, *Cultural Economies: Histories from the Alternative Arts Movement, NYC*, 1996, The Drawing Center, New York. For a host of reasons, including that Congress, since the end of 1989, had decimated public funding for contemporary art, the alternative nonprofit art network was on the verge of becoming history. The NYSCA grant was a call to historicize some aspect of the alternative arts field, with the intention of ultimately resuscitating it. *Cultural Economies* proposed to analyze the growth and decline of the movement, focusing on its preconditions and economic and sociopolitical contexts as well as its artistic and community realizations. *Cultural Economies* included artworks by individuals and groups who were closely identified with particular alternative endeavors, in combination with ephemeral material and photographic documentation that charted the activities of a range of alternative art structures. I compiled a set of adhoc dossiers on a range of spaces and groups, which constituted a research and reading area at the core of the exhibition. A sequence of articles that report on relevant activities and conditions drawn from daily and weekly press records (1969–1995), which stress real time, accessibility, and the newsworthy quality of alternative and adhoc events, comprises the accompanying catalogue.[10]



Julie Ault, *Cultural Economies*, 1996, The Drawing Center, New York

Cultural Economies was the first project I organized individually post-Group Material. It was motivated by a perceived collective need to examine the then current juncture of the alternative arts network, and by the desire to understand my personal history, given that Group Material's practice was rooted in the contexts *Cultural Economies* took up. The project also enacted my professional shift from the group into a solo action. Exercising my individual voice in public was both welcome and formidable. *Not* belaboring and debating every thought and decision with collaborative partners was a new luxury as well as an unfamiliar responsibility.

I believe this turn toward historicizing was additionally stimulated by the university studies which, through the lenses of political science and art history, equipped me with new analytic tools and a deeper grasp of history as a field of study and operation. And clearly, Group Material's earlier foray into history writing in *AIDS Timeline* was a foundation. Until then I had no sense of connection to history, of how personal and public narratives intertwine. Young and naïve, I'd been relatively ignorant of history in general and antagonistic to the idea of the past as subject matter. But the accumulation of life experience and endings – the AIDS-related deaths of many young friends and colleagues, parting from Serrano, disillusionment over artistic and political agency, Felix's death, and the dissolution of Group Material, brought the notion of history "home." New awareness of "having history" and of being "in history" took hold, which was both enlarging and inhibiting. Although I am somewhat reluctant to probe the specifics for fear of over-psychologizing and *getting into it all*, it seems that Felix's death was a particularly influential context on my turn toward historicizing, (the need to decipher events and contextualize? as a distancing device?), and on another shift I would make, toward the relatively lasting form of the book as preferred medium.

Under the Umbrella Artist

While reviewing the announcement materials for *Cultural Economies* before they went to press I found that they read, "Curated by Julie Ault." Shocked by the curatorial

identification I rejected the characterization and changed the material to read, "Organized by Julie Ault." The distinction mattered for the reasons mentioned earlier – to sidestep the connoisseurship connotation, to stress subjectivity, to invoke artistic license, and because I did not want to give up the relative autonomy the artist role entails. Instinctively I felt I would be treated less deferentially if I were a curator, that I would be expected to sympathize and identify with institutional agendas over others. Remaining an artist was strategic. Artistic integrity could always be invoked at moments of conflict. And after all, I *was* an artist; despite that what I was doing involved and resembled curating and was later to morph in other directions as well.

Having a somewhat investigational relationship to form means I frequently take on methods from other arenas as part of my art practice. In addition to adopting curatorial activities, I've turned to editorial pursuit as artistic practice, using publication as a primary medium for translating exhibitory thinking into a distributable form. I sometimes employ text as medium, and sometimes take on an apparently design role. This is not linear development. What I learn in one area influences and cross-connects with what I do in another. Recurrent refreshing is built into this practice that depends on openness to form and new ways of working, as well as on the exchange between and joining of modes.

Authoring artistic identity fluidly and subtlety is a formidable challenge given how cultural forces label. Even though artists have for decades moved freely between media and methods, I find myself variously described as an artist, curator and, since operating in publishing, an art historian. Perhaps the particular confusion arises due to the contingent and ephemeral aspects of my practice, and because there is nothing at stake market-wise to necessitate or encourage firm definition. The discussion of professional categorizations and the art world division of labor they attest to is by now familiar, possibly even disingenuous to some degree. On the one hand, artist, curator, critic, historian are no longer regarded strictly as fixed positions either in theory or in practice, but rather, are widely interpreted as inclinations and processes. Many people's overarching practices are hybrid; they move between arenas of agency and ways of working, even if they identify as one over another for professional expediency. On the other hand, twentieth century

divisions are slow to dissolve. Even as the art system seems to, in principle, embrace hybridity, indeterminacy, and free flow, these are frequently contradicted by ground level conditions. Consider for instance the criticisms and sniping over curators Catherine David, Hans-Ulrich Obrist, or Jens Hoffman, for example, who have been perceived as getting too (overtly) involved in the production of ideas and art, instead of facilitation, and thereby eclipsing the artist. How loose or intact the categorizations remain depends from what vantage point in the art field, academia, or society at large one sits. (Try explaining an indeterminate art practice to the immigration officer at JFK or Heathrow.) The classifications of curator, artist, critic, and historian are permeable yet they can still function as boundaries that are raised strategically – for career or territorial purposes – and just as easily retracted. Mirroring this flexibility, I sway between insisting on the artist handle for its openness, answering to curator or art historian when specific goals are served by that identification, and regarding these classifications as irrelevant and outmoded. Personally I've grown tired of objecting to short-hand labels of mode as well as efforts to assign genre, including political art, community-based, institutional critique, and relational aesthetics. Regardless of resolve, one cannot control the tides of perception. Rather than repeating the debates ad infinitum I often opt for the path of least resistance.

From Closets to Histories

AIDS Timeline had been benchmark for Group Material in terms of research. We engaged in a more rigorous investigation than ever before in order to comprehend and portray how AIDS was allowed to develop into a far-reaching national crisis. The group researched the fields of medical and scientific industries, governmental statistics and policies, media representations – particularly stigmatization of people with AIDS which linked representation to public opinion and allocation of resources, and grassroots and activist responses by affected communities. A chronology of information from those arenas resulted; primarily driven by the timeline text complied by the group.

While we believed our research to be legitimate, none of us were academically trained (or, in retrospect, had common sense on that score it would seem); we did not keep track of sources whatsoever as we selected and compiled information. We simply presented the pieced together totality as a web of uncontested facts, without stating their context, which for exhibition purposes seemed acceptable. Regarding history as construction, we cut and pasted our collected version of the chronology of AIDS.

The exhibition received a great deal of critical attention as well as visitors. When University of California Press showed interest in translating the project into a book form, we realized our limitations and opted out of a publication on the grounds that it would have been irresponsible without a thorough evaluation of the information and citation of sources – daunting tasks we were ill prepared to take on.

The difference between exhibition and publication in this case illustrates the "anything goes" mode endemic to the art field, which I was ambivalent about. Like many artists, Group Material sometimes used vague methods and employed a scattershot approach to history to elaborate complex subjects. This tendency among some artists of our generation became somewhat prevalent and problematic in the 1990s as interdisciplinary became a seductive buzzword in the art field, and artists loosely and sometimes inaccurately embraced the notion. Although Group Material did not define its work as interdisciplinary, there is a relation in terms of function. On the other hand, the freedom to interconnect ideas – whether imaginatively, rhetorically, or in a Dadaist spirit – as proposition rather than proof, is one of the productive characteristics and graces of art. Embarking on solo work in the mid 1990s, I found it difficult to project deeper in the direction of rigorous scholarship or poetic articulation.

Carrying out research for *Cultural Economies* entailed visiting a myriad of alternative spaces and individuals associated with groups and art activism in order to gather material and conduct interviews. During the process I encountered a motley range of saving habits, from perfectly organized and conserved, comprehensive archives to a closet piled high with water damaged boxes (the latter in an active reputable organization). Some

peripheral entities were only traceable though scraps of information, and some seemed to exist only in hearsay: I simply came up empty-handed.[11] The goal was to apprehend a dimensional representation of the origins, missions, structures, methods, and programs of a wide range of peripheral entities – to decipher the who, what, when, where, how, and why of the key activities under scrutiny. I found out that some organizations have extensive, completist archives that document every public moment and breeze, but omit informal processes that are potentially revealing and enlivening – the effect being somewhat flat. I hungered for informal and behind the scenes material capable of situating me in the struggles and social relations of the moment. The yearlong research process for *Cultural Economies* demonstrated the randomness of the archive and raised questions about what becomes history. For the first time, I realized the latent potential of archiving to shape history, and witnessed the consequences of exclusion, especially as I was forced to reluctantly omit certain groups and organizations from representation in the exhibition due to lack of substantial information.

With no associated objects or available documentation circulating, peripheral and ephemeral ventures are marginalized and excluded without fanfare. Such histories frequently remain unwritten – it takes money to archive and to write history. Access to organizational and interventionist models of contestational, marginal, collaborative, and activist practices was at stake. Art history carefully eclipses its omissions, which affects not only our understandings of past events but ultimately regulates production, encouraging certain practices and discouraging others by example.

For the record

Aware that *Cultural Economies* would only be on view a couple months, and of the limited distribution of the catalogue, I considered deepening and extending the investigation with a book. Documentation of New York City's highly influential alternative art culture of the 1960s, '70s, and '80s was largely ephemeral with limited circulation, much of which took the form of press write-ups and anniversary publications

commemorating the histories of particular alternative spaces. I felt it was important to register a contextual and analytic portrayal of alternative spaces, structures, practices, and events within a given parameter into the enduring public record. A book might safeguard against their disappearance.

Part of the initial allure of publishing for me was that it was unknown and somewhat mysterious terrain I had little experience of. (Group Material had generated only three publications in its seventeen years of work, two were exhibition catalogues and the last was a book, *Democracy: A Project by Group Material,* 1990, which was a branch of the group's project at the Dia Art Foundation.[12]) Had I defined myself academically or as an author I may well have been uneasy about the resolution and permanence that publishing seems to impose, which is even more dramatic for art historians than for contemporary artists, who are expected to be flexile. Historians are anticipated to take a position, not to continually change their minds, means, and focus. Generally speaking, books lean toward containment, which is potentially incongruent with critical thinking. But this is a simplification of form and function, a generality that has exceptions and which can be countered or taken up differently in practice. Clearly no media is inherently conformist or activist, despite being fraught with trends and histories. We've witnessed a considerable range of agendas and modes of exhibitions unfold over time. I favor affording books the possibility we project onto other media such as film, exhibition, and architecture. In this particular situation, while resolution was not a goal, permanence was, in so far as any book or cultural manifestation can be considered enduring.

The Drawing Center agreed to partner with me on pursuing a book, but did not have any resources available to produce one beyond allocating administrative assistance. In order to insure a place in sanctioned art discourse it seemed important to work with an established academic publisher. I had neither publishing nor editing experience. Nonetheless I charged ahead, in part because I thought I had an excellent and unexplored subject that surely would garner interest, and in part because I didn't know any better. Blissfully ignorant of the protracted process to come, I made contact with a couple of

editors. Although there was initial interest the discussions quickly evaporated. Money was a key obstacle.

I wanted the volume to consist of newly commissioned texts by authors representing a range of topics, methods, and perspectives, as stated in the eventual book's introduction:

> *Alternative Art New York (1965–1985)* is composed of four intermingled layers of information: texts, images, documents, and a chronology of alternative structures. It is structured as a forum that recounts and analyzes histories from multiple perspectives. It is informed by my experience working collaboratively in this very field and is commensurate with its dialogic underpinnings. To convey histories, especially those emerging from philosophies of self-representation and cultural civil rights, is a challenge. No one person can bring together information, experience, and analysis of recent histories with the same vividness and intellectual rigor that multiple authors and voices can. Assembling a group of writers who employ different methodologies and styles to investigate their subjects is intended to highlight the value of each of these divergent processes for understanding and communicating histories. One of the tenets of the alternative arts movement has been the merit of dislodging restrictive categorizations and hierarchies (of mediums, of types of cultural practice, and of identity structures). Bringing together investigatory methods and writing styles which ordinarily are not joined – academic, journalistic, empirical, and hybrids – is in keeping with that principle.[13]

University presses do not normally compensate authors or editors; it is assumed the institutions they are employed by support them. However the majority of invited authors were not academically affiliated, and neither was I. It was unacceptable to ask people to delve into research and writing without compensation, nor did I want to do that myself. I applied to the New York State Council for the Arts for money to pay editorial, author, and design fees, as they had given a substantial grant for the original exhibition and

catalog. NYSCA awarded another grant for the book. With fees covered and an additional subvention for the copublisher on the table, through pure happenstance, University of Minnesota took on the project. That fortuitous story is worth recounting, an example of the informal way things sometimes happen.

Having encountered one obstacle after another and still lacking a publishing commitment after two years of shaping the book's structure and focus, establishing its participants, funding, and attempting to secure a publishing context, I emailed the proposal to a friend expressing my frustration. I was on the verge of sacrificing the project. Unbeknownst to me, she happened to be hosting a friend of hers at the time, who was the coeditor of a series of books for the Social Text Collective produced through University of Minnesota Press. She spontaneously showed him my proposal and he said, "I want to publish that book." I was ecstatic. The ball started rolling soon after.

Working with University of Minnesota Press (UMP) ultimately held both pros and cons. The press is highly revered and has excellent distribution, which makes an attractive context. The developmental input I got from the academic review process that all potential titles are subject to was quite helpful. The extensive copyediting done in house was exemplary and consequent. UMP's marketing experience provided a valuable perspective that influenced a range of decisions, including the book's title. Doug Armato, the press's director, was keen to include the key words "alternative," "art," and "New York," in the title to insure its appeal and that researchers could easily find it. At the time, I felt the solution *Alternative Art New York, 1965–1985* was reductive and compromised. I argued for the original title, *Cultural Economies: Histories from the Alternative Arts Movement, NYC*. Armato advised me to "trust your publisher," and in due course as I learned more about databases, search terminology, and the codes of the archive, I realized he was right.

On the negative side, UMP is a big machine that strictly adheres to its modus operandi, which made for several conflicts. Their relatively generic books are designed in-house. From my perspective, a book about visual art should reflect that focus and specifically

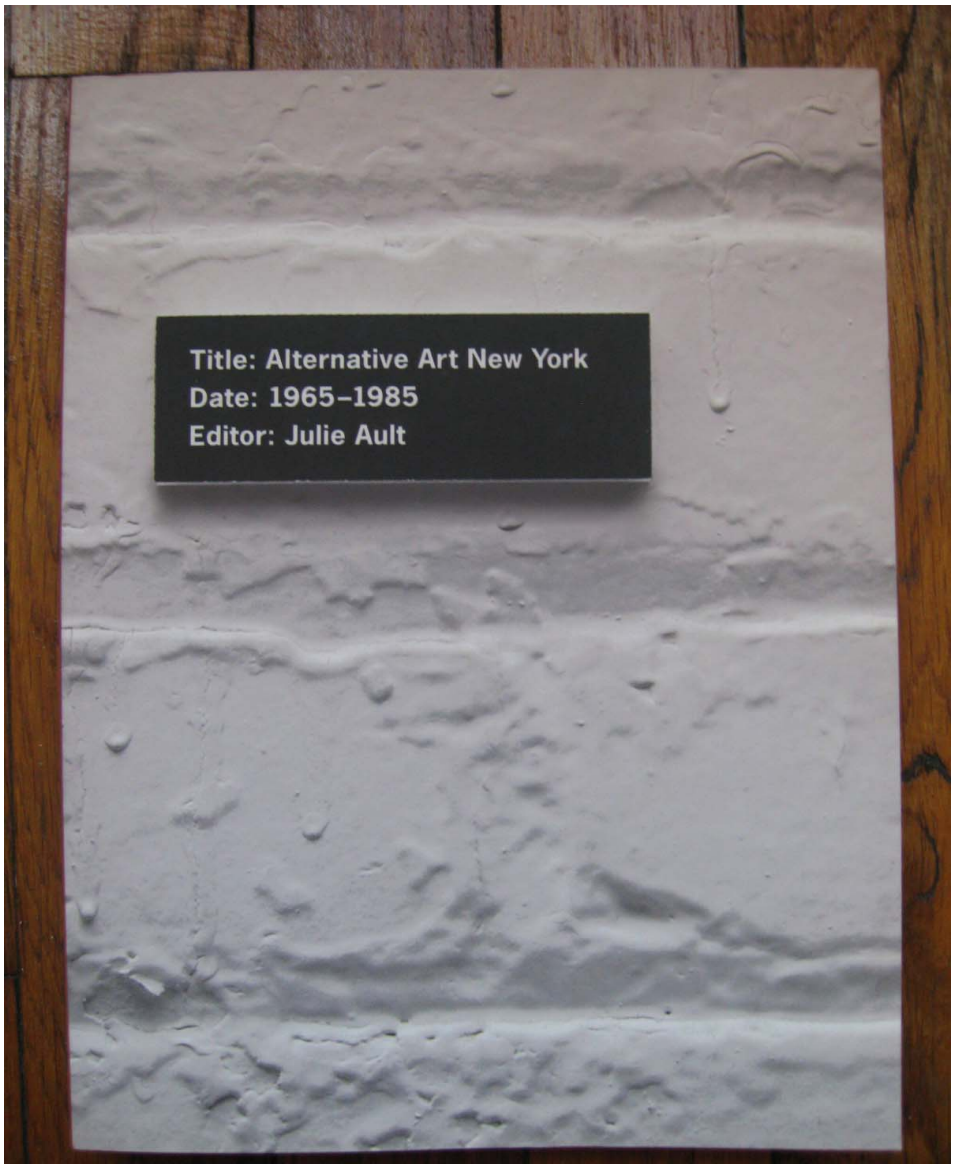
engage people with its visuality and design. I explained that as an artist I wanted a consulting role in determining the book's optical and material presence. However the press was categorically opposed to my having a say in the look of the book beyond indicating where illustrations should be positioned, and whether they should fill a quarter, half, or full page. Nonetheless it was agreed that UMP would be given half of the NYSCA grant to hire an outside designer, who I would have a role in choosing in order to help shape the book. Yet when it came time to submit manuscript to design process, communications with the press became vague and dropped off. UMP executed an in-house design using a preexisting template, but nonetheless kept the funding allocated for a designer. One editor refused to show me the book cover in advance because "we don't normally allow authors to be involved." Eventually she gave in, although when I made a suggestion for its improvement I received no response.

I relate these details not as gripes but because they speak to a division of labor between editorial and curatorial, between handling text and visuality that I still find antithetical to the way I work, but was instructive at that time. The press identified and often treated me generically as a professor (correspondence always began Dear Professor Ault, which I was not), whose sole role was to supply manuscript according to a contract that outlined editorial control as well as every detail down to the point size and typeface it should be submitted in. All other involvement was mistrusted, and was either an uphill battle or simply denied.

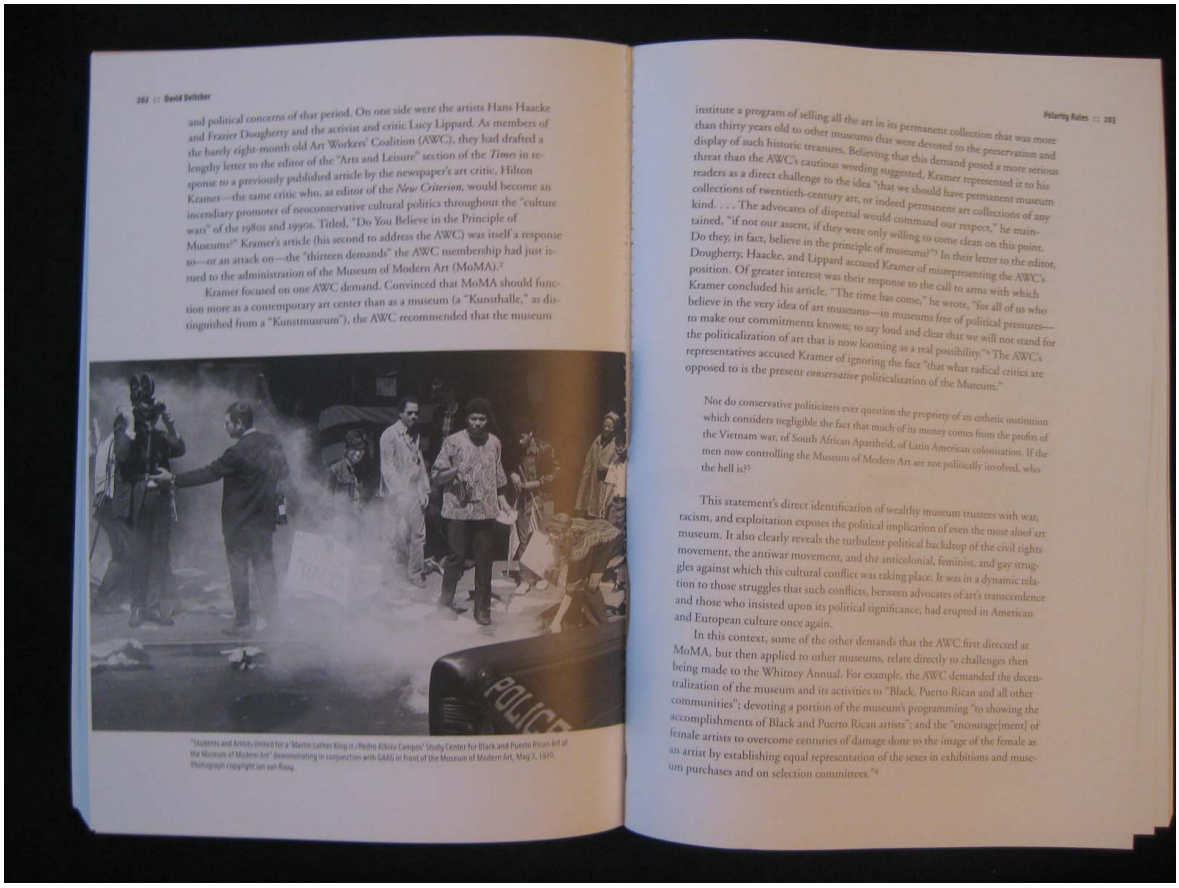
None of this outweighs the advantages of publishing *Alternative Art New York: 1965–1985* with UMP. It was an appropriate and effective context borne out by the currency of the book over time. (It went into second printing in 2010 thanks to another subvention from NYSCA.) The academic stamp of approval insured its use as a course book. Although I was disturbed to be excluded from the design process and ambivalent about the outcome at first, I now regard the book's standard academic-press appearance as an asset. The volume's distinction lies in its subject terrain and the methods by which they are taken up while tapping academic authority, identifiable in its very look. Its

nonspecific convention is effective, on a par with the so-called neutral authority of the white cube.

The ephemeral activities, events, and practices that formed New York's alternative art network made an ideal subject through which I began apprehending the consequence of both archiving and publishing. Recently I donated all the research material that was collected during the making of the exhibition and the book to the Fales Library and Special Collections at NYU, where it forms a substantial resource for others to consult.



Julie Ault, ed., *Alternative Art New York 1965–1985* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press and The Drawing Center, 2002) [and below]



New Models, Diverse Forms

During the period of Group Material winding down, while finishing the political science studies which outfitted me with new knowledge and rhetorical skills, including the ability to argue from a perspective I don't personally share, and at the same time working on *Cultural Economies*, I was attentive to research driven artistic practices that use the exhibition medium, including those of Fred Wilson, (*Mining the Museum*, 1992), Fareed Armaly, *(Brea-kd-own*, 1993, and *Parts*, 1996), Renee Green (*Import-Export Funk Office*, 1992), and Martin Beck (*Produktion Pop*, 1996, and *storage displayed*, 1997). Additionally, the emergence of collaboratively organized research exhibitions and "exhibition as production space" for cultural and political practices taking place in Europe, for example in the Shedhalle in Zurich under the direction of Renate Lorenz, Ursula Biemann, and Marion von Osten (*Game Girl*, 1995, *Nature TM*, 1995, *Sex & Space*, 1996), and at Kunstverein Munich under the extended guidance of Helmut Draxler

(*Die Utopie Des Designs*, 1994), seemed connected to the decentralized thematic expositions of Group Material. Most importantly, they were further evolving models of complex exhibition production in which historical inquiry, critical narratives, and active social and political engagement intermingled in fresh formalizations. All of this was fortifying food for thought at the stimulating intersection, where I contemplated how to renew my work interests and reconfigure structures. Using what forms, and with whom?

Martin Beck and I began collaborating in 1998, with *Outdoor Systems*, a project engaging issues of display and production of space that unfolded in a variety of sites over time, including billboards, exhibitions, and publications. We continue to work together on a project-to-project basis. Since 2000 we have intermittently provided curatorial counsel and created designs for exhibitions when we are particularly interested in either the subject terrain or the curatorial approach being employed. We took up this type of work as an extension of our exhibition making practices. In that capacity the shift in exhibition design policy from meaningful articulation to superficial stylization was particularly apparent. Although our collaboration has formed a major branch of my practice the last ten years, I refrain from detailing its character here, as it does not speak to the subject of archiving and historical representation as clearly as my individual focus does.

Engaging Sister Corita

> I work as an artist using ephemeral forms such as exhibitions, in contrast to making tangible art objects. Typically, I investigate something I am moved by, and share that search through installations, publications, and events. This practice has curatorial and editorial dimensions, and sometimes involves discovering a sensibility I want to connect to. So it was with Sister Corita.[14]

In 1996 I began a long-term relationship with the work of Corita Kent [1918–1986]. The previous year I received one of her silkscreen prints as a gift. Based on the maritime international signal for the letter “o,” the composition is a brilliant yellow and red field

with the words “O my god” written on it. After living with the work for a while, I felt the need to learn more about the artist. I visited the New York Public Library (this was before internet primacy) and found a book illustrated by Corita as well as a couple of articles, one of which contained the reproduction of a 1962 print composed of red, yellow, and blue discs titled *wonderbread*.[15] The idea of a Catholic nun appropriating product design to make a beautiful abstract pop work of art took me by surprise.

I learned from the article that Corita had lived at the Immaculate Heart Community (IHC) in Los Angeles between 1938 and 1968 so I gave them a call. Sister Stephanie Baxter oversaw the collection at the time and welcomed me to visit. Analogous to barging into publishing in part *because* I had no experience, not being raised Catholic meant I had no predisposition or inhibition about visiting the convent.[16] (My parents migrated from Protestant Congregational to the Bahá’í Faith to numerous new age organizations, including the Brotherhood of Mt. Shasta when I was growing up. Their constant seeking was somewhat tedious at the time, but seems to ultimately have played a healthy role in my internal formation.) A few weeks later I visited the IHC and encountered the extraordinary: hundreds of Corita’s prints, one more exciting than the next for its graphic innovation and spirited language combining advertising slogans with literary and scriptural extracts. Her work from the sixties in particular captivated me with its dazzling colors and compositional exuberance, political convictions, populist character, playfulness, and insightful recodings of commercial slogans. I was amazed that such an inventive body of work was neither celebrated in the art world nor recorded in art history.

Subsequent visits to the Immaculate Heart were as exciting as the first and were infused with Corita’s presence. Her prints cover every wall in every room. The women who work there consistently reference her creative principles in conversation. I poured over the informal archive; more prints, press clippings, publications, writings, as well as Corita’s extensive slide collection. Corita was an avid photographer, documenting her travels, her students’ work, and happening-style Mary’s Day processions she and her colleagues choreographed in the mid sixties. She was inspired by Charles and Ray Eameses’ photographic documentation of the everyday. Her slide archive formed a visual pool for

teaching and was inspiration for her artmaking. It includes the categories cookies, toys, ads, presents, flowers, seeds, billboards, puppets, trade fairs, mountains, artists' work, coke bottles, signage, and boxes. This image collection greatly illuminated Corita's creative production and process.

I informed Stephanie of my desire to show Corita's work in an exhibition at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, which would juxtapose her 1960s prints with graphics, media, and art works from the 1980s by artist, designer, and AIDS activist, Donald Moffett. I warned her that it was to be a three-way dialogue in the form of an exhibition: that I would be the third artist, creating a bold display environment. She was enthusiastic and open-minded. As we discussed logistics, Stephanie confided, "we're not really set up here for shipping the prints – it would be much better if you just buy the ones you want for the show and take them with you." (I'm still not sure if this was a marketing ploy or not.) I chose nearly fifty prints, went and bought a portfolio at a nearby supply store, and carried them back to New York, all the while feeling like a bandit. The serigraphs were priced the same since the '60s, from $25 to $100 each.

Power Up

The exhibition *Power Up: Reassembled Speech. Sister Corita and Donald Moffett*, 1997, Wadsworth Atheneum, and 2000, UCLA Hammer Museum, extended some of the key exhibitory ideas I'd been working with. For instance, the lively atmosphere of *Power Up* was rendered educative and functional by integrating ephemeral materials and resources gathered during my research, which informed and deepened my understanding of Corita and Moffett, their works, and the periods the works were made in, into the display. Art, artifact, and documentation intertwined non-hierarchically in the installation. Three-dimensional multipurpose fixtures designed to accommodate this ancillary material and encourage viewers linger in the environment acted as platforms, seating, and display surfaces. *Power Up*'s exhibition design derived from the aesthetic features and key strategies of Corita and Moffett's artworks. The intended effect was that upon entering the exhibition the viewer crossed into a dynamic visual and contextual environment.





Julie Ault, *Power Up: Sister Corita and Donald Moffett, Interlocking*, 2000,
UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles

When I first encountered Corita's work Group Material was ending and I was looking for role models. I found a woman of many talents, insights, causes, and networks. I identified with Corita's collaborative spirit, and the community she was a part of. During the 1960s the IHC was embroiled in dispute with local church authority over their interpretation of the Vatican II decree. I was inspired by hers and their creative drive in the face of oppressive authority structures, and by hers and their courage to go their own way. In 1968 Corita left the convent and the church; a year later the IHC dispensed with their vows and reorganized as a voluntary community inspired by religious ideals, beyond church authority. I admired Corita the artist, Corita the catalyst, and Corita the teacher, and mostly, her ability to fuse celebration, aesthetics, and critical consciousness in her practice of life and art. Although we never met, she has been an immense mentor.



Corita in her classroom at the Immaculate Heart College, Los Angeles, c. 1966



Corita teaching serigraphy at the Immaculate Heart College, Los Angeles, c. 1960

Divergent Archives

When Stephanie retired in 1997 she was replaced by Peggy Kayser, who had museum experience. Kayser formalized the collection into the Corita Art Center, raised the print prices, and sought to fill out their archive as well as make it archival. One day in 1999, Peggy mentioned that perhaps some of the gaps I had encountered in their collection might be filled in with a visit to the Corita collection at the Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts at UCLA. I had been researching for three years, yet had never come across this crucial fact of another archive! Apparently, Corita had a casual conversation in the mid-1960s with a UCLA professor, during which either he suggested or she offered that her personal collection of serigraphs eventually be donated there. Twenty years later, with no further discussion or formal agreement, Corita specified the gift to the Grunwald in her will, and left her remaining inventory, slide archive, and paper trail from the 1950s and 1960s to the IHC. I wanted to make an exhibition with Corita in Los Angeles and this opened the door. The Grunwald is connected to the Hammer Museum, and Ann Philbin,

whom I worked with on *Cultural Economies* at The Drawing Center, was its new director. She was enthusiastic about the idea, which would be the first showing of their Corita collection. Ironically Corita had insured the conservation of her work on paper by giving it to UCLA, yet it had not been consulted once at the Grunwald in the decade plus since her death. In 2000 an expanded version of the *Power Up* exhibition was created for the Hammer.

The IHC and the Grunwald Center are capable of telling different stories about Corita's work, by way of what is included as well as what is excluded in the respective collections. Even the site of the archive affects the interpretation of what is archived. In an essay about the process of learning about Corita through the two institutions I observed some key differences.

> The Grunwald is an archival archive within which everything is catalogued and well protected. Its chief responsibility is to conserve and protect its holdings for perpetuity. . . . The director of conservation dictates how and with what frequency materials in the archive can be exposed to public view. Works on paper are particularly vulnerable to light. Therefore, unlike in the IHC, Corita's prints were not hanging on the walls but are stored in darkness. . . . After I had got through the formality of the Grunwald Center, Corita's flat files proved to contain treasure upon treasure. I came across many works I had not been previously aware of, as well as ones I knew only from reproductions. The collection also contained numerous variations on compositions which demonstrated that Corita recycled ideas. . . . While the Corita collection housed at the Grunwald was tremendously exhilarating to explore, I couldn't help but notice the sharp contrast of that environment to that of the IHC. The center's sober and bureaucratic milieu seemed an unlikely match for Corita's artistic legacy, at least on the surface. But, although I was initially sorry to see so much energy, color, force, and passion lying dormant in the storage facility, were it not for the Grunwald's conservative attitude and

protection, her works might have prematurely and unnecessarily deteriorated, or, worse yet, might not even exist any longer.

. . .

The Grunwald archive, though seemingly complete as it contains one of nearly each of her prints, depicts Corita's artistic practice through the relatively coherent, enduring form of art objects. But even taken as a whole, her prints provide only a partial picture. Other interpretations of her artistic practice emerge once the frame of research is expanded to include the IHC ephemera collection. Looking at images such as the ones of the visually dynamic Mary Day processions Corita choreographed, or at pictures of advertising signage she fragmented through cropping, offer an expanded perspective of her creative practice and impact upon understandings of Corita's prints as well.[17]



Installation by Corita, Los Angeles, c. 1965

Come Alive! Publishing Corita

In addition to the exhibitions, brochures were made for both.[18] I wrote about Corita's practice in several European art journals and lectured on her work in various art institutions in the late '90s.[19] Martin Beck and I published an extensive essay on Corita in the prominent design journal, *Eye* in 2000.[20] But despite all this engagement it nagged at me that there was no book about Corita's art written from a current perspective. Exhibitions and leaflets are ephemeral. Books last, and as I learned with *Alternative Art New York*, they have the authority to confer historical legitimacy. Unfortunately, in consultation about a potential Corita book with the Grunwald director, we found financing to be prohibitive, particularly considering that no high quality photography of Corita's prints existed and would be costly to make. I put the idea on hold after a couple of years of getting nowhere.

Then, out of the blue, at the beginning of 2005, I received an email from Elinor Jansz informing me of her London based enterprise Four Corners Books. She expressed interest in Corita's work and wondered if I could imagine making a volume on the subject. I was ecstatic and we began planning immediately. Four Corners was a relative newcomer; at our point of contact they had only released three titles. The book we produced, *Come Alive! The Spirited Art of Sister Corita,* 2006, built a strong word of mouth and garnered a great deal of press attention. It went into second printing in less than a year of its publication, evidencing a thirst for Corita's fortifying buoyant sensibility.[21] It seems logical to conclude that a highly regarded university press (for example M.I.T.) or renowned specialized trade press (such as Phaidon) is not necessarily requisite for effective broadcast or for circulation to flourish. In this instance, the combination of a worthwhile untapped subject, a confirmed author, an apt and well-produced object, and good distribution work effectively. (Four Corners Books had no track record or U.S. distribution but as I had recently edited a monograph on Felix Gonzalez-Torres, which was distributed with the American company, D.A.P., we were able to secure similar distribution for *Come Alive!*) I do not mean to suggest that the affirmative reception the

book acquired would have been different with a larger or more established publisher, but the book itself certainly would have been.

Large presses tend to rely on the established series, formats, and design they formulate to distinguish the identity, interests, and niche of a particular imprint. This is understandable, and a good match in many instances, but can make for disjuncture when a subject and / or editorial approach warrants different methods, structure, and form. Customary procedures preempt other ways of doing things, meaning certain subject matter and methodology can either get excluded, or if engaged, done so routinely at the cost of concession and even distortion.

Four Corners Books is a small hands-on independent operation run by Elinor Jansz and Richard Embray. They specialize in books as projects by artists and books about art, tailoring each volume to the specific needs of the venture rather than plugging content into existing process and form. Elinor and Richard take on projects that require their developmental input on every level, in my experience, making for absorbed collaboration. Reminiscent of an alternative art space in the best sense, Four Corners is artist and author centered. While editorial control is typically and contractually the domain of publishers, Four Corners' contracts outline responsibility within an alliance of trust in which editorial control rests with the author or artist. Four Corners resists codifying itself or its titles, is open to shifting format and works with a variety of designers, finding a suitable match for each project and its unique requirements. (Of course it remains to be seen if they will continue to work in such a customized manner over time or as they expand.)

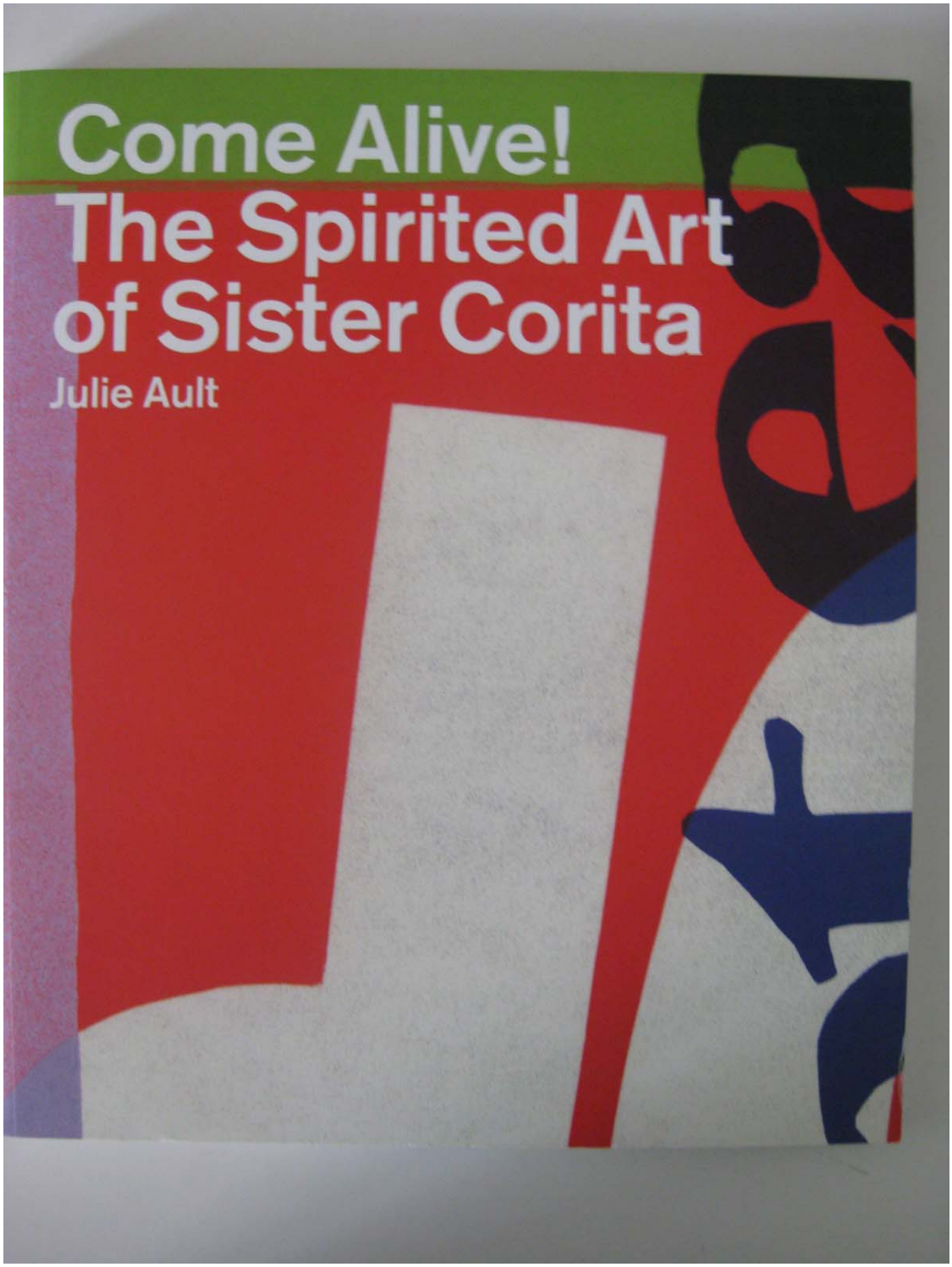
Four Corners' open form orientation meant I could consider structure and ingredients as well as scale and mode freely and creatively, which in the case of Corita was a real asset. Their approach resonated with my philosophy of exhibition as an open form, which I was now applying to publication. Such prospect distinguishes and furthers my publication work as artistic practice. The only limitation was budget, but even that increased dramatically as we developed the book concept and excitement brewed. I was invited to

suggest a designer I thought would bring a special perspective to Corita, and selected the London-based Nick Bell who, for many years, was design director at *Eye* magazine where Martin and I had published "All you need is love: pictures, words and worship by Corita Kent." Nick Bell's content-driven design engagement resulted in a fresh and illuminating visual materialization that I learned from. So I thought of him immediately as an apt partner for the book. He agreed, and Richard, Elinor, Nick, and I spent two days initially discussing Corita, the material, ideas, and goals for the book. That dialogue produced the scheme as we thought through the meaning of each aspect of the potential volume: scale, production specificity, printing method, image character and treatment, textual modes, audiences, relationships between textual and image layers, hard or soft cover, retail price, number of pages, atmosphere and feel, and more.

Using a conventional monographic format for a book on Corita was neither a default decision nor the result of plugging Corita into an existing series, but a strategy of providing a familiar authoritative frame through which to view her exceptionality. Given that the majority of the powerful and vivid images in *Come Alive!* had not been previously published, the importance of reproducing the serigraphs and selected images from Corita's slide library of ephemeral events such as Mary's Day happenings with as high quality as possible, called for a large-format layout. This determined the page size. Los Angeles photographer Josh White agreed to photograph the prints at a nominal fee, in part because his mother was a huge fan of Corita in the sixties. Once he was working on this, Josh was so excited by her work that he offered to photograph all of it free of charge for the IHC so they could have a high quality image data base for their archive. The IHC's existing photography was made adhoc and had frequently been deemed unpublishable. The new documentation has allowed Corita's work to circulate in reproduction far more widely since. The archive photographs diverge dramatically in quality from the this new documentation; each required a different treatment so we separated them into sections of the book, departing from my initial desire to intermingle Corita's ephemeral and lasting forms throughout. Instead, at Nick's suggestion, we treated the serigraphs as plates in order to get the most out of them production wise and make a strong uninterrupted showing of her 1960s prints.

Corita juxtaposed fluorescent colors to elicit dynamic effects in many of her serigraphs of 1967 and 1968, making a visual affinity with both political graphics and psychedelic concert posters from the time. A four-color printing method would distort and flatten them. Although it was very costly and complex to implement, a print mediator, Martin Lee, was engaged to oversee using fluorescent inks on a few plates. We shipped my Corita serigraphs to London so they could be consulted for accuracy during pre-production and printing. These options are simply not within the realm of possibility of university publishing or large trade publishers like Phaidon but such production decisions and their execution greatly affected the book.

My essay in *Come Alive!* advances the notion that although the signature on the prints was Corita's, deeper inquiry shows that the IHC art department's achievements as well as Corita's artworks were the results of social processes and myriad collaborations. Since the essay explores Corita's practice beyond process and printmaking to include teaching and events she choreographed in the collaborative communal context of the Immaculate Heart, we imbedded her own photos from the archive in it. The plates follow and, together, function as a visual essay by Corita, whose "word as image" mode is clarified by this arrangement. The final print reproduction contains a text by the poet, Jesuit priest, and anti-war activist Daniel Berrigan: "When I hear bread breaking I see something else; it seems almost as though God never meant us to do anything else. So beautiful a sound, the crust breaks up like manna and falls all over everything, and then we eat; bread gets inside humans." This leads immediately into an essay by Berrigan, who was a close friend and colleague of Corita's, which vividly portrays her spirited personality and the tumult of the 1960s in the Catholic Church and at the IHC. Berrigan's medium is language so Nick Bell created a spatially and typographically generous treatment, to visually stress voice. *Come Alive!* sought to represent Corita's creative methods, her work, and the context it derived from, and do so in a dynamic visual manner – an important aspect of the representation. The monographic format made sense given the goals. I believe fossilizing Corita was avoided by the particular narratives and nuance expressed in *Come Alive!*



Julie Ault, ed., *Come Alive: The Spirited Art of Sister Corita*, (London: Four Corners Books, 2006) [and below]


POWER UP
I love you


SEE THE MAN
HANDLE
WITH
CARE!
THE MOST

Divergent Exhibitions

Come Alive! The Spirited Art of Sister Corita was launched in London in the fall of 2006. Concurrently a small show was mounted at Between Bridges, a gallery run by the artist Wolfgang Tillmans, and a selection of Corita's slide archive was imbedded in Beck's and my show, *Installation* at the Secession. The book publicized Corita far more widely and effectively than individual exhibitions and writings had. Tillmans is known for having his finger on the pulse of culture's cutting edge and his interest in Corita gave the book added traction.

Pioneering curator and museum director Kasper Koenig saw a copy of *Come Alive!* and immediately wanted to stage a solo exhibition of her work at the Ludwig Museum in Cologne. He had not known Corita's work and was floored by it. Having already produced my ideal Corita installations I did not relish the idea of working on another ambitious exhibition at the time or developing a new exhibition perspective. However it seemed important to broadcast her art and I agreed to co-curate a modest show with one of the Ludwig's assistant curators, Nina Guelicher. Resources were not abundant, so all things considered, a conventional show using the museum's usual display tactics and publicity templates was planned. Previously I had freely shaped presentational formats to complement Corita's vital art. I did not critically consider in advance how it would be to work this other way around – plugging Corita into existing means rather than fashioning a suitable framework from scratch.

The exhibition, *Luete wie wir, Grafkiken von Sister Corita aus den 1960er Jarhren* (People like us, Graphics of Sister Corita from the 1960s), 2007, was nonetheless a hit, attracting many visitors and extensive media coverage. The Ludwig is known for its extensive collection of Pop Art, which Koenig wanted to bring Corita's work in dialogue with. It was also the most prestigious institution to exhibit her serigraphs in quantity to date. Koenig acquired fifteen prints from the IHC's Corita Art Center for permanent collection, specifically to supplement the Pop Art holdings. While Corita's works had

somewhat haphazardly made their way into numerous museum collections in former decades, the Ludwig acquisition was focused and intended to register Corita into the trajectory of Pop their collection demonstrates. On the surface this was all good news, however I felt both excitement and a degree of compunction about her work being institutionalized in these ways.

Serigraphs are the most lasting and coherent of the mediums Corita employed, but in addition to prints and other publication formats, she produced large temporary exhibitions and choreographed events and celebrations held at the Immaculate Heart College where she taught and chaired the art department in the mid-1960s. Corita primarily considered herself a teacher. These facets of her practice and the generative community context she lived and worked in were alluded to in *Luete wie wir*, but are not expressly taken up when the serigraphs are displayed exclusively. After the exhibition was over, one could visit the Ludwig's permanent collection, assume Corita was a printmaker, and leave it at that. However, when the frame of reference is redirected a different perspective of Corita unfolds. Realizing I was complicit in potentially truncating her practice,[22] and my own, as the exhibition lacked the specific "artistic" engagement I usually applied, was disturbing.

During the fall of 2007 I stayed in Malmo on an IASPIS residency with the express purpose of working on a project with a not-for-profit exhibition space, Signal. My initial idea was to develop a dialogue with Signal's four principles, Carl Lindh, Emma Reichert, Fredrik Strid, Elena Tzotzi, to critically and fruitfully examine their mission and Signal's relationship to its local and larger contexts, their working process and curatorial methods, and programming and implementation. I was to bring a new voice to the mix and share some of my art field experience, including using collaboration methods. I considered the dialogue itself to be the project, which would not necessarily result in something tangible such as an exhibition but would hopefully have a variety of subtle and observable consequences.

The directors of Signal and I began a series of in depth discussions as planned, but they also wanted an exhibition for their space and were enthused by Sister Corita. They

proposed we coproduce a Corita exhibition as an action oriented manifestation of our dialogue – a testing site for the issues we were discussing. In the aftermath of the Ludwig I was keen on using the opportunity to bring forward dimensions of Corita's practice that were less prominent in that presentation. The result, *Wet and Wild: The Spirit of Sister Corita,* 2007–08, contained no silkscreen prints but instead focused on the ephemeral aspects of her creativity and teaching methods. A slide show curated from Corita's archive conveyed her context at the Immaculate Heart College's revolutionary art department in Los Angeles in the 1960s, and was displayed on two perpendicular screens similarly to how Corita screened films in her classroom. Baylis Glascock's documentary, "Corita Kent: On Teaching and Celebration," from 1964 was on continuous view nearby. Key publications by Corita such as the *Irregular Bulletin*, *Footnotes and Headlines*, 1967,[23] and the inexpensive box of offset prints she made for Pilgrim Press in 1968[24] were taken apart and displayed on the walls. The usable exposition was furthermore activated as a platform for events that link contemporary design, pedagogical, and cultural practices to Corita's methods. *Wet and Wild* was organized in collaboration with Signal as well as the graphic design team New Beginnings. I was eager to freshly engage Corita's sensibility with others and build up ideas for the spatial display, accompanying events, and brochure jointly. This effort resulted in an expressive environment that functioned as exhibition, research arena, and frame for events including a silkscreen workshop deriving from Corita's appropriation of advertising slogans, and a debate about art educational methods.

While my first two exhibitory explorations of Corita had exposed her printmaking alongside documentation of her and the IHC's ephemeral practices, the Ludwig and Signal shows together provided a similarly wide view of Corita. *Wet and Wild* was the antidote to *Luete wie wir, Grafkiken von Sister Corita aus den 1960er Jarhren*, and vice versa. At the time I considered the Ludwig show as something of a personal failure. However in retrospect I think it was productive beyond its broadcasting function. It clued me in more specifically to the vulnerability of work such as Corita's in the cultural economy. Each exhibition had its strengths and spot lit essential lessons through the processes of negotiating Corita in these differently scaled and operated institutions.





Julie Ault and Signal, *Wet and Wild: The Spirit of Sister Corita*, 2007, Signal

Entering the Canon, Expanding Art History

In different ways the book *Come Alive!* and the Ludwig exhibition infused Corita with art historical legitimacy. Being a populist, Catholic, woman artist had rendered her work marginal, even nonexistent, in art history discourse. Corita regarded printmaking as "a very democratic form, since it enables me to produce a quantity of original art for those who cannot afford to purchase high-priced art." Her large editions of silk-screens were deliberately priced inexpensively. Her artwork did not primarily circulate in the fine art system, which she perceived as elitist, nor had it ever achieved "fine art" status in the eyes of art world professionals. Although some prints were sold from galleries, including one in Los Angeles run by her sister, they were also sold from churches, community centers, and vans driven by IHC members to various cultural and religious gatherings. Despite Corita's foresight in bequeathing her print collection for permanent conservation to the Grunwald Center, exhibiting and most significantly historical representation in publication form were requisite to reanimating her artistic language.

Having been inspired by Corita's creative production and pedagogic work it seemed natural to share it – to circulate and analyze her work and communicate its historical context. Several other likeminded artists and curators have sought to transmit Corita over the last decade, and her work is now represented in the New York Chelsea gallery, Zach Feuer. Judging from the responsive interest of viewers across generations as well as the fields of art, design, pedagogy, history, religious studies, and more, Corita's cultural contribution is significant and vitalizing. Her artistic and graphic innovations of the 1960s speak freshly to current art and design practices. Her political consciousness and anti-war stance are relevant again. Her playful recasting of advertising lingo for spiritual purpose captivates viewers. The warmth of her address is inevitably "cool."

Although she did not aspire to fine art classification, one result of renewed viewership is that Sister Corita Kent is currently being registered in the Pop Art canon via inclusion in exhibitions in American and European museums – the Whitney Museum for American Art, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Hirshhorn, MASS MoCA, MoMA P.S.1,

the Pompidou in Paris, the Kunsthalle in Vienna, among many others. Vexing questions emerge about what is gained and lost with these developments.

Corita's exceptional qualities are potentially narrowed as her work is established in the art field. Her serigraphs qualify as fine art and can therefore enter the account of modern art that curators and museums tell through art objects. Only rarely does that narration extend to address generative social contexts and ephemeral activities. The IHC and larger sociopolitical environment Corita worked in get invoked in press write-ups but are usually not visible in tandem with the presentation of her prints. Corita's crucial context is obscured – perhaps unintentionally, simply by retrofitting her prints into survey shows and museum collections under the header Pop Art. In time, context may be altogether lost as they move about, accompanied by an increasingly simplified blurb about their maker, revised repeatedly to incorporate the styles of hosting institutions. Of course this danger is not specific to Corita but potentially applies to all art. However in her case there seems to be a lot to lose.

On the other hand Corita changes and complicates the discourse of Pop – which has been something of a done deal – and of post-war art history. American Pop Art is almost exclusively the domain of male artists, including Rauschenberg, Johns, Hamilton, Warhol, Oldenburg, and Lichtenstein. (I am frequently asked if Corita knew the work of Andy Warhol. I'm sure she did, but I often wonder if Warhol knew the work of Sister Corita.) Furthermore, Corita's inclusion in the formal discussion of recent art history, which I must add is neither consistent nor assured in the long-term, highlights previous exclusionary modes and therefore fissures historical narrative. One wonders, what else has been marginalized and barred from the grand story of art as told by objects and approved practices? How hermetic is the canon? Can it be expanded? What does it take to do so? Authorized history is challenged by the reemergence of what has been omitted, again and again.

While I've outlined what happened in the case of Corita, questions also emerge about the different trajectories that might ensue if an academic historian entering through the front

door of history writing, rather than an artist using the side door had identified her as a worthwhile subject. Would Corita be even more celebrated? Would American museums jostle to acquire the remaining coveted prints? Would other scholarly investigations ensue as a result, further insuring her "place in history?" Depending on the status of the imaginary art historian, a tentative yes to all of the above. But would Corita have even been approved as a subject by a doctoral advisor or publisher? If so, in what type of program? Given Corita's compound marginality, particularly the Catholic connection and populist position, it seems unlikely that any art history PhD program in the U.S. would support the subject nor can I imagine there are advisors familiar enough to take on dissertation oversight. Cultural studies, philosophy and religious studies, and education are more likely settings. Yet even in those disciplines, I am only aware of one such dissertation – unpublished, by Barbara Loste, made at the School of Education at Gonzaga University.[25] Would a scholarly undertaking find a publisher? Judging from recent titles in major university presses' art departments it seems unlikely. I suspect it would be difficult in the absence of marquee appeal and either academic or collector backing to potentially lubricate the market. Given that it hasn't happened yet, I argue that entering art history through the side door, as an artist engaging the role of historian and amplifier, has proved an effective alternative for writing previously overlooked histories into the record. This parallels the situation with the NY alternative art field. Although in that case I believe it was simply a matter of time before art historians would have taken on the subject.

Institutional Pathologies

In March of 2010, while participating in a conference at University of Southern California (USC) – "Museum of Ideas," a well-known museum curator declared her love for the museum at the outset of her presentation – not only the one she works for, but generally announcing, "I love the Museum." Melodramatically my mind wandered during her presentation.

I used to love the museum. I thought it could change. But like any ill-fated attraction of opposites built on faith that transformation is possible through love, our relationship went awry. You hold on for too long, believing in miracles. Believing in Love. Wanting to channel its transformative power.

The museum seemed to really want change – even invite it. That's how we met. Its desire to absorb change was met by my – our – longing to be heard, understood, recognized, and attended to. The museum offered itself – an embrace – a safe place where we could envision and represent ourselves, speak openly, intimately, and critically. We affected one another. We shared. There was sympathy. We respected one another's desires and limitations. It was great. It couldn't last. The publicness of our relationship sealed our connection as well as its fate.

There were one-night stands, flings, and long-term relationships. We were passed around. Telling us what we wanted to hear. (I want you.) Always seducing. (I need you.) Never satiated, we went from one museum to the next. Believing in the merit of our performance, our righteousness. It felt good to love and be loved, but in the morning the yearning for more intensified.

In hindsight, it went on too long – locked in codependency, needing the museum to function, to be. We knew too much. We'd gone behind-the-scenes. Mystery was destroyed. Authority dissolved. Respect lost, as well as hope. Too many compromises all around. Resentments accumulated. "You promised you'd change!" We didn't realize the tenacity of the museum's conservative core. Its commitment to self-preservation.

Finally, there was only dead space between us. Nothing that hadn't already been said. We knew each other's thoughts, moves, and

capabilities. Nothing to look forward to. No adventure. Only routine and repetition. Faded passions. Faded interests. Stale mate. We grew apart. We went in different directions.

I used to regard museums optimistically, as places I wanted to know better and contribute to. Why did I no longer regard them as particularly provoking sites? What changed for me internally and in culture in recent years?

Economic transformation of the museum sector is one factor. The financial dependency of U.S. museums on the private sector and paying audiences is largely a twenty-first century phenomenon, a repercussion of public funding deterioration, which has dramatic and subtle affects on the who, what, why, and how of programming. This is symptomatic of a larger shift toward privatization of government programs, from prisons to education. Bureaucratic and business model mind-sets with competition at their core currently guide all variety of arts institutions; fixed procedural rules that are insensitive to practitioners and do not accommodate diverse ways of thinking and doing are part and parcel. Artists and art are treated somewhat generically, thereby narrowing the scope of possibility to shape projects and exposure freely. In this set up institutional reproduction powers up while draining creative practitioners, short-circuiting ideas, and shortchanging viewers.[26] Museums were never independent but the widespread allegiance to a modernist conceptualization of art as independent – even if in part illusory, in conjunction with reliance on individual patrons and, beginning in the 1960s on governmental support that broadened the scope of access and resultant programs, seems a relatively considered and in some respects more open-ended context. Within that arrangement there was a capacity for critique as well as institutional reflection compared to the burgeoning aggressive overcapitalized cultural economy of the early 2000s and the "anything can happen – as long as it brings in revenue" version of programming, witnessed for example at the Museum of Modern Art. At post-expansion MoMA this general position has resulted in an ascendancy of art as spectacle through sensationalized exhibitions that read in part as gimmickry. Popularizing the museum visit in this way comes at high cost.

On another note, a change in my general orientation was set in motion a few years ago: I grew tired of fulfilling the role of diagnostic opponent. While critically taking issue with how things are done as well as broadcasting alternative methods, subjects, and models had been sincere and imperative throughout my career, I reached something of an internal limit once I recognized the pattern of call and response that was defining my artistic identity as well as guiding my relationships with institutions. Being independent, and unaffiliated has made me well positioned to challenge status quo conditions and shake things up momentarily, through exhibitions, teaching, speaking, consulting, and writing. While I was motivated by the idealistic belief that critical and outspoken participation in the art system constructively contributes to its transformation, after twenty-five years in the field it seems apparent that while some things change the big picture stays relatively static. It took me a long time to comprehend that the temporary transgressions I set forth were primarily symbolic and ultimately simply part of the process. Witnessing institutions of all size and attitude fixed on preserving their authority and infinitely self-reproducing as though solvency and existence were enough has been to some extent, dispiriting. Reality trumped fantasy. The mystery, excitement, and challenge of creating a museum exhibition diminished as my experience increased – not speedily, but over time.

Book as Exhibition

I used to get irritated when people said things like, “have you ever thought about turning this exhibition into a book?” believing they were misguided in wanting to limit the role of exhibitions to leisure activity or simply lethargic (“visiting an exhibit should not be work,” “too much to read standing up.”) The separation of exhibition and publication seemed yet another outmoded division of labor worth disputing in practice. Traditionally, exhibitions present art without a lot of on-site explanation save the occasional disembodied wall text. Judgment is implied in the very selection and fact of presentation as curatorial authority speaks for itself. Further elucidation is contained in an accompanying catalogue, charged with the task of conveying background information and expert interpretations that contextualize the exhibited works. On the surface the

division between exhibition and publication seems pragmatic. However this partition of formats encourages the belief in objective curatorial authority as well as transcendent aesthetic experience while relegating scholarly elaboration and historical representation to a portable more intimate form, thereby differentiating functions of art and of audiences.

I have long been interested as a practitioner and an exhibition user in exhibitory situations that take up the operations commonly associated with publication, not simply by lengthening wall texts but by using visual, spatial, and discursive tools among many other strategies. For example, in one of the Impressionist galleries at the Musée D'Orsay in Paris, two versions of Claude Monet's *Woman With Parasol* hang in proximity. Rather than a traditional aestheticized presentation advancing a single painting as an uncontested masterpiece, by seeing them installed together we have access to art history and are better able to grasp the project of impressionism. The two works are not mounted on the same plane but on either wall of a corner so they don't cancel each other out visually. I found this simple installation act highly illuminating, the painting themselves are made to speak volumes of information normally exposed in didactic wall texts and accompanying publications.

While I have mainly favored presenting in-depth investigations in the social space of an exhibition hall – treating exhibition as a contextual environment in which the research that informed and deepened my understanding of the subject, works, materials, and their conditions are somehow integrated into the display, at some point I became less defensive about the separation and considered the challenge of making a book *instead* of an exhibition. An appealing thought given some of the growing frustrations with the exhibition form described earlier. How could an exhibition covert into a book? What would distinguish such a book, what might it book be like and look like? Previously collapsing publication terrain into exhibition, I subsequently wanted to collapse exhibition into publication. An added incentive: the book form requires no secondary representation but indefinitely represents itself. A bid for some semblance of durability for my work was also a factor, and remains so, though I doubt I realized it or would have

admitted it at the time. In some ways I fell into making books; they fit my temporary needs, aims, and temperament. Like many production shifts this was both purposeful and happenstance. Felix's death and my own aging set the stage for producing lasting objects in book form that might negotiate the clash between ephemerality and the enduring.

I began making self-contained, self-sufficient books, distinct from catalogues that accompany exhibitions, beginning with *Alternative Art New York*, but I would say began employing the mode even more consciously for the Corita book, *Come Alive!*, and in the dialogic monograph, *Felix Gonzalez-Torres* also published in 2006, by steidldangin.[27] Publishing permitted me to create lasting objects and largely circumvent the museum and art space circuit that, from my perspective, had become temporarily staid.

Rather than detail the thinking process and resulting volume on Gonzalez-Torres here, which essentially translated methodological features of exhibition practice into the course of making a book as well as set the stage for future undertakings, I will delve into this line of inquiry through the example of *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material*, which has been produced wholly in the context of my doctoral research.[28]

My application to do doctoral research in Visual Art at Malmö Art Academy, Lund University, occurred at a specific juncture. Having fulfilled all my exhibition, book, and project commitments, I was eager to carve out a substantial period of time unburdened by institutional agendas, production deadlines, and the pressures of reputation in order to deeply engage a creative analytic method of inquiry and practice under the dual purpose header, Retrospective / Prospective. My application proposed the following:

> My research will be two-fold: working through my relationship to form, intent on form-finding anew, as well as gaining understanding and analysis of art field coordinates for current and future work. I am planning to shed work structures that structure me. To perceive new interests and continue authoring an artistic identity according to my present I need to force a clearing and carve out a period of time that is unencumbered by

production deadlines, which is how I have been working for some years, and unburdened by prospects defined by past interests, enterprises, and resulting expectations. I want to consciously embrace transition, reengaging creativity rather than over focusing on production and representation . . . . My research armature will be an overarching project of retrospective assessment and apprehending prospective for new work focus . . . . My plan is to retrospectively articulate an understanding of various incarnations of my collaborative and solo art practices and perform an archeology of past work involvements and their features, contexts, effectiveness, reception, as well as discover the formative consequences on my ways of thinking and working.[29]

Group Material, For Example

In the practice of History (in academic history and in history as a component of everyday imaginings) something has happened to time: it has been slowed down, and compressed. When the work of Memory is done, it is with the things into which this time has been pressed . . . . In the theatre of the past that is constituted by memory . . . we think we know ourselves in time, when all we know is a sequence of fixations in the spaces of the being's stability – a being who does not want to melt away, and who, even in the past, wants time to 'suspend' its flight. In its countless alveoli space contains compressed time. That is what space is for.'

—Carolyn Steedman[30]

Language has unmistakably made plain that memory is not an instrument for exploring the past, but rather a medium. It is the medium of that which is experienced, just as earth is the medium in which ancient cities lie buried. He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct

himself like a man digging. Above all, he must not be afraid to return again and again to the same matter; to scatter it as one scatters earth, to turn it over as one turns over soil. For the "matter itself" is no more than the strata which yield their long-sought secrets only to the most meticulous investigation. That is to say, they yield those images that, severed from all earlier associations, reside as treasures in the sober rooms of our later insights – like torsos in a collector's gallery.

—Walter Benjamin[31]

Stories condense time the way maps miniaturize space. But somehow condensing time seems to distance the past from us rather than to bring it closer. What unfolds in a story – what really happens in a story – is language. Whenever something is said there is also silence.

—Matthew Buckingham[32]

Group Material's cultural practice was temporal and the forms employed were primarily ephemeral. When the group formally disbanded, in 1996, I was intent on preserving its ephemerality, on *not* becoming history. I resisted our work being defined or objectified in a monograph by an art historian, and reserved the right to cohere our history at some future point. Soon after I wrote:

The fragments that contribute to any history can be selected and configured to make a particular structure – to shape the past and / or to mobilize the present. That Group Material has an interest in it's own historicization, in how it's done, is intrinsic to the group's working paradigm. Producing such a book is enticing "as a project" in which the investigative and representational methods Group Material utilized would be mirrored and enacted in relation to its own history. Conversely there is a certain appeal in preserving the ephemeral aspect of the entire project by not bringing documentation together in one packaged history. . . . There

> are certain challenges specific to a process of the historicization of the conditions and impacts of group activities. For a complex understanding of activities that sought to divert and subvert master narratives it's important to propose alternatives to streamlined narratives that operate along linear logic in which one thing leads to another. Providing an orderly view or encapsulation of debated events and meanings is to some extent a revision of events whereby conflicts and contradictions are ultimately resolved, at least in their representation.[33]

I continued representing the group's work through live narration and writings, and responded to inquiries on a case-by-case basis. As the only founding member who remained until its conclusion I felt a responsibility to keep recounting the group's practice. Long-term member Doug Ashford has done similarly. Previously preferring collaborative representation whenever it was feasible, once the group formally dissolved we decided to represent it separately, speaking from individual perspectives.

In retrospect I believe describing Group Material during the years since it ended has been as much about concealment as exposure.[34] Telling has supplied me with the illusion of a positive, active relationship with the past, while in actuality routine narration and automated responses have prevented deep reflection into the collaborative's legacies and my experiences within its framework. (For instance, the question What is Group Material? triggered the recitation of a succinct explanation.) Despite live empirical explanation that renders the past vividly, I have to some degree perpetuated a static storyline of Group Material.

After a decade of active narration and historical management, I decided it was time to relinquish responsibility as well as control and address Group Material's history more deeply and with lasting effect. I needed to tackle the material traces that had infiltrated every closet, cabinet, and spare spot in my apartment, as well as the psychic traces that permeated memory. Getting the collection into a public archive was the first objective. Collecting material saved by other members as well and joining it all together in an

archive would permit researchers access to Group Material in a more coherent way than previously possible, and open the opportunity for academic engagement.

Interest in Group Material had been consistent since its conclusion and has increased in recent years. Perhaps curiosity persisted so *because* it remained indistinct and unhistoricized. Access has been fragmentary, mostly articles and interviews in newspapers and magazines, mentions and reproductions in books, one extensive essay by Jan Avgikos in *But Is It Art?: The Spirit of Art As Activism*, 1995,[35] and interviews and writings produced by former members after the group ended. Googling Group Material furnishes scanty information. Anyone wishing to gain in depth overview has confronted this scattershot condition. To really dig in requires a formidable process of chasing down and piecing together information as well as carrying out primary research, such as probing former participants. This sketchy state of information has made it possible for people to mythologize Group Material and project onto its practice, tilting it in different directions – activist, curatorial, socially minded, aesthetically subversive, as well as variously labeling the practice to suit their purposes – populist, community-based, political, institutional critique, relational aesthetics.

Life and Death in the Archive

External interest notwithstanding, defying archiving as a life-extending strategy has proved to be somewhat deadening. In retrospect resistance seems futile. As Norman Mailer commented on a visit to the archive he was to donate his papers to, "We all wind up in boxes anyway."[36] Perhaps this is faulty logic, but alternatively, it seemed that archiving might enliven and expand. Despite that archival institutions are regarded as crypts, they provide access to information for historiography and for "mobilizing the present," thereby insuring the possibility of infinite connection and use. In other words, archives are living entities.

Near the beginning of *Archive Fever* Jacques Derrida asserts that:

> If there is no archive without consignation in an *external place* which assures the possibility of memorization, of repetition, of reproduction, or of reimpression, then we must also remember that repetition itself, the logic of repetition, indeed the repetition compulsion, remains, according to Freud, indissociable from the death drive. And thus from destruction. Consequence: right on that which permits and conditions archiviation, we will never find anything other than that which exposes to destruction, and in truth menaces with destruction, introducing, *a priori*, forgetfulness and the archiviolithic into the heart of the monument. Into the "by heart" itself. The archive always works, and *a priori*, against itself.[37]

Derrida goes on to shed theoretical light on how archiving and the archive are conditioned by interrelationships between life, death, and revivification. "*On the one hand*, the archive is made possible by death, aggression, and destruction drive, that is to say also by originary finitude and expropriation. But beyond finitude as limit, there is, as we said above, this properly *in-finite* movement of radical destruction without which no archive desire or fever would happen."[38]

As I consciously began reconsidering Group Material (even before reading *Archive Fever*) I fleetingly wished that neither I nor anyone else would have saved any trace, or that a fire would have destroyed all evidence, so that the quagmire of the archive and its complex interactions with authority, history, death, the present, and the future would not require transaction.[39] But given that the material *was* in hand and historical awareness was in mind, along with the desire to relinquish the responsibility of live mediation, it seemed crucial to address how Group Material's archive would be cohered and contextualized to reside in an archival institution.

One Way of Ending

The AIDS activist collective Gran Fury was formed in 1988 as an agitprop branch of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) in order to exploit the power of art to end the AIDS crisis.[40] Like Group Material, Gran Fury used mass transit, the street, and print media to distribute their succinct slogans (for example, Kissing Doesn't Kill, and, ART IS NOT ENOUGH. TAKE COLLECTIVE DIRECT ACTION TO END THE AIDS CRISIS) and drew on the support of art institutions to produce temporary installations, notably at The New Museum of Contemporary Art and at the Venice Biennale. By the mid-1990s, feeling their usual methods were not up to the task at hand and unable to reinvent their practice, Gran Fury disbanded and at once donated their document collection "as is" to the New York Public Library (NYPL) for it to be archived and made public. For the most part the members also ceased representing Gran Fury verbally. In 1995 they distributed a flyer titled "Good Luck . . . Miss You," which articulated the origins of the group, its general strategy, and some of the personal and cultural reasons they were splitting:

> By 1993 the effort involved became too demanding for different members. Most people worked full-time if not more, running their own businesses. More importantly, for all the effort involved, it began to feel routine. We had settled too clearly into one way of working. As the AIDS epidemic had evolved, along with the governmental and institutional responses to it, the early solutions are no longer appropriate.[41]

Gran Fury members thereafter directed all inquiries to the NYPL even though it took several years for the collection to be archived and made available for public use. They were pragmatic in cutting the cord, which perhaps was more straightforward for them than it could be for Group Material given their much briefer collaboration. I envied how they had handled the transition, but could not imagine similarly discontinuing to represent Group Material and felt obligated to see what we had started not only to the end

but also beyond. Since Group Material had been my sole art practice for seventeen years my identity was entangled with the formation and it was hard to just "let go." (It's tempting here to make an analogy to romantic break ups: Gran Fury opted for a complete separation method, with no further discussion, and Group Material choose the one foot in one foot out technique of remaining accessible and continuing to speak.)

The appealingly uncomplicated choice would have been to simply deposit Group Material's collection with all its arbitrariness and absent narration into a library when the group dissolved, and let archivists handle it per usual procedure. However, it seemed abrupt to simply designate what was in hand on a given date as "the archive," and Group Material's paper trail was further dispersed among former members. Chiefly, I had been too close to the whole thing to let go and wanted the distance of time to both build up individually and develop a different and less emotional perspective on the group than I had at its finish.

False Evidence

Most archives exhibit a fragmentary and perhaps even random dimension in terms of what is included and what is excluded. Documents and artifacts are not intrinsically truth telling. Archivist Marvin Taylor sometimes regards archives as "false evidence." In her review of two recent books concerned with history writing Jill Lepore asserts "There is not and never can be any such thing as true history [English writer William] Godwin insisted: 'Nothing is more uncertain, more contradictory, more unsatisfactory than the evidence of facts.' Every history is incomplete; every historian relies on what is unreliable – documents written by people who were not under oath and cannot be cross-examined."[42] Several years ago, I analyzed my experiences researching Sister Corita during which I came to similar conclusions:

> Because they are repositories of documents or "facts," archives seem to tell the truth, and they do so with a degree of authority. Archives tell

> truths, but they can also "lie" through omission, or mislead. Connecting the dots between discrete documents and discovering relations between pieces of information – producing meaning – is what is at the heart of research. But the "facts" housed within a particular archive are not necessarily systematic. They are often fragmentary, disconnected from context, and sometimes even random. Crucial pieces of information which might answer questions, suggest particular narratives, or unlock mysteries are not necessarily archived.[43]

Deficiency in the archive is inevitable, as is discrepancy. Some gaps stimulate research, but some are better filled, such as fleshing out the collective's archive with individual members' material. While there is no assured way to mitigate the uncertainty of the archive or the relationships between truth, evidence, and memory, without exercising an absurd degree of control, I was reluctant to accept the situation at face value. I wanted to test the ability of the Group Material archive to communicate despite its omissions, and address the ways it came up wanting. This could be considered a case of founder's syndrome: an overprotective attitude and inability to let go. Mainly though, Group Material's concernment with discursive practices and representation, combined with a preoccupation with historical analysis and history writing in my work since the group ended, compelled fresh consideration and participation cohering the archive and stimulating its use.

Permanent Host

The inevitability of formulating the Group Material archive in a publicly accessible institution gained traction upon meeting Marvin Taylor, who in 1993 founded the Downtown Collection at the Fales Library and Special Collections at NYU.[44] I was immediately impressed with Taylor's focus on documenting the New York downtown arts scene that evolved in SoHo and the Lower East Side during the 1970s through the early 1990s as an arena of directly and tangentially interconnected individuals,

collectives, communities, and practices. Taylor seeks out complementary collections that cross-reference and contextualize each another. The Collection encompasses art, literature, music, theater, performance, film, activism, dance, photography, and video. The Downtown Collection has internal coherence.[45] Additionally, Taylor regards archives as living entities and has generated a vibrant collection and a decidedly non-stuffy research atmosphere that counters the cliché of the archive as somber crypt or bastion of elitism.

The Collection's broad cultural reach seemed the ideal context for Group Material's ultimate "institutionalization," particularly as Taylor, clearly an activist archivist himself, was excited by the notion of Group Material's collection being consciously cohered and structured by former members, even though the more common course is to simply deposit a relevant collection with its randomness and gaps intact and let people make what they will of it.

Institutionalizing the archive implies "closing the casket," but it simultaneously involves opening up and multiplication through use and interpretation. The archive is a primary source for potentially infinite production of history. According to Mark Wigley, "Archives of historical documents are not quiet, stable repositories for inactive traces of old work. To enter an archive is to enter a space of questions rather than answers. Archives provoke experiment by challenging our assumptions and emerging forms of practice. Far from a collection of inert fossils, the archive is an incubator of new life."[46] Group Material's archive would relocate agency from the group as working entity to others who activate its bodies of information, including for historical representation. Institutionalization, or instituting, also entails a reassignment or sharing of authority with the Downtown Collection and NYU as permanent hosts.

The Downtown Collection is preferable in this instance to the MoMA library or other art museums because it has a broader cultural base than "fine art," and specifically documents the cultural environment of downtown New York where the group's practice germinated and evolved. An educational institution seemed a better match for Group

Material, which was originally incorporated as a New York State educational organization. While MoMA and the Getty are prestigious, they are also perceived as elitist and can be off-putting to some visitors. The Downtown Collection is accessible to anyone who wants to visit and they have ample staffing, funding, and resources. Additionally, their average turnaround time for processing archives and making them accessible is a year to eighteen months. By way of contrast, the New York Public Library can take up to five years to process material and is reliant on governmental funding – often dwindling or in jeopardy.

Despite the collaborative's sketchy saving methods, there remains an informative and exciting pool of documents, photography, and artifacts that chart Group Material's process and practice. Included are minutes of meetings from the group's first year and a half of activity, internal communiqués, original proposals, announcements, press releases, exhibition statements, press responses, correspondence, project files, installation photography, snapshots, working notes and notebooks, exhibition soundtracks, research and source material, publications and books, and artworks and ephemera that were used in projects. Taylor's enthusiasm came through loud and clear during his initial site visit to my apartment; we were on the same wavelength and the arrangement was sealed.

Testing the Archive

Embarking on the concrete project of Group Material's archive and historical representation I formed dialogues with two people who had minimal foreknowledge of the group or the period. Both situations came about organically. Rasmus Røhling was an art student I met while visiting Århus Art Academy. Subsequently he visited New York and we informally worked together for several weeks – the dialogue eventually extending much longer. Sabrina Locks, a student at Bard Center for Curatorial Studies, did her summer internship with me while I was conceptualizing the archive endeavor. I had both Rasmus and Sabrina read through the paper trail of the first year of Group Material's activities, which includes meeting minutes, internal correspondence, mission statements,

press releases, press articles, and a motley selection of other material. I wanted to get their impressions of the data and find out how effectively it communicated to uninformed readers, see how they used a document collection, and gage their interest in particular facets of Group Material. Their responses helped me think through which aspects of the group's practice and production might be of particular interest to a younger generation of artists and curators. To stimulate our discussions we read key texts on history writing and archiving by Hayden White and Derrida. Sabrina and I met several times with Marvin Taylor to discuss the Downtown Collections' archiving philosophy and procedures and think through a fitting approach to the process ahead. Both Rasmus and Sabrina became primary intellectual partners throughout the making on the archive and the book.

Witnessing their interpretations, enthusiasm, misunderstandings, and puzzlement illuminated and delimited the capacity of the material to convey Group Material. Rasmus and Sabrina were each taken aback by the group's business-like meeting minutes from its initial year, which did not reconcile with Group Material's looser persona. What the archive does not tell is the group diligently documented its process in order to meet guidelines for New York State incorporation as a not-for-profit organization. Once incorporated, the minute taking stopped. As the group shrank from twelve to three members the group communicated in person and by phone, and the paper trail of internal dialogue dwindled. Another example: Sabrina and Rasmus were perplexed by two consecutive sets of minutes – one week listed ten group members, the following only six. Inexplicably the record made no note of the heated resignation of four members, accounting for the discrepancy. Sabrina and Rasmus's initial engagement with the material clarified that some qualifying narration was essential to portray Group Material with more dimension and accuracy than archival material with its holes and silences is capable of. Sabrina and Rasmus's initial engagement with the material clarified that some qualifying narration was essential to portray Group Material with more dimension and accuracy than archival material with its holes and silences is able to. This formative period of discussion and conceptualization produced an array of ideas for projects that might take place in the archive to help achieve this goal.

Proposed Subprojects

Context

A Group Material chronology will be developed as a project that extends GM's process and methods and forms. This chronology could accompany the archive as part of the finding aid and front matter providing contextual and historical information. It might also be for publication, possibly as a section of a larger book. The chronology could also be cohered as a website which links with other information, including individual documents, images, sites. The chronology may be composed by numerous people and will include objective and subjective information.

Configure, Reconfigure

Analyze and depict Group Material as bodies rather than as a body. Each time the constitution of the group changed, GM became another body, which expressed different goals and produced differentiated projects. This dimension, as well, as the fields of interconnections GM had with other individuals and social bodies over time could be traced through diagrams, lists, texts, and sociograms that depict and play with GM and its composition across time. The archive's organizational structure could perhaps itself be sectioned according to the group's various incarnations.

Narration

Conduct interviews and oral histories with members of Group Material. These could be uploaded into the front matter of the archive, could be part of a chronology / context website, as well as be used in publication formats. Extend the interviews to include people in various roles and relations vis-à-vis Group Material: artists who participated in exhibitions, collaborators, curators, institutional liaisons, art critics, art historians, funding agents, installation crew, guards who looked after the shows,

viewers, etc. Individuals' empirical narration and commentary on the subject would collectively portray the subject. This could be edited to form a section of a publication, as well as used in the finding aid and timeline, etc. This idea picks up on the *Chaos as Usual*[47] model – a book on Fassbinder consisting of interviews and statements from people who worked with him, which creates a kind of 360 perspective on his process. Fiction and journal as possible modes of telling; think about speaking voice in general (GM on GM) and in particular.

Documents

Annotate documents from various perspectives. Annotation can show various layers of processing and multiple perspectives. Annotation is text that doesn't go on the physical element. These texts can be put on collection, series, subseries, or folder level in the archive and its finding aid. Select documents to form a focused body for publication (i.e. GM's first year), perhaps as a section for a larger publication. During GM's first year, minutes of meetings were kept and lots of internal communiqués changed hands including loose notes on ideas for exhibitions and GM's mission, proposals for splitting the group (since it began splintering almost as soon as it started), and various position papers. There is also a good trail of how GM represented itself that year, and the reception to its projects.

Images

Make a sequence of images that show Group Material's development of exhibition as a medium through installation photography, which demonstrates how the group regarded the projects. In the earliest years pictures primarily focus of individual works rather than exhibitions overviews. As GM developed its purpose and form, this changes: exhibitions as visual forums are increasingly stressed. Such an image trail also demonstrates GM's increasing awareness of, and investment in, representation, its own history, and archiving. This sequence could be

used as a slide show, or in conjunction with an essay as part of a publication. Other visual sequences will be organized including a selection of images that have become iconic through repeated circulation, perhaps juxtaposed with "outtakes," and images that show the chronology of projects – to be used variously.

Reception
Chart the critical reception to Group Material's work over time – '80s, '90s, and beyond. A selection could be collated and potentially published to show what Group Material's practice and projects have meant during various cultural periods.

History
Collaboratively make a history project such as a publication, which might bring together in some fashion much of the above.

Methods and principles
Initiate inventive interpretations of key aspect(s) of GM's practice (as projects) in order to activate those methods / principles in the present tense.[48]

Also emerging from the initial brainstorming period was a set of points, issues, and questions that caption the entire investigation and articulation.

How is the threat of disappearance felt?
How does it manifest and propel the thinking behind the archive?
Archives deaden and enliven, expose and suppress; archive as endpoint and beginning, archive as set of paradoxes.

How does bringing documentation together imply shaping / making history?
How do artifacts – whether material or informational – communicate?

How to address the complexity of a period and the climate of conventions and perceptions that informed the making of a specific project?
Can contexts be in effect communicated?

How does the archive archive? How will this archive structure the content of GM?
How will it construct relationships to the present and future?
What limits to place on reproduction rights, exhibition use, and restagings?
Is the archive archiving a form? Is the gesture of archiving a formal gesture?
Where does the archive end? What defines its frame?
What are the criteria for inclusion and exclusion?
What tense is the archive?

What kind of continuity existed in GM externally? As a public persona? Internal continuity? How will these continuities cohabitate in the archive?
What purpose has making private processes, the group's collaboration for instance, public?

What is the import of GM working in "our" archive?
How does the subjective transform material to a public sphere without manipulating it?
What can the collective subjective do when given the chance to write its own history?
What archival structure and practices will animate and complicate without over determining meanings?

What is gained and lost in the process of subjecting ephemeral and peripheral activities to conservation? From inducting them into history?
How to make what is missing evident as a layer of historicising?
How to give voice / space to the fragments; gaps as essential to its historical memory?
What kind of suitable forms can be shaped to embody the historicising processes, gathered knowledge and diverse purpose that drive this inquiry?
Can one effectively challenge history writing while writing history?

Archiving Group Material using a hands-on activist manner was to involve deliberately configuring material for transfer to a public entity in conjunction with generating discourse and contextualization in the process. In this situation, archiving was considered to entail initiating investigations and catalyzing historiography along newly perceptible directions that would emerge while reviewing the amassed documentation, and reconsidering the acts and histories at stake.

Armature and body

In anticipation of cohering the archive archiving issues apparently stimulated a dream one night. My mother, grandmother, and I were poking around my great aunt's house. The old farmhouse had been renovated but my vague memories of how it once was lingered behind the superimposition. As if I were a little girl I stood on a chair and opened the kitchen cupboard. Aunt Jo's dishes and cans and boxes of food were intact inside. I was very excited that this one pocket revealing her lived experience and way of arranging things still existed in the midst of the once familiar environment in which all other material traces had been erased and exclaimed, "we have to protect this, this is special, these are Aunt Jo's things just like she used and kept them."

I first learned about "original provenance" in discussion with Marvin Taylor. Original provenance refers to the organizational configuration of things as they were saved, which is then applied in the archive. (I recently had another moving experience of how things are saved, this one while awake, when I visited my Aunt Dot's house several months after she died. I drifted aimlessly, opening closets and cupboards, looking for indications of her presence. Upstairs in her bedroom, I opened one of the bureau drawers and discovered it was filled with brightly colored bows and ribbons waiting to be reused. An optimistic collection. Aunt Dot. Instantly I recalled her gleeful salvaging and a lifetime of Christmas and birthday celebrations.) How things are saved: Taylor encourages maintaining such formative features when transferring collections to the library because an individual or group's procedures, priorities, and principles are revealed through its

organizational systems. Group Material's material traces had been dispersed since 1983 when the collaborative decided it would no longer maintain an exhibition space or headquarters and instead function nomadically, working from members' homes and aided by the temporary infrastructural support of art institutions that invited GM to make projects. The prospective collection was actually a commixture of several individuals' saving habits and classification systems stimulated by idiosyncratic, conceptual, and practical factors. The resulting amalgamation of methods is emblematic of the collaboration. This somewhat unruly composite structure was worth preserving to a certain degree, as opposed to rearranging, as some repositories might, according to an archiving system organized by material type (for example, uniting all correspondence, press releases, etc. chronologically). However, in keeping with the logic of original provenance the group's archive would remain sectioned according to individual members' collections, and categorized as such, for example, Julie Ault Papers, Doug Ashford Papers, Marybeth Nelson Papers, which seemed antithetical to how Group Material was conceived, regardless of the separate paper trails. This would have in effect degrouped the group. Conversely, I sought to regroup material into a larger framework – The Group Material Archive – in lieu of distinguishing individuals' savings. Within that, the logic of original provenance and adhering to significant saving methods such as the random mixing of source material where advertisements, newspaper clippings, theoretical essays, popular cultural artifacts, and brochures combined without designation, order, or hierarchy, was preserved. These situations attest to the consequence of negotiating each aspect of archiving in relation to the specificity of Group Material as opposed to completely relinquishing influence over archiving methods as Gran Fury had done.

According to renowned archivist Thomas Staley, "Ten per cent of an archive represents ninety per cent of its value."[49] Decentralized, members kept their own paper trails or not. Some of what was saved is of ambiguous value and much that should have been kept was not. Things got lost and thrown out early on because as barely solvent young New Yorkers we had space constraints and moved frequently. Other things got lost or discarded due to carelessness and lack of historical consciousness. (I regret to say that due to the constraints of my apartment I dumped whole files and boxed of material more

than once, thinking "we've finished these projects and don't need to keep all this paper anymore.") The material I'd stored for years included what I had saved as well as that given to me by former members Tim Rollins and Mundy McLaughlin upon their departure, and whatever was in Felix Gonzalez-Torres's files when he died. Doug Ashford kept a lot of material stored at his house as well as his ongoing notes tracing projects as they developed, which were integrated into the archive. It was important to solicit all former members for documents, notes, and images in order to make the most coherent multifaceted and multivoiced archive possible. Building the archive is ongoing; some individuals' papers have been folded in and some are forthcoming.[50]

The material traces of Group Material finally came out of their boxes, closets, and crannies of dormancy to temporarily inhabit a space at the Fales Library in fall 2008. The situation was an "archiving laboratory" in which the conceptual and practical activities and procedures involved in organizing and preparing Group Material's archive for permanent residency in the Downtown Collection were actively integrated. While formalizing the archive sought to make Group Material newly public, the process was also conceived as a laboratory in which to investigate the logic, structure, implications, and practice of the archive. This processing and research site produced a fertile ground for generating new contributions to the archive. The HBO detective series "The Wire," which posits evidence rooms and bulletin boards as active contingent sites for discerning narratives, patterns, and contexts around the cases the detectives are working on, inspired the archiving laboratory.[51] We thought of ourselves as detectives "solving the cold case" of Group Material.

I spent several months processing the material in its soon-to-be permanent home: handling, reading, and looking at every paper, image, and item; taking note, cross-referencing, recollecting, and reflecting. After just a few days of reading the early papers as well as encountering information long blotted from memory, I was shocked to discover I had unwittingly been telling a fair number of inaccuracies – lies even, while imparting stories about Group Material these past years. I read further and the divide between recollection and fact expanded. Certain retrieved information was basic while some

signaled that Group Material was much more complex and debatable than I had meanwhile fabricated and perpetuated. The more I reviewed the more deeply I understood the malleable and fallible nature of memory, and memory repeatedly threw documentary fact into question. Alternatively edified and mystified, the experience demonstrated the utter insecurity of the categories subjective and objective.

I cannot say I have had no inkling of the essentially loose relationships between memory, history, and accuracy. After all, how could activities spanning seventeen years with a total of twenty core participants across that period be portrayed all-inclusively in memory, in conversation, or with a typical presentational format? When invited to art institutions to provide an overview of Group Material for instance, I usually sought to convey a sense of the collaborative's origins, structure, contexts, process, changing composition, chronology, aims, agendas, aesthetics, and use of forms, as well as present numerous exemplary projects and discuss their reception, even though fitting all this into a sixty-minute show-and-tell scheme was unwieldy and reckless. I was uneasy with expediency and habitual representation and sometimes was disinclined to speak about Group Material whatsoever, but felt accountable since there was no comprehensive published source to direct people to.

Determining the criteria of what would be included in the archive – delimiting what is Group Material and what is not, is more complicated than it initially appeared. For instance I had several large files filled with articles, advertisements, brochures, flyers, bumper stickers, etc. that are indicative of popular and subcultural activities of the 1980s and early 1990s. I culled from this resource pool for research and teaching during the period and Group Material derived elements from it for exhibitions and publications. It is impossible to say what was clipped or preserved for general interest and what was saved with Group Material in mind. Artifacts gathered by other members may also be included therein. Furthermore, Group Material's shared interests and perspectives essentially informed my thinking and looking during that time. While only some items can be traced to the group's projects, it seemed to me that the whole lot should be part of the archive as it speaks to its contexts. How would other members feel about parallel files in their

cabinets? Is this too much information to make accessible? Would it make more sense to specify only ephemeral items exhibited or published in the official production of the group be included? Should shared references that informed Group Material's internal processes and underpinned its production be omitted from or contained in the archive? (Taylor agreed that general source materials are additive and they are part of the archive.)

Questions of privacy and publicity and inside and outside also arose. Is there information that should be withheld to respect the private machinations of group interaction? What are the ethics of exposure, of history? Should personal reflections on Group Material from our notebooks or sketchbooks be put into the archive? Are some things too personal to expose? Unwilling to discard or hide anything due to its personal nature, I decided if had been saved then it goes in the archive, regardless of embarrassment. The overarching goal is to make Group Material transparent as is possible to people beyond our lifetimes.

The ethics of exposure came to the foreground for me while researching for making the book on Felix Gonzalez-Torres. In the late 1980s, Gonzalez-Torres, who lived in New York, frequently corresponded by letter with his boyfriend Ross Laycock, who lived in Toronto. Ross died early in 1991 and Felix retrieved the letters he had sent him, joining them with the ones he had received. In 1991 Felix photographed fragments of some of Ross's letters up close, which he formatted as framed photographs and photographic puzzles. Marieluise Hessel, an art collector and the major benefactor of the Bard Center for Curatorial Studies, acquired several of Gonzalez-Torres's works including one or more of these photographs. Evidently she and the artist had a conversation about the actual letters and she asked him to consider the Curatorial Center's Library become their permanent home. As far as I know nothing contractual ensued between them, but the artist is said to have agreed in principle. Some years after Felix died, Andrea Rosen, who represents his work, sought to follow up on Hessel's and Felix's agreement. (Unwilling initially to give up the original love letters, she had a set of archival copies made for the purpose.) I read the complete correspondence in search of insight into Felix's thinking and work. The letters held promise on that score, particularly as Felix was often quoted to claim his Ross was his public, the person he made his work for. Having been friends with

Ross and had a close friendship with Felix I felt all the more entitled to read the letters, and all the more embarrassed once I did. From my perspective, with the exception of one letter that contains a drawing of two clocks and refers to his work *"Untitled (Perfect Lovers),"* 1991, very little if any of their contents provide information into Felix's practice or work or adds to its understanding beyond what is accessible in his works themselves or writings about them. Neither Felix or Ross could have guessed at the start of their relationship that the letters would be read by others; they are very personal and clearly written with privacy in mind. After reading the private correspondence I advised Andrea to reconsider and perhaps not make them accessible in the context of the curatorial center's library, where they would sit separated from his other correspondence and papers stripped of their context. However, she wanted to honor what she believed to be his wish and proceeded as planned.

Do I have an ethical double standard here? For I published the beautiful letter Felix sent Ross with the side-by-side clocks drawn on it along with a selection of letters he had written to Andrea Rosen, and others in which he spoke about his work in the book I edited. Including them there was additive as they represented another aspect of Felix's voice in relation to his work, interviews, and writings, and, through his words stressed the importance of his dialogues with Ross and Andrea. Perhaps a future researcher will ascertain some work related significance I did not in the letters now available at Bard. I have no right to close that door out of protectiveness. The situation generated questions I have since grappled with abstractly. Are some things too personal to expose? Who makes the judgment? What are the ethics of destroying private material? What and who is being protected in their withholding? Will such privacy matter twenty years from now, fifty, a hundred?

Recalling an exchange with his brother at his mother's funeral, in *Nothing to be Frightened of*, 2008, Julian Barnes wrestles with related issues. Who can speak for the dead? What validity do claims made on behalf of the deceased have? Barnes narrates his disappointment over his niece arriving at the funeral in a car other than his mother's car, which she ostensibly gave her granddaughter after having a stroke. "'I think Ma would

have wanted C. to come in her car.' . . . [My brother] pointed out that there are some wants of the dead, i.e. things which people now dead once wanted; and there are hypothetical wants, i.e. things which people would or might have wanted. 'What mother would have wanted' was a combination of the two: a hypothetical want of the dead, and therefore doubly questionable. 'We can only do what we want,' he explained; to indulge the maternal hypothetical was as irrational as if he were now to pay attention to his own past desires."[52] Barnes' brother's logic echoes my thinking in relation to Felix's wishes when he was alive that Andrea Rosen feels committed to enforcing, despite that no one can say if he would want that still, were he making decisions in shifted contexts with different bearings.

While I wanted to limit the reading of Felix and Ross's correspondence, Andrea, who oversees Gonzalez-Torres's estate, was countering my desire to publish snapshots of Felix in my book because his policy had been to reject requests for his image; preferring pictures of his work circulate. I wanted to print casual pictures of Felix with his family and with Ross in a chronology in the book. Andrea was understandably resistant but after much impassioned discussion we agreed on publishing some of what I'd selected, as long as they were small – less than a quarter page. Her commitment to Felix and what she perceives as his desires are laudable. She, like any estate executor, is charged with the formidable responsibility of balancing competing agendas of privacy and publicity, of what the deceased wanted and what makes sense in the present, of then, now, and the future.

An idea comes to mind thinking about Group Material's archive, whether information and documentation (or facsimiles) from individuals and institutions Group Material worked with should also be sought out and integrated into its archive. Wouldn't potential understandings of Group Material be meaningfully elaborated by such inclusivity, despite that active pursuit to fill out a collection is generally frowned upon as a threat to the "fair play" of the "as is" archive and its authenticity. Taylor is against actively filling out the archive and prefers to collect overlapping collections, so I left it at that, also as it would require time and financial resources to do otherwise.

What about material that played an informal role in our practice? For example the exhibition *The Castle*, 1987, included a soundtrack of "easy listening" versions of revolutionary songs that is part of the archive. But what about two other then-current cassettes – Public Enemy's "It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back," and the Beastie Boys' "Licensed to Ill" – which we listened to incessantly during the month of preparations and installation of that project while in Germany? I have no doubt they affected our attitudes and subtly influenced the installation. Should they be in the archive? Would their inclusion require annotation, which may result in information overload? Does that matter? What is too much detail, too much information?

I realized one could spiral out of control making more and more connections to information and items that would texture and deepen understandings of Group Material, and essentially end up "turning over the iceberg."[53] But to a point, these speculations are warranted. What defines the archive's parameter? The archive can be contracted or expanded depending on how these questions are engaged.

Another notable factor determining the very substance of the archive is that some Group Material members are intensely invested, some are detached, and others are dead and uninvolved in its history. Such disparity proliferates from the archive. Some members took notes and saved them, others did not. The majority of the archive was formed from what I had in my apartment and Doug had at his house. Doug had an eye to personal archiving and habitually kept his own notebooks, which are now archived. No one else saved his or her notes or notebooks. However lamentable, the asymmetry of individual reflection in the archive is reality.

Delimiting Use

The transfer to the Downtown Collection necessitated imagining future use. Exemplary scenarios need to be conjured including those beyond our lifespan. Our general approach is free access, for whatever purpose desired, including reproduction rights. However, the thorny question of reconstruction requires further conceptual negotiation. The nature of Group Material's temporal and context-specific work places limits on remaking art (installations, projects) from the archive, but directives and restrictions nonetheless need to be articulated.

In recent years several curators have asked us if Group Material exhibitions and projects could be reconstructed. If material ingredients of an exhibition were to be gathered from the archive and other sources, and installed according to photographic documentation of the original manifestation, the result would be a cross between artwork and artifact. There is no replacement for the actual experience of an exhibition, which makes a good argument for the research value of re-creation. However, one has to take into account what is missing. Group Material's exhibitions spoke from and to particular contexts during specific times. Aesthetic practice and social practice merged in the projects, which usually involved layers of collaboration in and beyond the group. The social processes involved in creating a project, which were part of the work, would be absent from any reconstruction. Contexts cannot be replicated. It is impossible to reproduce the climate of circumstance and perception and understanding for events.[54] For the time being the Downtown Collection has been prohibited from loaning material for reconstruction purposes, but certainly this issue needs to be redressed periodically.



Group Material boxes in the Lewis Carroll room at the Fales Library, NYU, 2008



Sabrina Locks and Julie Ault in the Group Material archiving lab, 2008

Analog Meets Digital

Whether or not archiving institutions digitize their paper holdings and make them accessible for online use is an issue of much recent debate. “We are always on the threshold between the past and the future, but we are also currently in the midst of an extended transition between the paper and the digital eras,” stated Richard Pearce-Moses in his Presidential Address at the Society of American Archivists Annual Meeting in 2006.[55] Harnessing technology to generate digital libraries, potentially for universal access, is at the core of the digital revolution in archiving. Availability of information for as many as possible for as little cost as possible to the individual (financial, time, or otherwise) seems desirable. But it is worth examining the prospective advances and losses involved in translating paper archives to digital files in tandem with instant availability via the Internet.

The positives are obvious: unconstrained access is convenient and, more significantly, it appears to be democratic. Geographic distances are overcome as information is widely and indiscriminately circulated to remote users. The ability to access archives in a digital environment attracts non-traditional users who are unlikely to visit an archive. Additionally, the aura and authority of the archive as the institutional foundation of legitimate record dematerializes. Allegiance to analog and ink-on-paper appears to uphold the culture of the archive as a distinct place, preserving heritage, atmosphere, authority, and exclusivity. Digital archiving assumes the progressive role and the naysayers of unrestrained electronic distribution are largely considered conservative luddites.[56]

But before accepting the digital archiving revolution, it is advisable to imagine the consequences of this fairly new option. The “placelessness” of the web eclipses the experience of the archive as physical context. Papers are made immaterial in their converted electronic state. In this setup, documents and artifacts are flattened, the nuance of materiality is leveled, and texture is forfeited. Paradoxically, as historical material becomes nearer to its user the electronic delivery platform also produces disconnection

between researcher and document. The vital experience of conducting hands-on research in the archive potentially disappears, as does access to tangible detail and impression which looking and touching entails.

Another factor is the formidable expense of technology and labor involved. Librarian Brewster Kahle makes a case for "universal access to everything," which is also the motto of the organization he founded in 1996, Internet Archive, and puts forward cost guesstimates for digitizing all the books in the Library of Congress, as well as loose documents, audio recordings, and video and film annals.[57] The extensive investment of time and money that is required to generate electronic archives from existing material collections in a sense preselects institutions, the well-endowed Getty Trust for example, as pioneers of the so-called democratization of the archive. But the pioneer spirit fueling digital archiving operates in both not-for-profit and commercial entities (such as Internet Archive and Google Books). The excessive expense organizations assume to digitize in turn relieves individuals of the costs associated with research travel and time dedication, which in principle opens up the possibility of delving into all kinds of exploration that was previously out of reach for many. Most public institutions are intent on electronic storage and access and clearly the future of archiving pre-digital age documents, images, and artifacts will combine analog and digital preservation.

In her stock-taking essay about studies done on information seeking behavior in the digital environment Krystyna K. Matusiak notes:

> Digital libraries are complex systems that serve a diverse audience, involve multiple cognitive tasks, and often pose usability problems.[9] Many researchers comment on disoriented user behavior and feelings of uncertainty and confusion in the process of searching for documents in digital libraries.[10] . . . Disorientation occurs because of the overloading of short-term memory and user's difficulty in forming a mental model of the information space.[58]

On the positive end, because digital archiving is a field in formation, the tendencies, problems, and preferences of user behavior are being studied and the conclusions taken into account by information designers and web developers. For example how do people seek and retrieve information? What mental models guide users' methods? What are the affectivities of keyword searching compared to browsing? How can points of access be provided for navigating complex unfamiliar systems? Pearce-Moses cites Beth Yakel and Polly Reynold's work on transforming finding aids interactively so that users comments, questions, and discussions can be integrated into finding aids that were formerly the domain of archivists. They are also developing responsive finding aids that recommend "relevant content based on searches," which is already standardly used by Amazon.com and other commercial sites.[59] The electronic archive environment is bound to research and development for the forecastable future, which results in users influencing the digital archive design and possibly even client-authored modes.

The discussion here focuses on electronic formatting of analog collections and does not get into the emergent issues around the dominance of digital means that have rapidly replaced earlier communication media – a condition which necessitates archiving take on entirely different methods of storage, preservation, and use. "Born-digital" information and interactive user-sharing sites such as Flickr create the possibility for continual archiving and ongoing instant documentation. Uploading personal stuff that friends can interface for instance (Flickr, Facebook) is a communication form but is not necessarily forever. The longevity of such data is uncertain. Paths and trends of correlated data management are just now taking shape and whether or not pools of accumulated data will be maintained as lasting archives is unknown.

The general reasons for archiving probably won't change, but the means have and will continue to. Technology and form are also content, which will exert unforeseeable affects on archiving and researching methods. No doubt as more and more information becomes available public expectation for access will expand and make new demands. The problems of rapidly changing technology will require massive amounts of data transfer and rounds of updating to new storage and delivery media, another costly commitment.

Kahle poses fundamental questions to the larger community, "Will access be open or proprietary? Will it all go under digital rights management, or are we going to help push some of these systems to be more open to fulfill the democratic ideals that are baked into our profession? Will the future of libraries and archives be public or private?"[60]

As digital multiplies we have to wonder what will become of paper archives. In a recent essay D. T. Max recalls, "I once asked [Thomas] Staley [director of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at University of Texas at Austin] what role he saw the Center fulfilling fifty years from now, with its boxes of yellowing rough drafts typed out on manual typewriters and piles of letters written with fountain pens by candlelight. 'There will be these bastions, whether the ruins of Athens or these archives, and they will be all the more valuable, he said."[61]

The tempo of archive use has traditionally been determined by cycles of requesting and reviewing material and consulting archivists and finding aids to ascertain what's available and what's next. "Archives are like books without indexes: you know in a general way if you're interested in the subject, but there is no shortcut to finding out if what you're really looking for is in there. . . . The finding aid is an overview of what an archive contains – drafts, letters, newspaper clippings, foreign contracts – but it does not detail what each item says, who is mentioned in it, or why it matters. Usually, the only person to have read the entirety of an archive is the author, and the authority on its contents is the scholar who has studied it the most."[62] When working with actual material where one is dependent on the call and response with librarians, research routes are customized at a careful pace and researchers tend to inspect reasonably cohesive bodies of material. Electronic access profoundly influences the pace of research. Internet speed permits, and to some degree encourages a more restless and scattershot approach to recovering and discovering, resulting in irregular and labyrinthine paths of investigation.

The web model of data organization and its instantaneity liberates information from traditional frameworks. It also appears to short-circuit thought processes and instigate reorganization and disorganization. Neuroscientists are finding that electronic abundance,

excessive net interaction, and Internet use in general are capable of rewiring our brains and producing fractured thinking and lack of focus.[63] I do not mean to suggest either orderliness or disorder is inherently beneficial to a general notion of historical research, nor do I want to generalize methods of knowledge gathering. These observations are intended to raise questions about some key differences between these forms of archive and the research methods they inspire.

Instant universal access to seemingly everything. Microsoft's 1994 ad campaign "Where do you want to go today?" promptly comes to mind. The researcher's information pursuit is a different game altogether from the scholarly hunt of former times; continually stimulated by cross-linking possibilities built into web and internet formats, the vastly increased volume of "finds" outpaces anything imaginable in the analog archive. Variety of sources is key; one can go from here to there to anywhere, which is simply not possible in a physical archive. The potential for incidentally cross-connecting information across traditional topic, subject, and disciplinary boundaries during a standard information seeking session on the Internet seems newly productive. Start any search of an event, person, or topic on Google and within thirty minutes you will have traversed a considerable array of material from wildly divergent sources that no doubt led you to unexpected places and unintentional cross-connections. Or you can visit the New York Public Library digital gallery and view, for instance, the entire catalog of Gran Fury's graphic interventions and installations within minutes. Perhaps not so much is lost in digital versions of texts, but the physical character of the AIDS activist graphics is dramatically reduced to uniform screen-size likenesses, which, though technically comprehensive, are nonetheless deficient. Once seen, a visit to the archive to view the material in person becomes less imperative, and may even seem superfluous. The explosion of information and open access is paradoxical; it excites and engulfs, and channels and destabilizes simultaneously.

This crucial discussion factored into identifying an appropriate archive for Group Material. At first glance digital access seems congruent with Group Material's populist orientation. However I was already veering toward NYU's Downtown Collection. Taylor

has not sought to digitize and has no plans yet to do so, in part because he believes in the consequence of researchers' experiences consulting and handling actual material in the archive. All things considered the benefits of the Downtown Collection outweighed the possible advantages of digitalization and the threat of empirical education in the archive being bypassed in lieu of instant availability helped settle the decision. That said, as digital continues grow, it seems likely that the Downtown Collection will eventually digitize a substantial part of their holdings in order to go with the flow of archiving trends, but there is no rush.

Archive Authority

Carolyn Steedman asserts, "The historian's massive authority as a writer derives from two factors: the ways archives *are*, and the conventional rhetoric of history-writing, which always asserts . . . that you *know* because you have been there. There is a story put about that the authority comes from the documents themselves, and the historian's obeisance to the limits they impose on any account that employs them. But really, it comes from *having been there* (the train to the distant city, the call number, the bundle opened, the dust . . .)," from having scrutinized actual documents, made connections between them, and passed judgments on their relevance as puzzle pieces in the history being shaped.[64] Authority is awarded to she who makes the effort and invests the time in persistent pursuit of her subject, even sacrificing along the way. The credible historian proves her worth by overcoming whatever obstacles may ensue including vast amounts of labor, personal investment, blockades to information, misinformation, profound contradictions, and the riddles imbedded in the silences and gaps in the archive.

The ceremonial character of entering and deciphering the archive abruptly vanishes as archives are digitized and at every turn made available online. But does it stand to reason that the "historian's massive authority" simply gets dispersed equitably in one fell swoop as formality gives way to informality and analog yields to digital? Over time, such technological innovation is bound to transform the future of historical representation. To

what degree is the authority of the electronic archive undermined by the state of placelessness, eventually rendering it less influential and diminishing the role of the historian and status of history writing in the process. Does the archive sustain its import when anyone can use it? What deems historical representation credible when anyone can write it? If historical representation is always in part concerned with broadcast, control, and galvanizing the present in which its investigation and methods occur, does it potentially become obsolete when the archive is constant, omnipresent, and open to any and all participation?

Steedman's claims that, "The Archive then is something that, through the cultural activity of History, can become Memory's potential space, one of the few realms of the modern imagination where a hard-won and carefully constructed place, can return to boundless, limitless space, and we might be released from the house arrest that Derrida suggested was its condition." Although Steedman does not necessarily envision the obsolescence of the archive, this theoretical reality of history (memory) unbound is echoed by Pearce-Moses fantasy that "In the best-case scenario [of the future], no one ever asks, "What is an archivist?" because we are an integral part of people's lives. Records are more than a commodity. Archives are more than a place. Records are reliable, authentic memory ever present in people's lives. Archives are the focus of a dynamic community. . . .[65]

The archive is not history but history writing and representation emerge from there, the archive is a site of production based on a controlled pool of sources. Steedman states "The Archive is made from selected and consciously chosen documentation from the past and also from the mental fragmentations that no one intended to preserve and just ended up there . . ."[66] Not everything is preserved. In the electronic environment where utterances, images, and events proliferate randomly and indefinitely will we find that the entire notion of history writing is eventually rendered irrelevant and redundant? Will historical representation and history writing per se – the mediation of annals and memory, the making and interpretation of meaning from the archive using the medium of language be necessary if the archive is opened in such a way that anyone and everyone can

contribute to it, access it, and construe it at anytime or all the time? (Another complex of questions might begin, what happens to individual and collective memory in this shift?)

Another dream triggered by archiving anxiety: I was in the company of a distraught woman who had inherited an artist's estate and was holding a press conference about the artist's death. There was the sense that she was beset so after it ended I stuck around to help field calls and visits. The estate, which she was to represent, included a lot of photographs. A doctor came calling to offer his services. She wouldn't see him but I spoke with him. He was very nice and claimed that because he was a bona-fide doctor; he could help "read" the photographs accurately. I believed him and recommended the woman contact him when I passed on his card to her.[67] Following Freud's assertion that all dreams are expressions of wish fulfillment, my simplified interpretation is that I would like an expert to come to the door and take on the responsibility of archiving and interpreting Group Material. Relationships to authorizing and authority are tremendously complex and harbor untold latent dimension. The dream tapped into my lingering childish desire to have things determined and conclusive. Yet this couples with awareness of the futility of such hope as well as critical consciousness about power structures and the social relations that expert authority embodies.

Though avidly consumed and to some degree venerated, when history is at stake, narration from the horse's mouth so to speak is regarded as problematically subjective and quasi-legitimate. The written record (imprint) is generally privileged as trustworthy authority. Of course neither archives, written or spoken histories are unbiased. Various authorial modes embody specific expressions of authority. Memories and histories intertwine and actively condition and contextualize any event, throwing contradictions into relief and potentially rendering resolution absurd. Derrida highlighted this counterbalance:

> In spite of resorting to what he holds to be a model of auxiliary representation, he [Freud] invariably maintains a primacy of live memory and of anamnesis in their originary temporalization. From which we have

> the archaeological outbidding by which psychoanalysis, in its archive fever, always attempts to return to the live origin of that which the archive loses while keeping it in a multiplicity of places. As we have noted all along, there is an incessant tension here between the archive and archaeology.[68]

With all this in mind, it became clear that Group Material should not be reduced to memory or record, but can most constructively be articulated and elaborated by the dynamics between multiple bodies of information, between multiple ways of telling and knowing.

From Archive to Book, Impression to Imprint

> Books, as repositories and containers of record and histories are a literally conservative medium.
>
> —J. Abbott Miller

Three years after disbanding, an art historian who I profoundly respect and is also a close friend of mine as well as Doug's, proposed writing a book on Group Material. This occasioned the opportunity to think through the scenarios of an art historian making the first book on Group Material in contrast to us doing one. I can think of no finer scholar or author, but it was nonetheless clear that our collaboration – mine in particular since I had been in the group from start to finish and informally held the role of archivist, would entail a great deal of work, commitment, and trust. The timing was not good for me personally as I was involved in advancing a solo practice and beginning to collaborate with Beck as well. It also struck me as too soon for a book. Primarily though I thought we should reserve the right to cohere our history in the way we saw fit at some later point. I feared this art historian's authority would define Group Material's work according to her perspective and interests, which she said entailed emphasizing the aesthetic dimension of the practice. As a newly tenured art history professor in a prominent university she was

under pressure to publish, searching for the right subject. This dictated the academic mode and publishing context for the potential volume. I was disinclined to partner on Group Material's first book with these added pressures of external career and institutional agendas in the mix. Ultimately we rejected the prospect. Other less formulated invitations came about in the ensuing years although none as compelling as the earliest. All were discouraged and we continued the course of adhoc representation.

The prospect of former members making a book was an open question that had surfaced intermittently since Group Material's conclusion. I was abstractedly committed to making a book at some time, but didn't know when that would be and was waiting for the right time personally, professionally, and culturally. During the process of researching and conceptualizing the archive it had become clear that a book would be an ideal form to contain and distribute many of the subprojects that were under consideration. A website could have functioned similarly but I have no experience with that and was told it would be extremely costly. Books are for the record and still carry more authority than websites. They last and can be reprinted. My experiences with previous publications that introduced unhistoricized subjects (the alternative art movement, Sister Corita) made obvious the power of publication to affect discourse and recent art history.

What Kind of Book? By Who? With Who?

Because collaboration with a publisher impacts every aspect of a book, it is important to weigh the options and match project with publisher well. What type of publisher was suited for this title – academic, art house, trade, independent? What interests define a particular publisher? What books would ours be alongside? What is the scope of their editorial and financial resources? It would take money to make a high quality book; full color was imperative given Group Material's consistent use of bold color. What is the publisher's distributional scope? Far-reaching and focused distribution is desirable, as is broad access via Amazon. Who has editorial control? Editorial control in the hands of the editor(s) was a must for this project. One obvious choice would have been an academic

press with a solid publishing context, editorial resources, and good distribution. However control *always* rests with academic publishers and I did not want to face a frustrating process of competing agendas and uneasy compromises. Equally important, most university presses are suffering financially and have been for years, so they are not keen on expensive-to-produce books. Cultural publishing burgeoned in the 1990s but as most publishers downsized in the last decade they have not been taking risks and are producing books formulaically, in part, because it's cheaper than addressing the form, structure, content production, and design of each title anew. Furthermore, university presses – even those devoted to visual art – do not normally privilege the visual dimension of their books beyond a marketable arresting cover. My experience partnering with University of Minnesota Press on *Alternative Art New York: 1965–1985* is typical. No matter how I tried to change the terms of the book's visual and material production – even supplying subsidy to hire a designer and upgrade paper, the press resisted. I did not want to confront a similar situation for a subject I was so closely affiliated with. I decided that despite their relatively brief track record the London-based Four Corners Books was the ideal partner. Having experienced their capability on the Corita book, I felt confident that we could work well together editorially, creatively, and materially, and we already had a climate of trust from our previous collaboration. Four Corners' principles, Elinor and Richard were immediately enthusiastic and we agreed to work together again.

It was clear by then that a self-historicizing endeavor would ensue. But what would have been so problematic if an art historian, an outsider to the group, would have written the first Group Material history? Essentially, authorizing an historian to write Group Material's initial history would by definition produce a grand narrator, and establish a primary interpretation of the work. Most likely any art historian taking on the subject would be influenced by academic convention and be obliged to situate Group Material's work in an art historical genealogy, thus entering the group into dialogues with canons or counter-canons. Academically rooted art historians are required to make a mark by staking out new territory and a particular position. Any art historian who would take on such an ambitious project would do so in part because there was no book on Group Material and it would be a worthwhile and alluring subject from both an intellectual and a

professional perspective. Although it wouldn't necessarily prevent Group Material from producing a book, once a subject is addressed and material used, it becomes more difficult to get a publisher and usually a monograph eclipses other monographs from being made for at least several years. Art historians are required to publish and to do so in academic publications, where editorial control lies with the publisher. It is a rare for an author to have editorial control. So what happens when conflicts over method and meaning occur in the production of a manuscript? My past experiences and others' I'm privy to reveal that the publisher has the upper hand and more often than not compromise gets skewed toward the publisher's perspective, which naturally embodies marketing and institutional agendas. This is neither good nor bad by definition, but was worth taking into account in this case. On the other hand, an outside researcher would bring a fresh view to the subject, with the advantage of having relative objectivity in shaping a perspective. A respected author would also expand Group Material's reach through his or her own audience. Certainly an academic press would likewise expand the public for Group Material. Biases notwithstanding, in relation to Group Material it seemed to be realistic about the kind of historicizing treatment the group's work had so far attracted and was likely to, and the institutional and publishing limitations an author would face.

The practice of art history is of course much more diverse than my prejudice portrays. There exists a vast range of art historian from cheerleaders to hyper-commentators in search of critical truth; from those who exclusively engage the written record to gather information and subject it to a specific manner of description and accepted modes of cross-connection and interpretation to more idiosyncratic undertakings and innovative methods and forms. Art history results from any number of subjective and public motivations. (Confession: I feel unduly annoyed reading art history and criticism that focuses on situating an artist's work in a lineage of reputed artists, which is not to say a social context. Or by the aroma of boosterism. Or the kind of (mostly American) art history writing institutional curators are prone to that states in the first paragraph, "Clearly so-and-so is one of the most important artists of the twentieth century." Or the kind in which the ambition and authority of the author overshadows the subject. Or that which relies on fanciful stretches, say to link an artist's practice to an historian's

fascination with Buddhism. These are subjective prejudices and I can certainly think of examples of the last two varieties that I give exception to [Dave Hickey, Dick Hebdige]. On the other hand I feel illuminated by art history that creates multiple points of entry to its subject and fashions a dimensional consideration. Or that which contextualizes and questions. Or that which digs deep to excavate the conditions of the work and its contexts. Or that which privileges the perspective of social process. Or that which reveals it's subjective stake in the matter. Genet's brilliantly reflective piece on Giacometti being a case in point.[69] Or the kind of art history that is unafraid to problematize its own authority. Caveat: a lot of artists love to complain about the dearth of solid art criticism, the absence of *serious* historians who are up to the job. The job being to write about their (our) work. All to be taken with a grain of salt.)

The book I envisioned would expect readers to interpret Group Material for themselves in the spirit of the group's exhibition practice, while a single-authored declarative would short-circuit that process to some degree. A documentary primer by members of Group Material does not close down the possibility for future titles by historians. In fact, the book that subsequently came about, *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material* makes future scholarship more likely.

Two exemplary models of self-historicizing heavily influenced my thoughts on how to approach a volume on Group Material. Using different narrative methods both *Eames design. The Work of the Office of Charles and Ray Eames*[70] and *Michael Asher, Writings 1973 – 1983 on Works 1969–1979* present a completist compendia of work without interpretation.[71] The Eames office book comes close to being a catalogue raisonné but the Asher volume does not really fit the category; it is survey that exhibits Asher's editorial hand by use of an outwardly objective mode, which clearly extends from Asher's materialist practice. Both books are structured by chronology: the Eames' complex production from 1941–1984 (designed objects, furniture, slide shows, films, exhibitions, lecture series projects, and graphic campaigns) and Asher's sequential organization of a decade of works. Pictorial history figures in largely in each.

Eames design is organized by year. A list of the then-current staff and notations of temporal professional activities including lectures, events, and publications appears in a running band at the top of each page. Additionally the strip contains reproductions of the occasional announcement card and many private snapshots – some of which show the Eameses in playful mode. The rest of each spread (about four fifths of very page) is filled with a project description and related pictorial material – photographs, drawings, plans, and documents. Photography is not perfunctory but approached creatively here privileging dynamic images of products and projects, many of which show usage. Images of process also proliferate. There are differently sized images and scale shifts within and across images further accentuating the lively visual attitude of the Eameses' design. Grids of images, for instance, film stills, occur intermittently. A great deal of information is packed into each layout; the book resembles the Eameses' information dense exhibitions, for example, *Timeline: "Men of Mathematics,"* 1966. The book effectively balances density with a clear methodical system and page design.

Eames design is a comprehensive trek through the history of the office. The team of three author-editors, which includes Ray Eames, have evidently mined the office archive thoroughly for visual material and data as well as anecdotal information in the descriptions, which often highlight procedural moments that otherwise leave no trace. The descriptive mode is past tense and simple. Consider one example from 1945.

> Experimental Chairs
> As orders for war-related plywood products declined in anticipation of war's end, the Molded Plywood Division applied the knowledge and expertise gained from working on the war projects to chairs and other furniture with renewed intensity. The long period of experimentation and germination, supported by the company's wartime work, culminated in a number of prototypes that could be adapted to assembly-line production. Concepts were worked up into full-scale models in both wood and metal in order to resolve technical and aesthetic problems. Several two-part prototypes were built with compound curves in the seats and back sections.

> Many types of leg solutions were tied in model form and in full size, including three-legged and four-legged wood and metal versions, T-sections, and rockers. The chair legs incorporated an axial movement with a back-to-front tilt.
>
> One of the most difficult obstacles to surmount was that of connecting material to material to join one part of a chair to another. Although the use of flexible rubber disks attaching the back and seat sections to the connection spine afforded a measure of resiliency, the method of attaching the disks to the wooden parts was a problem. Different kinds of glues and other methods were tried and discarded. Staff member Norman Bruns conducted numerous partially successful experiments with electronic cycle-welding, continuing the ideas attempted by Eero Saarinen and Charles for the "Organic Design" chairs.[72]

The second model, *Michael Asher, Writings 1973–1983 on Works 1969–1979* attests to the artist's conviction to resist interpretation of his work. The works are organized chronologically under headers formatted with date first, title of work, institutional venue, place, e.g.:

May 11–June 28, 1969
The Appearing / Disappearing Image / Object
Newport Harbor Art Museum
Newport Beach, California

Each project is elaborated by Asher's first-person description and a selection of photographs of the sites, the works in situ, floor plans, and announcement cards. The author conveys the precise data of each architectural site the works respond to as well as all relevant dimensions of the transformation that the works perform. Reproductions are extensively captioned. The book contains no design embellishment; it is a seemingly dry and straightforward communication of the works in their full material detail.

Michael Asher is known for his refusal to interpret his work. Even when confronted with plausible deductions he resists agreement or disagreement in favor of leaving meaning open. For example, an exchange between he and Buchloh during the question and answer period following Buchloh's lecture at the Santa Monica Museum on the occasion of the artist's 2008 solo exhibition turned on subtleties as Asher listened intently, filled in some information gaps, but nimbly detoured conjecture and foreclosed conclusion.[73] Open to interpretation is a tenet of Asher's practice, which he abides by in all representation.

Asher's book seeks to provide the reader with as much specificity as possible excepting the artist's intentions (beyond those self-evident in the description of what he did) or mention of reception to the work – either of which signify "reading" and could therefore predispose or direct the viewer. The following example demonstrates the artist's explanatory manner. The who, what, when, how, and where are all covered – only the why is missing. Nonetheless, or perhaps because of this, I find his narration generous, scintillating, and effective in its aim.

> January 8–January 11, 1973
> Gallery A402
> California Institute of the Arts
> Valencia, California
>
> Gallery A 402 was a student-run gallery where exhibitions were organized by Suzanne Kuffler, who was at the time a graduate student at the California Institute of the Arts. The gallery functioned as an exhibition space for both artists and students to make their work accessible to the Institute community. In late 1972 I was invited to exhibit a work there.
>
> The gallery measured 27 feet 7 inches by 16 feet 8 inches, with a ceiling height of 9 feet. Two rows of fluorescent light fixtures – the gallery's only source of light – extended the entire length of the room. The floor was covered with brown wall-to-wall carpeting. A series of rectangular wall facets – floor-to-ceiling wall projections which formed

short strips of wall surface or wall planes on a north-south and east-west axis – interrupted the exhibition wall planes, breaking up any continuity that the installation space might have had as a rectangular volume. There were two rectangular wall projections on the east side and one large 6-by-9 foot wall projection on the west side. Looking straight ahead into the southeast corner of the room, there was another short rectangular wall projection. All of these projected wall surfaces were permanent and accommodated utilities and air-ducting. Only the southwest corner was not interrupted by any projections.

Given this architectural configuration, I developed a proposal for all of the white wall surfaces. My idea was to paint the six parallel, opposing surfaces on the north and south side with the white *Dunn-Edwards* paint that was normal used for wall surfaces throughout the Institute. The seven east-west surfaces I wanted to leave as they were, yellowed, spotted with fingerprints, and broken through in various places.

It didn't occur to me to tell the gallery director what I planned to do, other than saying that I would paint the gallery. The morning I arrived to do the installation, I found all the walls freshly painted. I was really shocked because it was like having painted the work away. After thinking about it for a couple of hours I decided to adapt the idea slightly. I kept all the east-west opposing wall surfaces painted with *Dunn-Edwards Beau-T-Wall-White* since the gallery organizer had used that paint. On all of the north-south opposing wall surfaces, I then applied *Sherwin Williams Nu-White*. Both paints were matte-white, and close in tone and value, but the *Nu-White* was intended to diffuse the light from the fluorescent fixtures while the *Dunn-Edwards* carried the light. The interior surfaces were identifies therefore in terms of their distinct response to light rather than their chromatic difference.[74]

Buchloh states in his Editor's Note that:

> This volume . . . is an attempt on the side of the author and the editor to make accessible to readers and viewers the documents of an artistic practice that one could characterize as being both extremely ephemeral and transient . . .The book's paradoxical function – to document as discourse what operated as practice at one time (or, to be more accurate, as both, practice and discourse) – results partially from the fact that the work seems to have generated the same resistance on the side of the institutions (and the historians and critics and collectors) that it performed itself with respect to the notion of visual culture that they represent. . . . It is one of the paradoxes of this book to transfer from practice to discourse what was defined as a temporally and spatially specific and efficient operation. . . ."

Group Material shares points of contact with the Eameses (collaboration, complex shifting production) and Asher (ephemeral site- or institution-dependent practice) as well as with the goals of both books. *Eames design* draws from the archive; it combines efficiency and depth to create a precise expression of the design team's work and sensibility. Secondary representation is essential to trace Asher's work. *Michael Asher, Writings 1973–1983 on Works 1969–1979* retrieves and extends the artist's practice congruently. Both of these self-motivated and generated books inspired my thinking while developing a fitting approach, form, and format for Group Material's historical representation.





top: John Neuhart, Marilyn Neuhart, Ray Eames, eds., *Eames design* (New York: Harry N. Abrams,1989);
bottom: Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, ed., *Michael Asher, Writings 1973–1983 on Works 1969–1979*
(Nova Scotia: The Press of Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983)

Certain criteria lingered in my mind for years: the book would be self-generated and not be grounded in outside expert perspectives; informative presentation of the group's process and projects would form its basis as opposed to interpretation; it would use a chronological rather than thematic structure so as to further avoid construal though emphasis and classification; it would reflect Group Material's methods, principles of practice, and style. The schematic went through various permutations but this general strategy to compile a chronicle of Group Material persisted. I moved from speculation to actual planning in 2008, twelve years after the group's end. The proposal for the book follows:

> *Chronicle: A Project by Group Material* is the first monograph on the New York based artists' collaborative known for its sociopolitical art practice. The book is being organized in keeping with the methods and aims Group Material employed. It is initiated and guided by Julie Ault; other former members are providing input in varying degree, most notably Doug Ashford.
>
> The book is structured as a chronology that charts the origins, processes, developments, and projects of the group's activities. Consisting of pictorial and textual elements brought into dynamic relations, the volume draws heavily from Group Material's archive, including original documents, photographs, drawings, correspondence, artifacts, and anecdotal information. Its chronographic form takes account of multiple perspectives and descriptive modes. Group Material's projects will be rendered in the chronology though installation photography and information from original proposals, exhibition statements, announcements, press releases and responses. A portrayal of the group's practice by Sabrina Locks will examine the social relations of one emblematic exhibition, *AIDS Timeline*, and feature newly conducted interviews ranging from participating artists and organizations to the commissioning curator to audience members. The book as a whole will demonstrate, describe, conserve, and historicize Group Material's cultural

> practice. Essays by group members Doug Ashford, Julie Ault, and Tim Rollins will further illuminate the methods and principles of Group Material's practice.

Who would ultimately organize, edit, and author the book remained an open question for some time. Since I had initiated the project I was in a guidance role as well as its *de facto* organizer. But my hope was that other members, specifically Doug Ashford and perhaps more minimally Tim Rollins would collaborate on generating the volume. In keeping with this, the working title I had in mind was *Chronicle: A Project by Group Material* in order to relay to the group's only other book *Democracy: A Project by Group Material*. But I wondered on what grounds Group Material could legitimately tag the book. What exactly would make it a Group Material project? Editorial participation of multiple members? Merely employing the principles of Group Material's practice? How much involvement by how many members would qualify for collaborative authorship / editorship? Doug and I talked about some scenarios and agreed that whatever happened, we wanted the book to be accurately credited. For instance if he and I edited the book, we would be listed individually and not credited as simply Group Material. Another thought was that other interested parties, for example Sabrina and Rasmus, might join in. Inspired by reading about the collective of mathematicians who coauthored numerous books under the pseudonym Nicolas Bourbaki, I considered concocting a fictitious art historian who could be attributed with a volume that would in fact be collaboratively generated. Of course obscuring multiple identities behind a fictional historian is unlikely to work in current culture as it did in the 1930s and 1940s. And ultimately I realized my desire to fudge acknowledgment was misguided.

How did this play out? Doug was involved in a couple of meetings with the publishers and he and I met periodically, during which I brought him up to date on the decisions, direction, and progress, and he was invariably in agreement. Despite his enthusiasm and willingness to review information, substantive participation did not unfold in terms of methods, direction, or coediting, primarily because, instead, Doug decided to focus his energies into forging a substantial essay for the book. (Tim contributed with a brief essay

as well.) Former members Thomas, Mundy, Marybeth, Hannah, Peter, Lili all expressed enthusiasm and Mundy in particular reviewed the chronicle text when it was ready. Others reviewed relevant entries and provided further information. I invited Sabrina and Rasmus to propose contributions; Rasmus however got accepted to California Institute for the Arts to do his graduate studies and could only participate with critical feedback on the book generally. Sabrina engaged *AIDS Timeline* as a case study in our social process of exhibition making, resulting in a set of interviews with various practitioners involved in the project, which forms new research in the archive and is excerpted in the book. Although no one from the group emerged copartner in terms of organizing or editing the book, it did not strike me until deep in the publication's development that the subtitle, A Project by Group Material, would simply not be accurate. Not only was I primarily responsible for the book's structure, methods, and ingredients, I was shaping it according to specific interests in historical inquiry I'd developed in my solo work, particularly book making. I thought about modifying the subtitle to "A Project About Group Material" and simply omitting an editor credit altogether to keep authorship vague, however the publishers rejected the idea. Ultimately it was clear in the discussion with Four Corners Books that naming myself as the editor was honest, and it was essential to take responsibility for the work.

Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material

> Each person who sits down to write faces not a blank page but his own vastly overfilled mind. The problem is to clear out most of what is in it, to fill huge plastic bags with the confused jumble of things that have accreted there over the days, months, years of being alive and taking things in through the eyes and ears and heart. The goal is to make a space where a few ideas and images and feelings may be so arranged that a reader will want to linger awhile among them . . . . But this task of housecleaning (of narrating) is not merely arduous; it is dangerous. There is the danger of throwing the wrong things out and keeping the wrong things in; there is

> the danger of throwing too much out and being left with too bare a house;
> there is the danger of throwing everything out.
>
> —Janet Malcolm[75]

Tackling the mission of recuperating Group Material as a two-pronged "housecleaning" operation involved gathering and organizing the pool of material to constitute the archive and simultaneously distilling from that body of information to make the book. Malcolm's wise words seemed to speak directly to me as I embarked on compiling for the book and specifically the chronicle that would be its main section. Faced with the paradox of having too much and not enough, I was reminded of several occasions giving presentations on Group Material, where I found myself randomly accessing a massive muddle of memory, unable to balance detail and background in a proportional fashion. Determining what to include in the book and what to leave out felt like a weighty responsibility complicated by my collaborator status that made the process easier in some ways but also more complicated than I imagine it might be for an impartial historian.

Each aspect of cohering the archive and making *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material*, 2010, embodied specific and abstract purpose. While retrieving Group Material for myself, for the group, and with the larger purpose of public representation in mind, inhabiting the dual roles of observer and observed created a central methodological challenge, which at times was confounding. Flipping between my own and other members' muddle of memory as well as the accumulation of material sometimes felt dizzying. But, ultimately my insider relationship to the subject in conjunction with a more independent association to the potential for archives to shape historical representation seemed to productively balance one another.

Compiling and editing information into a coherent mass was a concrete task at the outset. Sounds reasonable, but what are the risks of this endeavor? For one, coherence implies organization and management of an unruly body of material, which is double-edged. The editorial process of including and excluding sounds reasonable – choices must be made – but it is also a somewhat violent process. Why include this and not that? Bits and pieces

of information get ripped from their contexts. Ultimately much more is abandoned than incorporated. I feared that an orderly synopsis would by definition advance a reconciled representation that is a poor substitute for the complexity of lived experience.

It is still somewhat uncommon for an art historian or institutionally affiliated curator to reveal their vested interests in engaging particular subjects, or to expose and reflect their own psychic context that inevitably fuels work. As one curator recently told me, "art history is not written using first names." But I could not, and did not want to erase my subjective investment in the showing and telling operations the book enacts and instead choose to highlight subjectivity as an inherent dimension, which whether hidden or exposed factors into all history writing.

The guidelines and criteria I concocted are laid bare in the end section of my essay contribution to the book, "Case Reopened: Group Material." What follows is that descriptive segment divided into parts (in red) which I reflect on here, revealing the deeper logic of the methods and choices, and inquiring of them further.

Private and public information intertwines throughout the chronicle, as do anecdotes and facts, snapshots and installation photographs. Selecting documentation and bringing it together to form textual and pictorial layers, determining placement and juxtaposition, and deciding on the content and mode of accompanying narration are all aspects of shaping Group Material's historical representation here. Chronology is considered a somewhat open structure, within which readers and users of the book are invited to make meaning of and cross-reference the imbedded information and material ingredients.

What is intended by this structured interlocking of public and private? The making of the group as a specific context along with its structure and process are inseparable from its public creations, yet the bulk of existing representation focuses on the group's projects. The aims are to widen the focus to include conveyance of internal and behind the scenes workings in each layer of published material, to stress aspects of the process that are otherwise invisible, and to emphasize the symbiotic relation between the collaboration

and the exhibitory formations it produced publicly. The book takes its ingredients from the archive, which embodies both private and public material.

How is this different from other versions of art history writing? Representation of artistic process and private information features into some art history writing, though inclusion of the latter in art writing beyond the basics is largely considered irrelevant and frowned upon as journalistic or sensationalizing. It is not unusual for anecdotes to be worked into some art writing, and Phaidon's monographs regularly incorporate snapshots of the artist in back matter. However, there are tacit boundaries between biography, art history, and art criticism. Biography is often perceived as a guilty pleasure that sullies more intellectual genres.

Why is this public-private principle important in this case? The distinction here if of form and emphasis. Snapshots and formal installation photography alternate on equal footing in *Show and Tell*. A four page incendiary letter Tim Rollins wrote to the group in 1980, A PROPOSAL FOR LEARNING TO GET THINGS OFF OUR CHESTS; BEHAVIOUS, DISCIPLINE AND OUR PROJECT, is exposed in full, alongside press releases and write-ups that represent a more harmonious collaboration. (Just a snippet: "Sometimes I wonder if there hasn't been a strain of mononucleosis artificially introduced into the group by the biological warfare department of the CIA. The endless wind-blowing, the 'working out' of polemics that common sense should tell us can only be resolved in practice – all this I suspect gets us quite depressed."[76]) Contradictory evidence is at the heart of the archive and prominently figures into a dimensional portrayal of Group Material. *Why publicize Tim's contentious letter?* Tim's letter rants and rails with emotion and rhetoric that unquestionably communicates major clashes in the group in its first months; it also shows how seriously he regarded the collaboration and what was at stake with Group Material's overarching project. Janet Malcolm nailed the significance of correspondence in her tour de force on the subjects of biography, documentary truth, and vulnerability of the archive, *The Silent Woman*.

> The letters were abashingly real. They brought the story that Anne and Olwyn had told me back to its emotional source. I felt like the possessor of a great prize – the prize that the narrator of *The Aspern Papers* goes to such extreme lengths to try to get. Letters are the great fixative of experience. Time erodes feeling. Time creates indifference. Letters prove to us that we once cared. They are the fossils of feeling. This is why biographers prize them so: they are biography's only conduit to unmediated experience.[77]

Group Material's actions are presented here as reference points in a larger cultural discourse, and contextual conditions are suggested by use of a variety of means. Group Material authored documents, reprinted in their original form and scale, compose one layer of information in the chronicle. The methods, contents, and visual character of these documents are valued as "original language." They vividly convey GM's motivations – what we perceived we were doing at the time, and demonstrate the group's shifting rhetorical strategies, as well as the cultural vocabulary of particular moments.

What thinking generated this idea and solution? Group Material came to life in the archive. I was struck by the vividness and changing character of internal correspondence, minutes of meetings, exhibition proposals, press releases, and project announcements the group had fashioned. Emotional intensity is palpable in early communiqués, proposals and press releases are borderline bombastic, topics and debates of the times are glimpsed through language, and graphic design bespeaks period styles. It occurred to me that a selection of those documents could convey the group's intentions, motivations, and actions far better than writing that depicts from the distance of time, either by those inside or outside the group. So I decided to animate the documents in the context of the book. This material would commonly be regarded as research, a starting point for history writing, rather than an endpoint to be presented.

Is the scrapbook a relevant model? Perhaps these traces could be substance for a scrapbook but the analogy ends there, due to design. In fact, despite the multiple layers of

motley material that compose the chronicle, the goal was not avoid a scrapbook sensibility and bring the elements into a carefully designed formal system that stresses all the incorporated material as primary and equivalent. All of the documents are reproduced at actual size. The majority are U.S. letter size, which resolved the page dimensions for the book. One aim is to encourage they be regarded as primary texts rather than ancillary items or illustrations. Nick Bell clarifies his graphic design logic for their treatment: "All documentary images bleed off page edges. So as not to elevate them to the status of art works as would be the case with framing them within margins. Other elements on the page are sometimes placed over these images so long as important parts of these images are not hidden. This prevents these images from becoming too precious. Images / documents butt up against each other in the gutter."[78] Presentation is a primary agent for situating things, including the past, in the present. The look, feel, and atmosphere of the book are engaged to speak of Group Material. I asked the design team to *not* copy Group Material's style but to situate its evidence in a visual field that translates the group's sense and spirit, and to draw on Group Material's exhibition principles in activating every inch of a room in book form.

The guiding text that filters throughout the chronicle imparting otherwise inaccessible circumstances, facts, and anecdotes is written in a depersonalized present-tense mode. This method of telling intends to situate readers in the times of events, as well as suggest collective subjectivity, distinct from a retrospective individual perspective.

How did you come to this decision about narrative point of view, and how are the desired results achieved? This text was conceived as though a knowledgeable but unspecified guide is matter of factly stating information in the midst of the documents and images that make up the chronicle. This necessitated a third person perspective. The text combines the functions of caption, report, digression, disclosure, and background – blending casual commentary into a formalized stream of information. The guiding text was built from three strata: the hard data of the archive, my memory, and the recollections of other group members I consulted. No author is named at the chronicle's outset but at the end states it is written by Julie Ault. The informal revealing tone

employed derives from lived experience, coalescing subjective and objective knowledge into a seamless voice intended to anchor and augment the archival matter. *How could this have been done differently?* Alternatively the guiding text could have been written from a first-person viewpoint, suggesting myself or another group member is the participant cum narrator who reflects retrospectively. However, I sought a common voice to avoid that kind of "post-post *this is what really happened*" point of view associated with the technique. The grand narrator outlook of a single group member ("I remember") or first-person plural ("we did") is likewise eluded. Then again, it could have taken the form of a primary analytic survey written from a first-person historian's vantage. However that technique positions the author as decoder and reaffirms the division of labor between artist as creative producer and critic as interpretive judge. An art historian writing a survey essay would likely consult the same sources of archive and former members, yet it is highly unlikely she would select and commit identical information to print, or do so in a similar manner. Most would consider the information recounted in the guiding text simply as raw material.

Why use the present tense to explain past events? What are the implications of this? At the outset of writing the guiding text I had to decide what tense and perspective to use. Having no background in physics I consulted Dan Falk's clear explanation of scientific conceptions of time, *In Search of Time. The Science of a Curious Dimension*.[79] Falk's discussion of how language is used to depict past events indicating either a tensed view of time – "the everyday notion of time in terms of past, present, and future" that speaks from now, or pointing toward a linear model that situates events as fixed in relation to other events on a timeline, resulting in a "*timeless* array of events" unrooted in the concept of now, inspired me to test writing the guiding text both ways to better comprehend the effect of tense.[80] For example:

> In December of 1980 Tim submitted a proposal to split the group into two completely independent bodies that share only the responsibility of maintaining the space.

> December 1980. Tim submits a proposal to split the group into two completely independent bodies that share only the responsibility of maintaining the space.

The tensed version invokes the voice of a narrator, begging the question who is speaking? And with what authority? Whereas the "timeless" timeline version does not. Rather, information seems to be self-evident, and builds on other information alongside it to articulate a block of time. Subjecting past events to present tense telling perpetually places readers in the time of the articulated events, rather than the time of the telling (retrospective vantage).

What tense is the archive? Carolyn Steedman's words speak to this condition: "Foucault suggests . . . that History clutters up and occupies our memory. At the same time, History (the formal written history, or history-writing) has provided a way of thinking about what is in a particular place – a place which for the moment shall simply be called Memory. To interrogate that place, we have to be less concerned with History as *stuff* (we must put to one side the content of any particular piece of writing, and the historical information it imparts) than as *process*, as ideation, imagining and remembering."[81] If one conceives of the archive as a place for infinite use, connection, and reproduction – "a space of questions rather than answers," an "incubator of new life" as Mark Wigley purports, then the archive is in principle timeless and up for grabs.[82]

Several topics are carried through the guiding text, such as the continuities and discontinuities of GM's composition, and how Group Material structured itself and financed its work. Private workings, conflicts and contradictions endemic to group process are likewise articulated. (Certain complex circumstances within the group are expressed vaguely although "the silences and absences of the documents always speak to us.")

What are the editorial criteria? The trains of information that run throughout represent the kind of knowledge – much of which is "inside" or behind the scenes – that is crucial

to understanding the internal process of Group Material over time as well as the who, what, when, where, how, and why, but would otherwise not be present or traceable in the documents and images. Some information is central ("Summer 1986. The group had stopped requiring monthly dues a couple years previously, and now regularly receives NEA funding for general operating costs and NYSCA support for special projects. For the most part, hosting institutions finance the respective exhibition and project costs."), and some is incidental ("1994. The resulting *Democracy Wall* costs one-hundred times more than *Da Zi Baos* did in 1982, as it cannot be directly attached to the façade and requires special rigging.")[83] The topic lines were determined while newly investigating Group Material through the archive over time and appealing to other members' recall. Information is pieced together from multiple documentation and composite memory.

Variances are integral to collaboration. Highlighting moments of internal discord is honest and also counters the tendency towards revisionist resolution in historical representation. For example:

> July 1980. With the prospect of going public getting closer, interpersonal tensions and ideological conflicts escalate. The agenda for the July 22 meeting includes: "open, general discussion of Group Material's purpose with a consideration for current personal and practical tensions operant in the group."
>
> And
>
> June 1991. A hampering degree of tension and discord has been percolating in the group, which largely goes undiscussed except casually, one-on-one. Everyone feels somewhat at a loss about direction and over how to digest larger cultural and political changes of the past few years in relation to collective practice. Also in question is how to simultaneously use, remain true to, and transcend the group's history. Felix seems depleted by collaborative process and is primarily advancing his

> individual voice as an artist. Julie feels the group has been on a treadmill too long and has a crisis in faith about the art field as a working context. She goes to college to study political science, with a potential shift from the cultural field to mainstream politics in mind. Doug has been increasingly devoted to teaching and investing his energies in the classroom and pedagogical pursuits. Karen is heavily involved with the women's health care and reproductive rights movement and frequently expresses disinterest in, and antagonism to, the field of art beyond using it as a site for activism. Somewhat undefined interpersonal conflicts are also present.[84]

As a whole, the guiding text derives from and represents a close reading and distillation of the archive and associated memory similar to the descriptions in *Eames design*, although using narrative present tense and sporadic casual tone.

Shouldn't some things remain private? Is there a responsibility to let bygones be bygones and positively portray the group at this time? Yes, some things are private and were protectively omitted from the book, or didn't seem additive, for instance, that founding members Tim Rollins and Patrick Brennan were boyfriends at the time. Their alliance *did* affect group dynamics in some ways, but ultimately I decided as an isolated fact this did not contribute to further understanding and that the influence was too complex and subtle to voice in this setting. Some internal issues are articulated vaguely, for instance in the entry, "May 1981. Hannah Alderfer, Beth Jaker, and Marybeth Nelson want to work collaboratively on visual projects in feminist communities. Along with Peter Szypula they leave the group due to irreconcilable clashes around ideological priorities and personality clashes."[85] This is ambiguous primarily because no one can really say with any deeper accuracy why these four members left the group. There is nothing in writing beyond Hannah Alderfer's letter of resignation, which is reproduced across from this entry, and the former members found it too complicated in hindsight to apprehend their reasons and commit them to print. As for exclusively presenting a positive unified

portrayal, that is antithetical to the collaborative which held difference, debate, conflict, and contradiction dear to its practice as methods.

Configuration and reconfiguration are additionally registered in the chronology as listings of current members. Group Material was a succession of social bodies, transforming whenever someone left or joined. The collaborative was modified by the gain or disappearance of specific interests and methods and new dynamics emerged, which had consequences in practice.

Are there other, perhaps more effective ways to register these changes? Diagrams might have been a good way to illustrate the changing arrangement and were considered early on, but not followed up on. In addition to the member listings that appear within the yellow band that contains the guiding text, I attempted to include photographs of the various configurations when available, and to show as many of the members as possible. Unfortunately some members were not photographed in the group context.

Another layer of the chronicle consists of excerpted texts, which are unified by typographic design treatment. These excerpts are diverse in nature; many are written by GM. Intermittently they open out to take account of other voices – including journalists, project participants, and audience members. The extracts range in function from installation instructions to critical reviews.

What motivated this layer? How were these excerpts determined? Perusing the archive and conceptualizing the structure for the book happened concurrently. While reading I took note of lots of interesting segments in all types of documents, initially regarding them as source material for writing the guiding text and my essay. As the basic concept for the book was established and the main part was conceived as a chronicle composed of reprinted documents, images, and guiding text, an ideal parameter was also set. In order to keep the retail cost affordable, and to keep the project from burgeoning, the publisher and I agreed the book should be fewer than three hundred pages. This narrowed the number of whole documents that could be reproduced and I began distinguishing those

that seemed additive in full, and those that didn't require that could be simply excerpted textually. This led to the idea of creating a layer of diverse extracts varying in author (though many are by Group Material), purpose, length, and style. These filter throughout the chronicle and permit the inclusion of other voices that otherwise wouldn't fit conceptually in the chronicle.

Revisionist and interpretive tendencies have been restrained in this initial look at Group Material in favor of creating a useful documentary foundation that, akin to one of the group's installations, invites a multiplicity of interpretation. *Show and Tell* offers a distilled representation of the group's strata of process and production, and of the findings from Group Material looking at itself. It is a source for hard data, impression and historical atmosphere. GM's collaborative spirit as well as its methods and principles are articulated through past projects and enacted in the making of the book. *Show and Tell* is also an introduction to the archive, an invitation to visit and look further. The organization of the archive and the response to that process through this book provide a platform and base interpretation to use, negotiate, and take issue with. Additionally, this final "Group Material" project forms a case study in archiving, historical inquiry and history writing, shaped from the questions and problems enmeshed in the investigation.

Ending and Beginning

Upon receiving the first copy of *Show and Tell* I experienced a combination of contentment, elation, and regret. Usually I am mildly alienated by a finished exhibition or book, which seems a poor substitute for the process that led to its outcome. It takes a while to get used to the object status of a book that previously inhabited one's mind in the form of ideas and emotions and one's workspace as an unwieldy monster – piles of papers, stacks of source materials, pools of images, countless revisions, communiqués and conversations. But *Show and Tell* didn't look like a foreign object, if felt fresh. It *looks* and *feels* like Group Material. I hear feedback: people react to its color, materiality, boldness, and accessibility as points of entry and elements of content. Initial conclusion:

Show and Tell is an apt representation and a layered and complicated project, which appears to communicate effectively to those who knew Group Material's work first hand and to those encountering it anew.

In spite of all this, a part of me regretted taking the road of conservation that making the book implies instead of leaving what was ephemeral ephemeral, if only to harbor an illusion of radicalism. New questions arise: What does it mean to now have Group Material as an object? After so many years of being nomadic and indeterminate what does it mean for Group Material to occupy a location in the archive and on the bookshelf? Does the book avert the fear of disappearance? (Yes, momentarily.) To what degree is it a substitution – not just in the sense of representation, but a compensation for the loss of time and fellowship and for the missing figures and friends who died during the group's lifespan? What does it mean to have this neat package that answers the question, What was Group Material? Is the group still disbursed among the memories of its core members and sometimes participants, the institutions it collaborated with, and the fading recollections of people who saw a Group Material exhibition, perhaps not even aware who made it or why? Group Material is simultaneously gone, disbursed, and locatable. Is Group Material now off limits, filed away in some obscure part of my memory? Does *Show and Tell* harness my relationship to the group once and for all? Am I done? Can I refrain from speaking further or will my connection to the period of practice keep changing and wanting expression. The questions persist but ultimately, second thoughts faded, trumped by belief in the consequence of advancing collaborative models of artistic production, artmaking as social process, the notion of the book as a fitting agent of visual art, and the fulfillment of giving something back to Group Material, my formative educative upbringing.

The making of the archive was bound to lead to Group Material's history being committed to print one way or another, and *Show and Tell* accomplishes a first uncompromised articulation, while fertilizing the research terrain others will travel. *Show and Tell* opens Group Material up to scrutiny and unlocks its myths. *Show and Tell* is an invitation to dig deeper. (Nagging concern: Is Group Material fossilized here? I don't

think so; the book, by design, does otherwise through its methods and words. Time, use, and further analysis will confirm or dispute.) That this self-historicization took the form of a publication was in part a necessity, given the ways in which, as outlined in this study, cultural forces determine the induction of ephemeral and peripheral activities into lasting art discourse. While I began this project thinking it would be an ending, I realize the opposite is true. Group Material is revivified and its history is just beginning. Many of the questions that guided this overarching exploration were addressed in the process. Although one continues to haunt: Can history writing be effectively challenged while writing history? This continuing inquiry is best pursued in practice.



Dream remnant, August 28, 2010: Along with an unfamiliar woman I was rummaging through some boxes in a classroom that seemed to have come from a women's shelter or halfway house of sorts. My friend Roni was also there, waiting to see what we would find. I came across an old calendar and noticed a secret compartment taped into its back cover. Separating the tape I found six tightly folded letters in different inks and handwriting. Messages from another time. I excitedly showed them to Roni; we both felt like we'd struck gold.

I believe this very pleasant dream refers to the unfinished business of a collaboration begun with Horn that has been tabled for the moment, yet hovers in the back of my mind. While working on the Group Material project, the artist Roni Horn invited me to develop a "creative personal chronology" for her forthcoming retrospective catalogue. A central theme of Horn's art is the mutability of identity, making for an interesting prospect for composing a personal history. I asked her to let me read her archive of private journals, work-related notebooks, unpublished writings, and examine her files and personal snapshots. Parallel to working on Group Material's social history, it seemed germane to overarching concerns about archiving and history writing to build a depiction of an individual and their formative past and to analyze the differences between these processes as well as the inhibitions and liberties that might emerge in the two authoring operations.

My initial focus was on Horn's history of reading and engagement with particular authors (knowing she is an ardent reader), influential relationships, and places of import such as her original landscape, her life-long home of New York City, and Iceland as her adopted home, (landscape and Iceland are central to her work) – with the intention of highlighting private and familiar ephemeral realms in relation to her art work, which is oft characterized as enigmatic and formal. From there, I composed a sequence of statements of fact, observations, and aphorisms that alternate with excerpts from Horn's private journals and unpublished writings. This constructed dialogue is both biographic armature and fragmentary personal chronology. An excerpt follows (JA = roman and RH ital):

She is self-possessed. She is full of herself.

I have this almost pathological desire for privacy. Maybe I'm just imitating the sense of memory.

I started thinking how who I'm talking to affects who I am – because who I'm talking to affects how I am – and how affects how I'm seen – that is, how you see me. So this circle of perception affects the outcome of me at any given moment. And the question then became what moment do I take to be me? So then a confusion of selves arose, even though over the years I noticed that I do bear a likeness to myself in some ways. But what about all the times when I hardly recognize myself?

She habitually listens to Shirley Bassey singing *Goldfinger*. Sometimes she makes it a duet.

I have a sister. And I figure that it's her presence that allows me so much solitude.

She considered having impersonations of herself made by Tommy Lee Jones, Renée Zellweger, and others.

She is demoralized by mundanity, the aggressive subjugation of nature worldwide, and America's widespread ignorance of history.

Once completed, Horn decided not to include the piece in her catalogue, feeling it was too close to the form she was using in another part of the publication, which is a subject index composed of entries by invited authors mixed with extracts the artist took from her own writings. (Although she didn't say so, I intuited she was also ambivalent – squeamish even, about the focus on her private domain once the piece was tangible.) We agreed instead to further develop the text collaboratively to make a small publication for the "Between Artists" series published by A.R.T. Press at some future date.

While working on her retrospective exhibition and publication, *Roni Horn a.k.a. Roni Horn,* the artist poured over photographs of her she collected from various sources and selected a set of images that alternate between childhood, teenage, and adulthood, which she cohered into a photographic installation called *aka*. Chronology is jumbled therein, countering any notion of linear evolution. Using the archive, *aka* proposes configuration

and reconfiguration and advances identity as dynamic process – contingent and flexile. This emblematic work will likely be represented in our publication, and I wrote about it at length in a recent essay.[86]



One pair of fifteen pairs of photographs that compose Roni Horn, *aka*, 2009

Meanwhile I have added a second section to the initial "chronology" I wrote that consists of journal-style reflections on the process of reading and learning in Horn's archive. It is also a questioning of biographical formats and relationships between memory, history, and the archive. An account of the purpose and methods of the endeavor is built into the essay. My ruminations on the process of delving into Horn's personal papers are best apprehended in the text itself.[87] A glimpse:

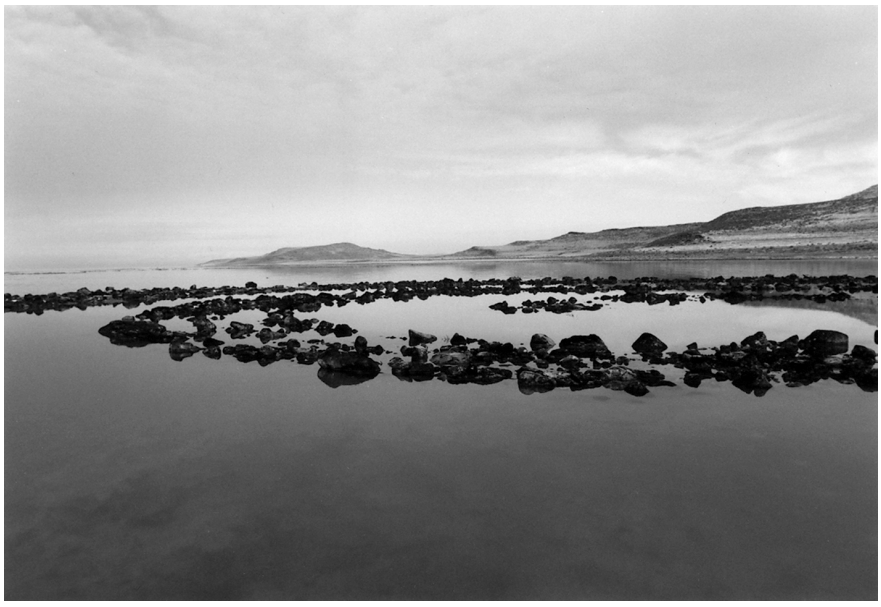
> I am sitting in her studio reading her private papers from the past thirty years. She works nearby customizing letterforms for a vocabulary of weather. They look liquid and whimsical and remind me of Dr. Seuss.
>
> Usually she works here alone. For the time being, I am in her daily milieu reading and absorbing. The open-plan arrangement of her workspace along with the newness of our proximity encourages access: out-of-the-

> blue we make comments and ask each other questions. After a couple days, she starts playing loud music, most frequently a playlist that includes *Knocking on Heaven's Door*, *Sympathy for the Devil*, *Goldfinger*, *Play With Fire*, *Desperado*, and *Sinnerman*. It depletes my reading concentration, but I'm getting the full-on Roni-in-her-studio experience, so I don't protest.
>
> I presume the notebooks provide direct admittance to her former present tense – taking me where I get to know Roni long before I knew her.
>
> Every once in a while I look up and exclaim, "this is so juicy," to which she smiles, looks intrigued, and immediately returns to what she was doing. I feel like a snoop despite permission. She has not read her early journals in decades and might well be stunned by the intimate yearnings, which were formerly lodged in her mind and found voice in diaristic privacy. She rendered situations, sensations, and emotions with raw sensitivity: hard evidence of feelings written in their time. I am flushed from what she felt, and have difficulty reconciling with Roni who sits in front of me. In and out of time.

The most profound difference between working on this inquiry and the Group Material situation is the sense of freedom and poetic license I experienced when *not* addressing a subject I am tied to through memory. This also has to do with Horn's sensibility and the intimate poetic voice I encountered in her early journals. I perceived a kind of senselessness in adhering to chronology in the case of understanding and portraying an individual (this individual at least). Whereas studying Group Material's chronology – what happened when, and in relation to what circumstances – a reconstruction of sorts, seemed the most illuminating manner to apprehend and convey the shifting identity and practice of the group. The sense of responsibility to the "truth" of the group *in time* was always an issue. With Roni, there was no clash between memory and record to be

reconciled. I relied on her writing and my reading of it, her work, our conversations, and my knowledge of her as a friend.

One last example of fitting form to situation in the telling of past conditions. Notions of historical representation and time are taken up in James Benning's film, *casting a glance* (2007), a close meditation on Robert Smithson's Spiral Jetty consisting of seventy-eight one-minute shots filmed during sixteen trips made there between 2005 and 2007. Dates expressed textually, ranging from April 30, 1970 to May 15, 2007 are interspersed with images to highlight the parallel between water levels during Benning's two-year period of shooting and the Jetty's lifespan in relation to the shifting level of the Great Salt Lake, which is responsible for its alternating exposure and concealment. Interestingly, the final date registered in the film – May 15, 2007, occurred after Benning had stopped shooting. When queried about why it is nonetheless included he said it was "just a future guess."



Production still from James Benning, *casting a glance*, 2007

Casting a glance fictionalizes the matching chronology of shooting to a chronicle of change in the Jetty's conditions and appearance, creating confusion in many viewers who presume a one-to-one relationship between the dates and the images exists and therefore

believe Benning literally filmed the Jetty over its thirty-seven year span. Benning's philosophy of duration and of landscape as a function of time invited further research. He does not announce the film as history writing but it is a sophisticated historical representation that in fact takes issue with other representations. In the subsequent essay I wrote about the operations of the film in relation to time, history, and chronology I observed:

> Spiral Jetty first went underwater in 1973, the year of Smithson's death, and it did not reemerge, except sporadically, until 2002. The jetty's visibility since 2002 is mostly the result of drought. During its period of invisibility Spiral Jetty became well known through aerial images from 1970 picturing it basking in sunshine, fully exposed above water. These photographs were instrumental in transforming the work into an icon, particularly as no documentation of Spiral Jetty in its submerged state circulated. Until the jetty's resurfacing it was publicly perceived as static, frozen in time, and was inadvertently objectified. Benning regards Spiral Jetty as a vital formation and wants to show how it changes over time as a result of climate, season, weather, daylight, industry, and tourism. *Casting a glance* shows us Spiral Jetty fully exposed, partially underwater, and completely submerged, and in this way representationally restores its periodic vulnerability and variety.[88]

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The practices of archiving, and historical investigation and representation are contingent on purpose and situation. What makes sense, in principle, is that research methods, archiving practices, interpretive means, form-finding, and communicative modes be taken up anew in relation to each case of historical discovery, recuperation, and representation.

The situations elaborated here seek to illustrate the logic of this tenet and some examples of the approach. Each complex of ephemeral histories demands its own representational method and form. From this perspective, formulaic engagement in any media implies treating a subject generically within pre-determined confines that risk diminishing subject matter, practitioner, and viewer. (How I lament the Sundance affect that gained currency in the early 1990s. The Sundance stamp of approval on independent documentary films virtually guarantees marketplace success. Far too much recent filmmaking suffers from tailoring work to fit the prescription. The affect is visible in documentaries from the credits to the arty treatment to the horizontal rather than vertical engagement with a subject.)

Notwithstanding the enthusiasm for the book form I've expressed here in relation to particular subjects taken up in practice, it is clear that books are not the be-all or end-all through which ephemeral and peripheral art histories might best find distribution or duration. Nor are they inherently suitable. But they are one significant venue to be employed.

How far can the notion of pursuing differentiation in form (and methods) for each exploratory manifestation of histories extend? I'm tempted to say all histories deserve a custom-made approach but this sounds far-fetched, or at least unrealistic and ahistorical. Is history by definition ephemeral? Is history writing always an attempt to make the ephemeral permanent – whether it is a life, a practice, or a set of circumstances or events? With the archive appointed as supreme mediator?

The limits and depths of historical inquiry are not prefigured. Archives are constantly infused with fresh topics and bodies of information; they are places of increasing diversity. They are also in a state of extraordinary flux amidst society's digital transformation. Although it is probably eternally the case, in this context, the future of the past, insofar as history writing and archive authority is concerned, is particularly unpredictable.

Archive, Archived, Archiving

Julie Ault

An accretion of further analysis, September 1, 2011

Once a collection has been instituted in a formal archive further additions are permissible. However, new material does not get smoothly integrated; it is kept separate as an accretion. In this way, production of the archive is registered as happening over time. That was then. Then something else was added.

The addition is in light of the archive. The designation of a subject as worthwhile by the establishment of an archived collection enables something to be added. (Collect as much as you want, the archive must agree to accept it.) Collection produces more archive. Consider, for instance, a set of letters in a box in a basement. Like any unaccounted for trace, they are vulnerable and can get lost, discarded, or end up on a table at a flea market. But the existence of a specific collection to which these letters are relevant means the correspondence will likely be accessioned. No longer in jeopardy, they will reside in a designated body, in the archive.

My research engages the intersectorial space of archiving, memory, and historical representation *in practice*, and in respect to working out fitting methods and forms for registering previously unhistoricized art events into enduring public records. Activating the archive of the artists' collaborative Group Material, of which I was a member for its active duration [1979 to 1996], and committing the group's initial historical representation to print, has been a primary testing ground. My research additionally encompasses the exploration of a number of other artists' methods, and the ways that art and artifact can give history form.

My overall investigation has been continually nourished by revisiting and rethinking ideas, references, actions, and deductions. It has likewise been stimulated through

incorporating fresh experiences, dialogues, and reflections, and continues to be a dynamic process.

This writing engages pivotal questions, which have been posed from outside and within, explicitly and implicitly, to the articulation of my research project made one year ago. This writing constitutes an accretion to that critical reflection submitted September 1, 2010, *Retrospective / Prospective: Activating the Archive*. That account remains a valid expression of the probing period, which preceded, and as such, is an artifact I would like to preserve rather than smoothly update. This accretive logic is a lesson of the archive, which teaches the wisdom of provenance, and that artifacts are evidence that should not be tampered with.

Tracking, recording, and displaying my research is a case in point. Treating *Retrospective / Prospective* as an artifact permits me to preserve the period of development, so I might witness and critically reflect on the overall process and its stages in the operation of recounting. Seamless revision privileges culmination, and in the process, endangers the legibility of development.[89]

The archive. It sounds so stern, so solid. The commencement and the commandment, where Derrida began.[90] Legacy. Heritage. Proof. At the beginning of my research,[91] I knew from experience that the archive was not reliable. In principle, I understood it was permeable, which is not to say wide open – but actionable. I realize this more intensely now. Instituting the Group Material Archive,[92] and cohering *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material*, 2010,[93] in tandem, allowed me to temporally conjoin "archiving" and "history writing," and in the process investigate their interdependency.

No stage in the process of learning is expendable. Archive ambivalence fed assumptions and intuitive resistance; curiosity and need led to research and action; archive enthusiasm brought more research, which generated disenchantment and obsession in equal measure. I crossed a threshold when I entered the archive as a place to derive from and contribute

to. The archive has likewise infiltrated me; once archive consciousness takes hold, it is difficult to suspend.

My initial reading of Jacques Derrida's *Archive Fever* was impatient. At the time, my research mood was activist; I wanted to find things out by doing – by "taking on" the archive, and that attitude influenced how I read. Research is colored by what one is searching for, and I was looking to confirm the suspicion that the archive is a tomb for past lives, conservative in every sense of the word – the opposite of memory, which is uncontainable and messy. Archive as collective death drive.[94] Looking for corroboration in *Archive Fever*, I did not fathom its refusal to assure the notion of archive whatsoever.

On the other hand, I came away equipped to embrace the prospect of death by history – to fill in the space of Group Material's missing body with archive and publication, hoping to revive its principles and methods in the process.[95] A liberatory dimension clarifies as I circle back to Derrida after instituting and inscribing Group Material into these systems of history: the responsibility of memory is consigned to the archive and to its future use.

Archive proliferates all the time, and in turn, so does history. The establishment of collections and subjects continually alter and expand the contents and scope of the archive.[96] In the process of cohering the Group Material archive I wondered, "where does the archive end?" At what point does the frame of inclusion go too far afield, or become too encompassing and exhaustive. The question seemed spatial at the time, but it is also a temporal issue. The letters found in the basement of an abandoned house. The manuscript that turns up at an antique store. The found document that no one knew existed, which has the potential to change everything. What about the phantom that *does* respond to our inquiry, albeit unwittingly, through recouped and uncovered artifacts?[97]

Artifacts communicate but they do not tell more than their physical facts. They have the capacity to bespeak. As historical traces they function as indicators, and may represent infinite ties to the past. But what exactly they infer and link to depends on what one is looking to find. They are not oracles. They do not tell stories. They do not contain the

past. They do not narrate what they represent. Artifacts are revealed through interpretative engagement. We extrapolate, we project, we disclose, we represent, we speak. Any number of relations between documents may exist, but it is the researcher who *makes* the relationships, and has the capacity to render associations visible, build cases, and establish histories.

There are many ways to make use of an artifact. You come across an object in an archive. You are somewhere between knowing nothing and knowing too much. Consider for instance a photograph that sits in a file. One person looks at the photograph and wants to know more; in fact she wants to know everything she can learn from it. She traces as many connections as possible, seeking origins, circumstances and consequences, stories and histories, and modeling chains of events the photograph suggests. She doesn't know where to stop; the photograph points to countless roads and she can only take a few. She chooses the sure paths and follows others on the hunch that they may be revealing, and perhaps lead to new knowledge. Another person encounters the photo and is immediately absorbed; she recognizes the thinking behind it, or perhaps is gripped by its point of view, or *something*. Utterly inspired, she seeks no further information. Someone else comes across the photograph and barely notices – it does not concern her study. For another, the photo confirms her thesis. She will use it on the cover of the book she is writing.

Historical Contexts and Interpretation

The call for historicizing Group Material more broadly in relation to historical periods – intellectual turns, cultural turns, and social trends, including postmodernism, multiculturalism, feminism, post feminism, and pluralism, gives rise to specific topics of method. What informed the decision to *not* take such an approach in the first retrospective representation of Group Material? Why does *Show and Tell* take a different route, and with what intentions and implications? Does the book embody critical

methods, is it a critical history itself, or does it simply record Group Material's history of critical practice?

The Road Taken

An initial motivation for reopening the case of Group Material was the desire to stop actively narrating the group. Soon after Group Material's dissolution in 1996 my live narrations fossilized into memorized short, medium, and long versions of the story, coupled with memorized enthusiasm.[98] I repeatedly activated "habit-memory"[99] and in the process, obstructed active recollection, which makes it possible to "remount the slope of our past,"[100] and forge new relationships and meanings.

Paul Ricoeur reminds us that active recollection, or what he calls "recollection memory,"[101] involves recognition, which memory out of habit does not. Habitual memory exists in a mental file cabinet,[102] accessible on demand with the right call number. Only the call number requires recognition. For years I regarded memorized telling as a necessary and pragmatic solution for repeatedly speaking to the same topic. At some unpinpointable moment I realized this was insidious. I had the impression of being divided, and of my voice speaking without me and sounding hollow. Rupturing that dead-end circuit required purposely entering memory of a different order, "present memory,"[103] as part of the larger process of apprehending, relearning, and gaining fresh insight into Group Material through archiving and publishing.

The modality used for the "present representation of absent, past things"[104] is dictated by purpose. Faithfully representing the group (to ourselves) for the sake of articulation, conservation, closure, and regeneration, influenced the mode of *Show and Tell*. The proposition of writing this history involved mourning, and, by extension, liberation, which proper mourning is said to usher in. Group Material's collaboration was intimate and long lasting. The commitment to work together others in close alliance, to create and evolve and convey shared ideals in practice and in public required devotion. Its inauguration in 1979 was cause for elation, yet when the group disbanded it barely felt

like a group. There was no clear object of mourning. The final entry of the guiding text, written in 2010, in the chronicle section of *Show and Tell,* demonstrates:

> Fall 1996. Felix Gonzalez-Torres died from AIDS-related causes in the beginning of the year (January 9, 1996). His death has cast a shadow on the group for Julie and Doug, who are already ambivalent about its continuance. Although Thomas and Jochen are still open to working in Group Material, enthusiasm is lacking. Group Material seems to be in a state of dissolution rather than reinvention or shift. Jochen Klein has returned to painting and moves to London, and Thomas Eggerer is also considering painting again, as well as a move to Cologne. Julie and Doug feel it is time to formally bring the group to an end and cease activity, and not let permit Group Material's history to be watered down by unmotivated, less compelling work. Julie and Doug decide they will continue to individually represent the group's histories through live narration and writings. They plan to think about making a book at some future date.[105]

This "conclusion" expresses several tenses at once: what was, what is – as it is written in present tense, and what will be. Cohering the archive in public, literally taking it out of our hands, and making the book, are in part, formalities for mourning the death of the group and the demise of the idealism that underwrote its course. I will turn to the conditions of this wider loss later.[106]

On the local level faithful resemblance is tested through recognition, by ringing true. Do I recognize Group Material in this book? Do other participants? Does the depiction do justice to personal and collective memory? Do those who encountered Group Material's projects in real time recognize and recollect? But turning past events into "history" is only partly for those who remember. The prime social reason for reopening the case was to stimulate action in the future, which is meant to include the instantly vanishing present.

Further affinity is aspired for. If faithful resemblance is achieved, it follows that future identifications will ensue and multiply.

My experiences attest to the necessity of recognition as part of active recollection, which, in turn, necessitates latitude for identification in Group Material's historical representation. But on what grounds? What sorts of identification? Can rapport be predicted? Does the artist-historian engineer identification by tapping into social memory? Or does she trust it will be a natural outcome of accomplishing similitude?

Given the ease with which authorial intentions take on a fixative dimension and set the stage for subsequent reception, attaching retrospective declarations of intent to the group's original work was avoided. Artists' intention is implanted in cultural memory both formally by way of published statements, interviews, didactics, gallery tours, live presentations, and miscellaneous information that circulates on the Internet, and informally by word of mouth – hearsay. Shorthand descriptions proliferate: my work is about . . . I was trying to get at . . . I meant to . . . . Access to a work or body of work is extended to the artist herself, anchoring art in the familiar terrain of explanation.

The artist as her own interpreter symbolically stands alongside the work imparting clues, and pronouncing intentions in hindsight.[107] Each time an author speaks about his work, especially in these times, when even informal talks are podcast or otherwise documented and distributed, he contributes to the record. Via the archive such informational artifacts imply potential repetition ad infinitum. Intentionality is somewhat integral to expression, but when an author's alleged design obstructs or supersedes viewers and readers' interpretation processes, it is problematic.

Because *Show and Tell* inaugurates Group Material's "history," it has the ability to define what Group Material "was all about." In *Show and Tell*, intentionality is implied in the details of the documentation presented, but it is not summarized retrospectively. As much as the book appears to be a documentary endeavor it exposes my – and, to include all levels of collaboration involved in the process – "our," subjective relationships to the

subject. The paramount intention to *represent faithfully* and *generate affinity* dictated its methods.

In the aftermath of cultural presence, when any iteration of Group Material is by definition history, interpretation is inevitable. Interpretation is suffused in every moment of searching, finding, curating, editing, assigning relevance, and connecting dots between documents that constitutes research, including not leastly, presenting, or making present. However, I have stopped short of overt interpretation as an explicit means. Yes, Group Material *could* be considered an example or product of larger trends, a "sign of the times," but such framing risks sacrificing its special dimension and particular dynamics. Grounding Group Material's portrayal within larger social frameworks, which, at the time, appeared to be limitless, but have since been bounded and periodized by historicization, is at odds with composing a historical representation to launch clearings so that social memory and imagination in its infinite terms might be tapped. It is important that readers have the opportunity to engage Group Material by their own power of association.

Group Material needed to be given account as both a specific and a notional framework of cultural agency. The questions of whether or not Group Material needed to be accounted for in order to *be history* and to be adequately consultable are unanswerable. Group Material was nomadic for most of its years of activity. After its dissolution information was scattered and access was sketchy. The seemingly opposing goals of being, on the one hand, recounted, and on the other hand, open-ended, beckoned. Group Material is now locatable in its reconstituted body of material in the archive, and on the bookshelf in *Show and Tell*. However, by design, Group Material remains undefined in so far as overt historicizing interpretation and retrospective summary are mostly excluded from *Show and Tell*.[108]

In its collaborative essence, and through its exhibition practice, Group Material embodied decentralization as it created contexts in response to precise conditions, conflicts, and affinities. The objectives that guided Group Material to resist making declaratives in its

exhibition practice in favor of fashioning multivocal forums guided me to follow suit in the book. Avoiding historical contextualization invites a multitude of individual and social interpretations by the book's users, along their own lines of understanding, instead of prescribed ones, in essence, making it possible for readers to do the work of interpretation and historicizing.

Take The Other Road

The historicizing overview terminology of movements and periods (*that were once operative and now finished, "you, young reader, were not there"*)[109] seems incompatible with the overarching social aim of representing Group Material's histories to precipitate consequent affinity in practice, and thereby extend its integral communal perspective and investment in cultural agency and cultural democracy. Periodizing contains and entombs and in this sense is antagonistic to the generative goals that extend from a philosophy and not only a timeframe, for example, from principles of cultural democracy rather than from "a period of cultural democracy."

Consider the eighties for instance. In recent years the eighties has been used as a framework for staging major exhibitions and publications, including *Flashback – Revisiting the Art of the 80s*, curated by Philip Kaiser, Museum für Gegenwartskunst Basel, 2005, and *Artforum*'s 40th Anniversary double issue "The 1980s," 2003.[110] Others are in the works. *This Will Have Been: Art, Love, & Politics in the 1980s*, curated by Helen Molesworth, opens at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA), Chicago, 2012, and Chus Martínez heads a research / exhibition project focused on the intellectual debates of the eighties, Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA), forthcoming. Group Material has been invited to participate in each of these in some fashion. I am not suggesting these specific projects epitomize the *problems* of periodizing structures, nor is this the place to analyze them one-by-one. I note them as examples of the eighties being used as an organizing structure.

It is true that Group Material was founded in 1979, came of age in public during the eighties, and was less prolific in the early nineties before disbanding. Does that warrant the label, "eighties artists"? Once so branded, it is difficult to transcend such classification. The effects of labeling cannot be underestimated. Being branded by a decade negates individual chronology; the time capsule is severed from lived experience, and from the continuities and discontinuities of social existence.

Period frameworks encapsulate and tend to be reductive. The attempt to relate art production to larger cultural and social circumstances implied by highlighting a decade, and conjuring a timeframe of dominant trends, risks doing so iconically. Even without explicit articulation, cultural terms that float in the social memory echo as backdrop: eighties' excess, the glamorous eighties, Po Mo, Wall Street, neo-geo, commodity art, neo-expressionism, appropriation.[111] Such terminology can unwittingly fuse as a classification system held in mind and applied by viewers and readers.

Decade periodization deriving from media and promotional culture is sometimes used as a convenient formatting structure at the expense of developing more complex ways of showing or proposing history.[112] Decade formats are macro, and risk racing through histories: there was this and then there was this and don't forget this was happening too. Typically, they are hierarchical. The role for Group Material in such a package is preassigned to sidebar at the edge of main events, such as the symbolic battle between neo-expressionism and appropriation, or between aesthetics and activism. Were these really battles? To what degree are such depictions rhetorical fabrications of polarization that in the process encourage conceiving culture and society as continually polarized?

On the other hand, mapping a period and drawing lines between artists, practices, and contexts can be fruitful. Periodizing can be taken up in the spirit of a partial or opinionated timeline, to lay open or propose relationships between events, and make complex or concealed histories discernable. Predictable renditions, of the eighties in turn call for counterrepresentations. (I suspect that Molesworth's and Martinez's endeavors will represent meaningful confrontations of ideas and practices.) The interplay between

common classification devices, how we perceive ourselves, others, and society, and what we do as cultural practitioners is at stake in the negotiation of formats.[113]

Historicizing formats encourage certain readings and practices and discourage others; they can act as entrance and / or obstacle, depending on the attitude and depth of the author(s). I may be overly reactive to the loading of meaning that historicizing formats based on packaging, periodizing, and delimiting movements exert. Just as I respond this way, others may well find such parameters focusing. However, even if I am particularly sensitive to such devices, I wonder whether any artist identifies with the handles that get attached to their work. I have never heard anyone say their work is about relational aesthetics, or I am a postmodern eighties neo-geo painter. To great extent classifying terminology is imposed by promotional culture, of which the art industry is a part. I include art history and criticism (and myself) in the art industry.

Defining periods and movements also involves judgment, who is in who is out, what and who were important then, and by exclusion, what was not. The Eighties Show: you may not want to be in it but you cannot afford to be left out. Histories are so written. One can be written in and written out.[114] In the spirit of Barbara Kruger, I have to ask, *whose eighties, whose history?*

Someday, when a future researcher studies the cumulative eighties exhibitions she will note that certain artists were repeatedly included. What meaning will she read into that? She might ask, How accurate were those versions of the eighties. Eventually new scholarship will take place. And history will expand with corrections and accretions. The process is on endless repeat. (My own involvement in the recuperation of Sister Corita's practice that was excluded from the canonic history of sixties Pop Art, is a case in point.)

Referring back to my notes during the "archiving laboratory" period of the Group Material test case, I find: "Initiate inventive 'interpretations' of key aspect(s) of Group Material's practice as projects in order to activate those methods / principles in the present tense." *Show and Tell* is one of those projects, a carrying on and reworking of

practice and precepts, and in itself an interpretation that hypothesizes Group Material as both particular and infinitely *timely*, opening its practice rather than narrowing it. Offering example for others to relate to and improve on, in so doing, setting up conditions for furtherance and multiplication.

Group Material cofounder Tim Rollins recently asked me, why the resurgence of interest in Group Material now? On the surface the interest and response seems to say something about what might be lacking in current artistic culture, or about filling a void, or being the right model at the right time, but in fact I believe a similar reception could occur at any moment, because the principles that Group Material embodied and the issues that the group's work spoke to are not time bound, despite that though the practice was time-based.

Perhaps it would be different if cultural and political conditions had changed dramatically since Group Material's disbanding. Then, it might arouse interest purely for historical value. There has been lots of change but no sea change. The spirit of Group Material as well as its example of collaborative practice and the strategies used are all valuable to the present. Vivid enduring effective collaboration is always timely.

Returning to the question: Why not historically contextualize Group Material more broadly? There is paradox in situating a practice that sought to "question the entire culture we have taken for granted"[115] and the master narratives and dominant institutions of that culture, within an anti-grand narrative, such as postmodernism – a "discourse of delegitimation."[116] In spite of its critical design, such discourse can function as an alternative account – a history of dissent, counterculture, and of constellations of critical intellectual debate, that takes shape as a quasi-grand narrative of Opposition.[117] I do not mean to suggest that historians and theoreticians plan this course. Although Group Material sometimes portrayed culture as a battleground, for the most part, it sought to cut across such a territorialized notion of the cultural economy, and of society, and speak in terms of "for" rather than "against." In the long-term, Group Material did not speak the vocabulary of opposition or dissent so much as participation, agency, and multiplicity.

For Group Material to be recognized it needs to reinforce itself. *Show and Tell* refuses to speak in terms of oppositions. The apparent dichotomies of dominant and marginal, culture and counterculture, Left / Right, righteous and corrupt, aesthetic and political, etc., lost their soundness over time in practice. On behalf of Group Material, *Show and Tell* takes a less contrast-driven, less aggressive stance. By refusing to affirm such disunion in representation *Show and Tell* stays true to the group's history of lived experience and does not further replicate polarizing notions of culture.

Historical staging is blunt. Why historicize in terms of one context over another? Given that the group did not delimit it's practice or identify with any particular movement, -ism, or classification, it would be somewhat arbitrary to fasten onto historical scaffolding.

Framing devices can be changed like backdrops in a photo studio, to change the sitter's appearance in relation to different settings. A figure is clearer in front of a solid background, than against a patterned one made from other texts, so to speak. Group Material would be one thing in relation to punk and another in relation to postmodernism, or conceptual art, modernism, or activism.

When local history is situated in or against a historicized context which is larger and pre-established as a subject / discourse, it is in danger of being absorbed. The larger configuration tends to "explain" the microhistory of a specific group of people, and their experiences, decisions, and actions. The microhistory gets thematicized and rendered an illustration of larger phenomenon. (This is analogous to the frequently heard accusation that curators use artworks to illustrate their thesis.) Because of the tendency of historical contextualization to function as explanation, the position taken here rejected *all* frameworks, to instead focus on one microhistory and its capacity to accentuate and register cultural conditions and change, through the lens of itself.

A specific example. Consider, for instance, were Group Material to be historicized by Multiculturalism? As soon as the term is put forward its potential to take over is expressed. It is true that Group Material was in itself heterogeneous and reflected various

multiplicities in its exhibitions. But this was not because of "multiculturalism," it was because culture *is* multicultural. That society is made up of multiple cultures is an undeniable fact.[118] Culture was multicultural before the term multiculturalism was active in any arena.

Clearly I do not mean to diminish or denigrate any theoretical inquiry and articulation, or any lived experiences associated with mulitculturalism, postmodernism, or feminism, etc., including my own. The impetus is to question the consequences and value of sweeping up the histories of the works and investigations of any artist, writer, or practitioner, into periodizing models, intellectual debates, or social movements at the expense of their potential open-endedness. In its self-iteration Group Material's status is meant to be protected as *untheorized historically*.[119] That this is in itself a theorization of Group Material indicates the orientation of *Show and Tell* as a critical enterprise engaged with history writing.

The question why not contextualize Group Material in broader historical or periodized terms asks Group Material to relocate its frame of reference. *Show and Tell*, in turn, invites a shift of focus to ground level social processes, and maintains that, in this case, historicizing is the domain of others. Others can use the book as resource to inspire and aid their studies and analyses, whether that means situating Group Material in a specified field of cultural activism, in relation to histories of curatorial practice, or postmodern art, or anything else.

Vantage

As it shows and tells, Group Material's book spotlights atmosphere; its ground-level orientation conveys that the collaboration was serious and it was fun; a sociable context.[120] The formal structure of the design of the book's chronicle section is intended to show this interior / exterior and process / project structure of the chronology.[121] A photographic analogy is helpful: the book's perspective is akin to a ground-level human-scale way of looking, while perspective situated in larger historical discourse is

comparable to an aerial, bird's eye view. Each method omits. The ground shot includes only glimpses of surround, the longer view makes it difficult to see what's happening close up – social process.

Ricoeur raises the issue of scale, and distinguishes its effect: "what can be seen on a large scale are the developing forces. But what can be seen on a small scale – and this is the lesson of microhistory – are the situations of uncertainty within which individuals . . . attempt to orient themselves . . . . Therefore, when you write macrohistory, you are more likely to work with determinisms, whereas when you work on microhistories, you have to engage indecisions, that is to say, indeterminism."[122] Ricoeur proposes that history writing employ scale shifts or moving through scales as productive method, and that scope be regarded as dynamic rather than as static.

The scale fluctuations in *Show and Tell* occur after the ground-level chronicle segment of the book. The essays that follow the chronicle include my own, "Case Reopened: Group Material," which speaks pragmatically (akin to my role in the group) to issues of methods and the ideas and purpose of the archive and book; and an essay by Tim Rollins, "What Was to be Done?" which looks back to the origins of the group – the cofactors that led to its founding and its initial spirit (Tim *was* the original spirit of the group); and an essay by Doug Ashford, "An Artwork is a Person," which zooms out for a wider view to situate Group Material's work in the eighties as extending from social movements of the sixties (Doug often inhabited the role of intellectualizing).[123] The essays by former group members are followed by Sabrina Locks, "Tracking AIDS Timeline" and "Behind the Timeline,"[124] which zoom in to her research on *AIDS Timeline*, 1989, done in the freshly cohered archive, and written while she was a curatorial student finishing her masters degree at Bard Center for Curatorial Studies. In essence Locks's investigation was designed as an example of using and contributing to the archive.[125]

To summarize, the essays begin at ground level, with the micro- microhistory of the archiving and history project, then make a temporal turn to look at origins, then zoom out to look on the larger social developments of the times, then move back in to look closer

within Group Material's chronology, and microscopically examine one project, which is a timeline project that maps the development of the AIDS crisis between 1979 and 1989. I belabor this to clarify the use of scale in the book as a whole. The book's 200-page chronicle section, which my comments here take up in detail, is primary, but it is one part in relation with other ways of telling. The overall book engages temporal and scale shifts and brings contributions from several vantage points into proximity.

By specifically stressing *AIDS Timeline* in the final section of *Show and Tell*, the dual operation of close-up perspective on one project, and opening out onto larger developments and macrohistory through the methods of that project is accomplished. The complexity of scale and temporal operations involved in historical representation is thereby pointed to.

Emphasizing actions and dynamics at ground level seeks to highlight social process over effect and judgment. This emphasis works to create a multivalent space that can be engaged, and projected into and out from, a space to harbor multiple points of entry and identification, and rouse interest, inspire imagination, critical consciousness, and analysis. Readers and viewers might relate to the spirit of idealistic enterprise Group Material embodied (a bunch of friends chipping in money and energy to open an exhibition space together), or the power relations of collaboration, or relate in terms of style. They might feel visual affinity or be affected by the liberal use of color, or be intrigued by different graphic design moments, or the suggestiveness of the exhibition titles. They may want to follow members' participation, or the involvement of one member, or may simply be taken with interlocking stories and histories, intrigued by what is exposed and what is not, or any other possibility.

Contemporaries who revisit the period through the lens of Group Material attend with their individual awareness and interests as well as with an expanse of cultural memory. Those who are less familiar with Group Material's period of activity are invited in at eye level to witness actions and circumstances through re-collection of evidence and memory, conveyed in a present tense telling. The use of present tense is intended as inclusive, to

increase accessibility and regenerate a fundamental sense of cultural agency. The potential for cross-connecting information is left open, according to viewers' lived experience, historical awareness, biases and allegiances.

Chronicle

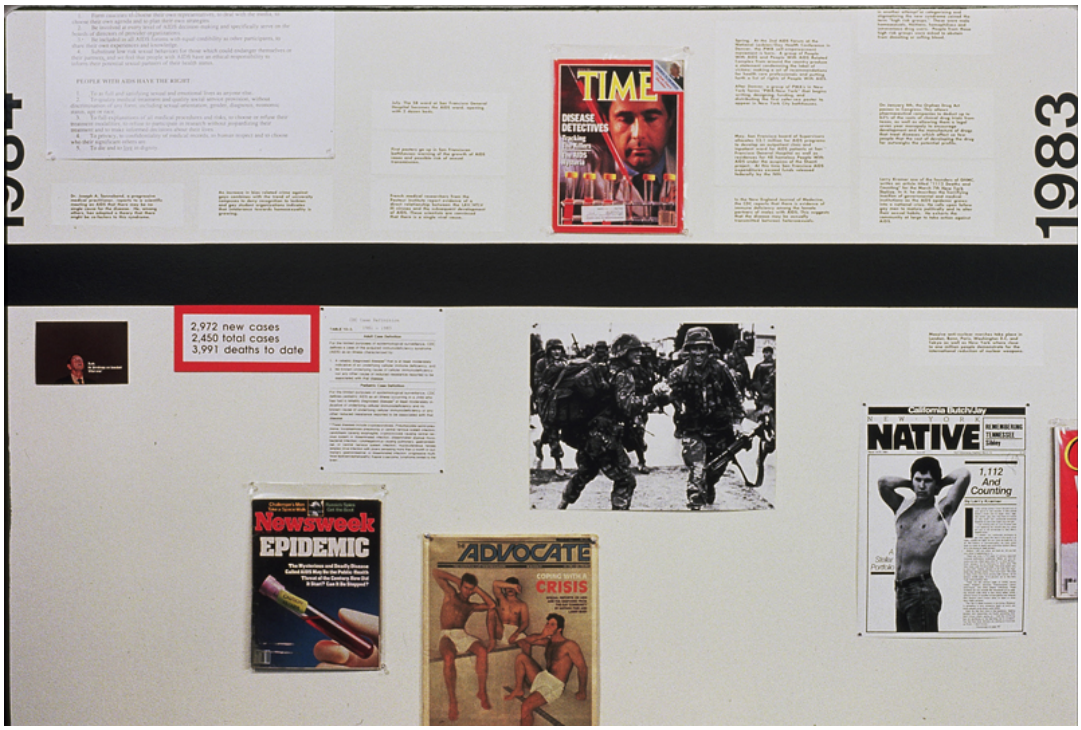
It is worthwhile to distinguish chronicle from timeline. Chronicles record rather than historicize. Chronicles impart events and sequence. Both chronicles and timelines are linear at heart but the informational reach of the timeline format is broader as it encompasses multiple lines of inquiry and is capable of bringing seemingly incompatible information into confrontation. The timeline format is more global and less strict than the chronicle format. Chronicles and timelines both periodize; they can both function as narrative armatures.

Answering the question "why did things happen like that and not otherwise?" requires turning past events into "followable story," which Hayden White distinguishes from historicizing a *completed* story. Chronicles are capable of telling followable stories, but timelines endeavor to answer other questions, which call for judgment: "What does it all add up to?" "What is the point of it all?"[126]

The timeline mode Group Material used on occasion as an exhibition format was conceived as a spatial articulation of extending lines of inquiry out from a linear layer or chronicle. As such, the timeline is a history-mapping tool used to generate diagrams of past events and their interrelations. Timelines potentially combine a horizontal notion of events with a vertical spread that takes in other events to posit their interconnectedness and propose potential readings of cause and effect. As a guiding device, a timeline sets a linear horizon and performs an anchoring purpose, acting as a focus from which viewers' perspectives venture. The timeline itself is endowed with a double function of systematizing and releasing information, opening views to what is above and below it.

Timelines make larger explanation and historical analysis possible by what they include and exclude. And they do so with apparent objectivity.

Group Material employed the timeline format as a research and structuring device for two exhibition projects. The first was *Timeline: A Chronicle of U.S. Intervention in Central and Latin America*, 1984, P.S.1, New York, and the second was *AIDS Timeline* 1989, Matrix Gallery, University Art Museum, University of California at Berkeley (other manifestations of *AIDS Timeline* took place at Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CT, 1990, and *1991 Whitney Biennial*, The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York).



Group Material, *AIDS Timeline,* 1989, University Art Museum, University of California at Berkeley

Because Group Material had used the format; I briefly contemplated making the book a timeline with Group Material as its driving subject, but rejected the idea for the same reason – *because* it was a form so associated with the group. The idea seemed clever and potentially trite beside Group Material's past exhibitory timelines. Secondly, similar

dilemmas arose as when considering historical contextualization. What to choose, what events to link to? What to implicate in Group Material and vice versa?

There is a substantial difference between timeline as exhibition, which in Group Material's case included objects, images, multiple media, documents, text, etc., and book version timelines, which are inherently graphic, rely on reproduction, and in so doing tend to level information on a single, seamless platform. Timeline exhibitions are capable of creating space for viewers to make connections between documents and take a prominent role in narrativizing or making history. Graphic timelines, common to media and magazine culture, are easily consumable – a type of compressed history lesson. In graphic formats the timeline's capacity for conveying the past as an intricate web of interconnected actions and events is dramatically decreased, in part because elements are reduced in scale and made equivalent. Graphic seamlessness and page scale dramatically alter the space for users, and give the appearance of events being illustrations in a chronology. The graphic smoothness indicates that narratives have already been written and committed to print, ready to be consumed, as opposed to "put together."

Hayden White points out that a key problem of the (objective) chronicle or chronology is the notion that events tell themselves, in lieu of a narrator (subjective).[127] At first glance the chronicle of Group Material does exactly that, given that artifacts, facts, and anecdotes are made present through themselves as well as by using a depersonalized present tense mode. The archive shows itself, albeit through the prejudiced curatorial eyes of its participant interlocutor(s), who, were once in the action; who represented actions in their time; and who now re-represent those actions without additional self-analysis. Narration is not absent in *Show and Tell*. The narrator is conceived and configured as a "collective subjective," constituted by the group that once was, and a more abstract version of the amalgam Group Material, which is conjured to do the telling in the present. Past is grammatically articulated as the present. Readers are guided by subjective and collective narration.

Books tend to streamline material, and ground or position readers by imposing a point of view, that of the narrator. *Show and Tell*'s chronicle is decentralized, in other words, it does not privilege one point of view – much like a decentralized Group Material exhibition environment in which there is no ideal view; all views are potentially ideal and multiple perspectives are spurred. One can enter anywhere. Framing or summarizing from a post- mode of narration proposes a position of "This is what it was all about." Such conclusive modes potentially short-circuit viewers' processes of discovery and *conclude* rather than extend Group Material in the process. While it could make good sense to use such a method in other situations, depending on the researcher-historian's purposes and relationship to the subject, in this case of "self-historicizing" a collective practice, these danger signs became clear in the process of thinking and working through what is at stake.

"The chronicle is usually marked by a failure to achieve narrative *closure*. It does not so much conclude as terminate. It starts out to tell a story but breaks off in *media res*, in the chronicler's own present; it leaves things unresolved or, rather, leaves them unresolved in a story-like way. . . . The Chronicle represents [historical reality] *as if* real events appeared to human consciousness in the form of *unfinished* stories."[128] While pointed out here by White as a peril of the chronicle form, I concur the Group Material chronicle does this and does so on purpose. The chronicle section of *Show and Tell* finishes and unfinishes, as closure of the group *and* continuance of its precepts are sought. Referring again to the final lines of the chronicle: "Julie and Doug feel it is time to formally bring the group to an end and cease activity. . . . They plan to think about making a book at some future date."

Unhistorical / Historical

(*Young, naive, and rebellious: we did not for a minute doubt our ability to change the world and alter society's course by coming on the scene and by our actions. However, we were not hoping to "make history"; our prospect was the present.*)

For several years, Group Material was rather unhistorical,[129] not quite like the carefree beasts and children Nietzsche conjured, but mostly unaware of being in history or of having one, capable only of being "honest."[130] Over time, historical consciousness took form in each of us for various reasons and it solidified in the group as a whole. The salient trigger was the AIDS crisis and the close up witnessing of its casualties. Historical perception took hold in the larger sense of social development. Waking up to the "bad news" of History, we perceived a pile up of events colliding in the AIDS crisis, which seemed like a slow motion disaster.[131] The group responded with no less than seven projects between 1989 and 1991, including exhibitions, a bus advertisement, a publication project distributed over eleven art magazines, and a sound installation.[132] Recently reflecting on the time, Ashford and I noted, "The accumulation of AIDS-related illnesses and deaths of young friends and colleagues informed our daily lives. For our own edification and for public purpose the group embarked on constructing a history of the conditions that transformed the epidemic into a full-blown national crisis."[133]

A secondary strata of historical awareness coincided: group self-consciousness of its own "history." The realization of being in history and having chronology – a career so to speak, subtly disrupted the group's process, and threw a monkey wrench into its rhythm. Due to these notions of local and larger history the fresh "honest" aspiring tone of the group's work deflated to some degree. For example, conceptualizing a multiform four-part project on Democracy (albeit crisis in democracy), with minimal irony, would not have been possible if not for the group's idealistic belief in cultural practice – in our practice – to impact the social present. Somewhere between working on the first part of *Democracy*, Dia Art Foundation, 1988, entitled *Education and Democracy*, and the last, *AIDS & Democracy: A Case Study*, a change in undercurrent was palpable.[134] The slide into awareness of "having a history" is difficult to pinpoint and describe, but for the group, it seemed to go hand in hand with the urgency and death toll environment related to AIDS. By then, Group Material had existed for ten years, so it is likely that hitting the decade limit sparked realization and nervousness. (*It's been ten years! Now what do we do?*)

Temporal awareness of time period, anniversary, and accumulation, in tandem with the profound recognition of mortality we experienced simultaneously, shifted the tone of Group Material. The larger backdrop of the "bad news" of history – that we are in a flow of disasters, exploitations, self-determination struggles, etc., framed by the historical conjunctions of American culture as economically stratified, competitive, polarized, and so on, was overwhelming. These interrelated strains of historical consciousness contradicted the idealism and critical exuberance that had previously motored the group. On the other hand, historical consciousness galvanized new work and a reinvestment of commitment in the group. As Locks noted in her investigation of *AIDS Timeline* for *Show and Tell*: "An exhibition can function, however provisionally, intentionally or not, as a prescriptive presentation of history, or, as in the case of *AIDS Timeline,* as a call to amend its course."[135] The notion of *intervening* and consciously using interventionist strategies clarified in the group at the time. It seemed the "us" and "them" lines were clearly drawn around AIDS. Those that it was happening for and those that it was not. Those who were fighting AIDS and those who were creating the conditions for its furtherance. Positions morphed into oppositions. Even the usage of terms like interventionist and strategy are telling and were somewhat new to the group's vocabulary of practice. Not that our previous work was agendaless, or without motive, but the notions of targeting and strategizing that were inherent to AIDS activism, gave things a different energy and spin. Suddenly, *everything* seemed ideological. The shift of perception to the more sinister and entrenched aspects of history was accompanied by a change in disposition, which contributed to the group's eventual dissolution. The practice we had regarded as serious fun turned just plain serious.

It is interesting that curators and historians repeatedly pick up on *AIDS Timeline*. Perhaps this is because it recalls a historical conjuncture that deeply affected the art field, and embodies coming of age moments for many people working in the field. In recent years several curators have inquired about reconstructing the exhibition. In principle, one could gather the artworks and artifacts that composed it from the archive and other sources, and attempt to mimic their original installation. Most of the more ephemeral matter was saved

and now sits in Group Material's archive at New York University. Artworks were returned to the participants and lenders but most are locatable. But history was conceived in the project as an active field linking to the present. Recuperating *AIDS Timeline* would fossilize it as an exhibition-scale artifact.

Beyond the calls for its possible reconstruction which former members and I have declined and instructed the archive not to allow, there are two current manifestations of fragments of the project. A selection of material about and from *AIDS Timeline* is being loaned from the Group Material Archive for the 12th Istanbul Biennial *Untitled (12th Istanbul Biennial)*, 2011.[136] The curators, Jens Hoffman and Adrian Pedrosa, initially sought to recreate a fragment of the timeline, which I steered against, encouraging them to visit the archive and figure out an alternative that does not involve reconstruction of the exhibition whatsoever. Coincidentally, Ashford and I were invited to take part in the "100 notes 100 thoughts" publication series accompanying the forthcoming *dOCUMENTA (13)*. Artistic director Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev suggested picking up an aspect of the *Timeline*. We decided to publish the *AIDS Timeline* text itself, which structured the exhibition, and was compiled in 1989. This is the first publication of the text beyond the copyshop handouts distributed in the original exhibition. (Remarkably, between the four members involved in its making, only one copy could be found to place in the archive). The only occasion Group Material was invited to or participated in a biennial type exhibition was *documenta 8* in 1987.[137] Reminding people about Group Material through *Show and Tell* kindled the present interest, which will, in turn, likely generate further affinities. The archive continually produces more archive and reproduces history.

In "Uses and Abuses of History" Nietzsche equated happiness and being in the moment with the "capacity to sense things *unhistorically*," or to "forget" at least some of the time. In White's interpretation, "to *forget* what he knows – more, an ability to *deny* what he knows; he has an ability to dream, to frolic in images, and to clothe the terror, pain, and suffering caused by consciousness of his own finitude in dream-like imitations of immortality."[138] In the same essay Nietzsche linked the ability to think outside of history,

at least momentarily, to high-level creative focus leading to Art,[139] and asserted that, "Only when history undertakes to be turned into an art work and thus to become a purely artistic picture can it perhaps maintain the instincts or even arouse them. Such historical writing, however, would go completely against the analytical and inartistic trends of our time; indeed, they would consider it counterfeit."[140] A possible reading: when the artist liberates herself from history and from the confining notion of "historical truth,"[141] she can then apply artistic vision to "writing history," in the form of art.

The archive burdens and liberates variously and simultaneously. Nietzsche's proposition, "for the health of a single individual, a people, and a culture the unhistorical and the historical are equally essential,"[142] echoes in its halls and digital storage systems. Being oblivious to history (honest, free), and learning to deny and forget history are two very different states. What are the means to forgetting? Is this where the archive, and history writing, or history work, come into the picture?

Archiving, like the boundary of a timeline, releases and structures simultaneously. The archive institutes both remembering and forgetting. It is an active apparatus of recollection *and* an operational depository of disremembering. Archive, and the written record that emerges from the archive (while producing more archive), are collective instruments for locating and containing history and therefore for infinite remembering and disremembering. The notion of archive as container is somewhat misleading, for the archive is endlessly uncontainable and in a constant reproductive state. (It is also increasingly unlocatable in digital culture.)

("We are all suffering from a consumptive historical fever."[143] Is there any escape from our obsessions with the past? A Leonard Cohen lyric comes to mind, "I can't forget, I can't forget but I don't remember what." If only it were possible to be unhistorical. But thinking and memory are inextricable, are they not? Ricoeur: "The mind and the memory are one and the same."[144])

(Can actively forgetting history produce anything other than repetition? We seem to spend decades apprehending our life stories, and then begins the incessant process of loosening their grip on us, and delinking ourselves from our case histories. The Group Material history project a case in point. How to unarchive memory?)

Against Interpretation

There are many ways to work with an artifact. In keeping with Paulo Freire's instructions on how to read I have, in the past, regarded an essay as a fragment or manifestation of larger bodies of information – the author's other texts and chronology for instance, as well as socio-historical conditions of the time and place of the original writing. I believed research into these contexts was crucial to understand what an author was responding and contributing to.[145] While I still agree in principle with Freire's approach I no longer regard it as exclusive. One can easily get mired while attempting to trace the conditions and debates of the times in order to place the text in the author's chronology of texts, *in situ*. One can get lost in references to references to references, which all require further research.[146] One can also get caught up in the various competing lines of historicization applied to an author or a set of concerns. I am not talking about getting productively lost, but just lost.

There are other ways of reading a text. A text can be engaged in self-contained terms, akin to an artwork presented without explicit historicization. Essay as artifact: a single untethered fragment to engage through a current lens instead of situating it historically. Freire also advises: "When reading a book, we subject-readers should be receptive to any passage that triggers a deeper reflection on any topic, even if it's not the main subject of the book. Sensing a possible relationship between the read passage and our preoccupation, we as good readers should concentrate on analyzing the text, looking for a connection between the main idea and our own interest."[147]

Activating this trigger and relay potential: Susan Sontag's "Against Interpretation" links to the arguments in favor of and against historical contextualization. Sontag's polemic likewise lends itself to the subject of how interpretation surfaces in exhibition making, curatorial policy, and exhibition didactics.

When Sontag addressed the project of interpretation of art some forty years ago she distinguished between the older respectful variety that lays itself on top of what it speaks about without obstructing, and construal that excavates, and in the process, depletes.[148] At the time, Sontag thought the "taming" of art through overemphasis on content and explanation was "the revenge of the intellect upon the world. To interpret is to impoverish, to deplete the world – in order to set up a shadow world of 'meanings.'"[149] (She nonetheless claimed that the influence of interpretation depended on context, and could be liberating or reactive).[150] Sontag laments, "None of us can ever retrieve that innocence before all theory when art knew no need to justify itself, when one did not ask of a work of art what it *said* because one knew (or thought one knew) what it *did*."[151] Entwining Sontag's purity with Nietzsche's unhistorical honesty: is the forgetting and denying of history to extend to that of art itself? (I am somewhat purposely clouding "interpretation" and "contextualization," and "history" and "content," or more accurately, I am trailing what may be a productive confusion in hopes of clarification.)

Sontag's critique focuses on interpreting art in terms of content, and the problems of approaching art as a detective on the mission to find and inspect evidence of content using agreed upon criteria. Interpretations by critics, historians, and curators leave traces and enter the archive, permanently linking to the history of the object of discussion. These activities form a system and industry of interpretation that, institutes, or in fact has already well established, how art "should" be used, understood, valued in the broader field of reception. The stage is set for viewers to seek interpretation, one way or another.

Does art require contextualization? All art or only certain art? How much information is enough? How much is too much?[152] The salient issues are less to do with quantity than with the spirit and intention of interpretation, how it is made and its manner of broadcast.

That the value of interpretation, and whether it expands or diminishes its object of focus, is to be considered on a case-by-case basis follows. Yet Sontag invokes spatial and procedural terminology – laying on top of is respectful versus digging beneath "for sub-text," excavation, snooping behind, which depletes – suggesting that particular methods are also at fault. Do certain spatializing relationships between work and explanation, and between work, explanation, and viewer, improve and others depreciate?

Speaking on behalf of art and its receivership, and for protecting clearings for experience as precious, Sontag can be read as prescriptive: interpretation should be vigilant about its separation from its object of comment. Tread discretely.

The rift between the belief in the self-evidence of art, its capacity to speak for itself, and the belief that art is by definition coded and in need of mediation, whether that be historical, biographical, social, etc., is a persistent one. I remain ambivalent, often witness to changing my tune, depending on the situation. In light of the problematic, this ambivalence gains clarity as a healthy skepticism of any programmatic approach implied in taking sides.

My perspective as a viewer and exhibition visitor, as well as a practitioner activates my internal fluctuation. I have increasingly heard myself articulating and identifying with a variety of positions about the benefits and perils of mediation. As a viewer I alternate between the frustration of unawareness – being left alone to make what I want of a work or set of works, and the liberty to do so, which is uncharted terrain imbued with responsibility.

"Real art has the capacity to make us nervous. By reducing the work of art to its content and then interpreting *that*, one tames the work of art. Interpretation makes art manageable, comfortable."[153] Yes, but not only. Interpretation has the capacity to illuminate and aid understanding. Interpretation can open up meanings and make them legible. Interpretation can take many forms and angles.

In a culture that bids us to constantly seek the comfort of explanation, unlearning ways of dependent seeing and thinking is strenuous. The "too much information" character of current technology-driven culture moves us in the opposite direction of self-reliance. Society is constantly in a "need to know" state. If you use a mobile or iphone you can look it up, whatever "it" is. No need to sweat over ignorance or forgetfulness – full data is waiting to be summoned. Current technology encourages free-ranging information.[154] Anyone can gather facts, interpretations, and historicize and interpret from the endless digital "archive" almost anytime and anywhere, including *while* visiting an exhibition or otherwise engaging in art. How this impacts individual and collective memory is yet to be seen.

The position that art is self-contained and autonomous can be read (and therefore dismissed?) as conservative, modernist, regressive, and guilty of upholding the division of labor between producer and interpreter, the delineation of practices. The thinking goes something like, in the spirit of more recent phenomena of boundary and category dissolution in art and other fields (rendered as criticality) shouldn't we redress ideologies of classification and move into the present? Art is not autonomous; it is socially and politically impinged.

If one accepts that formative contexts are inherent in work in one way or another, without judging their legibility or obscurity, other elucidation does become tricky, aggressive even, like someone speaking while someone else is speaking. It is confusing for the speakers and for the listeners. Of course, the voice-over might well say something worthwhile, intriguing, or illuminating. Regardless, a dilemma ensues for the viewer. Who do I listen to harder, who do I screen out? How do I experience my experience? What to privilege? (In the case of audio guides, the voice-over is literal. Many museums offer portable "audio guides" to their collections and major exhibitions. Viewers move through galleries wearing headphones, tuned in to a voice of authority that instructs and informs their encounters.)

Proximity and temporality can be hazardous. Placing interpretation too close can inadvertently obscure what it seeks to explain. I am sure I am not alone in being susceptible to the battle for attention that takes place between works and labels installed nearby and on the same visual plane. I want to just see the work but the label taunts and tempts and almost always wins. Once the label is read, looking is altered if not occluded. Suspending and delaying interpretation are worth considering, as are methods of articulating and presenting interpretation.

Exhibition pedagogy

Connie Butler mounted the exhibition *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), Los Angeles, 2007, with a surprising move: there were no explanatory labels or contextualizing wall texts commenting on the works included in the show. The works were made to hold their own and be engaged, or not, according to their self-evidence. The practice in American museums of affixing narrative explanatory labels next to works, also known as didactics, was quite common by the mid-nineties, in part a result of the broadening of the gate as institutions "embraced" diversity and formerly excluded art and artists gained entry.

The remarkably multicultural *1993 Whitney Biennial* curated by Elizabeth Sussman put 'identity politics,' and a "framework of institutional explication"[155] at center stage.[156] The exhibition was largely regarded as political and preachy and generated criticism from both popular and academic press about the aesthetic validity of much of the work as well as the flattening effects of the didactic efforts.[157] Summing up the press response, David Deitcher observed, "Critics might praise the museum's greater openness to art by members of historically marginalized groups only to condemn the art it contained. This they criticized for its "strident tone," for being "numbingly didactic, easily summed up in a sentence or two," for reducing complex social themes into "the dichotomy of victim / oppressor . . .".[158]

Although artists' statements had on occasion been judiciously used at the Whitney,[159] the extent of pedagogical devices including descriptive labels and wall panels of artists' statements in proximity to every work as a prominent layer of the show was unprecedented. This explanatory campaign seemed, on the one hand, an attempt to provide access to the works to uninitiated audiences, and on the other, to function as justification.[160] Miwon Kwon commented, "it is assumed that the artists are very theoretically engaged, that their work is incredibly difficult material, and that in order for the audience to get it – which is not necessarily to engage it critically – the artists must speak."[161] The *1993 Whitney Biennial* was benchmark for flagging certain art, as different and demanding.

Not all art gets so marked or commented, but there is a tendency in mainstream contemporary museum culture to flag that which is perceived as belonging to some other context than the "average" museum visitor, thus requiring explanation, social context, politicization, and / or justification for being exhibited and engaged. Institutional framing can be implemented with a light touch or heavy-handedly. As American museums have sought to counter their elitist reputations and popularize in the wake of dramatically restricted public funding since 1989[162] the use of extended explanatory labels and didactic wall texts has become widespread, not only to mark "difficult" work but to provide historical information and artists' biography, presumably as points of access for audiences. Nonetheless, some art is regarded as sacrosanct, for instance the primary collection of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, is allowed to "speak for itself," and I have yet to come across a didactic treatment of Robert Ryman's paintings or any other "blue chip" artist or "modern master." The authority of such works is historically established and considered to be self-evident. Their status is such that marking or interfering with them at their site of display, i.e. with extended label explanation or an artist statement, would seem, from an institutional standpoint, ludicrous. (Although some uninitiated visitors might welcome supplementary information on Ryman's work for example.) Just as explicit institutional framing evidenced in Sussman's Biennial impinges the works, this stealthy manner of institutional framing "masterpieces" as self-evident and unmarkable does so as well.

Butler's decision not to didactically commentate the exhibited work in *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution* seemed refreshing in so far as the work was not subjected to running narrative or overlay in the show after the initial introductory wall, but also in staking out the question of interpretation in curatorial practice. Withholding narrated context effectively made a case for the works themselves embodying histories and contexts. And it reclaims that idea from being interpreted as "conservative." By extension, a case is made for the exhibition as an embodiment of overlapping contexts that by design make clarifications possible. My positive reaction to the lack of didactic framing is special to an interest in the topic itself. Probably most visitors did not ponder the absence of explanation but simply viewed the show as they might any other exhibition, meaning more or less equal – no doubt a point Butler intended to make.

Curatorial interpretation and institutional framing intersect with larger issues of art literacy and legibility. I suspect some viewers are grateful for extra information and others find it interfering. To say viewers *should* have unfettered experiences of work leans toward advocating an ideal engagement with art, which is not a case I want to make. I do not mean to construe prescription from either Butler's or Sussman's strategies but to draw attention to specific poles of the dynamic relations between art, exhibition pedagogic practice and didactic trends, in relation to work that has been historically excluded and discriminated against by curatorial and institutional practice.

Formats and modes have histories of development and function but are not in themselves conservative or radical. Pedagogical contextualization, interpretation, and "marking," are neither monolithic nor synonymous – interpretive operations are contingent on particular purpose and setting. I have mostly considered bringing contextual information into an exhibition a radical intervention that "rescued" work from the ubiquity of "autonomous" orientation and generic modernist-style treatment. Such strategy is double-edged: aggressive illumination opens up and constrains simultaneously. There is no stable solution: interpretation and presentation are contingent on circumstances.

Remaining open and flexible and present to possibility in some sense necessitates being anti-method. Method is defended as pragmatic, "you can't reinvent the wheel every time." Constantly changing methods potentially risks short-circuiting the possibility for deepening within the usage of a particular method. In my practice, I veer toward anti-technique, anti-method, and advocate operating case-by-case. However, it is important this not be defined as formula or understood as a guarantee. Anti-method combats the deterioration that adopting a creative or analytic modus operandi can bring about.

Entrenched technique narrows and risks obscuring other ways of thinking and doing. The inability to imagine other ways is imbedded in routinization, including of artistic method. In the interest of countering both auto-alienation and generalizing relationships (for instance, between curator, artist, artwork, institution, viewer), anti-method loosely frames a reflexive approach. Perhaps this is not so much anti-method as rejection of standardizing methods. To some degree this is an issue of temperament and a reflection of long-standing attentiveness to the hazards of habit and stultifying allegiances.

I have discussed the conjuncture of archiving and history writing vis-à-vis Group Material in detail. I have reflected on the arguments for and adjacent to the methods and forms I used to transmit Group Material and formally register its practice in public record. I have articulated the rationale and effects of becoming involved with the book form and publishing as artistic practice. I began this writing with a memory of a representation: "*I love exhibitions and I love making them*. For many years I began public presentations with similar declaration."

Coming full circle is immanent. In essence, I've backed myself into a corner with only one way out, through the door marked *Exhibition*. I've travelled from exhibition enthusiasm to ambivalence and anxiety, to professional shifts and from closets to histories to divergent archives, from expanding art history to book as exhibition, to testing the archive and beginnings and endings, to historical context and interpretive exhibiting. Machinations of method and snapshots of remembered exhibition exuberance contour the trail.



Julie Ault, *Power Up: Sister Corita and Donald Moffett, Interlocking*, 2000, Hammer Museum

Looking Back

To synopsize the route I have taken in exhibition practice vis-à-vis interpretative and contextualizing modes so far: beginning in Group Material, whose agenda was to overtly fuse aesthetic and sociopolitical interests and challenge what we considered to be the false neutrality of the prevalent modes of circulation, my perspective was antagonistic to the notion of art as self-evident and its reverent handling, which I regarded as elitist.

Group Material regarded exhibition as its medium, and conceived exhibition as a decentralized forum that, in the abstract, diagrams a multiplicity of perspectives, and in the particular, articulates a specified thematic or thematic universe. The formats used by the group (timelines, salon-style installations, roundtables, town meetings, democracy walls, advert distribution networks) reflected collaboration, collectivity, social process, and cultural democracy, which were the group's fundamental values. Every object or element within a Group Material installation was contextualized by its proximate

relations to other works or artifacts, creating crossfire of meaning and interpretation by design. Projects were all site or context dependent. In contrast with the more prevalent conceptions of art as autonomous and the use of white cube space and modernist-style installation, Group Material's methods had a jolting effect.

However working in the group was not like belonging to a political party. Throughout those years I was also an active and diverse viewer and had strong dialogues with a number of artist friends involved in object-making practices, and who believed in the ability of their work to speak for itself in exhibitions. In other words, that meaning is in the work and need not be unlocked, supplied, or created by relations to information, social context, other art, material, thematic, etc.

When Group Material ended, and I continued to work with exhibition as medium, I embraced the challenge of bringing contextualizing information into proximity with artworks, in order to historicize artistic production. My independent exhibition making since has been primarily concerned with animating specific models of cultural production I am studying, and making their generative contexts visible as an integral dimension; in effect historicizing them. This involves thinking and working through the translation and enactment (through presentation) of research in exhibition form, and taking up methods of materialization in direct dialogue with what is to be shown.

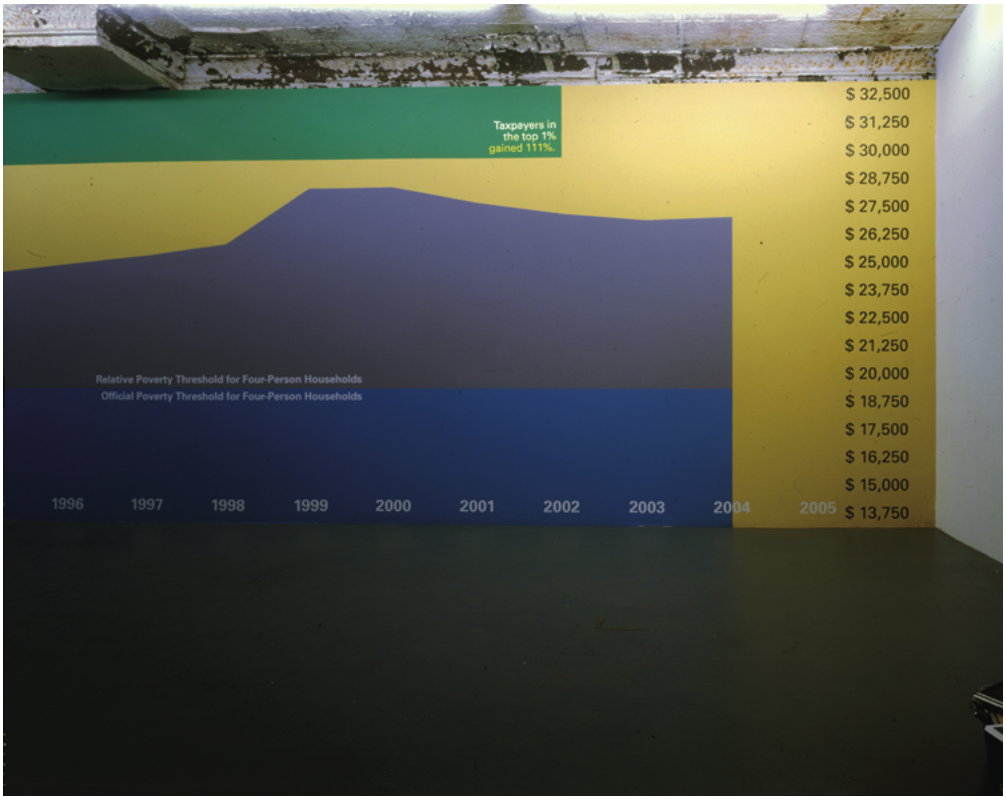
Exhibition space had traditionally been considered aesthetic domain (Sontag's wish?), and contextualizing information has likewise been relegated to the space of the publication. *Power Up: Sister Corita and Donald Moffett, Interlocking*, UCLA Hammer Museum, 2000, is a good example of how I sought to challenge that division between "exhibition" and "publication," and "aesthetics" and "information" in exhibition practice. This was accomplished by integrating ephemeral materials and information gathered during my research process that deepened my understanding of the artists, their practices, and the periods in which their works were made, into the exhibition itself. This was done in a visually engaging way using presentational devices that enlivened and aimed to appropriately contextualize material rather than render it rarified. By design, *Power Up*

was emphasized as a functional arena. Three-dimensional fixtures extended the content of the show from the walls into the open space of the room. These structures were ascribed with multiple functions – at once pedestals, platforms, seating, furnishings, sculptural elements, and display surfaces for presenting ephemeral material including photographs, publications, magazines, and quotations of the artists. (An interesting intersection with Sussman's pedagogic policy for the *1993 Whitney Biennial*. Why do I see my method as valid and Sussman's as running unfortunate interference? Were the strategies used in *Power Up* any less intrusive or aggressive?) In that instance, I was not so much the exhibition's curator as I was the third artist, whose role included conceptualizing, curating, and determining the material character of the exhibition.

A similar mode of thinking has extended to the installation work I have done with Martin Beck over the past ten years. Together we regard exhibition as a malleable set of spatial, ephemeral, formatting, and display concerns to be discovered and tested in regards to a specific sets of information or materials, and as an interpretive form. Exhibition designs made with Beck (distinct from the installations we author) derive from similar principles, and are concerned with giving form and structure and visuality to constellations of art and artifacts. Our design philosophy has been focused on comprehending the body of material to be shown through research, and by learning through the curator's eyes in order to understand their relationship to the material and objectives in exhibiting it. We then find ways to spatially, visually, and graphically express key principles and histories relevant to the material, as well as to curatorial purpose. This process does not prescribe visual or conceptual solutions per se – its results can be strong, even totalizing, or moderately visible or even subtle – often strong and subtle solutions intermingle in one design. We create a particular viewing environment tailored to the ideas driving the works and its potential relationship to the present as understood by the curator (historian).



Exhibition design by Julie Ault, Martin Beck, *Hidden Truths, Bloody Sunday*, International Center for Photography, New York, 2002



Julie Ault, Martin Beck, *Information*, 2006, Storefront for Art and Architecture, New York



Julie Ault, Martin Beck, *Information*, 2006, Storefront for Art and Architecture, New York

A singular example from my work history: In 2003 I was commissioned to make a permanent public work for a newly renovated humanities building at Queens College, City University of New York (CUNY). The cross-disciplinary, multi-use character of Powdermaker Hall, and the democratic educational orientation of the school at large, forged a compelling context, leading me into the work of key thinkers and practitioners involved with democratic ideals in education and radical pedagogy, including Paulo Freire, John Dewey, Ira Schor, and bell hooks. I decided to extend and rethink the custom of educational institutions (and courthouses) that proclaim a maxim at their entrances with a single motto, or inspirational quote, by constructing a dialogue of written extracts to be distributed throughout the building. The lengthy research process involved identifying provocatively open-ended extracts, as opposed to sloganistic ones, and curating them into a pairings and the overall dialogue. (Each entrance / exit pairs quotes: a quotation installed inside and one on a proximate exterior wall.) The final twelve quotations, *Points of Entry*, 2003, were fabricated in stainless steel using the same signage mode seen elsewhere on campus so they would appear to be part of the institution. The quotes are distributed at key entrances and exits of the building. In essence *Points of Entry* is an exhibition of textual artifacts. (The books the extracts come from, as well as all the books I researched from, were put in the library for people who want to read further.) By way of example, these two quotes now flank the interior main entrance of Powdermaker Hall:

> Education for domestication is an act of transferring "knowledge," whereas education for freedom is an act of knowledge and a process of transforming action that should be exercised on reality.
>
> —Paulo Freire

> Thought is no longer theoretical. As soon as it functions it offends or reconciles, attracts or repels, breaks, dissociates, unites or reunites; it cannot help but liberate and enslave.
>
> —Michel Foucault

This seems to me a worthwhile example in my exhibition work history of a somewhat different approach. Although it is interpretive through selection, juxtaposition, inclusion, and presentation, the textual artifacts are nonetheless permitted to speak for themselves. The extracts function as points of entry to a reservoir of larger discourse and individual authors, similarly to *Show and Tell's* chronicle and archive. In this sense, *Points of Entry* is "unfinished." An aspect of the project that remains promising is the combination of exhibiting research and arousing further research in the process.



Julie Ault*, Points of Entry,* 2003, Queens College, City University of New York, [quote: Michael Apple]



Julie Ault*, Points of Entry,* 2003, Queens College, City University of New York, [quote: bell hooks]

The modes of authoring exhibitions described above overlap substantially along lines of method (and anti-method), including the intermingling of art, artifact, and information. Taking stock, it is clear that I have primarily developed highly interpretive modes, whether by producing a contextualizing environment, or by thematicizing art and artifact, or by putting work in strong juxtapositions, or by employing information and ephemeral material as raw material, which is then transformed into "my" or "our work."

It is difficult to form a present judgment on these ways of working as models, because from my perspective, exhibitions are manifestations of complex and dialogic research processes. The research subject terrain is typically tangled in process as it expands and contracts, goes awry, spirals out of control, and distills. Resultant exhibitions are temporary materializations of long-term investigations, but unlike the shape shifting lead-up, they freeze the configuration of ideas and methods and material, as it is understood at

that moment. In this way exhibitions are snapshots of process, perhaps even contrived endpoints to punctuate or frame a period of research.

Much of my exhibition work has resulted in dynamic and somewhat dense and layered designed environments that create specific contexts; a threshold is crossed on entering. They are objectifications of process. From today's perspective my past exhibitions appear somewhat heavy handed. However, I am loyal to them in so far as they have been effective laboratories for animating ideas and convictions, and were seemingly effective broadcasts. Their visual flavor and attention to setting the stage for a particular body of material, distinguished them from prevalent presentational techniques, and by contrast rendered more common "neutral" modes visible. Whatever their focus, these exhibitions sought to faithfully represent and to generate affinity, goals I identified for *Show and Tell* and for previous books as well.

It would be interesting to work anew with the same bodies of material to test other ways of transmission, in order to learn to what degree the modes I have outlined gained contour and traction from their time.

The information-heavy "For Interpretation" approach I have variously employed had the goal of bringing ancillary or ephemeral illuminating information into the space of an exhibition during periods when presentation of art tended more towards excluding information and reverentially privileging art. The cultural tide of exhibition and museum culture previously discussed, and the "too much information" character of current technologically proliferating culture, gives shape to a different cultural environment, which requires being taken into account in relation to any current exhibitory proposition.

So where is the material evidence of my ambivalence over mediating art in exhibition practice? There is not much, other than that making decisions which impact directly on the possible readings of work have appeared more weighted to me in recent years, and I tend toward more subtle solutions than in the past. I have been waiting, in principle, for a presentational occasion that conceptually necessitates refraining from overt mediation.

Ever Ephemeral: Remembering and Forgetting in the Archive, is a test site in which to address and analyze these issues anew.

Situating Research, Exhibition as Research

Ever Ephemeral picks up on developing ways to share research with viewers and readers. The exhibition extends the curatorial thread running throughout my work history, but it does not continue the "exhibition as medium" theme in the same embodied way as in past practice. *Ever Ephemeral* will inhabit two proximate Malmö venues, Signal and the Inter Arts Center; its diffusion intends to infuse viewers' experiences with recollection as well as counteract the "installation threshold" tendency, which can totalize. The situation provides the opportunity to step back from interpretive presentation and overt contextualization, and to judiciously withhold and resist "marking" the works, so that they may perform within an orchestrated arrangement without overt interference.

Ever Ephemeral is conceived as a space to visually and conceptually reference and continue my inquiry process. The works lay open relationships between archiving, memory, and historical representation, and speak to questions that propelled the investigation: what tense is the archive? How can art give history form? How to effectively call history writing into question while writing history – and to topics including, the plasticity of history, consequences of archiving and unarchiving, and understandings of chronology and counter-chronology.

Interchange with other artists continues to be essential nourishment for the evolution of my practice. The inclusions denote specific dialogues, which have contoured and shed light on the research arena. Here, works stand for themselves, for influential dialogues, and for practices, essentially representing a dialogue of inquiries.

How does curatorial voice make itself known? Does it intervene on the works or integrate with them? Using what modes? And in what tense? To what degree is curatorial

introduction, for instance, in the form of a wall text, redundant to an exhibition, or alternatively, additive as orientation? The challenge is to balance competing agendas of refraining and revealing: to what extent can I reveal and disclose points of entry and activate questions and considerations the artists and works generated in my thinking, without taking over or talking over? Are objectives and curatorial subjectivity sufficiently imbedded in the exhibition or is another layer of communication required or beneficial?

While my exhibition making curatorial voice has been declarative in the past, here it is invested with discretion, in search of a light touch. Trusting the works' power to show themselves and interact, and trusting the facility of exhibition to infer connections rather than declare them, so they might be discovered. (Are all exhibitions research environments?)

Drawing lines between works using spatial means, visual means, setting angles and positions, constructing parallels and intersections. As was the case with *Show and Tell*, "Interpretation is suffused in every moment of searching, finding, curating, editing, assigning relevance, and connecting dots between documents that constitutes research, including not leastly, presenting, or making present."

The curatorial inclusion of texts and publications in *Ever Ephemeral* as "works" organizes the exhibition as a space for reading and viewing to intermingle. Some textual work is integral to what is shown, such as the booklet by Alejandro Cesarco that goes with his projection work, "Present Memory." The publications by Roni Horn *are* her work in the show. I have chosen to show Horn's book works over wall works to highlight the union of photographic investigation and reading that the artist has innovated and evolved. Large-scale visual works that are primarily textual, by Danh Vo and by Felix Gonzalez-Torres, encompass and anchor each exhibition space. Texts I have written speak to the included film by James Benning, and to proceeding from and contributing to the archive, via Horn, Gonzalez-Torres, and Group Material.

Inspired by "A Narrative Table of Contents" that John McPhee placed before the conventional table of contents in his part travelogue, part geological study, *Annals of the Former World*,[163] I plan to mimic the manner in which McPhee circuitously and subjectively accounts for the body of material that follows. "A Narrative Table of Contents" foregrounds the author's unwieldy research itinerary in contrast to tying it all up chronologically. How does one thing lead to another in research process? By purpose and happenstance with unexpected turns and connections throughout.

I will write my "Narrative Table of Contents" for *Ever Ephemeral* during the period of installation, as the exhibition becomes concrete. Its precise form and how it will be manifest in the exhibition is not yet determined, and in this case of continuation of research, will necessarily be articulated as the arrangement of works and artifacts comes into focus *as* an exhibition. A formal checklist, akin to the conventional table of contents that follows McPhee's narrative in *Annals of the Former World*, will be part two of the table of contents. This material uses the vocabulary of table of contents as opposed to checklist or exhibition ingredients to overlay the "exhibition" with "publication."

Chronology is raw material that gets inspected, analyzed, reorganized, and played with in several works in the show. The tension between chronology and counter-chronology captions the Inter Arts Center gallery in the form of Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *"Untitled (Portrait of Julie Ault),"* 1991,[164] a dateline text portrait, which, resembling a frieze, is painted directly on adjacent walls at the point where they meet the ceiling. This seemingly poetic run-on of events and dates emblematically tosses personal history in the air, in this case – my personal history. Formative past moments are recollected and strung together, and made to stand in for the foundation of a life. Faithful resemblance happens specifically for the subject and the maker of the portrait. The portrait embodies the dialogue they had about its formulation, the exchange of accounting for oneself, and of memories and self-revelation. On another level this is less a portrait of an individual than a metaphorical template for any life; the work acts as a prompt to consider the structural links between memory and identity. Faithful resemblance is abstracted, inviting everyone into the proposition and into the game – catalyzing self-consideration and recollection.

Gonzalez-Torres proposes the individual as emblematic site of the interdependency of memory and identity and the imbrications of personal and social memory. Ricoeur asks, "Is memory primordially personal or collective? This question is the following: to whom is it legitimate to attribute the *pathos* corresponding to the reception of memories and the *praxis* in which the search for memories consists?"[165] The portrayed subject is a lens to look into and project out from, a compilation of private and public events attached to dates. The dates are not ordered chronologically; time is mixed up. Cause and effect are thrown into narrative disorder, resembling the unruliness of memory and its transgressive relationship to time. How does one narrate himself? How does one see herself? How does one represent herself? The art of memory. Memory Work. Memory as history.

> In a gallery room – in the piece – and hereby meaning the construction presented to us – its deconstruction is always, already actively inherent.[1]
> . . .
>
> However the foundation of this deconstruction relies on the meaning that this order produces rather than that it relies on the order itself.
>
> By using the piece as an index, and by combining it with our knowledge and memory, we no longer have to read the piece sequentially to get to this meaning.
>
> By memory work we shift perspective and can now navigate in the chronology the same way one shifts gear in a car with manual transmission.[2] We can now go directly to the platforms of meaning

[1] This applies not only to art making but to any kind of representation. In general the motivation for this investigation is a concern for the mechanisms behind representation. How do they work – and why do they often produce a dual reading of the mechanisms behind the represented and the represented itself - Often to the point that the represented presents itself as autonomous. I want to connect the represented with the mechanisms producing it. I want to locate that space within the space of the presented.

[2] This new perspective reveals the plot of the chronology – so to speak. From this perspective the piece is not an autonomous universalizing final stage, but instead a part of a process. Once this relation becomes clear, the real "virtuous act" for the viewer to witness is how the artist navigates on this cultural map by exporting material from a subjective sphere (the chronology) into a public (the exhibition).

> existing in the chronology – generated either by the artist, by history – or by reflections in the viewer's own subjectivity.[166]

Rasmus Røhling picks up "the plot of chronology" in *Self-Titled*, 2008[167] (version with footnotes quoted above), a three-pronged video installation and text that sprang from analyzing the structure of representation and the problematic of linear modeling in relation to "the artist's chronology" – the archive. *Self-Titled* diagrams the work of art as indexical representative of the artist's larger body of work, organized by time in the form of chronology. The artist establishes his chronological history in order that it is perpetually accessible by himself and others (viewers). Once he is grounded in chronology, the artist is at liberty methodologically and formally, free to shape shift and transcend his own time. (This echoes the impetus of establishing the history of Group Material in *Show and Tell* in order to conserve and release simultaneously.) Røhling analyses the province of the artist's chronology, which, populated by works that signify the terrain – or "portals," functionalizes timeline as a navigation tool, similarly to the paradoxical capacity of the archive to provide containment and liberation simultaneously.

> Knowing this, we are able to apply a more modular quality to the editorial mechanism of pulling specific points from the chronology into the piece.
>
> By combining the memory's nonlinear way of navigating with conventions of formality – we are able to detach particular points from the chronology and bring these into the piece – without it affecting the surround cells.[168]

Discussion with Røhling was very fruitful during the initial period of figuring out how to approach the Group Material archiving endeavor – what was at stake, and the negotiation of the hazards of subjecting the history of Group Material to chronicle format and to the centralizing tendency of the book form. (To stimulate our dialogue we read *Archive Fever*, and watched the documentary on *Derrida*, Kirby Dick, Amy Ziering [dirs], 2002, and one on James Benning, *Circling the Image*, Reinhard Wulf [dir], 2003, among other material.) Just as our exchange filters through the methods of *Show and Tell*, *Self-Titled* springs from shared research ground. The dialogue is represented by the reverberation of

Self-Titled in *Ever Ephemeral* – and its cross-wiring to the Group Material history, Roni Horn's investigations of identity and memory, and Gonzalez-Torres's proposition.

Instituting Group Material is represented in *Ever Ephemeral* by a single artifact borrowed from the Group Material Archive,[169] the February 16, 1987 issue of *People* magazine, "Liberace 1919–1987."[170] For me, this artifact, which was previously exhibited in *AIDS Timeline*, speaks volumes as a reference to the AIDS crisis and symbol of the turning points in the group's historical consciousness as well as in mine. Time frame is invoked by the dates of Liberace's life; date of birth and date of death pointing to cycles of presence and disappearance, beginning and ending that underscore the impetus of archiving. Here, the magazine is the synechdochic "portal" into Group Material, and by extension, the time period of its activity. This past publication will be shown (on the wall) in relation with copies of the current archiving publications on Group Material, *Show and Tell* and *AIDS Timeline*,[171] as well as the draft version of the finding aid for the Group Material Archive that is soon to be published online as the collection is made public. The formal processing of the archive is just now completed, three years after the material was transferred to NYU.[172]

Another substantive dialogue across practice brought to bear here is with the artist Roni Horn. (I discussed our exchange around researching her journals to compose a personal history for her at length in part one of this writing.) The ephemeral nature of memory and the mutability of identity are continual themes in Horn's work. By way of example, *This is Me, This is You*, 1999–2000, marked the threshold of Roni Horn's retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, entitled *Roni Horn aka Roni Horn*, 2009.[173] The grid of forty-eight photographs of the artist's niece Georgia taken over two years candidly charts Georgia's range of expression, mood, and style as she vamps freely for her aunt. But this is only half of the work. A matching framework of twin shots made two or three seconds after the initial ones was installed two floors below at the same entrance position. Separation is structured into this work. Horn never brings the two sections together in one line of vision, but strategically mounts them on different planes – around the corner from one another or on facing walls, thus teasing our recollection. The

correlating pictures in each half of the work make a similar impression, but we notice slight differences that activate our memory – the girl moved her arm, tilted her head, opened her mouth, or widened her smile. *This is Me, This is You* performs several of Horn's essential themes – doubling, differentiation, and the dynamic process of identity. A selection of the artists bookworks using photography to explore the continuous process of becoming, including *This is Me, This is You*, are planned for *Ever Ephemeral*.[174]

Specific research into rationales for archiving and "unarchiving" continues in the project of gathering and temporarily reuniting a set of vintage "optimistic" clocks designed by George Nelson and collected by Felix Gonzalez-Torres during the last years of his life.[175] After the artist's death at age 38 in 1996, I, along with his friend and gallerist, Andrea Rosen, were responsible for taking care of his personal possessions, among which were more than a dozen clocks designed by George Nelson in the 1950s, as well as hundreds of plastic toy figures collected by the artist, and his books. We distributed the objects among Gonzalez-Torres's intimates, friends, and colleagues. I have rejoined the clocks as a means for investigating the implications of dispersal vis-à-vis memory as opposed to archiving, and in effect, to detour them temporarily, so that their itinerary and narratives will be registered publically. This project additionally involves Rosen and I examining our previous decision anew, in light of "archive consciousness." I staged a conversation to this effect from which an edited version has been derived to accompany the sole public exposure of the "clock collective."[176] (The conversation is at the end of this essay.)

In the Signal space, Alejandro Cesarco, in *Present Memory*, 2010,[177] further explores the overlapping of tense and the tenses of memory. *Present memory* is a portrait of the artist's father, precipitated by his father's diagnosis with cancer, and made in anticipation of his eventual absence. The work uses film and video as narrative devices that denote time and memory. In its first iteration, the work was repeated at the same spot on different floors of a building. In this way recollection was built into its viewing. Cesarco's film is accompanied by text in the form of a booklet, which is a compilation of quoted extracts about nostalgia, mortality, absence, and memory.

Present Memory investigates the complex mental operations in such explicit foreknowledge – predicting and resisting thoughts of death and future absence. Cesarco mediates their shared awareness through visually representing the convergence of tenses. He suggests the conceptual terrain using simple operations, first filming his father in his office (he was a doctor), then recording him a second time using video, with the film projected behind / in front of / onto him. There is no dialogue. *Present Memory* embodies silence and gap metaphorically.[178]

Several elements in *Ever Ephemeral* require both applying and furthering my research into archiving, memory, and historical representation. Across the board, curatorial decisions involve both philosophic and pragmatic dimensions. For instance, Cesarco's *Present Memory* includes a text. On occasion Cesarco has produced small booklets, which he designs, to accompany his film installations. Typically they are composed of a text and a single emblematic image reproduced on the cover. We are producing a booklet for this showing of *Present Memory*. Cesarco and I share an ongoing work dialogue that relates to our respective forays into archiving, concepts of memory and history, and concepts of temporality. Cesarco also has a strong relationship to Gonzalez-Torres's work and recently acted as publisher for the book, *A Selection of Snapshots Taken by Felix Gonzalez-Torres*, 2010,[179] for which I lent several snapshots I received from the artist, and, which, incidentally, includes a photograph of some of Gonzalez-Torres's clocks in situ in his apartment.

Cesarco suggested fashioning the conversation between Rosen and myself about the clock collection into a booklet, in keeping with the character and design he employs, so we might link the motivations of *Present Memory* and the reunion of clocks, and visibly connect the them along lines of mourning, emotional memory, and renewal. The critical poetic reflections that compose his booklet are extended by the conversation in the second booklet, and vice versa. Together they speak to the tense of the archive.

In 2008 Danh Vo asked me to write for a catalogue that would accompany his 2009 exhibition, *Where the Lions Are*, at Kunsthalle Basel. Rather than directly interpret or

describe Vo's "history-driven" practice, which in this case included, among other things, the procurement of highly symbolic artifacts – the chandeliers from the Hotel Majestic ballroom in Paris that were "witness" to the 1973 Paris Peace Accords between North Vietnam, South Vietnam, and the U.S, I selected and linked together five texts that reflect Vo's thinking, methods, and outlook, and titled the sequence, "Death Sentence."[1] The curated essays include, for example, "The Dead Astronaut" written by J.G. Ballard in 1968, connected to the artist by analogy. In Ballard's dark tale the widow and best friend of astronaut Robert Hamilton, who, dead in his capsule, has been orbiting the earth for twenty years, wait in a remote location for the capsule's descent to earth. When it does, they race alongside rogue relic hunters and covert military personnel to win his remains, which in the end contain poisonous radiation levels. The short story denotes the revenge of "progress" in the form of deadly artifacts falling to earth. (When reading it I envisioned Vo as a kind of relic scavenger.)

Vo's subsequent work included here, *Death Sentence*,[180] translates the sequence of texts into a visual form. The artist regarded the configuration not only as a contribution to his catalog that ends there, but as starting point of information and ideas to work with over time. The work mimics the format of the type of labeling system familiar to natural history and ethnographic museums that commonly runs underneath wall-mounted vitrines to provide historical data about each artifact displayed. Vo's version displays the curated texts transcribed by hand by his father, who does not speak English or French – the languages of the texts.

Death Sentence is planned for proximity in *Ever Ephemeral* with the collection of clocks so that they might cross-comment on one another and further open up and refract relationships between artifacts, interpretation, individual history, and collective memory.

The plasticity of history and chronology resurfaces in relation to the recollected clocks in the Signal exhibition with James Benning's 16mm film *casting a glance*, 2007.[181] *Casting a glance* is a close meditation on Robert Smithson's Spiral Jetty consisting of seventy-eight one-minute shots filmed between 2005 and 2007. The film fictionalizes a

chronicle of change in the Jetty's conditions and appearance, which in the filmmaker's words "maps the Jetty back onto its 37-year history."[182]

Ranging from April 30, 1970 to May 15, 2007, dates are interspersed with images to highlight the parallel between water levels Benning encountered on his visits to the Jetty, and the shifting level of the Great Salt Lake, which is responsible for the Jetty's alternating baring and secretion. The water level of the Great Salt Lake fluctuates dramatically due to climate change and seasonal shifts. The water level rises in spring due to mountain runoff and recedes in summer when extensive sun exposure causes the rate of evaporation to exceed inflow and rainfall. Because of the exceptionally shallow nature of the lake, even modest changes in level can enlarge its area, thereby swallowing the Jetty. Spiral Jetty first went underwater in 1973, the year of Smithson's death, and it did not reemerge, except sporadically, until 2002. Due to drought, the Jetty has been mostly visible since 2002.

When Benning visited on May 15, 2005, to begin filming, he coincidently found the water level was at 4195.6 feet, exactly the same as when Smithson made the piece in 1970. While reviewing water level notes from his trips about a year later, he realized he could mimic the conditions of earlier times with matching levels, and decided to superimpose the Jetty's history onto his images.

Benning's *casting a glance* extends the game of tag in *Ever Ephemeral* across a constellation of works and investigations into the relationships between chronology, history, memory, and identity – to include "natural artifact" as measure of temporality.

The Simultaneity of Time

The double operation of recollection of memory and object – their coproduction in fact, is the fertile ground of this entire research. The clock collection project is as emblematic as

the Group Material archive and *Show and Tell*. What will happen when the clocks are altogether in public for the first time ever, exposed by the arc of the conversation, which captions the collection in its state of exhibition? For me they express the irreducible simultaneity of past and present, and clocks are meant to keep ticking, so future is also implied. For others they may be just clocks – artifacts that do not speak beyond their physical fact.

The works that constitute *Ever Ephemeral* embody symbolic tensions that drive the overall research, between past tense and present tense, between remembering and forgetting, between closure and exposure, continuance and completion, and between history for living and the continuity of transience, tensions that unfold in the archive.

Time Frames: A Conversation between Julie Ault and Andrea Rosen

Julie Ault: Last night I read this letter that Felix sent to you in 1993, which at the time accompanied the gift of a clock. Until I read it, I had not consciously been thinking about the emotional content of reassembling the group of clocks. I've been mostly focused on the practicalities. The letter begins, "This is not a clock. It's more than just a machine that marks time," and ends, "To more time." It threw me into an emotional state, which was not how I'd planned to begin our conversation.

One interpretation of Felix collecting "optimistic clocks" the last couple years of his life is that he was buying time. But I never liked that explanation, in part because it doesn't reconcile with Felix as I knew him. Perhaps the clocks were not amulets so much as they were beautiful, tough objects that fed his process of working through the complex relationships to time, which the conditions he was living in, and with, brought forward. Perhaps the clocks were about *facing* time. Diagramming a situation of no escape. You can't ignore time when you have a dozen clocks on the wall.

What led me to regather the clocks was the desire to see them together again, and generate an occasion to recollect our memories of thinking through what to do with Felix's things when he died, specifically his books, the clocks, and the toys he collected. I'd like to revisit our decisions to disperse those things as we did and reflect on how they sit with us fifteen years later. There is also a desire to symbolically stage a reunion of community that was united around Felix and is now diffused, although particular bonds remain active.

Andrea Rosen: The movement between emotionality and objectivity you are talking about is a really essential part of this dialogue, because these positions were always fused in Felix's work. The work is a guiding force, or example, in that it imbues something with one's own personal emotionality but at the same time allows it to be stripped of anything personal in order that it might have some greater existence.

I'm remembering how museum curators would ask Felix, "Do you mind if we don't allow people to take sheets of paper from the stack during the opening?" and he'd say, "No, I don't mind," and I'd say, "But Felix, why did you agree to that when dispersal is at the essence of what you believe and what the work is about?" Referring to institutions, he explained how you have to allow for the nature of what things are. Then, there was a situation when the stacks were shown at a gallery, and the gallery had hired people to roll up sheets from the stacks and give them out at the opening. At that point Felix said he actually hated seeing people take them at openings. Felix maintained the works no longer belonged to him, and these kinds of shifts and ambiguity helped me realize that the work can only really transcend itself through other people.

I think we used Felix as our example when we made those decisions about his things, which is to say, it's not that the clocks weren't imbued with meaning, it's not that you can't read them as being about holding onto time, it's not that anyone shouldn't have considered them precious or representational. But Felix set up an agenda. No matter how essentially private or however much something is saturated with emotional content the only thing you can do for that to continue is to give it up. Felix set an agenda for us.

JA: We proceeded with dispersal in step with his principles, but it amazes me that we never talked about it in those terms. My memory of the period is vague, as is my recollection of the physicality of the experience and whether we dismantled his apartment over a few days or a few weeks. Although I don't recall the contour of our discussion I am reasonably certain that we didn't explicitly address what should happen with his things in analytic terms. I don't think we even considered keeping the toys he'd amassed, or the clocks, or even his library together, or talked about any of these being institutionalized in the form of an archive. At that moment his things were somewhere between life and becoming artifact. Your reading of the situation mirrors mine, that the resolution happened organically, that it was the only thing to do that made sense.

AR: Felix was not didactic, he didn't say this is what my work is about, or this is what I want you to do, but he trained us in a way of thinking. He exposed a realm of possibility.

JA: I'm hoping to activate my memory through tapping into yours. Do you know when Felix started getting the Nelson clocks, or recall any fragments of discussions about them, or being with him when he found a clock? I thought he collected clocks for about two years before he died, but the letter he sent you was written in February 1993, indicating it must have been at least three years.

AR: There had to have been a time when he could only start affording such things, but I think that he had one clock that began it. I would guess, although I don't know why, that it was the multicolored one.

JA: I also recall it was one of the atomic clocks. I remember him being very taken with those around the same time that he got excited about Sputnik lamps, which were also symbolic period objects alluding to the paradox of progress.

AR: His fascination was with all George Nelson things—it was chairs and furniture—and probably started less with the consciousness of a clock and more with awareness of Nelson's design. The letter is 1993, so he must have already been collecting them well before, because otherwise he would not have been giving one to me.

JA: It seems to me it was probably only a couple months before that he began. The fact that he gave you one, and wrote about optimistic design in the letter indicates a newfound pleasure that he wanted to share. He wouldn't have bought a lot of clocks already and *then* decided to give you one. I suspect he wanted to share the excitement he felt immediately.

AR: It's such a condensed time period. One could ask what difference does it make whether it was 1993 or 1994 or 1995; they're very close together. But between them there was a huge expanse of time in terms of what happened in Felix's life. Post Ross's death

there were a number of relationships, exhibitions, and so much progression. I'm surprised how finite his letter sounds, how much it has to do with a feeling of him already being at the end.

JA: That's certainly what unleashed my emotions reading it—the sense of prediction, fate, a rehearsal of saying goodbye. Even though he probably didn't start getting the clocks until much later, I consider their time frame to be January 1991, when Ross died, and January 1996, when Felix died. The letter is midway, at an incredibly complicated period.

If you were in the situation today that we were in 1996 would you do the same?
I've felt some regret about scattering Felix's books, but I don't know if it's legitimate.

AR: My only major concern is about how we archived our choices. I think there was hastiness in treating the recording of the books the same way we did other things; thinking that we only needed to write down "book" or "three books" and who they were given to.

JA: You and I kept a lot of books, though I've since given some away. And we gave some of his close friends books that related to their shared histories and interests. Some choices were very specific, for instance we sent Felix's dog-eared copy of *Remaking History* to Barbara Kruger because she edited it, thinking she would appreciate his margin notes and use. But I think we had a different relationship to the clocks and saw them as more elevated than anything else because of their symbolic content, especially at that moment.

AR: Felix chose to amass the clocks into a collection, which was different than selecting a certain chair, for instance. There was something about the collectiveness. At Felix's memorial Mario Nunez said everyone in this room is like a part of a library and we're all responsible for remembering different chapters—together we make up this library that is

Felix. I believe we had dispersed the objects prior to that, but I remember how profound that was to me.

We never felt that his objects should stay together or that we were sacrificing them to fulfill the agenda of distribution. Keeping Felix's collected toys together would have been a strange misplaced relationship of trying to hold onto something that didn't exist. There was also the acknowledgement that if you have two of the toys for instance, you have the essence as if you had all of them, whereas holding onto all of them would express a false sense of possession of something else.

JA: One reason we didn't want to keep these things together reflects that Felix felt one could never own or depend on anything; you have to let go. Archiving would have created illusions of permanence and coherence that seemed contrary to his philosophy. I have a different consciousness now about archiving. I wouldn't change our decisions, but I think if we were in the situation now we would discuss whether or not to keep his books together. Were they part of his papers?

AR: I guess they were a slightly gray area. We thought about people who would want something Felix used and wrote in, something referring to his intellect. Something that touched on work and not only the light side. There's also the fact that a book with margin notes has Felix's hand in it. Nothing else left in his apartment had his hand in it like that. I think it's worthwhile to go back and contact everyone we gave a book to, and ask them what book it was and what edition, and to photograph the covers. Beyond that I don't regret not having those tangible things. It's impossible to interpret why Felix underlined a certain passage in a book. And I'm skeptical when a curator says, "I want to look at Felix's library, I want to look at every single thing he underlined, and I want to read every note he ever wrote." But what happens if this thing were all together? I would be happy to provide someone with a list of every book that was in Felix's library and leave it at that. But if I had every one of those books, would I want people to look at them?

JA: But eventually you won't be around. The books contain notes he wrote for himself; they are precious like diaries and work journals. Even an enigmatic notation in a book becomes precious to a researcher.

AR: But there's an assumption that he read each book equally or with equal intention, and in fact we don't know when he read them or with what intentions or what order, or whether he underlined for a class or for something else.

JA: On one hand there are no assumptions that are legitimate, but on the other all assumptions are legitimate—maybe this is intrinsic to both research and historical representation. Someone tries to find the puzzle pieces and put them together in order to form a picture for him or herself.

AR: Felix did not want the picture to be about him. It's the work. Whatever he digested from readings that margin notes might reflect went into the work. He didn't want the subject to be him or him personally. I really believe in his desire to keep the separation between what went on with the work and him as a person.

JA: As you know, when I was working on the book on Felix's work I also wanted to read and see everything, and did, but I did not write explicitly about Felix's work or reveal inside information about his process. For me, looking at everything I can get my hands on during research has to do with absorbing sensibility, tone, inference, and various content, ideas, and angles—all stimulating the process, but it does not imply a one-to-one relationship with portrayal. There's a difference between taking it all in and what you do with it.

I don't think that we sufficiently considered the difference between books and the other collections like toys and clocks. A library is accumulated over time and reflects periods in one's life and growth. It's eclectic. It's not the same as comprehensively collecting certain kinds of toys or Nelson designs. And because it shows the pathways and idiosyncrasies of one's thinking processes it's illuminating to researchers. Dispersing

books is somewhat radical, because it goes against conservation and the notion that if you keep annotated books together you can apprehend a person's intellectual itinerary. Such a collection or archive would support that idea, which many people probably do not regard with skepticism but consider being a sound method. And to some degree the logic makes sense: if I read and see everything and consult every image and piece of information possible then I am going to get to a deeper understanding of the thinking and process and conditions of the person I'm studying. I subscribe to this too but also stand by the conclusion of not objectifying Felix's reading through archiving the books.

AR: The work needs to stand on its own. Felix used those books for him to make the work. And the work is what exists. The work can only be open for interpretation. Felix was very poignant about this to me; the work needed to stand on its own. The idea that his books should be disseminated came from this root, and maybe over however many years it is since Felix died, we've lost that part of how rigorous he was about that.

JA: There is great value in archiving. At the same time archive authority has to be taken with a grain of salt; if they had been archived, the books would apparently say, *this* is what Felix was reading. But he was also reading other things that didn't get saved. We don't know the scope of what he read and if and to what degree anything he read or saw influenced his thinking and his work. Anyone who approaches the archive and tries to get a handle on a subject must to some degree understand the ambiguity of what's encountered within, and understand archives are partial and sometimes random.

If we had chosen to keep the books together then I would have made a case for the clocks being archived too; they are potentially as important as the books. There is the work, and then there is everything else. There are lines that can be drawn, but I don't think it is only his books that speak to his intellectual exchange. The clocks do too, and the toys. Everything could.

I'm just beginning to think about what it means to see the clocks together again. They're really beautiful and compelling, but there's some sadness about the whole thing, not only

about Felix's death, but that the community is so different. They represent a specific community as well as a larger context made up of overlapping communities that Felix's work emerged from that not only changed but eventually disappeared. Addressing the inevitability of dissolution is one of the reasons I wanted to organize this reunion.

AR: That's the interesting thing about community; it can't be what you expect. You can't have an expectation of what all that effort to create community will be. The community of who Felix touched in his lifetime could only be so much and we are not bound together. That's what's so interesting about his work. It can't be insular. If you keep the group the same it only has its limitations. Yet someone can write me a letter that tells how Felix's work affected him or her that I would never have anticipated.

Out of the toys and books and everything Felix had the clocks are content-wise the closest things to his work. In the end this clock is an object and it doesn't represent Felix. But this letter is Felix. We can detach ourselves from these objects. They don't hold Felix. It's harder for us to think about giving up those things that have his handwriting on them. There's an assumption that a book Felix read and annotated is Felix more than that clock is Felix.

JA: There's a continual paradox—"that object is not Felix, but it also is Felix." And the paradox keeps upping the ante. So those papers of Felix's that do remain, enter the archive, and become accessible take on tremendous weight.

AR: Yes, those things that exist are disparate and disproportionate, but I feel he specifically chose to keep the things he kept, though in no way is it a complete record. What we're striving to do is create broader archives so these things have contexts. For instance there's a picture of a bracelet of the dolphins. We can assume that that picture was not *the* source but *a* source for his idea of continuous dolphins. And then there's a history of the dolphin stack and the decisions made around that work. I'd like to see that information exist in as many files as could potentially be relevant. It is one piece of information in a history of information.

At the Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation we are working with the idea of case studies, how decisions were made in Felix's lifetime and after: Why did this thing happen, how did that next thing happen? Almost no decision that we make is done on speculation or on my assumption. We go back and see how decisions were made, what happened in that exhibition, and in that one. This tracing also becomes part of the archive, as well as any information or oral history that goes into it. A document or element may go into a section about a particular stack piece, and it may go into a segment about stacks in general, and it may go into an archive about a particular exhibition like the Guggenheim show. So the idea is that information exists in many places. To sift through that archive autonomously, as though these are the only things left in Felix's archive, seems to me to be irrelevant. We take that material and integrate it elsewhere, not the original piece of paper but a copy, so it is in the context of other relevant decisions and those case studies perpetually growing.

JA: Of course there is also the original piece of paper. Where does that live? What you're saying makes sense, Felix's work and his thinking and the archival traces don't synch comfortably with the boundaries and classification system of the archive. There's also the problem of interpretation, the tendency to articulate one-to-one relations between artwork and source, which is often reductive or just wrong (though in some instances might be accurate). Searching for sources and connecting the dots and creating genealogies happens frequently in art history writing. You're speaking of an archive based on cross-referencing as a set of possibilities, which is designed with the capacity to generate lots of readings and a context of cross-connecting information to other information rather than confining particular informational artifacts or turning them into specific stories.

AR: It's like your book on Felix; it's about contradiction. That piece of information contradicts another, and you're going to be able to see the contradictions. I'm much more interested in that situation of differences than in, "oh, here it is." Maybe it is the closest way of letting people experience Felix's way of thinking; the way he almost trained us to

think; the responsibility to not take something at face value and to be responsible for evolving the information and constantly re-contextualizing.

JA: This letter is a good example. I'm glad I never saw it before, or if I did see it I screened it out. I read yours and Felix's correspondence years ago, and I feel like I would have paid attention to it, but maybe not, maybe I read it and it had nothing to do with what I was thinking at the moment, and I just didn't take it in. Of course if you start applying this letter to thinking about the works with two clocks, "*Untitled" (Perfect Lovers)*, well, that's a valid connection to make but it's not sure or singular.

This is an exciting challenge, to make such a new kind of archive. At its core Felix's work requires that all formats for enacting it be tailored or rethought. Tailoring the archive extends from that.

AR: My intention with the archive and foundation is for its format to be a replication of Felix's intentions. It's taken years to do that. It has its own ambiguities and open-endedness and it's not instructive or didactic, it provides a way of thinking that will hopefully guide someone's strategies of how to make future decisions.

JA: It might take another ten years but I don't think that matters. It's not about getting it done fast and simply creating access. You're charged with the responsibility, and there's a time when the ideas of how to make information, including that which has been private, accessible in a fitting way, and how to structure it takes as long as it takes.

AR: It's not even a choice. It has its own organic time frame and it has to unfold as it unfolds. The risk of that is like the urgency of Felix's letter, that he was in a situation where he felt like we all live with the illusion that we're going to be around for another however many years.

JA: In the second part of the letter, like in other correspondence from Felix and even in the clocks, there was clarity.

AR: As much as he's telling me in it to think with certain optimism, you can't ignore the finiteness of this letter. And the clicking of the clock is way more finite having read this letter, even though it wasn't his intention.

JA: In only a few sentences in Felix's letter multiple intentions are expressed. "And then it will always remind you of the good times, the growing times or times of growing, the important time, the urgent time, the beautiful time we had the luck of having together, by chance."[183] It implies different tenses. That's one of the things I find so beautiful about the clocks, that they invoke ephemerality and permanence, memory, history, and questions about perception of time. What tense are these objects? What tense is the archive?

(This conversation took place on July 7, 2011 in New York City.)

[1] Julie Ault, "Exhibition as Political Space," published in *Dürfen die das?*, eds. Stella Rollig and Eva Sturm (Vienna: Verlag Turia + Kant, 2002), pp. 58–59

[2] See Julie Ault, "Widely spaced at eye level" in Julie Ault, Martin Beck, *Critical Condition, Selected Texts in Dialogue* (Essen: Kokerei Zollverein / Zeitgenössische Kunst und Kritik, 2003), pp. 319–326. This essay discusses what are, for me, the most significant explorations of modernist installation methods including the white cube and median eye level display: Mary Anne Staniszweski, *The Power of Display. A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1998), and Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube. The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1999).

[3] Julie Ault, "Three Snapshots from the Eighties," in Paul O'Neill, ed., *Curating Subjects* (London: Open Editions, 2007), pp. 34–35.

[4] Kim Levin, "The Whitney Laundry" (excerpt), *The Village Voice*, April 9, 1985 in O'Neill,
p. 36.

[5] Group Material letter to *The Village Voice*, (excerpt), April 1985, in O'Neill, p. 36.

[6] MoMA's Bauhaus exhibition omitted the substantial segment devoted to education from the version that took place in Berlin; *The Bauhaus in Berlin*, 2009, Martin Gropius Building, organized by Bauhaus Archive / Museum of Design Berlin, the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation, and the Weimar Classics Foundation in collaboration with MoMA.

[7] Since Group Material ended I've frequently heard comments like, "I saw a show at the such and such museum that looked like a Group Material show," which invariably means it used strong color and / or salon style presentation.

[8] The use of paradigm here simply refers to pattern or model – the overarching regard for collaboration and working in the field of art that I had been operating with.

[9] Letter from Julie Ault to Doug Ashford, December 7, 1996.

[10] Julie Ault, ed., *Cultural Economies: Histories from the Alternative Arts Movement, NYC* (New York: The Drawing Center and *Real Life Magazine*, 1996).

[11] I kept all the research material and collected documentation together after the show, and in 2008 donated it to the Downtown Collection at Fales Special Collections, New York University, New York.

[12] Brian Wallis, ed., *Democracy: A Project by Group Material* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1990).

[13] "For the Record," in Julie Ault, ed., *Alternative Art New York 1965–1985* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press and The Drawing Center, 2002), p. 11.

[14] Comments delivered at panel, *Sister Corita Kent*, American Film Institute–Immaculate Heart Community, Los Angeles, March 11, 2007.

[15] Now, a complete database of her prints can be consulted online at www.corita.org/.

[16] Some colleagues, including a Coritaphile even, steered clear of delving deeper into Corita research in so far as it required visiting the Immaculate Heart. They explained that having been raised Catholic, and felt conflicted about Catholicism, pyschological blocks inhibited their visiting the IHC.

[17] Julie Ault, "Archives in Practice," originally published in *Interarchive. Archival Practices and Sites in the Contemporary Art Field*, Beatrice von Bismarck et al., eds. (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter König, 2002), pp. 100–101, and reprinted in Julie Ault, Martin Beck, *Critical Condition*, pp. 271–272.

[18] The brochure made for my initial exhibition with Corita's work is online at http://www.wadsworthatheneum.org/pdfs/Matrix%20134.pdf. A brochure was made for *Power Up* at the Hammer as well.

[19] For example see "Somebody had to break the rules," in *springer* Bd. III Heft 4 (Winter 1997), and "Building and Unbuilding," in Mathias Dusini, ed., *Covering the Room: 8 Ausstellungsflächen* (Salzburg and Vienna: Salzburger Kunstverein and Montage, 1998).

[20] Julie Ault, Martin Beck, "All you need is love: pictures, words and worship by Corita Kent," *Eye* 35 / 00, Spring 2000.

[21] Julie Ault, ed., *Come Alive! The Spirited Art of Sister Corita* (London: Four Corners Books, 2006).

[22] I am not saying this happens specifically at the Ludwig or in any other collection or showing, but that the potential is present.

[23] Sister Corita Kent, *Footnotes and Headlines, a Play-Pray Book* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967).

[24] *Sister Corita* (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1968). Glascock's video and several publications by Corita were also included as ancillary material in *Luete wie wir,* where as they were primary ingredients in *Wet and Wild.*

[25] Barbara Marianne Loste, *Life Stories of Artist Corita Kent (1918–1986): Her Spirit, Her Art The Woman Within,* Dissertation submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Leadership, School of Education, Gonzaga University, March, 2000.

[26] These ideas and more are expressed in Julie Ault, "Of Several Minds Over Time," in Steven Rand, ed., *Playing by the Rules* (New York: Apex Art, 2010), pp. 94–105.

[27] Julie Ault, ed., *Felix Gonzalez-Torres* (Göttingen and New York: steidldangin, 2006).

[28] Julie Ault, ed., *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material* (London: Four Corners Books, 2010).

[29] Research proposal, "Introspective Retrospective, Art Practice 1979–2006," submitted to the PhD Program Visual Art at Malmö Art Academy, Lund, April 2006.

[30] Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002) pp. 79–80.

[31] *Walter Benjamin's Archive. Images, Texts, Signs*, translated by Esther Leslie. Ursual Marx et al, eds. (London: Verso, 2007), page before preface.

[32] Matthew Buckingham, "Mahheakantuck – Everything Has a Name," in *October* 120, Spring 2007, p. 179.

[33] Julie Ault, "The Double Edge of History," originally published in *springer*, Bd. III Heft 3 (Fall 1997). Reprinted in Julie Ault, Martin Beck, *Critical Condition,* p. 245.

[34] On the relationship between writing and death Foucault notes that, "Storytellers continued their narrative late into the night to forestall death and to delay the inevitable moment when everyone must fall silent." Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 117.

[35] Jan Avgikos, "Group Material Timeline: Activism as a Work of Art," in Nina Felshin, ed.

But is it Art? The Spirit of Art as Activism (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995), pp. 85–116.

[36] D. T. Max, "FINAL DESTINATION. Why do the archives of so many great writers end up in Texas?," *The New Yorker*, JUNE 11, 2007.

See: www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/06/11/070611fa_fact_max?currentPage=all.

[37] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever. A Freudian Impression*, translated by Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995). pp. 11–12.

[38] Ibid., p. 98.

[39] Having now disclosed these fantasies, some who encounter the Group Material archive may wonder if some particularly juicy or inflammatory documents inadvertently found their way into a fireplace. The final sentences of *Archive Fever* stimulated this thought. "We will always wonder what, in this mal d'arhive, he [Freud] may have burned. We will always wonder, sharing with compassion in this archive fever, what may have burned of his secret passions, of his correspondence, or of his 'life.' Burned without him, without remains and without knowledge. With no possible response, be it spectral or not, short of or beyond a suppression, on the other edge of repression, originary or secondary, without a name, without the least symptom, and without even an ash." Ibid., p. 101.

[40] Gran Fury consisted of Richard Elovich, Avram Finkelstein, Amy Heard, Tom Kalin, John Lindell, Loring McAlpin, Marlene McCarty, Donald Moffett, Michael Nesline, Mark Simpson, and Robert Vazquez.

[41] See: www.actupny.org/indexfolder/GranFury1.html.

[42] Jill Lepore, "Just the Facts, Ma'am," *The New Yorker*, March 24, 2008, a review of two recently published books, John Borrow: "A History of Histories" and Gordon S. Wood: "Purpose of the Past."

[43] Ault in Beatrice von Bismarck et al, eds., p. 101.

[44] http://www.nyu.edu/library/bobst/research/fales/downtown.html.

[45] D. T. Max, "Thomas Staley believes that the best archives have an internal coherence. He conceives of the Ransom collection as a group of 'nodes,' a term he has borrowed from 'Finnegans Wake.'"

[46] Introductory note by Mark Wigley in Felicity D. Scott, *Living Archive 7: Ant Farm* (Barcelona / New York: Actar, 2008), np.

[47] Juliane Lorenz, ed., *Chaos as Usual: Conversations About Rainer Werner Fassbinder* (New York: Applause Books, 2000).

[48] This working plan was prepared in September 2007 by Ault, with input from Locks and Røhling.

[49] D. T. Max, "Thomas Staley, director of the renowned literary archive The Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center located at University of Texas at Austin has coined several maxims about the acquisition of archives, including what he calls Staley's Law."

[50] Marybeth Nelson, and Hannah Alderfer contributed their remaining files and notes. Some members saved nothing and Karen Ramspacher and Liliana Dones have promised to retrieve material from the periods of their involvement for the archive.

[51] Sabrina Locks first mentioned the analogy to "The Wire."

[52] A complex (and beautiful) philosophical treatise on death, the archive, personal history and its methods of telling: Julian Barnes, *Nothing to be Frightened of* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2008), p. 6.

[53] Rasmus Røhling used this term when we were discussing these issues.

[54] This section about imagining future use also appears in my essay "Group Material: Case Reopened" in *Show and Tell*, p. 212.

[55] Richard Pearce-Moses, "Janus in Cyberspace: Archives on the Threshold of the Digital Era," in American Archivist, vol. 70, nr. 1, spring–summer 2007.
(See: www.archivists.org/governance/presidential/pearce-moses.asp)

[56] Conrad de Aenelle, "Digital Archivists, Now in Demand," *New York Times*, February 7, 2009. Digital asset managers, digital archivists and digital preservation officers – all in demand.

[57] Brewster Kahle, "Universal Access to All Knowledge," *American Archivist*, vol. 70, nr. 1, Spring–Summer 2007.

[58] Krystyna K. Matusiak, "Information Seeking Behavior in Digital Image Collections: A Cognitive Approach," *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, vol. 32, nr. 5, September 2006, pp. 479-488. (Footnote 9 in Matusiak's text: Ann Blandford, Suzette Keith, Iain

Connell & Helen Edwards, "Analytical Usability Evaluation for Digital Libraries: A Case Study," Proceedings of the 2004 Joint ACM / IEEE Conference on Digital Libraries (June 2004). Footnote 10: Andrew Dillon, ''Spatial-semantics: How Users Derive Shape From Information Space,'' *Journal of the American Society for Information Science* 51.6 (2000): 521–528; Blandford, ''Analytical Usability''.)

[59] Pearce-Moses.

[60] Kahle.

[61] D. T. Max.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Matt Richtel, "Hooked on Gadgets, and Paying a Mental Price," *New York Times*, June 6, 2010.

[64] Steedman, 145–146.

[65] Pearce-Moses.

[66] Steedman, p. 68.

[67] This dream gave me a field day for self-analysis, but I won't try to unravel or interpret it here except to impart some relevant information. The woman I was accompanying seemed to be Michelle Reyes, who is the director of the Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation. Michelle and I worked closely together on the book I edited, *Felix Gonzalez-Torres*, which like it or not, is regarded by some as an authoritative analysis. Felix was a close friend and collaborator in Group Material who died in 1996, the year Group Material realized its final project. In the dream I felt very sympathetic to Michelle being overwhelmed by the idea of having to represent and authorize the artist's work. The doctor reference probably relates to medical doctors who "save lives," and to the fact that this investigation of archiving and historical representation is part of my PhD research project, which should result in me being given the title of "doctor."

[68] Derrida, p. 92.

[69] Jean Genet, "L'atelier di Alberto Giacometti" (1957) in Edmund White, ed. *The Selected Writings of Jean Genet* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1995).

[70] John Neuhart, Marilyn Neuhart, Ray Eames, eds., *Eames design. The Work of the Office of Charles and Ray Eames* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1989).

[71] Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, ed., *Michael Asher, Writings 1973–1983 on Works 1969–1979* (Nova Scotia: The Press of Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and The Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, 1983).

[72] Neuhart et al, p. 53.

[73] January 26, 2008, Santa Monica Museum of Art.

[74] Asher in Buchloh, p. 64.

[75] Janet Malcolm, *The Silent Woman. Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes* (New York: Vintage, 1995) p. 205.

[76] Timothy Rollins, "A PROPOSAL FOR LEARNING TO GET THINGS OFF OUR CHESTS; BEHAVIORS, DISCIPLINE AND OUR PROJECT," in Ault, *Show and Tell*, pp. 12–15.

[77] Malcolm, pp. 109–110.

[78] E-mail to the author, February 20, 2009.

[79] Dan Falk, *In Search of Time: The Science of a Curious Dimension* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, St. Martin's Press, 2008).

[80] Ibid. "The British philosopher John McTaggart (1866–1925) spelled out this distinction in his influential essay 'The Unreality of Time' in 1908. He called the two ways of thinking about time the 'A series: and the "B series.' The A series is simply the everyday notion of time in terms of past, present, and future; it is sometimes called the 'tensed' view of time. Any event can be located in time with respect to the A series when the speaker sates how long ago the event happened – or how long we must wait till it happens. The B series, in contrast, refers to fixed labels that we attach to specific moments in time – 5:00 p.m. GMT on June 30, 2009, for example. (This is sometimes called the 'tenseless' view of time.) Events described in terms of the B series can be marked "earlier than" or "later than" each other – but 'now' never enters into it.

When we describe events in terms of the A series, our statements seem to be contingent: the phrase 'I had eggs for breakfast yesterday' is true if I say it the day after having the eggs, but it may or may not be true if I say it on some other day. Statements described in terms of the B series have a different feel: sentences like 'The Declaration of Independence was signed more that a year after the battles of Lexington and Concord' or

'The eclipse of 2017 will happen five years after the London Olympics of 2012' seem to have a more permanent truth: they appear to describe unchanging attributes of world history. I have used tenses in the usual ways in those sentences, but one could, with a little practice, develop the habit of omitting past and future tenses when using the B series perspective, and just making do with the present tense. One could say, for example: 'The Declaration of Independence is signed more than a year after the battles of Lexington and Concord.' One can capture the essence of past and future – absorbing the A series into the B series, so to speak – by eliminating any references to 'now': instead of 'The eclipse will happen nine years from now,' say, 'The eclipse occurs nine years after this utterance.' It is not our natural way of speaking, to be sure, but philosophers would argue that it conveys the same information." pp. 145–146.

[81] Steedman, p. 67.

[82] Wigley, np.

[83] See guiding text in Ault, *Show and Tell*, p. 116 and p. 193.

[84] Ibid., p. 11 and p. 183.

[85] Ibid., p. 49.

[86] "What a Pair: Roni Horn aka Roni Horn," in *Roni Horn* (Bregenz: Bregenz Kunsthaus, 2010).

[87] "Roni Horn, a compilation" is a work in progress.

[88] The essay is called "4195.6 feet: Geography of Time" and is drawn from here for this synopsis of the film.

[89] Writing on a computer virtually unarchives the progression of the writing being done, where as the accumulations of drafts and versions that sit in countless archives are consultable.

[90] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever. A Freudian Impression*, translated by Eric Prenowitz, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 1.

[91] This phrase in itself is a short circuit; my research into archiving practices did not begin four years ago but is tracked further back in *Retrospective / Prospective: Activating the Archive*, 2010.

[92] The Group Material Archive is part of the Downtown Collection at the Fales Library and Special Collections, Elmer Holmes Bobst Library, New York University. See: The Fales Library & Special Collections, *Guide to the Group Material Archive 1976-2009 (bulk 1979-1996)* [finding aid]. Not yet published.

[93] Julie Ault, ed. *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material* (London: Four Corners Books, 2010).

[94] "But beyond finitude as limit, there is, as we said above, this properly *in-finite* movement of radical destruction without which no archive desire or fever would happen." Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p. 94.

[95] "*Consignation* aims to coordinate a single corpus, in a system or a synchrony in which all the elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration." Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p. 3.

[96] Marvin Taylor, director of the Fales Library and Special Collections at New York University (NYU), says they are "acquiring like crazy" and consequently are increasingly backlogged with processing and cannot accommodate spatial demands of incoming collections. Conversation with the author, February 3, 2011.

[97] Reference to Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p. 62, and the larger discussion of Freud and Yerushalmi. "Naturally, by all appearances, we believe we know that *the phantom does not respond*. He will never again respond, Yerushalmi knows it. . . . "Freud will never speak again. . . . because he had *already* responded . . . He will never again respond because he will have been in a position to have, *already*, *always* responded. He will never again respond because it is a phantom, thus a dead person."

[98] It was particularly unsettling to realize that enthusiasm is vulnerable to memorization.

[99] Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, Translated by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 431. Ricoeur recounts two forms of memory Henri Bergson theorized in *Matter and Memory*, "habit-memory, which is simply acted out and lacks explicit recognition, and recollection-memory, which is not without declared recognition." [Ricoeur]

[100] Bergson quoted in ibid. "Spontaneous recollection is perfect from the outset; time can add nothing to its image without disfiguring it; it retains its memory in place and date." In

short: “The memory of a given reading is a representation, and only a representation”; whereas the lesson learned is, as just said, “acted” rather than represented, it is the privilege of representation-memory to allow us “in the search for a particular image [to] remount the slope of our past.” To memory that repeats is opposed memory that imagines: “To call up the past in the form of an image, we must be able to withdraw ourselves from the action of the moment, we must have the power to value the useless, we must have the will to dream. Man alone is capable of such an effort.” p. 25.

[101] Ibid., p. 336.

[102] “Memory no longer consists in recalling the past but in actualizing what has been learned and stored in a mental space. In Bergsonian terms, we have crossed over to the side of habit-memory.” Ibid., p. 62.

[103] I’ve borrowed the term present memory from artist Alejandro Cesarco to suggest, in this instance, memory that is present that takes place in the present and makes present, or represents the past, simultaneously, which can happen with live narration. Cesarco’s work, *Present Memory*, 2010, is a part of my research exhibition, *Ever Ephemeral*.

[104] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, p. 138.

[105] Ault, ed., *Show and Tell*, p. 206.

[106] Mourning the loss of idealism has been relatively private. I hesitated expressing this depletion publically because I did not want the first book on Group Material to be a tragedy.

[107] I witnessed an amazing slide presentation by Louise Lawler at the Cooper Union in the mid-1990s. She refrained from talking while showing images of her work. When questioned she explained she did not want to give the audience any more information than we would have if we saw the work.

[108] Doug Ashford’s essay, “An Artwork is a Person,” is to some extent an exception in that Ashford takes an overview vantage situating GM’s practice within what he regards, to some degree, as polarized society. He does so sensitively and artfully; his text is essential to the book. Ault, ed., *Show and Tell*. pp. 220–225.

[109] I’m reminded of the comment Stacey Allen made when she was a curatorial student at Bard in 2003 and Artforum’s double issue on the 1980s was circulating, “Everyone talks

so much about how interesting and great the ‘80s and early ‘90s were. It’s kind of depressing for us to feel like we’ve just missed out.” [*Artforum*, 40th Anniversary, “The 1980s” part one, March 2003, vol. 41, nr. 7; part two, April 2003, vol. 41, nr. 8] It is this sense of something being “over and done with” or finished, that strikes me as problematic in relation to imparting past events within a strict decade periodization.

[110] *Artforum*, 40th Anniversary, “The 1980s” part one, March 2003, part two, April 2003. Each issue contained columns entitled “Time capsules,” “Milestones,” etc. Group Material’s inauguration and two small photographs were included in a timeline of the 1980s, and Dan Cameron interviewed Doug Ashford and myself for the issue. *Flashback – Revisiting the Art of the 80s* at the Museum für Gegenwartskunst Basel, 2005, included documentation of three GM exhibitions via a slide show and printed material, which I compiled. *This Will Have Been: Art, Love, & Politics in the 1980s*, Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA), Chicago, 2012, is curated by Helen Molesworth and will include Group Material’s *AIDS & Insurance*, exterior bus advertisement, 1990.

[111] The eighties could likewise be characterized by a set of iconic political events: Solidarity, Tiananmen Square, Reaganomics, AIDS, the fall of the Berlin Wall, etc.

[112] At a 1994 slide talk made at CalArts Group Material screened an NBC 30-minute program on the 1980s on a monitor installed kitty-corner to the slide screen. The program was a compilation of video bites providing glimpses into “newsworthy” events that took place between the beginning of 1980, marked by the election of Ronald Reagan and the release of the Iran hostages, and the fall of the Berlin Wall at the close of 1989. The group contrasted reflection with that TV version of the decade.

[113] A pertinent anecdote. When I was preparing the manuscript for *Alternative Art New York, 1965–1985* (University of Minnesota, 2002) I proposed “Cultural Economies: Histories from the Alternative Art Movement,” as a title. I believed that calling the various practices, structures, events, and spaces that the book analyzed a “movement” would authorize them and create momentum in the field at the time, which, despite being in relative decline, was nonetheless active. The publisher argued that the activities did not constitute a movement and the term could not be used. Lesson learned; calling it a movement does not make it one.

[114] ("You were such a good artist. What happened . . . you disappeared?!" "Wasn't it amazing? So fertile *then*. I miss the eighties." "Why weren't you in that show?")

[115] "Our project is clear. We invited everyone to question the entire culture we have taken for granted." Group Material inaugural statement, 1980. Reprinted in Ault, ed., *Show and Tell*, p. 23.

[116] Referring to Lyotard's argument in *The Postmodern Condition* that the discourses of legitimation have failed, and then talking about the "grand narratives" proposed by Christian Theology and Marxism which have lost their credibility, "We are engaged, whether we like it or not, in a discourse of delegitimation." Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, p. 313.

[117] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, p. 218. "As microhistory has already verified, the initial benefit of a variation in scale is that it shifts the accent to individual, familial, or group strategies that call into question the presupposition of submission by social actors on the bottom rank to social pressures."

[118] I am speaking generally about the United States.

[119] This was the stance I took as the book's editor, and not a "group decision."

[120] Links to cultural and sociopolitical circumstances and contexts are invoked by the work, which is chronicled. The detailed data of the exhibition history near the book's end, of venues, institutions, places, participants, and collaborators are coordinates that portray context, inscribing a larger field of action and social relations. The exhibition titles of documented work chart a compendium of concerns and objectives.

[121] This comes across for example, in the types of selected material and the interplay between casual photography, professional installation shots, and snapshots of the group in different settings, chosen to show members at work, sometimes posing, or in off moments, and sometimes smiling.

[122] "Memory, History, Forgiveness: A Dialogue Between Paul Ricoeur and Sorin Antohi," March 10, 2003. Accessed from http://www.janushead.org/8-1/Ricoeur.pdf.

[123] Ault, pp. 209–16; Rollins, pp. 217–19; Ashford, pp. 220–227.

[124] Locks, pp. 228–55.

[125] "Behind the Timeline," is a set of interviews Locks conducted with people who were involved with or participated in *AIDS Timeline* twenty years later.

[126] Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, (Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), p. 7.

[127] Hayden White, The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality, in W.J.T. Mitchell, ed. *On Narrative* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), especially pp. 2–4.

[128] Ibid., p. 5.

[129] Cofounder Tim Rollins was never "unhistorical."

[130] See Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, "On the Use and Abuse of History for Life," (orig. published 1874), translated by Ian Johnston, revised edition, 2010. Accessed from http://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/nietzsche/history.htm. (An art historian friend who enthusiastically recommended this translation, which she considers "far superior to the one in book form," directed me to this version.) "For the man says, "I remember," and envies the beast, which immediately forgets and sees each moment really perish, sink back in cloud and night, and vanish forever. In this way the beast lives *unhistorically*. For it goes into the present like a number without any odd fraction left over; it does not know how to play a part, hides nothing, and appears in each moment exactly and entirely what it is. Thus, a beast can be nothing other than honest." Hayden White clarifies, "In reality Nietzsche believed that human *forgetting* is quite different from animal *oblivion*." *Metahistory*, p. 347.

[131] Ricoeur quotes Walter Benjamin's description of the angel confronting the past in Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus,* "His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling up wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feel. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress." Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, pp. 499–500.

[132] See *Show and Tell*, pp. 156–189 of the Chronicle section.

[133] Doug Ashford, Julie Ault, "Group Material: *AIDS Timeline*," 100 Notes – 100 Thoughts 032, dOCUMENTA (13) and Hatje Cantz, 2011.

[134] *Democracy*, four installations and town meetings, *Education*; *Politics and Election*; Cultural *Participation*; *AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study*, Dia Art Foundation, New York, September 15, 1988–January 14, 1989. Followed by Brian Wallis, ed., *Democracy: A Project by Group Material*, Dia Art Foundation, Discussions in Contemporary Culture, Number 5 (Seattle: Bay Press, 1990).

[135] Locks, in *Show and Tell*, p. 229.

[136] The title references the title structure Felix Gonzalez-Torres used in his work; Gonzalez-Torres is the primary inspiration for the exhibition that focuses on art that effectively fuses aesthetic innovation and political articulation. The Biennial premise is widely circulated, for instance, at http://www.e-flux.com/shows/view/9136.

[137] Group Material, *The Castle*, June 12–September 20, 1987, *documenta 8*, Museum Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany. Commissioning curator: Edward Fry.

[138] White, *Metahistory*, p. 339.

[139] This concept can feed into what seems like an outmoded notion of the artist and a concomitant caveat: one cannot create and analyze at the same time. Or, that Art is achievable only by freeing the mind and internal artistic communion. Of course one cannot legitimately rip the points of Nietzsche's larger argument out of its time and then-current conceptions of art and paste them onto "art today." Nonetheless I find contemplating the notion of sensing unhistorically in correlation to the socially minded and sociably exuberant moments of creative practice I remember in Group Material stirring.

[140] Nietzsche, "On the Use and Abuse." Hayden White: "In Part IV of "The Use and Abuse of History," Nietzsche argued that history could serve life by becoming a form of art. He insisted that the tendency to turn history into a science is fatal to its life-giving function. "The knowledge of the past is desired only for the service of the future and the present, not to weaken the present or undermine a living future."

[141] "Nietzsche's purpose was to destroy belief in a historical path from which men might learn any single, substantial truth. For Nietzsche – as for Burckhardt – there were as many "truths" about the past as there were individual perspectives on it. In his view, the study of history ought not to be merely an end in itself but should always serve as a means to some *vital* end or purpose." White, *Metahistory*, p. 332.

[142] Nietzsche, "On the Use and Abuse."

[143] Ibid.

[144] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, p. 102

[145] "Seriously studying a text calls for an analysis of the study of the one who, through studying wrote it. It requires an understanding of the sociological-historical conditions of knowledge." Paulo Freire, "The Act of Study," in *The Politics of Education. Culture, Power, Liberation* (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 1985), p. 2.

[146] One can easily be overwhelmed by what they don't know, and turn to a less consuming source, like reading a Wikipedia entry.

[147] Ibid., p. 3.

[148] Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1961–1966), pp. 6–7.

[149] Ibid.

[150] Ibid., p. 7.

[151] Ibid., p. 4.

[152] I once overheard a guard at the Dia Art Foundation explaining to a visitor the installation view by Robert Gober, which included wall-to-wall floor-to-ceiling imagery of woodland, was influenced by the fact that he had bought a country house in upstate New York.

[153] Ibid., p. 8.

[154] I do not use a mobile phone, but I notice how others do. Someone recently asked me how large was the town I grew up in. I had no idea but within three minutes he had looked it up and told me the population of Winthrop, Maine c. 1970. In the meantime we lost the train of discussion.

[155] "There was an enormous amount of explaining: even though much of the work makes an attempt at direct communication, it is still surrounded by a framework of institutional explication and pedagogy-gallery tours, panels, the catalog, and wall labels." Silvia Kobowlski, in "Politics of the Signifier: A Conversation on the Whitney Biennial," Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Silvia Kobowlski, Miwon Kwon, Benjamin Buchloh. *October*, vol. 66, Autumn, 1993, p. 14.

[156] "This understanding of American culture as the totality of polyvalent, often conflicting expressions of a fragmented collectivity established the overarching theme for the 1993 Biennial – the first to be fully organized under Ross's direction. For the first time in Biennial history, the vast majority of the show's participants were members of marginalized groups. Where the 1991 Biennial suggested a harmonic model of multiculturalism, the 1993 Biennial proposed a more radical, inharmonious model of cultural democracy, establishing a context in which virtually all of the art on view could, and often demanded to be read in political terms." See David Deitcher, "Polarity Rules: Looking at Whitney Annuals and Biennials, 1968-2000," in Julie Ault, ed., *Alternative Art New York 1965–1985* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press and The Drawing Center, 2002), pp. 201–246.

[157] For instance, Robert Hughes, "A Fiesta of Whining," *Time*, March 22, 1993; Eleanor Heartney, "Identity Politics at the Whitney," *Art in America* 81, no. 5 (May 1993); articles by Hilton Als, Glenn O'Brien, Bruce F. Ferguson, David Rimanelli, Jan Avgikos, Greg Tate, Dan Cameron, David Deitcher, Thomas McEvilley, Liz Kotz, and Laurence Chua in *Artforum* (May 1993), 7-17; and Kobowlski et al., *October*. Robert Hughes: "The key to the show, the skeptic might say, is its inclusion of the tape of the police bashing of Rodney King taken by George Holliday, a plumbing-parts salesman not known for his artistic aspirations before or since. The 1993 Biennial is anxious to present all its artists as witnesses, just like Holliday. Witnesses to what? To their own feelings of exclusion and marginalization. To a world made bad for blacks, Latinos, gays, lesbians and women in general. It's one big fiesta of whining agitprop, in the midst of which a few genuine works of art and some sharp utterances (mainly in video) manage to survive." Retrieved from http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,978001,00.html.

[158]Deitcher, "Polarity Rules," p. 240.

[159] For example, writings by Agnes Martin were presented as wall texts nested within sequences of her paintings in the survey, *Agnes Martin*, Whitney Museum of American Art, 1992.

[160] For instance, justification along the lines, potentially, of, This is not here because it's great art, which you would see for yourself if it was, but is here because the work addresses black rage, which in light of the previous year's L.A. rebellion, we should be thinking about. See Rosalind Krauss, "Politics of the Signifier," pp. 5–6. Krauss describes her positive encounter with Lorna Simpson's work, which was then undermined by the curatorial text and reading Thelma Golden's specific interpretation of the work in the catalog. (Also see note 31 in "Politics of the Signifier." The videotape of Rodney King being beaten by Los Angeles police officers was installed in the exhibition on continuous play is listed in the catalog as *George Halliday's Videotape of the Rodney King Beating*, 1991.)

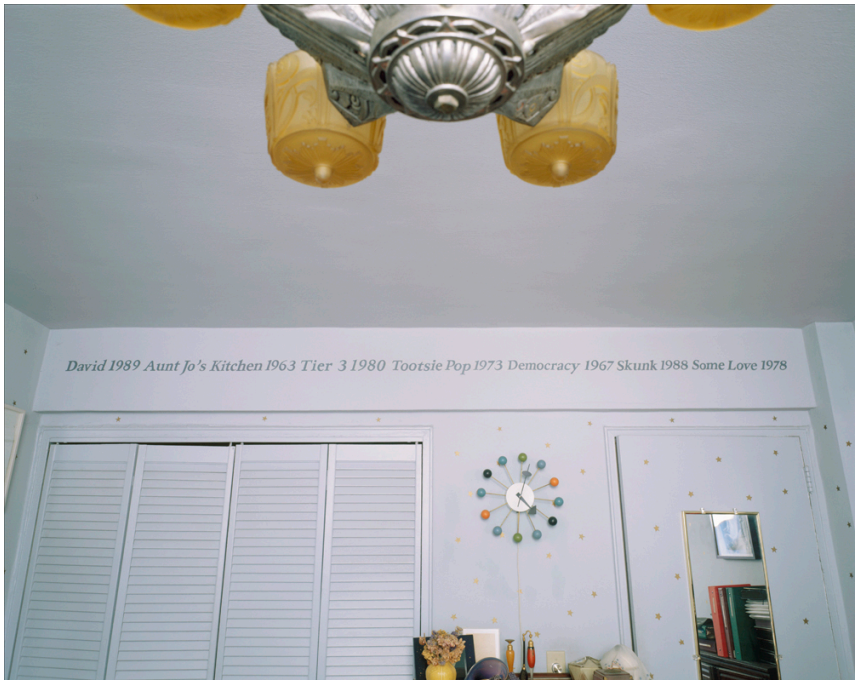
[161] Kwon, "Politics of the Signifier," p. 7.

[162] See Brian Wallis, "Public Funding and Alternative Spaces," in Ault, *Alternative Art New York*, pp. 161–181.

[163] John McPhee, *Annals of the Former World*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000).

[164] Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *"Untitled (Portrait of Julie Ault),"* 1991, paint on wall. Gonzalez-Torres's text portraits are composed of private and public dates and events significant to the subject's formation, initially determined by the subject and added to / subtracted from and sequenced by Gonzalez-Torres. In 1991, Gonzalez-Torres asked me for a list of formative dates and events which a word, name, place, or phrase could denote, from which he would make my portrait. I enthusiastically called on memory, letting people, places, and events surface. I obsessed over the responsibility of memorializing key relationships, and myself. It was largely a conscious activity relying on active memory – searching for and considering "benchmarks." I thought about what conditions formed me and about what I would want to be reminded of on a daily basis

since the work would be installed in my bedroom. Finally, FGT selected from my pool and sequenced the entries non-chronologically.



A few years ago I repainted the room and did not reinstall the work. FGT's portraits are not static; they may be modified by whoever owns them, whether that is the subject or another individual or institution. My portrait has had two subsequent permutations: for an exhibition of portraits of artists by artists organized by Independent Curators Inc. (ICI), 2004, I self-consciously modified it for being in public, which it has not been. And for the occasion of Danh Vo's "Rundgang," school exhibition at the Städelshule, 2005, I restructured it with all new entries except for one in order to "remake" myself. Each reformulation is an accretion to the archive of the work.





As the owner of the work, I am using this occasion rematerialize the portrait and modify its composition. In light of the overarching research into using and making the archive, variety of memory, and representation of pasts, over time, I put together a larger reservoir of possibilities, making note of references to compelling memories that popped into my head – "memory as appearing, ultimately passively, to the point of characterizing as an

affection – *pathos* –the popping into mind of a memory." I distilled that into a smaller pool, and invited my mother to make the final selection, which I then sequenced non-chronologically. The work requires being painted by hand where the wall meets the ceiling, to wrap around one or more corners onto other walls. Phung Vo, who is Danh Vo's father, will do the painting on site.

[165] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, and Forgetting*, p. 93.

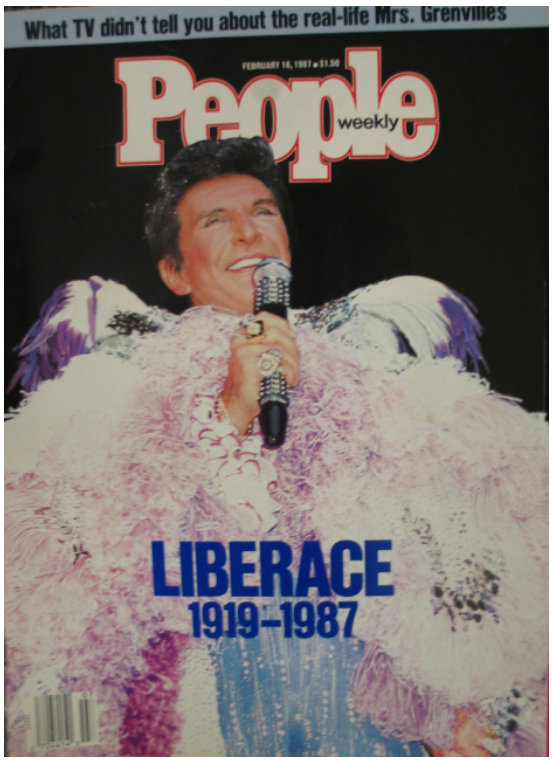
[166] Rasmus Röhling, *Self-Titled*, 2008.

[167] Rasmus Röhling, *Self-Titled*, 2008, video installation. *Self-Titled* engages the notion of the artist's chronology, and in some measure extends from Röhling's and my discussion about historicizing and issues of archiving and self-historicization. The work uses extracts from a documentary on Derrida, a scene from Spiderman 3, a racecar driver rapidly shifting gears, and a recitation of an essay written by Röhling for the work.



[168] Ibid.

[169] The Group Material Archive in the Downtown Collection can be viewed by appointment: Fales Library and Special Collections, Elmer Holmes Bobst Library, New York University, New York.

170 

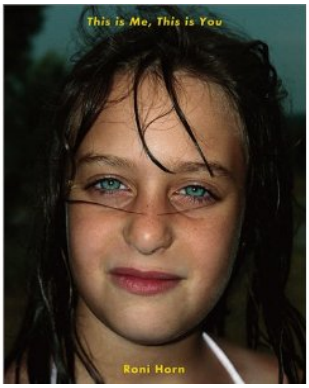
[171] Julie Ault, ed. *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material*. London, Four Corners, 2010; Doug Ashford, Julie Ault. Group Material: *AIDS Timeline*. Ostfildern, Hatje Cantz, 2011.

[172] The Group Material Archive has been made accessible to particular researchers and curators in the interim, and material has been loaned to several exhibitions. Now that the collection is fully processed and accounted for it can be consulted freely.

[173] *Roni Horn aka Roni Horn* encompasses a double-volume book and four retrospective exhibitions that took place in 2009–10 at the Tate Modern in London, Collection Lambert in Avignon, France, the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, and the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston.

174 

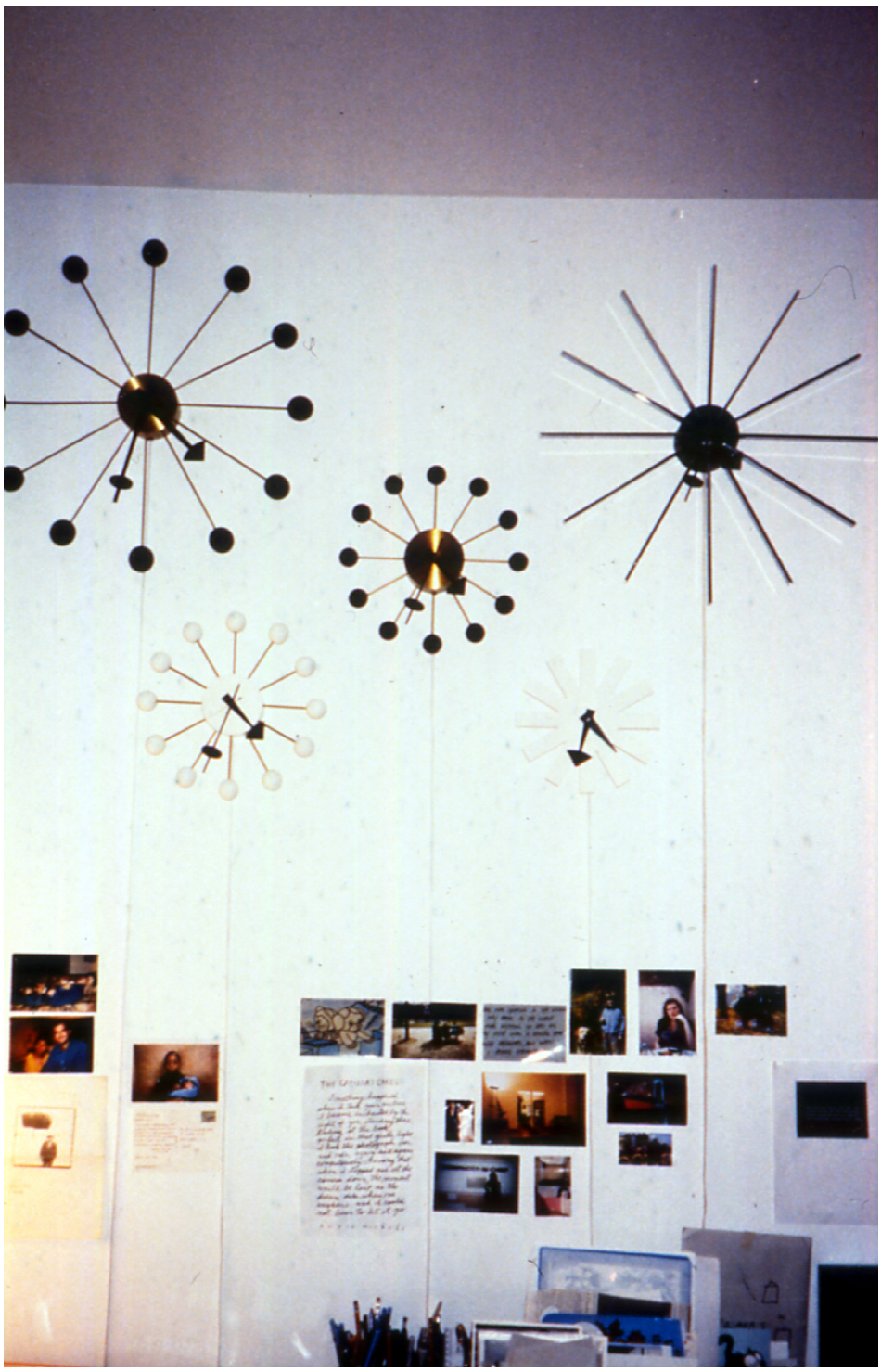




While Roni Horn was researching and conceptualizing the retrospective of her work in 2009, she and pored over photographs of herself she collected from various sources, choosing twenty-four, which she then composed into pairs for use in the publication, *Roni Horn aka Roni Horn*, (Steidl Verlag, copublished by Tate, London, and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 2009). Subsequently Horn selected a larger choice of photos for the work *aka,* 2009. The images are made uniform scale and alternate between childhood, teenage, and adulthood. Personal style is variable. Horn jumbles chronology, countering any notion of linear evolution. Not in fact autobiography, *aka* combines portraiture, documentary, personal excavation, and biographic proposition, verging on a fresh genre. I wonder what was revealed to the artist, what she experienced as she surveyed the history of her looks and encountered evidence of former selves. What was she studying? What (or who) was she seeking? Identification? Foreshadowing? A prototype in childhood? Was she always recognizable to herself? Was there disidentification? Are *those* images included in *aka*? Was indication of her enduring chameleonic appearance puzzling, reassuring, or somehow out of synch with her internal images? What remembrances did the experience of looking open onto? Any thesis to be garnered from *aka* is met within itself by antithesis; the work is a conundrum. Horn has ostensibly made herself a subject while also making herself an object—of study of self and of identity.







175

[176] On July 7, 2011, fifteen years after the dispersal of the artist's belongings, Ault and Rosen reflected together on their decisions.

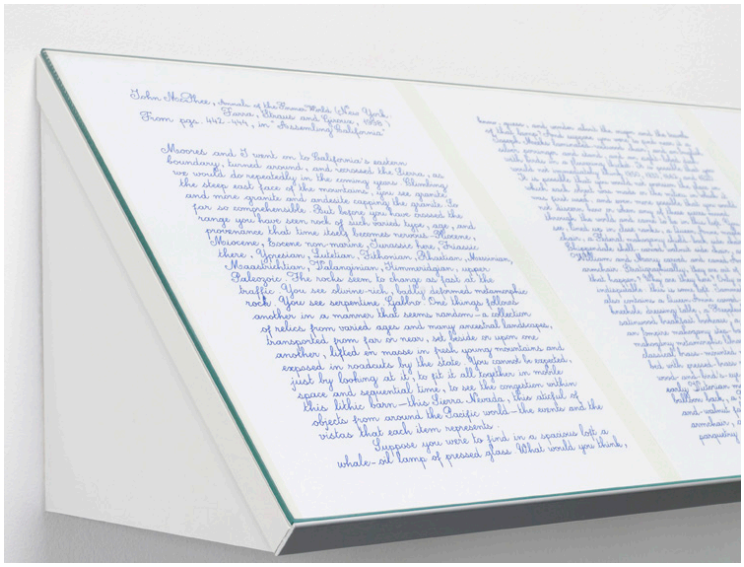
177



178 On first viewing, this work reminded me of the dedication page in Toni Morrison's *Sula*: "It is sheer good fortune to miss somebody long before they leave you. This book is for Ford and Slade, whom I miss although they have not left me."

179 *A Selection of Snapshots Taken by Felix Gonzalez-Torres*, Alejandro Cesarco, ed. (New York: A.R.T. Press, 2010).

180 Danh Vo, *Death Sentence,* 2009, Ink on sixty pieces of paper, Text compiled by Julie Ault and handwritten by Phung Vo.





[181] For decades Benning refused to convert his 16mm films to other media because if he did, it would not be film. Benning has recently allowed some transferral to digital media, and transferred *casting a glance*, 2007, 80 min., 16 mm to DVD for this exhibition.



[182] Conversation with the author, June 11, 2009

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Brian Wallis, “Public Funding and Alternative Spaces,” in Ault, *Alternative Art New York*.

Appendix A

The following textual components are part of the exhibition, *Ever Ephemeral: Remembering and Forgetting in the Archive,* Signal - Center for Contemporary Art, Monbijougatan 15, Malmö, September 23 – November 13, 2011, and Inter Arts Center, Bergsgatan 29, Malmö, September 30 – October 30, 2011.

Checklist, *Ever Ephemeral: Remembering and Forgetting in the Archive*

Alejandro Cesarco*, Present Memory*, 2010, text compiled by Cesarco, produced as booklet in exhibition.

Time Frames: A Conversation, 2011, dialogue between Ault and Andrea Rosen about their decision to disperse Felix Gonzalez-Torres's collection of clocks rather than archive them when he died. The clocks have been gathered from their respective owners for the occasion of this exhibition. The conversation is a take-away booklet in the exhibition.

Julie Ault, *4195.6 feet: Geography of Time*, 2010, text on James Benning (dir) *casting a glance*, 2007, produced as handout in exhibition.

Julie Ault, *Historical Inquiry as Subject and Object*, 2010, essay on Group Material archive and book project, a take-away in exhibition.

Doug Ashford, Julie Ault: Group Material: *AIDS Timeline*
(Hatje Cantz, dOCUMENTA (13), 2011, ISBN 978-3-7757-2881-2)

Rasmus Röhling*, Self-Titled,* 2009, text by Röhling imbedded in his work and a take-away in the exhibition.

Julie Ault*, Roni Horn, a compilation*, 2010 [ongoing]*,* text that derives from researching Horn's journals to compose a personal chronology of the artist; exhibited in relation to a set of artists books by Horn. Extract produced for exhibition.

Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *"Untitled" (Portrait of Julie Ault)*, 1991, the loan form for the work includes the text, materialization specifications, and terms of agreement.

"Ever Ephemeral: Remembering and Forgetting in the Archive"

Curated by Julie Ault

Signal - Center for Contemporary Art
Monbijougatan 15, entrance from the backyard
SE 211 53 Malmö
September 23, 2011 - November 13, 2011

Inter Arts Center
Bergsgatan 29
SE-214 22 Malmö
September 30, 2011 - October 30, 2011

Signal Checklist

Danh Vo
Death Sentence, 2009
Ink on sixty pieces of paper
Text compiled by Julie Ault and handwritten by Phung Vo

Julie Ault, Danh Vo.
Where the Lions Are, 2009
Publication [Kunsthalle Basel]

Twelve vintage clocks designed by George Nelson and collected by Felix Gonzalez-Torres
Loaned by Julie Ault, John Connelly, Amada Cruz Harman and Rick G.
Harman, Jim Hodges, Roni Horn, Michelle Reyes, Andrea Rosen

Julie Ault and Andrea Rosen,
Time Frames: A Conversation, 2011
Booklet [published for the occasion]

James Benning
casting a glance, 2007
16 mm film transferred to dvd, 80 min.

Julie Ault
4195.6 feet: Geography of Time, 2010
Text handout

"Viruses"
November 3, 1986
Time magazine

Loaned by The Group Material Archive, Downtown Collection at the Fales Library and Special Collections, Elmer Holmes Bobst Library, New York University

The Fales Library & Special Collections
Guide to the Group Material Archive 1976-2009 (bulk 1979-1996), 2011
Web page, finding aid, not yet published

Julie Ault
Historical Inquiry as Subject and Object, 2010
Text handout

Julie Ault, ed.
Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material, 2010
Publication [London, Four Corners Books]

Doug Ashford, Julie Ault
Group Material: AIDS Timeline, 2011
Pamphlet [Hatje Cantz, dOCUMENTA (13)]

Alejandro Cesarco
Present Memory, 2010
Color video, no sound, continuous loop, 4 min.

Alejandro Cesarco
Present Memory, 2010
Booklet [published for the occasion]

Inter Arts Center Checklist

"Liberace 1919–1987"
February 16, 1987
People magazine
Loaned by The Group Material Archive, Downtown Collection at the Fales Library and
Special Collections, Elmer Holmes Bobst Library, New York University

The Fales Library & Special Collections
Guide to the Group Material Archive 1976-2009 (bulk 1979-1996), 2011
Web page finding aid, not yet published

Julie Ault
Historical Inquiry as Subject and Object, 2010
Text handout

Julie Ault, ed.
Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material, 2010
Publication [London, Four Corners Books]

Doug Ashford, Julie Ault
Group Material: AIDS Timeline, 2011
Pamphlet [Hatje Cantz, dOCUMENTA (13)]

Felix Gonzalez-Torres
"Untitled" (Portrait of Julie Ault), 1991
Paint on wall

Rasmus Røhling
Self-Titled, 2008
Video installation

Rasmus Røhling
Self-Titled, 2008 / 2009
Text handout

Roni Horn
You Are The Weather, 1997
Another Water, 2000
This Is Me, This Is You, 2002
Dictionary Of Water, 2002
Cabinet Of, 2003
Index Cixous, 2005
Doubt Box, 2006
Roni Horn aka Roni Horn, 2009
aka, 2010
Well and Truly, 2011
Publications [various publishers]

Julie Ault
Roni Horn, a compilation, 2008–present
Text extract on wall

"Ever Ephemeral" is part of Ault's doctoral research in fine and performing arts, Malmö Art Academy, Lund University.



PRESENT MEMORY

Alejandro Cesarco

All this must be considered as if spoken by a character in a novel. [1]

The subject of nostalgia comes into the picture: it belongs to the precarious hold that a person may have on the inner representation of a lost object. [2]

Nostalgia is a sadness without an object, a sadness which creates a longing that of necessity is inauthentic because it does not take part in lived experience. Rather, it remains behind and before that experience. Nostalgia is like any form of narrative, and hence, is always ideological: the past it seeks has never existed except as narrative, and hence, always absent, that past continually threatens to reproduce itself as a felt lack. [3]

The photograph is literally an emanation of the referent. From a real body, which was there, proceeded radiations which ultimately touch me, who am here; the duration of the transmission is insignificant; the photograph of the missing being, as Sontag says, will touch me like the delayed rays of a star. A sort of umbilical cord links the body of the photographed thing to my gaze: light, though impalpable, is here a carnal medium, a skin I share. [4]

The photograph as souvenir is a logical extension of the pressed flower, the preservation of an instant in time through a reduction of physical dimensions and a corresponding increase in significance supplied by means of narrative. [...] Temporally, the souvenir moves history into private time. [5]

The souvenir involves the displacement of attention into the past. The souvenir is not simply an object appearing out of context, an object from the past incongrously surviving in the present; rather, its function is to envelope the present within the past. [6]

If a person very close to us is dying, there is something in the months to come that we dimly apprehend—much as we should have liked to share it with him—could only happen through his absence. We greet him at the last in a language that he no longer understands. [7]

Cisplatin, Pemetrexed, Avastin. [8]

Endlessly I sustain the discourse of the beloved's absence; actually a preposterous situation; the other is absent as referent, present as allocution. The singular distortion generates a kind of insupportable present; I am wedged between two tenses, that of the reference and that of the allocution: you have gone (which I lament), you are here (since I am addressing you). Whereupon I know what the present, difficult tense, is: a pure portion of anxiety. Absence persists—I must endure it. Hence I will manipulate it: transform the distortion of time into oscillation, produce rhythm, make an entrance onto the stage of language (language is born of absence: the child has made himself a doll out of spool, throws it away and picks it up again, miming the mother's departure and return: a paradigm is created). Absence becomes an active practice, a business (which keeps me from doing anything else); there is a creation of fiction which has many roles (doubts, reproaches, desires, melancholies). This staging of language postpones the other's death: a very short interval, we are told, separates the time during which the child still believes his mother to be absent and the time during which he believes her to be already dead. To manipulate absence is to extend this interval, to delay as long as possible the moment when the other might tipple sharply from absence into death. [9]

I wanted to do a show that would disappear completely. It had a lot to do with disappearance and learning. [...] Freud said that we rehearse our fears in order to lessen them. In a way this "letting go" of the work, this refusal to make a static form, a monolithic sculpture, in favor of a disappearing, changing, unstable, and fragile form was an attempt on my part to rehearse my fears of having Ross disappear day by day right in front of my eyes. [10]

The methodological centrality of the personal carries through his complete oeuvre. He has commented: "It is not hard for me to tell things about myself personally—that's the easy part. The hard part about making personal work is not to make it one man's problem—not to make a film that just refers to my own grief. Who cares about that? I want people to be able to enter the film through their own lives ... But by myself being open I think they can be open to themselves. That's what I think a personal film has to do—has to show a trust but then it has to become more meaningful than what that story is about. It has to be bigger." [11]

We found by way of explanation that in mourning time is needed for the command of reality-testing to be carried out in detail, and that when this work has been accomplished the ego will have succeeded in freeing its libido from the lost object. We may imagine that the ego is occupied with analogous work during the course of melancholia; in neither case have we any insight into the economies of the course of events. [12]

To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it "the way it really was" (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger. [13]

Nothing sorts out memories from ordinary moments.
Later on they do claim remembrance when they show their scars. [14]

It is now a commonplace assumption to believe that something essential is lost, or at least attenuated, in the process of growing up. Whether it is called vision or imagination, or vitality, or hope, lives are considered to erode over time (the idealization of childhood and adolescence is reactive to this belief). And it is, of course, integral to this story to conceive of death as an enemy—as something we fight, something that makes surprise attacks—and not as of a piece with our lives. [15]

[Little Prince] "You know, when you are feeling very sad, sunsets are wonderful ..."
[Narrator]: "On the day of the fourty-four times, were you feeling very sad?"
But the little prince didn't answer. [16]

It is a good thing, he thought, that out of consideration for the reader, there should pass through the essay's discourse, from time to time, a sensual object. [17]

The temporality of everyday life is marked by an irony which is its own creation, for this temporality is held to be ongoing and nonreversible and, at the same time, characterized by repetition and predictability. The pages falling off the calendar, the notches marked in a tree that no longer stands —these are the signs of the everyday, the effort to articulate difference through counting. [18]

For both art and life depend wholly on the laws of optics, on perspective and illusion; both, to be blunt, depend on the necessity of error. [19]

Being is a becoming. And this becoming does not achieve stabilization even with death. Long after a given being has ceased to be physically in the world, it remains there, mnemonically, "housed' in all of the psyches that have ever affirmed it. In each of those psyches, it is not a coherent and stable entity, but a constellation of diverse and highly particularized sounds and images, caught up in a ceaseless process of flux and transformation. [20]

And even when the bird walks, one still knows him winged. [21]

Silence remains, inescapably, a form of speech (in many instances, of complaint or indictment) and an element in a dialogue. [22]

1. Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 119.

2. D.H. Winnicott, "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena," in *Playing and Reality* (New York and London: Routeledge, 1996), 16.

3. Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, The Gigantic, The Souvenir, The Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 23.

4. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 80-81.

5. Susan Stewart, *On Longing*, 138.

6. Susan Stewart, *On Longing*, 151.

7. Walter Benjamin, "One-Way Street," in *Reflections*: *Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings* (New York: Schoken Books, 1986), 70.

8. Recommended first-line chemotherapy for advanced non-small cell lung cancer.

9. Roland Barthes, referring to Winnicott, in *A Lover's Discourse,* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 21-22.

10. Felix Gonzalez-Torres, interviewed by Tim Rollins, in *Felix Gonzalez-Torres* (New York: A.R.T. Press, 1993), 13.

11. James Benning, quoted by Julie Ault in "Using the Earth as a Map of Himself" in *James Benning* (Vienna: Filmmuseum Synema Publikationen, 2007), 112.

12. Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia" in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 14 (London: Hogarth, 1964), 252-253.

13. Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schoken Books, 1985), 255.

14. Chris Marker, *La Jetée*, book version of the 1964 film (New York: Zone Books, 1992), unpaginated.

15. Adam Phillips, *The Beast in the Nursery* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998), 107.

16. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince* (San Diego: Harcourt, 2000), 18-19.

17. Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, 135.

18. Susan Stewart, *On Longing*, 14

19. Friedrich Nietzsche, "A Critical Backward Glance," in *The Birth of Tragedy.*

20. Kaja Silvermann, *World Spectators* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 27.

21. Marcel Proust quoting Antoine-Marin Lemierre, in "Saint-Beauve and Baudelaire" in *Contre Saint-Beauve.*

22. Susan Sontag, "The Aesthetics of Silence," in *Styles of Radical Will* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 11.

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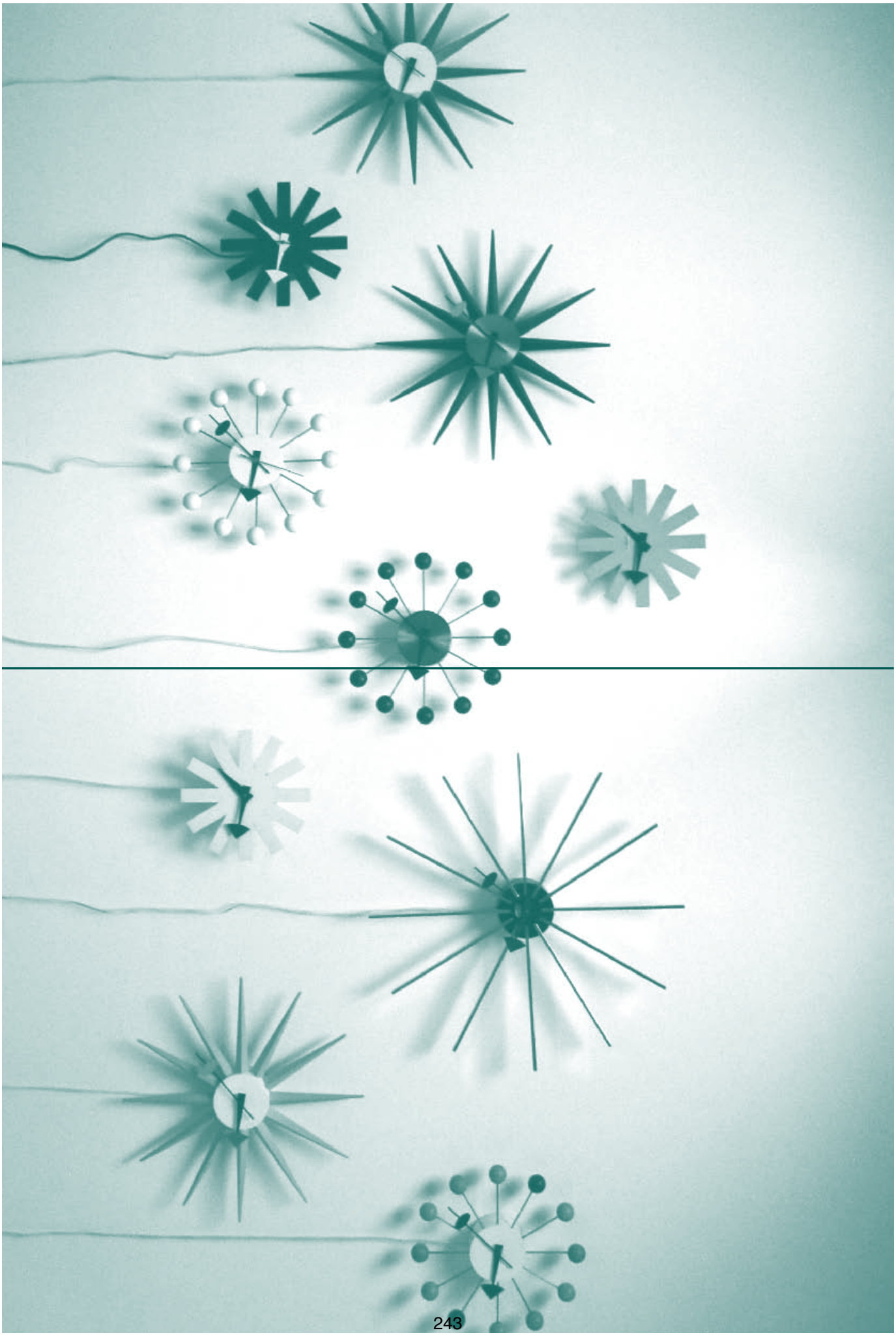
COVER: Alejandro Cesarco, *Present Memory*, 2010
still from a color video, no sound, continuous loop,
commissioned by Tate Modern, London.



TIME FRAMES

Julie Ault and Andrea Rosen

The artist Felix Gonzalez-Torres died in 1996 at the age of 38. His friends Julie Ault and Andrea Rosen were responsible for taking care of his personal possessions, among which were at least a dozen clocks designed by George Nelson in the late 1940s and '50, as well as hundreds of plastic toy figures collected by the artist, and his books. Ault and Rosen distributed the objects among Gonzalez-Torres's intimates, friends, and colleagues. Now the clocks are on loan to Ever Ephemeral, *which is part of a larger investigation of the intersection of memory, history, time, and archiving. On July 7, 2011, fifteen years after the dispersal of the artist's belongings, Ault and Rosen reflected together on their decisions.*

AULT: Last night I read this letter that Felix sent to you in 1993, which at the time accompanied the gift of a clock. Until I read it, I had not consciously been thinking about the emotional content of reassembling the group of clocks. I've been mostly focused on the practicalities. The letter begins, "This is not a clock. It's more than just a machine that marks time," and ends, "To more time." It threw me into an emotional state, which was not how I'd planned to begin our conversation.

One interpretation of Felix collecting "optimistic clocks" the last couple years of his life is that he was buying time. But I never liked that explanation, in part because it doesn't reconcile with Felix as I knew him. Perhaps the clocks were not amulets so much as they were beautiful, tough objects that fed his process of working through the complex relationships to time, which the conditions he was living in, and with, brought forward. Perhaps the clocks were about *facing* time. Diagramming a situation of no escape. You can't ignore time when you have a dozen clocks on the wall.

What led me to regather the clocks was the desire to see them together again, and generate an occasion to recollect our memories of thinking through what to do with Felix's things when he died, specifically his books, the clocks, and the toys he collected. I'd like to revisit our decisions to disperse those things as we did and reflect on how they sit with us fifteen years later. There is also a desire to symbolically stage a reunion of community that was united around Felix and is now diffused, although particular bonds remain active.

ROSEN: The movement between emotionality and objectivity you are talking about is a really essential part of this dialogue, because these positions were always fused in Felix's work. The work is a guiding force, or example, in that it imbues something with one's own personal emotionality but at the same time allows it to be stripped of anything personal in order that it might have some greater existence.

I'm remembering how museum curators would ask Felix, "Do you mind if we don't allow people to take sheets of paper from the stack during the opening?" and he'd say, "No, I don't mind," and I'd say, "But Felix, why did you agree to that when dispersal is at the essence of what you believe and what the work is about?" Referring to institutions, he explained how you have to allow for the nature of what things are. Then, there was a situation when the stacks were shown at a gallery, and the gallery had hired people to roll up sheets from the stacks and give them out at the opening. At that point Felix said he actually hated seeing people take them at openings. Felix maintained the works no longer belonged to him, and these kinds of shifts and ambiguity helped me realize that the work can only really transcend itself through other people.

I think we used Felix as our example when we made those decisions about his things, which is to say, it's not that the

clocks weren't imbued with meaning, it's not that you can't read them as being about holding onto time, it's not that anyone shouldn't have considered them precious or representational. But Felix set up an agenda. No matter how essentially private or however much something is saturated with emotional content the only thing you can do for that to continue is to give it up. Felix set an agenda for us.

AULT: We proceeded with dispersal in step with his principles, but it amazes me that we never talked about it in those terms. My memory of the period is vague, as is my recollection of the physicality of the experience and whether we dismantled his apartment over a few days or a few weeks. Although I don't recall the contour of our discussion I am reasonably certain that we didn't explicitly address what should happen with his things in analytic terms. I don't think we even considered keeping the toys he'd amassed, or the clocks, or even his library together, or talked about any of these being institutionalized in the form of an archive. At that moment his things were somewhere between life and becoming artifact. Your reading of the situation mirrors mine, that the resolution happened organically, that it was the only thing to do that made sense.

ROSEN: Felix was not didactic, he didn't say this is what my work is about, or this is what I want you to do, but he trained us in a way of thinking. He exposed a realm of possibility.

AULT: I'm hoping to activate my memory through tapping into yours. Do you know when Felix started getting the Nelson clocks, or recall any fragments of discussions about them, or being with him when he found a clock? I thought he collected clocks for about two years before he died, but the letter he sent you was written in February 1993, indicating it must have been at least three years.

ROSEN: There had to have been a time when he could only start affording such things, but I think that he had one clock that began it. I would guess, although I don't know why, that it was the multicolored one.

AULT: I also recall it was one of the atomic clocks. I remember him being very taken with those around the same time that he got excited about Sputnik lamps, which were also symbolic period objects alluding to the paradox of progress.

ROSEN: His fascination was with all George Nelson things

—it was chairs and furniture—and probably started less with the consciousness of a clock and more with awareness of Nelson's design. The letter is 1993, so he must have already been collecting them well before, because otherwise he would not have been giving one to me.

AULT: It seems to me it was probably only a couple months before that he began. The fact that he gave you one, and wrote about optimistic design in the letter indicates a newfound pleasure that he wanted to share. He wouldn't have bought a lot of clocks already and then decided to give you one. I suspect he wanted to share the excitement he felt immediately.

ROSEN: It's such a condensed time period. One could ask what difference does it make whether it was 1993 or 1994 or 1995; they're very close together. But between them there was a huge expanse of time in terms of what happened in Felix's life. Post Ross's death there were a number of relationships, exhibitions, and so much progression. I'm surprised how finite his letter sounds, how much it has to do with a feeling of him already being at the end.

AULT: That's certainly what unleashed my emotions reading it—the sense of prediction, fate, a rehearsal of saying goodbye. Even though he probably didn't start getting the clocks until much later, I consider their time frame to be January 1991, when Ross died, and January 1996, when Felix died. The letter is midway, at an incredibly complicated period.

If you were in the situation today that we were in 1996 would you do the same? I've felt some regret about scattering Felix's books, but I don't know if it's legitimate.

ROSEN: My only major concern is about how we archived our choices. I think there was hastiness in treating the recording of the books the same way we did other things; thinking that we only needed to write down "book" or "three books" and who they were given to.

AULT: You and I kept a lot of books, though I've since given some away. And we gave some of his close friends books that related to their shared histories and interests. Some choices were very specific, for instance we sent Felix's dog-eared copy of *Remaking History* to Barbara Kruger because she edited it, thinking she would appreciate his margin notes and use. But I think we had a different relationship to the clocks and saw

them as more elevated than anything else because of their symbolic content, especially at that moment.

ROSEN: Felix chose to amass the clocks into a collection, which was different than selecting a certain chair, for instance. There was something about the collectiveness. At Felix's memorial Mario Nunez said everyone in this room is like a part of a library and we're all responsible for remembering different chapters—together we make up this library that is Felix. I believe we had dispersed the objects prior to that, but I remember how profound that was to me.

We never felt that his objects should stay together or that we were sacrificing them to fulfill the agenda of distribution. Keeping Felix's collected toys together would have been a strange misplaced relationship of trying to hold onto something that didn't exist. There was also the acknowledgement that if you have two of the toys for instance, you have the essence as if you had all of them, whereas holding onto all of them would express a false sense of possession of something else.

AULT: One reason we didn't want to keep these things together reflects that Felix felt one could never own or depend on anything; you have to let go. Archiving would have created illusions of permanence and coherence that seemed contrary to his philosophy. I have a different consciousness now about archiving. I wouldn't change our decisions, but I think if we were in the situation now we would discuss whether or not to keep his books together. Were they part of his papers?

ROSEN: I guess they were a slightly gray area. We thought about people who would want something Felix used and wrote in, something referring to his intellect. Something that touched on work and not only the light side. There's also the fact that a book with margin notes has Felix's hand in it. Nothing else left in his apartment had his hand in it like that. I think it's worthwhile to go back and contact everyone we gave a book to, and ask them what book it was and what edition, and to photograph the covers. Beyond that I don't regret not having those tangible things. It's impossible to interpret why Felix underlined a certain passage in a book. And I'm skeptical when a curator says, "I want to look at Felix's library, I want to look at every single thing he underlined, and I want to read every note he ever wrote." But what happens if these things were all together? I would be happy to provide some-

one with a list of every book that was in Felix's library and leave it at that. But if I had every one of those books, would I want people to look at them?

AULT: But eventually you won't be around. The books contain notes he wrote for himself; they are precious like diaries and work journals. Even an enigmatic notation in a book becomes precious to a researcher.

ROSEN: But there's an assumption that he read each book equally or with equal intention, and in fact we don't know when he read them or with what intentions or in what order, or whether he underlined for a class or for something else.

AULT: On one hand there are no assumptions that are legitimate, but on the other all assumptions are legitimate—maybe this is intrinsic to both research and historical representation. Someone tries to find the puzzle pieces and put them together in order to form a picture for him or herself.

ROSEN: Felix did not want the picture to be about him. It's the work. Whatever he digested from readings that margin notes might reflect went into the work. He didn't want the subject to be him or him personally. I really believe in his desire to keep the separation between what went on with the work and him as a person.

AULT: As you know, when I was working on the book on Felix's work I also wanted to read and see everything, and did, but I did not write explicitly about Felix's work or reveal inside information about his process. For me, looking at everything I can get my hands on during research has to do with absorbing sensibility, tone, inference, and various content, ideas, and angles—all stimulating the process, but it does not imply a one-to-one relationship with portrayal. There's a difference between taking it all in and what you do with it.

I don't think that we sufficiently considered the difference between books and the other collections like toys and clocks. A library is accumulated over time and reflects periods in one's life and growth. It's eclectic. It's not the same as comprehensively collecting certain kinds of toys or Nelson designs. And because it shows the pathways and idiosyncrasies of one's thinking processes it's illuminating to researchers. Dispersing books is somewhat radical, because it goes against conservation and the notion that if you keep annotated books

together you can apprehend a person's intellectual itinerary. Such a collection or archive would support that idea, which many people probably do not regard with skepticism but consider being a sound method. And to some degree the logic makes sense: if I read and see everything and consult every image and piece of information possible then I am going to get to a deeper understanding of the thinking and process and conditions of the person I'm studying. I subscribe to this too but also stand by the conclusion of not objectifying Felix's reading through archiving the books.

ROSEN: The work needs to stand on its own. Felix used those books for him to make the work. And the work is what exists. The work can only be open for interpretation. Felix was very poignant about this to me; the work needed to stand on its own. The idea that his books should be disseminated came from this root, and maybe over however many years it is since Felix died, we've lost that part of how rigorous he was about that.

AULT: There is great value in archiving. At the same time archive authority has to be taken with a grain of salt; if they had been archived, the books would apparently say, this is what Felix was reading. But he was also reading other things that didn't get saved. We don't know the scope of what he read and if and to what degree anything he read or saw influenced his thinking and his work.

Anyone who approaches the archive and tries to get a handle on a subject must to some degree understand the ambiguity of what's encountered within, and understand archives are partial and sometimes random.

If we had chosen to keep the books together then I would have made a case for the clocks being archived too; they are potentially as important as the books. There is the work, and then there is everything else. There are lines that can be drawn, but I don't think it is only his books that speak to his intellectual exchange. The clocks do too, and the toys. Everything could.

I'm just beginning to think about what it means to see the clocks together again. They're really beautiful and compelling, but there's some sadness about the whole thing, not only about Felix's death, but that the community is so different. They represent a specific community as well as a larger con-

text made up of overlapping communities that Felix's work emerged from that not only changed but eventually disappeared. Addressing the inevitability of dissolution is one of the reasons I wanted to organize this reunion.

ROSEN: That's the interesting thing about community; it can't be what you expect. You can't have an expectation of what all that effort to create community will be. The community of who Felix touched in his lifetime could only be so much and we are not bound together. That's what's so interesting about his work. It can't be insular. If you keep the group the same it only has its limitations. Yet someone can write me a letter that tells how Felix's work affected him or her that I would never have anticipated.

Out of the toys and books and everything Felix had the clocks are content-wise the closest things to his work. In the end this clock is an object and it doesn't represent Felix. But this letter is Felix. We can detach ourselves from these objects. They don't hold Felix. It's harder for us to think about giving up those things that have his handwriting on them. There's an assumption that a book Felix read and annotated is Felix more than that clock is Felix.

AULT: There's a continual paradox—"that object is not Felix, but it also is Felix." And the paradox keeps upping the ante. So those papers of Felix's that do remain, enter the archive, and become accessible take on tremendous weight.

ROSEN: Yes, those things that exist are disparate and disproportionate, but I feel he specifically chose to keep the things he kept, though in no way is it a complete record. What we're striving to do is create broader archives so these things have contexts. For instance there's a picture of a bracelet of the dolphins. We can assume that that picture was not the source but a source for his idea of continuous dolphins. And then there's a history of the dolphin stack and the decisions made around that work. I'd like to see that information exist in as many files as could potentially be relevant. It is one piece of information in a history of information.

At the Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation we are working with the idea of case studies, how decisions were made in Felix's lifetime and after: Why did this thing happen, how did that next thing happen? Almost no decision that we make is done on speculation or on my assumption. We go back and see how decisions were made, what happened in that exhibi-

tion, and in that one. This tracing also becomes part of the archive, as well as any information or oral history that goes into it. A document or element may go into a section about a particular stack piece, and it may go into a segment about stacks in general, and it may go into an archive about a particular exhibition like the Guggenheim show. So the idea is that information exists in many places. To sift through that archive autonomously, as though these are the only things left in Felix's archive, seems to me to be irrelevant. We take that material and integrate it elsewhere, not the original piece of paper but a copy, so it is in the context of other relevant decisions and those case studies perpetually growing.

AULT: Of course there is also the original piece of paper. Where does that live? What you're saying makes sense, Felix's work and his thinking and the archival traces don't synch comfortably with the boundaries and classification system of the archive. There's also the problem of interpretation, the tendency to articulate one-to-one relations between artwork and source, which is often reductive or just wrong (though in some instances might be accurate). Searching for sources and connecting the dots and creating genealogies happens frequently in art history writing. You're speaking of an archive based on cross-referencing as a set of possibilities, which is designed with the capacity to generate lots of readings and a context of cross-connecting information to other information rather than confining particular informational artifacts or turning them into specific stories.

ROSEN: It's like your book on Felix; it's about contradiction. That piece of information contradicts another, and you're going to be able to see the contradictions. I'm much more interested in that situation of differences than in, "oh, here it is." Maybe it is the closest way of letting people experience Felix's way of thinking; the way he almost trained us to think; the responsibility to not take something at face value and to be responsible for evolving the information and constantly re-contextualizing.

AULT: This letter is a good example. I'm glad I never saw it before, or if I did see it I screened it out. I read yours and Felix's correspondence years ago, and I feel like I would have paid attention to it, but maybe not, maybe I read it and it had nothing to do with what I was thinking at the moment, and I just didn't take it in. Of course if you start applying this letter to thinking about the works with two clocks, *"Untitled"*

(Perfect Lovers), well, that's a valid connection to make but it's not sure or singular.

This is an exciting challenge, to make such a new kind of archive. At its core Felix's work requires that all formats for enacting it be tailored or rethought. Tailoring the archive extends from that.

ROSEN: My intention with the archive and foundation is for its format to be a replication of Felix's intentions. It's taken years to do that. It has its own ambiguities and open-endedness and it's not instructive or didactic, it provides a way of thinking that will hopefully guide someone's strategies of how to make future decisions.

AULT: It might take another ten years but I don't think that matters. It's not about getting it done fast and simply creating access. You're charged with the responsibility, and there's a time when the ideas of how to make information, including that which has been private, accessible in a fitting way, and how to structure it takes as long as it takes.

ROSEN: It's not even a choice. It has its own organic time frame and it has to unfold as it unfolds. The risk of that is like the urgency of Felix's letter, that he was in a situation where he felt like we all live with the illusion that we're going to be around for another however many years.

AULT: In the second part of the letter, like in other correspondence from Felix, and even in the clocks, there was clarity.

ROSEN: As much as he's telling me in it to think with certain optimism, you can't ignore the finiteness of this letter. And the clicking of the clock is way more finite having read this letter, even though it wasn't his intention.

AULT: In only a few sentences in Felix's letter multiple intentions are expressed. "And then it will always remind you of the good times, the growing times or times of growing, the important time, the urgent time, the beautiful time we had the luck of having together, by chance." It implies different tenses. That's one of the things I find so beautiful about the clocks, that they invoke ephemerality and permanence, memory, history, and questions about perception of time. What tense are these objects? What tense is the archive?

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COVER: George Nelson clocks owned by Felix Gonzalez-Torres and re-collected for the exhibition. Installed and photographed for the purpose of this conversation at Andrea Rosen's office prior to shipping.

DESIGN: Alejandro Cesarco

4195.6 feet: Geography of Time

Julie Ault

> A great artist can make art by simply casting a glance. A set of glances could be as solid as any thing or place, but the society continues to cheat the artist out of his "art of looking," by only valuing "art objects." The existence of the artist in time is worth as much as the finished product.
>
> —Robert Smithson, (1968)

> Between May 15, 2005, and January 14, 2007, I made sixteen trips to Spiral Jetty. Created in 1970, the Jetty is a 1,500-foot-long spiral-shaped jetty extending into the Great Salt Lake in Utah constructed of rock, mud, salt crystal, and algae. The resulting film maps the Jetty back onto its own thirty-seven-year history – looking at and listening to its reccurring changes.
>
> —James Benning (2007)

Had you not read or heard James Benning describe his film *casting a glance* (2007) prior to watching it, you'd likely assume that the sixteen dates that delimit its chronological structure and herald its constellation of eighty one-minute shots made at Spiral Jetty indicate when they were filmed. Each group of shots is introduced with a date, starting with April 30, 1970, which marks the jetty's beginning, and ending with May 15, 2007. The fact that the imagery is in fact the result of Benning's visits between 2005 and 2007 is not apparent in the film.

Benning claims it was not his intention to fool people into thinking he had been filming Spiral Jetty for thirty-seven years; he characterizes the conflation of chronologies as "a metaphor for history, a metaphor on time."[1] Nonetheless some viewers find the designated time span confusing or feel hoodwinked when they realize the discrepancy. Others walk away in awe of what they believe to be the filmmaker's durable commitment

to recording the jetty. For those who follow Benning's work closely, the superimposition of time frames – thirty-seven years, eighteen months, and eighty minutes – is far more artful and complex than a ploy; it is a valuable methodological manifestation of his persistent investigation into time, duration, and landscape.

The link between the history of Spiral Jetty and Benning's filming of it is the water level of the Great Salt Lake, which fluctuates dramatically due to climate change and seasonal shifts, and thus determines the jetty's concealment and/or exposure. The water level rises in spring due to mountain runoff and recedes in summer when extensive sun exposure causes the rate of evaporation to exceed inflow and rainfall. Because of the exceptionally shallow nature of the lake, even modest changes in level can enlarge its area, thereby swallowing the jetty.

When Benning visited on May 15, 2005, to begin filming, he coincidently found the water level was at 4195.6 feet, exactly the same as when Smithson made the piece in 1970. While reviewing water level notes from his trips about a year later, he realized he could mimic the conditions of earlier times with matching levels, and decided to superimpose the jetty's history onto his images.[2]

Spiral Jetty first went underwater in 1973, the year of Smithson's death, and it did not reemerge, except sporadically, until 2002. The jetty's visibility since 2002 is mostly the result of drought. During its period of invisibility Spiral Jetty became well known through aerial images from 1970 picturing it basking in sunshine, fully exposed above water. These photographs were instrumental in transforming the work into an icon, particularly as no documentation of Spiral Jetty in its submerged state circulated. Until the jetty's resurfacing it was publicly perceived as static, frozen in time, and was inadvertently objectified.

Benning regards Spiral Jetty as a vital formation and wants to show how it changes over time as a result of climate, season, weather, daylight, industry, and tourism. *Casting a glance* shows us Spiral Jetty fully exposed, partially underwater, and completely

submerged, and in this way representationally restores its periodic vulnerability and variety.

When filming Spiral Jetty, Smithson used multiple vantage points and scale shifts ranging from extreme close-ups to aerial views to photographically portray the earthwork. In his film *Spiral Jetty* (1970) he used ground-level perspectives to show the sculpture's construction and helicopter shots when depicting its finished state. Benning's methods derive from and expand on the artist's strategy. Except for several overlooking shots made from a twenty-foot ladder, Benning positions his camera exclusively at ground level. He employs a "to-and-fro" method that intersperses shots from various ranges and perspectives, thereby countering the notion of a singular ideal vantage point.

Benning believes in the virtues of focused attention and duration, viewing both as active forms of learning integral to his practice. They also reflect the influence of Henry David Thoreau. While living in the cabin he built on Walden Pond, Thoreau wrote: "No method nor discipline can supersede the necessity of being forever on the alert. What is a course of history, or philosophy, or poetry, no matter how well selected, or the best society, or the most admirable routine of life, compared with the discipline of looking at what is to be seen?"[3]

Casting a glance has a personal dimension and interweaves public biography with autobiographic references. At the outset we learn the film is "in memory of Robert Smithson," and the final shot is accompanied by the sound of a small plane, a reference to Smithson's death. Four of the sixteen timeline dates that introduce the film's sections harbor personal associations that point to mortality: January 2, 1971 (Smithson's birthday, 1938); July 20, 1984 (Smithson's death, 1973); December 28, 1970 (Benning's birthday, 1942); and April 11, 2002 (his daughter Sadie Benning's birthday, 1973).[4]

Another compelling dimension of *casting a glance* is its soundtrack, which was mostly recorded on location. We listen to the coactions of wind and water, punctuated by birds, thunder, insects, and the occasional indication of civilization. Soon after we settle into the

film's nearly sublime atmosphere, strange human yelps shatter the sense of solitude. Then we're confronted with gunshots, a trademark of Benning's films. Later we hear a fighter jet overhead, dispatched from an Air Force base just west of the jetty.

Benning incorporates two extra audio segments that were not captured on-site. About three-quarters through the film, a 1973 recording of Gram Parsons and Emmylou Harris singing the beautiful and mournful duet "Love Hurts" ruptures the section captioned March 19, 2005. Like Smithson, Parsons died in 1973. He was twenty-six. The volume increases and decreases as the shots transition, suggesting a fluctuating distance to the source – perhaps a tape deck in an off-screen car. The song seems remote, ghostly. Its emotional content is intensified by images of the jetty engulfed in the cool colors of dusk and the warm tones of last light.

During his editing process Benning happened to watch *Mono Lake*, by Nancy Holt and Robert Smithson, a film that charts a trip they made with Michael Heizer to the hypersaline California Lake in 1968. When Holt edited their footage thirty-six years later, she included two romantic songs by Waylon Jennings, whom the three had seen perform a week before going to Mono Lake. Benning speaks about using music, like Holt, to invoke the psychic pain of witnessing the death of a loved one. He refers to Nancy Holt and Robert Smithson, to Emmylou Harris and Gram Parsons, and relates through his personal experience of witnessing the death of a close friend in 1979.[5]

A second inserted acoustic fragment accompanies footage of five people walking on Spiral Jetty. We hear a man's voice intermingled with ambient sound, but it is muted; his words are indecipherable. Although unidentified, the voice is Smithson's, which Benning sampled from *Mono Lake*.

Normally a stickler for precise equivalency, the eighty shots that compose *casting a glance* are only approximately one minute each. Benning has deviated from his usual methods when it comes to each segment's length, as well as to his customary allegiance to symmetry, by introducing variation in the number of shots that form the film's

sections.[6] He is nonchalant about such anomalies: "I somehow didn't care this time," and on another occasion jokes, "I'm getting too old to count."[7] While the filmmaker's transgressing his own logic might be initially destabilizing for some Benning aficionados, it is striking the way Benning embraces change in his own methodology. *Casting a glance*, while documenting Spiral Jetty, is a measure of his transformation as artist and filmmaker.

Benning obsessively explores what engenders a sense of connection for him here. The film attests to alliance, influence, and veneration. I can't help but think of *casting a glance* as an offering – a love letter, essentially – to Smithson, who died without experiencing the full evolution of Spiral Jetty. It is also a dialogue – an unwitting collaboration with the deceased artist. While Benning frames Spiral Jetty through his particular brand of "subjective objectivity" and formal simplicity, the inverse also occurs: he is framed by Smithson and thus comes into focus. Through this we get to experience the quintessential Benning via Spiral Jetty, which we find to be an ideal context for enacting the filmmaker's philosophies of looking and listening and landscape as a function of time. Smithson's vision manifest in Spiral Jetty amid the multifaceted splendor of the Great Salt Lake, and Benning's vision manifest in the conceptual and formal grace of *casting a glance*, coalesce into an articulation of complementary sensibilities and convictions, particularly in respect to understanding landscape as an infinitely dynamic process.

In a recent conversation Benning reflected on that initial day of filming and the coincident measurement of 4195.6 feet. He recalled, "A violent storm blew through later that day and the water rose and dropped two feet. The jetty disappeared and then reappeared allowing me to witness its historical range in just a few hours (maybe eighty minutes); perhaps this was what made me think a year later that I should map my film back across the jetty's full history."[8]

The obvious story told in *casting a glance* is the life of Spiral Jetty; Benning and Smithson's communion of methods is an implicit focus, and the overshadowing theme is

time. Inquiring of the relationship between chronology and narrative,the film's timeframe seems illusory, throwing "now" and "then" into question; *casting a glance* is somehow tenseless.[9] Geological time, calendar time, clock time, perceptual time, and cinematic time are concurrently invoked, which makes a compelling methodological point of contact with Smithson. In 1996, Jack Flam insightfully hypothesized, "…Smithson takes time itself not only as one of the main *themes* of his art, but also as one of his most important *mediums*."[10] This reflection could well extend to Benning and his embrace of temporality in *casting a glance*.

Oh, and did I tell you what a beautiful film it is?

[1] Benning in conversation with Lynne Cooke on the occasion of a screening of his films at Dia:Beacon, September 21, 2008.
[2] E-mail to author, April 15, 2009.
[3] Thoreau quoted in Benning, "Life is Finite," Wexner Center website, 2008. Thoreau's influence on Benning continues: in 2007 he built a copy of the Walden cabin in the Sierra Nevada mountains.
[4] E-mail to author, April 2, 2007.
[5] Benning, Vienna Filmmuseum, November 1, 2007.
[6] For example, sixty one-minute shots create *One Way Boogie Woogie*, 1977; thirty-five two-and-a-half minute shots compose *El Valley Centro*, 2000; and ten ten-minute shots form *Ten Skies*, 2004.
[7] "Dialogue with James Benning" moderated by Robert Koehler, Buenos Aires Festival Internacional de Cine Independiente, March 27, 2009.
[8] Conversation with the author, June 11, 2009.
[9] Physicists and philosophers widely agree that "the flow of time" is a creation of consciousness that we rely on for order. See Dan Falk, *In Search of Time; The Science of a Curious Dimension*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2008).
[10] Jack Flam, *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

Historical Inquiry as Subject and Object

Julie Ault

> Each person who sits down to write faces not a blank page but his own vastly overfilled mind. The problem is to clear out most of what is in it, to fill huge plastic bags with the confused jumble of things that have accreted there over the days, months, years of being alive and taking things in through the eyes and ears and heart. The goal is to make a space where a few ideas and images and feelings may be so arranged that a reader will want to linger awhile among them…. But this task of housecleaning (of narrating) is not merely arduous; it is dangerous. There is the danger of throwing the wrong things out and keeping the wrong things in….
>
> —Janet Malcolm[1]

Since the New York-based artists collaborative Group Material disbanded in 1996, I have continued its representation through live narration and writings, and responded to inquiries on a case-by-case basis. As the only founding member who remained until its conclusion I felt a responsibility to keep recounting the group's practice. (Long-term member Doug Ashford has done likewise.) Group Material's cultural practice was temporal and the forms employed were ephemeral. When the group ceased its activities I was intent on preserving its ephemerality and *not* becoming history. Fearing a revisionist encapsulation in which conflicts and contradictions of collaboration are resolved in their representation, I resisted our work being defined or objectified in a monograph by an art historian, and reserved the right to cohere our history at some future point.

Following a decade of active narration I decided it was time to relinquish responsibility (and control) and address Group Material's history with lasting effect. I needed to confront the material traces that had infiltrated every closet, cabinet and spare spot in my apartment, as well as the psychic traces that permeated memory. Collecting material saved by other members' as well and joining it all together in an archive would permit access to Group Material in a more coherent way than had been possible, and open the door for further historical representation.

Tackling the mission of recuperating Group Material as a two-pronged 'housecleaning' operation involved gathering and organising the pool of material to constitute the archive, and simultaneously distilling from that body of information to make a book. While formalising the archive sought to make Group Material newly public, the process was also conceived as a laboratory in which to investigate the logic, structure, implications and practice of the archive. I spent several months processing the material in its soon-to-be permanent home – the Downtown Collection at New York University: handling, reading and looking at every paper, image and item; taking note, cross-referencing, recollecting and reflecting. The more I reviewed the more deeply I understood the malleable and fallible nature of memory, and memory repeatedly threw documentary fact into question. Alternatively edified and mystified, the experience demonstrated the utter insecurity of the categories 'subjective' and 'objective'.

Looking back, I realise while telling the story of Group Material these past years I have unwittingly told some lies. This discovery occurred when encountering information in files that I had long since blotted from memory. Surprised, I read on and the divide between recollection and fact expanded. Certain retrieved information was basic while some signalled that Group Material is much more complex and debatable than I had meanwhile fabricated. It seems I had convinced myself that the streamlined storyline, which I repetitiously recounted for years, was accurate.

Of course documents and artefacts are not intrinsically truth telling either; they are fragmentary and disconnected from context. Archives set the stage for history writing, yet they can mislead and even lie through omission. Essential pieces of information, which might answer questions and redirect research, are not necessarily tangible or archived.

While retrieving Group Material for myself, for the group and with the larger purpose of public representation in mind, inhabiting the dual roles of observer and observed created a central methodological challenge, which at times was confounding. Flipping between my own and other members' muddle of memory as well as the accumulation of material sometimes felt like too much and not enough. But, ultimately my insider relationship to

the subject in conjunction with a more independent association to the potential for archives to shape historical representation seemed to productively balance one another.

Each aspect of cohering the archive and making *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material* has embodied specific and abstract purpose. A set of vexing questions fuelled the work. How does bringing documentation together imply shaping history, and writing history? How do artefacts – whether material or informational – communicate? Can contexts be in effect communicated? What archival structure and practices will animate and complicate without over determining meanings? How does the archive archive? What tense is the archive? Where does the archive end? What defines its frame? What can the collective subjective do when given the chance to write its own history? What is gained and lost in the process of subjecting ephemeral and peripheral activities to conservation, from inducting them into history? What kind of suitable forms can be shaped to embody the historicising processes, gathered knowledge and diverse purpose that drive this inquiry? How to make what is missing evident as a layer of historicising? How does the subjective transform the material to a public sphere without manipulating it? Can one effectively challenge history writing while writing history?

The book's main section was conceived as a chronicle composed of reprinted documents and images, with a guiding text running throughout. *Show and Tell* takes its ingredients and methods from the archive, which embodies both private and public material. The making of the group as a specific context along with its structure and process is inseparable from its public creations, yet the bulk of existing representation focuses on Group Material's projects. *Show and Tell* widens the focus to include conveyance of internal workings in each layer of material that forms the book, and stresses aspects of the collaboration that are otherwise invisible.

Group Material comes to life in the archive. Working through the material, I was struck by the vividness and changing character of internal correspondence, minutes of meetings, exhibition proposals and press releases produced by the group. Emotional intensity is palpable in early communiqués, proposals and press releases are bombastic, topics and debates of the times are glimpsed through language, and graphic design bespeaks period styles. A selection of documents is reprinted in their original form and

scale in *Show and Tell*. They are valued as 'original language', which vividly conveys what we perceived we were doing at the time far better than writing that depicts from the distance of time would, whether by someone inside or outside the group. This material would commonly be considered source for writing rather than substance for presentation. By design the book encourages that the documents be regarded as primary texts rather than ancillary illustrations. This method situates readers *in the archive,* inviting a multiplicity of interpretation.

Contradictory evidence is at the heart of the archive and prominently figures into this portrayal of Group Material. A four-page incendiary letter written by cofounder Tim Rollins to the group in 1980 is fully reprinted alongside documents that represent a more harmonious collaboration. Tim's letter rants and rails rhetorically. It evidences major clashes in the collaborative's first months but it also shows how seriously he regarded the collaboration and articulates what was at stake for the group. As Janet Malcolm asserts, 'Letters are the great fixative of experience. Time erodes feeling. Time creates indifference. Letters prove to us that we once cared. They are the fossils of feeling… conduit to unmediated experience.' [2]

The guiding text that filters throughout the chronicle was conceived as a nonspecific voice imparting otherwise inaccessible circumstances, facts and anecdotes alongside the archive materials. It represents a close reading and distillation of multiple documentation and composite memory. This text captions, reports, digresses and discloses, coalescing subjective and objective knowledge into a seamless voice that augments the material. A depersonalised present-tense mode is used, intended to situate readers in the times of events and suggest collective subjectivity, distinct from first person retrospection. Trains of information such as the continuities and discontinuities of the group's composition, conflicts and contradictions endemic to its process, and how Group Material structured itself and financed its work run throughout.

While reading through the files I noted many interesting segments in all types of documents, initially regarding this as source material for the guiding text. The number of full documents that could be reproduced was limited by the budget, which led to creating a layer of diverse extracts varying in author purpose, length and style. Unified by typographic design treatment, these also filter throughout the chronicle.

Image wise, snapshots portraying the various members and incarnations of the group, although in some cases there are no photos, and formal installation photography of the collaborative's forty-five projects are presented on equal footing.

Despite the multiple layers of motley material that compose the chronicle, the goal was to bring the elements into a carefully designed formal system that stresses all the material as primary and equivalent. The book's visual tone builds on Group Material's aesthetic style. Analogous to the decentralised thematic exhibition format the group advanced, the chronicle is thought of as an exhibition space in the form of a book.

Revisionist and interpretive tendencies have been restrained in *Show and Tell* in favour of creating a useful documentary foundation and introduction to Group Material's archive. The organisation of the archive and the response to that process through the book provide a platform and base interpretation to use, negotiate and take issue with. The project is also a case study in archiving, historical investigation and history writing, shaped from the questions and problems enmeshed in an amalgam of personally, collectively and socially vested inquiry.

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[1] Janet Malcolm, *The Silent Woman. Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes* (New York: Vintage, 1995), p. 205.
[2] Ibid., pp. 109–10.

№032

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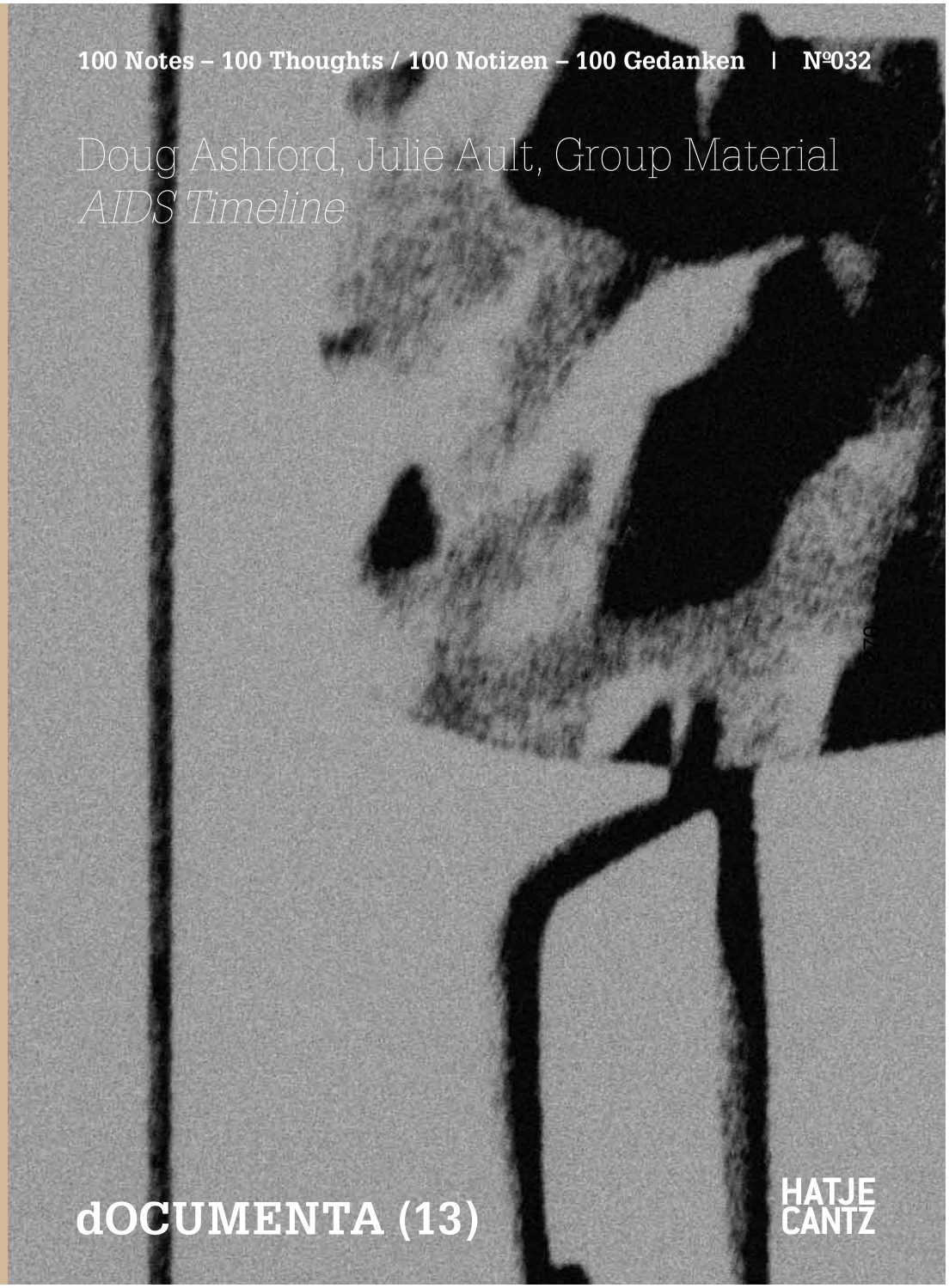
100 Notes – 100 Thoughts / 100 Notizen – 100 Gedanken | Nº032

Doug Ashford, Julie Ault, Group Material
AIDS Timeline



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Introduction

Doug Ashford & Julie Ault

Group Material's work was primarily topical and temporal, fueled by our personal and collective observations—and by the social urgencies we perceived. Our horizon was the present tense. In 1989, the curator of the MATRIX Gallery at the Berkeley University Art Museum, Larry Rinder, invited us to address the subject of AIDS after seeing our exhibition at Dia Art Foundation the year before, "AIDS & Democracy: A Case Study".

At the time, Group Material consisted of Doug Ashford, Julie Ault, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, and Karen Ramspacher. By 1989, we had witnessed several years of the epidemic with severely inadequate public response. The accumulation of AIDS-related illnesses and deaths of young friends and colleagues informed our daily lives. For our own edification and for public purpose, the group embarked on constructing a history of the conditions that had transformed the epidemic into a full-blown national crisis.

Along with Berkeley intern Richard Meyer, we researched events and developments in several arenas—medical and scientific industries, governmental policies and statistics, grassroots responses and activism within affected communities, and media representations of AIDS, as well as artistic responses and popular culture of the relevant period. To form the exhibition, selected artifacts and documentary material from these fields were joined with artworks by individuals and collectives in a chronological structure. A thick black line bifurcated the display, marking the temporal horizon of the AIDS crisis, beginning with 1979, the year the Centers for Disease Control started tracking cases and deaths due to a new immune-suppressive virus, and extending to the then present, 1989. The increasing number of new AIDS cases and deaths each year appeared on the timeline, and text—information curated by the group from the same research arenas—ran close to the line. Documentary material was keyed to the timeline, as were some of the more directly pertinent artworks, while other indirect and metaphoric works were not anchored to points in time.

At first glance, the timeline format promoted a linear reading; however, once one got involved with the histories and stories and images, cross-referencing became inevitable. *AIDS Timeline*'s ingredients were presented not as disparate elements or facts but as a web of intertwined events that described social processes and demonstrated the connectivity of actions and events.

Virtually all the major social inequities that compromise democracy in the United States were reflected in that decadelong history of AIDS. The group's arrangement of information posited a history of the political and social conditions in which AIDS was not only allowed but encouraged to become a national crisis, and broadcast some evidential responses made in the arms of the crisis. The timeline related the widespread stigmatization of people with AIDS, demonstrating the links between representation and judgment and between representation and allocation of resources. Furthermore, it documented the impact that homophobia, racism, heterosexism, and sexism had on the formation of public policy.

Aesthetic practice and social practice merged in *AIDS Timeline*. The project involved layers of collaboration in and beyond the group with both individuals and community advocacy organizations. *AIDS Timeline* proposed models of history writing, curatorial method, artistic practice, and social process, as well as a compound of temporal contexts joined together that reflected the climate of circumstance and perception, the complexity of the period. The exhibition sought at once to contextualize the AIDS crisis and to create a context itself—a didactic exhibit environment that examined recent events to account for present conditions, with the hope of influencing what was to come.

Agency was our horizon, and history—not only that of the 1980s, but history as a continuum extending from earlier than 1979 and going on indefinitely. Chronology as guiding device set a linear horizon and performed an anchoring purpose, acting as a focal point from which viewers' perspectives could venture. Within such a setup, the horizon is endowed with the double function of systematizing and releasing information. The horizon opened views to what was above and below the timeline. It opened views to the larger set of conditions articulated by the arrangement of information brought into narrative armature, to reveal the far-reaching associations between political and cultural events that render the historical period legible.

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Julie Ault (b. 1957) works as an artist, curator, editor, and writer.

Einführung

Doug Ashford & Julie Ault

Die Arbeit von Group Material bezog sich in erster Linie auf aktuelle Themen und die Gegenwart und wurde von unseren persönlichen und gemeinschaftlichen Beobachtungen angetrieben – ebenso wie von den gesellschaftlichen Dringlichkeiten, die wir wahrnahmen. Unser Horizont war das Präsens. 1989 wurden wir von Larry Rinder, dem Kurator der MATRIX Gallery am Berkeley University Art Museum, dazu eingeladen, uns mit dem Thema AIDS zu beschäftigen, nachdem er im Vorjahr in der Dia Art Foundation unsere Ausstellung »AIDS & Democracy: A Case Study« gesehen hatte.

Die damaligen Mitglieder von Group Material waren Doug Ashford, Julie Ault, Felix Gonzalez-Torres und Karen Ramspacher. 1989 blickten wir bereits auf mehrere Jahre der Epidemie zurück, in denen diese zutiefst unangemessene öffentliche Reaktionen ausgelöst hatte. Unser Alltag war geprägt durch immer häufigere Erkrankungen infolge von AIDS und Todesfälle unter jungen Freunden und Kollegen. Zu unserer eigenen Erbauung und für öffentliche Zwecke begann die Gruppe, eine Geschichte der Umstände zu konstruieren, unter denen sich die Epidemie in eine ausgewachsene Krise transformiert hatte.

Zusammen mit dem Berkeley-Praktikanten Richard Meyer untersuchten wir die Ereignisse und Entwicklungen an verschiedenen Schauplätzen – in den Bereichen von Medizin und Wissenschaft, Regierungspolitik und Statistik, Graswurzelbewegungen und Aktivismus in den betroffenen Communitys sowie Darstellungen von AIDS in den Medien, aber auch die künstlerischen Resonanzen und die Populärkultur des betreffenden Zeitraums. Bei der Gestaltung der Ausstellung wurden ausgewählte Artefakte und dokumentarische Materialien aus diesen Gebieten mit Kunstwerken von Individuen und Kollektiven im Rahmen einer chronologischen Struktur zusammengebracht. Die Präsentation wurde durch eine dicke schwarze Linie zweigeteilt, die den zeitlichen Horizont der AIDS-Krise markierte; diese begann 1979, als die Centers for Disease Control begannen, Erkrankungen und Todesfällen aufgrund eines neuen Immundefizienz-Virus nachzugehen, und reichte bis in die damalige Gegenwart, 1989. Die alljährliche wachsende Zahl neuer AIDS-Erkrankungen und Todesfälle erschien auf der Zeitleiste, und parallel zu ihr verliefen Texte – von der Gruppe kuratierte Informationen zu den gleichen Forschungsfeldern. Die Zeitleiste wurde ergänzt durch dokumentarisches Material und einige unmittelbar auf das Thema bezogene Kunstwerke, während andere, indirekte und metaphorische Arbeiten nicht zeitlich verankert wurden.

Auf den ersten Blick förderte das Format der Zeitleiste eine lineare Lesweise; sobald man sich jedoch in die Historien und Erzählungen und Bilder vertiefte, wurden Querverweise unvermeidlich. Die Bestandteile der *AIDS Timeline* wurden nicht als grundverschiedene Elemente oder Fakten präsentiert, sondern als ein Geflecht miteinander verknüpfter Ereignisse, das gesellschaftliche Prozesse beschrieb und den Vernetzungsgrad von Handlungen und Ereignissen aufzeigte.

Diese damals ein Jahrzehnt währende Geschichte von AIDS spiegelte praktisch alle bedeutenden gesellschaftlichen Ungerechtigkeiten wider, die die Demokratie in den Vereinigten Staaten beeinträchtigen. Die Anordnung von Informationen, die die Gruppe vorgenommen hatte, postulierte eine Geschichte der politischen und sozialen Verhältnisse, die nicht nur zuließen, sondern begünstigen, dass AIDS zu einer nationalen Krise wurde, und veröffentlichte einige entlarvende Reaktionen, die unter dem Eindruck der Krise aufkamen. Die Zeitleiste informierte über die verbreitete Stigmatisierung von Menschen mit AIDS und zeigte die Zusammenhänge zwischen ihrer Repräsentation und Beurteilung sowie zwischen ihrer Repräsentation und der Bereitstellung von Ressourcen auf. Darüber hinaus dokumentierte sie den Einfluss, den Homophobie, Rassismus, Heterosexismus und Sexismus auf die Herausbildung der öffentlichen Ordnung ausübten.

In *AIDS Timeline* verschmolzen ästhetische Praxis und gesellschaftliche Praxis miteinander. Das Projekt erforderte vielschichtige Formen der Kooperation innerhalb und außerhalb der Gruppe mit Einzelpersonen und Interessenverbänden. *AIDS Timeline* schlug Modelle für Geschichtsschreibung, kuratorische Methoden, künstlerische Praxis und gesellschaftliche Prozesse vor, ebenso wie eine Verknüpfung temporärer Kontexte, die zusammen das Klima der Verhältnisse und der Wahrnehmung und die Komplexität jener Zeit widerspiegelten. Die Ausstellung zielte darauf ab, die AIDS-Krise zu kontextualisieren und zugleich einen eigenen Kontext herzustellen – ein didaktisches Ausstellungs-Environment, das aktuelle Ereignisse untersuchte, um über gegenwärtige Verhältnisse Rechenschaft abzulegen, verbunden mit der Hoffnung, zukünftige Entwicklungen zu beeinflussen.

Handlungsmacht war unser Horizont, ebenso wie die Geschichte – nicht nur die Geschichte der 1980er Jahre, sondern auch die Geschichte als ein Kontinuum, das vor 1979 begann und sich unendlich fortsetzt. Die Chronologie als Leitfaden bildete einen linearen Horizont und diente als Anker; sie fungierte als Blickpunkt, von dem aus sich die Betrachter neue Perspektiven erschließen konnten. Innerhalb einer solchen Anordnung erhält der Horizont die Doppelfunktion, Informationen zu systematisieren und freizugeben. Der Horizont eröffnete Ausblicke auf das, was oberhalb und unterhalb der Zeitleiste lag. Er bot Ausblicke auf die umfassenderen Verhältnisse, die sich durch die Anordnung von Informationen in einem narrativen Gerüst ausdrückten, um die weitreichenden Zusammenhänge zwischen politischen und kulturellen Ereignissen aufzudecken, die den historischen Zeitabschnitt interpretierbar machen.

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Group Material
AIDS Timeline

MATRIX Berkeley 132
University Art Museum
University of California at Berkeley
November 11, 1989–January 28, 1990

The following chronology is an attempt to trace the development of the AIDS crisis in the United States and contextualize its development socially and politically. Like any representation of history, this project is subjective in that it includes certain information and excludes other information. The juxtaposition of facts in AIDS Timeline reveals how government, medical and media inaction compounded the crisis and how the communities most affected by AIDS have worked to diminish it.

1979

Pope John Paul II visits the United States and reaffirms traditional Roman Catholic teaching.

"Real People" a television program on NBC, is the network's newest hit. A hybrid between news and talk-show, it examines the "strange and unpredictable, the heroic and fallible in human nature." The show traces the believe-it-or-not escapades of seemingly ordinary Americans.

98% of all American homes contain a television set, 60% of which are color.

The Institute for the Protection of Gay and Lesbian Youth, later known as The Hetrick Martin Institute, is founded in New York City.

Dan White kills San Francisco Mayor George Moscone and openly gay City Supervisor Harvey Milk. White, a former policeman and City Supervisor, is convicted only of the reduced charge of manslaughter. His defense claims that due to the over-eating of Twinkies he suffered "diminished mental capacity." Mass demonstrations, the "White Night Riots," erupt in the streets of San Francisco after the verdict is announced.

An estimated 120,000 people participate in the first March on Washington for Gay and Lesbian Rights.

The U.S. supported Shah of Iran is deposed. The Ayatollah Khomeini takes over.

1980

This year's top grossing film is "The Empire Strikes Back" directed by George Lucas. It is a science fiction story of the adventures of a fatherless son as he masters 'the force' needed to defeat an evil empire.

Dr. Mathilde Krim, an internist with a specialty in sexually transmitted diseases begins noticing immunologically unusual patients. The following year Dr. Krim is one of the many people who first report the new diseases. She will later become a founder of AmFAR, the American Foundation for AIDS Research.

In the electoral campaigns of this year the Republican Party stresses "smaller" government, trying to appeal to people's desire for less governmental restraints on their daily lives. The party proposes to cut social services and promote the further privatization of our resources.

Ronald Reagan is elected the 40th president of the United States of America. This is described by many as a "landslide" even though Reagan wins only 27% of the registered vote.

Three American Maryknoll nuns are found raped and shot to death in a shallow grave in El Salvador. American military support for the ruling oligarchy is temporarily suspended—only to be reinstated shortly thereafter.

1981

After 444 days in captivity, 51 members of the American Foreign Service who have been held as hostages by Iranian students in Tehran are released.

Early in 1981 the staff at the Centers for Disease Control, the federal agency responsible for recording public health trends, begins noticing that there are unusual cases of PCP occurring in New York and California. PCP (Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia) is a rare form of immune suppressed pneumonia.

President Ronald Reagan proposes to slash federal education, welfare, housing and health budgets. In this budget the National Institutes of Health, the federal agency responsible for testing drugs and treatments, is cut by $127 million.

The Sentinel, a San Francisco gay-community newspaper, publishes a small article on June 26, entitled "Unique Pneumonia Strikes Gay Men." The article reports, "Health officials said recently that there has been a mysterious outbreak of pneumonia among gay males."

Kaposi's sarcoma (KS), an extremely rare form of cancer, has been diagnosed in 26 homosexual men. Medical officials are mystified by the occurrence of this disease in men under the age of 50—a group virtually unknown to have ever had KS. KS becomes known as the "gay cancer."

"Poppers," or amyl nitrate, is considered a possible cause of "gay cancer" in an effort to find a correlation between lifestyle and transmission of the disease.

An article by Bobbi Campbell R.N. is published in the San Francisco *Sentinel*. This is the first public testimonial by a person with Kaposi's sarcoma. That same issue compares governmental and medical response to AIDS with these agencies' earlier responses to the outbreak of Legionnaires disease. In 1976, the federal government instituted emergency measures to find the cause of Legionnaires which had affected 29 people in Philadelphia. Comparatively, there has been no federal response to ongoing "gay cancer" cases.

The media portrays the early patients with the disease as promiscuous homosexual males. The syndrome is partly blamed on "lifestyle" or sexual preference. The risk of sexually transmitted diseases and the transmission of a "new" agent are linked at this stage.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC), initiates the reporting of KS (Kaposi's sarcoma) and PCP (Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia) nationwide.

Bobbi Campbell becomes the "KS Posterboy," launching a one-man fundraising effort to establish a support group for "gay cancer" patients. His posters displayed in the windows of a San Francisco drugstore are among the earliest educational campaigns about the new disease.

AIDS, as an acronym for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome replaces earlier naming of the syndrome: GRID (Gay Related Immune Deficiency), CAID (Community Acquired Immune Deficiency), AID (Acquired Immune Deficiency).

The Shanti Project in San Francisco, a death counseling organization founded seven years earlier, begins a support group for Kaposi's sarcoma (KS) patients.

The Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) is founded in New York City. GMHC is a grass roots organization of volunteers which seeks to provide information and support services through its buddy program, education, counseling, legal services, and advocacy for people with AIDS.

A request for $833,800 made by Dr. Jim Curran from the National Institutes of Health annual budget to study the new "gay cancer" is denied.

1982

Nearly two years since the first warnings of an epidemic, CBS anchorman Dan Rather presents one of the first network news reports on AIDS. His lead-in to the story is, "You rarely hear a thing about it. At first it seemed to strike only one segment of the population…"

The newly formed GMHC (Gay Men's Health Crisis) organizes a benefit dance called "The Showers." The event is held at the Paradise Garage. $53,000 is raised for research and education.

This year's Reagan Budget calls for the slashing of at least 1,000 grants from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the federal agency that controls medical research and health education.

The San Francisco city government allocates $450,000 to finance the first AIDS clinic and the first locally funded educational efforts.

Seven people die from cyanide laced Tylenol. Within 3 weeks, the Centers for Disease Control spends $10 million and puts 1,163 people to work investigating Tylenol that might be affected. Within 6 weeks the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) restructures the packaging of non-prescription drugs. The *New York Times* writes one story every day for the 31 days of the scare.

Comparatively, only $1 million is spent to research AIDS since its recognition; AIDS drug trials are delayed due to lack of personnel; and The *New York Times* has written only 3 stories on AIDS to date.

At this time there is roughly one death everyday from AIDS in this country.

The first National AIDS Forum is held in Dallas, Texas, as part of the First National Lesbian and Gay Leadership Conference.

A candlelight march is held in San Francisco as one of the earliest mass demonstrations of outrage at the lack of response by medical and governmental agencies to the progression of AIDS.

"Homosexual Plague Strikes New Victims" is the title of an article published in the August 19th *Newsweek* magazine. The piece is inspired by news from the National Cancer Institutes describing growing evidence that hemophiliacs are showing AIDS-related symptoms. The article reports, "the homosexual plague has started spilling over into the general population."

Michael Callen co-founds an organization in New York, called Gay Men With AIDS. Their stated goal is to "support each other by sharing our personal experiences, our strength and our hope."

The first *Wall Street Journal* article on AIDS is printed only after 23 heterosexual men and women are diagnosed with the disease.

Most investigators are convinced in 1982 that the cause of AIDS is an infectious agent, most likely a virus, and not the result of exposure to toxic substances or other environmental or genetic factors.

1983

The Orphan Drug Act passes in Congress. This allows pharmaceutical companies to deduct up to 63% of the costs of clinical drug trials from taxes, as well as giving them a 7 year monopoly to encourage development and manufacture of drugs that treat diseases which affect so few people that the cost of developing the drug far outweighs the potential profits.

The *New York Native* publishes an article by Larry Kramer titled, "1112 Deaths and Counting." The article describes the inaction of governmental and medical institutions as the AIDS epidemic grows into a national crisis. He calls upon the gay community to take action against AIDS.

At the second AIDS Forum at the National Lesbian/Gay Health Conference in Denver, the People With AIDS self-empowerment movement is founded. A group of PWAs and PW/ARCs (People With AIDS Related Complex) from around the country produce a statement condemning the label of victims; making a set of recommendations for health care professionals, and putting forth a list of rights for People With AIDS.

Within a year after discovery of the AIDS virus, a second viral subtype, HIV2 is identified.

Massive anti-nuclear marches take place in London, Bonn, Paris, Washington D.C., Tokyo and New York where close to 1 million people demonstrate for the international reduction of nuclear weapons.

Dr. Joseph Sonnabend, a progressive medical practitioner, reports at a scientific meeting on AIDS that there may be no single cause for the disease. He, among others, has adopted a theory that there might be co-factors responsible for the syndrome.

In another attempt at categorizing and stigmatizing people with AIDS, the media and the medical establishment coin the term, "high risk groups" as including: male homosexuals, Haitians, hemophiliacs and intravenous drug users. These groups of people are asked not to donate blood.

The Centers for Disease Control reports that there is evidence of immune deficiency among the female partners of males with AIDS. This suggests that the disease may be sexually transmitted between heterosexuals.

Abbott Labs, Inc., gets federal Food and Drug Administration approval for the blood test that will detect antibodies to HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus), believed to be the cause of AIDS.

The city of San Francisco allocates $2.1 million to develop an outpatient clinic and inpatient ward for AIDS patients. At this time the city of San Francisco AIDS expenditures exceed total federal funds allocated for this disease.

1984

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) approaches Lyphomed drug company, the manufacturers of a drug called I.V. Pentamidine used to treat a rare type of pneumonia. The CDC asks Lyphomed to manufacture I.V. Pentamidine to treat AIDS-related

pneumonia, PCP. PCP is the leading cause of death in People With AIDS. The company hesitates because there are "no potential profits" in so small a market.

William Buckley Jr., editor of *The National Review* publishes an article for his syndicated column in which he states, "Everyone detected with AIDS should be tattooed on the upper forearm, to protect common needle-users, and on the buttocks to prevent the victimization of other homosexuals."

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports that AIDS can be spread heterosexually and that it can be transmitted even before a person shows outward manifestations of the disease.

Dr. Robert Gallo, head of the AIDS division of the National Institutes of Health claims to have discovered the cause of AIDS by isolating a virus he terms HTLV3. This is almost a year after French researchers at the Pasteur Institute announced the discovery of a similar virus, LAV. Gallo's claim causes a controversy over the crediting of the discovery of the virus. The medical community agrees to call the virus HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus).

The city government of Amsterdam, The Netherlands, starts an exemplary needle exchange program distributing clean needles from vans to drug users. The exchange of blood, through shared "works," (needles, syringes, etc.) can put I.V. drug users at risk for contracting HIV.

A National Cancer Institute laboratory confirms that the antiviral drug AZT (Azidothymidine) slows replication of HIV in the human immune system. AZT was originally developed by the U.S. government as a cancer drug in 1964.

There is no category for lesbian sex in official HIV transmission categories, yet as early as 1984 there are documented cases of woman-to-woman transmission. This exclusion furthers lesbian invisibility and the mistaken notion that lesbians are protected from infection. It is proven that HIV can be present in vaginal secretions as well as menstrual blood.

1985

With much fanfare, the Coca-Cola Company begins distributing its "New Coke." Within weeks, grassroots groups organize to bring back "old" Coke. Coca-Cola company responds to this nationwide campaign by inventing "Coca-Cola Classic."

Prostitutes are among the first groups to be tested for HIV, the virus thought to cause AIDS. The results reveal that most prostitutes who test positive for HIV antibodies contract the virus through the use of shared I.V. drug "works." Most prostitutes use condoms to practice safer-sex. Despite these facts, the media and the public continue to scapegoat sexworkers as vectors of illness.

Rock Hudson discloses that he has AIDS. President Reagan, who has never said the word AIDS in any public address, telephones to wish Hudson well. The American media quadruples its coverage of the syndrome.

Hospitals and blood drives around the country begin testing donated blood for HIV antibodies.

The PWA Coalition is formed in New York City. It is created by and for People With AIDS and People With AIDS Related Complex (ARC), to promote self-empowerment. In June, the first issue of the *PWA Coalition Newsline*, a monthly newsletter by and for PWAs and PW/ARCs is published. The *Newsline* provides a forum for diverse opinions and includes treatment information, feature articles, memorials and a resource list.

Burroughs Wellcome PLC, a British drug conglomerate, begins testing AZT (Azidothymidine, an anti-viral medication previously developed with federal funds) on thirty-three patients with AIDS.

The hysterical fear of AIDS "contamination" in the classroom causes school boards across the country to bar children with AIDS from attending classes. This continues over the next four years even though the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) have issued guidelines indicating that everyday physical contact will not transmit the disease.

After hosting two successful AIDS benefits in New York and Los Angeles, Elizabeth Taylor is named National Chairperson of the newly formed National AIDS Research Foundation, later to become AmFAR (American Foundation for AIDS Research).

Assistant Secretary of Defense, William E. Mayer, announces that the department will screen all prospective military recruits for possible HIV infection. He later decides to implement screening of all 2.1 million military personnel.

Two protesters chain themselves to the Federal Office Building in San Francisco demanding that more federal money be allocated for AIDS research; and that ARC (AIDS Related Complex) patients receive the same benefits as AIDS patients.

The New York City Department of Substance Abuse Services approaches ADAPT (Association of Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment) to urge the group to formulate an organized response to the growing number of intravenous drug users at risk for HIV infection. ADAPT proposes a pilot project to distribute free, sterile needles to addicts on the streets.

San Francisco Board of Supervisors votes unanimously to outlaw discrimination against People With AIDS/ARC.

University of California researchers demonstrate that HIV is blocked by a condom during sexual intercourse.

A New York City Department of Health AIDS staff person remembers: "We were making the case for a subway poster campaign and I'll never forget being told by a supervisor: 'We don't need that. Anybody who needs to know about AIDS already knows about it.'"

American commercial television's first dramatic representation of an AIDS story, "An Early Frost," is shown on NBC. The central crisis of the story is that a young man develops AIDS and must reveal his homosexuality to his parents.

JAMA, (Journal of the American Medical Association) publishes an editorial by Dr. Anthony Fauci, head of AIDS research at the National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, explaining the results of two studies done on household contact and AIDS. Rather than recognizing perinatal transmission of HIV, Fauci mistakenly warns of the possible risk of casual contact. The Associated Press runs a "household contact" story over their newswire, beginning a national hysteria which extends to the outfitting of many police officers with rubber gloves.

The original Centers for Disease Control (CDC) definition of AIDS becomes more specific, outlining particular illnesses called "opportunistic infections" that indicate a suppressed immune system related to AIDS.

The Great Republic Insurance Company, and the Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, issue an "AIDS Profile" to their agents, instructing them to earmark applications from "single males without dependents that engage in occupations that do not require physical exertion." These applicants are usually denied insurance.

In a November press conference President Reagan, in response to a question, utters the word "AIDS" for the first time in his presidency.

1986

The National Security Council and the C.I.A. implement illegal covert operations in which arms are sold to Iran. Profits from this sale are directed to the Nicaraguan Contras.

Despite conclusive medical evidence that AIDS is not casually transmitted, the Justice Department rules that Federal contractors who fire People With AIDS because of fear of contagion cannot be challenged under the U.S. Civil Rights Law protecting the handicapped.

The song, "That's What Friends Are For," written by Carole Bayer-Sager and Burt Bacharach, recorded by Dionne Warwick, Elton John, Gladys Knight and Stevie Wonder, becomes a top pop single. Released as a fundraiser for AIDS research, it raises $750,000.

Four years after it is first suggested, physicians begin experimenting with a new form of a drug called Pentamidine. The new form is less toxic that I.V. Pentamidine, which causes severe side effects. Pentamidine prevents PCP, the leading cause of death among People with AIDS.

Delta Airlines refuses to carry PWA Mark Sigers.

The Public Health Service adds AIDS to the list of "dangerous contagious diseases" which prohibit entry into the United States Subsequently, many visitors are detained by immigration.

Once diagnosed with an opportunistic infection, or full-blown AIDS, the average lifespan of a male PWA is 18 months; for women it is 9 months and for I.V. drug users 6 months.

Between 1982 and 1986, the proportion of women with AIDS increases from 12% to 26% of total cases nationwide. Even this statistic is low because most women with AIDS die undiagnosed. They have infections specific to women such as severe vaginitis, pelvic inflammatory disease, or cervical cancer, all unrecognized as AIDS related by the Centers for Disease Control.

Lyndon LaRouch endorses California State Proposition 64 which would change the health code to require citizens to report anyone they suspect of having AIDS, restrict the movement of PWAs, and abolish state funding for AIDS programs. It is voted on and defeated.

President Ronald Reagan gives his first public speech on AIDS. He says that the administration is committed to finding a cure and asks Surgeon General C. Everett Koop to prepare a "major report" on AIDS. Congressman Henry Waxman terms Reagan's pronouncement "outrageous," noting that Reagan's budget, made public just days before, includes reductions in spending for AIDS research.

Reagan asks for $10 million cut in the Public Health Service's AIDS effort as well as massive cuts in Medicaid.

The Supreme Court, in Bowers v. Hardwick, rules (5-4) that the states can outlaw sodomy and other homosexual sex acts, even if conducted by consenting adults in private. Justice Blackmun writes in the dissenting opinion that he sees "no justification for invading the houses, hearts and minds of citizens who choose to live their lives differently."

The New York City Health Department reports that AIDS has become the leading cause of death of men ages 30–44, and women ages 25–29.

A National Academy of Science report charges that the U.S. government response to AIDS has been "dangerously inadequate" and calls for $2 billion per year for education and research. Ronald Reagan signs legislation that provides only $410 million for AIDS research.

A single B-2 bomber costs over $500 million.

The federal government finally begins to deal with AIDS treatment and drug trials. But AIDS drug trials, like many others, exclude women, people of color, poor people, people in rural areas, I.V. drug users, hemophiliacs, prisoners, and children, many of whom die from preventable and treatable illness.

1987

President Reagan orders mandatory AIDS testing for all immigrants and federal prisoners. His Education Secretary, William Bennet, presses for even more extensive mandatory testing while Surgeon General C. Everett Koop joins most public health authorities in opposing this as a wasteful process.

Senator Jesse Helms is "sickened" by GMHC's safer-sex comic books, designed to reduce the risk of HIV transmission. Helms proposes to prohibit any funds that would provide educational materials that depict or condone homosexual, any sexual activities outside of marriage, and the use of illegal intravenous drugs. A version of this amendment passes 94 to 2.

Explicit materials targeted to specific audiences, have been proven to be effective in changing risk behavior.

"To me that does not make sense. It just does not make sense. And if we do not educate them as to how to avoid it and what to do about it, and some of these funds will go for that, then my gosh, what are we doing here? We are just going to subject this whole country to a widespread pandemic or epidemic of AIDS? That is what we are doing right now." Republican Senator Orrin G. Hatch, speaking against the Helms Amendment.

The Centers for Disease Control revises the AIDS definition again. The new definition includes HIV enceophalopathy, wasting syndrome, and other indicator diseases that are diagnosed presumptively, without confirmation of lab evidence of opportunistic infections.

Randy Shilts' book, *And the Band Played On* is distributed by St. Martin's press. It quickly becomes a national bestseller. The book chronicles the unfolding of the AIDS epidemic as a medical, political and cultural crisis from 1978 to 1985.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, head of National Institutes of Allergies and Infectious Disease, testifies that he still has not begun testing aerosol Pentamidine for lack of a single staff person even though 13 months earlier this agency declared Pentamidine as a high priority for treating and preventing PCP (Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia). 60% of PWAs die of PCP.

Between 1984 and 1987 the total U.S. Defense Department Budget increased by $33.5 billion whereas the total Health and Human Services Department budget decreased by $143 million.

Senator Danforth Quayle is among the handful of legislators who vote against a federal program that would provide AZT to people who could not afford it.

Extensive and conclusive medical evidence proves that HIV is not casually spread. It is only transmitted through needle sharing, blood transfusion, or unprotected sexual contact. Despite these facts police officers all around the nation insist on wearing rubber gloves when arresting AIDS activists.

Condom manufacturers produce their first television commercials and all three major national networks refuse to broadcast them.

The Names Project is founded by Cleve Jones in San Francisco. Thousands of people begin making hand-made panels for their loved ones who have died from AIDS, resulting in the Names Project AIDS Memorial Quilt. The quilt is displayed at the 1987 Gay and Lesbian March on Washington.

Connecticut Congressman Stuart McKinney dies of AIDS related illness.

AZT(Azidothymidine) is approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). AZT slows HIV replication and is the only drug that can be legally prescribed by doctors in the United States to treat AIDS. It is also very toxic. Many patients (40–80%) become intolerant after a year or so. The manufacturer, Burroughs Wellcome, is granted a 7-year marketing license and takes out a patent that extends its monopoly of the drug for seventeen years.

Despite the fact that the government (the National Cancer Institute) actually developed the drug in 1964, gave the monopoly to Burroughs Wellcome to entice them to produce it, and provided their first raw materials necessary to make the drug, Burroughs Wellcome charges close to $10,000 per year/per person for AZT.

The National Conference of Catholic Bishops releases a statement on AIDS saying they can tolerate education including condom use if emphasis is placed on abstinence of sexual intercourse outside of marriage. Controversy develops over this statement as some clergy, including Cardinal O'Connor in New York City, refuse to recognize that a large portion of Catholics have sex, hetero and homo, outside of marriage.

For fiscal year 1988, the Reagan administration requests $5.2 billion for the Strategic Defense Initiative, STAR WARS. This represents only about 1.5% of the total Defense Department budget.

The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) is founded in New York City. ACT UP describes itself as "a diverse non-partisan group of individuals united by anger and committed to direct action to end the AIDS crisis."

ACT UP's first major action is a demonstration on Wall Street, organized to call attention to drug companies' profiteering from AIDS. ACT UP applies pressure on government agencies and drug companies to re-evaluate and modify their procedures for approval of drugs, treatments, and access.

The number of American women 15 to 44 years of age dying from AIDS rose 75% between 1986 and 1988. AIDS ranks eighth among all causes of death for women in this age range. Black women are 9 times more likely than white women to die of AIDS. Educational efforts aimed at women in general to prevent HIV transmission remain scarce.

Burroughs Wellcome reduces the cost of AZT by 20% to assuage critics. Even as they do this they raise the price of Zovirax, a drug for herpes, by a similar amount.

1988

Only 27 private multinational corporations control 90% of all major U.S. media, including, television, newspapers, publishing and radio. This is reduced from 46 such companies in 1981.

Yolanda Serrano, ADAPT's executive director, announces that ADAPT will distribute sterile needles to I.V. drug users in NYC to prevent the spread of HIV (through blood left in shared needles), as a form of civil disobedience. In response, the Department of Health freezes ADAPT's money and shuts down the office for 48 hours. A month later Governor Mario Cuomo revises his stand and supports experimental needle exchange.

Premarital HIV screening is proposed in some states. It is estimated to cost approximately $60,000 to $100,000 per case found, with 26% of all confirmed cases being false-negatives. Utah will withhold a marriage license if you are found to be HIV positive.

Senator Dan Quayle of Indiana is selected by Vice-President Bush as his running mate for the Republican ticket. In the past year, Quayle has voted five times to restrict the content of educational material on AIDS, and has opposed a plan to supply AZT to impoverished patients.

Congressman William Dannemeyer endorses California State Proposition 102 which would make anonymous testing illegal and force those who test HIV positive to turn in the names of their sexual partners. It is defeated by a margin of more than one to two.

As the market for AIDS drugs increases, Lyphomed drug company competes for federal drug approval of aerosol Pentamidine which prevents PCP pneumonia. The company raises the cost of I.V. Pentamidine by 300% while the cost to actually make the drug drops from $6.00 to $1.80 per dose.

Two thousand AIDS activists "seize control" of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to protest the laggardly pace of AIDS drugs approval process. As a result of this demonstration the government accelerates the approval process by an average of three years.

A brochure describing AIDS transmission is prepared by Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, and mailed to every American household, 7 years after the epidemic was first recognized.

$193 million is allocated in this year's federal budget for military marching bands.

The DeSoto County School District of Arcadia, Florida, bans two young brothers with AIDS from attending school. Only after a victorious federal court suit are they re-admitted. Two months later their family's home is burned down by unidentified arsonists. The family is forced to relocate to another city.

Ryan White, a grade school student with AIDS, and his family, move out of Kokomo, Indiana, to escape the ostracism in his hometown. He had been prevented from attending public school for two years.

AIDS spending for federal, state and local monies added up to $4.4 billion which is 8% of the total health spending in this country.

Admiral James Watkins, (retired) Chairman of the Presidential Commission on AIDS, states, "...discrimination is the most significant obstacle to progress against the disease because patients would not cooperate in providing data if they feared for their jobs or homes." Watkins said the Federal government has not provided sufficient support in the fight against AIDS.

In reference to Nicholas Nixon's Portrait of People With AIDS, exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, ACT UP states: "...in portraying PWAs as people to be pitied or feared, as people alone and lonely, we believe that this work perpetuates general misconceptions about AIDS without addressing the realities of those of us living everyday with this crisis as PWAs or as people who love PWAs. We believe that the representation of People With AIDS affects not only how the viewers will perceive PWAs outside the museum, but, ultimately, crucial issues of AIDS funding, legislation, and education."

Only 89 patients have received Trimetrexate, a drug believed to be more potent against PCP than Bactrim or I.V. Pentamidine. But it is still costly, and since AIDS drug trials like many others, exclude women, people of color, poor people, people in rural areas, I.V. drug users, hemophiliacs, prisoners, and children, many of these people still die from a preventable and treatable illness.

1989

Medical data reveals that early intervention for HIV positive people can delay the onset of full-blown AIDS. Many AIDS organizations now endorse testing. However, questions are raised about confidentiality and discrimination, as well as the practicality of testing when there are so few plans of treatment available, accessible and affordable.

Introduced by ACT UP, the "parallel track" program allows patients who are intolerant to the prescribed treatment to receive an experimental AIDS drug outside of a clinical trial. ddI, only the second drug to slow the spread of infection, is made available through parallel track, only for patients who have severe side affects from AZT. ddI is not covered by insurance or medicaid.

Art works by Andres Serrano and Robert Mapplethorpe spark a controversy in Congress, leading to restrictive legislation forced upon the National Endowment for the Arts. The legislation provides that "none of the funds authorized...may be used to promote, disseminate or produce materials which in the judgment of the NEA...may be considered obscene, including, but not limited to, depictions of sadomasochism, homoeroticism, the sexual exploitation of children, or individuals engaged in sex acts and which, taken as whole, do not have serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value."

500,000 people march on Washington in a "March for Women's Lives" in support of safe, legal, and accessible abortion.

In 1989, only 4 of the 100 current drug trials are designed for children. Only these test a drug against a placebo. The placebo travels through an I.V., possibly introducing infections to immune suppressed children. Most children with AIDS are in the public health care system with no advocates to fight for their lives.

The Supreme Court decides in Webster v. Reproductive Health Services to return the right to restrict abortion to the states, opening debate over a woman's right to control her own body.

"Optimistically, AIDS will push this country into getting universal health insurance." Dr. Stephen Joseph, New York City Commissioner of Health.

ACT UP demonstrators interrupt trading on the New York Stock Exchange for 4 1/2 minutes. The demonstrators call for traders to sell Burroughs Wellcome stock because the drug company profiteers from the AIDS crisis. Simultaneous protests occur in New York, London, and San Francisco. Shortly thereafter Burroughs Wellcome lowers the price of AZT (the only federally approved drug that slows the replication of HIV) by 20%.

ACT UP and WHAM (Women's Health Action and Mobilization) organize the "Stop the Church" demonstration. 5,000 people gather at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City to protest the Catholic church's policy on AIDS and women's reproductive rights. Protesters charge the Catholic church with preventing AIDS education in schools, blocking access to women's health clinics, denouncing safer sex, and denying the effectiveness of condoms and clean needle use as AIDS preventative measures.

In response to grassroots activism, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approves aerosol Pentamidine for prevention of AIDS related pneumonia (PCP). This is the first time a drug has been approved because of community-based research.

The opening session of the Fifth International AIDS Conference in Montreal is taken over by PWAs and AIDS activists calling for more inclusion of People With AIDS in research. ACT UP AIDS activists release "A National AIDS Treatment Research Agenda" which outlines principles for conducting clinical trials: involving PWAs in trial design, emphasizing drugs for Opportunistic Infections, creating more flexible protocols, broadening entry requirements, avoiding use of placebos, and establishing criteria other than death rate for judging whether drugs are effective.

Average lifetime medical costs for a person with AIDS from diagnosis to death is about $93,000. A conservative government estimate states that a fifth of those infected with HIV have no insurance at all.

A study sponsored by the insurance industry shows that 37 million people, nearly 18% of the U.S. population, have no medical insurance.

26% of adolescents who were diagnosed with AIDS in 1989 contracted HIV through heterosexual intercourse. AIDS cases among 15 year olds in New York City increased by 40% between 1987 and 1989.

According to *JAMA (Journal of American Medical Association)* there have been 50–100 prosecutions for HIV transmission brought against HIV infected persons for sexual contact, spitting, biting, splattering of blood, or donating blood. In the military, violations of a "safe sex" order range in charges from disobeying a military order to assault with a deadly weapon and attempted murder.

Partnership for the Homeless projects up to 30,000 homeless People With AIDS by 1993 in New York City. Yet the city government has a plan to provide only 800 beds for homeless PWAs by 1991. At this time, there are an estimated 8,000–10,000 PWAs living on the streets, with only 74 beds currently available.

Contract tracing, requesting a list of sexual and I.V. drug user contracts, is urged by Dr. Stephen Joseph, Health Commissioner of New York City. Contract tracing has been denounced by many health officials including Dr. Joseph's superior, Dr. David Axelrod, New York State Commissioner of Health, as being costly and draining public health resources that could be used for treatment and prevention.

Pentamidine, one of the best preventative treatments for PCP pneumonia, increased in cost for a year supply from $25 in 1984 to $200 in 1989.

100 Notes – 100 Thoughts / 100 Notizen – 100 Gedanken

№032: Doug Ashford, Julie Ault, Group Material
AIDS Timeline

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dOCUMENTA (13)

HATJE CANTZ

SELF-TITLED

Rasmus Røhling

In a gallery room – in the piece – and hereby meaning the construction presented to us – its deconstruction is always, already actively inherent.[1]

Looking at this construction we soon discover that we are forced to look at the deconstruction in order to identify the construction, as – the piece in front of us, the *now* – is only an accumulation of *before*.[2]

One could say that the piece is the castle one builds on a piece of land in order to claim it as his kingdom. Even though this construction has a surface, the surface of the art piece has more in common with the index of a book, than it has with the wall that defines the border of a piece of land.

Standing in front of the art piece with this knowledge – the viewer (being aware of his carnal limitations) might ask: "how do I penetrate this facade – How do I access this land behind it?"[3]

The answer is – By doing memory work. By memory work and knowledge we are able to go though the facade of the art piece and into its deconstruction. While inside the deconstruction we will discover that this structure depends on a linear model, and that time is the fiber that holds it together. Just like gravity shapes a landscape, time is – by its sequential way of ordering of things - the foundation of this structure.[4]

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[1] This applies not only to art making but to any kind of representation. In general the motivation for this investigation is a concern for the mechanisms behind representation. How do they work – and why do they often produce a dual reading of the mechanisms behind the represented and the represented itself – Often to the point that the represented presents itself as autonomous. I want to connect the represented with the mechanisms producing it. I want to locate that space within the space of the presented.

[2] In other words the construction is the signifier to another context. The architectual metaphor is used to point to the geographical dilemma of location – If this space of deconstruction is always, already at work – where is it located – how do we access it psycically?

[3] At this point – the text is accompanied with images from computer-generated landscape. The question of location – *how do we go to this eccentric center of the represented deconstruction* – has many similarities with a simulator. A place that is physically unavailable, but that we visit with a relative relationship to the laws of time and gravity. Using history, knowledge and memory we access this deconstruction. However since it is only available in this post-mortem state – we must also move as ghost; between "times", through walls etc.

[4] As opposed to sequential transmission – with manual transmission, the user (in this case meaning the viewer) does not have to go from 1st gear to 2nd gear, 2nd gear to 3rd gear – and so on. The user does not rely on a sequential order and can for an example jump from 5th gear to 1st gear. This mechanism is very similar to how our memory works. As viewers we don't have

However the foundation of this deconstruction relies on the meaning that this order produces rather than that it relies on the order itself.

By using the piece as an index, and by combining it with our knowledge and memory, we no longer have to read the piece sequentially to get to this meaning.

By memory work we shift perspective and can now navigate in the chronology the same way one shifts gear in a car with manual transmission.[5] We can now go directly to the platforms of meaning existing in the chronology - generated either by the artist, by history - or by reflections in the viewer's own subjectivity.

From this perspective we can study the process of the chronology transforming from a grid, and into the body of work that is presented to us in the gallery setting.[6]
As the chronology is too complex to be presented as a whole, what the artist must do is to pick out essential intersections in the chronology and pull these points into the construction as the final piece.

However since the chronology is sequentially connected (meaning that time is the fiber that holds it together) the artist must be very aware that in stretching one specific point from its context – the surrounding parts of the context will follow – potentially creating unintentional gaps for the viewer to enter with his own subjectivity.[7]

To avoid this we have invented conventions of formality within forms of representation. By using these conventions we can avoid unnecessary bubbles of mystery that would encourage the viewer to enter with his own interpretation at unintended points. When these formal tools are used correctly - leaving out parts of

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to go through the whole learning process (the chronology) that the artist went through preparing the exhibition – we don't have to access the chronology form the same perspective as it was written but can tap in wherever.

[5] This new perspective reveals the plot of the chronology – so to speak. From this perspective the piece is not an autonomous universalizing final stage, but instead a part of a process. Once this relation becomes clear, the real "virtuous act" for the viewer to witness is how the artist navigates on this cultural map by exporting material from a subjective sphere (the chronology) into a public (the exhibition).

[6] If for an example the artist wants to pull out a phenomenological topic from the chronology – this layer could potentially be imbedded in "local" matters, which are only relevant to that specific point in the chronology.

[7] The imagery illustrating this paragraph is from Spiderman 3 – from a scene called *The Birth of the Sandman*. Sand's porous texture makes an ideal example of a system that tends to be conceived as a whole, but in fact consists of nummerous independent modules. Just like the artist is the invisible hand that shifts the gears in the car with manual transmission – here, the artist's conceptual framework is the transparent force that organizes the material. The artist is the third perspective – not the POW *in* the chronology, not the viewer in the exhibition space – but the perspective that observes his own chronology from above as it shapes and grows into a new body in the public space.

the chronology does not destabilize it– nor does it distort the outcome of the piece presented.

An example would be the nail that the painting hangs on. No one that sees a painting hanging would think that the canvas is levitating. In other words: leaving the nail out of the construction presented to the viewer is a successful example of formal editing in the chronology.

Knowing this, we are able to apply a more modular quality to the editorial mechanism of pulling specific points from the chronology into the piece.

By combining the memory's nonlinear way of navigating with conventions of formality - we are able to detach particular points from the chronology and bring these into the piece - without it affecting the surround cells.

The result is the artist in a new hybrid form. The surface of the art piece has been replaced with a portal; a transit area to the artist's chronology where every stage of the process is equally represented. This allows the artist to shift in and out of different mediated forms – depending on which one is most suitable for the discourse he wants to enter. If needed, the artist can dissolve himself completely into theory – At other occasions the artist might transform into a piece in the gallery – or if required he can choose to represent himself in person.[8]

Whatever form he chooses – the mechanism that animated this transformation is revealed and logical to the viewer thanks to deconstruction.

Instead of the viewer spending all his interpretive energy on *how* the message was delivered – he can now fully focus on its content.

[8] The imagery illustrating this paragraph is from Spiderman 3 – from a scene called *The Birth of the Sandman*. Sand's porous texture makes an ideal example of a system that tends to be conceived as a whole, but in fact consists of nummerous independent modules. Just like the artist is the invisible hand that shifts the gears in the car with manual transmission – here, the artist's conceptual framework is the transparent force that organizes the material. The artist is the third perspective – not the POW *in* the chronology, not the viewer in the exhibition space – but the perspective that observes his own chronology from above as it shapes and grows into a new body in the public space.

In that sense Robert Smithson is the Sandman. In the historicized body of work that one finds after his death, he manifests himself in various formats. Sometimes the concept "Robert Smithson" is represented as a sand pile-piece, sometimes as a text, and on other occasions he figures in person next to the execution of a piece in the landscape. The artist is the editor of the transmission from his own chronology. His presence (whatever form it might take) is never monumental – but merely serves a temporary gesture to emphasize and optimize the relationship between the chronology and the piece.

Roni Horn, a compilation

Julie Ault

Her mother was often awake in the wee hours of the night reading the newspaper and drinking a chocolate egg cream in the kitchen.

Arthur and Anne Horn named their kids economically and symmetrically: Ona, Ian, Roni, Matt.

Both of her grandmothers were named Rose.

Her ancestors changed from Hornichyk to Horn when they emigrated.

Her father: smart and sharp, harsh and opinionated, honorable and compassionate. She inherited him in some measure. He instilled her with profound love and respect for nature. Through objects, she learned from him about the past.

She spent a lot of time walking around Rockland County alone while she was growing up.

They thought their father's name was Arthur but she encountered a document that said otherwise after he died.

My mother taught me to say the opposite of what I meant and people would understand better. I think she was right . . . because then you get a laugh—or people just think you're out of it.

My father was a pawnbroker—my cousin Eddie was a writer—my father gave him his first typewriter—and Eddie wrote a book called The Pawnbroker *that was partly based on my father's life except that my father was never in a concentration camp. Then they made a film out of Eddie's book. And the house in the movie was just like ours and Rod Steiger was a lot like my father—especially the emotional repression.*

She remembers her mother reading Myra Breckinridge when she was about thirteen. *The cover of the book had an androgynous figure on it.* They discussed its subject matter, which she found intriguing.

As a teenager, she worked at an apple orchard store stocking shelves and making apple cider donuts.

It always seemed like magic to me . . . when he priced things in the pawnshop.

My mother had a blue convertible. I went food shopping with her. When I got lost in the supermarket I walked home. My mother wasn't there either.

She used to climb a tree to a private spot on the black tar roof of a storage building where her father ran a nursery in Peekskill. There, she could read to her heart's content in the sun, hiding in the light. Once over several days she read lots of Camus—The Stranger, The Fall, The Plague, Exile and the Kingdom, The Myth of Sisyphus.

When I was young I found a copy of Psychopathia Sexualis in my parents library. It appeared as a reference work, and as such, reading it seemed to have no taboos attached . . . Until I actually did read it and was awed at the descriptions—which set quite a standard for my imagination in regard to what people do to each other.

Favorite trees inscribe the family homes in her memories. Meadow Street: the maple tree, birth to age nine. The elementary school was surrounded by woods. Red Hill Road: magnolias, tall grasses, dogwood, age nine to thirteen. She liked to watch the fireflies at night. Andover Road: beech tree, age thirteen until sixteen. She couldn't wait to leave home any longer. At sixteen she went to Providence to study.

Conflicts surfaced between father and daughter around when she was fifteen.

Her best friend Arnold was killed at age sixteen when a car hit his motorcycle.

Harold Pinter was important when I was leaving home. I had seen some of the movies he wrote screenplays for and then got to reading his plays.

Although not a fan of Sartre, Existentialism and Human Emotions was essential for her as it provided insight into melancholy, which had previously seemed mysterious.

Jean Genet made a strong impression on me when I was in undergraduate school—sort of when I was fitting into who I was. My first real girlfriend gave me The Thief's Journal with a beautiful picture of Genet by Brassai on the cover.

The library—that's my home.

When I was eighteen and nineteen I was heavy into Beckett, Joyce, Kafka and Yeats. I read Ulysses for the second time while I was traveling with Ditto in Ireland. I loved that. Watching the liffey and thinking of Leo Bloom.

While at Yale she read the entire fifteen volumes of Paul Valéry's work.

I wonder how I see, differently, in solitude. Wonder what I see, differently, in solitude.

She kept journals between 1975 and 1990.

I have a house to which I come back and go from to other places. I have little attachment for this place, or any place I've ever inhabited. Sometimes I derive a great deal of gratification from associating intimately with spaces and places which are comfortable (spiritually) to remain in.

Her father wanted her to be a scientist.

Her journals are chronological. As repositories for introspection they are also atemporal. Presentness, retrospection, and prospection commingle. The early ones are a free flow of personal reflection and declaration, romantic longing and savoring, desire and doubt about her work, meditation on relations between objects, space, and contexts, and focused observation of her immediate natural surroundings—especially in Iceland. After a few years the notebooks changed tone. Perhaps it was too painful to be so close to language and self-consciousnesses at once. Perhaps her relationship to time changed. Perhaps the depth, which had found voice in her journals, was relocated in her art as her practice gathered form.

There is no physical manifestation of home in my life. But there is a home. It is a very portable one. Home is for me a state of mind. I feel my home composing itself ever more concretely as I attain a greater sense of self. Its composition resides also in my friendships; the mutual acknowledgements of the profoundest order.

She fashioned a philosophy of home at twenty-three.

The ideal house is a place whose only distinctions between outside and in is the space it divides off. It necessarily isolates on a physical level. But there can be no spiritual distinction between outside and in. There can be no shelter that isolates spiritually. If things are going badly outside it is necessary to take this badness inside. There to deal with it the more directly and fully.

A picture of a woman and a sailor (her parents), dated 1945, is pasted to the inside cover of one of her journals.

I graduated from college and a few months later I left for Iceland. I took a motorcycle and spent six months on crummy roads. I was living in a tent the whole time. It was a very frugal period—perpetually uncomfortable, wet, cold, windy and exhausting.

When I am alone everything about me is a mirror. This is new. This reflection, beckoned from the wholeness of my solitude.

I thought a great deal about art today and especially the nature of a work which has no sensational aspect. No mystery to create magnetism. Just the direct and simple presence of a thing which can be seen physically in its entirety in an instant and harbors no illusions.
Her self-imposed isolation is means and destination.

She has an insatiable need for quietude and privacy.

Living with myself is no easy matter: as Valéry said: "One must go into himself armed to the teeth…"

10 pm I decide to leave directly for Reykjavik. A long, long drive home. But I was really up to it—though the frame cracked 40 miles out of Varahlit, I kept going—70 miles out of R. the rain came—5:30, into town sopping wet. Standing outside Jenny's wondering how to get in—a brief walk and then a dog barking brings an old woman downstairs—ushers me upstairs with warm open gestures—into a beautiful old kitchen out of the 40s with b&w checkered tile floor—enamel white fixtures and a high ceiling, painting and glossy light blue. It is full of light—and the gesture of the two old women, sisters out of a Fellini type sensibility—I keep thinking I must be dreaming—First, I am wrapped in heavy blankets and served fruit with the utmost care and attention and then as I sat there, wrapped up —like Dad used to tuck me in as a child—eating my red apple—she serves me a most delicious egg and tomato sandwich and then another—

I sure do like that motorcycle. How it just keeps going.

Her private records: diaries, intimate letters—received and written, ruminations on specific works, letters expressing the philosophy of her art, unpublished writings and conversations. She lets me read it all.

Nostalgia longing arises in me at the sight of the early pre-drawn lights in the farmers' houses.

Her itinerancy moved her beyond associative relays between her original landscape and formative losses.

When I get back to Reykjavik or my trip to the west fiords I will rewrite this journal using only my memory to describe the circumstances—in this way I shall discover the moments of deepest intensity I have of experiences here in Island.

Every time you use a memory you change it.

Find a lighthouse to stay at in Iceland. Alone. Utterly. And from each window a vantage to see the same view in space, each day . . . but each day feeling its difference . . . the difference created through duration. I want to feel that passage.

She realized her authorship early in life. Stillness, reading, remote landscapes, conviction, risk taking.

When she finished college she gave a close reading to everything she could put her hands on by Heidegger, Nietzsche, and Rilke. Together they formed an important space.

One day this week I will go up to the Museum of Natural History. Really strong urge to see the different birds even though all stuffed.

Up to the Museum of Natural History to see the birds. You really have to look hard to see them. Looking at the nests, the different collections, arrangements and densities of each.

Remarkable constructions. This museum has got to be one of my favorite places in the city.

I am seeing so much these days.

Living situation tenuous. No place in Manhattan to move to. Everything exorbitantly priced. Not much available. Too much instability for any kind of peace of mind. I wish that I could somehow glide above all the mundane change. The plague of urban living seems to be that it demands a rate of change which is inhuman and ultimately depressing. It seems a deliberate propagation of despair. It takes all my energy just to ignore it. Anne and Arthur have a way being encouraging. It's just their style.

For years she copied lengthy quotations by hand. She keeps these documents in binders. Quoted authors include Artaud, Bachelard, Borges, Camus, Capra, Cézanne, Cioran, Coomaraswamy, Dante, Dickinson, Dupin, Eliot, Faulkner, Flaubert, Gide, Gourmont, Heidegger, Hölderlin, Joyce, Kafka, Kierkegaard, Kubler, Mallarmé, Merton, Ortega Y Gasset, Rilke, Rodin, Roethke, Rossellini, Stevens, Siren, Suzuki, Thoreau, Valéry, Weil, Williams, Yeats.

Felt so good today, I went out and bought 5 lbs of soap.

I wonder what Faulkner would make of the midnight sun. Composed a little lyric for him—"That evening sun—it won't go down."

Homesick for Iceland.

Unable to read. Anxious to get forthcoming trip over with. R. Reagan elected president. My body responded with nausea, disgust. An aborted day, entirely. Unable to think. Wander about too much.

People say they want to get out and "see the world"—as if they weren't living in the world and what they saw daily before them wasn't a part of it. Getting out to see the world is no reason to travel. I'm sitting here wondering why the walnut is so well sheltered. So well housed. European Radio talks too much.

In Iceland I was moved from within. I felt first. Beyond the reach of my intellect, beyond the application of my words. I felt the presence of my being as real. It is as forceful as the sky, the earth and the waters.

I move in tides when I am alone, high and low and constant.

Have been working intermittently throughout day and evening. It seems that I get much to close to what I am doing and lose the structure of sight. Reading Thoreau whose attitudes and interest in nature is very appealing to me. I like the basis for his writings as well as the form. With the exception that his poetry which occurs frequently throughout the text is

very poor. I have taken to skipping over it entirely. I greatly admire his lifestyle and the sense that his work, writing, and observing the natural world comes from a real center.

In solitude, her subtle mind is in dialogue with a multiplicity of authors.

What do you do when someone moves you? You cultivate that motion.

Snowshoeing in Vermont. That is my next move.

Spectacles bore her.

I remember when I was a child, perhaps 12 years old; my father and I stopped in an antique shop. There I found an extraordinary ivory cue ball. I couldn't take my eyes off it. It captured my imagination and inspired an immense desire to hold it. He preferred not to give it to me.

Artifacts of faith: she was attracted to things made solely as the result of faith in something, which have no other meaning.

A long walk to see the sun rise. A majestic view of the hanghukill glacier and the valley north of it. I am truly inspired tonight and the new work is really beginning to come to clarity in my mind. I am also so full of Yeats and believe tonight has brought me a more full appreciation and understanding of his work.

In me late last night and early this evening, I carried in me the most quiet and true happiness. It was indeed a state of inspiration in which I felt at one with myself and the nature about me. I felt a communion with Yeats I never before felt except in rare moments with Rilke—that I really knew / felt the meaning of their words. Thru the internal state of my being. I had lived their meaning and their meaning was part of me.

A mundane ordinary day. But basically relaxing. Yeats is really in me now. And I am bigger for it.

On long journeys in Iceland she reads particular authors in depth. She took Thomas Bernhard to the Arctic Circle while working on "Pi" and "Arctic Circles." *His energy suited the view perfectly—empty, flat—end of the world landscape—Gathering Evidence, Woodcutters, The Loser, Concrete, Gargoyles, The Lime Works. It was like the landscape catalyzed an understanding and created a kind of stamina in me for reading him.*

Emily Dickinson accompanied her when she toured the country's hot tubs and pools. Another time it was Flannery O'Conner's short stories. She first read O'Conner on the recommendation of her high school English teacher.

The weather has got me thinking again: living life as the moment-to-moment result of myriad circumstantial exchanges . . . . I'm haunted by the critical questions I have about

my work. Trying to keep it at a slight distance—believing I can resolve them in time with less direct address—

There exists no outside force that is capable of affirming my being in the manner that I do through my work.

Her seclusion is interposed with a heavily populated fantasy life.

One winter in Iceland she read Thomas Mann's Buddenbrooks entirely in the dark. *It was wonderful. When I was a kid "Tonio Kröger" was important to me. I took that story very personally.*

I grew up with the Arctic Circle on the map and there was no question in my mind that I was going to go look at it one day and I did so. Of course it is a dead ringer for any other horizon but it is the Arctic Circle.

By the early-eighties her journals principally provide occasions for deep examination of her art works. She stops keeping notebooks by 1991. Thereafter she keeps notes on disparate sheets of paper, often undated.

A gold field…as it lays on the floor…lays among the dust and accumulating newspapers, I wonder and wonder and wonder at it: and so here I have a disembodied substance brought back to corporal existence–an epic object–it would make the coldest place burn with its fire, is splendor—a brilliance capable of reflecting the purest of natures, the purest of solitudes–A presence so palpable—I close my eyes to the object and it becomes—and becomes.

Gold is rarely experienced in its pure state. It is rarely used for its intrinsic properties (if it were it would not be alloyed so frequently.): it is used most frequently for its image quality.

When she first began reading, Edgar Allan Poe was a fixation. She especially liked all the stories on premature burial and obsessional behavior. She recollects experiencing a weird sexual energy from reading him.

To use color as a material substance: manipulated as much for its phenomenal offering as for its less seen but highly present qualities: chemical and physical properties. Adhesion, solubility, texture, density.

The first lines of Dickinson's recorded in her journal are: "To shut our eyes is travel." "We went to sleep as if it were a country." "I work to drive the awe away yet awe impels the work."

Pair = One thing plus another
Double: One thing plus itself
Duplicate: One thing plus itself again exactly

Twin: One thing plus one thing that are alike (likenesses)

. . . in the late eighties I had a kind of epiphany with Dickinson and just dropped everything—stayed home and read everything in print in one go. That meant a couple of weeks as I recall. Her writings are not exactly light reading and I remember wanting to reread many times before moving to the next poem. I then went on to her letters.

Lispector came to me in the late eighties and early nineties. I have a very strong connection to her work.

I've always thought of my library as the center of the world.

Lyrics of Abba songs and of "Send in the Clowns" sit in a pink plastic folder in her files.

She doesn't often find herself somewhere she doesn't intend to be. Place is purpose. *A Place: condensation of acts.*

I think that all the visual work comes through language. I believe I think with words, I can't verify that, but my understanding of how I put ideas together or how I put work together, forms together, is definitely involved with language in some way.

She makes lists:
Recurrence
Repeat
Pair
Double
Duplicate
Twin
Franchise
Reflection

and

I have been taken as
My sister's husband
My niece's father
My girlfriend's boyfriend
My best friend's boyfriend
My girlfriend's girlfriend

and

My father was a pawnbroker in Harlem
My first real girlfriend's name was Ditto
My first trip to Iceland was in 1975
My hair used to be red

My hair was so thick I had no peripheral vision
My cousin Seth put his hand in dogshit on a dare when I was a teenager
My best friend was Arnold—we used to swim naked in the top of a silo
My mom bought me a chocolate colored plastic wallet with sky king embossed in blue and black on the cover
I first masturbated over Monica Vitti in L'Avventura—on T.V.
I used to have a recurring dream—me on a ladder as high as the sky—next to a stack of books as high as the sky too. I was reading the top book working my way down to an unseen bottom
I had a pink bathroom when I was young
I was kicked out of the Brownies when I was a kid. The troop leader didn't want any Jews.
My father had a cuckoo clock in this pawnshop. I liked to pull the solid metal cones that hung from the clock and watch the cuckoo come out. The cuckoo got stuck outside the clock and my father smacked me.
I used to have a pair of mittens made as golf club covers. They had been hocked at the pawnshop. They were mink w/ brown velvet lining.

She is self-possessed. She is full of herself.

I have this almost pathological desire for privacy.

Maybe I'm just imitating the sense of memory.

I started thinking how who I'm talking to affects who I am—because who I'm talking to affects how I am—and how affects how I'm seen—that is, how you see me. So this circle of perception affects the outcome of me at any given moment. And the question then became what moment do I take to be me? So then a confusion of selves arose, even though over the years I noticed that I do bear a likeness to myself in some ways. But what about all the times when I hardly recognize myself?

She habitually listens to Shirley Bassey singing *Goldfinger*. Sometimes she makes it a duet.

I have a sister. And I figure that it's her presence that allows me so much solitude.

She considered having impersonations of herself made by Tommy Lee Jones, Renée Zellweger, and others.

I spent a few nights in a hotel. The halls were lined with glass cases crowded with stuffed birds. Near the door to my room a large snowy owl was sitting on a chest. I hustled the owl into my room. The owl's presence was so strong. Even a dead owl…And I couldn't sleep. So late in the night I schlepped it back out to the hall.

She is demoralized by mundanity, the aggressive subjugation of nature worldwide, and America's widespread ignorance of history.

I am sitting in a room that is also my home—and it overlooks a not-quite-setting-sun, across the ocean horizon, in what has become a kind of recurring criminal act—absorbing all of my attention for hours at a time. Also in the view out there is the entrance to the center of the earth—Snaefellsjökull. In the foreground of the view are a traffic rotary and recycling center and a sewage treatment plant too. Together they do an ok job of countering the sublime.

Her library contains many books by Theodor S. Geisel, aka Dr. Seuss.

. . . Jerry, Margret, Ditto, Lin, Matthew, Douglas, Sandy, Dale, Eliza, Jeanny, Jeff, Rachel, James, Quentin, Ona, Robert, Don, Felix, Tala, Melissa, Vicente, Arnold, Frida, Ulfur, Matt, Georgia . . .

It is necessary for me to be received by those who move me. In this reception resides my home.

A quintessential lifelong New Yorker. She oscillates between chumminess and detachment, bombast and sensitivity, directness and evasion. Sometimes she calls people 'babe' or 'honey bunch.' When she's fired up she swears like a sailor.

Iceland's landscape is being nibbled from every direction: a dam here, a road there, patches of gridded forest here. With each of these new alterations, Iceland moves one step further –away from its unique self. Seeing all of this combat with beauty, I begin to understand that Iceland's infamous bad weather was in fact a blessing in disguise–protecting Iceland all these years from the Icelanders.

The bad news of the world is always in her. Reading the news really winds her up. Invectives abound.

I feel so alienated because I can't hold the world together in a way that makes sense to me—in terms of all this horrific shit going on.

My mother died yesterday. That's how I found myself at the Museum of Natural History. The Hall of African Mammals was just as it was when my mother first brought me here. I remember the things I remembered then. The dioramas hold time and memory constant.

When I was a child I came into this room, fresh from a bright blue sky that lingered in my vision. I took that blue and the color of the sun right into the darkness with me. The memory of them illuminated and scaled the vast darkness. I held my mother's hand as I stood in front of these other places, stringing the views, one after another — places like pearls, together.

In the Hall of African Mammals that day my mother wore a kerchief pulled tightly over her hair and knotted behind her neck. When I looked at her, I saw a muted light reflecting off her forehead, accentuating the line of the kerchief and the shape of her head. She wore a powder blue sweater trimmed in brown scallops around the neck and sleeves. The powder blue fuzz caught the light and made the sweater glow in the

darkness. The fuzzy aura of kinked wool teased me as I looked up at her. And around her neck she wore a strand of grooved gold balls.

Many things encircle her, radiating out from her—gold balls, links of illuminated windows, sequences of inhabited reflections, a necklace of faraway places—and the memories borne in me. I encompass myself with them—a spiral opening out, expanding: always in the present tense.

She laments the transformation of her original landscape from farming community to suburban expansion.

Memory is a pairing of you.

My brother and I would play outside together. He let me wipe my nose on his shirt so I didn't have to go home.

BEING FULL OF RELATION

My weather began back in grade school. In class the teacher announced a hurricane was on its way. With that she dismissed us and emphatically instructed: "Run home!" I guess it gave me such a thrill I've been running to Iceland ever since.

You know the room in a lighthouse that revolves? When you stand in that room you feel like the light.

Weather is the one thing she holds in common with every person.

While working on Library of Water she read Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*, *The Road*, and *No Country for Old Men*. *The former contained episodes of violence that were more powerful than I have seen in any film—i.e. Peckinpah, Tarantino, etc.*

"We'll be up shit's creek" as my mother used to say.

In a letter to Dr. Ruediger Hentschel at Schott Galswerke she wrote: *I want to produce a work of optically clear, utterly transparent glass. This would be an object which from afar would have a container-like aspect that the frosted sides would present, but when the viewer approaches the object and looks into it from the top—will have the experience of seeing into the interior of a solid form. Basically an object which is a window into itself. The object is in another sense, the experience of transparence itself. Transparence in the paradoxical form of a solid mass. Something not looked through, but into. I thought that a body of still and clear water would be an analogy for the work, but water is almost always contained by something not water. Here would be an object that distinguishes itself in its extreme state of clarity.*

. . . I have come to Iceland dozens of times since . . . almost every year sometimes twice a year . . . it has a migratory frequency and sense of necessity . . . I've tried to imagine not

going to Iceland . . . it's not an option . . . I go because I have to . . . the way geese migrate . . . a chemical necessity . . .

Her aim is to make objects that are clear about themselves.

. . . I want to talk about this experience I had 'x' time ago and I have to wonder why I've picked just that one—or even why I remember that one thing. And so I'm thinking about all the missed memories that are me too but totally forgotten. And now I'm thinking why can't I remember the things I've forgotten and isn't the missing me, me too?

Reading Roni Horn

I am sitting in her studio reading her journals and private papers from the past thirty years. She works nearby customizing letterforms for a vocabulary of weather. They look liquid and whimsical and remind me of Dr. Seuss.

Usually she works in this room alone. For the time being, I am in her daily milieu reading and absorbing. The open-plan arrangement along with the newness of our proximity encourages access: out-of-the-blue we ask each other questions and offer spontaneous commentary. After a couple days of this, she starts playing loud music, most frequently a playlist that includes *Knocking on Heaven's Door*, *Sympathy for the Devil*, *Goldfinger*, *Play With Fire*, *Desperado*, and *Sinnerman*. It depletes my reading concentration, but I'm getting the full-on Roni-in-her-studio experience, so I don't protest.

I presume the notebooks provide direct admittance to her former present tense—taking me where I get to know Roni long before I knew her.

Every once in a while I look up and exclaim, "this is so juicy," to which she smiles, looks intrigued, and immediately returns to what she was doing. I feel like a snoop despite permission. She has not read her early journals in decades and might well be stunned by the intimate yearnings formerly lodged in her mind that found voice in diaristic privacy. Situations, sensations, and emotions are rendered with raw sensitivity: hard evidence of feelings written in their time. I am flushed from what she felt, and have difficulty reconciling with Roni who sits in front of me. In and out of time.

She springs from one room to the other and from one work station to another—reviewing images, talking to Suzanne and Ann in the office, making calls, editing texts, checking email. Sometimes I'm jolted by her physical presence as she rushes to the printer or suddenly belts out " . . . the man with the Midas touch . . . "

My abrupt questions must seem bizarre: 'who was David? What happened between you?' She looks blank at first—unaware of what I'm talking about—yet she devoted pages and

pages to him thirty years ago as she savored their deepening friendship and subsequently anguished over the unexplained rupture that occurred. She was tremendously disappointed to learn that their bond was neither definite nor mutually precious. He disappeared from her journal.

Every afternoon, around three o'clock, one of us goes out to get us each a pack of Reese's Peanut Butter Cups.

I wonder if I am the only person who has read these, or if a former intimate ever intruded, perhaps under duress— distressed by the sense of fading connection—seeking verification of their unarticulated ending on the horizon.

Every once in a while she says, *I can't believe I'm letting you read all that*. Frankly, I can't either.

Her accounts of solitary travel speak of the paradox of isolation. Her longing for social communion is so insistent and intense that I mirror it. When I come to descriptions of meetings that evolved into the warm exchange of contact I feel as reassured and renewed as if they were my own experiences.

The diary-writing protagonist of Sartre's *Nausea* reasoned: "I think that is the big danger in keeping a diary: you exaggerate everything. You continually force the truth because you're always looking for something."

I've never maintained a journal for long, but when I was around five years old, did so for a few weeks. Apparently my days were simple: it was exclusively composed of entries that read "macaroni and cheese today" and "no macaroni and cheese today."

She may not realize that some love letters are tucked into notebooks, but I can't bring myself to tell her.

I've only been reading a few days but I conclude, perhaps erroneously, that she has always made good choices for herself.

I marvel over the deep thinking and fine writing she demonstrated at only twenty years old. Shit, this chick has *always* been self-conscious, articulate, and sharp as a tack. Recollections of myself at that age are disturbing. I wonder what would explain the gulf.

She has long centered her life on freedom and responsibility. Youthful contact with Sartre's philosophy of existentialism cannot account for this (" . . . man being condemned to be free carries the weight of the whole world on his shoulders; he is responsible for the world and for himself as a way of being . . . "); such tenets must be in her core.

My appetite for biography is driven by an unappeasable desire for self-understanding—which I suspect is a somewhat unhealthy cultural symptom—and by the wish to cultivate possibilities for my future through the lens of another.

Evenings, I read some of the books by Genet, Sartre, Camus, and Poe that impressed her when she was coming of age.

When asked in 1993 to provide a curriculum vitae for the first monograph on his work, Felix Gonzalez-Torres composed a chronology of his life that intertwined private and public events, which he related informally (*1964 Dad bought me a set of watercolors and gave me my first cat . . . 1993 Sam Nunn is such a sissy, peace might be possible in the Middle East*). Twelve years later I made a duet with his timeline: further inscribing personal milestones and social memories and histories, including some that occurred before his birth as well as after his death (*1945 First atomic bomb, named "Little Boy," is dropped on Hiroshima by the United States . . . 1994 "Untitled" (America) is the last of twenty-four light string pieces made over two years, which Gonzalez-Torres calls "my own history of light."*). That piece inspired Roni's invitation for me to consider her personal history. I regard this as an undertaking of friendship, but not only. Investigating relationships between clock time, history, lived experience, narrative, and memory has occupied me since Felix died, although I hope it won't always.

I felt on firmer ground with the Felix chronology, with his biographic armature to derive from, and because he could not take issue with my choices.

Every artist colludes in the shaping of his or her public persona. If I push this piece freely, I may activate her boundaries and learn the extent of her inclination to control portrayals of herself. Mirroring is intrusive business, even when invited.

She seems like a minefield. She is sensitive, and I recognize the double-edged nature of sensitivity with regard to my own psyche. I doubt she has thought much about the potential consequences of this collaboration—how it could affect our friendship, our connection. I might write something that offends or disappoints her. My idea of accurate information may not flush with her self-perception. I may not know her as well as I believe I do, which would be unsettling. How best to balance privacy with exposure? What will be exposed? The enterprise feels treacherous. Still, I like the idea of testing our limits. Projecting discord, I remind myself (and mentally remind her) to *lighten up*.

Last night, I reread an email I received from Jim Benning a few years ago: "Life is finite with a beginning and end. It can be traced along a line. Someone thirty-five has a line this long. Someone eighty-two twice that plus some. However, the number of points in each line is exactly the same. Proof: Form an angle with any two lines of finite length. Draw a line through the end points of each line and then a set of lines parallel to that line. The points of the two lines are shown to obey a one-to-one correspondence. Perhaps an ordering of the points is more important than length . . . . But time is infinite with no beginning and no end. It can be represented on a line that is infinitely long in both directions. Life placed on this line exists as a point somewhere in the middle. Tomorrow is just as far away from no beginning (negative infinity) and no end (positive infinity) as are today and yesterday. Therefore all of life exists at the same point in time."

Where to begin? I've heard that people in therapy either recount and reexperience the past, or focus on current circumstances and relationships. I talked exclusively about the present. But as Roy Schafer has observed, "Once the analysis is under way, the autobiographical present is found to be no clear point in time at all."

Language is blunt. We could use a new tense that refers to past, present, and future as synchronous.

In 1991, Felix asked me for a list of formative dates and events which a word, name, place, or phrase would denote, from which he would make my portrait. I enthusiastically called on memory, letting people, places, and events surface. I obsessed over the responsibility of memorializing key relationships and myself. I thought about what formed me and about what I would want to be reminded of on a daily basis since the piece would be installed in my bedroom. Finally, Felix selected from my pool and sequenced the entries non-chronologically.

"In the theatre of the past that is constituted by memory . . . we think we know ourselves in time, when all we know is a sequence of fixations in the spaces of the being's stability—a being who does not want to melt away, and who, even in the past, wants time to 'suspend' its flight." (Bachelard)

Felix's portraits are not static; they can be modified by whoever owns them. (The owner may or may not be the subject of the portrait.) Typically the owner preserves the artist's original selection, and some expand on it. My portrait has had two subsequent permutations: one time I self-consciously modified it for a public exhibition. And for another exhibition I restructured it with all new entries except for one. Collectively the three versions diagram the absolute mutability of self and life as flux.

Subject and object: alternating between authoring, witnessing, and narrating our selves.

A few years ago I painted over the original portrait and have no plans to recreate it. I don't really want to live with it now, although I've contemplated making the fourth version a random group of memories, an impersonal accounting of public events, a collection of lies, or a set of predictions.

Sometimes when I hear myself proliferating my personal facts and fictions I wish I could just stop talking. Stories repeated and repeated in order to sustain some semblance of consistency about who I think I am. Mythologizing is tedious. Of course demythologizing gets tiresome too.

Self-representation always involves the dilemma of "the secrets kept from oneself and from others." (Bersani and Phillips) The impact of a secret cannot be fathomed until it is exposed.

Recently, after swearing to tell the truth, I was interviewed by a judge for jury duty, and responded to his questions automatically. Upon leaving the courtroom I was stunned to

realize how much misinformation I had unintentionally served up in a five-minute exchange, beginning with my birthplace. (I instinctively say I'm from Maine but actually I was born in Boston.)

Every so often when she tells me something about her past, I suspect she's told it countless times and I feel a bit uncomfortable.

My attraction to her diaries is that they are from her past, not about it, and are perhaps more reliable than history filtered through memory and myth.

Carolyn Steedman has written, "And here is a problem: history and biography came into being together, make constant reference to each other, make us see the one in the other, make us think in the same way; but one is about the end, and the other can only ever be about endings."

Occupied by concepts of biography, I wonder what the alternatives are.

The desire for new means of constructing experience is active. It is the unforeseeable that I am most interested in.

We seem to spend decades apprehending our life stories, and then begins the incessant process of loosening their grip on us, detaching from our case histories.

There is a danger that *Roni Horn, a compilation* may be misinterpreted to suggest that personal history is retrievable and archivable.

LOAN AGREEMENT

LOANED BY: Julie Ault
88 Bleecker Street #4G
New York, NY 10012

LOANED TO: Malmö Art Academy
Box 17083
200 10 Malmö SWEDEN
(hereinafter, the "Borrower")

LOANED FOR: "Ever Ephemeral" September 30, 2011 - October 30, 2011

LENGTH OF LOAN: September 1 – November 30, 2010

WORK: FELIX GONZALEZ-TORRES
"Untitled" (Portrait of Julie Ault), 1991
Paint on wall
Dimensions vary with installation
ARG# GF1991-033

INSURANCE VALUE
FOR THE BORROWER: **Cost of installation of the work**

The loan must be credited in the exhibition as follows:

Collection of Julie Ault, New York

Julie Ault (hereinafter "the Owner") is assigning their rights and responsibilities to create a manifestation of the work in accordance with the open-ended yet specific parameters of the work.

The borrower accepts the Owner's rights and responsibilities with respect to the work within the parameters. The loan of the Owner's rights and responsibilities as granted to the borrower is enduring only for the specified length and specific purposes of the loan. Each manifestation of the work is the work and should be referred to only as the work.

There are many steps necessary for the borrower to fully take on the responsibility of manifesting this work and this loan is made only if all of these steps are taken on fully. The borrower must read this entire document and fulfill all requirements within it. This loan is contingent on the fulfillment of these requirements. If these requirements are not fulfilled, this loan document is null and void.

SPECIFICS OF THE WORK

It was the intention of Felix Gonzalez-Torres that the work be able to be manifested and may physically differ according to the location and interpretation of flexible parameters.

Description
One artwork consisting of text comprised of events and their corresponding dates. The font of the text is Trump Medieval Bold italicized. The color for the text is dark grey.

Regarding the Text of the Portrait
The Owner has the right and responsibility to add and/or subtract events and their corresponding dates to/from the work at any time. The Owner has the ability to decide on a case-by-case basis, whether to assign this right (or any part thereof) to add/or subtract events and their corresponding dates, to an authorized borrower. In this case, as curator of the exhibition, The Owner has decided it is not necessary to extend these rights.

Text of the Portrait
The borrower should manifest the following version of the portrait.

The Cold Room 1962 Beckett 1964 Aunt Jo's Kitchen 1961 Justine and Juliette 1990 Maine Mall 1971 Pontiac 1973 Tootsie Pop 1973 Felix 1987 Group Material 1979 Alexis de Tocqueville 1992 National Endowment for the Arts 1989 Roni 1990 Moon over Miami 1991-95 Dr. Irene 1991 Bill and Hillary 1992 Cab Ride 1995 Dead 1996 Come Alive 1996 Mickey and Minnie 1997 Joshua Tree 2000 Deepening 2010 Cabins 2007

Installation
In the ideal manifestation of the work the text is hand-painted by a professional sign painter in a horizontal line or lines directly on the wall or walls just below where the wall meets the ceiling, creating a continuous unbroken frieze, formatted according to the space and length of text in a modest but readable scale. Because the work can expand or contract in length due to the potential to add and/or subtract events and their corresponding dates and in consideration of the flexible parameters of the work and the varying conditions of each chosen site for installation, each manifestation can physically differ. While the work may encircle the site in more than one horizontal line if there is enough text to warrant it, it is not intended to appear in paragraph format. It may be broken by the architectural details of a space.

Please note: while the medium is paint on wall, within the artist's lifetime in situations where this was not possible, he did allow portrait works to be applied to the wall in alternate mediums. If such a situation arises, where a sign painter is not possible, the borrower may approach the Owner to determine the appropriateness of an alternative medium. The Foundation welcomes the opportunity to provide advice in such situations or the Foundation may act on behalf of the Owner.

It is important that the borrower understand the breadth of their decision making responsibilities in regard to the installation of the work so that they are prepared to predetermine and make as

many decisions ahead of time as possible, while leaving room for the understanding that some of the decisions may unfold during the process of physically installing the work. Once the text has been chosen, the borrower must determine the site for installation, taking into consideration if the site is appropriate in relation to the parameters set out (as described above) and, if so, the borrower must consider how the features or conditions of the site might alter or influence the installation. The borrower must also understand their responsibility for formatting the text within the open-ended yet specific parameters of the work (as described above).

Whenever consistent with its charitable and educational mission, The Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation is available without charge to provide information on previous installations, and the borrower is encouraged to contact The Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation with any specific questions about the work.

ADDITIONAL TERMS OF LOAN

Costs
The Borrower is responsible for all costs associated with installing and maintaining the work while it is on loan.

Deinstallation
Upon completion of the exhibition, all materials out of which the work was manifested must be destroyed or obliterated.

Copyright, Rights and Reproductions
All copyright in and to images of Felix Gonzalez-Torres works is reserved. Loan of this work confers no right to make images or authorize third parties to use images of it. The Foundation must be contacted to obtain image usage rights. It is the responsibility of the borrower to refer anyone seeking the right of reproduction to the Foundation.

Regarding Portrait Works: Maintaining an Unbroken History
As stated in the Certificate of Authenticity and Ownership, Felix Gonzalez-Torres considered a recording of the variations from manifestation to manifestation of each installation of the work to be conceptually important. Therefore, each time the work is installed (by the Owner or by an authorized borrower) the installation should be recorded both through written documentation of the events and their corresponding dates included and the specific order in which they appear as well as installation photographs of each manifestation.

Archival Responsibilities
An inherent part of the work of Felix Gonzalez-Torres is that it may physically differ according to location and the configuration of the work. To this end, the Foundation works to obtain and retain a complete history of all exhibition information, installation details, production material, as well as all exhibition catalogs and information about each installation of the work. Therefore, the Foundation requests that borrowers work with the Foundation to maintain accurate and complete archives of the work by sharing the following archival information and material with the Owner and the Foundation. The following information and materials should be provided by the Borrower and sent to The Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation and the Owner free of charge. Please note: as specific technologies change or become obsolete, images of the work should be provided to the

Foundation in a format of comparable quality to what is described below. Up-to-date preferred specifications may be obtained from the Foundation.

Details regarding each specific installation:

- The events and their corresponding dates used and the specific order in which they appear. This should be recorded through both installation photographs and written documentation.
- Type of installation method used and contact information for the individual or company executing the installation.
- Floor plan indicating the location of the work in the space.
- An elevation view of the space (which includes measurements of the work and the wall(s) on which it is installed).

Details regarding each exhibition in which the work was included:

- Information about the exhibition, including title, curator, and exhibition dates
- Two copies of the exhibition catalogue
- One copy of all exhibition materials, including a press release and checklist
- Five copies of the invitation or announcement card

Details regarding documentation of the work:

- High-quality photocopies or digital scans of all reviews of exhibitions in which the work is included, including title of article, author, title and date of publication and page number
- High-quality photo documentation of each manifestation of the work installed in context, including name and credit line of the photographer. All copyright in and to images of Felix Gonzalez-Torres works is reserved and this should be indicated to the photographer of the work. Images must be provided as high resolution digital images, which must fulfill the following conditions:
  - Each image must be in TIFF format
  - Each image must be a minimum of 60 MB at 8 Bit (ideally 80 MB or larger) in RGB format, when opened. Please note this must be the original out-of-camera file size. Resolution must not be interpolated or manipulated in any way. At a resolution of 300 dpi, the largest dimension should be approximately 20 inches or more. Please also provide RAW and 16 Bit files, if they are available.
  - Images may not be compressed, or a lossless compression should be used, such as LZW.
  - All images must be provided on a CD/DVD labeled with exhibition title, dates, institution, photographers' name and any courtesy information; alternately, the images may be sent via a file sharing application like YouSendIt. Images sent this way should be accompanied by a PDF or DOC listing the same information.

Regarding Titles and Media

Felix Gonzalez-Torres intended that the wording, punctuation, placement of punctuation and parentheses, and formatting of titles and media were specific and had conceptual meaning. It is requested that the work be listed as follows in catalogues, wall labels and other texts: "Untitled" (Portrait of Julie Ault). If it is the protocol of the borrower to italicize or underline titles, it is requested that the quotation marks and parentheses remain in place. If it is standard practice to include medium and dimensions in catalogues, on wall labels or other texts, it is requested that

the following text be used: Paint on wall; Dimensions vary with installation. It is not appropriate to indicate any additional details specific to a particular installation of the work.

This loan document is executed by the Borrower and the Owner, who has full legal title to the work. The Borrower agrees and acknowledges that the terms set forth in this loan document are binding upon the Borrower as a condition of the Borrower's loan of the work, and each individual executing this loan document, whether on behalf of the Owner or the Borrower, represents and warrants that he or she, as the case may be, has the legal authority to cause the Owner or the Borrower, as the case may be, to enter into it.

By:_____ Date: _____

Julie Ault

By:_____ Date:_____
Silvana Hed, Malmö Art Academy

Appendix B

Digital version:

Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material (London: Four Corners, 2010 ISBN: 978-0956192813). *Show and Tell* is data and evidence of a major test site for the problematics of my research.

Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material

Edited by Julie Ault

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Four Corners Books



Democracy Wall panel being installed, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1993

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An Artwork is a Person © Doug Ashford 2010

What Was to be Done? © Tim Rollins 2010

Tracking AIDS Timeline © Sabrina Locks 2010

This volume © Four Corners Books 2010

Cover image: Collection of materials for *Market* awaiting installation, Kunstverein München, 1995

The Group Material Archive in the Downtown Collection can be viewed by appointment:
Fales Library and Special Collections,
Elmer Holmes Bobst Library,
70 Washington Square South,
New York, NY 10012
Phone: (212) 998-2596
Email: fales.library@nyu.edu

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Chronicle: 1979–1996

September 1979, New York. Tim Rollins, Marybeth Nelson, Hannah Alderfer, Beth Jaker, and Peter Szypula have all finished their undergraduate degrees at the School of Visual Arts (SVA), where they studied with conceptual artist Joseph Kosuth, whose art, philosophy, and emphasis on collaboration were pivotal for them. They are eager to extend the camaraderie, community, and critical dialogues they created in school. Tim is currently making politically engaged investigative installations, which often include popular music and text, and is at work on a Master of Education degree at New York University (NYU). Marybeth, Hannah, Beth, and Peter are primarily attracted to collective production and are engaged with gender and sexual politics theory. They are not making art individually. At NYU, Tim befriends Patrick Brennan, a painter who has recently transferred to the art education department there. Julie Ault, Yolanda Hawkins, and Tim share an apartment; they all met in art classes at the University of Maine at Augusta in 1973. Julie occasionally makes collages using images drawn from popular magazines, and is interested in collaboration. Yolanda is principally an actress pursuing theater work. Instigated by Tim and Patrick, these friends and friends of friends form a group to discuss and present socially engaged art, other people's as well as their own, and to bring together their aesthetic and sociopolitical aims. DIY culture, feminist discourse, the civil rights movement, Marxist theory, as well as the loose network of collectives, alternative spaces, journals, and adhoc activities in New York City's nonprofit art sector are all formative contexts for the group.



October 1979. Marek Pakulski—Julie's cousin, who is also a friend of Tim's—soon joins. Marek, a musician, is the bass player for the Fleshtones. Patrick's friend Michael Udvardy, who he met studying art at Miami Dade College, is also invited to join. Michael is currently making artworks that diagram social relations while continuing his education at Columbia University. The group begins meeting in their various apartments to discuss ideas and plan activities. Each member pays monthly dues of $30. The name Group Material is agreed on, to invoke collective production and to highlight shared interests in investigating material culture and effecting material change. British artist Conrad Atkinson's current exhibition *Material–Six Works*, which is concerned in part with the politics of labor and unions in Britain, is another reference point for naming the group. Atkinson's work is particularly influential for Tim.

November 1979. Group Material discusses acquiring not-for-profit incorporation status in order to be eligible for government funding, and the possibility of getting a storefront headquarters and exhibition / work space. The group designs a logo, plans a manifesto and sets up a telephone answering service. The members also present their current individual work at meetings. On one such occasion Patrick Brennan projects a slide of a large painting he made of a New Jersey industrial landscape, and stands back to the group facing the projection wearing a leather bomber jacket while Candi Staton's disco hit "Victim" plays on the stereo.

March 1980. In addition to theoretical and practical discussions, the group attends panels and starts planning their first shows, to take place once a space is found.

↑ GM members, 1980, clockwise from top left: Szypula, Brennan, Rollins, Ault, Lebron, Nelson, Jaker, Dones, Alderfer, Pakulski

MEMBERS:
Hannah Alderfer, Julie Ault, Patrick Brennan, Yolanda Hawkins, Beth Jaker, Marybeth Nelson, Marek Pakulski, Tim Rollins, Peter Szypula, Michael Udvardy

MINUTES : DECEMBER 11, 1979 Session, Group Material

Attending : Julie Ault, Hannah Alderfer, Jan Marek Pakulski, Beth Jaker, Patrick Brennan, Mary Beth Nelson, Peter Szypula, Timothy Rollins

Absent: Yolanda Hawkins, Michael Udvardy

1. Dues for the month of December:

Dues for the month of December will be paid by mail by all members on December 15, 1979. Mailing address for dues is : Patrick J. Brennan, 229 East 11th Street, N.Y.,N.Y. 10003. Patrick will record payments and will issue receipts.

a. Marek, Tim and Mary Beth make Dec. payments of $30.00 each at Dec. 11th session.

b. Patrick announces the opening of GM bank account atthe AMALGAMATED BANK on 14th St.

2. Logo Design :

Final deadline for amy GM members who wish to propose logo designs will be the next meeting of GM on January 8, 1980.

3. Answering Service:

GM's answering service was established by Julie. The service is METROLINES TELEPHONE ANSWERING SERVICE, located at 164 W.21st St. N.Y.C. 10011. To leave messages: call 691-7950, Ext. 460. To pick up messages : 691-5800, ask for Ext. 460.

4. GM discusses the publication of a journal or book :

Beth suggests devoting energy to the publication of writing and artistic projects through an inexpensive journal. Plans for the publication can be undertaken while GM waits for the establishment of a permanent headquarters and working space. GM members are encouraged to give this matter thought and to bring specific ideas to the Jan. 8 session.

5. GM discusses Marxist School Symposium and SVA Seminar :

Tim announces his "Problems in Socialism and Fine Art" course to be offered at the New York Marxist School in Feb. 1980. In connection with this work, the N.Y.M.S. is planning a conference on Marxism and Art. GM discusses possibilities for participation in this conference. GM agrees to allow those GM members who are interested in this project to get involved as representatives of GM.

6. GM discusses the development of a source book:
GM talks about compiling a source book of contacts, services, printers, etc., in order to have a handy guide of

2.

inexpensive
resources that will help promote GM's work and publicity. GM members are asked to bring resources information (addresses, phone numbers, prices, etc.) to Jan. 8 meeting.

7. GM Manifesto:

GM decides to write a manifesto in order to publicize the rationale and the aspirations of thecollective. Notes for this manifesto should be initiated independently by each member of GM. The manifesto will then be forged from the collection of member's notes. Work on the manifesto will begin at the Jan. 8th session of GM. The history of the manifesto form will be researched by interested members, reporting Jan.8.

8. Review of Artwork :

Hannah,

Old and recent work of Peter, Julie, Patrick and Tim was reviewed. All GM members are encouraged to propose exhbbition plans for new work.

9. Search for Headquarters :

The date for a search for GM headquarters will be setat the Jan. 8th session.

10. Orgnization of GM Meetings:

Patrick proposes to agree upon a more efficient method for organizing GM sessions. GM decides to elect a rotating chairperson for each meeting. Mary Beth is elected for Chair at the Jan. 8th session of GM.

11. Minutes:

Tim suggests that minutes from GM meetings be recorded then mailed to GM members soon after each session. GM agrees. Minutes are to be mailed beginning with Dec. 11th session.

12. GM Workshop:

GM decides to split session time , alloting ½ of the session for the discussion of business and issues, the other ½ to be used as a workshop for the production of publication plans, logos, source book, etc.

13. Next meeting:

Next session of GM is scheduled for January 8, 1980 at 132 East 26th St. (2C). at 8:00 p.m.



↑ GM storefront at 244 East 13th Street, 1980
→ Following spreads: Fiery communiqué to GM from Tim Rollins

MEMBERS:
Hannah Alderfer, Julie Ault, Patrick Brennan, Liliana Dones, Yolanda Hawkins, Beth Jaker, Marybeth Nelson, Marek Pakulski, Tim Rollins, Peter Szypula, Michael Udvardy

June 1980. Tim consults Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts (VLA) about New York State incorporation procedures and learns that instituting terms for decision-making and responsibility allocation in the group, and producing and preserving a paper trail are prerequisites. Meeting minutes and internal business including proposals, rebuttals and questions should be registered in writing and kept on file. A statement of purpose as well as operational policies and a three-year projected budget need drafting. The group is required to establish committees, select officers and assign duties to each member. Despite not wanting such a formal structure, the group adheres to these procedures on paper in order to get incorporated. In principle the group is committed to a non-hierarchical structure and decisions are made according to collective agreement, often achieved after plenty of animated and fiery debate. VLA lawyer David Glaser agrees to handle Group Material's incorporation process pro bono. Patrick and Michael's friend Liliana Dones (Lili), formerly a fellow painting student at Miami Dade College, is accepted as a new member. Lili is studying in NYU's art department. Her work involves gathering information about people's economic and social conditions through questionnaires.

July 1980. The group finds and rents an affordable storefront at 244 East 13th Street, on a low-income largely Spanish-speaking block on the Lower East Side. The immediate focus is on the first show and the initial program, fixing up the space, and producing a statement of purpose, announcements and press releases for public distribution. The space needs renovation including a sink, a paint job, electrical work and lighting, false walls for the back, as well as a general clean up of the interior and exterior. Yolanda Hawkins is made forewoman and a renovation schedule is established. Monthly dues are raised to $45 to meet the responsibility of the storefront's operating costs; any excess funds are to be put into programs and activities. With the prospect of going public getting closer, interpersonal tensions and ideological conflicts escalate. The agenda for the July 22 meeting includes: "open, general discussion of Group Material's purpose with a consideration for current personal and practical tensions operant in the group."

July 22, 1980

Unsolicited Statement
to GROUP MATERIAL

A PROPOSAL FOR LEARNING TO GET THINGS OFF OUR CHESTS:
BEHAVIOR, DISCIPLINE AND OUR PROJECT

Timothy Rollins

I'd like to be very honest. I was significantly hurt by last week's meeting; the subsequent depression was exacerbated by what I interpret as some other members' feelings that I personally was responsible for problems in the group, that I should talk to people, that I should do something about the strained relationships that have afflicted this organization with a severe case of hypertension. This is what I have to say, and I think it only fair and proper to address my statements to the Group as a whole:

Not to be overdramatic, but I worry - am sometimes terrified - because of Group Material. The colossal amount of time , energy, talk and money that has already been funneled into this Group by its members would make any serious internal fuck-up the most grave of tragedies. To be blunt, this Group MUST be a success - a success of a kind that the Group as a whole can live with. I see ourselves as heading towards failure and I need to express my opposition to tendencies operating even at this early stage.

BEHAVIOR

In the long run my criticisms of the group's internal behavior AS A WHOLE are probably the least important. But this category of problems is certainly the most infuriating, the most painful. I want to address the question of intrigue in the group - the kind of rabid backbiting I detect that produces only a smelly, foaming residue when personal and working relations are combined in disproportionate amounts. I think the "uncomradely" behavior evident in meetings and (I'm certain) in private conversation about Group members is pathetic and incredible at this early point, among persons who are supposed to be friends. Here are some of the signifers in this semiosis of crap : whispering in the ear of another member while someone is making a statement to the Group, a total loss of temper and control culminating in mindless personal insult, obnoxious dry grins to others when suggestions are made, pedestrian little jokes that throw a monkey wrench into the course of an important discussion, the rolling, winking, crossing, clenching of eyes and any other number of exaggerated facial contortions that attempt to produce meaning but only piss people off. When we have reservations about points being made, we must learn to articulate them in the clearest language possible. Resentment that is written all over our faces must be deciphered from its confused, mysterious forms for the sake of the people affected and for the sake of the Group as a working whole.

I think I am resented in the Group , and I offer this self-criticism : I do tend to be impatient, pompous, pedantic, demanding, self-righteous and , most disturbing to me because I can't seem to control it, a tendency to parade my knowledge in the search of argumentative authority. (Perhaps I'm doing this at this very moment; I'll talk about this later...) But on the other hand I feel that any knowledge or information that I offer is automatically taken as an afront to the Group's intelligence, that academic information is apriori useless or of no interest to the Group. I know that this will be strenuously denied in theory, but is my imagination when I see at least four pairs of eyes roll whenever I make a point of history or aesthetics or political economy ? I am sincere when I say that my comments (except for those moments when I'm obviously engaged in phrase-mongering) and my little drawings and my little proposals and my little writings such as this develop out of an enthusiasm for the people and project and potential of this fucking Group. There have been intimations saying that I'm dictatorial ; I won't take this nonsense. Dictatorial behavior occurs when someone denies the proposals and decisions of the Group in the sole interest of advancing his/her subjective whims. But what if no one makes even a weak attempt at a cohesive, concrete, informed and MATERIAL suggestion (in the form of writing, diagram, or any other sort of presentation that can be scrutinized and analyzed) but, rather, simply (very simply) skims "ideas" from the tops of their heads in a cavalier fashion ??? We all have visions - but what we desperately need are diagrams for practical activities. Generally, our style of work sucks. When someone does work, bringing in a concrete idea, they are rarely supported - instead everyone plays the role of the critic. But even this is theater - at least real critics produce a literature that offers a clear position, no matter how mistaken. You can't imagine the frustration when you work to propose something - research the possiblities- take the time to articulate your suggestion, only to be accused (usually subliminally) of intimidating the group, of be an absolutist, of "trying too hard" or - the most crippled insult of all - "talking too much." If only our mouths produced written language - we'd have volumes of important material that could be collected and used by other groups interested in the type of work we trying to do. " Trying to do." Don't you see how pathetic this is ?

Trust isn't a personalized emotion - it has a function that should be emphasized in this Group. In reality this group possesses few innocents ; it contains neither Wolves nor Lambs . Whether or not we continue in our neurotic, sheepish and bleating confusion is a matter that can only be determined by every member of the Group DURING THE WORK PROCESS OF THE GROUP ITSELF. We have different fields of expertise (developed or emergent), levels of proficency in a multitude of interests and a healthy pluralism whenever it doesn't collapse into a confusion of interests. We should have nothing but enthusiasm for our project because - and your head is really up your ass if you don't realize this - WE HAVE NO OTHER SATISFACTORY OPTION. I refuse to "play down" my activity for the sake of making Group members "feel" like they are participating. DO SOMETHING ! Better we all become a pack of over-talkative dilettantes with arms full of drawings and proposals and mouths full of references than a sanitarium of slouching mumblers with pens and notebooks in one hand and a beer can in the other.

DISCIPLINE

Group Material really needs to tighten up, to be more efficient in our work methods and organization, to be more conscientious to priorities if we are not to deteriorate into a messy, arbitrary, indistinctive co-op gallery that dresses indecisiveness in the garb of humility, "down to earth"-ness and a committment to the casual. When discipline isn't consistently embraced by every member in a group, then self-discipline and self-initiative is unfair and impossible - it virtually feeds the laziness or the sloppiness of other members' responsibilities. Already in Group Material we can see that certain individuals tend to carry the organization, only to be reprimanded for conspiring to build hegemony. All this leads to personal resentments that are hard to undo.

Group members should be highly conscious of their responsibilities. I'm amazed how members approach the reality of this enterprise. The Group should at least provide a world of compensation for the social functions we perform for money : we design for corporations, teach for the state, construct the lofts for people responsible for gentrification, make insipid, useless products for the profit of some asshole somewhere. And yet we wouldn't think of being late for work at the office, work that is almost completely against our self-interest, but when a work session on the Group Material space is scheduled, people saunter in over an hour late or don't show up at all. And we wonder why advanced capitalism has survived with such durability all this time -they know how to organize themselves effectively ! THIS IS THE WRONG TIME AND PLACE TO PLAY IN A LOW-KEY . Everyone is treating the Group as if it were some leisure-time activity when particular people (namely Mary Beth and Patrick , without whom I'm sure we would have 1. no space because no one else got off their asses to look 2. no references because most of us have pathetic credit histories 3. no basic utilities) are losing money, losing time at work and, certainly, losing faith in the ability of this group to last five years. FACT : Not one serious suggestion for a 3rd (or 4th or 5th) show has been offered - only the most vague , evasive and practically flippant of " ideas for proposals for shows ." Sometimes I wonder if there hasn't been a strain of mononucleosis artificially introduced into the group by the biological warfare department of the CIA. The endless wind-blowing, the "working out" of polemics that common sense should tell us can only be resolved in praxis - all this I suspect gets us quite depressed . Many of the little practical problems I find with the group would be petty complaints if they did not appear to be irrefutable evidence of the Group's collective incompetence. Trivial ?... if we can't even call Con Ed , how the fuck are we going to be able to call press and contacts to get people to come to the space, to establish a supportive audience, to promote our work for the benefit of not only ourselves but, and I mean this, for the advancement of art history in America. Our inconclusiveness is becoming maddening; one gets crazed trying to keep 1001 issues and questions "in mind" never knowing when group "opinion" will shift at the whim of one who has changed his/her mind, or who didn't attend the last meeting and didn't bother to call someone to find out what went on.

OUR PROJECT

The problem of discipline , like the problem of behavior, is linked to the question that, it seems, everyone in the Group is trying to evade : WHAT IS GROUP MATERIAL GOING TO DO ? Only the collective can discuss this, but I want to ask : Are we to be a co-op debating society or a spearhead for a politically and socially informed cultural movement ? Of course these are the extremes of possibility, but anyone who sees aiming for the high mark as "impractical" or "overambitious" has been victimized by the old pedagogy of the bourgeoisie that tells every member of the working class : " You can do nothing but work for us !" Artists or would-be artists like us tend to suffer from an irrational inferiority complex when it comes to putting our asses on the line of actual cultural production . Are we Group MATERIAL or not ? Really ... how insecure ... how dare we feel inadequate or hesitant to do work in this age of Judy Chicagos and Times Square Shows ??? This is to say nothing of the out-and-out reactionaries that constitute the facade of the American avant-garde ! Our work concerns, at an essential level, the politics of aesthetics in a world where politics are increasingly being made aesthetic . We will certainly do more harm than good - by example - if we don't get our shit together in the way of theory and practice.(Can't you hear it now ? " So you are naive and want to make a socially committed art ? Look at Group Material, look how far they got ...") Discipline is the foundation of any effective activism if in this world, at least) and the Group needs to work harder on an individual and collective basis. We must DO things, MAKE things - it is through this practice that we will earn a real ability and education instead of merely consuming information we can puff out at someone else's gallery openings.

Julie said a good thing a couple of weeks ago, unfortunately not at a G.M. meeting. She was in her room, preparing her artworks. I don't remember what lead to her excellent comment : " I'm just going to do these things and I'm not going to worry about looking like an asshole anymore." At last, purism is defeated ! Julie is no hero (or isn't she ?!) , but this is an example of committment (to cultural production - to art) and courage . It will probably get her a nice bunch of money in the long run as well. (Just kidding, of course.)

Tim

August 1980. Ideas for shows are debated and the exhibitions calendar is planned. There is a lot of discussion about the press kit proposed by Hannah, and over how to represent Group Material and its specific exhibitions. Money is tight. The press kit and inaugural materials are scaled down. Out of financial necessity the group decides new members will be charged a $500 membership fee for a full vote in Group Material, or $250 for half a vote.

September 1980. Mundy McLaughlin, another former School of Visual Arts student, is accepted as a new member. Mundy's montages combining found images and maps illustrate collectively held assumptions about U.S. politics and consumption. Severe financial problems result in Julie and Patrick scolding members who are not paying up. Michael Lebron, a Cooper Union graduate working with advertising strategies and public address, attends two meetings and the September 6 photo session of the group but does not become a member of the group. Former SVA student Anne Drillick as well as George Ault (Julie's cousin and a friend of Tim and Yolanda's), currently a computer science graduate student at NYU, join Group Material. Both are attracted to group process rather than object making.

MEMBERS:
Hannah Alderfer, George Ault, Julie Ault, Patrick Brennan, Liliana Dones, Anne Drillick, Yolanda Hawkins, Beth Jaker, Mundy McLaughlin, Marybeth Nelson, Marek Pakulski, Tim Rollins, Peter Szypula, Michael Udvardy

Proposal for the Proposal of Exhibitions,
Tim Rollins, July 29, 1980

Proposals for exhibition "forms and contents" should be presented to Group Material in this order:

1. Ideas for shows tend to come from the strangest places: in the midst of lunch, two seconds before you are ready to fall asleep on a Thursday night, during a drunken conversation, and so on. Rarely are ideas generated in one individual's head: the individual's idea is actually a synthesis of something seen or heard or investigated or thought of socially. But nevertheless an individual is inevitably responsible for giving an idea its voice. Ideas for shows should be *well thought* (as to appropriateness, feasibility, advantages and potential problems, history of the idea, etc., ideas as to concrete execution) by an individual or group and DRAFTED in the form of a loose proposal to be submitted to Group Material.
2. Discussion for show proposals should NEVER be discussed on the same day or meeting that they are delivered. Each member of GM should have a copy of the proposal outline to take home and TO THINK ABOUT, adding suggestions directly to the submitted proposal sheet.
3. At the next meeting, people come back with their complaints, their enthusiasms, their criticisms. Group votes whether to *develop* or *return* the proposal to the individual responsible. If returned, the idea is dropped. If developed, members return their written comments (on the proposal sheet) to the individual who tries to synthesize group opinion into a FORMAL PROPOSAL to be adopted at the next meeting.
4. PROPOSAL is presented at the next meeting and either agreed upon or not agreed upon. While a consensus will always be attempted, if a stalemate occurs impeding decision on adoption of show, then a majority vote must be taken.
5. The individual responsible for proposal becomes the SPONSOR for the exhibition, and creates a committee to do all the work for the actualization of the show, going through appropriate Officers (sec., treas., public relations, press, community liaison, art director, etc.) to ensure a successful and smooth operation.
6. Exhibition is held.

Meeting Minutes (excerpt),
Tim Rollins, July 29, 1980

Group debates the colors of the wall. Julie proposes one wall red, the other gray. Pat expresses fear of looking like a "regular" art gallery—he is for painting the entire space red or Julie's "combination proposal." Yolanda is against a "neutral" gray—is for all red, the combination, or a darker charcoal gray. Lili is for the combination proposal with an emphasis on the red wall and office. Peter wants the entire space gray with the exception of the office space walls which will be red. Marybeth suggests that the context of the exhibition space shouldn't be over-emphasized and that the color should be comfortable. She wants gray walls with the office red. Hannah agrees with Marybeth, believing that all red would draw out the walls imperfections and would make the space intense and small looking. Beth also wants a gray space with a red office and a red toilet room. Beth suggests that what goes on in the space will contextualize the space and that wall colors are somewhat irrelevant. Tim passes out statement concerning the reasons for painting the gallery red. The group votes on three options: 1. Combo proposal of gray walls, red office. 2. All red. 3. All gray. Option one passes unanimously. Color chips that Tim researched are chosen. Tim is responsible for getting the paint. . . .

Group makes questions for each of us to answer for next meeting about first show:

How do you want GM to be represented in the first show?
Do you want GM to be represented as a collection of individuals?
Do you want GM to be represented as a group or collective?
How do we want to be represented in relation to the community where we are located?
How do we want to reach a broader audience?
What to you want to do for the show?
How do we want GM to relate, include other artists? Why include other artists?
What do we want our relationship to the art world to be?

Notes on first show plans (excerpt),
August 1980

An attempt should be made to avoid the first show looking like just a bunch of art. I think this could easily happen as the show will have no central theme and the works will not be ultra related to each other.

In my opinion the interest we need can be had through the way in which we treat our space as an exhibition salon. The function of the gallery must be realized in social and historical terms. . . . The interior design of our space and the displaying of art should be of optimal importance and should be determined by intellectualism, careful thought, and not taste, never taste. . . .
We should strive to make this event fun.
We absolutely must avoid snobbery, stuffiness and rigidity. (Brennan)

I think it is extremely important that our first show clearly demonstrates our belief in a working method that recognizes people organizing to work together in their own interests as the basis of political action—and our commitment to the forming of alliances necessary to do this. Any first show, no matter what its structure, would say, "This is who and what we are, and this is an indication of what you can expect from us. . . . One way to do this would be for GM to assume, at various points throughout the show, a more self-conscious voice of introduction. . . . could for example introduce a history of artists' groups "as GM"—or GM as an idea whose time has come—or as a certain notion of socialism / feminism, as workers, as a bunch of young artists committed to a comprehensible art (who like to scream at one another), as coming out of a certain class background—as $45 a month, as teachers, as students, as neighbors, as coming out, as Diana Ross. . . (Nelson)

Theme—socio-political information. Supplemental information—as important as the artwork (we must keep in mind that a large percentage of the traffic flowing through the first show will have had very little prior exposure to the content of GM or the artwork involved). 1. Flyers or a booklet containing the following info: A. What is Group Material—who is involved and what do we hope to accomplish. B. Background information on guest artists and GM artists whose work is exhibited. A poster or some other commemorative piece of paper. (Dones)

First show (FS) will determine our initial outreach, make clear who we see as our audience, and to what kind of a public we are committed to. . . . FS appropriate time to express how we see GM relating to community, operating in this particular location. . . . Address community by having all written statements a part of the show in Spanish and English, immediately bridging the language barrier. . . . Each GM member to participate in some way—either individual or group works or statements, some people will do both. That we make art—statements demonstrating where our commitments lie socially and politically—that we invite only individuals operating within political groups to show work. That other art groups engaged in social activism may present works representing their group that have been made under collective name. . . . The purpose of this show would be to establish our alliance / affinity to these artists . . . to show how firmly based we, as a group of artists, are in an emerging cultural activism, which is occurring on an international scale. This collection of artists / art groups makes a point about the relationship of "individual" to "collective" as a satisfactory personal solution, as a viable political strategy. (Jaker)

The organization of the first show must reflect our understanding of how we function, why we decided to originate, what are our histories, diversities, and similarities, immediate and long range goals. . . . I feel a Blueprint diagram or foundation should be constructed of how this communication is to take place. This also ties in directly to GM as a learning center. . . .The Diagram, Blueprints exhibitional form should reflect the communication process built on struggle. A struggle practical enough to satisfy physical needs and progressive enough to satisfy intellectual and emotional needs. Communication is central to the articulation of social relations between people. (Szypula)



Inaugural Exhibition

Group Material,
244 East 13th Street, New York,
October 4–27, 1980

The inaugural exhibition includes a window installation of montages made by Peter, Marybeth, Hannah, and Beth, an installation by Conrad Atkinson, works by Michael Lebron, Klaus Staeck, and other group members. Lili's piece, *Budgets*, consists of ten papers pinned to a bulletin board. Although they are not identified by name, they reflect the budgets of Group Material members. A calendar of upcoming exhibitions and information about the group is distributed. The night before the show opens, Tim is setting up his piece, which includes stenciling text in red paint on the floor, while a stereo with Martha and the Vandellas' "Dancing In The Street," also a part of his work, is on continuous play. It is unclear if the paint will dry in time and whether or not the show will be ready for the reception. As the Vandellas song plays repeatedly, tensions mount and everyone begins yelling at one another.

↑ Window montages by GM for *Inaugural Exhibition*



Gerald Marzorati, "Artful Dodger,"
The Soho News, October 15, 1980

"I am for art that is political-erotic-mystical . . . for art that embroils itself with the everyday crap and still comes out on top," Claes Oldenburg declared nearly 20 years ago, around the time he opened the door to his *Store* (an actual storefront on the Lower East Side) and beckoned the street drop into the post-abstract expressionism art vanguard. Not long after, of course, Oldenburg abandoned the lowly grit of the city block (and that of the plaster sculpture he made and stocked) for the American heartland and the monumental promise it held.

In moving along, Oldenburg was also moving with the flow. If, by the late 60s artists were inclined at all to work within Robert Rauschenberg's famous gap between art and life, they usually concerned themselves with art and life of a very private sort. The street, and all that it gathers, got pulled in.

But now, in neighborhoods where galleries fear to tread, there's fresh pounding on the pavement. In the South Bronx, Stefan Eins and Joe Lewis have staked out and maintained Fashion Moda, a ground floor performance and gallery space that has planted a touch of downtown way uptown and shipped back to Manhattan some provocative notions about what art is and who can make it. Last New Year's Eve, a group of artists associated with Collaborative Projects—a cell-like group of politically conscious artists that has organized a number of shows and events along social themes—seized an abandoned, city-owned storefront on Delancy Street (many of the artists lived or worked in the surrounding blocks) and filled it with crude, manifesto-type artworks condemning the neighborhood's landlords and developers. (The city eventually padlocked *The Real Estate Show*, but has since given the organizers another ramshackle storefront on Rivington Street the artists call ABC No Rio.) And last spring many of the ideas and personalities associated with these various groups and events came together in the much-discussed *Times Square Show*, where, along with everything else, more than a few prominent art-world figures saw for the first time that art was once again infiltrating life.

The latest such move was launched earlier this month in a storefront at 244 East 13 St. between Second and Third Avenues— a "bad" block in the icy parlance of the suddenly resuscitated East Village real estate industry. Here, in what was formerly an Hispanic social club, an eight-month-old artists collective called Group Material has opened a gallery and committed itself to, in the words of the inaugural statement, "the creation, organization, and promotion of an art dedicated to social communication and political change."

"We're not just going to be a gallery devoted to showing political art," Timothy Rollins explained several hours before the opening of the gallery's first show—a small survey of politically-minded works, most of them by Group Material artists. "We want to set up real social relationships with the people here, working people. It's important for us to become a vital part of the block. A lot of people did it in the 60s, and then they got away from it. Now everybody's more complacent about and satisfied with the whole art-as-commodity idea. We're not."

Like most of the artists, writers, filmmakers and musicians who make up this burgeoning storefront scene, the Group Material members—as Liliana Dones' *Budgets* survey piece in the current show accurately details—are young (under 30), live on the Lower East Side (loftless), and make art that reflects the new wave's penchant for unpolished media and unvarnished messages. And Group Material's politics, like those of Fashion Moda and Colab, stem less from any dogmatic ideology than from the facts of their lives. Fresh from art school (where many of them met), stuck in cramped apartments and dull, if rent-paying, jobs, the Group Material artists are fighting what they see as an urban guerrilla war with the only tools they have.

"We're not just white kids slumming," argues Patrick Brennan, another group member. "We're here because we live here, and our problems are the neighborhood's problems. We pay the rent [$450 a month] so we can be as political and controversial as we want or have to be."

Among the events on Group Material's calendar are *The Salon of Election '80* (a show of presidential election-based art to take place election night, Nov. 4); the *Gender Show* (an investigation of issues concerning sexuality); and a dance party featuring three decades of "revolutionary" recordings.

In all these activities Group Material members emphasize that they hope to draw on talents and resources outside the group, and draw to the storefront those who might normally pass a gallery by. Says Rollins confidently: "The whole thing, in the end, should be seen as a catalyst."

To which skeptics will no doubt counter, catalyst for what? There are those who maintain that the best of these young artists will, in the near future, crop up in mainstream galleries and museums—that the storefront scene is not so much an alternative as a trailblazing shortcut.

Further, it has been argued that the increased cultural activity among young East Village artists has, if inadvertently, been a catalyst for rising rents and co-op conversions that drive out the very neighborhood people Group Material wants to align with and help.

Such assertions have not escaped the Group Material artists. "You always have to deal with contradictions," says Rollins. "Most of us are aware of how gentrification works. But what are we supposed to do? Would it be better if we lived on Columbus Avenue, made art, ignored politics and remained pure? You've got to do something."

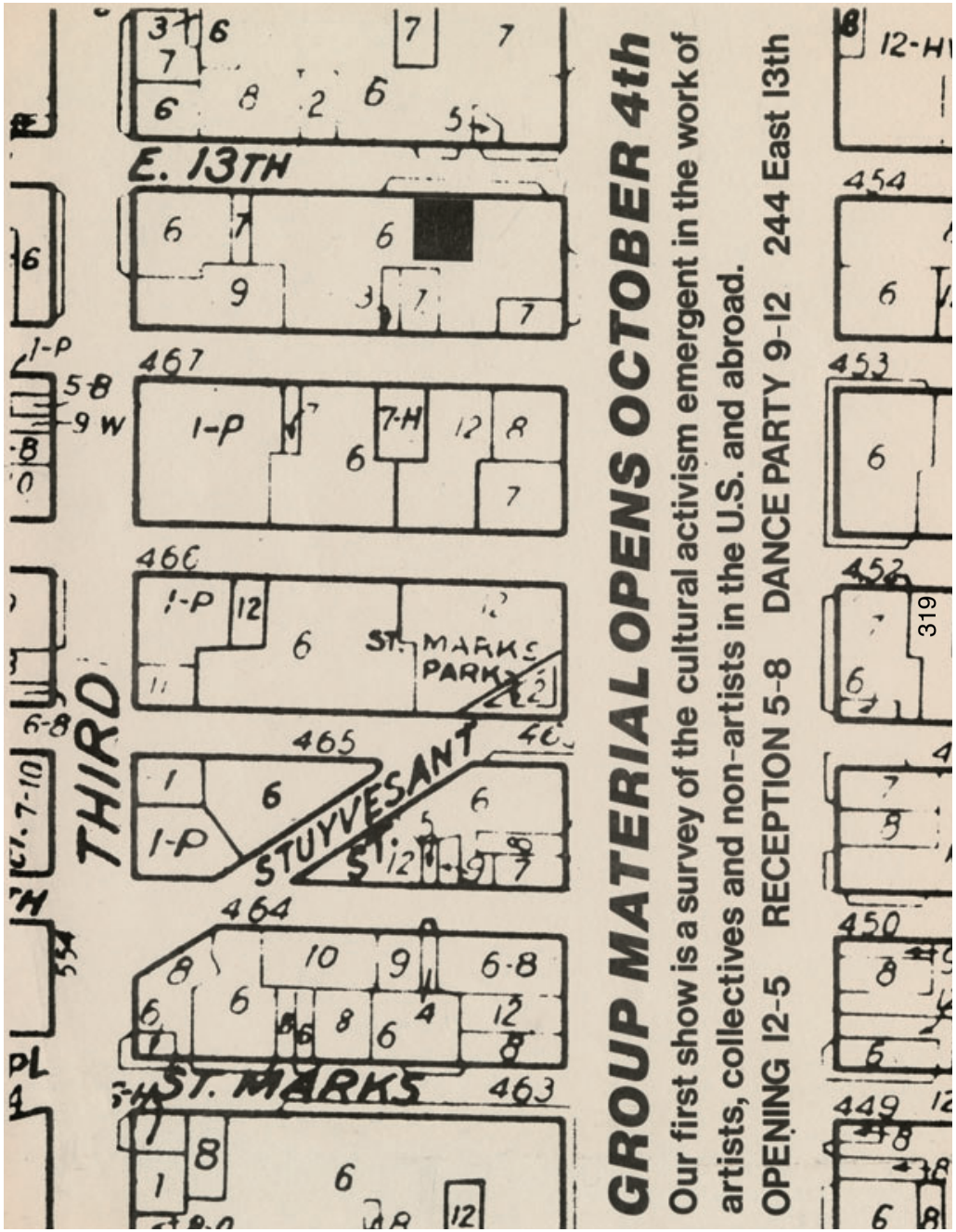
Richard Goldstein, "Enter the Anti Space" (excerpt),
The Village Voice, November 5-11, 1980

Here, in the heart of the up 'n 'coming East Village, artists five years younger than the Colab crowd have opened a space that offers advice about lowering your rent—in Spanish. People from the block donated all the furniture; local children wander in, giggling at the walls. At the opening last month, 400 people gobbled fish fritters cooked by the woman upstairs. It was so successful, as art events go, that Group Material has already earned the enmity of New Wave artists far and wide. "Real cute," smirked one. "Well read," snarls another.

The members of Group Material return the compliment. "We don't identify ourselves as New Wave artists," says Beth Jaker. "It seems to be a very reflective art," her colleague Tim Rollins adds, "a camp critique, the middle class making fun of itself. It's like the warning Walter Benjamin gave about the danger of aestheticizing politics. We're less interested in reflecting than projecting out into the community."

↓ *Inaugural Exhibition*, left to right: works by Patrick Brennan, Margia Kramer, Mundy McLaughlin
→ Following spread: Detail of handout to visitors distributed during *Inaugural Exhibition*





WHO IS GROUP MATERIAL ? WHO ARE THEIR AUDIENCES ? GROUP MATERIAL IS 5 GRAPHIC DESIGNERS, 2 TEACHERS, A WAITRESS, A CARTOGRAPHER, TWO TEXTILE DESIGNERS, A TELEPHONE OPERATOR, A DANCER, A COMPUTER ANALYST AND AN ELECTRICIAN. GROUP MATERIAL IS ALSO AN INDEPENDENT COLLECTIVE OF YOUNG ARTISTS AND WRITERS WITH A VARIETY OF ARTISTIC AND POLITICAL THEORIES AND PRACTICES. GROUP MATERIAL IS COMMITTED TO THE CREATION, ORGANIZATION AND PROMOTION OF AN ART DEDICATED TO SOCIAL COMMUNICATION AND POLITICAL CHANGE. GROUP MATERIAL SEEKS A NUMBER OF AUDIENCES :

WORKING PEOPLE - PEOPLE WHO REALIZE THAT THE FINE ART THEY SEE IN MOST GALLERIES AND MUSEUMS BEARS LITTLE RELEVANCE TO THE EVERYDAY INTERESTS AND STRUGGLES THAT CHARACTERIZE THEIR LIVES

NON-ART PROFESSIONALS - HISTORIANS, ANTHROPOLOGISTS, BUSINESSPEOPLE, TEACHERS, SOCIOLOGISTS, JOURNALISTS, ETC. ; PEOPLE WHO WOULD LIKE TO LEARN HOW DIFFICULT SOCIAL ISSUES CAN BE CLEARLY INVESTIGATED AND PRESENTED THROUGH ARTISTIC MEANS

ARTISTS, STUDENTS, ORGANIZATIONS - PEOPLE WHOSE WORK IS, DUE TO ITS SEXUAL, ETHNIC, POLITICAL OR COLLOQUIAL NATURE, USUALLY EXCLUDED OR UNDER-REPRESENTED IN THE OFFICIAL WORLDS OF ART AND ACADEMIA

OUR IMMEDIATE COMMUNITY - THE PEOPLE OF MANHATTAN'S LOWER EAST SIDE, THE PEOPLE ON THE BLOCK, THE PEOPLE WHO WILL PASS BY OUR STOREFRONT ON THEIR WAY TO SOME EVERYDAY ACTIVITY

WHAT IS GROUP MATERIAL'S PROJECT ? IN OUR FIRST YEAR, GROUP MATERIAL WILL EXHIBIT THE ART OF GROUP MEMBERS, COMMUNITY ARTISTS, NON-ARTISTS, FAMOUS ARTISTS. THE SHOWS WILL INITIATE A FORUM FOR A VARIETY OF CONTROVERSIAL THEMES : THE AESTHETICS OF CONSUMPTION, THE 1980 PRESIDENTAL ELECTIONS, THE IMAGERY OF ALIENATION, GENDER, THE CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF FOOD, AUTHORITY AND HIGH FASHION, POLITICAL ART BY CHILDREN OF N.Y. TO NAME SOME EXAMPLES. RELEVANT FILMS, LECTURES, PANELS, LITERATURE, AND PERFORMANCES WILL ACCOMPANY EACH EXHIBITION.

WHERE IS GROUP MATERIAL LOCATED AND WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT ? GROUP MATERIAL IS LOCATED AT 244 EAST 13th ST. BETWEEN SECOND AND THIRD AVENUES IN N.Y.C. OUR LOCATION IS AT ONCE PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL. BESIDES OUR ART EXHIBITIONS, GROUP MATERIAL WILL BE DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE LIFE OF OUR NEIGHBORHOOD. PART OF G.M.'S WORKING RESPONSIBILITY IS TO THE IMMEDIATE LOCAL PROBLEMS THAT SHAPE THE SPECIAL CHARACTER OF THIS PLACE. HOUSING, EDUCATION, SANITATION, COMMUNITY ORGANIZING, RECREATION : THESE ARE THE CONCRETE AREAS OF PRACTICE THAT GIVE OUR ARTISTIC AND THEORETICAL WORK SUSTENANCE AND MEANING. THAT OUR ADDRESS MIGHT SEEM TO BE AN UNLIKELY SITE FOR AN ART GALLERY MAKES IT ALL THE MORE IMPORTANT THAT WE BEGIN TO RETHINK THE PURPOSE OF ART AND THE ORIENTATION OF ITS INSTITUTIONS. GROUP MATERIAL WANTS TO EXPLODE THE ASSUMPTIONS THAT DICTATE WHAT ART IS, WHO ART IS FOR AND WHAT AN ART EXHIBITION CAN BE.

WHEN IS GROUP MATERIAL OPEN ? AN INDEPENDENT ART DEPENDS ON ITS NOT BEING A BUSINESS. SINCE G.M. IS ORIENTED TOWARD PEOPLE WHO MUST WORK, WE ARE OPEN 5 P.M. TO 10 P.M. ON WEEKDAYS, NOON TO 10 P.M. ON SATURDAYS AND SUNDAYS. THERE WILL BE SPECIAL HOURS FOR SPECIAL EVENTS.

WHY WAS GROUP MATERIAL ORGANIZED ? GROUP MATERIAL WAS FOUNDED AS A CONSTRUCTIVE RESPONSE TO THE UNSATISFACTORY WAYS IN WHICH ART HAS BEEN CONCEIVED, PRODUCED, DISTRIBUTED AND TAUGHT IN NEW YORK CITY, IN AMERICAN SOCIETY. GROUP MATERIAL IS AN ARTIST-INITIATED PROJECT. WE ARE DESPERATELY TIRED AND CRITICAL OF THE DRAWN-OUT TRADITIONS OF FORMALISM, CONSERVATISM AND PSEUDO AVANT-GARDISM THAT DOMINATE THE OFFICIAL ART WORLD. AS ARTISTS AND WORKERS WE WANT TO MAINTAIN CONTROL OVER OUR WORK, DIRECTING OUR ENERGIES TO THE DEMANDS OF SOCIAL CONDITIONS AS OPPOSED TO THE DEMANDS OF THE ART MARKET. WHILE MOST ART INSTITUTIONS SEPARATE ART FROM THE WORLD, NEUTRALIZING ANY ABRASIVE FORMS AND CONTENTS, GROUP MATERIAL ACCENTUATES THE CUTTING EDGE OF ART. WE WANT OUR WORK AND THE WORK OF OTHERS TO TAKE A ROLE IN A BROADER CULTURAL ACTIVISM.

HOW DOES GROUP MATERIAL PLAN TO IMPLEMENT ITS WORK ? GROUP MATERIAL RESEARCHES WORK FROM ARTISTS, NON-ARTISTS , THE MEDIA, THE STREETS-FROM ANYONE INTERESTED IN PRESENTING SOCIALLY CRITICAL INFORMATION IN A COMMUNICATIVE AND INFORMAL CONTEXT. WHILE OUR DIRECT APPROACH IS ORIENTED TOWARD PEOPLE NOT WELL ACQUAINTED WITH THE SPECIALIZED LANGUAGES OF FINE ART, WE EXPECT THAT OUR SHOWS WILL BE VERY REFRESHING FOR AN AUDIENCE THAT HAS A LONG-STANDING INTEREST IN QUESTIONS OF ART THEORY AND PRACTICE. IN OUR EXHIBITIONS, GROUP MATERIAL REVEALS THE MULTIPLICITY OF MEANINGS THAT SURROUND ANY VITAL SOCIAL ISSUE SO THAT PEOPLE ARE INTRODUCED TO A SUBJECT, MAKING EVALUATIONS AND FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS ON THEIR OWN.

OUR PROJECT IS CLEAR. WE INVITE EVERYONE TO QUESTION THE ENTIRE CULTURE WE HAVE TAKEN FOR GRANTED.

C A L E N D A R 1 9 8 0 - 1 9 8 1

OCT. 4 - OCT. 27 :

GROUP MATERIAL OPENS

OUR FIRST SHOW WILL BE A SURVEY OF THE NEW CULTURAL MILITANCY EMERGENT IN THE WORK OF ARTISTS, COLLECTIVES, AND NON-ARTISTS IN THE U.S. AND ABROAD.

OPENING : 12 NOON - 5:30 P.M.
RECEPTION : 5:30 - 8:30 P.M.
DANCE PARTY : 8:30 - 12 MIDNIGHT

NOV. 16 :

AN OPEN CALL TO ALL ARTISTS !!!

GROUP MATERIAL WILL ACCEPT FOR EXHIBITION ANY AND ALL ARTWORKS CONCERNING THE 1980 ELECTIONS. GROUP MATERIAL WILL BEGIN ACCEPTING WORKS ON OCTOBER 11, 1980. ENTRIES WILL BE ACCEPTED UNTIL OUR EXHIBITION SPACE IS EXHAUSTED - FIRST COME COME, FIRST SERVED.

ELECTION NIGHT OPENING, NOV. 4TH AT 8:00 !
WATCH THE RETURNS WITH GROUP MATERIAL !!!!

NOV. 21 - DEC. 21 :

A L I E N A T I O N

AN EXHIBITION THAT DESCRIBES AND EXPLAINS THE MODERN BREAK-UP OF REALITY ; OUR SEPARATIONS FROM EACH OTHER, OUR ART, OUR PRODUCTION, OUR NATURE, OUR SELVES.

IN DECEMBER !

REVOLTING MUSIC !

AN EXHIBITION OF MUSIC IN THE FORM OF A WILD DANCE PARTY!!!

FOR ONE NIGHT ONLY, GROUP MATERIAL WILL D.J. THE REVOLUTIONARY HITS OF THE PAST THREE DECADES : RECORDS THAT ARE OVERT AND COVERT DEMONSTRATIONS OF CLASS, SEXUAL AND RACIAL CONSCIOUSNESS.

PLUS SLIDES & FILMS OF WESTERN INSURRECTIONS !!

JAN. 9 - FEB. 2 :

THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE





← *Budgets* by Liliana Dones
↑ GM and friends on East 13th Street

The Salon of Election '80

Group Material, New York, November 4–16, 1980

The show, consisting of a wide array of works relevant to topical political situations and the presidential campaign, opens on election night. Group Material invites people to watch the returns and "join us for an evening of ridicule, suspense, fear, and hopelessness." Three televisions are installed, which are tuned into network election coverage and a broadcast of Michael Cimino's film, *The Deer Hunter*, about the effects of the Vietnam war on a group of friends from a small town in Pennsylvania. Former actor Ronald Reagan is elected.

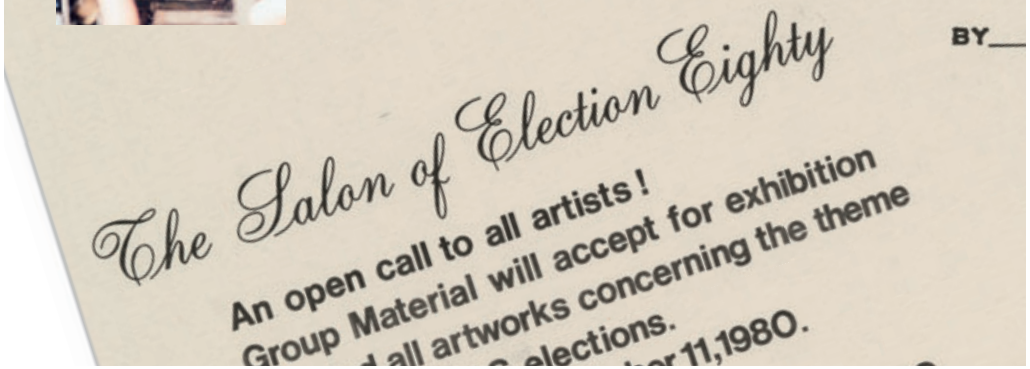
November 1980. Marek Pakulski has left the group to focus on his music, leaving the Vice President role vacant, which has to be filled for incorporation requirements. Tim reports on the progress of the *ALIENATION* show and presents the flyer design and ideas for special events. It is suggested that the group participate as a whole in some manner: either in the form of a collective project, or through an evening of performance pieces that concern alienation. The group agrees on the night of performances, but no date is set. Tim also makes a request for historical quotations that could be enlarged as part of the installation and suggests lighting the show with only glaring fluorescents. The group decides to serve coffee in styrofoam cups with ugly plastic stirrers for the opening and no booze. *The People's Choice* is planned with special events such as talent shows and screenings of home movies being considered. A Christmas party is scheduled for the block. There is general discussion about the need to analyze and critique the exhibitions and events, and the poor quality of interaction among group members, particularly around developing shows. These and other group conflicts are articulated.

↙ President Jimmy Carter delivers his concession speech, 1980
↙ Still from *The Deer Hunter*

MEMBERS:
Hannah Alderfer, George Ault, Julie Ault, Patrick Brennan, Liliana Dones, Anne Drillick, Yolanda Hawkins, Beth Jaker, Mundy McLaughlin, Marybeth Nelson, Tim Rollins, Peter Szypula, Michael Udvardy







Meeting Minutes (excerpt),
Tim Rollins, November 11, 1980

Open (epic) discussion:
Patrick: Complains work and responsibility is not being equally divided within group. The group is not functioning as a group, and in effect is working against itself.
Lili: Hostilities are worked out in meeting but remain. Group is polarized. Tim and Patrick are the only ones who hang the shows.
Beth: Agrees with Patrick on matters of workload and admits being guilty of not doing enough. Thinks uneven effort on part of members is a direct result of hostilities within the group.
Peter: Suggests that in the instance of the *ALIENATION* show Tim was in total control from the beginning and didn't want anyone to contribute anything. Comments that Tim had told him there was no work left to do.
Patrick: Moves that the *ALIENATION* show was only a small aspect of the problem.
Tim: Dislikes insidiousness and hostilities in group. Group members have to discipline themselves.
George: States he has tried his best to do work in the group but had not realized how little time he would have. Wants to learn something in the group. Has considered quitting.
Julie: Members should take responsibility for doing work and not wait until they are told what to do. People are jealous of an idea—therefore don't want to contribute to Tim and Patrick's shows, however the majority of shows are Tim and Patrick's ideas—does this mean that no one is going to help with any show? Talk of members (Beth, Hannah…) is positive but their actions don't reflect this. Members who don't put work in a show are hostile toward those that do—do not talk to them about their work.
Hannah: Suggests that Patrick and Tim are not using the right tone to get her cooperation. Their open hostility makes her less willing to participate in their projects. Wants more theoretical discussions on shows.
Tim: Initiating projects, and discourses are more important than discussion. (Can't chitchat about "alienation.")
Marybeth: Agrees with Julie's comments. Will try to be more responsible. Finds it impossible to work with Tim and Patrick but tries to work around them (workshops, Halloween party). There may be a jealousy of ideas but there is also a possessiveness of ideas on part of Tim and Patrick—won't let other members join in creative process. The work of members goes unnoticed if not directly witnessed. The relations in the group are not getting better but worse.
Lili: Introduction of the Third World concept—those members are directly involved in feuding. It is selfish of six members to take up time dominating discussion.
Julie: Not selfish of other members because it is a definite problem within the group and it must be worked out. The group is not going to work out until everyone finds a place within the group.
Mundy: We are involved in a business-type organization and should not let personal differences spoil our effectiveness.



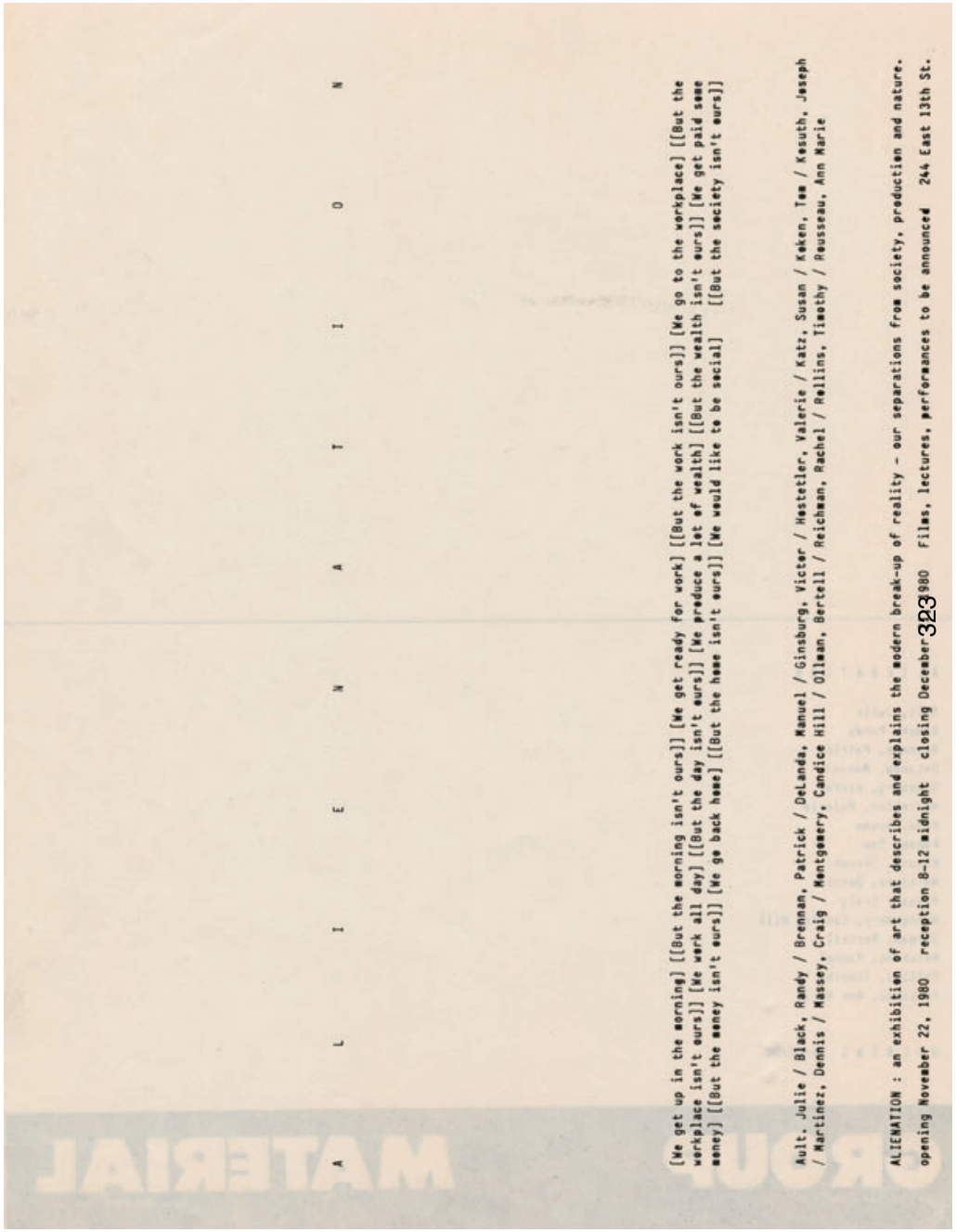
ALIENATION

Group Material, New York, November 22–December 21, 1980

ALIENATION, in part informed by Marxist theory, is: "An exhibition that describes and explains the modern break-up of reality—our separations from society, production and nature." During an evening of live performances, Mundy sings "The Star-Spangled Banner" and recites the Lord's Prayer. Patrick performs *I'm a Victim*, the finished version of the presentation he previously made to the group, for which he stands in front of a painting he made of a Hudson River waterfront location instead of using a projected image.

December 1980. Tim submits a proposal to split the group into two completely independent bodies that share only the responsibility of maintaining the space.

↑ *ALIENATION*, left to right: works by Joseph Kosuth, Tim Rollins, Ann Marie Rousseau, GM (windows)
→ *ALIENATION* flyer designed to mimic Ridley Scott's 1979 film, *Alien*





The People's Choice (Arroz con Mango)

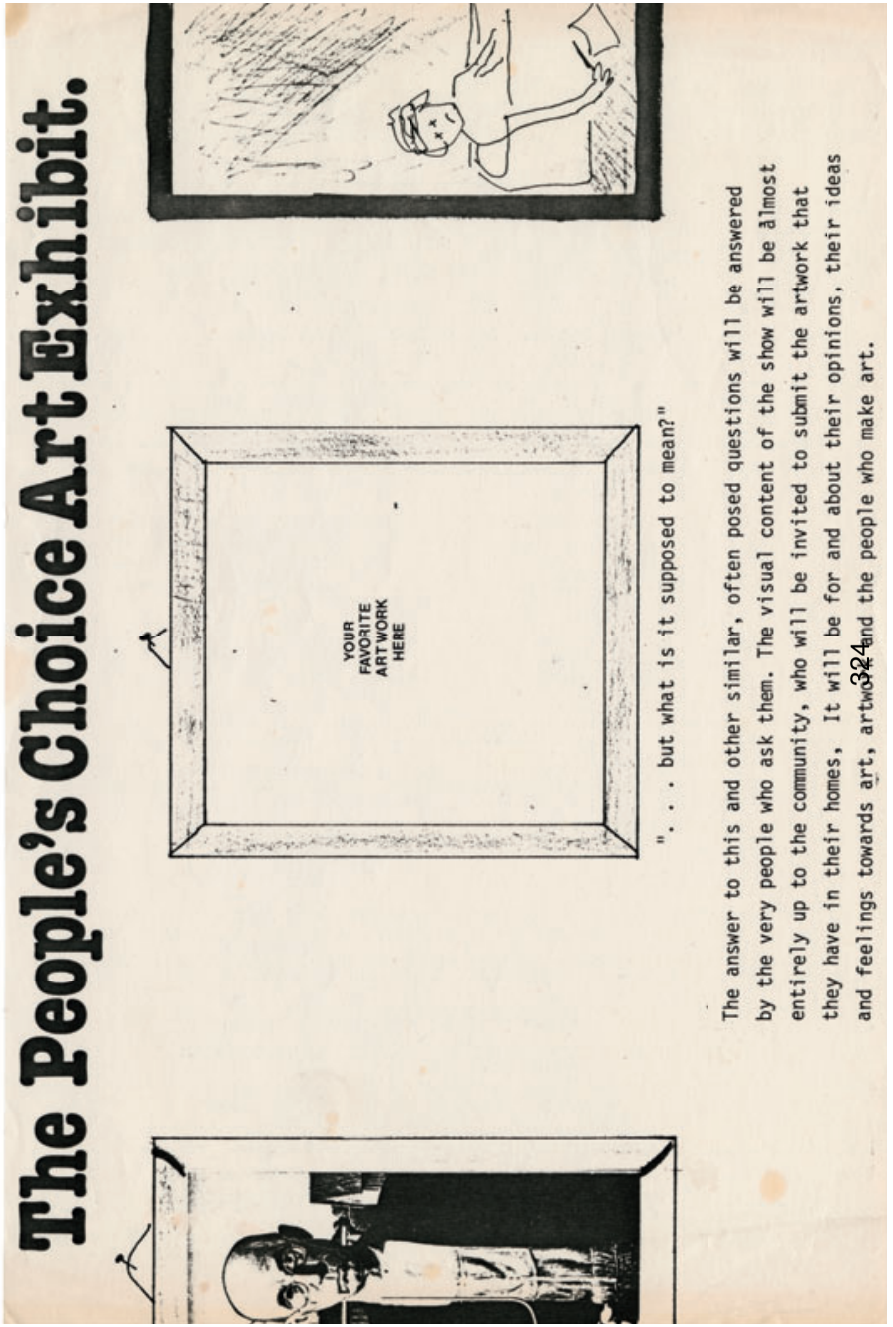
Group Material, New York, January 10–February 1, 1981

January 1981. With the help of neighborhood kids Hector and Celinda, Group Material goes door-to-door visiting residents on the block, inviting participation in the upcoming exhibition. Doors open readily to the kids, who speak Spanish. In some cases people offer something on ths spot; one woman takes her wedding photo off the wall and hands it over. Others are skeptical about the use and care of their treasured objects. Momentum builds as people bring in their material and items are installed in the space. Friendly rivalry prevails and soon the walls are full. Lili, who is Cuban, suggests "Arroz con Mango" (which loosely translates as "what a mess") as a subtitle for the show. Invitations to the opening are mailed out using the notoriously slow bulk mailing system in order to keep costs down. The announcements do not get delivered in time for the reception, which is nonetheless a great party with only residents from the block and Group Material members in attendance. "Bingo Night," an event accompanying the show, attracts lots of neighbors and local artists.

February 1981. George Ault leaves the group, due to his studying responsibilities at NYU.

↑ PEZ candy dispenser collection exhibited in *The People's Choice*

MEMBERS:
Hannah Alderfer, Julie Ault, Patrick Brennan, Liliana Dones, Anne Drillick, Yolanda Hawkins, Beth Jaker, Mundy McLaughlin, Marybeth Nelson, Tim Rollins, Peter Szypula, Michael Udvardy



Thomas Lawson, "The People's Choice, Group Material," *Artforum*, April 1981

Group Material is a loose association of about 12 artists committed to working in the area where aesthetics and politics meet. The group has existed in one form or another for about a year, operating from a storefront on East 13th Street since last July and presenting theme shows in which the idea behind each show is considered more important than any of the pieces in it.

The members of Group Material find the notion of production problematic when they consider the role of art objects. To keep from having that production co-opted (something very few overtly political artists have been able to avoid) they downplay and at times repudiate the object in favor of the context. The group's real work is their use of the storefront as a catalyst. Their ambition, at least at present, is remarkably free of individual careerism and is focused instead on the creation of the conditions necessary for making communication possible.

One could quarrel with their anachronistic denial of the potential that the art object holds but not with their genuine desire to initiate discourse. The problem lies within their well-worn means. But these questions are cavils, evidence merely of factional dispute. What is more important in the case of Group Material is their emphasis on the need for discourse, the break that they are attempting from the self-enclosed systems of recent art.

For *The People's Choice* the group invited the residents on the block to exhibit things they liked and were important to them. Most brought personal mementoes, photographs and gifts, and a few brought objects that indicated the idiosyncratic tastes of real collectors. Nearly everything came with a story, as a whole, the show turned into a narrative of everyday life, a folk tale in which intimacies were shared without shame.

The artwork on display was diverse in both intent and degree of sophistication. There was a mural done by the kids on the block as a part of a weekly project. There were a few amateurish paintings of family, favorite landscapes and pleasing abstract shapes. There were some small clay pieces by someone's grandmother, now dead. The value of these artifacts lay precisely in their sentimentality, a quality that is absent from most artwork that strives to mean something to a general audience.

Most of the paintings were family souvenirs or gifts. The photographs were of babies, first communions, weddings, pictures taken in the army, and in one case, a billboard of superimposed snapshots documenting the history of an entire family. Each picture had its own story, and together they added up to a moving, detailed record of a small community within the city.

Another category was that of the collectors, people who had chosen to exercise a quirky, personal taste in furnishing their homes. There was a collection of small toy animals from above a person's kitchen sink, another of PEZ brand candy dispensers, a three-dimensional picture of a covered bridge and a strange-looking valet chair. The function of all of these is mostly esthetic, yet they still have extra-esthetic narratives that sustain them. The most shocking of these was the Robert Morris poster from 1974, infamous in another context, in which the artist posed in S&M costume. It was presented here with the explanation that it was taken from the apartment of a man who had hanged himself.

Apparently different from the very personal, very local content of the bulk of the show, the sculpture of Jorge Luis Rodriguez seemed at first out of place. But the welded-steel construction, a shiny-surfaced dressing table with a crazed, Cubist-inspired structure, soon began to seem more at home. Not only was the image itself a domestic one, and obviously intended to be seen as such, but it soon became clear that Rodriguez's role on the block was a special one. He is the community's artist, working with the community's own icons and supported by the people he serves.

The artists of Group Material are clearly serious in their commitment to the idea that art can be used as an instrument for social and political change, and to date their interventions have demonstrated a remarkable intelligence. But like all such groups, they will probably suffer from the contradiction that lies at the heart of their existence. No matter what their aspirations are, no matter their abilities, at some point each member of the group will be faced with a terrible, if familiar, choice—between political or esthetic action. Until then, Group Material will probably present some of the most provocative and thoughtful shows to be seen in New York.





↑ Photograph lent for *The People's Choice* by Junior, the superintendent of 244 East 13th Street

Press release (excerpt),
Group Material, January 1981

The People's Choice—an exhibition of favorite art possessions on loan from the people and households of 13th Street between 2nd and 3rd Avenues, and the members of Group Material. A display of the private gone public, of the-not-normally-found-in-an-art-gallery, of personal choice and cultural value on one block in New York City.

December 22, 1980

Dear Friends and Neighbors of 13th Street :

GROUP MATERIAL is having an exhibition and you are invited !

Group Material is the gallery that opened this October at 244 East 13th Street. We are a group of young people who have been organizing different kinds of events in our storefront. We've had parties, art shows, movies and art classes for the kids who are always rushing in and out.

"Arroz con Mango" is the title of our next exhibition. We would like to show things that might not usually find their way into an art gallery : the things that you personally find beautiful, the objects that you keep for your own pleasure, the objects that have meaning for you, your family and your friends. What could these objects be ? They can be photographs, or your favorite posters. If you collect things, these objects would be good for this exhibition. If you knit, crochet, do needlepoint, or any other craft, these would be good, also. Drawings, paintings, sculpture, furniture or any other art forms created by yourself or others will be included. Choose something you feel will communicate to others. If there is a story about your object, write it down and we will display it along with the thing you have chosen to show.

Imagine that for three weeks there would be a room full of things that describe the people of 13th St. !

If you are interested in exhibiting in this show, please drop by the Group Material gallery anytime between 5 - 10 weekdays, noon - 10 on weekends.

"Arroz con Mango" opens January 9th. We will be putting the show on the walls starting January 5th, so there isn't much time !

PLEASE get in touch with us AS SOON AS POSSIBLE if you would like to contribute to the show.

Thank you,

Liliana, Marybeth, Tim,
Patrick, Anne, Mundy,
Peter, Beth, Julie,
George, Hannah

IT'S A GENDER SHOW

Group Material is organizing an exhibition and series of events around issues of GENDER.

WE ARE SEEKING:

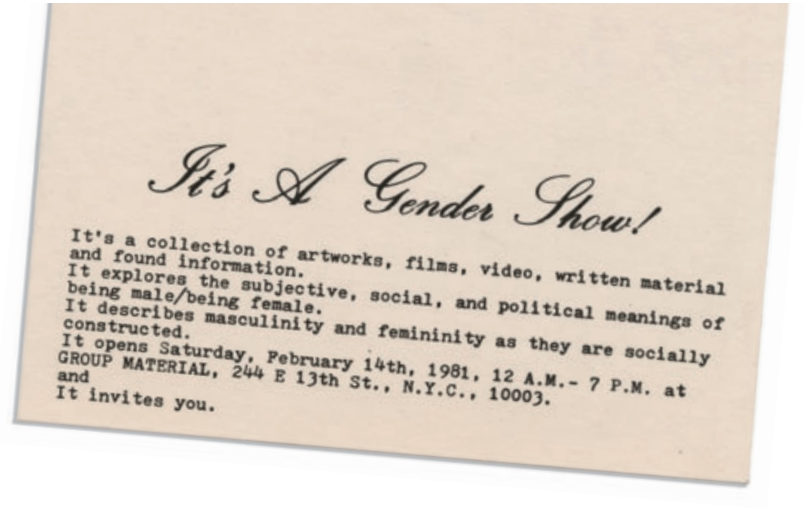
- Material which opens up definitions of femininity and masculinity.
- Material which speaks to issues of physical attractiveness, youth, and sexual potentcy which idealize male and female activity and relations.
- Material which illuminates the relationship between sexuality and our gendered subjectivities.
- Material which comments on the assumption that erotic desire is constructed differently for men and women.
- Material which demonstrates how male and female behaviors are developed and reinforced in the FAMILY.
- Material which confronts sexual models which influence us; representations of gender roles in popular music, advertizing, in culture at large.
- Material which addresses why we organize politically around same-sex sexuality in a society structured by gender divisions.
- Material which documents the emergence of sexual "outlaws" who violate patriarchial rules of conduct.
- Material which exposes the social institutions which strive for sexual conformity, cultural hegemony.
- Material which describes the commonplace ways we can and do manipulate gender boundaries in order to break loose of gender tyranny.
- Material which considers whose class voice speaks the loudest in issues of sexuality and gender.

The Gender show opens at Group Material on February 14, 1981. If you have anything to contribute, please call the phone numbers listed below. We need material for the walls and special events.

The special events being organized are:

- Two evenings of films, independent films about gender, and sex education films used in the public school system.
- Video presentations
- A panel discussion on Gender, Sexuality, Gay Politics/Feminist Politics.
- An evening of performances.

If you prefer to stop by Group Material, we are located at 244 East 13th Street, between 2nd and 3rd Avenues. We are open every weekday evening from 6-10 P.M., Saturday and Sundays 12-10 P.M.
For further information call :
Beth Jaker-866-5352 / Marybeth Nelson-684-0881 / Peter Szypula-8892553 / Hannah Alderfer-964-8184



It's A Gender Show!

Group Material, New York, February 14–March 9, 1981

It's A Gender Show! is organized by Group Material members Beth Jaker, Marybeth Nelson, Hannah Alderfer, and Peter Szypula with external curatorial collaboration from an artist friend, Effie Serlis, who also studied at SVA. The exhibition's thematic focus on gender and issues of sexual politics generates a great deal of interest and expectation among artists (as well as criticism). The show develops a strong word of mouth and brings in a substantial audience. (There are no existing photographs of this show.)

Letter to Group Material (excerpt), Joy Episalla, Carrie Yamaoka, Michelle Araujo, Bill Allen, Bobby Bordo, February 14, 1981

Group Material has misrepresented its own objective of social communication in the curating of the *Gender Show* in the following ways: There was no opportunity for the artists to share their ideas and artwork about gender (in an attempt to end the alienation of the individual artist). Rather, the curators, unbeknownst to the contributing artists, decided to jury the show, and then viewed the work in the privacy of the artists' homes, thus prohibiting any dialogue about the nature of gender. . . .

Group Material has misrepresented its objective of political change in the curating of the *Gender Show* in the following ways: As in the "official world of art and academia," the artists had no opportunity to "maintain control" over their work. In one case, the curators denied the artist control over his work by accepting it only up on the condition that he make certain changes. Another work was not accepted because it was "too large." . . .

We write this letter because Group Material has been a real alternative to the world of art commodification. Its strength lies in criticism and support in a collective fashion. To continue this discriminating practice reinforces the ways in which artists are alienated and coopted from distribution and exhibition of artwork. . . .



Revolting Music

Machinists' Union Hall, New York, March 7, 1981, 11 p.m.

Mundy, Julie, and Tim select songs, bring records, and take turns DJ-ing the event. Movies borrowed from the midtown Donnell Library are projected including: *Workers Conditions*, *Martin Luther King Speeches*, *Anti-War Demonstrations*, *Black Music in the Sixties*, *Women in Defense*, and *Kids and War Toys*.

March 1981. Anne Drillick leaves the group.

→ Following spread: *Revolting Music* playlist (pages one and two of six)

MEMBERS:
Hannah Alderfer, Julie Ault, Patrick Brennan, Liliana Dones, Yolanda Hawkins, Beth Jaker, Mundy McLaughlin, Marybeth Nelson, Tim Rollins, Peter Szypula, Michael Udvardy

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT : Patrick Brennan :(212)260-8721
after Liliana Dones :(212)260-3757
5:30 pm Mundy McLaughlin:(212)673-7506

GROUP MATERIAL Presents : A wild dance party featuring the revolutionary hits of the past three decades - REVOLTING MUSIC

REVOLTING MUSIC March 7th at the Machinists' Union Hall, 7 East 15th Street (off Union Square)11 P.M. Tickets $5.00 in advance, more at the door. A benefit for GROUP MATERIAL.

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What is REVOLTING MUSIC ?

THE EVENT : On Saturday night, March 7th at 11 p.m., GROUP MATERIAL (a radical art collective with a gallery based on East 13th Street) presents an exhibition of music in the form of a wild dance party -

REVOLTING MUSIC !!!

We've gone through every popular record of the past three decades, choosing over 100 guaranteed danceable hits that demonstrate sexual, class and racial consciousness and the furious desire for social change.

The party is at (where else ?) the famous Machinists' Union Hall 7 East 15th St., just off Union Square. We start playing records and dancing at 11 p.m. Tickets are $5.00 in advance (available at Free Being Records, 2nd Ave. on St. Marks Place, or at the Group Material gallery, 244 E. 13th St. between 2nd and 3rd Aves, 6 - 10 p.m. weekdays, noon to 10 on Sat. and Sun.) Tickets will be more at the door. This is a benefit to continue the work of GROUP MATERIAL. ALSO : multiple showings of films from Eisenstein to the present; cheap beer bar.

THE PHENOMENON : What does REVOLTING MUSIC sound like ? Well, it isn't the vapid Barbara Streisand screeching songs like "People"; it isn't the wretched Sinatra's "My Way."

REVOLTING MUSIC is Aretha's Respect, The Isley Bros.' Fight the Power, Poly Styrene's Oh Bondage, Up Yours !

REVOLTING MUSIC isn't Barry Sadler's "Ballad of the Green Berets." It isn't Billy Joel's " I Love You Just the Way You Are " and it definitely isn't Reagan's "Thumbs Up, America !"

REVOLTING MUSIC is James Brown's I Don't Want Nobody To Give Me Nothin' (Open Up the Door and I'll Get It Myself !) It's Vicious Rap by Sweet T. and I'm Not Down by the Clash.

cont.

Revolting Music — Master List

59

Wanted dead or alive ✓

T- Power / Temptations
T- Rebels are We / Chic
J- Hanging Out / Kool and the Gang ✓
J- People's Party / Gonzales ✓
J- Dancing in the Street / Martha and the Vandellas ✓
J- Stomp / Bro. Johnson ✓
J- Abdul Oh Bondage Up Yours / X-Ray Spex ✓
M- Identity / "
M- Let's Submerge / "
J- The Prisoner / Clash ✓
J- Complete Control / " ✓
M- Release the Tension - Patti Labelle
M- Are You Lonely / Labeele
J- Blue Monday / Fats Domino ✓
J- Cloud Nine / Temptations ✓
J- Ball of Confusion / " ✓
M- Black Skinned Blue Eyed Boys / Tony Morgan
T- Escapism / J. Brown
J- Talkin' Loud and Saying Nothing / J. Brown ✓
T- Say it Loud / "
J- Future Shock / " ✓
T- Get up Offa that Thing / "
M- Hey America / "
T- Hell / "
T- Can't be Still / Brooker T and the MG's
M- Bustin' Loose / Chuck Brown & the S.S.
J- Viscious Rap / Sweet T. ✓
J- Gold Fever / Merry Clayton ✓
J- Police and Thieves / Clash ✓
M- The Beat Goes On / Sonny & Cher
J- Half Breed / Cher
J- I'm Eighteen / Alice Cooper ✓
T- Mr. Freedom X - Miles Davis
J- White Riot, Hateful / Spanish ✓
J- Bombs, the Guns of Brixton / Clash ✓
J- THE PAYBACK ✓
J- SUBTERRANEAN Homesick blues ✓
J- Tommy Gun - Clash ✓

Revolting Music — Master List (Page 2)

J- Shake Rattle Roll Joe Turner ✓
M- Respect / Aretha Franklin
M- Think / " "
M- Spanish Harlem / "
T- Broken English / Marianne Faithful
T- Workingclass Hero / "
J- M What's Going On / Marvin Gaye
J- M Inner City Blues / "
T- Star Spangled Banner / Jimi Hendrix
J- Can't Work No More / Impressions ✓
T- Freedom / Isley Bros.
J- People of Today / " ✓
J- Take me To the Next Phaze / " ✓
J- Fight the Powers / " ✓
J- Go For Your Guns / " ✓
J- Get Into Something / " ✓
J- Lonely Tenement / David Johansen ✓
T- Woman / Etta James
T- Something in the Air/The Revolution / Labelle
J- Tear the Roof off this Sucker / Parliament ✓
J- One Nation Under a Groove / Parliament ✓
T- Time / Jackie Moore
T- Vietnamese Baby / N.Y. Dolls
T- Personality Crisis / "
J- People Got to Be Free / Rascals ✓
J- Save Me / Wilson Pickett
T- Save Me / Aretha Franklin
J- Breakout / Mitch Ryder ✓
J- Wild Night / Martha Reeves ✓
J- Manifesto / Roxy Music ✓
J- Liberty / Mitch Ryder ✓
J- Meat / " ✓
T- Wild One / Martha Reeves & the V's
J- Satisfaction / Otis Redding ✓
M- You Can Make it if You Try / Sly & the Family Stone
T- Organize / "
T- ±M±* Stand / "
J- car wash - Rose Royce ✓



Consumption: Metaphor, Pastime, Necessity

Group Material, New York, March 21–April 20, 1981

This is the first exhibition for which the space is painted entirely red. A Tupperware party is held on April 15. The invitation reads: "Group Material loves Tupperware! Join Louise, a charming Tupperware representative, and Group Material in the consumption of a product well worthy of artistic acclaim!" Much to Louise's surprise, and as a credit to her sales skills, the Lower East Side-based artists and musicians who attend buy *a lot* of Tupperware.

April 1981. Suggestions for next year's exhibitions include: a show about the family; open invitational in collaboration with Lower East Side space ABC No Rio and Fashion Moda in the Bronx; Living in the City; Religion; Arroz con Mango II; Law and Order; War; Habits & Rituals; Media—Can You Top This?; political photomontage artist Klaus Staeck; Sports; Television; Apocalypse; the Whitney Biennial; Celebrity Show; Fun Show; and Love and Sex.

↑ The "Everything Must Go!" sign installed at GM's entrance for *Consumption* prompted the landlord to notifiy the group about its obligation to fulfill its lease agreement.

March 18, 1981

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

On Saturday, March 28 from 2 – 8 p.m., GROUP MATERIAL opens its latest in exhibitions devoted to social themes :

CONSUMPTION: METAPHOR PASTIME NECESSITY

AN EXHIBITION ON THE SOCIAL RELATIONS OF USE, SQUANDER, ABSORPTION AND DESTRUCTION.

CONSUMPTION as NECESSITY :

BIOLOGY DICTATES ! We require a minimum amount of food, shelter, clothing, utilities. The quality of life depends on the fair and equal access to these bare necessities. But the basic materials essential to life are owned, operated and distributed by "the Private Sector." "Getting by" is a political struggle.

CONSUMPTION as PASTIME :

EVERYDAY IS A SALE ! To fabricate needs, to hunt and shop – this is our leisure. Don't preach about the wasted labor, time, environment, mental and physical health. I like the long, glowing aisles and I like to browse to the Ray Conniff Singers and I always want, gripped in a supernatural urge to buy.

CONSUMPTION as METAPHOR :

IT'S THE MODERN FOOD CHAIN ! To dominate production, the ruling class must promote the endless consumption of goods, services and culture as if it were the consummation of civil society. Masses are ground into markets. The antagonistic individual, nation or class is absorbed, one way or another, by capitalism's coup of everyday life.

SEE ! Mundy McLaughlin's tragic supermarket photos !
WONDER ! as Mierle Laderman Ukeles asks, "Where do we stick the garbage ?"
GAZE ! at Anne Pitrone's poster-narrative about the endless wait for upward mobility !
MARVEL ! at Julie Ault's universe of middle-class products !
TRY ! Cathy Thomson's Atlantic City Tableaux !
CRY ! at Barbara Lipp's documents on cosmetic surgery !
SIGH ! at a seagull trapped by a Coke can by Christy Rupp !
SAMPLE ! Michael Udvardy's construction-paper mural on peer-pressure purchases !
BEHOLD ! Timothy Rollins' installation on Nestlés consumption of the Third World !
CONSIDER ! Bill Stephens' collusion of Capitol and Coca-Cola !
LAUGH ! at Patrick Brennan's merciless caricatures of culture consumers on the left and right
LINGER ! with Lyn Hughes on penetration
STUDY ! Juan Sanchez's painting on American imperialism in Puerto Rico !
RELAX ! with Mike Glier's drawing of a

2.

As the metaphysics of limitless growth and infinite markets loom out of control, the desire to consume becomes itself all-consuming.

It's power for power's sake as the ultimate act of consumption is in the works !

It's a final clearance sale !

EVERYTHING MUST GO !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

HOURS : 6 to 10 p.m. WEEKDAYS
Noon to 10 SAT. & SUN.

Press contacts (after 5:30 p.m.)

PATRICK BRENNAN (212) 260 - 8721

LILIANA DONES (212) 260 - 3757

senator with advice for a nervous nation !

SAVOR ! Gregg Smith's painting of visiting chefs from Communist China !

BUY ! Bill Allen's and Robert Bordo's piece on industrial and artistic production !

BROWSE ! through Micki McGee's book on "Her Intestinal Bypass"!

LOOK ! at Mattie Peoples' painting of a lost Black utopia !

SATISFY ! your suspicions with Greg Sholette's piece on Citibank's destruction of neighborhoods !

SCREAM ! at a chandelier of blood-eating zombies by Karen Hatch !

HURRY ! to see Sally LeLong's windows about advertising's imperialism of the Self !

TEST ! Randolph Black's proposal for High Art !

TAKE ONE ! of Moira Dryer's prints about America's new Chinese market !

RUSH ! to see Andrew Nash's nice blue swimming pools !

USE ! Gary Morgan's xeroxes on starvation, nuclear power and party dresses !

CONSUMPTION:
METAPHOR
PASTIME
NECESSITY

3—28—81
OPENING 2-8
RECEPTION 8-10

GROUP MATERIAL
244 E 13 ST. N Y C



↑ Detail of work by Tim Rollins in *Consumption*



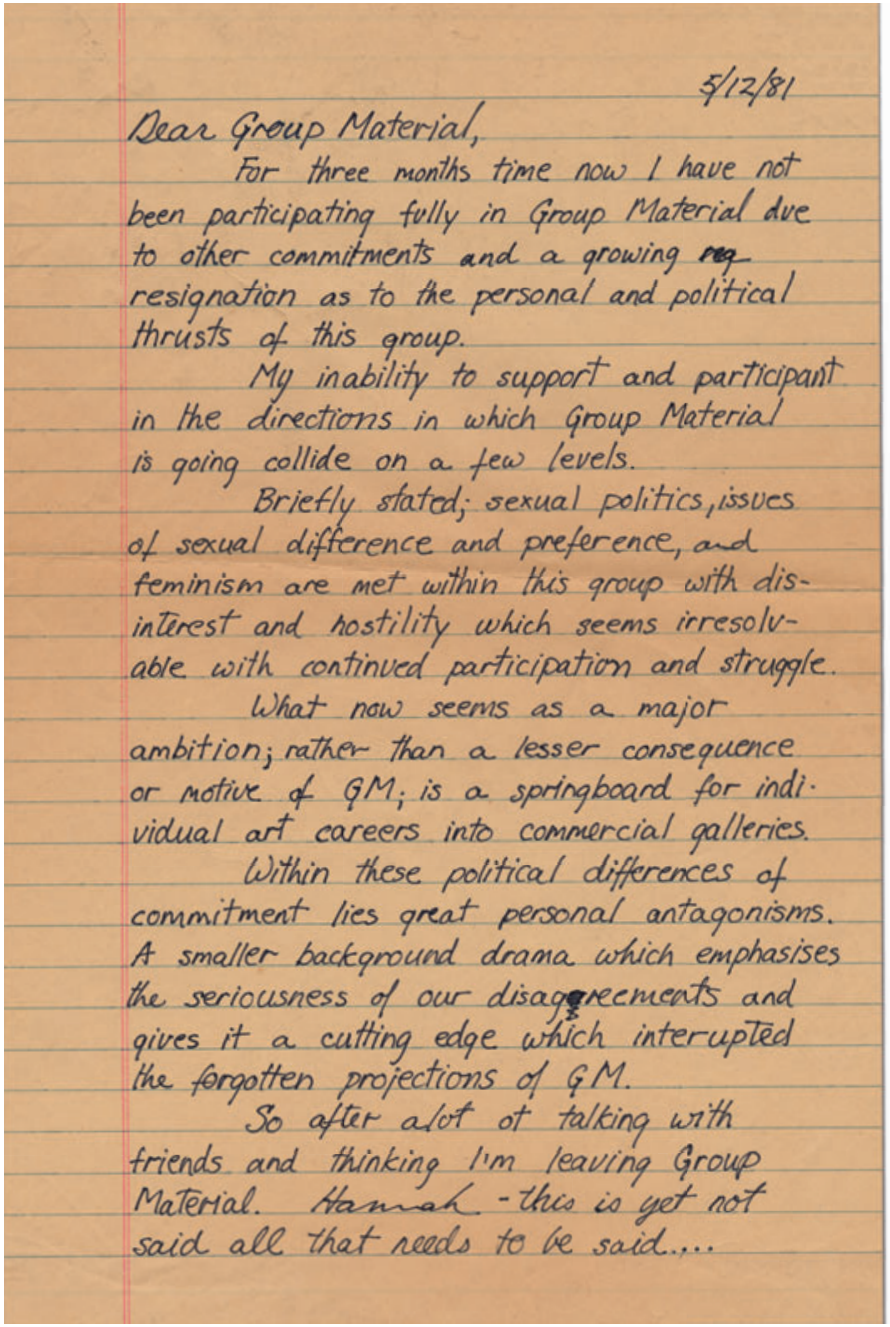
Facere / Fascis

Group Material, New York, May 2–June 4, 1981



A Dress / Dance / Dazzle event is held at Club 57 in conjunction with the exhibition. Mundy and Julie DJ and people are invited to: "Just wear what you swear by. You'll walk that glorious runway as your fashion selection is announced to an admiring audience. All the dancing afterwards will relieve that spring fever. Group Material puts fashion in your hands . . ."

The announcement card for *Facere / Fascis* is a source of conflict in the group. Hannah and Beth feel the image is offensive to women. Hannah, who often designs materials for the group, does not want any part in doing this card. Lili, who is also a designer, does, and designs it to look like a magazine cover.



5/12/81

Dear Group Material,

For three months time now I have not been participating fully in Group Material due to other commitments and a growing ~~req~~ resignation as to the personal and political thrusts of this group.

My inability to support and participant in the directions in which Group Material is going collide on a few levels.

Briefly stated; sexual politics, issues of sexual difference and preference, and feminism are met within this group with disinterest and hostility which seems irresolvable with continued participation and struggle.

What now seems as a major ambition; rather than a lesser consequence or motive of GM; is a springboard for individual art careers into commercial galleries.

Within these political differences of commitment lies great personal antagonisms. A smaller background drama which emphasises the seriousness of our disagreements and gives it a cutting edge which interupted the forgotten projections of G.M.

So after a lot of talking with friends and thinking I'm leaving Group Material. Hannah - this is yet not said all that needs to be said....

The Future of Group Material,
Julie Ault, May 1981

For GM to improve itself we should look to some of our original ambitions.

1) "Part of GM's working responsibility is to the immediate local problems that shape the special character of this place. Housing, education, sanitations, community organizing, recreation. These are the concrete areas of practice that give our artistic and theoretical works sustenance and meaning."
2) "Rethink the purpose of art and the orientation of its institutions. GM want to explode the assumptions that dictate what art is, who art is for and what an art exhibition can be."
3) Broaden our base, communicate with artist groups, etc. outside the U.S., and set up an international network.
4) To represent GM as a group in exhibition and projects (outside of 244 East 13th).

The People's Choice was the best show we've had. It was so successful because the show itself was a brilliant idea and it *really* addressed #2 above. It is also the only show we got *intelligent* and *favorable* press (from *Artforum*). *Political Art by Children* and *Food & Culture* both have the possibility to be as successful. These shows are the most fun and were and will be true GM projects which the whole group works on.

We should concentrate on this type of work as opposed to the theme shows where we choose two or three people to take care of the show and then they go collect work. Not that this format hasn't been good but it is much more problematic in terms of there being a comprehensive, understandable, explanatory show on the walls, "In my opinion" (ha ha ha) the *Consumption* show is the only one of those that succeeded....

Lastly, if GM is to become the force we want it to become every member must question their interest. The best way to combat the criticism of being a self-interested clique is to cease being a self-interested clique.

May 1981. Hannah Alderfer, Beth Jaker and Marybeth Nelson want to work collaboratively on visual projects in feminist communities. Along with Peter Szypula they leave the group due to irreconcilable differences over ideological priorities and personality clashes.

June 1981. Yolanda Hawkins has not been participating much or attending meetings for some time and is no longer a functioning member of the group. Group Material is now an incorporated not-for-profit organization, awaiting tax-exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service.

← Letter of resignation to the group by Hannah Alderfer

MEMBERS:
Julie Ault, Patrick Brennan, Liliana Dones, Mundy McLaughlin, Tim Rollins, Michael Udvardy

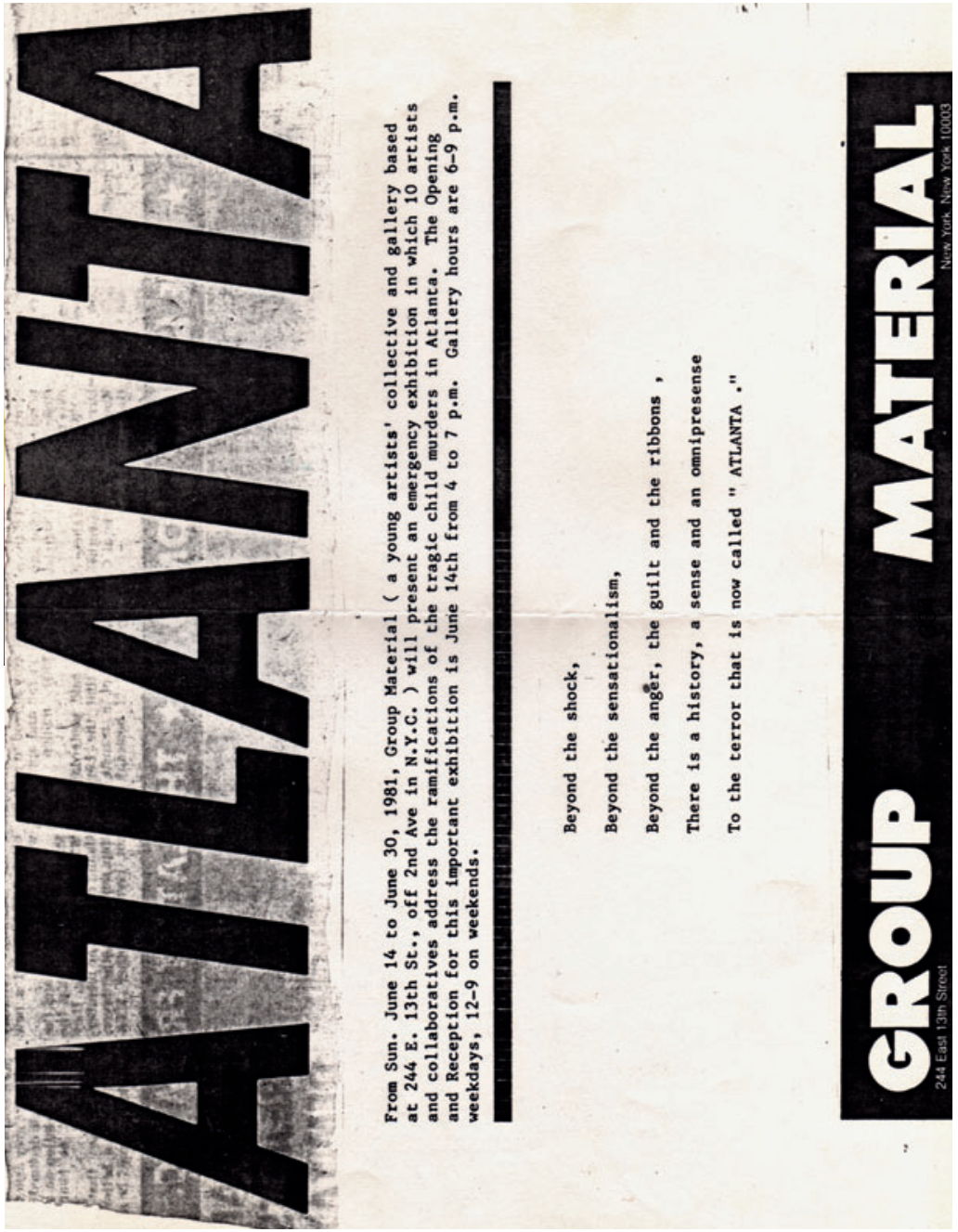


Atlanta: An Emergency Exhibition

Group Material, New York, June 14–30, 1981

Since the summer of 1979 the bodies of twenty-nine black children, adolescents and adults have been found dead in Atlanta, believed to be murdered by one or more serial killers. Atlanta's black communities are terrorized by the killings, which receive a great deal of media attention. Group Material responds to this topical situation, which has been generating responses in art making, with an exhibition presenting "ten artists and collaboratives who address the ramifications of the tragic child murders in Atlanta."

↑ *Atlanta*, left to right: works by Faith Ringgold, Micki McGee, and Tim Rollins with 35 children from Harlem and the Lower East Side



Group Material Minutes June 16 1981

Present: Ault, Udfarty, Dones, Rolaidns, Hawkins, Burnen, La Plumba, Hawkins.
Absent: Onassis, Rockefeller, etc.

Agenda:
1) Grants (NEA)
2) Witchhunts (NO MORE).
3) Invitational Show.
4) Food.
5) Judy Richheimer.

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1) Grants (NEA). Tim filled out and sent the application for the NEA grant and the group listens as he reads aloud what he wrote on the application. Patrick goes wild with objections (a bit to wild in the eyes of most group members, who wonder if perhaps Patrick is having his period) (only kidding Patrick) to the fact that Tim filled out the application without consulting the group. Most members agree that in the future the group should be consulted on such members, and that also all members should take on more responsibilities. We agree to meet twice a week from now on. We agree Group Material, as far as finances goes, is in a panic situation. We agree that just because the girls in Group Material have higher IQs than the boys, that doesn't mean that they are more intelligent.
A bit of research has told Tim that 7-Loaves is nothing but a two bit SHIT OPERATION. This is no doubt the biggest scandal at this weeks meeting. The Cultural Council is on the other hand, a CLASS operation (croissants...) and supply accountants, which are needed to account for the funds we are granted.
*******to deal with our financial emergency, dues are $55 until further notice****
2) Witchhunts (NO MORE). It's on,
3) Food. Fuck the food show! Everyone agrees we can't do it. Instead we will have a one night exhibition/benefit/feast. Virtually the same artists on the list for M-5 will be asked to do dishes, which will be eaten all for the good price of $2.50. Mundy and Julie will start the work on the show - fliers/press release. Everyone will call the artists.
4) Invitational Show. Stephan has agreed to participate, but since big Joe Lewis (a powerful man in these parts) is having a show at the actual Boselite Fashion Moda complex, he suggests we show work in gutted buildings, and outside - he will provide a map/walking tour. (If only one girl from Group Material will tickle his toes while saying obscene things).

Group Material Minutes June 16 1981

5) Judy Richheimer. There is a possibility she will be writing about us for Profile Magazine! (correction Portfolio magazine, or was that Panorama?) and she wants to sit in on one of our meetings. Everyone seems to think this is alright (but why should she want to?)

****

Thursday's Work Meeting

Filing: Lili.
Converting the back room into an office: Lili and Julie. (But everyone should help.)
Mailing List: Julie and Mundy. (How to get listed: Yolanda)
Grant Letters: Pat, Joe and Mundy.

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next week: more viscious infighting promised!

Meeting Minutes (excerpt),
Mundy McLaughlin, June 23, 1981

Incorporationville: Everyone is sick of these reports and Mundy must deal with negative vibes as she dishes out the news that if we get tax exempt status within 18 months of becoming incorporated, we are not responsible for taxes. She must deal with yawns and downright looks of disdain while reporting that going under an umbrella will not effect our incorporating procedure. Mundy is very sad when her report is over—she enjoys being in the limelight so.
Back of the space: the word from Julie the Jawbreaker (so better behave) is GET YOUR SHIT OUT OF THE BACK BEFORE IT GETS STUFFED UP YO' ASS.
Madame Binh Graphics Collective: Wants to do a poetry reading on June 19—group says YEAH WE GO FOR THOSE GIRLS—even if, as Tim points out, they aren't cool.
Artists Interested in GM: Hey man we are getting GOOD FEEDBACK from groovy artists like John Fekner, Paulette Nenner, and lots of great people who know where it's at. The word is, and this is a trip man, they actually think we are TOGETHER and all that.
Grant Letter(s): Fine, fine, mmmm good. Good letter boys.
Opportunity for the Women of Group Material: One of the boys has been lonely lately at night (betcha can't guess who????) since that lovely tradition known as the Tall Ships is being replaced this year by the more elegant NATO WAR SHIPS on July 4th, there will be a demonstration or two. No More Nice Girls—call Anne Pitrone 477-5799 (who may not be a part of No More Nice Girls, but is organizing this demonstration). So come on you nice girls, Lili, Julie, Mundy—screw it—let that bitch in you come out. Read *The Scum Manifesto*!
(Due to the fact that the secretary has become a sincere feminist in the past week, she will leave you with a quotation from that great book of wisdom—*The Scum Manifesto*: "Although completely physical, the male is unfit even for stud service.")

Eat This Show

Group Material, New York, July 11, 1981, 8 p.m.

The final show of Group Material's first season is a one-night exhibition of pieces related to the culture and politics of food, along with edible artworks consumed during the event.

July 1981. Patrick Brennan, Liliana Dones, and Michael Udvardy leave the group out of frustration with ongoing conflicts and from a desire to focus on their individual art practices. Patrick announces he is keeping the space to use as a studio. The lease is in his name.

August 1981. Group Material is awarded its first NEA grant in the amount of $5,000 (through an eligible umbrella organization, Heresies). Director Frank Hodsell withholds the funds; allegedly because he suspects the group has communist leanings due to the red walls of its gallery. Eventually the money is released.

MEMBERS:
Julie Ault, Mundy McLaughlin, Tim Rollins



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CAUTION !

ALTERNATIVE SPACE !

Sept. 1981

WE LEARNED THE HARD WAY.

Group Material began as twelve young artists who wanted to develop an independent group that could organize, exhibit and promote an art of innovative form and social change. Starting two years ago, we met and planned in living rooms after work. We saved money collectively. After a year of this, we were theoretically and financially ready to look for a gallery space. This was our dream - to find a place that we could rent, control and operate in any manner we saw fit. This pressing desire for a room of our own was strategic on both the political and psychological fronts. We knew that in order for our project to be taken seriously by a large public, we had to resemble a "real" gallery. Without these four walls of justification, our work would probably not be considered as art. And to be honest, the gallery was to become a security blanket in our own minds as well ; a second home, a social center in which our politically provocative work was protected in a friendly neighborhood environment. We finally found such a space in a 600 sq. ft. storefront on a Hispanic block on East 13th St. in New York.

We hated the association with "alternative spaces" because it was clear to us that most prominent alternative spaces are, in appearance, policy and social function, the children of the dominant commerical galleries in New York. To distinguish ourselves and to raise art exhibition as a political issue, we refused to show artists as singular entities. Instead, we organized artists, non-artists, a very broad range of people, to exhibit around a special social issue. From ALIENATION to ATLANTA to GENDER to a very popular show of artwork from the living rooms of people on our block, Group Material sought to reinvent a dialectical approach to reality through the means of art.

Because of our location we had in effect limited our audience to East Village passersby and those curious enough to venture out of their own neighborhoods to see art off-Soho. But our most rewarding and warm and fun audience was the people on the block. Because they integrated us immediately into the life of their street, our work, no matter how tedious or unrecognized by media, always had a direct and energetic social meaning.

Distributed to audience at the UPTOWN/DOWNTOWN exhibition, City Gallery, Oct. 1981 by the Lower Manhattan Cultural Committee

2.

Externally, Group Material's first public year was an encouraging success. But internally, problems advanced. The maintenance and operation of the storefront had become a ball-and-chain on the collective. More and more our energies were swallowed by the space, the space, the space. Repairs, new installations, gallery sitting, hysterically paced curating, fundraising and personal disputes cut into our very limited time as a bunch of individuals who had to work full-time jobs during the day or night or both. People got broke, people got tired, people quit. As G.M. closed its first season , we knew we could not continue this course without self-destructing. Everything had to change. The mistake was obvious. Just like the alternative spaces we had set out to criticize, here we were sitting on 13th St., waiting for everyone to rush down and see our shows instead of taking the initiative ourselves of mobilizing into more public areas. We had to cease being a space and become a working group once again.

For this second season, Group Material is a very different organization, with new associates, new tactics. We've learned that the notion of alternative space isn't only politically phony and aesthetically naive - it can also be diabolical. It is impossible to create a radical and innovative art if this work is anchored in one special gallery location. Art can have the most political content and right-on form, but the stuff just hangs there silent unless its means of distribution makes political sense as well. Working out of our new headquarters on E. 26th and Lexington Ave. in N.Y.C., Group Material has planned not only special gallery shows (we haven't totally dispensed with them) but also exhibitions in public areas : streets, city squares, newspapers, mass transit, even churches.

If a more inclusive and democratic vision for art is our project, then we cannot possibly rely on winning validation from bright, white rooms and full-color repros in the art world glossies. To tap and promote the lived aesthetic of a largely "non-art" public - this is our goal, our contradiction, our energy.

GROUP MATERIAL WANTS TO OCCUPY THAT MOST VITAL OF ALTERNATIVE SPACES -

THAT WALL-LESS EXPANSE THAT BARS ARTISTS AND THEIR WORK
FROM THE CRUCIAL SOCIAL CONCERNS OF THE AMERICAN WORKING CLASS.

October 1981. Group Material distributes a flyer, "Caution! Alternative Space!" in *Downtown Uptown*, an exhibition by seventeen lower Manhattan based alternative spaces at the City Gallery in New York. The handout explains the problems that emerged during the group's first year, which led to leaving Thirteenth Street to develop a new practice based around distribution and employing public spaces. In addition to planning projects for city squares, newspapers, and mass transit, the group begins to use Tim and Julie's living room at 132 East 26th Street as a headquarters for meetings and occasional exhibitions, and discusses getting new members. Jock Reynolds conducts a site visit to 26th Street on behalf of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in response to the group's funding application. After a few minutes of pretending to be professional and established, the adhoc character of the set-up is apparent to Reynolds, who proposes a candid conversation over a couple of six-packs. He is supportive and offers good advice.

Enthusiasm!

**Group Material Headquarters,
132 East 26th Street, New York,
October 31–November 28, 1981**





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The group show *Enthusiasm!* announces GM's new headquarters. Tim and Julie paint bold exclamation marks inspired by the graphic design of Alexander Rodchenko on the second floor windows of 132 East 26th Street, and use the motif for the exhibition flyer.

November 1981. In the summer Tim met Doug Ashford at the *Coney Island Show*, which they had both participated in. Doug had just graduated from Cooper Union where he studied with Hans Haacke and Martha Rosler. He makes layered drawings that quote from mass culture for both street and gallery settings, and is interested in collaborative social practice. Tim introduces Doug to Mundy and Julie in the fall and in November he is invited to join the group.

↑ Current GM members clockwise from left: Julie Ault, Doug Ashford, Mundy McLaughlin, Tim Rollins



M5

5th Avenue buses, New York, December 10, 1981–January 10, 1982

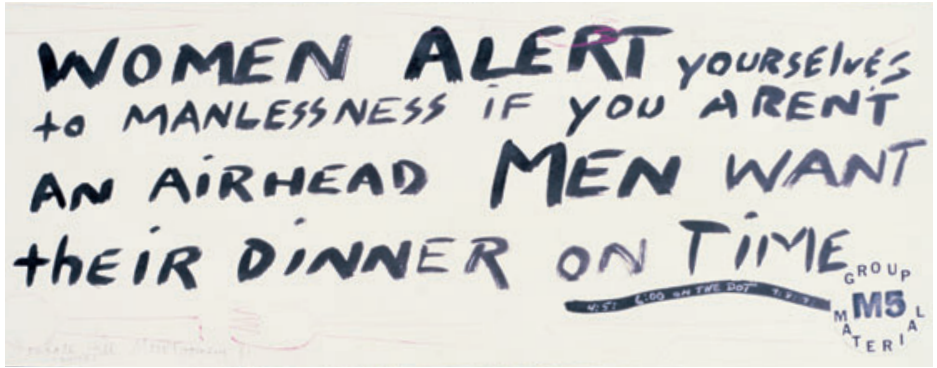
As part of the group's objective to integrate art into everyday spaces, Group Material contracts to fill 100 advertising spaces inside buses on the Fifth Avenue lines—M3, M4, M5, M20—that travel the spine of Manhattan, from Harlem to Soho. The total rental cost is $600. The work of twenty-nine invited artists is displayed in place of ads for one month. Works range in media from photocopies to paintings.

March 1982. GM presents *Works on Newspaper*, a group show of artists working on and with newspapers, in its 26th Street headquarters.

↑ Post Reagan election unattributed advert displayed on taxi cab exterior
→ *M5*, top to bottom: works by Candace Hill-Montgomery, Anton Van Dalen, Tom Bassmann

Press Release (excerpt),
Group Material, December 1981

The collection of artworks speaks to
the rider about:
alienation from their jobs
the independence of Puerto Rico
the condition of public schools
urban fear
the new face of Uncle Sam
and much more.







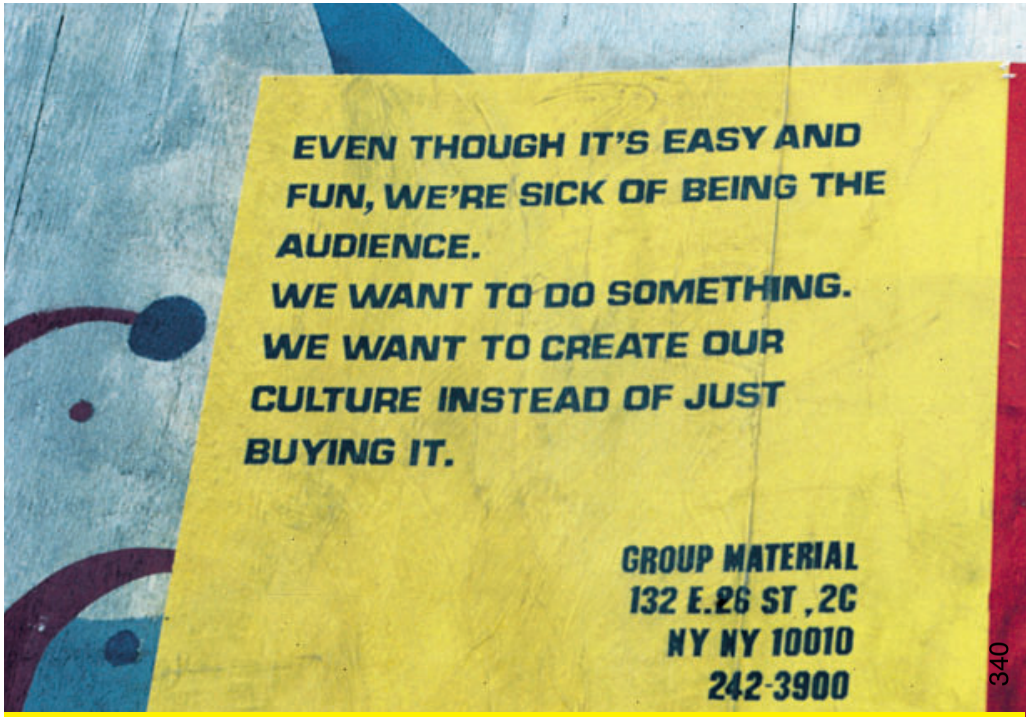


DA ZI BAOS

Union Square, New York, from April 16, 1982

大 字 報
Big Word Poster

Dazibaos (big character posters) are a popular Chinese debate medium, which Tim learned about when he visited China in 1978. A handwritten poster that opines, informs, or protests is mounted on a public wall. Responses in the form of more dazibaos ensue; a discourse develops. In China "democracy walls" have been a way of publicizing issues and influencing public opinion as well as official policy. For *DA ZI BAOS*, the group elicits and publicly juxtaposes a set of twelve statements in the spirit of the Chinese dazibaos. With an inexpensive tape recorder in hand, Mundy and Julie question passersby on Union Square about topical social and political issues including U.S. interference in El Salvador, women's reproductive rights, the death penalty, and the importance of labor unions. Six relevant organizations are invited to contribute statements about these issues to be displayed alongside the individuals' interviews. The posters look mechanically printed but are produced by hand for $200 using projected Letraset mockups, marker and tempera. The broadsides are illegally adhered with wheat paste to the wall of the defunct S. Klein building, also on Union Square. Tim wears a suit and carries a clipboard to appear official and ward off inquiries during the clandestine late-night installation. The posters remain in place and untouched until they disintegrate from exposure.



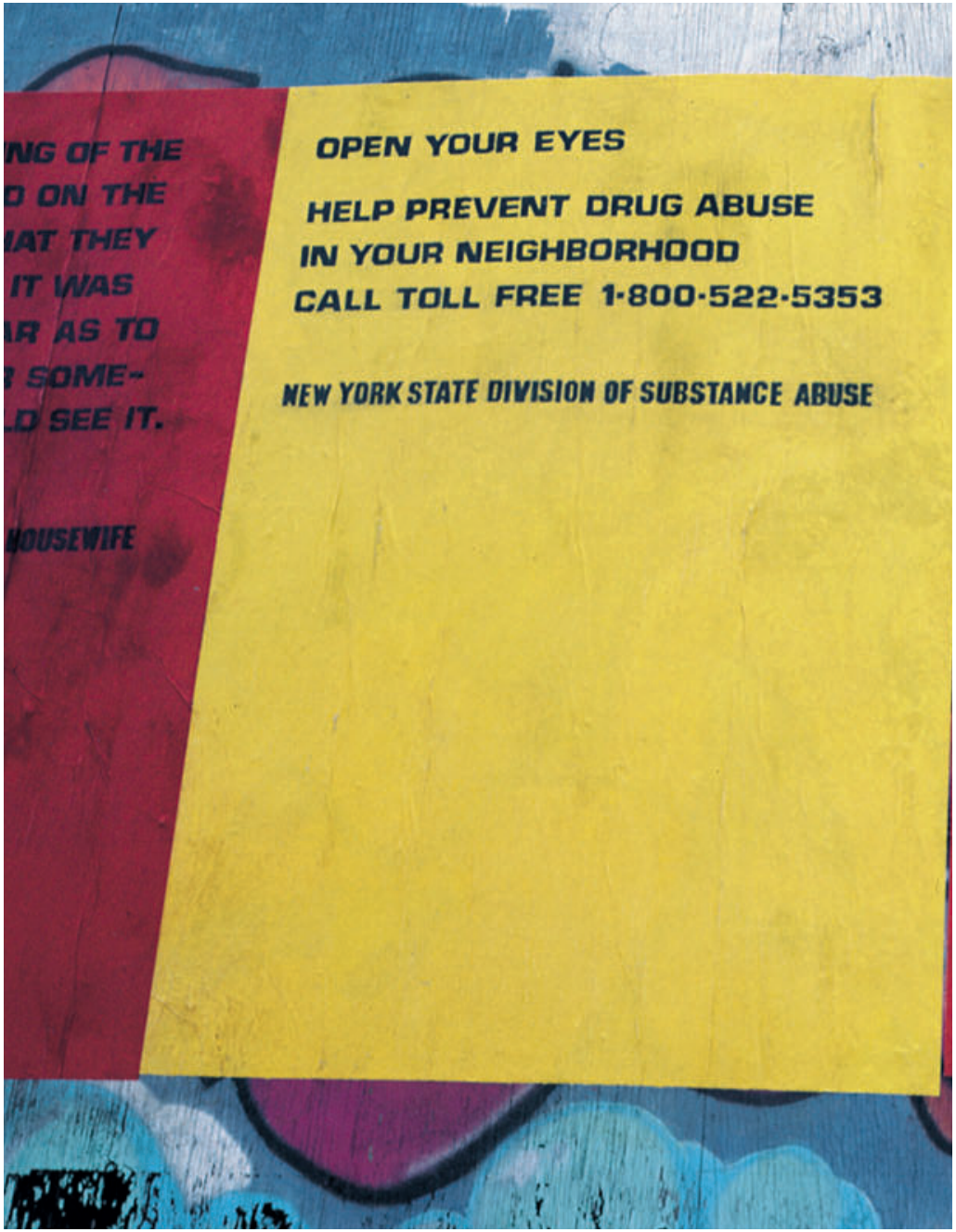


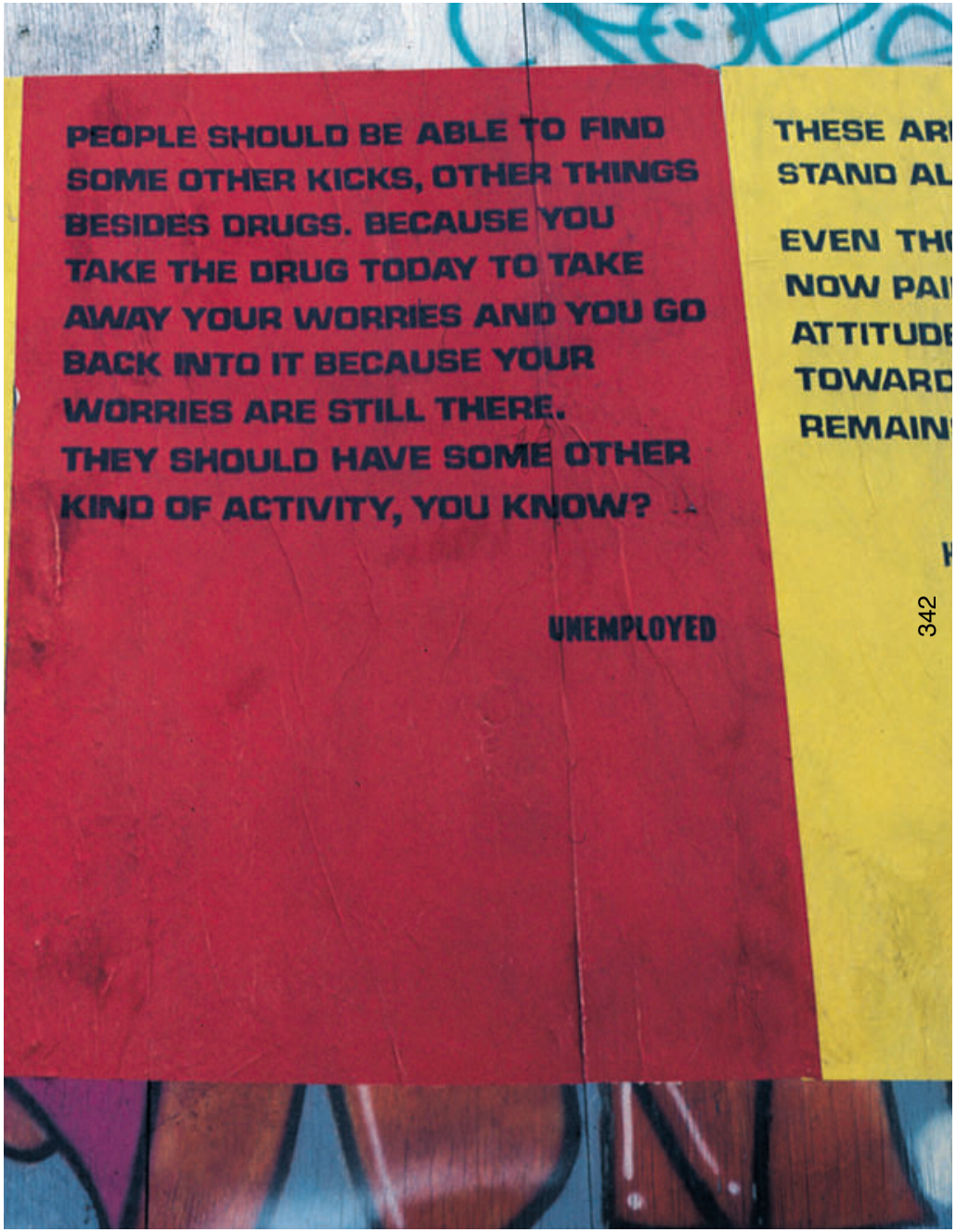




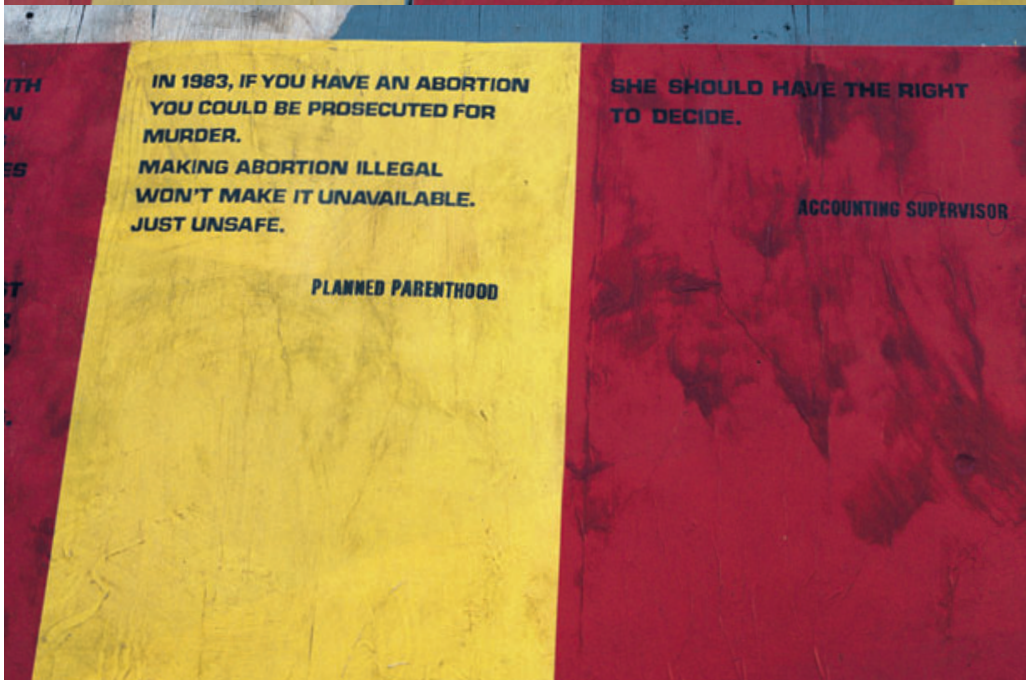
↑↗ GM's *DA ZI BAOS*, Union Square, New York
↙ Dazibaos readers in Beijing, 1979

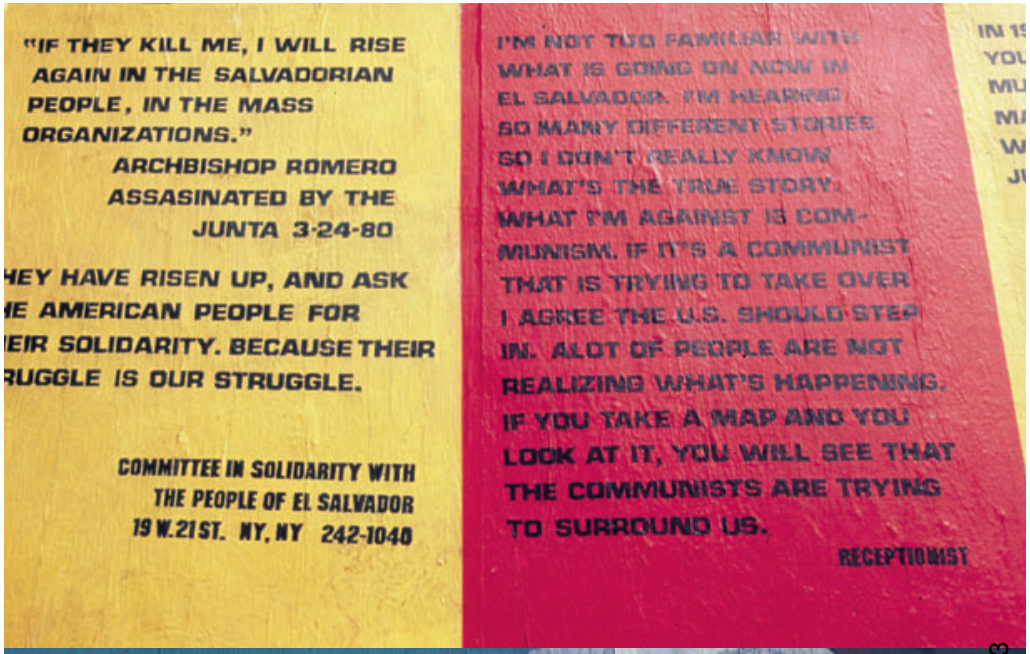


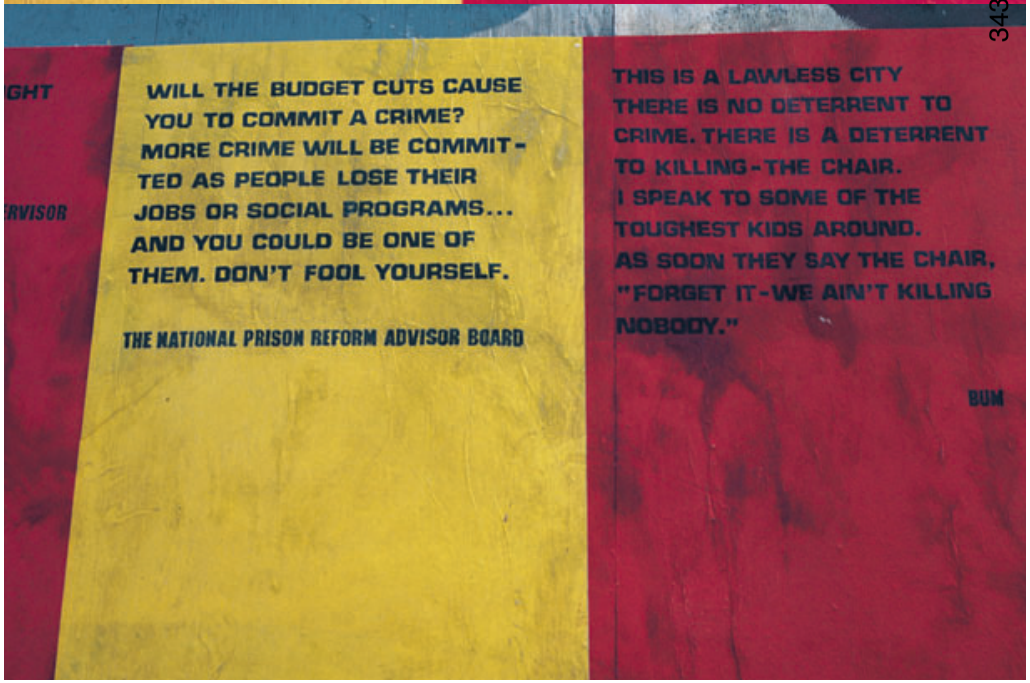

NG OF THE
O ON THE
AT THEY
IT WAS
AR AS TO
SOME-
D SEE IT.
OUSEWIFE
OPEN YOUR EYES
HELP PREVENT DRUG ABUSE
IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD
CALL TOLL FREE 1·800·522·5353
NEW YORK STATE DIVISION OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE


PEOPLE SHOULD BE ABLE TO FIND
SOME OTHER KICKS, OTHER THINGS
BESIDES DRUGS. BECAUSE YOU
TAKE THE DRUG TODAY TO TAKE
AWAY YOUR WORRIES AND YOU GO
BACK INTO IT BECAUSE YOUR
WORRIES ARE STILL THERE.
THEY SHOULD HAVE SOME OTHER
KIND OF ACTIVITY, YOU KNOW?
UNEMPLOYED
THESE AR
STAND AL
EVEN TH
NOW PA
ATTITUD
TOWARD
REMAIN


THESE ARE ROUGH TIMES TO STAND ALONE.
EVEN THOUGH PEOPLE ARE NOW PAID FOR WORKING, THE ATTITUDE OF THE MASTERS TOWARDS THE SERVANT REMAINS THE SAME.
HOME HEALTH CARE WORKERS UNION
UNIONS BENEFIT SOCIETY - BUT NOT IN MY OFFICE.
OFFICE WORKER


IN 1983, IF YOU HAVE AN ABORTION YOU COULD BE PROSECUTED FOR MURDER.
MAKING ABORTION ILLEGAL WON'T MAKE IT UNAVAILABLE. JUST UNSAFE.
PLANNED PARENTHOOD
SHE SHOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO DECIDE.
ACCOUNTING SUPERVISOR


"IF THEY KILL ME, I WILL RISE AGAIN IN THE SALVADORIAN PEOPLE, IN THE MASS ORGANIZATIONS."
ARCHBISHOP ROMERO ASSASINATED BY THE JUNTA 3-24-80
COMMITTEE IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE PEOPLE OF EL SALVADOR
19 W. 21 ST. NY, NY 242-1040
I'M NOT TOO FAMILIAR WITH WHAT IS GOING ON NOW IN EL SALVADOR. I'M HEARING SO MANY DIFFERENT STORIES SO I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHAT'S THE TRUE STORY. WHAT I'M AGAINST IS COMMUNISM. IF IT'S A COMMUNIST THAT IS TRYING TO TAKE OVER I AGREE THE U.S. SHOULD STEP IN. ALOT OF PEOPLE ARE NOT REALIZING WHAT'S HAPPENING. IF YOU TAKE A MAP AND YOU LOOK AT IT, YOU WILL SEE THAT THE COMMUNISTS ARE TRYING TO SURROUND US.
RECEPTIONIST


WILL THE BUDGET CUTS CAUSE YOU TO COMMIT A CRIME? MORE CRIME WILL BE COMMITTED AS PEOPLE LOSE THEIR JOBS OR SOCIAL PROGRAMS... AND YOU COULD BE ONE OF THEM. DON'T FOOL YOURSELF.
THE NATIONAL PRISON REFORM ADVISOR BOARD
THIS IS A LAWLESS CITY THERE IS NO DETERRENT TO CRIME. THERE IS A DETERRENT TO KILLING - THE CHAIR. I SPEAK TO SOME OF THE TOUGHEST KIDS AROUND. AS SOON THEY SAY THE CHAIR, "FORGET IT - WE AIN'T KILLING NOBODY."
BUM



Primer (for Raymond Williams)

Artists Space, New York, May 1982–July 17, 1982

Raymond Williams' *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* focuses on the sociology of language through an analysis of how the meanings of important words shift according to changing social contexts, i.e. "community," "individual," "revolution." Group Material jumps off from and modifies Williams' operation, constructing a vocabulary of everyday, outwardly non-ideological words, i.e. "sale," "photo," "vocal," and demonstrates sociopolitical readings of them through artworks and objects.



Press Release (excerpt),
Group Material, May 1982

Primer (for Raymond Williams) is a collaborative installation presenting over thirty individual responses to the political and social content of ordinary words such as: building, check, donkey, map, number, sale, space, table, etc. . . . Tim Rollins, a founder of Group Material, states that *Primer* "is dedicated to Raymond Williams, a British cultural critic and historian whose innovative work in the field of art, politics and language (culminating in his book *Keywords* of 1976) serves as an inspiration and example to the theme and method of our project."

This is the first time the group displays pop culture material. GM initially considers installing the "non-art" elements in the hallway leading to the gallery. But after lengthy discussion the consensus is to combine popular culture and contemporary art in the same space. Artifacts and documentary materials are used to demonstrate some of the keywords that structure the exhibition. For instance James Brown's *Revolution of the Mind* album is paired with "record" and a news photo of the medal-winning sprinters giving the Black Power salute at the 1968 Summer Olympics ceremony is coupled with "sport." The intermingling of influential mass-cultural sources with artworks as a curatorial method creates a lot of excitement within the group.

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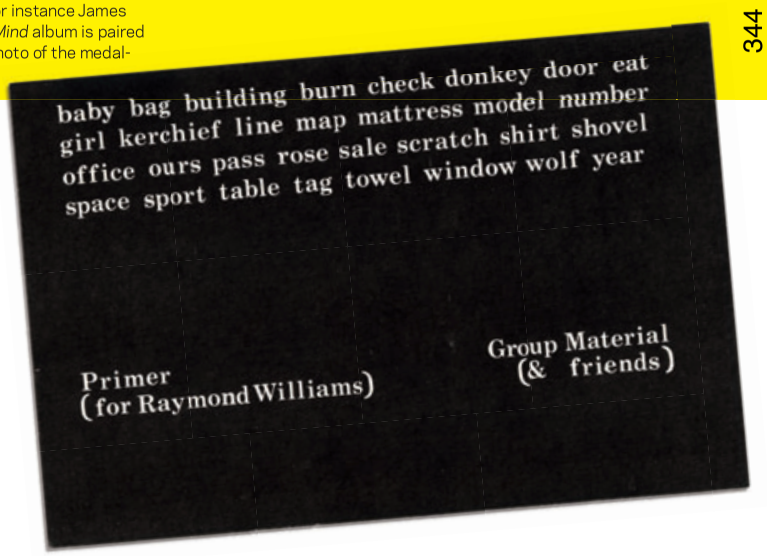


BOBBY SANDS MP
MURDER #1
FRANKIE HUGHES
H-BLOCK MARTYR
PATSY O'HARA
HUNGER STRIKER
MURDER #4
MAY 21, 1980
KIERAN DOHERTY
REPUBLICAN VOLUNTEER
HUNGER STRIKER
MEMBER OF DAIL EIREANN
MURDERED
hunger strike
MURDER #5
July 8, 1981
Joe McDonnell
MARTIN HURSON
MURDER #6
Freedom fighter
IPOW
MURDERED
Mickey Devine
MURDERED
In britain's
Long Kesh death camp
eagle
eat
fall
firm
girl


345
FSLN
NICARAGUA LIBRE
help
horse
inflamed



Luchar! An Exhibition for the People of Central America

Taller Latinoamericano, New York, June 19–July 9, 1982

↑ Title wall of *Luchar!* with photos by Bolivar Arellano of the bodies of Dutch journalists murdered in El Salvador
↗ Work by Anne Pitrone in *Luchar!*
→ Following page, *Luchar!*, left to right: works by Bobby G, FDR/FMLN demonstration flags, anonymous photographs of FMLN guerrillas, Joss Gonzalez

Art and politics intersect in *Luchar!*, an exhibition hosted by the Taller Latinoamericano, a cultural center that provides opportunities for an exchange of ideas and art between and within North and Latin American cultures. *Luchar!* takes place amid a consortium of organizations devoted to political solidarity with self-determination movements in Central and South America which occupy the entire second floor of 19 West 21st Street. and include Casa Nicaragua and Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES). At the reception performers share the stage with political and cultural activists, including Daniel Flores y Ascencio, founder of INALSE (Institute of Arts and Letters of El Salvador in Exile), Lucy R. Lippard, and a representative of the Salvadoran revolutionary organization FDR (Revolutionary Democratic Front / FMLN (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front). A work by Anne Pitrone—a life-size piñata that depicts a figure in the strappado torture position—generates some controversy. Its symbolically powerful presence is disturbingly evocative of lived reality to some staff members of and visitors to the organizations on the same floor.

October 1982. A few months after *Luchar!* the group rents a small office space for $200 a month on the second floor of 19 West 21st Street. The neighboring offices house a variety of social organizations, which stimulates the group's consciousness and discussions about interrelations between art, social practice, and political organizing.







Lucy R. Lippard, "Revolting Issues" (excerpt), *The Village Voice*, July 27, 1982

The call for entries stated, among other things, that "all artwork should either directly or thematically address the relationship between popular movements for self determination in Latin America and United States government policy" and that it would include works not traditionally seen as fine art: multiples, reproducibles, and work by non-artists as well as flags, campaign graphics and propaganda materials."

About 100 Hispanic and North American artists responded. Ashford received a lot of apprehensive phone calls that fell roughly into two categories: art world artists worried that their contributions would be seen as naïve and politically incorrect; and artists working in left organizations worried that their contributions would be seen as too dogmatic and not artful enough. If that split continues, a still more complex set of worries will be justified, though these phone calls are a hopeful sign. . . .



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Revolutionary Fine Arts

Taller Latinoamericano, New York, April 14, 1983, 8 p.m.–12 a.m.

April 1983. In conjunction with announcing GM's new headquarters on 21st Street, a one-night exhibition of works by over thirty politically minded and activist artists, *Revolutionary Fine Arts*, is staged in the communal spaces of the floor. Jock Reynolds writes to GM: "Glad to know Group Material is active and getting a new office together. Please reconsider this year whether you might not wish to reapply to Artists Organizations for support from the Endowment. Linda Shearer and I were really disappointed not to see an application from GM this last year." The group had been resistant to formalizing its procedures and maintaining the accoutrements of legitimacy as required by the NEA, and had not applied. However, having just received IRS tax-exempt status, GM again concocts the semblance of professionalization and a hierarchical salaried staff structure (on paper) in order to be eligible for grants. Privately the group decides to keep minimal overheads, operate on an adhoc basis, and never have salaried positions in order to avoid any conflict of interest.

↑ *Revolutionary Fine Arts*, works visible on left by Tim Rollins and 25 kids from the South Bronx, Tom Lawson



Invitation to Participate (excerpt),
Group Material, November 1983

Subculture is the natural extension of our successful M5 project. . . . *Subculture* will be an exhibition of art in the place of advertising on New York City subway trains. Group Material has rented 1400 advertising spaces to show the work of 100 artists. The work will be seen on every fourth train on the IRT lines which cover the boroughs of Manhattan, the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens. . . . *Subculture* intends to change that vacuous tableau faced by the commuter every day of a world full of hemorrhoid sufferers and opportunities offered by the Albert Merrill School for technical training. While offering real public exposure to artists, this project gives subway riders a chance to view images that carry a little more meaning for them than whether they should "wash with Woolite."

Subculture

IRT subway trains, New York, September 1–30, 1983

↖ **Work for *Subculture* by Dennis Adams**

Subculture is supported with public funds from New York State Council for the Arts (NYSCA), which covers the space rental and publicity costs. Each artist produces their own cards for installation on the trains. The media vary, being hand painted, drawn, collaged, spray-painted and stenciled, silk-screened, photographically printed, and photocopied. Group Material prefers to pay for advertising space, as opposed to seeking in-kind contributions, so as to be treated like any other client. A Mass Transit Authority (MTA) representative warns that no religious or political messages are allowed. Many of the pieces do in fact have political content and one subverts Christian imagery, but no formal review process takes place. The group delivers the collected subway cards directly to the installation crew, who promise there will be no problem with the material or its content—"we just put 'em up." The sole conflict that develops is over Aric Obrosey's piece, *McMerger*, which envisions the corporate fusion of McDonald's





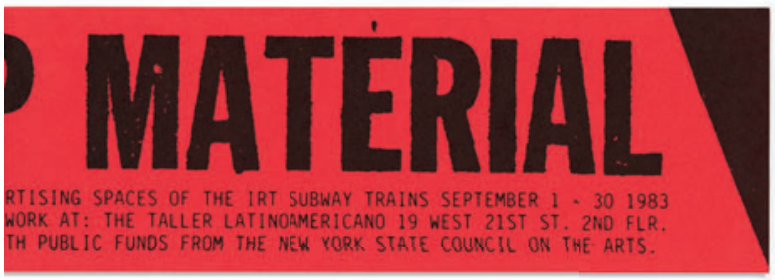


and Burger King. Obrosey's piece comes to the attention of the MTA whose representative advises GM not to submit the piece, as it is potentially offensive to the two companies, which are also subway advertisers. Although not officially rejected, the group suspects Obrosey's pieces are simply not installed.

November 1983. The group creates a fundraising campaign promising a *Pity Puppy* print to those who contribute at least $20 to help Group Material continue its activities. Several artists respond; the result is approximately $250 income. The 14 in. x 11 in. black-and-white print is a reproduction of a painting called *Pity Puppy*, which the group believed was by Margaret Keane. Keane has for years made paintings of children, puppies, and kittens with large pitiful eyes, which are distributed as inexpensive prints and posters. Walter Keane, her husband, claimed credit for the works in the early sixties until she took him to court for a divorce proceeding. Rights to the painting style and artworks were at stake. Margaret painted in front of the judge, and when asked to do likewise, Walter avoided the test, claiming an injury affected his hand. The court sided with Margaret in 1965 and the Keanes divorced. The group was partly attracted to the image by this story of the court proceedings, but during the production of this book, it is discovered that the image was in fact created by another artist, Gig.

January 1984. Group Material mounts a group exhibition titled *A.D., Christian Influence in Contemporary Culture* at Work Gallery, which is actually a storefront studio space shared by artists Tom Bassmann and Louis Laurita, who are frequent participants in GM shows.

↖ **Work for *Subculture* by Julie Wachtel**
↑ **Work for *Subculture* by Brad Melamed**

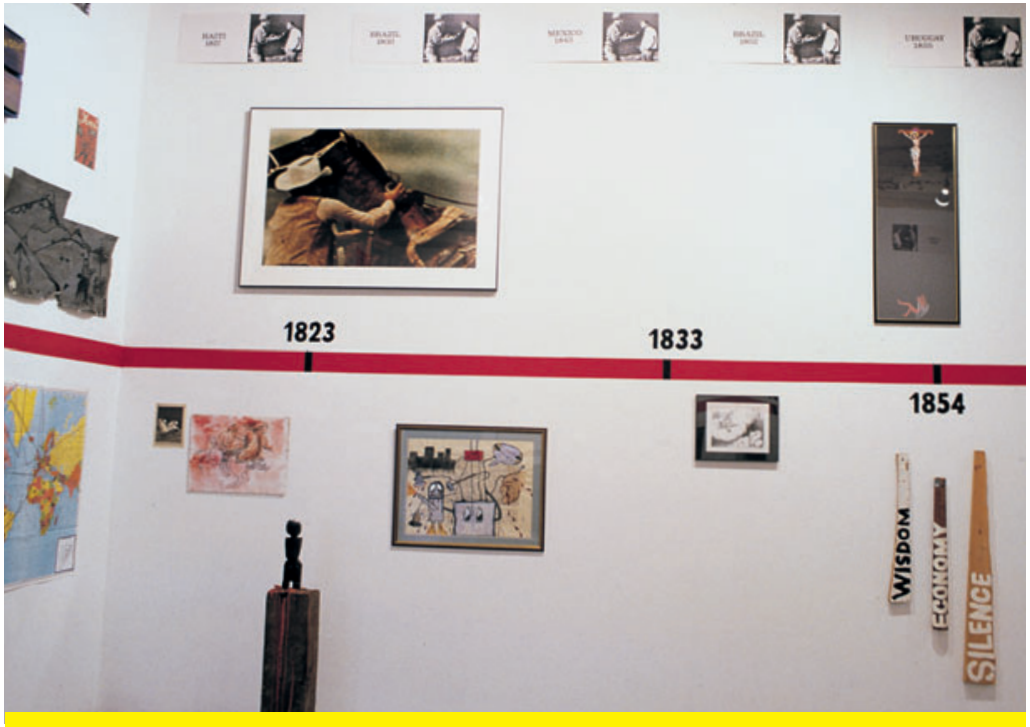






Timeline: A Chronicle of U.S. Intervention in Central and Latin America

P.S.1, New York,
January 22–March 18, 1984



Timeline mixes historical and contemporary artworks, documentary materials, artifacts (some of which Doug procures through associations with Central American artists and intellectuals living in exile), and high-in-demand commodities the U.S. imports from Central America, such as coffee and bananas, which are spread on the floor in one corner of the installation. The centerpiece is a giant red buoy made by Barbara Westermann, William Allen, and Ann Messner for use in a march against U.S. intervention recently held in Washington, DC. *Timeline* is part of a nationwide campaign called Artists Call Against U.S. Intervention in Central America, which produces a considerable program of cultural actions including a network of art exhibitions and benefit events in both commercial galleries and non-profit venues to raise consciousness and money to support popular movements in Latin America. Doug and Julie are closely involved in the planning activities and administration of Artists Call.



Exhibition Proposal (excerpt),
Group Material, November 1983

Since 1900, the U.S. has intervened militarily in the affairs of Central and Latin America over thirty times. . . .

For this exhibition, we have designed an installation of many disparate objects, artworks, commodities and historical documents. This myriad of things is collected into a unified purpose: to illustrate the crucial issues of the Central and Latin American U.S. relationship.

Instead of preparing a literal, historical survey of art about Latin and Central American life and politics (an impossibility for many reasons), Group Material proposes to gather together a constellation of artists from different political contexts and times who nevertheless made work about the *very same issues* that burn with such intensity in Central and Latin America today.

For example, while the work of Diego Rivera, Tina Modotti and Siqueiros have an obvious relevance to the issues we wish to investigate, John Heartfield's 1933 photomontage (made for a socialist magazine in Berlin representing workers voting for the Nazi Party for fear of their personal safety), is startling in its correlation to the recent election in El Salvador and the "surprising" victory of the ultra-right. . . .

Exhibited with equal status with the artworks, Group Material is curating a collection of commodities (large bags of coffee beans, tobacco leaves, Chiquita bananas from the United Fruit Co., sheets of copper, etc.). We do this because the desire and struggle to acquire these products remains the foundation for much of the oppression that Central and Latin America has suffered historically. . . .

1920
1932

1954


1954
1964
1973


Die Demokratie muß gewaltsam in Blut gebadet werden.
FMLN
1980
1982
FSLN
TIMELINE:
THE CHRONICLE OF U.S. INTERVENTION IN LATIN AND CENTRAL AMERICA
GROUP MATERIAL
1984
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1868: U.S. troops intervene in Uruguay.
1868: U.S. troops intervene in Colombia.
1873: U.S. troops intervene in Colombia.
1885: U.S. troops intervene in Panama.
1888: U.S. troops intervene in Haiti.
1891: U.S. troops intervene in Chile.
1894: U.S. troops intervene in Nicaragua.
1895: U.S. troops intervene in Colombia.
1896: U.S. Marines invade Honduras.
1896: U.S. troops intervene in Nicaragua.
1898: U.S. troops intervene in Nicaragua.
1898: Battleship *Maine* sunk. U.S. initiates Spanish-American War.
1898: U.S. troops invade Puerto Rico to 'liberate' it from Spain.
1899: U.S. troops intervene in Nicaragua.
1901: U.S. troops intervene in Colombia.
1902: U.S. troops intervene in Colombia.
1903: U.S. troops intervene in Honduras
1903: U.S. troops intervene in Dominican Republic.
1903: U.S. troops intervene in Panama.
1904: U.S. troops intervene in Dominican Republic.
1904: U.S. troops intervene in Panama.
1907: U.S. troops intervene in Honduras.
1910: U.S. troops intervene in Nicaragua.
1911: U.S. troops intervene in Honduras.
1912: U.S. troops intervene in Cuba.
1913: U.S. troops intervene in Mexico.
1914: U.S. troops intervene in Haiti.
1915: Marines land in Haiti and occupy it until 1934.
1919: U.S. troops intervene in Honduras.
1920: U.S. troops intervene in Guatemala
1924: U.S. troops intervene in Honduras
1925: U.S. troops intervene in Honduras.
1925: U.S. troops intervene in Panama.
1926: U.S. troops intervene in Nicaragua.
1928: Banana workers strike in Colombia against United Fruit Co., 1000 killed.
1932: 3 U.S. and 2 Canadian warships arrive in El Salvador.
1932: Salvadoran peasants begin mass insurrection; military retaliates massacring 30,000.
1954: CIA overthrows Arbenz government in Guatemala.
1958: Panama declares state of seige after 6 are killed in anti-U.S. riots.
1959: John Foster Dulles approves "*thorough consideration be given to the elimination of Fidel Castro.*"
1961: CIA defeated in Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba.
1962: U.S. naval blockade of Cuba initiated.
1964: U.S. troops kill student protesters in Panama Canal Zone.
1965: U.S. invades Dominican Republic.
1973: U.S.-sponsored coup in Chile overthrows Popular Unity government; Allende murdered.
1975: 40 students killed at University of El Salvador demonstrating against U.S. intervention.
1983: U.S. Marines invade Grenada.



Americana

The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, March 21–June 9, 1985

The group is invited to make a new project for the *1985 Whitney Biennial*. *Americana* critically engages the Biennial structure and questions how America represents itself, as well as how the Whitney defines American art through curatorial practice and the politics of inclusion and exclusion. *Americana* is Group Material's model biennial, a *salon des refusés* of what has been significantly absent, excluded by curatorial business-as-usual attitudes, including populist art, works by artists of color, feminist practices, overtly political art, and everyday artifacts. A range of store-bought objects are interspersed with artworks in the display with the intent to dislodge the boundaries between "high" and "low" culture. Several loaves of bread including Wonder Bread, Wonder whole wheat, Pepperidge Farm sprouted wheat, and Arnold Buttertop are installed in a row in the middle of one wall, and lit with high intensity theatrical spotlights. The lights heat the bread and messages are periodically left at Group Material's answering service requesting "someone come up to the museum and change the bread, it's getting nasty."

↑ Photograph of the Thomas Jefferson memorial, Washington, DC, installed at the entrance of *Americana*







← LeRoy Neiman, *Harry's Bar*, 1984
→ Martin Wong, *Chinese Laundry*, 1984
→ Following spread: Two pages from the proposal for *Americana*, 1984



I. INTRODUCTION

How does American culture represent America ?

Americana is an exhibition of contemporary fine art, mass-produced art and decorative objects, and common household products. These different elements of our culture are collected into one dynamic installation. Americana transforms the gallery into an arena of combat between the champions and the critics of the traditional American self-image.



GROUP MATERIAL has organized Americana on FOUR fronts :

1. Fine art that uses or reacts with a specifically American imagery

2. Mass-produced artworks and decorative objects that present distinctively American motifs

3. Commericial products , from soft drinks to major appliances, with media images that feed off of traditional American icons.

4. A "soundtrack" of taped music for the exhibition



These disparate kinds of culture will all be shown together, given visual and conceptual unity by the exhibition design described as follows ...

II. NOTES ON THE EXHIBITION DESIGN

GROUP MATERIAL organizes exhibitions that bring together many cultural objects in order to investigate a crucial social theme. G.M. accomplishes this mainly through the strategy of precise and innovative exhibtion design. Our installations demonstrate how art is dependent on a social context for its meaning. Our shows also bring the supposed neutrality of the traditional exhibition space and practice into serious question.



EXHIBITION DESIGN, con't.

For Americana, the gallery walls will be covered floor to ceiling in contact wallpaper* in a wide variety of traditional and contemporary American designs (from colonial patterns, to facsimile Pennsylvania Dutch tiles, to mod chrome abstract styles, to new "Holly Hobbie" and "Star Wars" motifs.)

All the artwork and objects will be displayed "salon style" , high and low, along the gallery walls in spaces cut out of the wallpaper background.

In a GROUP MATERIAL exhibition, a bag of "Almost Home Cookies" is as important as, say, a piece by Barbara Kruger. Fine art, mass art and commercial products are shown with equal status. What gives Americana its edge is how we place seemingly opposite forms of art, objects and products in combinations that help make their real social interrelations most vivid. For example, how is Eric Fischl's print Year of the Drowned Dog perceived when shown beside a coastal scene by Jamie Wyeth ? How is Richard Prince's Cowboy piece transformed by its placement above a mass-produced popular Western calendar ? And what does an Andrew Wyeth painting turn into when exhibited near a twin-tub washer and dryer combo in "Harvest Gold" tone ?

Americana's lighting will be unusual for an art exhibition. Using theatrical illumination, the show will wear the light of spacious skies, purple mountains' majesty and amber waves of grain.

*Contact paper is vinyl sheeting with al light adhesive backing. It's inexpensive, easy to install and will not cause damage to gallery walls when removed.













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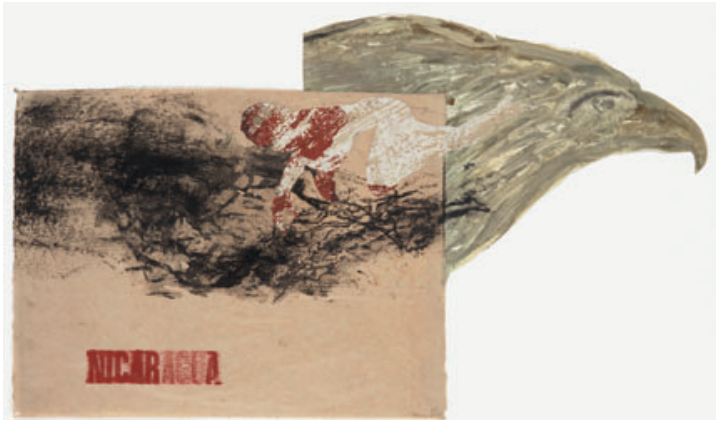
Kim Levin, "The Whitney Laundry" (excerpt), *The Village Voice*, April 9, 1985

What is there to say about a Whitney Biennial in which the most provocative and subversive thing is a LeRoy Neiman hanging on the museum's walls? It's not the picture that's provocative but the perverse fact: the shock of schlock being sanctified, even if it is done tongue-in-cheek. What does it say about the state of our minds—and the state of art—that this is the hideous thrill of the day? Have we finally sunk so low? . . . If Group Material's titillating, weakly rebellious installation lacks the grubby strength of *The Times Square Show* nearly five years ago, it does provide a hook to hang this year's Biennial on: commodity time is here. It's nice that Group Material tried to outwit the Whitney curators with its laundry room, even if it ended up doing the dirty work for them.

Letter to *The Village Voice* (excerpt), Group Material, April 16, 1985

Contrary to Kim Levin's assumptions, Group Material wasn't used by the Whitney to any greater extent than its resources and visibility were used by us to present a critical model of what we believe an American museum's biennial should be. . . . Does Levin really believe it takes a clever critic to understand how institutions manipulate the meaning and reception of culture?
If you really want a "radical shakeup," why stop at the Biennial? The entire culture industry needs to be overhauled. *Americana* is but one small demonstration toward a program of cultural change. It was not designed for the Whitney, or for art critics, but for the large public which Levin contemptuously reduces to "students, tourists, novices, and art investors."

→ Nancy Spero, *Nicaragua*, 1984–1985







← Tseng Kwong Chi, *Townsend, Vermont*, 1983
→ Artist and soundtrack list for *Americana* (in progress)

GROUP MATERIAL

AMERICANA

Artists:

John Ahearn walk in
Doug Ashford Sat
Julie Ault-Sat
Alan Belcher
Harvey Bletchman-Sat(D)
Marshall Collins
call Henry Darger-Sat (Dag)
Jane Dickson-8(D)Sat
Sam Doyle
flexi-Larry Fink
Eric Fischl (T)mart
General Electric
Leon Golub
Edgar Heap of Birds
Suzanne Helmuth/Jock Reynolds
Candace Hill Montgomery Th(V?)
Neil Jenney (?)
Jerry Kearns
Barbara Kruger (→) Th
Tseng Kwong Chi from Semaphore (J)
flexi Mierle Laderman Ukeles Th or Fri (J)
Lady Pink -from Sonja
Thomas Lawson
Sherrie Levine (T)
Peter Max (1?)

Alan McCollum
Mundy McLaughlin
John Miller ← Mr Coffee
Peter Nagy
Joseph Nechvetal Brooke (Sat)
Leroy Neiman (T?)
Claes Oldenberg → Fri
Osteriser
Saul Ostrow 18th LeeQuinones
Richard Prince Chrysler Truck
Faith Ringgold James Rivera
Norman Rockwell
Tim Rollins with Public School Students
Christy Rupp
Juan Sanchez (D) Sat
Fritz Schoedler (T?)
Laurie Simmons ← Andres Serrano (Fri)
Nancy Spero
Joel Sternfeld (J) Fri or Thurs
Sunbeam ← Rigoberto Torres Sat (D)
Anton Van Dalen
Julie Wachtel
Andy Warhol Sat (D) Feldman
Martin Wong Semaphore truck
Jamie Wyeth (FT)
← Zenith

20.

Soundtrack:

"The Sun Treader", Carl Ruggles
"The Payback", James Brown
"You're Gonna Reap What You Sow", Loretta Lynn
"Mind Your Own Business", Hank Williams
"Old Folks Gathering", Charles Ives
"We're Not Going To Take It", Twisted Sister
"You're Blind", Run D.M.C.
"I Don't Wanna Play House", Tammy Wynette
"It's Gonna Rain", O'Neal Brothers
"The Stripper", David Rose
"Gotas de Lluvia", El Gran Combo
"This Land Is Your Land", Woody Guthry
"Jump Call", Benny Carter
"The Beverly Hillbillys Theme", Flatt & Scruggs

Letter of invitation to participate (excerpt), Group Material, March 1985

Group Material is creating a poster piece to be exhibited at Chapter entitled *Democracy Wall for Cardiff*. . . The piece is composed of ten posters, each 6′ x 4′ butted together to create a 40 feet long work. The posters alternate between red and green: the green posters carrying statements given by official social organizations in Great Britain, and the red carrying statements given by people interviewed outside Tesco supermarkets and on the street in Cardiff. . . .

We are contacting organizations with as diverse as possible purposes and functions, in order to create a sort of "landscape" of different social outlooks. We are asking from each organization, of which you are one, a statement of not more than 50 words pertaining to the "Future of the Family" as it relates to the purposes of your organization. This will be mounted on an individual poster and made part of the entire piece. . . .

Democracy Wall

Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff, Wales, April 27–May 25, 1985

↓ *Democracy Wall* installed inside Chapter Arts Centre
→ Letter from National Cleansing Campaign, including statement for *Democracy Wall* poster



NATIONAL CLEANSING CAMPAIGN

General Secretary:
Mrs. Vera. M. Fletcher,
212 Darlington Lane, Stockton-on-Tees,
County Palatine of Durham.
Telephone: (0642) 65050

"Here is Wisdom; This is the Royal Law; These are the Truly Oracles of God. (The Coronation E.R.II.)

HOLY THY LAW Psalm — BIBLE THE TRUTH 119:142

MURDY McLaughlin
GROUP MATERIAL
235 East 10th St 4B
New York, N.Y. 10003

3rd April, 1985

Dear Mr. McLaughlin

Than you for your letter of 29th March, 1985. How very kind of you to write me suggesting I submit an offering to your poster exhibition.
I have sent the items enclosed in haste to Mr. Philip Sky in Cardiff with a letter all in great haste because of so short a time allowed and because of the threatened postal strike plus the coming Easter Holiday, both very restricting.

" Once upon a time the Altar of the Household in Anglo-Saxondom was the Holy Bible, within which is to be found the Constitution whereby the whole Nation should live. To become healthy and prosperous the Future of The FAMILY depends upon its return to The Law of The LORD. The Blessing of GOD invoked daily and the Family a Christian Society. However, [today complete destruction faces The Anglo-Saxon and Kindred peoples through the deliberate degradation of its Children through drugs, brainwashing, homo-sexuality, rape and murder. With the destruction of the minds of our Children the rest of the World will be forced back to the jungle for it is in them lies the spark of genius, to be wiped out forever if the enemy within has its way.]

I am grateful for the opportunity you offer because- for the love of GOD and for the sake of our Children we have been sounding the ALARM for the past twenty years. Perhaps the advent of AIDS in our midst will help our people to WAKE UP.
There are two kinds of Capital Punishment. 1). YAHVEH directly executes judgment and DEATH upon Men and Nations for certain offences. This HE does in HIS Time and Will and none can say HIM nay. 2). YAHVEH delegates to Man the DUTY of inflicting DEATH for certain offences and that without delay and without hesitation ".

With kindest regards and best wishes

Yours Sincerely,

Vera Fletcher.

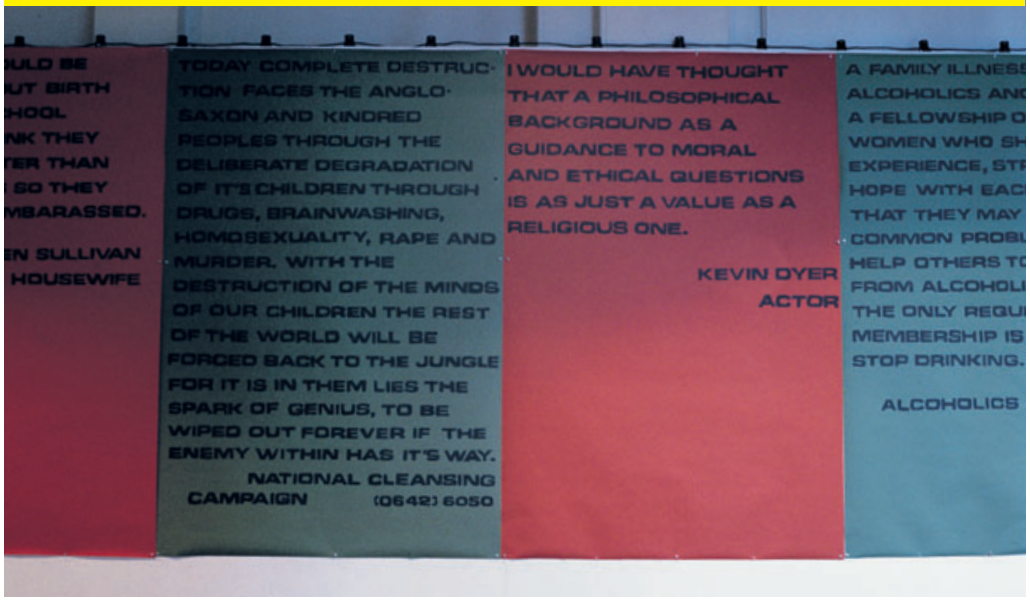
Divine justice **DEMANDS** death penalty for:
MURDER *Deut. 19:10-13*
SODOMY *Lev. 20:13*
RAPE *Deut. 22:25-27*
KIDNAPPING *Ex. 21:16*

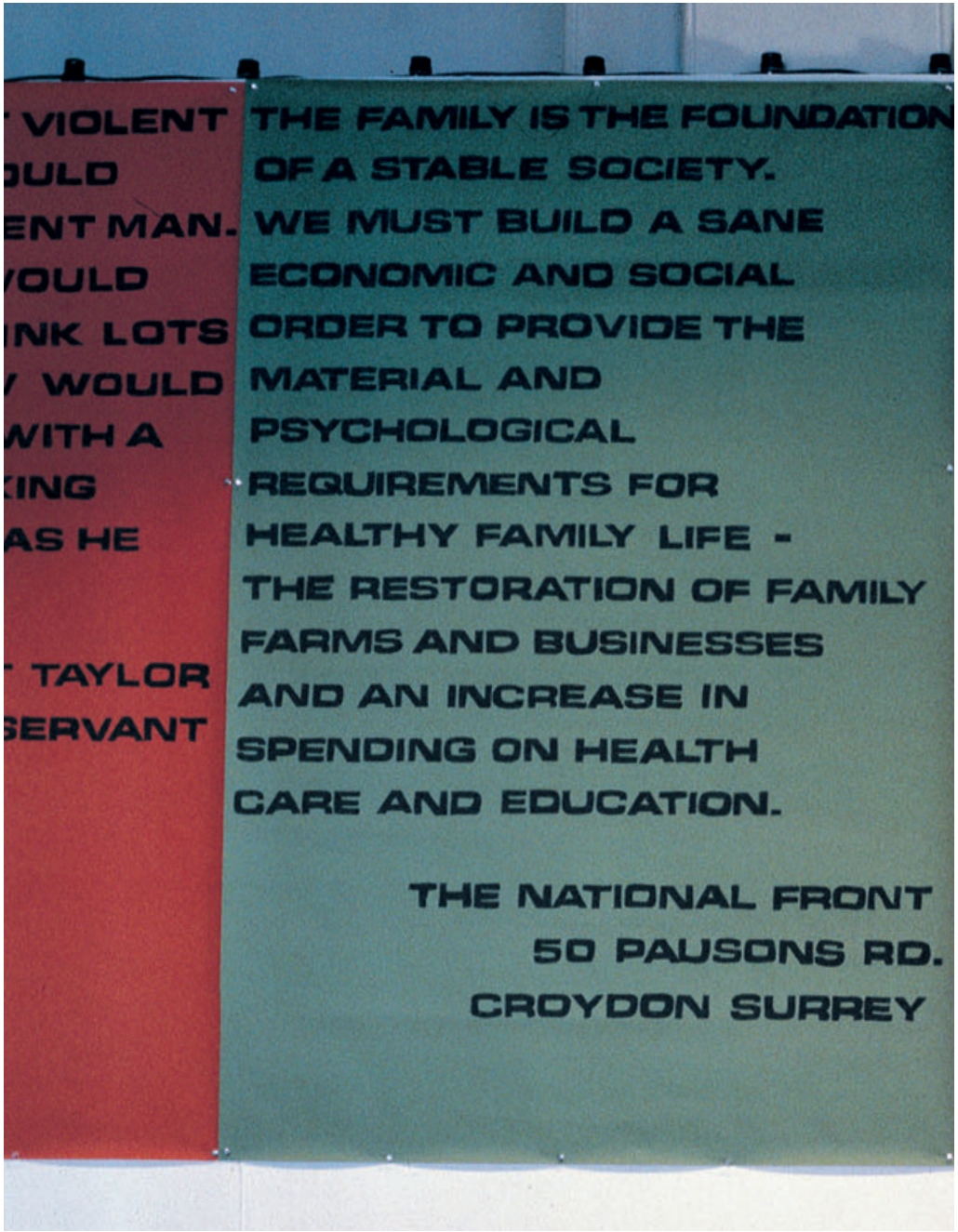
"For verily I say unto you, Till Heaven and Earth pass, One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from THE LAW....." (MT. 5:18-20)

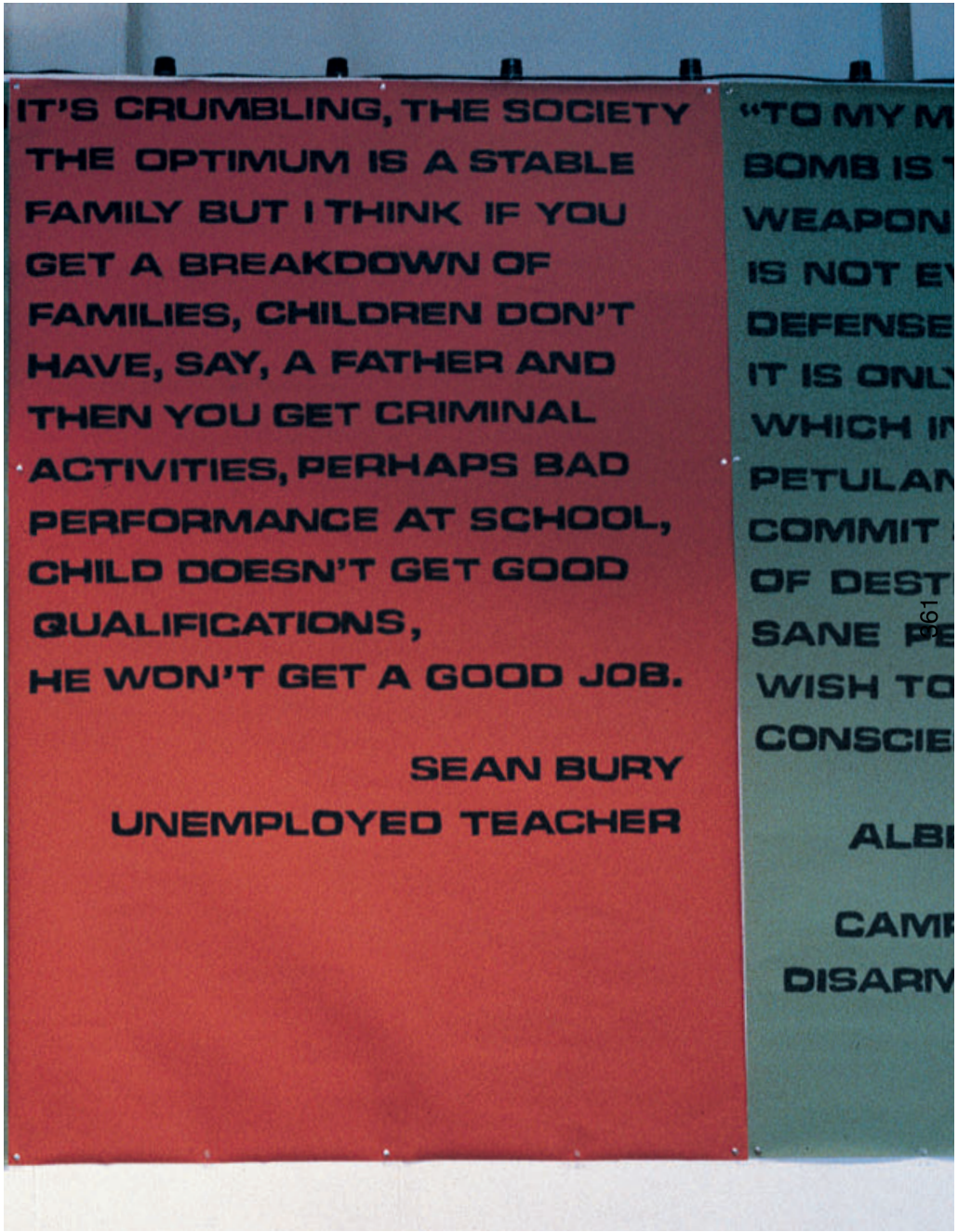


← McLaughlin and Ault making *Democracy Wall* posters

GM's application of the democracy wall, the form first used by the group in *DA ZI BAOS*, intends to diagram conflicting perspectives rubbing up against one another. *Democracy Wall for Cardiff* is organized around the theme "the future of the family as a social form," presenting statements from street interviews with Cardiff citizens juxtaposed with statements from social agencies. On the day the posters are installed inside Chapter someone destroys the one from the National Front. An explanation by the curator, Philip Sky, is mounted in its place, stating that the intention of the *Democracy Wall* is: "to present in direct, graphic form, a multiplicity of ideas. Group Material is in no way interested in promoting any line on the Family. *Democracy Wall* is a visual and conceptual survey of popular and official thought on the subject of the Family's future."




VIOLENT
OULD
ENT MAN.
OULD
INK LOTS
WOULD
WITH A
KING
AS HE
TAYLOR
SERVANT
THE FAMILY IS THE FOUNDATION
OF A STABLE SOCIETY.
WE MUST BUILD A SANE
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
ORDER TO PROVIDE THE
MATERIAL AND
PSYCHOLOGICAL
REQUIREMENTS FOR
HEALTHY FAMILY LIFE -
THE RESTORATION OF FAMILY
FARMS AND BUSINESSES
AND AN INCREASE IN
SPENDING ON HEALTH
CARE AND EDUCATION.
THE NATIONAL FRONT
50 PAUSONS RD.
CROYDON SURREY


IT'S CRUMBLING, THE SOCIETY
THE OPTIMUM IS A STABLE
FAMILY BUT I THINK IF YOU
GET A BREAKDOWN OF
FAMILIES, CHILDREN DON'T
HAVE, SAY, A FATHER AND
THEN YOU GET CRIMINAL
ACTIVITIES, PERHAPS BAD
PERFORMANCE AT SCHOOL,
CHILD DOESN'T GET GOOD
QUALIFICATIONS,
HE WON'T GET A GOOD JOB.
SEAN BURY
UNEMPLOYED TEACHER
"TO MY M
BOMB IS
WEAPON
IS NOT E
DEFENSE
IT IS ONL
WHICH I
PETULAN
COMMIT
OF DEST
SANE P
WISH TO
CONSCIE
ALBI
CAMP
DISARM



MASS

**various locations,
May 1985 through
December 1986**

↑ *MASS* installed at The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, 1986
→ Following spread: Hanging instructions for *MASS*

William Olander, Exhibition Brochure (excerpt), (New York: The New Museum, 1986)

The issue of collaboration . . . is extremely complex in relation to Group Material for it is not merely a matter of four artists who collaborate with each other ("Group Material"), but four artists who have collaborated, over the past six years, with literally hundreds of other artists. . . . *MASS* was conceived by Group Material in response to some current buzzwords often used to describe the contemporary art scene—"hot," "expressionist," "heroic," "violent," "adventurous," and "raw." In opposition to these, Group Material proposed a different spelling of contemporary culture—"MASS." To this end, Group Material invited almost two hundred artists to contribute an image [which had to be 12 inches by 12 inches] of their own: a photograph, a record cover, or an advertisement—to offer literally a signifier which would become the signified "MASS," a twelve-by-forty-foot word which also functions as an image, a concept, a representation, and finally a collaboration . . . . This is a new opportunity to reconsider "MASS" in all of its contemporary significance: mass, as in the masses; mass, as in scientific density; mass, as in mass culture and mass media; mass, as in a religious mass, etc. etc. . . .

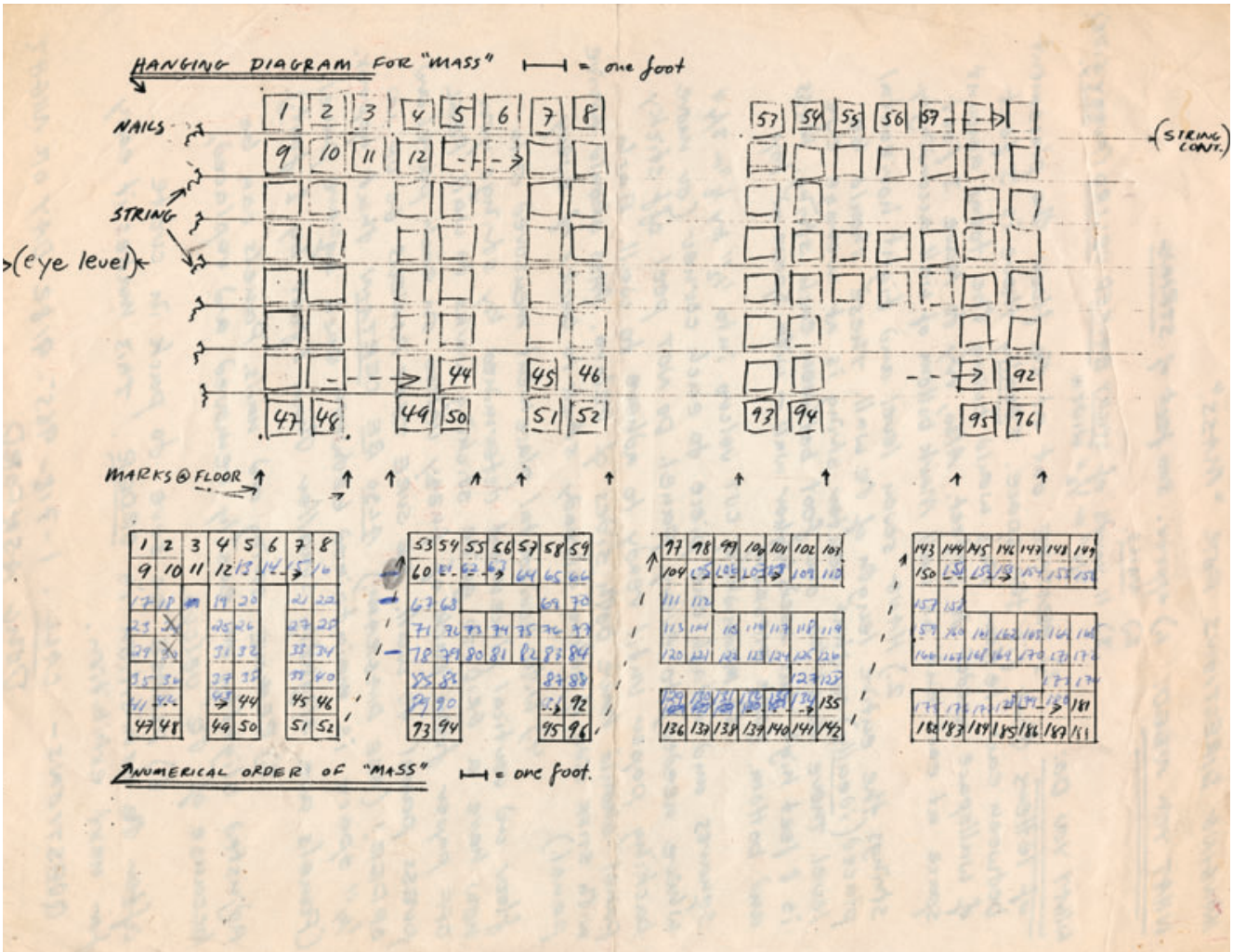
Hanging directions for *MASS*, Doug Ashford, 1985

What you need
1) Approx. 300 feet of string
2) Nails
3) 11 yards of sticky backed velcro (fuzzy side only 3/4" or 1/2" width)

What you do
1) Measure out at the floor the placement of letters that fit the space. Ideally there is 2 feet between each letter. This would bring the total amount of wall space needed to 38 feet. Also, try to leave 3 feet space at each end as well. Mark bottom of wall accordingly.
2) Hang seven level and tight horizontal strings the entire length of the wall. These should be placed (ideally) so that center string is at average eye level. There must be one foot between each string. *MASS* is 8 feet high but needs higher wall with space at top and bottom (see diagram).
3) Meanwhile, cut velcro into 1/2" by 1/2" or 3/4" squares and attach one piece to each corner (or more where needed) to every panel. Do not peel off sticky backing paper until ready to adhere to wall. Each panel should have both sides of velcro. (*MASS* should arrive with stiff side of velcro already stuck to back of every panel.)
4) With horizontal placement measured onto floor and vertical placement determined by strings you now have a grid to guide sticky works to wall. Peel off paper from back of fuzzy velcro on each panel and press panel to wall. Be sure that panels go up in order! (See diagram). Also be certain that approx 1/4" space is maintained between each square panel. (Panels are slightly smaller than 1 foot by 1 foot).
5) Remove string and nails. Panels can be adjusted slightly or easily removed and replaced, because of the velcro.
6) Please be sure to pack in crate after the exhibition in order. This makes it easy for the next exhibition.

Questions—call day or night.


1933
SURPLUS
BUFFALO
CRANKIN


HANGING DIAGRAM FOR "MASS" ⊢⊣ = one foot
NAILS
STRING
(eye level)
(STRING CONT.)
MARKS @ FLOOR
NUMERICAL ORDER OF "MASS" ⊢⊣ = one foot.



Messages to Washington

Washington Project for the Arts, Washington, DC, September 1–October 12, 1985

Fifty advertisements are placed in local newspapers around the country inviting people to send visual, taped, or textual "messages to Washington" to make up an exhibit in DC, which the group plans to supplement with popular expressions of political opinion pulled from its archive of photos and artwork. The ads are necessarily small due to budget constraints, many are poorly printed and some are illegible, which explains at least in part the relatively few responses—twenty or so—to the public call. The group fills out the exhibition with artworks as well as items lobbyists distribute to Congress to publicize their issues, for instance an eight foot piece of lumber from a carpenter's union.

↑ *Messages to Washington* with work by Christy Rupp in foreground
→ Following spread: Drawing of 1984 vice-presidential candidate Geraldine Ferraro by Steve Jones, installation by Dorothy Kohn (Dottie the K)

"MESSAGES TO WASHINGTON"

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

"Everyone has an opinion"

People's opinions fascinate us.
Group Material is tired of hearing people's opinions as watered down by "public opinion polls", distorted by the media and through their letters as interpreted by President Reagan.
We have an idea other people feel the same way.

The exhibit "Messages to Washington", to be installed at Washington Project for the Arts in September 1985, is an opportunity for people from all over the country to have their direct opinions join with other people's opinions to form a collective portrait of how Americans really feel about their government and what it is doing.

We are sending an open call out to every state and territory in the Nation for people to

TELL YOUR GOVERNMENT WHAT YOU THINK

We are asking for visual - paintings, drawings, photographs, objects, (any size), written - letters, poems, etc., and verbal/audio - recorded on standard cassette tape - messages, to be sent to Group Material at 80 8th Avenue, Suite 303, New York, N.Y. 10011 no later than August 15, 1985.

Everything we receive will be installed at Washington Project for the Arts at 400 7th Street N.W., Washington D.C. from September 1 1985 through October 12. It is anticipated that it will be seen by many political representatives and that it will attract important newspaper, T.V. and radio coverage.

Group Material is a non-profit organization founded in 1979 to create exhibitions that are both socially and formally progressive. The group has been active since that time creating exhibits in which the individual parts make up a dialogue examining social, political and cultural subjects.

Our more recent projects include SUBCULTURE, on New York City subway trains, TIMELINE, for "Artist's Call", at PS. 1 in New York, AMERICANA, for the Biennial Exhibition of the Whitney Museum and DEMOCRACY WALL for the Chapter Arts Center in Cardiff, Wales.

GERRY

FORCED
EVICTION
FOR THE
POOR



Introductory Wall Text (excerpt),
The Alternative Museum and Group Material,
February 1986

The classical conception of democracy mandates that each individual act on the "free exchange" of information surrounding him. The founding fathers thought that eventually this treasure chest of ideas would enable a population to see, judge and then change its condition. Government would act as a mirror—reflecting the individuals' informed judgment. And the citizen, in turn, would feel his identity reflected in the nation state.

Such a neat package somehow went astray. Today the overload of information has fractured any consistent reflection of social life. World views can be flipped like television channels—seconds of *Dynasty* interchange with seconds of congressional debate—as facts blend with fiction the ideal of informed judgment becomes little more than another commercial.

Any totalitarian grip on alternative views of the world seems redundant—instead pictures and sentences are drained of meaning. . . .

December 1985. Group Material produces *Alarm Clock*, a single-wall installation, for *The Other America: Art and Labor* at Royal Festival Hall in London. *Alarm Clock* focuses on labor in the U.S. and is realized with input and assistance from British artist, and co-curator of *The Other America*, Margaret Harrison. *Alarm Clock* includes: office flyers, a variety of alarm clocks ("made in China", "made in Yugoslavia," a Westclox "Standard," a Westclox "Big Ben," a "designer" clock), bumper stickers, coffee mugs with office slogans on them, *The Professional Image* book, office memo post-it pads, a managers door sign, and a Bruce Springsteen *Born in the U.S.A.* poster—all intermingled with artworks. The alarm clocks, hung intermittently at eye level, are all stolen at the opening.

↑ Lobbyists' flyer included in *Messages to Washington*
↓ Advertisement to participate in *Messages to Washington*, published in *The Tribune*, July 11, 1985

Liberty & Justice

The Alternative Museum, New York, February 22–March 22, 1986

February 1986. The Alternative Museum's director Geno Rodriguez invites Group Material to co-organize *Liberty & Justice*, an exhibition staged to coincide with the Centennial Celebration of the Statue of Liberty. The exhibition includes forty critical artistic interpretations of liberty and justice in the United States. A soundtrack of versions of "The Star-Spangled Banner," "America the Beautiful," and "God Bless America" plays constantly.


tropolitan area.

de defeat of hospital regulation proposals
m last November was the best thing that
appened, Harris said.

uel adjustment

ot get to present its main witness
t said it needs the fuel-adjustment money
ases in the cost of coal, oil and other fuel
rate electricity.

es testifying for the commission staff and
ntial Utility Consumer Office said APS
its costs in the past and may have
ensive fuel when cheaper sources were

witness, Michael Yokell, told the
s that the way APS now figures its future
no incentive to save consumers money
s allowed to keep the extra money as an
est egg if the amount raised turns out to
it really needed.

uachuca fizzles

down to the guys at the gate," said Lt.
rd Delgado, base public affairs chief.
swoman Lorena Edlen said the problem
n that "military intelligence people are
g in secret."
uclear blast was intended to allow 335
e 138th Military Intelligence Battalion a
rience conditions of enemy attack.

has filed a separate suit against the county attorney's office, alleging that it intended to damage his political career and reputation.

County Attorney Stephen D. Neely filed the suit against the state, and previous and current members of the board of supervisors, alleging that the Pima County charged.

Neely said all current supervisors were named as defendants because the board is a carryover body.

REAL ESTATE LICENSING CLASS
Total Cost
$149.00
CLASSES START JULY 22ND
PROFESSIONAL INSTITUTE OF REAL ESTATE
2602 W. Baseline
820-3544

TELL YOUR GOVERNMENT WHAT YOU THINK
OPEN CALL
for
MESSAGES TO WASHINGTON
Messages from the American people to the United States government will be displayed at Washington Project for the Arts in Washington D.C. in September, 1985. Send pictures, objects, writings, or taped messages to GROUP MATERIAL 80 8th Avenue, New York, New York 10011 by August 15. Include your name and address (optional). Entries can be any size, can include paintings, drawings, photographs, letters, poems, found or handmade objects, etc. Taped messages should be on standard cassette tape. This exhibition will be seen by major political representatives of the American people and will attract important newspaper, television and radio coverage.

SUMMER SIZZLERS
Get out of the heat and into some cool cash savings! Our Summer Sizzlers sale is going on now—with red hot once-a-year values on all appliances and televisions in stock! But you must hurry, because a sale this sizzling is too hot not to cool down!
WE'LL DEAL...WE'LL TRADE!
90 DAYS SAME AS CASH





Arts and Leisure

The Kitchen, New York, May 24–June 14, 1986

Group Material uses a primary color scheme for the show—one wall blue, one red, and one yellow—an allusion to popular culture and specifically to some clippings and cartoons included in the show. A visitor comments on how much she enjoys the exhibition; not realizing the group's intentions, she adds, "It's just too bad you had to work with those wall colors."

Summer 1986. Mundy McLaughlin leaves the group and New York to return to Canada, where she is from, to study law at McGill University in Montreal. She is tired of U.S. politics and fatigued by the collective process, wanting to pursue an individual art practice.

The group had stopped requiring monthly dues a couple years previously, and now regularly receives NEA funding for general operating costs and NYSCA support for special projects. For the most part, hosting institutions finance the respective exhibition and project costs.

Press Release (excerpt),
Group Material, May 1986

Arts and Leisure presents a critical overview of imagery that takes art history and popular culture as its subject. Combining "fine art" and mass media images, *Arts and Leisure* questions the modern tradition of using art as the subject matter of art, as exemplified by Pop Art's homage to popular culture, Postmodernism's exacting criticism, the nearly hostile mockery of Fine Art by comic strips, and recent socially conscious art. . . . A recent *National Enquirer* article reporting with amazement on modern art prices correlates with a Louise Lawler criticism of the fine art media. Aric Obrosey's "yin / yang Pizza Hut / African Hut" bridges the commercial order of Dagwood spitting on museum art in the popular comic strip. Walt Disney's low view of the fine artist coexists with Conrad Atkinson's belief in the artist as an agent of social change.





Resistance (Anti-Baudrillard)

White Columns, New York, February 6–28, 1987

The group seeks to counter the art world's apparent infatuation with, and use and abuse of French theorist Jean Baudrillard's writings, particularly as they are used to invoke "the end of the political." A roundtable discussion about what is at stake in relation to his theories, art, and politics is held between Judith Barry, Peter Halley, William Olander, Julie Wachtel, Oliver Wasow, and Doug Ashford and Julie Ault for GM. The edited transcript is made into handouts that accompany the show. Dividing the space are three television monitors showing Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville's *Six Fois Deux / Sur Et Sous La Communication*, David Cronenberg's *Scanners*, and a work by Dara Birnbaum. Barbara Kruger participates with a piece called *Why I Am Not Anti-Baudrillard*, which is a quote from the theorist about the relationship between antithesis and thesis. Baudrillard visits New York for a conference at NYU while the show is on, and Josie, who works at White Columns, hands him an invitation, to which he says with dismay, "but this is anti-Baudrillard."

↘ Announcement card for *Resistance* (front) with photograph by Catherine Allport of the funeral of a UDF organizer killed by police, Umlazi, South Africa, 1985

MEMBERS:
Doug Ashford, Julie Ault, Tim Rollins

Exhibition Proposal (excerpt),
Group Material, October 1986

A theoretical jungle surrounds us. Overgrown from inactivity, this jungle harbors real dangers—the dissolution of history, the disfiguration of any alternative actuality, and the attempt to disown practice. Activism is perceived as illusory in an illusory culture.

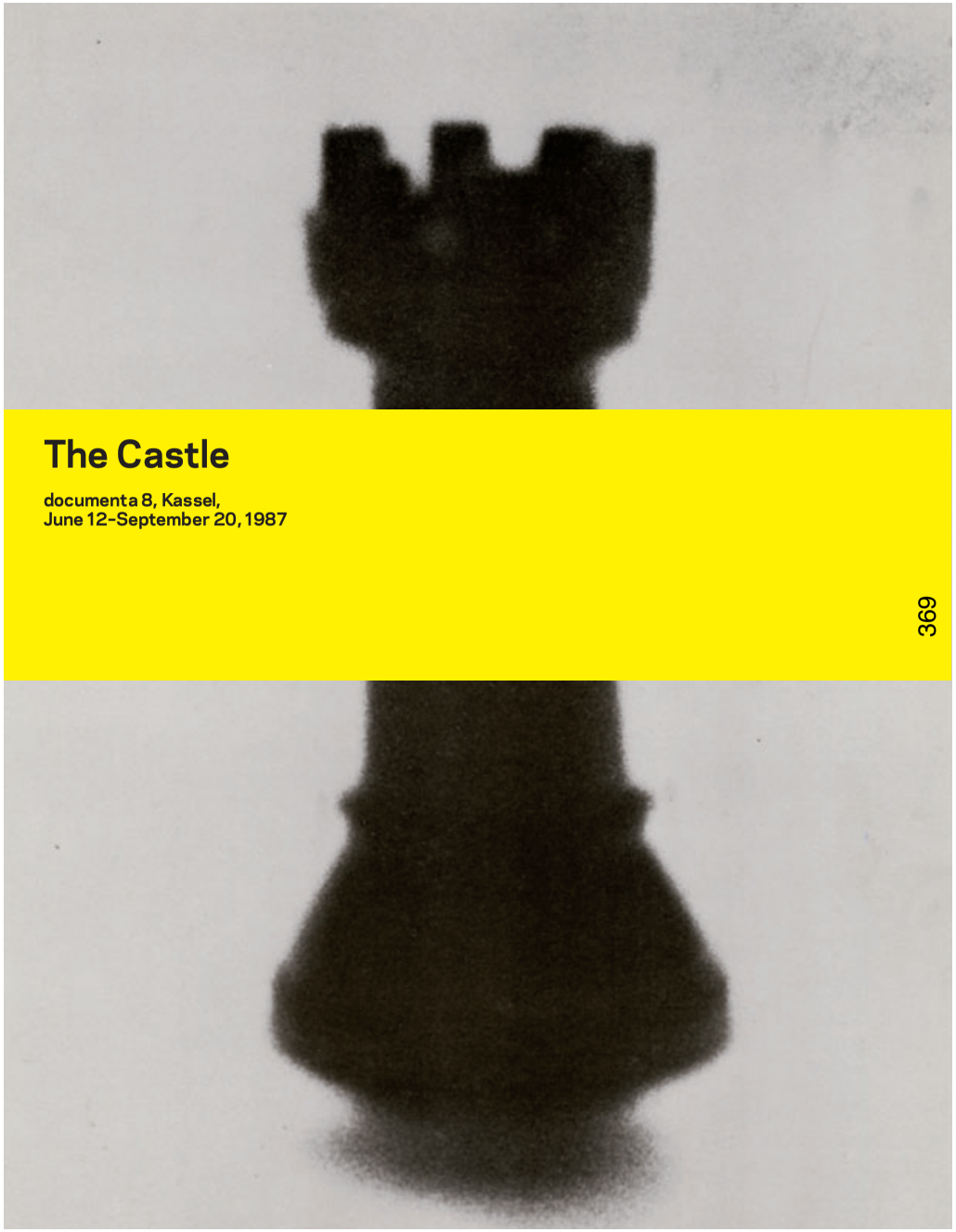
In this self-imposed confinement art becomes comfortable, criticality becomes style, politics becomes idealism, and ultimately information becomes impossibility.

Group Material refutes this operatively submissive philosophy with this proposed exhibition, *Anti-Baudrillard* (*Resistance*).

Anti-Baudrillard (*Resistance*) is a collection of art objects and images that depict an undeniable political reality and form a picture of widespread, international resistance. This resistance denies the self-indulgence of leisure-class theory. It is resistance born from necessity and genuine day-to-day existence. . . .







The Castle

documenta 8, Kassel,
June 12–September 20, 1987





An enclosed circular room painted a subtle shade of silvery gray and carpeted in royal blue is constructed for *The Castle*. Franz Kafka's book with the same title, about a man who repeatedly tries and fails to gain access to the authorities of the eponymous castle, is a reference point for the exhibition concept. A deleted extract from Kafka's text is reproduced along the bottom and top perimeters of the walls, encircling and captioning the space—metaphorically expressing the perspective of the show. It reads: "The Castle in itself is infinitely more powerful than you are; nevertheless there might still be some doubt whether it will win, but you don't turn that to account; it is as though all your endeavors were aimed at establishing the victory of the Castle beyond any doubt, that is why suddenly in the midst of the fight you begin to be afraid without any cause, thus increasing your own helplessness." A soundtrack of easy-listening versions of socially relevant and revolutionary songs plays continuously. A collection of American and German store-bought products exemplify "how the consumer marketplace masquerades as an arena of alternatives and creates an illusory freedom of choice: buying power is substituted for political power." Products designed to appeal to notions of hierarchy and status are installed, including Mr. Big napkins, Master Blend coffee, Lord cigarettes, Meister Klasse soup mixes, and Imperial margarine. GM focuses on only small-scale artworks for the show to contradict the competitive bigger-is-better attitude evident in international exhibitions such as documenta.

← Previous page:
Detail of announcement card for *The Castle* (front)
↑ Exterior view of *The Castle*
↗ *The Castle*, left to right: works by Silvia Kolbowski, Tom Lawson (top), Master Blend coffee (middle), Aric Obrosey (bottom), Larry Johnson

MEMBERS:
Doug Ashford, Julie Ault, Tim Rollins

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Exhibition Proposal (excerpt),
Group Material, September 1986

The Castle has a subject, a theme and design that unifies the myriad of objects exhibited. *The Castle* refers to how modern western culture, from the most common household product to the most coveted contemporary artwork seems to address a new will to power, not genuine political power but a desire for the representations of power, the signs of superiority, privilege and dominance. . . . *The Castle* features artists who imitate, mediate, appropriate, and militate against this crisis of contemporary visual culture. . .

The visage of Orwell's Big Brother has been sublimated by the omnipresent surgically altered face of Michael Jackson. The power we seek to impress or usurp, the power we desire yet deny, the power that has penetrated every fiber of our common sense, the power that has made working classes disbelieve in their own everyday existence; this is the subject of our exhibition. . . .





Reader's Guide (excerpt),
Group Material, June 1987

All artists seek an ideal audience. This audience used to be people—flesh and blood individuals. This is finished. Our art is now made for The Castle.

Unlike the older forms of dominance—the King, the Boss, the Landlord, The Castle is a general, sweeping power we can no longer exactly locate. Despite its lack of specificity, it strikes us with as great a force and brutality as ever before experienced in history. It is the dangerous, amorphous nature of The Castle that makes it the object of our love and attention.

To love The Castle is to make oneself in its image. Artists take on attributes of The Castle. As in the game of chess, we as artists are taller and more privileged than the dispensable pawns. Artists are pawns of a higher rank, bestowed with illusions of freedom. Yet like the rook, we must comply with strict laws of limited movement.

Here is our offering to The Castle—an arrangement of paintings, drawings, sculptures, prints, photographs, pages torn from popular magazines, recorded tapes of music, decorative household objects, things we buy in supermarkets—visual objects that dress in the vestments of power in order to perhaps gain an audience to power, an audience with The Castle.

The Castle, like all castles before it, is very slowly crumbling into history. Others will scour the ground, find the useful debris and use it to build new structures. We look forward to the moment when The Castle weakens, when the artist rejects the role of the rook, retrieving full power of movement. This requires artists who, not waiting their turn, ignore the law of the grid and break the rules of the game.



Constitution

The Temple University Gallery, Philadelphia, October 1–November 14, 1987

For *Constitution*, the walls of the Temple University space are painted a shade of tan from the Federal period of American interior design—the period when the Constitution of the United States was drafted. Group Material paints an enlargement of the preamble and initial section of the 1787 Constitution on the gallery walls to create a visual and symbolic background for the art displayed, which includes works in various media by "fine" artists, so-called outsider and "folk" artists, and a bench designed by Thomas Jefferson. A soundtrack of Mahalia Jackson singing traditional hymns plays during the show.

↑ *Constitution*, left to right: works by John Ahearn, Andres Serrano, Nancy Spero (top), Sherrie Levine (middle), Daniel Pressley (bottom)
→ Exhibition handout
→ Following spread, left to right: works by Guerrilla Art Action Group, Curtis Brown, Edward Curtis (top), Dennis Adams (bottom), David Robbins, Faith Ringgold, Thomas Jefferson (bench)

CONSTITUTION

DO I CONTRADICT MYSELF?
VERY WELL THEN I CONTRADICT MYSELF,
(I AM LARGE, I CONTAIN MULTITUDES.)

- WALT WHITMAN
FROM "SONG OF MYSELF"
1855-1881

HOW TO CELEBRATE THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA? BEGIN BY IMAGINING THAT WE PAY TRIBUTE NOT TO A YELLOWED DOCUMENT VACUUM-SEALED UNDER THICK PLATE GLASS IN WASHINGTON, D.C., BUT RATHER TO A LIVING BODY - LIKE A 200-YEAR-OLD PERSON - MIRACULOUSLY VIGOROUS AND WISE, YET OBSTINATE, PERHAPS TOO CONFIDENT OF ITS OWN GOOD INFLUENCE AND PERFECTION, WITH THE AGE-OLD DILEMNA OF PRACTICING WHAT IT PREACHES IN THE EVERYDAY REALITY OF TODAY'S AMERICAN PEOPLE.

MANY WANT TO GIVE THE CONSTITUTION THE KIND OF BIRTHDAY PARTY BEFITTING A GRAND OLD DAD. GROUP MATERIAL ALWAYS LOVES A PARTY, BUT ESPECIALLY A CELEBRATION OF ISSUES, OF QUESTIONS. GROUP MATERIAL TOASTS THE CONSTITUTION BY DEMANDING IT BEAR WITNESS. IN THIS RESPECT, OUR EXHIBITION CONSTITUTION IS A GOOD-SPIRITED TOWN MEETING. THE CHORUS OF FINE ARTWORKS, EVERYDAY OBJECTS, FOLK ART OBJECTS AND FURNITURE ALL ASK OUR GUEST OF HONOR THE SAME QUESTIONS IN MANY DIFFERENT VOICES AND LANGUAGES: WHY DID YOU COME ABOUT AND FOR WHOM? WHAT DID YOU MEAN 200 YEARS AGO AND WHAT DO YOU MEAN TODAY? WHY HAVE YOU SUCCEEDED AND FAILED AT THE SAME TIME? HOW CAN WE PROTECT YOU? HOW CAN YOU PROTECT US?

FOR THIS EXHIBITION AT THE TEMPLE GALLERY IN PHILADELPHIA, GROUP MATERIAL HAS TAKEN THE CONSTITUTION-AS-DOCUMENT, AS A HISTORICAL WRITING, AND ENLARGED THE ORIGINAL CALLIGRAPHY, TRANSFORMING IT FROM AN ARTIFACT INTO A SITE - AN ARENA WHERE WE MAY OBSERVE THE BATTLE BETWEEN PROMISES AND DOUBTS AS MANIFESTED IN THE STREETS OF AMERICA DAILY.

CONTRADICTION - BETWEEN IDEALS AND LIVED REALITY, BETWEEN WEALTH AND POVERTY, BETWEEN DOMINANT CULTURE AND ETHNIC DIFFERENCE - IS THE FUNDAMENTAL HISTORICAL TRADITION OF OUR UNITED STATES. GROUP MATERIAL'S CONSTITUTION IS A CRITICAL TRIBUTE TO THIS NATIONAL CONDITION - THIS PRIMAL AMERICAN DESIRE FOR INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM THAT AT ONCE VINDICATES AND THREATENS THE PREMISES OF OUR MOST REVERED HISTORIC DOCUMENT. A CONSTITUTION IS ALSO A WALK. WALKING THROUGH OUR EXHIBITION, YOU ARE WALKING THROUGH THE PRINCIPLES OF THE CONSTITUTION MADE VISIBLE. YOU ADD TO THIS EXHIBITION WITH THE LIVED EXPERIENCE AND ACTIONS OF YOUR DAILY LIVES, TRANSFORMING CONSTITUTION FROM A NOUN TO A VERB, INTO SOCIAL ACTION.

WHAT IS MORE DANGEROUS TO THE FORMING OF A MORE PERFECT UNION THAN THE ILLUSION THAT WE POSSESS SUCH A FLAWLESS STATE ALREADY?

HOW TO CELEBRATE OUR CONSTITUTION? BY SPOILING THE PARTY WITH QUESTIONS.

- GROUP MATERIAL





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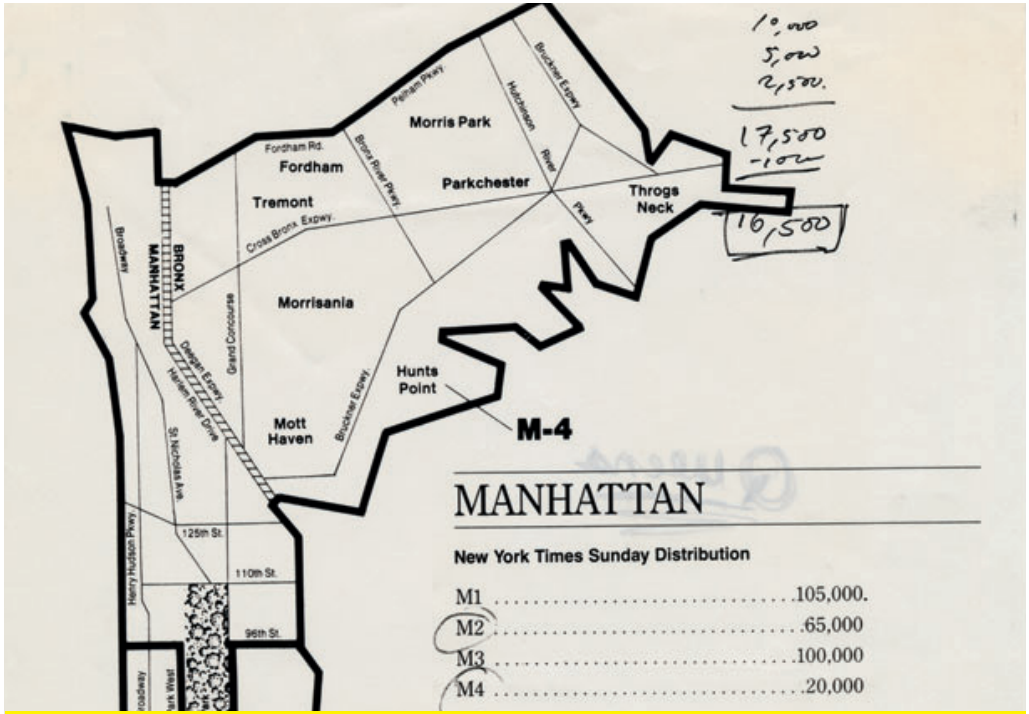
Fall 1987. Julie visits Felix Gonzalez-Torres' MFA exhibition at NYU, which includes dateline Photostat pieces and images of crowds reproduced as puzzles, and brings his current work to the attention of the group. Contact is made and affinities between Felix and the group are immediately apparent. Felix had participated in *Subculture* in 1983 after Mundy, enthused from seeing a work of his, had gotten in touch. Felix seems a natural for the group. After getting together a couple times with Doug, Julie, and Tim, he is invited to join.

Tim Rollins leaves the group to exclusively devote himself to his progressively more primary endeavor, K.O.S. (Kids of Survival), the after school workshop he developed in the South Bronx where junior and high-school kids read books together and collaborate on paintings that communicate their lived experiences in relation to the ideas encountered in the literature. Tim had wanted to stop participating in GM for a while, and as Felix has now joined, he feels confident that his leaving does not jeopardize its continuation.

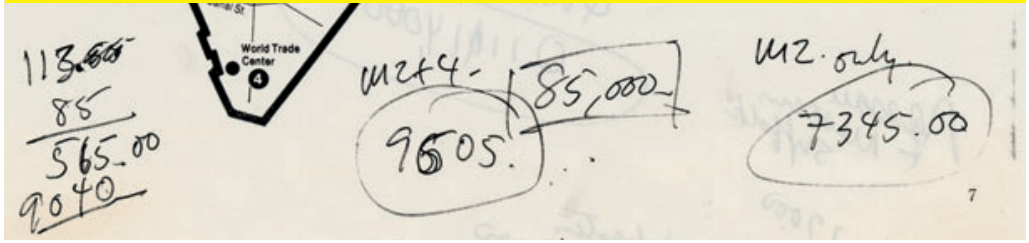
← *Constitution* catalog
↑ *Constitution*, left to right: works by Gretchen Bender, Leon Golub, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Tom Lawson

MEMBERS:
Doug Ashford, Julie Ault, Felix Gonzalez-Torres



Inserts

advertising supplement to the Sunday *New York Times*, May 22, 1988





GM acts as a contractor, commissioning works by ten artists for *Inserts*, booklets to be placed in an edition of a Sunday newspaper. The single page works are conceived for the situation by Mike Glier, Jenny Holzer, Barbara Kruger, Carrie Mae Weems, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Nancy Spero, Nancy Linn, Hans Haacke, Richard Prince, and Louise Lawler. Originally planned for the *Sunday Daily News*, the project is rejected just prior to realization. A *Daily News* source reports that the approval committee was expecting drawings and paintings, and was taken aback by the amount of text in the art. Additionally, they viewed the tone and subject matter of AIDS, nuclear weaponry, and racism as offensive and inappropriate to their family-oriented readership. The group approaches the *New York Times*, whose director of Advertising Acceptability reviews the content and expresses concern that readers may be confused and upset by the use of the term "pickaninny" in the work by Carrie Mae Weems. He asks if she will reword. Weems refuses and the *Times* agrees to publish the piece intact. *Inserts* has a budget of $25,000, the majority of which goes for the space and distribution into 85,000 copies of the May 22 Sunday edition. Grants from NYSCA, the Public Art Fund Inc., and Art Matters, Inc. fund the project.

← *New York Times* distribution map for advertisers
→ Following spreads: *Inserts*, left to right: Mike Glier, Jenny Holzer, Richard Prince, Louise Lawler

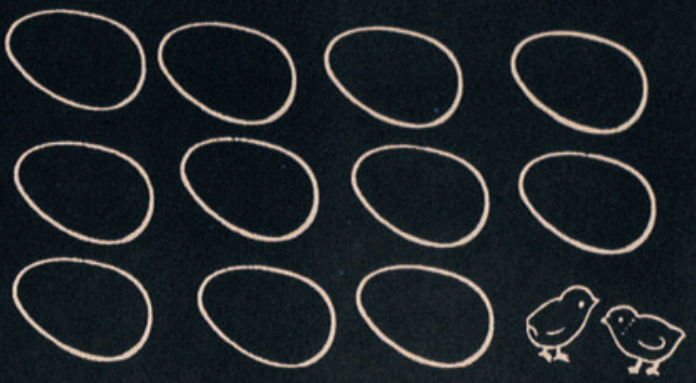


I AM A MAN.
I ENTER SPACE BECAUSE
IT EMPTIES ME.
I CHASE PEOPLE
AROUND THE HOUSE.
I SLEEP ON MY BACK
FOR SIGHTS OF SEX
THAT MAKES BLOOD.
I PROTECT WHAT MULTIPLIES
BUT I AM NOT CERTAIN
THAT I LOVE MY BOY.
THERE IS PLEASURE
IN STOPPING MY FLESH
WHEN IT DOES WRONG.
GETTING WHAT I WANT
MAKES ME SICK.
WHY I FIGHT IS
NOT YOUR BUSINESS.
I LIKE DYING AND I AM SURE
I CAN DO IT MORE THAN ONCE.
I NEED PERFECTION BUT
WHEN I IMPLEMENT IT
HALF OF EVERYONE DIES.
I HAVE A LOT OF ACCIDENTS
AND I THINK THEY ARE FUNNY.
I EMPLOY PEOPLE TO MAKE
MY HOURS LIKE DREAMS.
I LIKE A CIRCLE OF
BODIES WHOSE HANDS
DO WHAT THEY SHOULD.
I WILL KILL YOU FOR
WHAT YOU MIGHT DO.

FIREMAN PULLING DRUNK OUT OF A BURNING BED:

"YOU DARNED FOOL, THAT'LL TEACH YOU TO SMOKE IN BED."

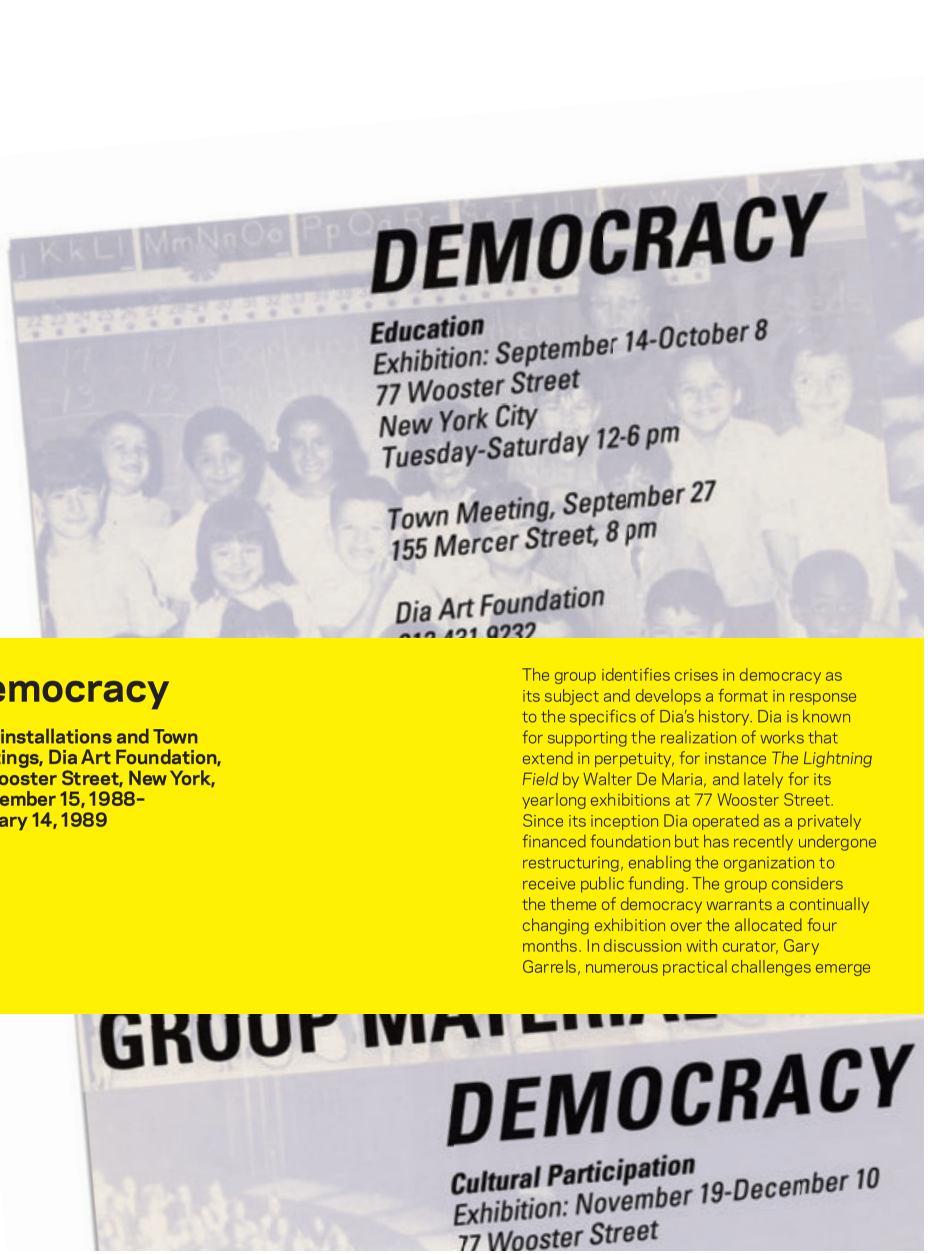
DRUNK: "I WASN'T SMOKING IN BED, IT WAS ON FIRE WHEN I laid down."

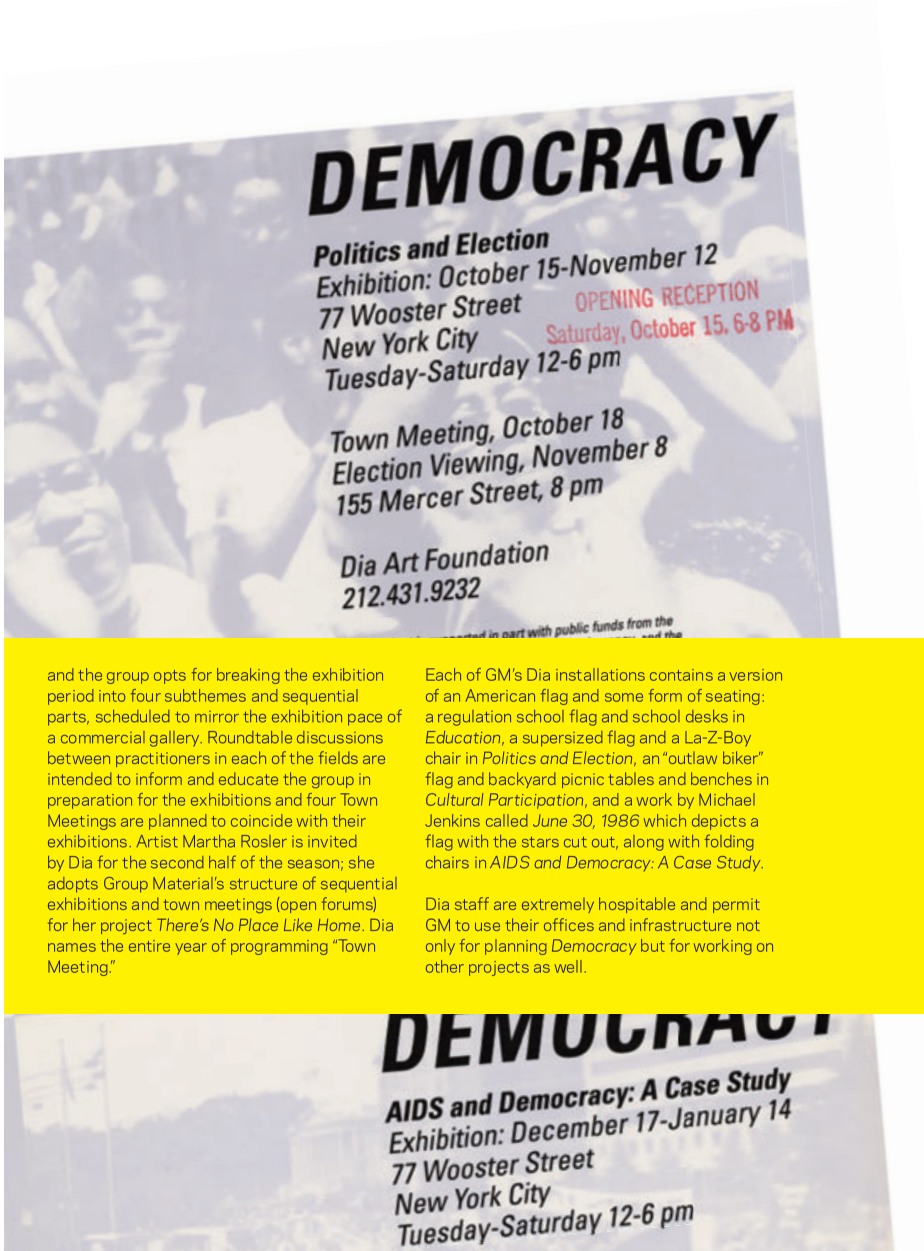


enough.

There are enough nuclear weapons scattered over the globe to kill everyone on earth at least 12 times.

Ruth Leger Sivard, World Military and Social Expenditures, 1986





Democracy

Four installations and Town Meetings, Dia Art Foundation, 77 Wooster Street, New York, September 15, 1988–January 14, 1989

The group identifies crises in democracy as its subject and develops a format in response to the specifics of Dia's history. Dia is known for supporting the realization of works that extend in perpetuity, for instance *The Lightning Field* by Walter De Maria, and lately for its yearlong exhibitions at 77 Wooster Street. Since its inception Dia operated as a privately financed foundation but has recently undergone restructuring, enabling the organization to receive public funding. The group considers the theme of democracy warrants a continually changing exhibition over the allocated four months. In discussion with curator, Gary Garrels, numerous practical challenges emerge and the group opts for breaking the exhibition period into four subthemes and sequential parts, scheduled to mirror the exhibition pace of a commercial gallery. Roundtable discussions between practitioners in each of the fields are intended to inform and educate the group in preparation for the exhibitions and four Town Meetings are planned to coincide with their exhibitions. Artist Martha Rosler is invited by Dia for the second half of the season; she adopts Group Material's structure of sequential exhibitions and town meetings (open forums) for her project *There's No Place Like Home*. Dia names the entire year of programming "Town Meeting."

Each of GM's Dia installations contains a version of an American flag and some form of seating: a regulation school flag and school desks in *Education*, a supersized flag and a La-Z-Boy chair in *Politics and Election*, an "outlaw biker" flag and backyard picnic tables and benches in *Cultural Participation*, and a work by Michael Jenkins called *June 30, 1986* which depicts a flag with the stars cut out, along with folding chairs in *AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study*.

Dia staff are extremely hospitable and permit GM to use their offices and infrastructure not only for planning *Democracy* but for working on other projects as well.

TOWN MEETING!
EDUCATION & DEMOCRACY
ORGANIZED BY GROUP MATERIAL
Tuesday, September 27, 8 PM
DIA ART FOUNDATION • 155 Mercer St.

AGENDA

Meeting Chairperson: Tim Rollins, Director, Art and Knowledge Workshop, Bronx

I. Welcome and introductory remarks by Tim Rollins for Group Material

II. Brief summary of issues raised during a panel on Education & Democracy organized by Group Material*

III. Open to the floor: Discussion on the following questions --

A. What are some aspects of the present crisis in education in the U.S.?

B. Education for whom? -- Who has the greatest access to organized forms of education? Who is denied access to these same institutions? How is democracy served by current educational policies? Is a Eurocentric curriculum suitable for the increasingly multicultural nature of contemporary American society?

C. Education beyond schooling? -- What is the state of forms of

Education & Democracy will be recorded, transcribed and incorporated into a publication organized by Group Material for the Dia Art Foundation.

*Education & Democracy panel held in May 1988: John Deveaux, Bronx Educational Services; Rodney Harris, Boys & Girls High School, Brooklyn; Catherine Lord, California Institute of the Arts; Tim Rollins; Ira Schor, City University of New York.

This project is supported in part by public funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency, and the New York State Council on the Arts. Admission is free. For more information call (212)431-9232.

Democracy: Education

Dia Art Foundation, New York, September 15–October 8, 1988; Town Meeting, September 27, 1988

Education presents artworks directly and metaphorically related to education and its institutions alongside collaborative contributions by teacher and student groups. Doug writes a letter of invitation to public school teachers to elicit projects from and with their students for the exhibition, which, with help from Mario Asaro (a former intern with Group Material who is associated with Artists / Teachers Concerned) is distributed via the mailing list of the New York State Teachers Association. Although he is no longer an active group member Tim Rollins is involved in the proposal stage of *Democracy*, and he participates in the roundtable discussion, as well as acting as chairperson of the Town Meeting.

GM paints the walls with blackboard paint, which is a surprise to Peter Halley, whose work in the exhibition uses mainly black paint as well. During the show, a fire breaks out on the floor above and the fire department arrives. In the chaos of attempting to remove the art from harm's way, two firemen manhandle the most valuable artwork in the show—two chalkboards with ephemeral traces of a performance by Joseph Beuys on them—thereby damaging the work.



↑ ***Democracy: Politics and Election*** **roundtable discussion, left to right: Eva Cockroft, Judge Bruce Wright, Julie Ault, Felix Gonzalez-Torres**

ROBOTER

BEHAVIOR
MODIFICATION



Press Release (excerpt),
Group Material, September 1988

Our objective is to focus on the different options and limitations that surround the process of learning. The installation is designed as a classroom, where many voices enter a dialogue. Democracy is in a state of crisis. It must be a process of collaboration and inclusion which needs to be constantly reinvented. . . .



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Democracy: Politics and Election

Dia Art Foundation, New York, October 15–November 12; Town Meeting, October 18, 1988

The presidential race between Michael Dukakis and George H. W. Bush is defined by a new level of negative campaigning and television oriented, art directed spectacle masterminded by Bush's campaign manager, Lee Atwater, with assistance from political consultant Roger Ailes. Symbols seem to stand in for substance, which is registered in the installation by the placement of a television tuned to major network campaign coverage on a podium right at the gallery entrance. Hundreds of red, white, and blue balloons are inflated to cover the ceiling during the reception. Dia's caterers likewise thematize the decorations and drinks with a red, white, and blue motif. The opening atmosphere is of a perversely patriotic party gone wrong.



↑ *Democracy: Politics and Election* left to right: works by Betrand Lavier, Antonio Muntadas and Marshall Reese (monitor), Mike Glier (hanging), Mitchell Syrop (wall), supersize flag and La-Z-Boy chair included by GM

Press release (excerpt),
October 1988

The *Politics and Election* exhibition will not simply illustrate political crises and struggles, but will focus specifically on the contemporary nature of political power. We are currently witnessing the complete dismissal of substance and honesty, in which the real crises are overshadowed by the style of presentation. The exact color, dimensions and design of the debate podiums have become more important than the issues being discussed. Through juxtaposition of subtly related objects and images, Group Material invites the audience to read between the lines. . . .

TOWN MEETING!

POLITICS & ELECTION

ORGANIZED BY GROUP MATERIAL

Tuesday, October 18, 8 PM

DIA ART FOUNDATION • 155 Mercer St.

AGENDA

Meeting Co-Chairs: Lucy R. Lippard, writer and activist
Jerry Kearns, artist

PAST: Introduction by Lucy R. Lippard and Jerry Kearns, a recent history of cultural responses to political crises.

PRESENT: Open to the floor. Discussion on the following:

What are the major aspects of the current political crises?

How are you responding to these crises individually and collectively?

Are these various methods and strategies successful?

FUTURE: Are there events approaching us that will demand cultural action?

What are the possibilities for action on a local and national level?

Please come prepared to speak on these issues. The Town Meeting on Politics & Election will be recorded, transcribed and incorporated into a publication organized by Group Material for the Dia Art Foundation.

This agenda is based on a panel discussion held in June 1988: Richard Andrews, former Director of Visual Arts, NEA, Washington D.C.; Leon Golub, artist; Esther Parada, artist; Judge Bruce Wright, Justice of the Supreme Court, State of New York.

This project is supported in part by public funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency, and the New York State Council on the Arts. Admission is free. For more information call the Dia Art Foundation, (212) 431-9232.



Democracy: Cultural Participation

Dia Art Foundation, New York, November 19–December 10; Town Meeting, November 22, 1988

↑ Store sign omitted from *Democracy: Cultural Participation*



Group Material installs a cloth sign that reads "Under New Management" over the gallery doorway, which is intended to reference the presidential election, relations between multiculturalism and institutional change, as well as Dia's transformation from a private to public institution. Dia staff consider this to be in poor taste and want it removed; reluctantly, the group complies. A couple of days before the opening, the group feels something is missing from the exhibition and makes a shopping trip to a supermarket in search of inspiration and material. The snack food aisle contains a plethora of options packaged to suggest ethnic identifications with particular tastes.

The group buys numerous examples to allude to market versions of multiculturalism, e.g. BonTon "Fiesta Mix," Bachman "Pastapazazz," Bravos "Nacho Cheese" tortilla chips, and installs the packages in a row along two walls of the exhibition. The La-Z-Boy reclining chair from *Politics and Election* is raffled during *Cultural Participation* along with a "name brand color TV" and a "20 lb. self-basting turkey." Tickets are sold for $1 by Dia guards who approach visitors asking them if they want to enter a raffle.

→ Following page: Dia guard Camilla Fallon at *Democracy: Cultural Participation* with banners by Mike Kelley behind desk

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Press release (excerpt),
Group Material, November 1988

This installation will construct a site of displacement, symbolic of our mainstream culture which is becoming progressively homogenized. Consumptive freedoms of choice replace more active forms of cultural participation. We have been socialized by what we own, not by what we do and make. The marketplace script tells us how to be a man or a woman, what it means to speak a language, what it means to be an American. This exhibition asks, are we a multicultural society, or just a diverse set of demographic statistics? . . .

TOWN MEETING!

CULTURAL PARTICIPATION

ORGANIZED BY GROUP MATERIAL

Tuesday, November 22, 8 pm

DIA ART FOUNDATION • 155 Mercer St.

AGENDA

Meeting Chairperson: David Avalos, Artist, San Diego

I. Welcome and introductory remarks by David Avalos

II. Open to the floor: Discussion on the following questions --

A. What are some aspects of the present crisis of cultural participation?

B. Culture for whom? Who is given access and who is denied access to the institutions of representation? In what ways do cultural institutions serve and in what ways do they fail their communities and public?

C. How does consumerism affect our participatory power? How do various marketplaces and institutions define communities and dictate sociality?

D. What are some non-mainstream, alternative, and/or oppositional practices? What are the problems and solutions presented by these practices?

E. What are our options? How can we begin to build cultural democracy?

This agenda is based on a panel discussion held in June 1988: David Avalos, Martha Gever, Lucy Lippard, Randall Morris, Robert Farris Thompson, Deborah Wye.



Democracy: AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study

Dia Art Foundation, New York, December 19, 1988–January 14, 1989; Town Meeting, January 10, 1989

Group Material regards this installation as a "juncture in which sorrow, rage, and fear can be used to reinforce our decision to act, to empower ourselves in the struggle for a society in which all individuals will have their most basic needs fulfilled by a responsible, egalitarian, and truly democratic government." The tables that cross the space distribute stacks of flyers from activist and community organizations. Monitors on either end screen videos—a common medium for artists creating work addressing the AIDS crisis. A wall text at the entrance dedicates the entire *Democracy* project to William Olander, friend and Senior Curator at the New Museum, who is very ill. The group installs a makeshift wheelchair ramp for the opening, which Bill attends. It is an emotional evening for the group, also tinged by a measure of antagonism to the memorializing orientation of some art in the show by a number of visitors wanting a more militant exposition.



Ronald Jones: *Untitled* (1986). Its label reads: (International Maritime Code: "Stop and watch for my signals. You are in grave danger." "I am trying to communicate with you. You are in grave danger."; "Stop and watch for my signals. I am disabled—communicate with me."; "I am disabled—communicate with me for you are in grave danger too.")

Safe Combat in the Erogenous Zone

BY ELIZABETH HESS

AIDS AND DEMOCRACY: A CASE STUDY. Group Material, Dia Art Foundation, 77 Wooster Street, through January 14.

Group Material's survival over the past decade is an achievement in itself. In 1979, a group of art students formed a collective as an antidote to the extreme alienation artists were feeling toward one another, not to mention toward the rest of the world. Whatever their political beliefs, the members shared the conviction that art was, or could be, a social force. This is still their raison d'être. Over the years, Group Material (Doug Ashford, Julie Ault, Felix Gonzalez-Torres) has developed a less anarchistic and more strategic aesthetic, yet it has not lost its ability to surprise us. Taking over Dia with a four-part series about "Democracy" was a most unexpected coup.

Many of the recent exhibitions on AIDS have used photographic documentation to dispel any illusions about the reality of the 79,823 cases on record in the U.S. Photos aptly convey the immediacy of the crisis, but there are obviously other ways for artists to communicate their thoughts on, or experiences with, AIDS. The power of Group Material's fourth and last show lies in the collective's decision to expand the usual approach to the subject through a Conceptual installation.

"AIDS and Democracy" necessarily—if predictably—includes loads of information to counter manipulated or missing facts with more up-to-date data. Hours of continuous videotape play on two monitors, and numerous broadsides, pamphlets, newspaper clippings, and handouts from ACT UP fill a long table in the center of the gallery. But, beyond the fact sheets and the human drama, the show implicitly raises a fascinating question about the impact of AIDS on contemporary art and, in a few cases, on works made prior to the advent of the disease.

In another context, many of the 36 pieces might not raise the specter of AIDS, but this installation sets up the work to argue a point of view. The walls are covered with a variety of pieces that are yoked into the activist premise of this show: AIDS is so pervasive and misconstrued that everyone must participate in the fight to stop it. The disjunction between the cool "art" and the hot "propaganda," initially jarring, becomes less and less so as the information gleaned from the software and hard copy begins to color our general vision. The best way to look at this show is to move back and forth between the tapes, the print material, and the objects on the walls.

The point this installation makes is that, in the light of concrete information on AIDS, all works, no matter how tangentially related, take on a particular meaning. AIDS unavoidably changes the picture of art, which is exactly what all major life and death disruptions do. Not so long ago, the vehemence of antiwar sentiment infiltrated the content of many images that didn't initially intend to speak out on Vietnam. Jasper Johns's flag, for example, was temporarily invested with an ironic significance. Many of the more abstract works here, such as Ross Bleckner's fuzzy striped canvas, which is shaped into a protective shield (or perhaps an authoritarian badge), may or may not have been made with AIDS in mind. Either way, Bleckner's piece reads as if it was painted to combat AIDS because it is in this show. The same is the case for a figurative sketch by Mike Glier, of several heads accompanied by a detached, limp arm.

We see Group Material's curatorial eye working, as certain objects shift into context. Michael Jenkins has cut the stars out of a large painting of an American flag, leaving an empty hole in the corner of his facsimile. The piece comments only generally on governmental failure, but here the desecration of the flag becomes a demand for the right of every citizen to health care. A few works, such as Nancy Burson's *Leukemia Visualization Image*, don't need to make any accommodation to the theme. She juxtaposes a magnified photo of healthy cells with one of diseased ones, ironically revealing the beauty in the beast; to the untrained eye, both the normal and the malignant cells have their own fascination. Several American flags ripple through the air in a small realistic canvas by Brian Buczak, who, we learn from a chilling label on the wall, died last year on the 4th of July.

Nothing in the gallery is immune to AIDS: even a painting of an ordinary oak branch by Joe Andoe, which seems entirely unrelated, becomes tragic through association. A few pieces, including *A*

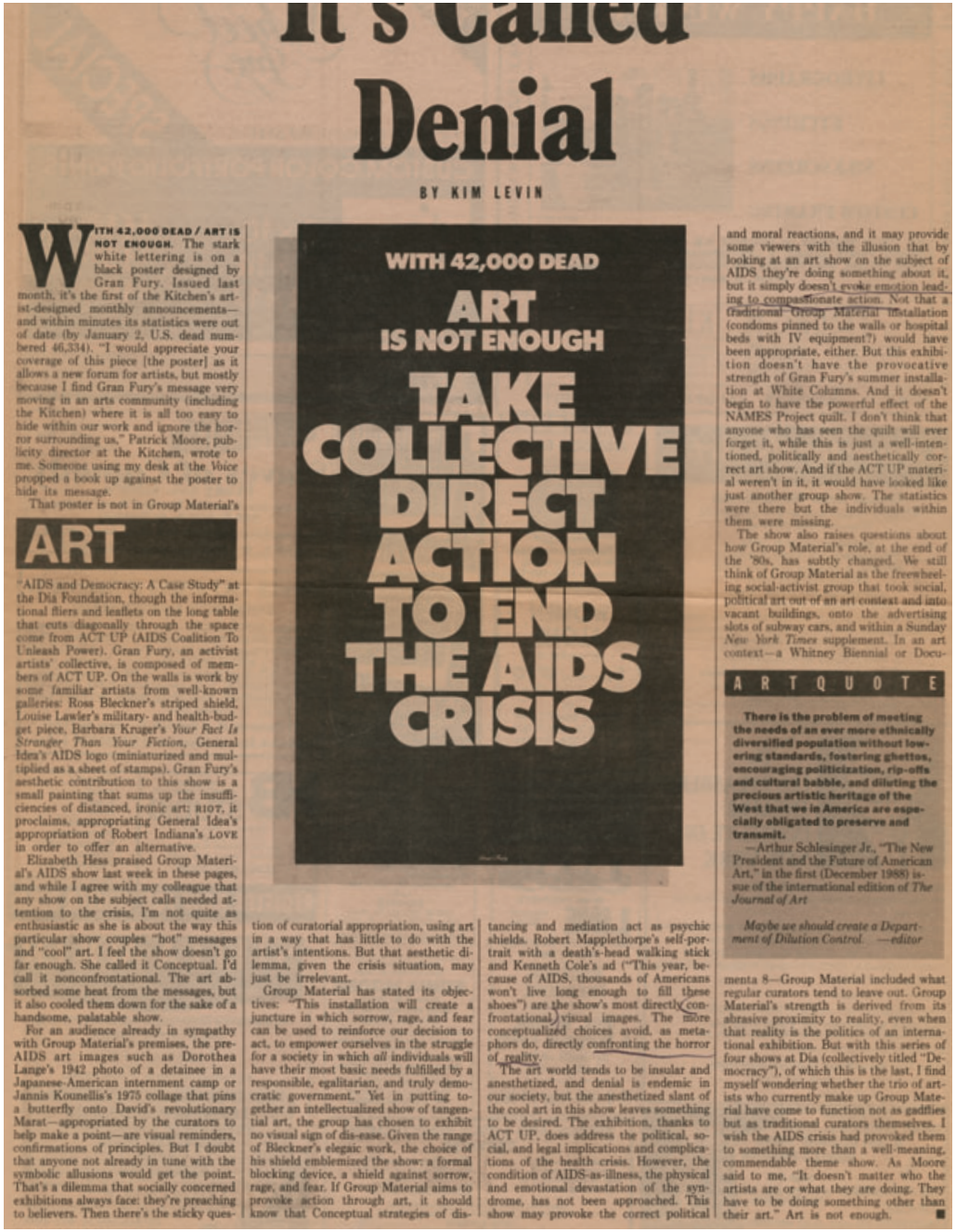
ART

Journal of the Plague Year, by Tim Rollins & K.O.S., Louise Lawler's *Them*, and Gretchen Bender's *Suspect*, would speak to the subject in any context. These are the pieces we will turn back to, over time, for a history lesson.

In the '80s, overtly polemical pieces are not usually in the majority. *Dark Quadrilateral* by Steven Evans is a small reproduction of a photograph (placed so high up on a wall that it's easy to miss) of a group of concentration camp victims with the same inverted triangle on their uniforms that has become the symbol for gay liberation. Historical links to the devastating stigma currently placed on people with AIDS are also suggested by a 1942 photograph by Dorothea Lange: a Japanese man in a crowded internment camp is being tagged for identification purposes. While both these photos were originally taken in the '40s, what is so frightening about their inclusion here is not what they reveal about the past, but what they imply could happen in the future. The fact that these are pre-AIDS images allows them a critical distance to comment on the issue.

On the brighter side, there's some good sex in this show. It's primarily for educational purposes, but a few of the experts get off by demonstrating what they preach. *Life Guard for Sex*, produced and directed by Richard Morgan, is an attempt to prove that safe sex can be sexy. The tape (only available on request) is filled exclusively with the pleasures of voyeuristic, gay, X-rated antics, complete with genitals waxing and waning. Bodily fluids, however, remain with their rightful owners. True to the spirit and format of the average porn film, there's no story, character development, exterior scenes, or memorable faces.

Most of the videos are traditional documentaries that faithfully chronicle various protests, including the unveiling of the AIDS quilt in Washington, D.C. *Doctors, Liars, and Women*, directed by Maria Maggenti and Jean Carlomusto, is one of few tapes geared to women, both lesbians and heterosexuals. Last January, when Dr. Robert E. Gould wrote an article in *Cosmopolitan* claiming that heterosexual women could have unrestricted sex even with a partner who tested HIV positive, he never dreamed that the women's movement would jump on his back with a camera; the doctor is intelligently and aggressively made to look like a dangerous fool, and the controversy makes national news as it cuts a mainstream path through a host of talk shows all the way to *Nightline*. The tape unravels the original facts in the story, and then follows them in a hilarious montage as they get tangled up again in the media. Cosmo girls can get AIDS too, just like everybody else. ■



It's Called Denial

BY KIM LEVIN

WITH 42,000 DEAD / ART IS NOT ENOUGH. The stark white lettering is on a black poster designed by Gran Fury. Issued last month, it's the first of the Kitchen's artist-designed monthly announcements—and within minutes its statistics were out of date (by January 2, U.S. dead numbered 46,334). "I would appreciate your coverage of this piece [the poster] as it allows a new forum for artists, but mostly because I find Gran Fury's message very moving in an arts community (including the Kitchen) where it is all too easy to hide within our work and ignore the horror surrounding us," Patrick Moore, publicity director at the Kitchen, wrote to me. Someone using my desk at the *Voice* propped a book up against the poster to hide its message.

That poster is not in Group Material's

ART

"AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study" at the Dia Foundation, though the informational fliers and leaflets on the long table that cuts diagonally through the space come from ACT UP (AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power). Gran Fury, an activist artists' collective, is composed of members of ACT UP. On the walls is work by some familiar artists from well-known galleries: Ross Bleckner's striped shield, Louise Lawler's military- and health-budget piece, Barbara Kruger's *Your Fact Is Stranger Than Your Fiction*, General Idea's AIDS logo (miniaturized and multiplied as a sheet of stamps). Gran Fury's aesthetic contribution to this show is a small painting that sums up the insufficiencies of distanced, ironic art: RIOT, it proclaims, appropriating General Idea's appropriation of Robert Indiana's LOVE in order to offer an alternative.

Elizabeth Hess praised Group Material's AIDS show last week in these pages, and while I agree with my colleague that any show on the subject calls needed attention to the crisis, I'm not quite as enthusiastic as she is about the way this particular show couples "hot" messages and "cool" art. I feel the show doesn't go far enough. She called it Conceptual. I'd call it nonconfrontational. The art absorbed some heat from the messages, but it also cooled them down for the sake of a handsome, palatable show.

For an audience already in sympathy with Group Material's premises, the pre-AIDS art images such as Dorothea Lange's 1942 photo of a detainee in a Japanese-American internment camp or Jannis Kounellis's 1975 collage that pins a butterfly onto David's revolutionary Marat—appropriated by the curators to help make a point—are visual reminders, confirmations of principles. But I doubt that anyone not already in tune with the symbolic allusions would get the point. That's a dilemma that socially concerned exhibitions always face: they're preaching to believers. Then there's the sticky question of curatorial appropriation, using art in a way that has little to do with the artist's intentions. But that aesthetic dilemma, given the crisis situation, may just be irrelevant.

Group Material has stated its objectives: "This installation will create a juncture in which sorrow, rage, and fear can be used to reinforce our decision to act, to empower ourselves in the struggle for a society in which *all* individuals will have their most basic needs fulfilled by a responsible, egalitarian, and truly democratic government." Yet in putting together an intellectualized show of tangential art, the group has chosen to exhibit no visual sign of dis-ease. Given the range of Bleckner's elegaic work, the choice of his shield emblemized the show: a formal blocking device, a shield against sorrow, rage, and fear. If Group Material aims to provoke action through art, it should know that Conceptual strategies of distancing and mediation act as psychic shields. Robert Mapplethorpe's self-portrait with a death's-head walking stick and Kenneth Cole's ad ("This year, because of AIDS, thousands of Americans won't live long enough to fill these shoes") are the show's most directly confrontational visual images. The more conceptualized choices avoid, as metaphors do, directly confronting the horror of reality.

The art world tends to be insular and anesthetized, and denial is endemic in our society, but the anesthetized slant of the cool art in this show leaves something to be desired. The exhibition, thanks to ACT UP, does address the political, social, and legal implications and complications of the health crisis. However, the condition of AIDS-as-illness, the physical and emotional devastation of the syndrome, has not been approached. This show may provoke the correct political and moral reactions, and it may provide some viewers with the illusion that by looking at an art show on the subject of AIDS they're doing something about it, but it simply doesn't evoke emotion leading to compassionate action. Not that a traditional Group Material installation (condoms pinned to the walls or hospital beds with IV equipment?) would have been appropriate, either. But this exhibition doesn't have the provocative strength of Gran Fury's summer installation at White Columns. And it doesn't begin to have the powerful effect of the NAMES Project quilt. I don't think that anyone who has seen the quilt will ever forget it, while this is just a well-intentioned, politically and aesthetically correct art show. And if the ACT UP material weren't in it, it would have looked like just another group show. The statistics were there but the individuals within them were missing.

The show also raises questions about how Group Material's role, at the end of the '80s, has subtly changed. We still think of Group Material as the freewheeling social-activist group that took social, political art out of an art context and into vacant buildings, onto the advertising slots of subway cars, and within a Sunday *New York Times* supplement. In an art context—a Whitney Biennial or Documenta 8—Group Material included what regular curators tend to leave out. Group Material's strength is derived from its abrasive proximity to reality, even when that reality is the politics of an international exhibition. But with this series of four shows at Dia (collectively titled "Democracy"), of which this is the last, I find myself wondering whether the trio of artists who currently make up Group Material have come to function not as gadflies but as traditional curators themselves. I wish the AIDS crisis had provoked them to something more than a well-meaning, commendable theme show. As Moore said to me, "It doesn't matter who the artists are or what they are doing. They have to be doing something other than their art." Art is not enough. ■

ART QUOTE

There is the problem of meeting the needs of an ever more ethnically diversified population without lowering standards, fostering ghettos, encouraging politicization, rip-offs and cultural babble, and diluting the precious artistic heritage of the West that we in America are especially obligated to preserve and transmit.

—Arthur Schlesinger Jr., "The New President and the Future of American Art," in the first (December 1988) issue of the international edition of *The Journal of Art*

Maybe we should create a Department of Dilution Control. —editor

Letters to *The Village Voice*

Of course, art is not enough [Kim Levin, "It's Called Denial: Another Look at Group Material's AIDS Show," January 17]: people dear to us are passing the divide, minds are slowly glowing fainter, hearts are beating their last months, weeks, days. Of course, Kim Levin and Gran Fury are right—these are our own emotions. And yet Levin's article is unfair. Art is never enough in life's realm: Munch's deathbeds are not death, as conversely French impressionist paintings are not the sun on meadows. Elizabeth Hess is equally enraged, I am sure, about the merciless plague, but she looked at the show with the expectations one has for art ["Safe Combat in the Erogenous Zone," January 10].

Art is not direct action. The powerful poster by Gran Fury is not direct action—it merely calls for it. Direct action locates itself in life: in the fight for AIDS patients' rights and dignity, in the fight for an all-out governmental effort to fight the disease, and, let's not forget, in the hospital rooms where some nurses and doctors do what they can—and argue with their more frightened colleagues.

Rudolf Baranik, Cambridge, Massachusetts

Whatever one might think of Kim Levin's rather odd argument against Group Material's AIDS show—which seems to suggest that artists ought to give up art in favor of activism (does that, I wonder, apply to critics as well?)—what really prompted this letter is my question as to whether or not we saw the same show. The space of Group Material's show was diagonally traversed by two tables that, as Ms Levin says, provided a large amount of literature about AIDS, its consequences, and possible personal and collective responses. (This material was assembled by Group Material, not as Levin suggests, by ACT UP.) At each end of the tables, which dominated the space, was a *large* videotape monitor, playing continuously. Continuously filling the gallery were the sounds of activism—not sorrow, pity, or evocations of the disease—from the 11 videotapes, almost all of them directly about AIDS activism and made by AIDS activists. I found no mention of any video works at all in Ms Levin's review.

In the words of activist and organizer Joe Hill: "Don't mourn, organize!" I doubt that anyone with work in the show would disagree.

Martha Rosler, Brooklyn

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← Previous spread: "Safe Combat in the Erogenous Zone," Elizabeth Hess, *The Village Voice*, January 10, 1989
← "It's Called Denial," Kim Levin, *The Village Voice*, January 17, 1989

MEMBERS:
Doug Ashford, Julie Ault, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Karen Ramspacher

March 1989. Karen Ramspacher, the curatorial assistant at the Dia Art Foundation and a women's health care and AIDS activist, is a vital presence providing feedback and stimulating dialogue during the making of *Democracy*. With the project finished, the group invites her to become a member and work together.

May 1989. Group Material is invited to make a poster for the exterior side panels of San Francisco buses for *Art Against AIDS on the Road*, and invites artist and Gran Fury member, John Lindell, to collaborate on the piece. The result is a version of a poster Lindell made previously for Gran Fury, the New York based collective of AIDS activists, that reads "All People with AIDS are Innocent" alongside the caduceus symbol, which represents the medical profession.



Unisex

The Lesbian and Gay Community Center, New York, June 1–December 1, 1989

Group Material curates a tape of disco hits of the late 1970s and 80s, the period when AIDS was recognized and came to define the era, for its contribution to *The Center Show*. The tape plays continuously in the restrooms of the Center for the duration.

Summer 1989. During the Congressional controversy over NEA funding of exhibitions of Robert Mapplethorpe's and Andres Serrano's works, the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, DC, which had just cancelled their forthcoming Mapplethorpe show, invites Group Material to make an exhibition on censorship. Director, Christina Orr-Cahall's letter states: "In the last few days I have met with many of the board of trustees to reconfirm our commitment to contemporary art. . . . All have regretted the set of circumstances which have endangered our relationship with the artistic community." The group begins making a proposal for an exhibition titled *Intolerance*, and polls a few artists, writers, and curators for their views. Responses include, "don't do it, it's too loaded," "no, don't, the show would be serving too many objectives simultaneously and won't serve the issues," "do it but it must clearly transcend context and act against Congress," "agree to do it only if the Corcoran makes a retraction," "anything you do would show complicity with Orr-Cahall's compromises." Ultimately GM declines the invitation.





↖ ***Unisex* cassette tape**
↑ **Home Lobbyist mail-order kit, symptomatic of the extended "culture war" over art funding that began in 1989**



Shopping Bag

Kunstverein, Hamburg,
October 14–November 26, 1989

GM is commissioned to make a publically sited, community-engaged project for *D&S Austellung*. The result is *Shopping Bag*, which has a list of the shopping capitals of the world on one side and the current arms dealing centers on the other, both superimposed on a repeated image of helicopters. The bags are distributed in local shops and department stores in Hamburg for the duration of the exhibition.

↑ People using GM's shopping bag in Hamburg

Group Material, "Exhibition Statement," *Art Papers*, January–February 1990

. . . less than ever does a simple reproduction of reality express something about reality. A photograph of the Krupp works or the A.E.G. reveals almost nothing about these institutions . . . Therefore something has to be constructed, something artificial, something fabricated.

–Bertolt Brecht

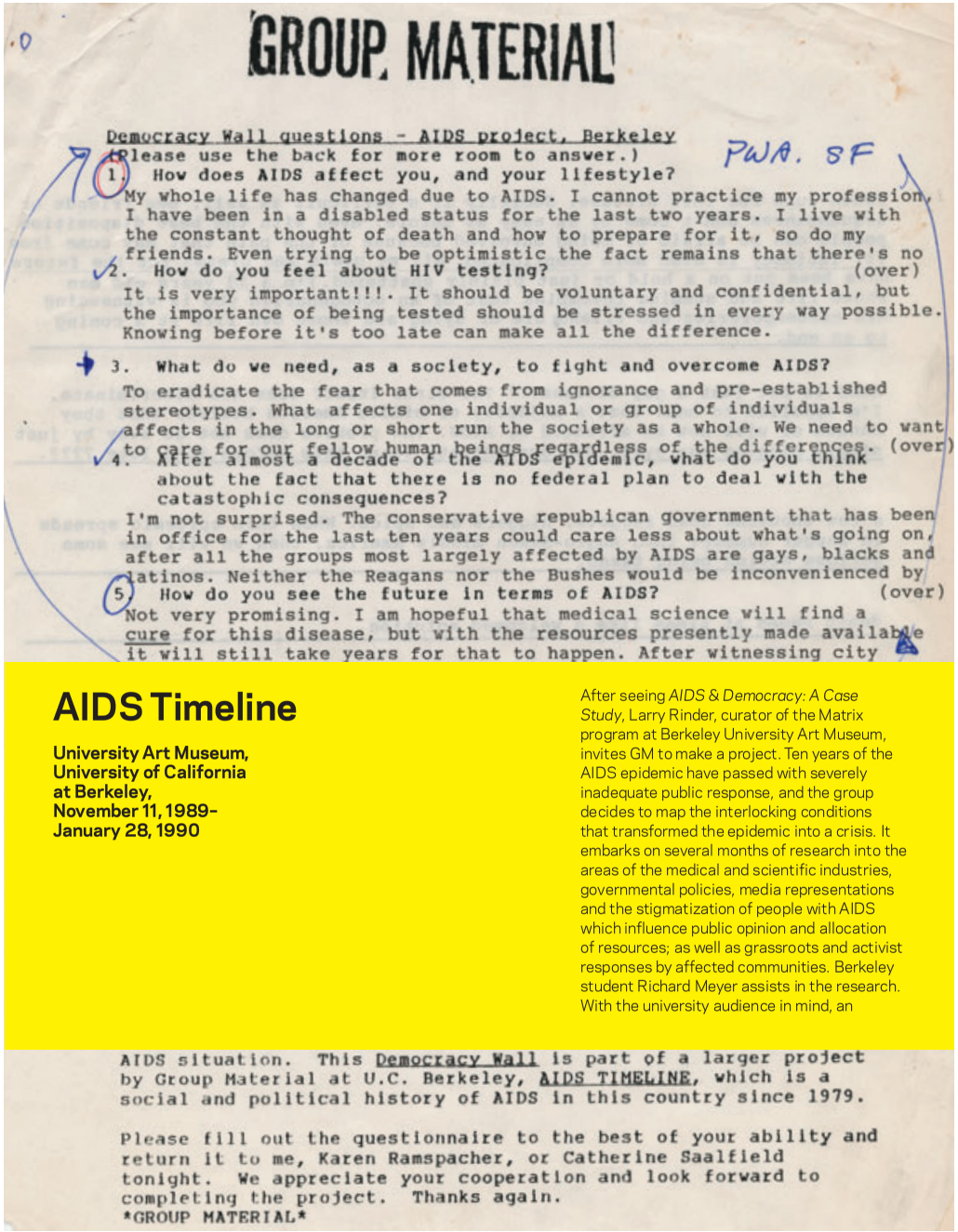
Last summer Group Material went to Hamburg, invited by the Kunstverein to produce a project outside the museum as part of their D&S exhibition. Our five day stay to research sites and make a proposal included the one Saturday of the month that stores are kept open in Germany. We walked through the downtown business district during this unusually frantic crowding of the streets and stores and felt immediately at home.

In Germany you can't help but think about war. We talked about the idea of "postwar" alliances and military industries as we stepped in and out of boutiques and stores. The seemingly infinite arcades of Hamburg resemble a sort of urbanized American mall, a concentration of consumer bliss easily traversed by foot. We realized that any legal attempt to divert attention from these glitzy displays toward some sort of artwork about military weaponry would be futile.

In large part, the consumer affluence that we were taking part in was and is a direct result of a history of military and economic domination by strong countries over smaller ones, multinational interests over local concerns, and profits over people. Behind each store counter isn't just a cash register; there is an intricate geography of demographics and battle-plans. The capitals of fashion and armaments neatly coexist.

The proliferating global information order and its expanding communications and media systems has increasingly blurred the definitions of "public" and "private." Our "public" piece, something with a practical function, would be seen in use on the streets of Hamburg as it made its way into the "private" space of the home. The shopping bag replaced the usual ones in a large department store and a variety of smaller shops for the duration of the exhibition.





GROUP MATERIAL

Democracy Wall questions - AIDS project, Berkeley
(Please use the back for more room to answer.)

1. How does AIDS affect you, and your lifestyle?

My whole life has changed due to AIDS. I cannot practice my profession, I have been in a disabled status for the last two years. I live with the constant thought of death and how to prepare for it, so do my friends. Even trying to be optimistic the fact remains that there's no

2. How do you feel about HIV testing? (over)

It is very important!!!. It should be voluntary and confidential, but the importance of being tested should be stressed in every way possible. Knowing before it's too late can make all the difference.

3. What do we need, as a society, to fight and overcome AIDS?

To eradicate the fear that comes from ignorance and pre-established stereotypes. What affects one individual or group of individuals affects in the long or short run the society as a whole. We need to want to care for our fellow human beings regardless of the differences. (over)

4. After almost a decade of the AIDS epidemic, what do you think about the fact that there is no federal plan to deal with the catastophic consequences?

I'm not surprised. The conservative republican government that has been in office for the last ten years could care less about what's going on, after all the groups most largely affected by AIDS are gays, blacks and latinos. Neither the Reagans nor the Bushes would be inconvenienced by

5. How do you see the future in terms of AIDS? (over)

Not very promising. I am hopeful that medical science will find a cure for this disease, but with the resources presently made available it will still take years for that to happen. After witnessing city

AIDS situation. This Democracy Wall is part of a larger project by Group Material at U.C. Berkeley, AIDS TIMELINE, which is a social and political history of AIDS in this country since 1979.

Please fill out the questionnaire to the best of your ability and return it to me, Karen Ramspacher, or Catherine Saalfield tonight. We appreciate your cooperation and look forward to completing the project. Thanks again.
GROUP MATERIAL

AIDS Timeline

University Art Museum, University of California at Berkeley, November 11, 1989–January 28, 1990

After seeing *AIDS & Democracy: A Case Study*, Larry Rinder, curator of the Matrix program at Berkeley University Art Museum, invites GM to make a project. Ten years of the AIDS epidemic have passed with severely inadequate public response, and the group decides to map the interlocking conditions that transformed the epidemic into a crisis. It embarks on several months of research into the areas of the medical and scientific industries, governmental policies, media representations and the stigmatization of people with AIDS which influence public opinion and allocation of resources; as well as grassroots and activist responses by affected communities. Berkeley student Richard Meyer assists in the research. With the university audience in mind, an information-heavy installation is designed. The group intertwines the collected informational layers in a text that chronicles the histories of AIDS in the U.S., with an added focus on the Bay Area. This text runs through the show—demonstrating that actions and events have consequences and interconnections with other actions and events—and structures the arrangement of ephemeral materials and artworks installed around it. Artifacts intended to mark cultural events and situate viewers in particular moments through collective memory are included—for instance a poster for the top-grossing movie for 1980, *The Empire Strikes Back*, which is hung near a photograph of Ronald Reagan's inauguration.

In addition to the timeline installation, GM organizes a Democracy Wall on the exterior facade of the museum, consisting of responses from community members to questions about AIDS, such as "How does AIDS affect you, and your lifestyle?" The placards are produced in blue and gold—the University's official colors. GM curates a lengthy video program situated in the exhibition, and a shorter sequence of videos, which are installed in the gymnasium on campus. GM also invites the NY-based agitprop collective Gran Fury to insert a piece in an issue of *The Daily Californian* newspaper to coincide with the opening day of the project. [See pages 226-255 for *AIDS Timeline* Case Study]



← Anonymous questionnaire for *AIDS Timeline Democracy Wall*
↑ *Democracy Wall* installed on University Art Museum, Berkeley
→ Following page: detail of *AIDS Timeline* with ACT UP T-shirts, text and magazines



IMPORTANT INFORMATION! GUIDELINES FOR APPLICATION!

YOUR MESSAGE HERE

Randolph Street Gallery, Chicago,
February 23-March 20, 1990



This project is being supported in part by Art Matters, Inc., Gannett Outdoor of Chicago, and The Lannan Foundation.

YOUR MESSAGE HERE

INTRODUCTION

Individuals and groups in Chicago are invited to design billboards in "YOUR MESSAGE HERE", a public project sponsored by Randolph Street Gallery. The deadline for submissions is November 15, 1989.

Anyone can present a design for consideration, including community organizations, social service agencies, writers, visual artists, performing arts groups, advocacy groups, and teachers and their students. Collaborations among individuals or between organizations and individuals are also encouraged. The participation of individuals and groups of diverse cultural backgrounds is central to the project.

There will be about 40 street-level billboards (5' x 11' size), located within various neighborhoods throughout the city, including many in the areas of Pilsen/ Little Village, the near Northwest Side, the West Side, and the South Side. Each design that is accepted for production will be enlarged and posted by a sign company for three months, from January through March 1990.

This project is being organized, in part, because many people are undergoing struggles to preserve their urban neighborhoods on their own terms, both in Chicago and nationally. "YOUR MESSAGE HERE" seeks to recognize the resources and relationships that exist within communities, as well as to foster closer relationships between individuals and their communities, artists and their neighborhoods, local organizations and the people they can serve. This project offers individuals and groups the opportunity to develop public messages that speak to each other and to the surrounding community.

UPDATE

The following notes are a brief update on what has happened so far with this project.

Community meetings were organized and held during September and October with the assistance of the North Lakeside Cultural Center, The African-American Arts Alliance, The Westside Cultural Arts Council, The Mexican Fine Arts Center, and Ruiz Belvis Cultural Center. These meetings were held to introduce the project and invite participation. Local participants discussed their interests and their concerns about the project; we also discussed how communities may be affected by the presence of the billboards. The meetings were attended by people from diverse backgrounds, including artists, representatives of community organizations, local arts organizations, teachers, advocacy groups, and others.

As a follow-up there was a meeting held at Randolph Street Gallery to bring together people from different areas of the city, and to discuss this project and other community art projects with the artists collective, Group Material, who are helping as project coordinators.

Some of the topics that were discussed at the meetings include the following:

- How commercial billboards look and function in the communities
  (for example, they often attempt to identify racial and economic stereotypes).

- Subjects that could be addressed in the billboards
  (for example: Local issues like school reform, recognizing community resources such as neighborhood arts groups, health facilities, etc.; National issues like fair housing, racism and cultural diversity, censorship, etc.; Global issues like the environment, the AIDS epidemic, etc.).

- What the role of Group Material is - they are a New York-based artist collective who are widely recognized for their broad-based and socially insightful group projects.
  (Group Material is advising and helping Randolph Street Gallery to coordinate "YOUR MESSAGE HERE".)

- How the designs will be selected - see REVIEW section on the next page.

- Financial compensation for participants - see FEES section on next page.
  (At this time we are not able to pay participants, although we may be able to raise funds to cover this and other costs, including a publication on the project that may serve as a working resource for future efforts.)

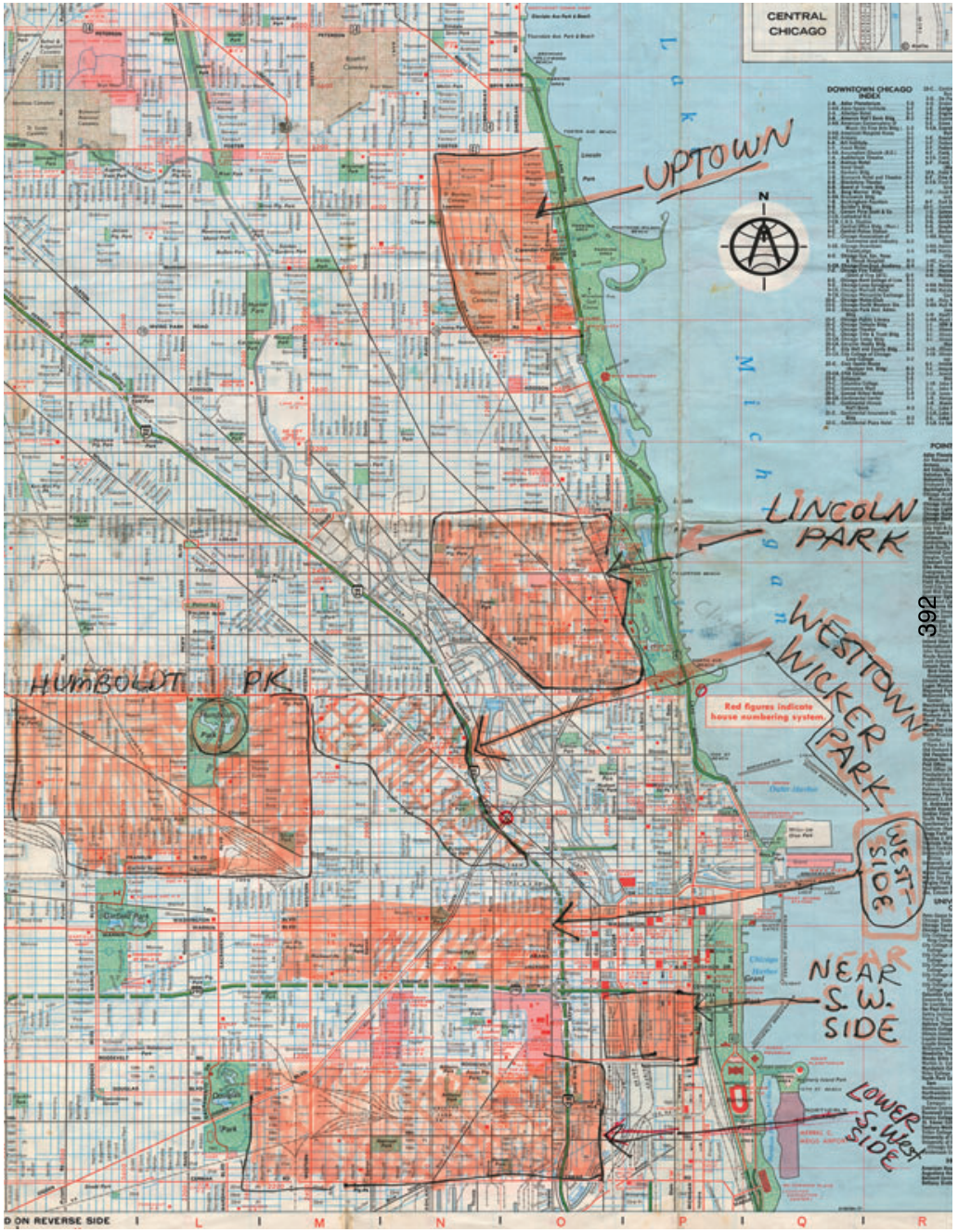


A complex organizational process and structure are used to generate *YOUR MESSAGE HERE*, an exhibition of site-specific billboards installed in neighborhoods in Chicago. Randolph Street Gallery (RSG) invites Group Material to co-organize and co-curate. Joanne Vena joins the effort as project coordinator. Gannett Outdoor donates billboard spaces for a three-month period. Planning meetings are held at RSG and at the North Lakeside Cultural Center, The African-American Arts Alliance, The Westside Cultural Arts Coalition, The Mexican Fine Arts Center, and the Ruiz Belvis Cultural Center to set the stage for and elicit proposals for billboards. An open call is made, which says, "Anyone can present a design for consideration, including community organizations, social service agencies, writers, visual artists, performing arts groups, advocacy groups, and teachers and their students." Representatives from RSG, GM, and five community centers review and select the proposals to be realized. Gannett Outdoor has right of approval and finds some designs problematic, including a piece by No Pasaran Women's Group consisting of an image of women's hands holding cans of spray paint and the text: "Women Unite—Spray at Night" and "Stamp Out Sexist Ads." Kay Rosen's *A GAG ORDER MAKES ME WANT TO THROW UP* is deemed distasteful by Gannett and replaced with her alternative proposal, *BIG TALK*.

↑ Billboard by John Schneider



↑ Left to right: Julie Ault, Joanne Vena, Karen Ramspacher, Doug Ashford
→ Map of Chicago's neighborhoods used when planning *YOUR MESSAGE HERE*



Project Statement (excerpt),
Group Material, Feburary 1990

Advertising has an enviable transformative power. As a way of communicating ideology, worldviews, politics, it is both a means and an end. It is able to channel desire in the direction of a specific product or service and create an unfulfillable feeling of lack in the face of material plenty. The real power of advertising is the power of suggestion—the ability to define social agendas (e.g. consumerism), and to form the background within which we imagine ourselves and in turn, live our lives.

The low-income largely black and Hispanic neighborhoods of Chicago contain an astonishing number of billboards, the overwhelming majority of which advertise . . . liquor and cigarettes. The idea of *YOUR MESSAGE HERE* was to replace as many of the usual ads that we could with what people wanted to see on billboards on their streets in their neighborhoods.

This project was designed from the start to be an inclusive process intended to engender excitement, participation, and experience. The process itself was time-consuming and complex. Group Material and Randolph Street Gallery organized a series of community meetings in various Chicago neighborhoods. A call was put out inviting interested people, artists and non-artists, to come talk about issues in their community and how they might be addressed with billboards. We were interested in fostering closer relations among artists and their communities as well as between different groups. . . .

In the face of hundreds upon hundreds of billboard images in the city, *YOUR MESSAGE HERE* might seem modest in scale. But neither the process that produced the project, or the potential effects of such a model of working collaboratively to temporarily claim a bit of public space and attention were modest or insignificant.



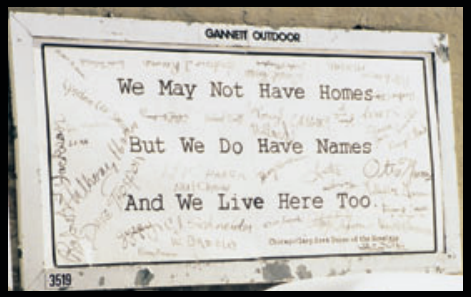






















← Top row, left to right: Billboards by Kay Rosen, James Liebner and Catholic Parishes of Pilsen, Martina Lopez

Second row, left to right: Vito Greco / Aligator, Jeanne Dunning, Mark Blottner

Third row, left to right: Felicity Rich, Stephen Lapthisophon, Mario Gonzalez, Jr. and Jesus Morales / Inner City 8

Bottom row, left to right: Greg Boozell and Sara Frederickson & Chicago / Gary Union of the Homeless, Mary Patten, SisterSerpents



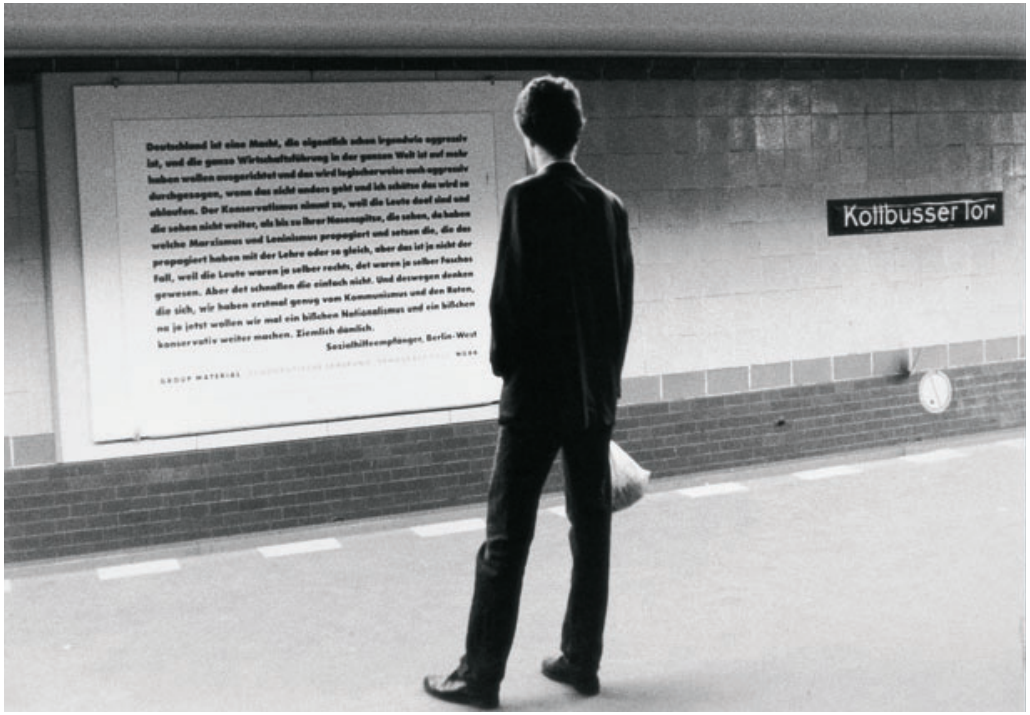
Democracy Poll

Neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst (NGBK), Berlin, June 26–July 5, 1990

↑ *Democracy Poll* statement displayed on electronic billboard on the Ku'damm, Berlin's main shopping street
→ Detail of *Democracy Poll* booklet inserted in *Der Tagesspiegel*

Democracy Poll is a multi-sited investigation of recent developments after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Questions posed to individuals and organizations in Germany and New York center on issues relating to the German Republican movement, hopes and fears for the future of Germany, changing attitudes to immigration law among others. Spontaneous interviews in public places are conducted. Sixty of the responses are selected and edited by GM for inclusion in a booklet inserted into an edition of the daily newspaper, *Der Tagesspiegel*, for broadcast on an electronic billboard on Berlin's major shopping street, Kurfürstendamm, and for display on billboards in several U-Bahn stations.





↑ *Democracy Poll* interview statement installed at U-Bahn station, Berlin

Letter to NGBK curator Frank Wagner (excerpt),
Julie Ault

The questions (first draft) we agreed on are as follows:
What are your hopes for the future of Germany?
What do you think about the current policies on immigration, guest workers, and refugees? How does the opening of the wall affect these matters?
What is your definition of freedom?
Explain what you think the criteria should be for granting citizenship?
What do you think the relationship between NATO and Germany should be?
What does nationalism mean to you?
What do you see as the reasons for the recent growth of nationalistic feeling?
Why do you think that the R.E.P. and other conservative organizations are growing?
How is this being affected by the opening of the wall?

I strongly urge you to conduct the interviews yourself as the manner and sensitivity of the interviewer is very important to the success of the project. . . . Just approach everyone indiscriminately and you should end up with a good mix of viewpoints. When Mundy and I did this in the past we dressed "well" and it seemed to help being female so perhaps a female companion would be good. Two people are best so it's not overwhelming but looks somewhat organized as well. The most important aspect of the interviewing process is to lead the person into conversation in a relaxed way, to not cut them off, to not color their response in any way by reacting adversely or otherwise to what they say, and to ad lib, start with a question, if it doesn't work, try another, and be ready to really just ask something off the top of your head to elicit an opinion. That's why it's best if someone who has a vested interest in the project does the interviews.

Sample interview statements, *Democracy Poll*
Group Material, April 1990

The ego of most West Germans is based on their economic situation and the fact that probably in no other country in the world do simple folk live so well. The idea just occurs to me that the safest way of ensuring that never again a war will be started on German soil is to make sure that the Germans always live a little better than their neighbors, thus they do not seek to assert their own worth in military exploits.

Taxi driver, Germany

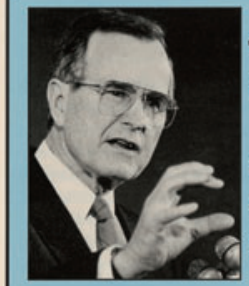
I think there are different reasons why some people in other countries are afraid of Germany. I guess a lot of people are afraid that Germany will get too big. In Europe Germany will play the largest role, it already does almost, and even more after reunification. It's easy to figure out what that means economically. And therefore fears are legitimate, in my opinion.

Camera assistant, Germany

We can't afford to be patriotic anymore because the world has become so small that if you are concentrated and centered on what is happening in our country or any other country you are going to miss the entire bigger picture. I just think that we Americans are realizing that we are not as important as we thought. It was all self-aggrandizement. On an economic level we were considering ourselves number one for a long time. Especially when Reagan pulled us out of the depression by artificially stimulating the economy with billions and billions of dollars that we didn't have. Our trade deficit is enormous and our national deficit is enormous.

College student, U.S.

The Insurance Industry and AIDS



"Like many of you, Barbara and I have had friends who have died of AIDS."

"Once disease strikes, we don't blame those who are suffering... We try to love them and care for them and comfort them. We don't fire them, we don't evict them, we don't cancel their insurance."

Do you remember these words of President George Bush? They are taken from his first speech addressing the AIDS crisis. Perhaps you heard these words on television or read them in a newspaper. Maybe you were one of the insurance executives in the audience who is a member of the National Leadership Coalition on AIDS (NCLA). If you live in Hartford, the home of many of our country's most powerful insurance companies, it's possible you've seen this quote on the back of a public bus.

President Bush's belated message of compassion set an important precedent. It was the first time the White House specifically addressed AIDS as a national issue since the epidemic was reported nearly ten years ago. In his speech, the president promised a cabinet review of health care in the United States, and endorsed the

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is a rapidly escalating epidemic thought to be caused by a virus — HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus). HIV suppresses peoples' immune systems, making them vulnerable to a host of diseases, many of which are treatable, often at significant cost. To date there have been 146,746 people diagnosed with AIDS, and an estimated 1.5 million people are infected with HIV. HIV affects people regardless of their age, race, sexual orientation, and economic class.

Our government has conducted widespread educational campaigns to warn the general public of the dangers inherent in driving without a seatbelt and in smoking tobacco. These efforts have undoubtedly saved lives. If the United States government had conducted an intensive educational campaign in 1984, immediately following the discovery that HIV is transmitted through the exchange of blood and semen, many people who are now HIV positive might not have become in-

AIDS & Insurance

Real Art Ways, Hartford,
September 1–30, 1990



AIDS & Insurance bus ads are installed on the rear of Hartford buses that travel from the city center to the suburbs. This project is sponsored by Real Art Ways. The posters feature a picture of President Bush and a quotation from his speech to insurance executives at the National Leadership Coalition on AIDS, which reads, "Like many of you, Barbara and I have had friends who have died of AIDS." "Once disease strikes, we don't blame those who are suffering . . . We try to love them and care for them and comfort them. We don't fire them, we don't evict them, we don't cancel their insurance." Hartford is the insurance capital of the country and home to many corporate headquarters. The group hopes the poster will be understood as an official announcement. Mary Anne Staniszweski writes an essay for a brochure to complement the ad, which is handed out to staff at the entrances of insurance company offices.





AIDS Timeline (Hartford, 1990)

Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, September 30–November 18, 1990

AIDS Timeline is re-configured for the Wadsworth Atheneum Matrix gallery, where it includes information and material from local AIDS-related community organizations as well as works by artists from the Hartford region. GM regards the *Timeline* not as a traveling exhibition, but as a flexible framework that takes into account the specificity of the AIDS crisis in a given geographic parameter, while also reflecting the development of the pandemic on a national scale.

↑ Felix Gonzalez-Torres on opening day of *AIDS Timeline*, Hartford
↗ *Democracy: A Project by Group Material* displayed in bookshop

1990. *Democracy: A Project by Group Material*, (Dia Art Foundation, Discussions in Contemporary Culture, Number 5, edited by Brian Wallis) is published by Bay Press. There is a book launch at Printed Matter Bookstore at Dia, 77 Wooster Street, which is where the exhibitions took place two years earlier. The book's introduction states: "The final part of *Democracy*, and perhaps the most important, is this book. Through this book we tried to encapsulate many of the ideas that went into and came out of the *Democracy* project in order to make them available to a far wider public than could attend the events. We organized the publication very much as we organize our exhibitions, bringing together a variety of voices and points of view to address the issues."





Collaboration

The Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin, October 26, 1990–January 13, 1991

For *Collaboration*, the group produces a video of interviews with area residents on the subjects that divide and unite the college town of Oberlin, Ohio. Large-scale *papier-maché* rocks, modeled after rocks in the campus landscape, are distributed to public schools and completed by students working with their teachers. The video is screened in the museum and the rocks are shown on the grounds. Felix does not participate in this project because he is teaching this year at CalArts.

Fall 1990. At the invitation of Patrick O'Connell, director of Visual AIDS, Group Material publishes fragments of *AIDS Timeline* for DAY WITHOUT ART 1990 in the December issue of eleven publications: *Afterimage*, *Art & Auction*, *Art in America*, *Art New England*, *Artforum*, *Arts*, *Contemporanea*, *High Performance*, *October*, *Parkett*, and *Shift*. James Morrow works with the group to design the layouts for print.

↙↑ Video stills, *Collaboration*
→ Following spread: detail of *AIDS Timeline*, magazine version, *Artforum*, December 1990





Exhibition Statement (excerpt), Group Material, October 1990

For Oberlin, we proposed not a finished product, but a process. We wanted to make a situation in which the method of collaboration and the content of any potential project(s) would not be predetermined by Group Material.

On September 6 we came to Oberlin and presented some of our previous projects and talked about our working methods. The first step toward opening the collaboration was to open the floor to an exchange of ideas. Many people spoke at this initial meeting. Their concerns ranged from the destruction of the round house to make way for a McDonald's, and the threat of war in Iraq, to the high cost of tuition at the college. The one problem that was articulated repeatedly—thereby becoming the primary issue at hand—was that of the division between the college and the town and the perceptual and physical barriers that inform the separation of communities. Economics seemed to play a major role in this discussion and related directly or indirectly to every concern raised that night.

A planning meeting, open to anyone who wanted to participate in the collaboration, was scheduled for September 7. The goal was to determine how to approach the issues of community and economics and, ultimately, to make something that could be shown in the museum and other public places, or distributed in another way. About sixty people came to this meeting. After much discussion, it was agreed that we would divide into smaller groups, which reflected interest in particular forms and methods. . . .

's AIDS TIMELINE is presented as a ITHOUT ART 1990 by Visual AIDS their December issues: Afterimage, Art New England, Artforum, Arts, nce, October, Parkett, and Sbift.

e Company and the Lincoln pany issue an "AIDS Profile" em to earmark applications ependents that engage quire physical exertion." denied insurance.

lves to the Federal Office manding that more money h; and that ARC (AIDS e eligible for the same



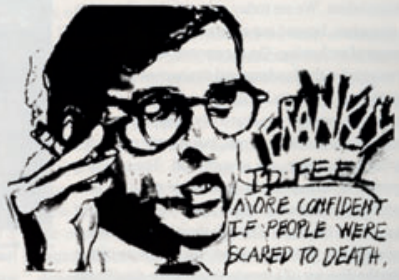
searchers demonstrate that HIV during sexual intercourse.

SEX



After hosting two successful AIDS benefits in New York and Los Angeles, Elizabeth Taylor is named National Chairperson of the newly formed National AIDS Research Foundation, later to become AmFAR, American Foundation for AIDS Research.





JAMA, (Journal of the American Medical Association) publishes an editorial by Dr. Anthony Fauci, head of AIDS research at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, explaining the results of two studies done on household contact and AIDS. Rather than recognizing perinatal transmission of HIV, Fauci mistakenly warns of the possible risks of casual contact. The Associated Press runs a "household contact" story over their newswire, beginning a national hysteria which extends to the outfitting of many police officers with rubber gloves.

The New York City Department of Substance Services approaches ADAPT (Association of Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment,) to urge them to formulate an organized response to the growing number of intravenous drug users at risk for HIV infection. ADAPT proposes a pilot project to distribute free, sterile needles to addicts on the streets.

The Centers for Disease Control's original definition of AIDS is revised to become more specific, outlining particular illnesses called "opportunistic infections" that indicate a suppressed immune system related to AIDS.

Francisco AIDS Foundation "Corporate Executive," Mike Glier "Blood," Andres Serrano "Find A Cure" from "Street Graphic Interventions," Diane Neumaier

President Ronald Reagan gives his first public speech on AIDS. He says that the administration is committed to finding a cure and asks Surgeon General C. Everett Koop to prepare a "major report" on AIDS. Congressman Henry Waxman terms Reagan's pronouncement "outrageous," noting that Reagan's budget, made public just days before, includes reductions in spending for AIDS research.



Reagan asks for a $10 million cut in the Public Health Service's AIDS budget as well as cuts in Medicaid.

1986

The Public Health Service adds AIDS to the list of "dangerous contagious diseases" which prohibit entry into the United States. Subsequently, many visitors are detained by immigration.



The Supreme Court, in Bowers can outlaw "sodomy" and other conducted by consenting adult in the dissenting opinion, that h the houses, hearts and minds o lives differently."

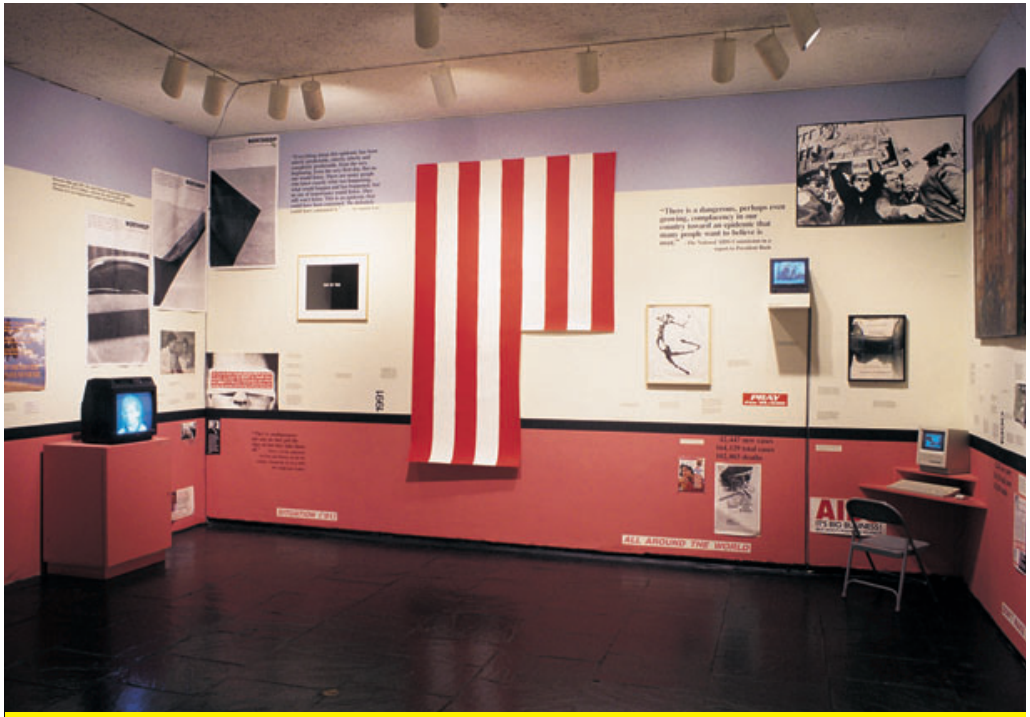
A National Academy of Science report charges that government response to AIDS has been "dangerously inadequate" and calls for $2 billion per year for education and research. President Reagan signs leglislation that provides only $410 million for this research.

A single B-2 bomber costs over $500 million.

WHO'S ZOOMIN' WHO



"June 30, 1986," Michael Jenkins "Selections From The Disco, Various BPM, 1979-1990," Steven Evans additional photography: Ben Blackwell art direction:



ACT UP, The Advocate, Lutz Bacher, James Baldwin, Gretchen Bender, Nayland Blake, George Bush, The Center, Dick Cheney, Jeanne Dunning, Evan Estern, Steven Evans, Tom of Finland, Fund for a Feminist Majority, Dr. Robert Gallo, Mike Glier, GMHC, Gran Fury, Peter Halley, Whitney Houston, Rock Hudson, Interview Magazine, Michael Jenkins, Peter Jennings, Dr. Stephen Joseph, Ed Koch, Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, Dr. Mathilde Krim, Barbara Kruger, Louise Lawler, Rudy Lemcke, Life Magazine, Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous, T.L. Litt, George Lucas, Robert Mapplethorpe, Marlene McCarty, Meryl Meisler and the Drop Ins, Brad Melamed, Harvey Milk, Donald Moffett, The Names Project, Diane Neumaier, Newsweek, Daniel Nicoletta, Oliver North, Northrop, People Magazine, Raymond Pettibon, Planned Parenthood, PWA Coalition, Rambo, Ronald Reagan, Real People, The Rest Stop, Tim Rollins + K.O.S., Kay Rosen, Erika Rothenberg, The Sentinel, Andres Serrano, The Silence=Death Project, Lorna Simpson, Sharon Siskin, Rolf Sjogren, Kevin Smith, Nancy Spero, Ellen Spiro, Jimmy Swaggert, Tasmanian Devil, Elizabeth Taylor, Testing the Limits Collective, Ben Thornberry, Michael Tidmus, Time Magazine, Tylenol, Us Magazine, Dionne Warwick, Carrie Mae Weems, Burroughs Wellcome, Wheel of Fortune, Oscar Wilde, Millie Wilson, David Wojnarowicz, Martin Wong.

AIDS Timeline (New York, 1991)

The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, April 16–June 23, 1991

AIDS Timeline is reconfigured for the *1991 Whitney Biennial*. During the show's planning conflict surfaces in the group, in part over staging another version of the *Timeline* as opposed to developing a different exhibition strategy and form for addressing the subject matter. Alongside these differences, Felix is suffering from the death of his boyfriend, Ross Laycock, and expresses burnout from working on so many AIDS-related projects consecutively. Julie, Doug, and Karen likewise feel burned out. Nonetheless the group is committed to using the Whitney as a platform for presenting its history of the development of the AIDS crisis. For the third version of *AIDS Timeline* the walls are painted with a tripartite treatment composed of dismal distortions of red, white, and blue—muddy rose, cool grayish white, and a drab light blue. It is notable that Group Material's contribution to the *1985 Biennial*, *Americana*, did not contain the work of any artist shown in the *Biennial* at large, while several participants in *AIDS Timeline* are represented in the *Biennial* as well. In response to accusations of elitism and bigotry over the years, the Whitney, like many institutions, appears to be more inclusive than in the past.

June 1991. A hampering degree of tension and discord has been percolating in the group, which largely goes undiscussed except casually, one-on-one. Everyone feels somewhat at a loss about direction and over how to digest larger cultural and political changes of the past few years in relation to collective practice. Also in question is how to simultaneously use, remain true to, and transcend the group's history. Felix seems depleted by the collaborative process and is primarily advancing his individual voice as an artist. Julie feels the group has been on a treadmill too long and has a crisis in faith about the art field as a working context. She goes to college to study political science, with a potential shift from the cultural field to mainstream politics in mind. Doug has been increasingly devoted to teaching and investing his energies in the classroom and pedagogical pursuits. Karen is heavily involved with the women's health care and reproductive rights movement and frequently expresses disinterest in, and antagonism to, the field of art beyond using it as a site for activism. Somewhat undefined interpersonal conflicts are also present.

Additionally, public cultural funding has been vastly decreased and restricted by Congress since 1989. NEA grant recipients are required to certify in writing their compliance with a "decency clause." GM's 1991 applications to the NEA and NYSCA are denied funding. GM does not apply again.

November 1991. Group Material declines to participate in an exhibition that it previously agreed to take part in via a letter: "While we remain supportive of your important project and would like to have been part of it, we've decided to take an official hiatus after much deliberation. In short, we are suffering from burn-out and a run of pessimism and really need a few months with no undertakings in public so we can reinvent our practice and revitalize our work for ourselves and potential audiences."

↑ Announcement card (front)
→ Following spread: two pages from Group Material's wall text document for *AIDS Timeline (New York, 1991)*

1989

Medical data reveals that early intervention for HIV positive people can delay the onset of full-blown AIDS. Many AIDS organizations now endorse testing. However, questions are raised about confidentiality and discrimination, as well as the practicality of testing when there are so few plans of treatment available, accessible and affordable.

Introduced by ACT UP, the "parallel track" program allows patients who are intolerant to the prescribed treatment to receive experimental AIDS drug outside of a clinical trial. ddI, only the second drug to slow HIV replication, is made available through parallel track for patients who have severe side affects from AZT.

Art works by Andres Serrano and Robert Mapplethorpe spark a controversy in Congress, leading to restrictive legislation forced upon National Endowment for the Arts. The legislation provides that "none of the funds authorized . . . may be used to promote, disseminate or produce materials which in the judgment of the NEA . . . may be considered obscene, including, but not limited to, depictions of sadomasochism, homoeroticism, the sexual exploitation of children, or individuals engaged in sex acts and which, taken as a whole, do not have serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value."

500,000 people march on Washington in a "March for Women's Lives" in support of safe, legal and accessible abortion.

There were 30 soup kitchens in New York City in 1980, now there are 600.

The United States invades Panama to ouster CIA trained and supported General Manuel Noriega.

The official poverty line for a single person in America is now $5,469, and for a family of four is $10, 989. A full time salary at minimum wage is $6, 968 a year, and 23.5% of all American children under the age of three live in poverty.

The ruptured tanker Exxon Valdez spills 11 million gallons of crude oil into Alaska's Prince William Sound. This is worst oil spill in U.S. history. Only 8% of the spill is ever cleaned up.

ACT UP demonstrators interrupt trading on the New York Stock Exchange for 4½ minutes. The demonstrators call for traders to sell Burroughs Wellcome stock because the drug company profiteers from the AIDS crisis. Simultaneous protests occur in New York, London, and San Francisco. Shortly thereafter Burroughs Wellcome lowers the price of AZT (the only federally approved drug that slows the replications of HIV) by 20%.

Six American Jesuit priests are murdered in their home in San Salvador by El Salvadorian National Guardsmen. The United States State Department helps to delay any investigation. A witness to the killings is threatened with deportation by U.S. State attorneys in Miami.

The Supreme Court, in Webster v. Reproductive Health Services, provides states with new authority to limit a women's right to abortion, but stopped short of reversing its 1973 Roe v. Wade decision legalizing abortion.

In response to grassroots activism, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approves aerosol Pentamidine for prevention of *AIDS* related pneumonia (PCP). This is the first time a drug has been approved because of community-based research. Pentamidine increased in cost from $25 in 1984 to $200 in 1989, per dose/per month.

The opening session of the Fifth International AIDS Conference in Montreal is taken over by PWAS and AIDS activists calling for more inclusion of People With AIDS in research. ACT UP releases "A National AIDS Treatment Research Agenda" which outlines principles for conducting clinical trials: involving PWAs in trial design, emphasizing drugs for opportunistic infections, creating more flexible protocols, broadening entry requirements, avoiding use of placebos, and establishing criteria other than death rate for judging whether drugs are effective.

A study sponsored by the insurance industry shows that 37 million people, nearly 18% of the U.S. population, have no medical insurance.

26% of adolescents who were diagnosed with AIDS in 1989 contracted HIV through heterosexual intercourse. AIDS cases among 15 years olds in New York City increased 40% between 1987 and 1989.

David Duke, former leader of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, is elected to the Louisiana State Legislature on the Republican ticket.

Partnership for the Homeless projects there will be up to 30,000 homeless People With AIDS by 1993 in New York City. Yet the city government has a plan to provide only 800 beds for homeless PWAs by 1991. At this time, there are an estimated 8,000-10,000 PWAs living on the streets, with only 74 beds available. Federal funds for low income housing assistance drops from $27 billion to $8 billion in 1989.

ACT UP and other AIDS activists descend on the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta. This is the beginning of an ongoing protest to pressure the CDC to change the definition of AIDS to be more inclusive, especially to study illnesses that affect women, intravenous drug users, and people of color. By 1991, 65% of HIV infected women die without ever receiving an AIDS diagnosis.

1990

Though many public health officials note that shared needles are a primary source of HIV transmission and therefore advocate for dispersal of clean syringes, the U.S. Senate vote 99 to 0 to ban the use of federal funds for free clean syringes for I.V. Drug users.

The 6th International Conference on AIDS held in San Francisco is boycotted by many AIDS organizations, medical professionals, and others, due to the discriminatory policies of the United States. Immigration and Naturalization Services which bar people with HIV infection from entering the country.

50,000 Haitians demonstrate in New York City to protest a federal Food and Drug Administration restriction barring any Haitians from donating blood in the United States. This restriction feeds the discrimination against "risk groups" rather than dealing with "risk behavior." The restriction is repealed due to community pressure.

AIDS is now the leading cause of death in women between the ages of 25–39 in New York City. According to a survey by the Department of Health, most women know HIV is transmitted in semen and that condom use can prevent transmission. Only 32% actually use condoms. Many women incorrectly believe that the disease affects only homosexuals.

Women with AIDS are disproportionately Black and Latina, together representing 72% of female cases. While Latinas are 8% of the total U.S. Population, they make up 16% of cumulative AIDS cases. AIDS is the leading cause of death among Latinas ages 25–44.

The expected lifespan of black Americans this year is so low that it will statistically lower the overall life expectancy for all Americans. This is the first time that life expectancy has gone down in America since records began to be kept at the turn of the century.

Parents of students in a Brooklyn junior high school petition the school and threaten to keep there children home to protest the presence of Joey DiPaolo, an 11 year old boy who reveals that he is HIV antibody positive.

Deregulated Savings and Loan institutions across the country go out of business leaving $150 billion of debt to the American taxpayers, later increasing to a $500 billion debt.

Project Proposal (excerpt),
Group Material, May 1991

Recently we have seen a resurgence of the use of the term "obscene" in relation to artistic expression and intellectual discourse. Distorted definitions of obscenity have been used by political special interest groups to propose mechanisms of control over American cultural life. Group Material believes that the discussion that will truly determine the legal, institutional and moral definitions of obscenity must take place in a highly public format.

The advertisements that Group Material produces will be small and succinct, each relating to the next as an ongoing narrative discussing the various aspects of how obscenity is socially defined. In this way, specific works could address specific issues related to social definitions of obscenity. These could include: the construction of gender and sexuality, book banning in educational settings, the imposition of religious ideas, political uses of morality, sex and AIDS education and other issues of dissent . . . The context of the newspaper provides us with important levels of meaning. As a source of information, the paper acts to frame any information it contains with an aura of intimacy.

Project Statement (excerpt),
Group Material, December 1991

Cash Prize is a series of advertisements in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* that address the ongoing management of information in America. Each advertisement consists of a juxtaposition of a list of simple researched facts and quotes with a photograph borrowed from the entertainment industry. . . Group Material seeks to represent the economic state of many American families in contrast to the popularly used image of familial bliss. As information, *Cash Prize* describes a social unit under siege from the changing taxation policies and depleting welfare programs of the Reagan-Bush era. As art, it produces a relationship between this political order and the informational order of the newspaper and other media—each dependent on the other for the maintenance of the America we now live in.

Cash Prize

***Seattle Post-Intelligencer*,**
December 17–20, 1991

The group is invited to make a site-specific work as part of a public art project called *In Public: Seattle 1991*. Group Material visits Seattle for a few days but is uncomfortable with the so-called "parachuting in" method of community engagement. Although it is becoming common practice, GM regards this as a problematic symptom of the institutionalization of socially engaged art practices taking place in the shadow of public cultural funding debates. Back in New York, GM proposes to make a series of print advertisements that address sexuality and representation as they intersect with censorship and social control—a subject of debate in the "culture wars." This idea elicits some trepidation from *In Public* over the meeting of subject matter and newspaper as venue, and the group shifts its focus to the state of the American family, "an entity often used by political forces as a symbol in determining social debate and policy."







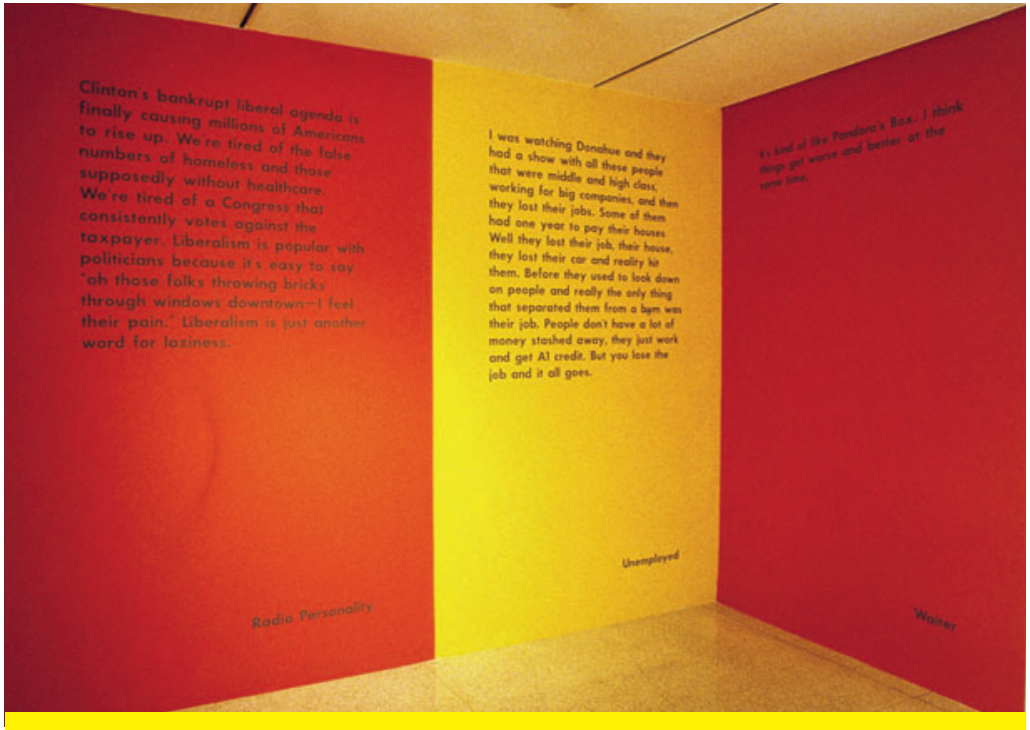
1992. Doug, Julie, and Felix teach a sculpture class at Rhode Island School of Design that combines collaborative teaching and individually-led sessions. Group Material makes a multiple titled *Family Photo* to benefit Randolph Street Gallery in Chicago, which is a laminated publicity photo, also used in *Cash Prize*, from the popular 1980s prime time soap opera, *Dynasty*. The ABC series depicted the ostentatiously wealthy Carrington family, and starred Joan Collins, John Forsythe, and Linda Evans; *Dynasty* was the pop cultural epitome of the lifestyle-focused, financially inflated eighties.

Karen Ramspacher is no longer actively participating in the group. Felix's involvement is off and on as he devotes his energies to his individual practice.

↑ Promotional photo for *Dynasty*

MEMBERS:
Doug Ashford, Julie Ault, Felix Gonzalez-Torres





Tomorrow

San Diego Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, October 8–December 31, 1993

The Betty Russell Foundation, a program that fosters cooperative projects between the Museum of Contemporary Art and the Visual Arts Department at the University of California, San Diego chooses Group Material for their 1993 residency and project. GM wants to use the project budget to buy a set of films thematized around the ideological formation of "the State," as an acquisition for the Museum's permanent collection. The idea is not positively received and the "democracy wall" form is activated instead. The group's inquiry into the San Diego area focuses on people's views of the future and their political and social priorities.

↗ Left to right: Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Julie Ault, and Doug Ashford visiting the San Diego Museum



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Project Statement (excerpt),
Group Material, October 1993

In 1982 when we sought people's opinions on the street in New York City for our *DA ZI BAOS* project many seemed surprised to be approached. Perhaps because it was a novel experience people were largely receptive and spoke with little self-consciousness. Eleven years and three Presidential elections later, people we questioned in San Diego were receptive—possibly for a different reason. Today they expect to be asked what they think. Models of how to give an opinion are everywhere and to some degree internalized in each of us.

Public opinion is a valuable denominator in our current political economy. The strength of an imagined majority or the embarrassment of an ineffectual minority gathered around a position usually no more specific than 'for' or 'against,' can be wielded with great effect to reproduce support or dissent. . . . Populations are pictured as percentiles. . . . roaring numbers replace genuine democractic discourse. . . . Nuance and contradiction simply do not correspond with reductive models of sentiment.



Democracy Wall

Museum of Fine Arts (MFA), Boston,
October 19, 1993–January 23, 1994

Museum
of
Fine Arts
Boston

465 Huntington Avenue
Boston
Massachusetts
02115
(617) 267-9300

August 20, 1993

MEMORANDUM

To: Curators and Department Heads

Fr: Trevor Fairbrother TF

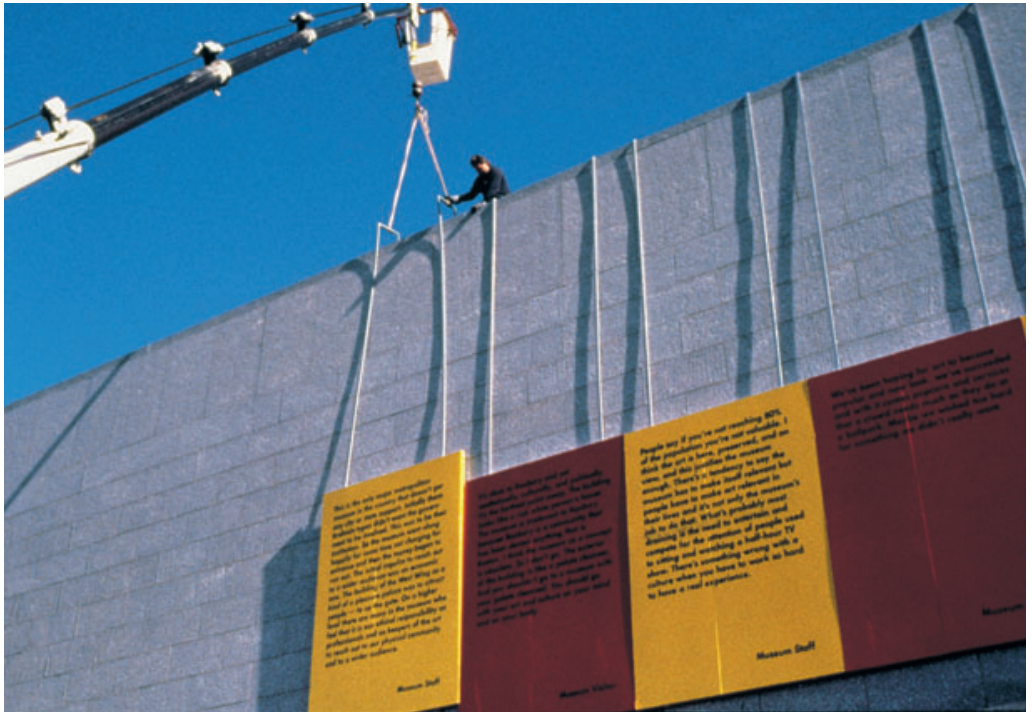
Re: On-site project by artists' collaborative Group Material

For the Department of Contemporary Art's exhibition, In and Out of Place: Contemporry Art and the American Social Landscape (October 19, 1993 - January 23, 1994), Group Material will present one of their "Democracy Walls" on the facade of the West Wing entrance. This boldy-colored billboard will comprise a landscape of opinions concerning the role and function of museums in modern life, specifically the Museum of Fine Arts and the Boston community. Three artists from Group Material -- Doug Ashford, Julie Ault, and Felix Gonzalez-Torres) will be in Boston from August 26 through August 31 conducting brief interviews with staff, visitors, and neighbors in the area. If you and your staff encounter these artists and they ask for a few comments, I hope that you will be willing to help them. I assure you that they are both friendly and responsible, and I am confident that the project they are making will have a strong positive effect for the Museum.

In my absence, Kathi Drummy, Operations Coordinator in the Department of Contemporary Art, will host the artists and be in charge of this phase of the project.

During the initial site visit, the Museum's operations manager responds to Julie's query about the viability of the façade of the new I.M. Pei wing as a site for a piece by Group Material, by saying, "I don't want to be negative, but *that's impossible*." A "democracy wall" is nonetheless planned for exactly this location, chosen for its symbolic value as the institution's skin, delimiting inside and outside. The resulting piece costs one hundred times more than *DA ZI BAOS* did in 1982, as it cannot be directly attached to the façade and requires special rigging.

Doug and Julie spend several days interviewing MFA staff including curators, educators, and administrators about their perspectives on the role and state of the museum. They also tape a hundred impromptu interviews with visitors entering the museum and passersby in the vicinity. The resulting *Democracy Wall* engenders controversy. The museum's director leaves the curator a lengthy phone message expressing dissatisfaction with the critical content of the piece, and requests that a disclaimer message be placed nearby, saying in effect, it's only art. The statements are presented as anonymous, but at the opening many of the formerly-friendly staff who were interviewed steer clear of Julie and Doug, who speculate that people have misgivings about their candor. Perhaps the public exposure of the museum as a contested institution is also unsettling to them.





Project Proposal (excerpt),
Group Material, May 1993

Except in private conversation and focus-group situations, museum visitors rarely have the opportunity to communicate their motivations for going, expectations, describe their experiences and responses to what they see, or express their affirmations, criticisms and desires for the institution. Group Material will visit the museum and its immediate area to conduct spontaneous interviews along these lines of inquiry. A group of excerpts will then be selected for reproduction and display. The selection does not represent GM's opinions or artificially construct an editorial but seeks to represent a range of articulate responses and ideas. The *Democracy Wall* form is a multi-vocal opinion landscape that mirrors the way individual voices echo, dispute, rub up against one another and ultimately construct a picture of collective experience. . . .

Maureen Dezell, "Propping Up The Wall,"
The Boston Phoenix, October 29, 1993

Museum of Fine Arts director Alan Shestack has caved in to pressure from a handful of museum trustees and insisted that *Democracy Wall*, the twelve-panel temporary installation now on view above the MFA's West Wing entryway, be accompanied by a label explaining it's a work of art.

The museum commissioned Group Material, the New York-based artists' collaborative, to create the 10-by-77 foot installation . . . The piece includes observations by museum visitors, non-visitors, staff, curators, and a quote from the MFA's official mission statement.

"We tried to develop an elaborate critique and appreciation," explains Group Material's Julie Ault. "If you could stand outside the museum and listen, this is what you might hear."

Apparently, though, some don't want to listen.

A few museum trustees complained to Shestack about what they perceived as the negative tone of the work. Others said they liked it. Though he approved the Group Material exhibit, Shestack began saying shortly after its installation that he had "problems" with the piece.

Shestack, who failed to return repeated phone calls to discuss *Democracy Wall*, told exhibition organizer Trevor Fairbrother . . . to come up with an explanatory label addressing the trustees' concerns.

"I don't mind there being an ID label," says Fairbrother. "But I agree with the artists' notion that if you're given the side of a building, as they were—and that's a brave and generous gesture on the museum's part—you don't put something right next to the piece explaining it's taking a stand on something. Any good art has a point of view."


This is the only major metropolitan museum in the country that doesn't get any city or state support. Initially these Brahmin types didn't want the government to be involved. This was to be their institution. So the museum went along happily for some time not charging for entrance and then the money began to run out. The initial impulse to reach out to a wider audience was an economic one. The building of the West Wing as a kind of a pleasure palace was to attract people — to up the gate. On a higher level there are many in the museum who feel that it is our ethical responsibility as professionals and as keepers of the art to reach out to our physical community and to a wider audience.
Museum Staff
It's close to Roxbury and
aesthetically, culturally, a
it's the farthest point awa
looks like a rich white pe
The museum is irrelevant
because Roxbury is a co
has been denied anything
Boston. I think the museu
is obsolete. So I don't go.
of the building is like a p
And you shouldn't go to
your palate cleansed. You
with your art and culture
and on your body.


yet
nd politically
y. The building
rson's house.
to Roxbury
mmunity that
that is
m as a concept
The exterior
alate cleanser.
a museum with
should go
on your mind
Museum Visitor
People say if you're not reaching 80% of the population you're not valuable. I think the art is here, preserved, and on view, and this justifies the museum enough. There's a tendency to say the museum has to make itself relevant but people have to make art relevant in their lives and it's not only the museum's job to do that. What's probably most draining is the need to entertain and compete for the attention of people used to sitting and watching a half-hour TV show. There's something wrong with a culture when you have to work so hard to have a real experience.
Museum Staff
We've been h
popular and
and with it c
that a crowd
a ballpark.
for somethin



Spring 1994. Felix is no longer active in GM. Doug and Julie collaboratively teach Photography II at Mason Gross School of the Arts and participate (as Group Material) in *Public Domain*, curated by Jorge Ribalta at the Centre d'Art Santa Monica in Barcelona, with a configuration of GM's published projects titled *Campaign*. In April they create the exhibition design for *Public Interventions*, curated by Eleanor Heartney and Milena Kalinovska at the ICA, Boston, which is a comprehensive look at temporary and permanent public art projects that interact with the economic, political, and social issues.

May 1994. While visiting Munich on a site visit to the Kunstverein for planning a project, Doug and Julie meet Thomas Eggerer and Jochen Klein, two painters just finishing their studies who have recently collaborated on texts and a temporary public intervention. Affinities are evident and the four hit it off. Thomas and Jochen are invited to work with Group Material, initially on *Market*, which is scheduled to take place at the Kunstverein München the following year. Thomas has a pending DAAD (Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst) fellowship in New York; he and Jochen move to New York in the summer.

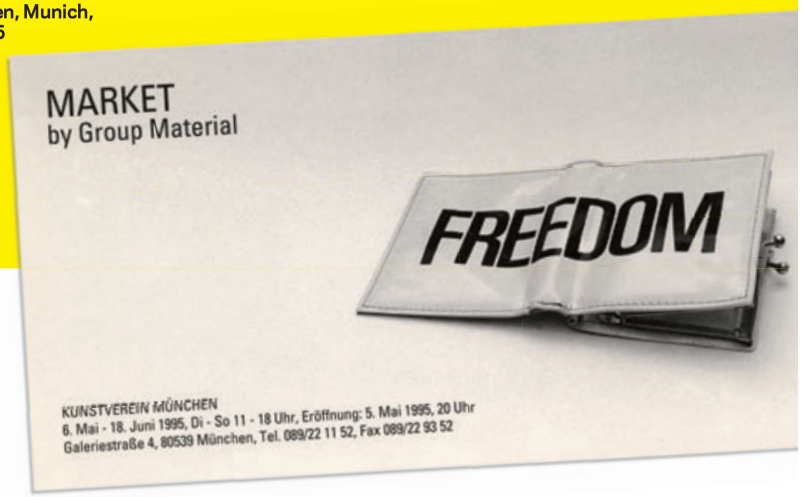
↑ Left to right: Jochen Klein, Doug Ashford, Thomas Eggerer in shopping mall, New York

MEMBERS:
Doug Ashford, Julie Ault, Thomas Eggerer, Jochen Klein



Market

Kunstverein München, Munich, May 6–June 18, 1995





Figuring that *Market* might be Group Material's final interior exhibition, it is designed to reference early shows by using red walls and is planned to be composed exclusively of mass-produced materials and informational artifacts rather than artworks. Specifically it addresses the ways in which market culture is adopting previously marginalized ideological positions and ideals, including those associated with feminism and civil rights. Curating for this occasion means investigating lines of inquiry in promotional culture and a great deal of shopping. A wallet that Julie bought in the early eighties, with the word Freedom silk-screened on it, is used as the iconic emblem for *Market*. The group produces a set of give-away promotional items including "quick-slit" letter openers, bumper stickers, "Keepit Clips," and small shopping bags, all with the Freedom wallet image printed on them in lieu of a company logo. Together with a catalog, these elements form the show's publication. 150 advertising slogans that make no direct mention of a product or brand but poetically appeal to "fundamental" concepts about life and society and suggest abstract yet ideologically toned directives, are collected and made into vinyl type transfers in various sizes and colors installed directly on the walls. This language loosely captions the installed objects and screened videos.

Fall 1995. Doug and Julie collaboratively teach the Interdisciplinary Seminar at The Cooper Union School of Art.

↑ Left to right: Thomas Eggerer, Jochen Klein in supermarket, Munich
→ Collection of materials for *Market*, awaiting installation
→ Following page: Video stills, *Cops: Caught in the Act*, *How to Organize Your Home*, screened in *Market*



Advertising slogans for *Market* (excerpt),
Group Material, May 1995

You've never been this secure.
Take me away
It's What's Inside That Counts
A Business of Caring.
In Touch With Tomorrow
Make the Connection.
The Convenience You Expect.
Business First, Freedom Second.
It Just Feels Right.
For the real world.
Let's Come Together
Where do you want to go today?
The Right Choice
It's The Right Thing To Do.
Have It Your Way
You're in Good Hands.
Power over tomorrow.
The Power of Partnership
Better things for better living.
Your Edge on the Future
The Right Decision.
Find your life in ours.
We make the things that make a difference.
Solutions for a small planet.
We'll help get you there.
Built to set you free
The Strength of Experience
Making the Difference Together
We're a part of your life.
There is a difference.
Nothing Comes Closer to Home.
Let's talk taste.
And you thought you knew us.







Group Material, "Project Statement," *Three Rivers Arts Festival Program*, 1996

The quotations and underlying images running throughout the program guide were compiled by Group Material as our contribution to this year's public art component of the Three Rivers Arts Festival, *Points of Entry: A Community Based Public Art Project*. We have integrated the Festival's schedules and information with a constructed 'dialogue' from interviews conducted spontaneously on the street, during a radio call-in program, and from scheduled discussions in homes and offices. Several excerpts are reproduced from previous writings by architects, critics and designers. All texts are represented anonymously to de-emphasize attributes normally used to categorize identity—such as location of residency or institutional affiliation—and instead highlight actual statements.

The questions we raised with interviewees were largely about their experiences using the city, neighborhoods and public spaces, recent relevant changes, personal and collective histories, functions of urban festivals and the cultural, corporate, and consumer entities that administrate, support and visit such events. The linked fragments can be read as a textual chain that was not conducted as a dialogue in real time, but should convey a logic of interconnectedness between topics.

As 'community' and 'public' are amorphous terms it is crucial to question the ideological underpinnings and context as well as the character of social constellations at work when they are invoked. Given recent trends toward professionalization of community-based art alongside privatization of public space, we decided to investigate the term 'community' in relation to the festival itself.

Our project is not a sociological or scientific survey, nor is it a random sampling of Pittsburgh residents and there is no pretense of objectivity here. The overarching goal of the project is to introduce unarticulated perspectives and voices into the official festival arena and to construct a picture of 'community' and 'the city' as indeterminate and contested by introducing unexpected observations, critiques, and agendas.

Program

Three Rivers Arts Festival, Pittsburgh, June 7-23, 1996

The group is invited to participate in the Three Rivers Arts Festival, a multileveled official arts festival produced for downtown Pittsburgh. As a response to the problematic context of institutionalizing community-based art practices, Group Material decides to replace the artificiality of an assigned constituency by naming the organizers of the festival themselves as the "target audience," and using the festival's program guide as the form and distribution for GM's contribution. Using a variety of means including street interviews, a radio call-in show, and local newspaper ads the group solicits testimony from Pittsburgh residents about their experiences of the city, including those that are behind-the-scenes, secret, and subcultural. The stories express an alternative mapping of the production of the urban space of Pittsburgh through hidden histories, which Group Material threads through the official program guide for the festival.





Fall 1996. Felix Gonzalez-Torres' death, from AIDS-related causes (on January 9, 1996), has cast a shadow on the group for Julie and Doug, who are already ambivalent about its continuance. Although Thomas and Jochen are still open to working in Group Material, enthusiasm is lacking. Group Material seems to be in a state of dissolution rather than reinvention. Jochen Klein has returned to painting and moves to London, and Thomas Eggerer is also considering painting again, as well as a move to Cologne. Julie feels it is time to formally bring the group to an end, rather than let Group Material's history be watered down by less compelling work. Doug agrees. Julie and Doug decide they will continue to individually represent the group's histories through live narration and writings, and consider making a book about the group at some future date.

Chronicle guiding text written by Julie Ault with information drawn from the Group Material archive, and the memories of Doug Ashford, Liliana Dones, Thomas Eggerer, Mundy McLaughlin, Marybeth Nelson, and Tim Rollins.

Case Reopened: Group Material

Julie Ault

> *[The archive] cannot help with what is not actually there, with the dead who are not really present in the whispering galleries, with the past that does not, in fact live in the record office, but is rather,* gone *(that is its point; this is what the past is for); it cannot help with parchment that does not in fact speak. . . .*
>
> *Moreover, historians read from what is not there: the silences and absences of the documents always speak to us.*
> Carolyn Steedman[1]

Assembling the archive

In the summer of 2008 I gathered together the physical traces of Group Material from file cabinets, closets, bookshelves, and under the couch in my apartment, and transferred the whole lot to the Downtown Collection at the Fales Library at New York University. There, it would be cohered into a formal archive and joined by the material from other group members, most notably the substantial accumulation of long-term member Doug Ashford.

The group's material traces had been dispersed since 1983 when the collaborative decided it would no longer maintain an exhibition space or headquarters and instead function nomadically, working from members' homes and aided by the temporary infrastructural support of art institutions that invited GM to make projects. Decentralized, members kept their own paper trails, or not. While no single person had the official responsibility of keeping up documentation of GM's process and projects, former member Mundy McLaughlin did so for the most part until 1986, at which point I took over the informal role, as well as the files. Founding member Tim Rollins gave me his files soon after. Others who left did not turn their collected material over to those who continued.

What remains tangible for the archive, thirty years after GM's founding, is a mixture

[1] Carolyn Steedman, *Dust. The Archive and Cultural History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), p. 81, 151. I am indebted to Fareed Armaly for recommending this excellent inquiry at just the right time.

of several individuals' saving habits stimulated by idiosyncratic, conceptual, and practical factors. Some of what was saved is of ambiguous value and much that should have been kept was not. Things got lost and thrown out early on because as barely solvent young New Yorkers we had space constraints and moved frequently. Other things got lost or discarded due to carelessness and lack of historical consciousness. (I am embarrassed to recall that it wasn't so many years ago when I enthusiastically threw out bundles of files thinking "Those projects are done, I won't be using these anymore." At the time, freeing up storage space in my small apartment seemed more pressing than an abstract notion of history.)

The inception of Group Material's archive can be regarded as a kind of reunion—materially speaking and as an enterprise that engenders coming together. The desire to seek out relevant materials from the group's former members was threefold: to organize the most comprehensive diverse and multivocal information collection about Group Material possible for public use, to regroup the group symbolically through its fragments and traces and, in the process, to reconnect with those members who I was not already in touch with in hopes of gaining new insight into the collaborative's internal relations. Five out of a total of twenty core members have died: Patrick Brennan, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Beth Jaker, Jochen Klein, and Michael Udvardy. The process is ongoing: meeting with Marybeth Nelson, Hannah Alderfer, and Peter Szypula from the original group over twenty-five years later, and freshly experiencing the camaraderie, closeness, and fun that colored the initial collaboration was thrilling, as was rekindling dialogues with Liliana Dones and Karen Ramspacher.

This book was planned to emerge on a parallel track with organizing the archive. The challenge of how to represent GM's collective endeavor, and with what authority, was highlighted. It was vital to inform previous participants about the project and seek their advice, as well as their contributions to the archive.

The plan to transfer Group Material's documentation to a publicly accessible conserving institution had been in the works for a while. Four years ago I met Marvin Taylor, who founded the Downtown Collection in 1993, and was immediately impressed with his focus on documenting New York downtown culture as an arena of directly and tangentially interconnected individuals, collectives, communities, and practices. (The archive encompasses art, literature, music, theater, performance, film, activism, dance, photography, and video). The Downtown Collection meaningfully contextualizes its constituents; Taylor seeks to obtain overlapping and complementary collections. He stresses archives are living entities, and has generated a vibrant collection and a decidedly non-stuffy research site that counters the cliché of the archive as somber crypt. (Taylor further won my vote when he said he regards archives as "false evidence," but more on that later.)

Doug Ashford was likewise enthusiastic. We recognized the Downtown Collection's broad cultural reach as the ideal context for Group Material's ultimate "institutionalization," particularly as Taylor, clearly an activist archiver himself, was excited by the notion of Group Material's collection being cohered and structured by former members, even though the more common course is to simply deposit a relevant collection with its arbitrariness and gaps intact and let people make what they will of it. Discrepancy is inevitable. Some gaps stimulate research, but some are better filled, such as fleshing out the collective's archive with individual members' material. (Normally archives adhere to original provenance as a structuring device, which would result in continued degrouping in GM's case.) Furthermore, Taylor supported the idea of using the period of processing the material as an archiving laboratory in which some initial research projects could be produced, including the making of this book and a multiform inquiry into GM's exhibition *AIDS Timeline* by Sabrina Locks.

Activating the archive

Group Material's cultural practice was temporal and the forms employed were primarily ephemeral. When the group ended in 1996, I was intent on preserving its ephemerality, resisting becoming history, and opposed to leaving the responsibility of defining and interpreting our work—at least initially—to a curator or art historian. There was a certain appeal in preserving the ephemeral aspect of the entire project: letting people learn about the work through the fragmentary documentation in circulation, and broadcasting Group Material with live narration that renders the past vividly, including tailoring presentations for specific contexts or audiences. Previously GM favored joint representation but since its ending, Doug and I have opted for narrating the work from individual perspectives publicly, and responding to individual enquiries case-by-case. For thirteen years we have sustained a vital dialogue—at times, a debate—about GM's historical representation as various issues emerged. Intermittently we broached the idea of making a book, waiting for the timing to be right.

It had been clear that a time would come when some of us would want to revisit GM and fashion inquiries and accounts, but that we needed the distance of time to do so properly in part because the emotional dimensions of ending a long-term collaboration clouded our capacity to think analytically and freely about how exactly such a project might be generated, and with what aims, means, and methods. For me, buying time so that we could eventually do justice to the subtleties of Group Material's practice and production was also motivated by the desire for an unencumbered phase to develop my own individual creative interests, voice, and identity.

A great deal of interest in Group Material has been expressed in the years since it ended. Would this continue if the combination of fragmentary access and an amorphous status, which invite projection, were offset by the concrete and intrinsically conservative forms of archive and book?

Because the archive has the capacity to construct relationships between Group Material and present and future, the situation compelled us to consider it anew and to shape the content and context from which research into the collaborative's practice will be made. The key challenge has been to figure out which archiving and history writing structures, practices, and methods would effectively animate and complicate the subject of Group Material without excessively controlling or overdetermining its meanings.

Institutionalizing the archive implies closing down, or "closing the casket," but it simultaneously involves opening up and multiplication through use and interpretation. The archive is a primary source for potentially infinite production of history. The archive relocates agency from Group Material as working entity to others who activate its bodies of information. Institutionalization also entails a reassignment or sharing of authority. The relationship between GM's archive and the Downtown Collection is resonant with previous dynamics between GM projects and hosting institutions, except that this cohabitation will be permanent.

The transfer necessitates imagining future use. Exemplary scenarios need to be

conjured including those beyond our lifespans. Group Material's general approach is free access, for whatever purpose desired, including reproduction rights. However, the thorny question of reconstruction requires further conceptual negotiation. The nature of GM's temporal and context-specific work places limits on remaking art (installations, projects) from the archive, but directives and restrictions nonetheless need to be thought through and articulated. In recent years we have been asked if Group Material exhibitions and projects could be reconstructed. If material ingredients of an exhibition were to be gathered from the archive and other sources, and installed according to photographic documentation of the original manifestation, the result would be a cross between artwork and artifact. There is no replacement for the actual experience of an exhibition, which makes a good argument for the research value of re-creation. However, one has to take into account what is missing. Group Material's exhibitions spoke from and to particular contexts during specific times. Aesthetic practice and social practice merged in the projects, which usually involved layers of collaboration in and beyond the group. The social processes involved in creating a project, which were part of the work, would be absent from any reconstruction. Contexts cannot be replicated. It is impossible to reproduce the climate of circumstance and perception and understanding for events.[2]

Archives and books are paradoxical; they enliven and deaden, expose and suppress. What was previously an open-ended answer to "What is Group Material?" is unlikely to remain that way in the face of such historicizing forms that authorize and to some degree fix definition, even as they seek complexity.

The dangers of becoming history are well signposted, but the need to cohere and disseminate information coupled with the desire to relinquish the responsibility for (and control of) mediation supersedes the risks. That Group Material would have an interest in its own historicization is intrinsic to the group's working paradigm. The investigative and representational methods Group Material utilized as well as its concern with discursive practices are mirrored and enacted in relation to its own history in this project. The challenge of representing one's own (collective and by extension individual) history fundamentally dislodges divisions between the archive and memory as well as between objective and subjective knowledge.

Unpacking the archive

In the fall of 2008, a temporary workspace was set up at the Downtown Collection within which collecting material, deciding on the archive's conceptual structure, and arranging and inventorying took place. GM's material came out of its various crannies of dormancy to form a fertile ground for research processes to begin. Inspired by the television series *The Wire* and programs about investigating "cold cases," we imagined ourselves detectives making sense of the surrounding evidence, charged with solving the case of Group Material, and for Sabrina, the case of *AIDS Timeline*.[3]

Despite the group's sketchy saving methods, there remains an informative and exciting pool of documents, photography, and artifacts that chart Group Material's process and practice. Included are meeting minutes from the group's first year and a half of activity, internal communiqués, original proposals, announcements, press releases, exhibition statements, press responses, correspondence, project files, installation photography, snapshots, working notes and notebooks, exhibition soundtracks, research and source material, publications and books, and artworks and ephemera that were used in projects. Building the archive continues; some individuals' papers have been folded in and some are forthcoming.

After just a few days of sorting through and reading the early papers as well as encountering information long blotted from memory, I was shocked to discover I had unwittingly been telling a fair number of inaccuracies—lies even, while imparting stories about Group Material these past years. I read further, and the divide between recollection and fact expanded. Certain retrieved information was basic while some signaled that Group Material was much more complex and debatable than I had meanwhile fabricated and perpetuated. My initial foray into Group Material's paper, artifact, and image trail transfigured the mental spatialization in which I had short-circuited information and prioritized it through the filters of my impressions.

I can't say I've had no inkling of the essentially loose relationships between memory, history, and accuracy. After all, how could activities spanning seventeen years with a total of twenty core participants across that period be portrayed all-inclusively in memory, in conversation, or with a typical presentational format? I was uneasy with expediency and habitual representation and sometimes was disinclined to speak about Group Material whatsoever, but felt responsible to address the ongoing interest, particularly since there was no comprehensive published source to direct people to.

In retrospect I believe describing Group Material during the years since it ended has been as much about concealment as exposure. (Foucault: "Storytellers continued their narrative late into the night to forestall death and to delay the inevitable moment when everyone must fall silent."[4]) Telling has supplied a positive, active relationship with the past (and forestalled "death" analogous to Scheherazade in *One Thousand and One Nights*) but what inevitably became routine narration has also prevented my own deeper reflection into the collaborative's meanings and experiences.

Determining the criteria of what gets included in the formal archive—delimiting what is Group Material and what is not, is more complicated than it initially might appear. Questions of privacy and publicity and inside and outside arise.

Should some (perhaps particularly juicy) information be withheld or destroyed to respect the private machinations of group interaction? How does the individual get demarcated in collaboration? In the archive? Some GM members are intensely invested, some are detached, and others are dead and uninvolved in its history. Such disparity proliferates from the archive. Should personal reflections on Group Material from our notebooks be put into the archive? (Another inequity: some took notes and saved them, others did not.) What about individually culled source material that was clipped or preserved for general interest but with Group Material tangentially in mind? What about material that played an informal role in GM's practice? What about material reflective of former members' work after the group ended, which demonstrates individual incorporation and extensions of GM's principles and methods? There is the question of whether information and documentation (or facsimiles) from individuals and institutions Group Material worked with should be sought out and integrated into its archive. Wouldn't potential understandings of GM and the social relations it engendered be meaningfully elaborated by such inclusions, despite that active pursuit to fill out a collection is generally frowned upon as a threat to the fair play of the "as is" archive and its authenticity.

One could spiral out of control making more and more connections to information and items that would texture and deepen understandings of Group Material, and essentially end up "turning over the iceberg."[5] But conceptually at least, these

[2] Discussions between Helen Molesworth, Doug Ashford, Karen Ramspacher, and myself raised important issues about reconstruction, as have conversations with Martin Beck, Miwon Kwon, Rasmus Røhling, and Sabrina Locks.

[3] Sabrina Locks initially brought up the analogy of *The Wire*, specifically scenes in the detectives' workrooms where they pinned documents and clues to the walls in order to look for interconnections.

[4] Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 117.

[5] Rasmus Røhling used this term when we were discussing these issues.

speculations are warranted. Where does the archive end? What defines its frame? The archive can be contracted or expanded depending on how these questions are considered.

Archive Authority

Although first person narration is avidly consumed, as well as venerated in certain situations (therapy, the courtroom), when history is at stake, first person narration is regarded paradoxically; on the one hand subjective perspective, reliance on memory, and relation to ego render it suspect, only quasi-legitimate. On the other hand, "having been there" invokes empirical authority and authenticity. History is even more complicated when collective subjectivity is involved: all those contradictions, multiple agendas, and conflicting memories! The written record is generally privileged as trustworthy authority.

Because they are repositories of documents or "facts," archives seem to tell the truth, and they do so with a degree of authority. Archives tell truths, but they also mislead through omission (Taylor's "false evidence"). Connecting the dots between discrete documents and discovering relations between pieces of information—producing meaning—is at the heart of research. But what is housed within a particular collection is rarely systematic; it is often fragmentary, disconnected from context, and sometimes random. Crucial pieces of information, which might answer questions, suggest particular narratives, or unlock mysteries are not necessarily archived.

In spring and summer of 2007, before moving material to NYU, two interested parties who had minimal knowledge of Group Material tested how and what Group Material's documentation trail communicates. Rasmus Røhling, an art student at the time at Jutland Art Academy in Århus, Denmark, and Sabrina Locks, a graduate student finishing her studies at Bard Center for Curatorial Studies, respectively reviewed the files and documentation from Group Material's initial period of activity.[6] Witnessing, and subsequent discussion of their understandings, interpretations, confusions, distortions, assumptions, and questions illuminated and delimited the materials' capacity to convey Group Material. For instance, Rasmus and Sabrina were shocked by the character of the group's business-like minutes during its first year until I explained that the volume and manner of documentation happened because we diligently followed set rules for organizational record keeping in order to meet the criteria for incorporation in the state of New York. Later on GM primarily communicated in person and by phone, which accounts for the dwindling traces of internal dialogue. Sabrina and Rasmus were perplexed by two consecutive sets of minutes: one week listed ten group members, the following only six. Inexplicably the record made no note of the heated resignation of four members, which accounted for the discrepancy. It was clear some qualifying narration was essential to portray Group Material with more dimension and accuracy than archival material with its gaps and silences is capable of.

Various authorial modes embody specific expressions of authority, and neither archives, spoken, or written representations are unbiased or comprehensive. Subjective and objective are not secure categories; they are hybrid and permeable. Memories and histories intertwine and actively condition and contextualize any event, throwing contradictions into relief and potentially rendering resolution absurd.

[6] I met Rasmus when I was teaching at Jutland. He asked if I knew of any interesting work he could get involved in as he was planning a lengthy stay in New York; our dialogue about archiving and historicizing GM developed during that visit. Rhea Anastas (who was then teaching at Bard Center for Curatorial Studies) recommended Sabrina do a summer internship with me in 2007, which we extended to working on a project from and for the archive.

Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material

What can the collective subjective do when given the chance to write its own history, and transform its own material to a public sphere? How do artifacts—whether material or informational—communicate? How can meanings and histories be extracted from and read into cultural artifacts? What kind of suitable communicative forms can be shaped to embody the historicizing processes, gathered knowledge, diverse purpose, and doubts that drive this inquiry? How to make what is missing evident or register absence as a layer of historicizing?

Private and public information intertwine throughout the chronicle, as do anecdotes and facts, snapshots and installation photographs. Selecting documentation and bringing it together to form textual and pictorial layers, determining placement and juxtaposition, and deciding on the content and mode of accompanying narration are all aspects of shaping Group Material's historical representation here. Chronology is considered a somewhat open structure, within which readers and users of the book are invited to make meaning of and cross-reference the imbedded information and material ingredients.

Group Material's actions are presented here as reference points in a larger cultural discourse, and contextual conditions are suggested by use of a variety of means. Group Material authored documents, reprinted in their original form and scale, compose one layer of information in the chronicle. The methods, contents, and visual character of these documents are valued as "original language." They vividly convey GM's motivations—what we perceived we were doing at the time, and demonstrate the group's shifting rhetorical strategies, as well as the cultural vocabulary of particular moments.

The guiding text that filters throughout the chronicle imparting otherwise inaccessible circumstances, facts, and anecdotes is written in a depersonalized present-tense mode. This method of telling intends to situate readers in the times of events, as well as suggest collective subjectivity, distinct from a retrospective individual perspective. Several topics are carried through, such as the continuities and discontinuities of GM's composition, and how Group Material structured itself and financed its work. Private workings, conflicts and contradictions endemic to group process are likewise articulated. (Certain complex circumstances within the group—such as resignations or departures—are expressed vaguely although "the silences and absences of the documents always speak to us.")

Configuration and reconfiguration are additionally registered in the chronology as listings of current members. Group Material was a succession of social bodies, transforming whenever someone left or joined. The collaborative was modified by the gain or disappearance of specific interests and methods and new dynamics emerged, which had consequences in practice.

Another layer of the chronicle consists of excerpted texts, which are unified by typographic design treatment. These excerpts are diverse in nature; many are written by GM. Intermittently they open out to take account of other voices—including journalists, project participants, and audience members. The extracts range in function from installation instructions to critical reviews.

Revisionist and interpretive tendencies have been restrained in this initial look at Group Material in favor of creating a useful documentary foundation that, akin to one of the group's installations, invites a multiplicity of interpretation. *Show and Tell* offers

a distilled representation of the group's strata of process and production, and of the findings from Group Material looking at itself. It is a source for hard data, impression, and historical atmosphere. GM's collaborative spirit as well as its methods and principles are articulated through past projects and enacted in the making of the book. *Show and Tell* is also an introduction to the archive, an invitation to visit and look further. The organization of the archive and the response to that process through this book provide a platform and base interpretation to use, negotiate, and take issue with. Additionally, this final "Group Material project" forms a case study in archiving, historical inquiry, and history writing, shaped from the questions and problems enmeshed in the investigation.

Group Material should not be reduced to memory or record, but can most constructively be articulated and elaborated by the dynamics between multiple bodies of information. Somewhere between the representation of lived experience of events and their contexts, and the non-judgmental multiplicity of the archive, historical representation gets complex and exciting. The history of history is fraught with what Derrida calls "an incessant tension between the archive and archaeology." He continues "They will always be close the one to the other, resembling each other, hardly discernible in their co-implication, and yet radically incompatible, heterogeneous . . . "[7] Perhaps imprint and memory are not mutually hostile, and the conflict between archive and memory is overestimated. What if we understand History and Memory as inseparable, accept their apparent coproductive roles, and refuse to regard this as a predicament.

Group Material's archive and publication projects are fueled by the recognition that the past and its contexts are irretrievable. The knotty undertakings of archiving and history writing have been taken up with resuscitating and mediating in mind, and without illusion that the result be entirely accurate. History is a dynamic of vested inquiry, process, and representation. This book, which is part of the process, mixes and honors multiple ways of knowing, showing, and telling.

[7] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever. A Freudian Impression*, translated by Eric Prenowitz, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 92.

I am grateful for dialogues with Doug Ashford, Martin Beck, Matthew Buckingham, Sabrina Locks, Sarat Maharaj, Rasmus Røhling, and Marvin Taylor, which have variously influenced my thinking as reflected in this essay.

What Was to be Done?

Tim Rollins

It was 1978 and we had no choice. We had to do something. We wanted to make a scene. A brilliant desperation was in the air for we young artists who wanted—needed—to be politically engaged but lacked any venues for new and true artistic inquiry, experimentation, demonstration, and change.

Group Material had some powerful foreshadows: Russian Constructivism, Dada and Surrealism, the Arts and Crafts movements in England and later the United States, the Shakers, and other utopian communities. But when I go back and wonder how Group Material came to be, I have to acknowledge the incongruous influence of two very, very different artists—the British activist Conrad Atkinson and the gay neo-expressionist painter Jedd Garet.

My revelation moment occurred when I encountered a special issue of the British art publication *Studio International*, edited by Richard Cork. The title of the issue was "Art for Whom?". It presented and explored a survey of socially engaged, community based arts projects throughout the UK at the moment (and to my mind the only true avant garde movement around). In those pages I was introduced to the art of Conrad Atkinson and Margaret Harrison. What excited and inspired me about Atkinson's and Harrison's projects was the direct engagement with specific individuals and communities to develop and produce artwork that was both visually and politically vital. This was work that actually transformed the situation that was the impetus for the work. Unlike so much "political art" then (and now, sadly), this was not art about politics, about the People as an abstraction. This was work made in concert with communities in crisis with a direct intention to change things to positive effect. This was art as dialogue, not representation and reportage (descriptive, removed, and safe).

Many of the first members of Group Material were my classmates at the School of Visual Arts (SVA) from 1975 to 1977. We were deeply involved in Joseph Kosuth's reading and discussion seminar in art and cultural politics. Jedd Garet was also a classmate of ours and while I don't remember if he was in Kosuth's seminar class, I'm

certain he was in the studio class we all took with the painter Jennifer Bartlett. While Jedd would be quietly making his things in the corner of the studio (this was a required studio class lasting several hours) our gang would be forever arguing with Jennifer about the purpose, meaning, and nature of art. We weren't making objects. We were making dialogue. We sincerely considered the collective conversation as our work and it drove Jennifer crazy. (This was way before "Situational Aesthetics.") We were probably tendentious, a little obnoxious, but I recall a great energy, an irreverence and humor in the talks and we all learned a lot. Even Jennifer had a begrudging respect for what were attempting to do.

Anyway, we had all just graduated from SVA without the prospects of anything. Jedd Garet, on the other hand, got a large exhibition at the fabulous Robert Miller Gallery straight out of school. Jedd was making these very punky, neo-surrealist paintings that were very popular with lots of folk at the time and championed by critics like Robert Pincus-Witten and Robert Rosenblum. While our gang's ideas of what could be and Jedd's were light-years away, Jedd was still a good friend and so we all went to his wildly successful opening at the gallery. After, we retreated to a bar downtown and then it started. Everyone was complaining and hand wringing. "No one is ever going to want to be involved in our kind of work . . . there is no place for political art in this city . . . oh, what to do, what to do?!!"

That's when it hit me. We needed our own place.

Born and raised in the hills of central rural Maine, American pragmatism is built into my DNA. Back home, if you need to build a barn, you don't get a committee together to do a study of the history and practice of barn building over the past three centuries and don't need to go into barn-building theory (e.g. The Barn and "the Other"). You build a damn barn. We needed a barn, not a space but a place, a laboratory of our own. We could operate outside the commercial and increasingly not-alternative spaces of the mainstream art scene in order to make our own ways in our own contexts. This is what we wanted and needed to do. Exhibitions as inquiries. And we wanted to do this in a physical space occupied not just by objects, artists and the art-involved audience but a hub of social relations. We wanted to get away from the slumming, abject, funky, raggedy-looking feel of so many of the artist-run galleries at the time without reverting to the expensive-looking Soho white cube paradigm. We wanted to develop social action with style—our style. We wanted to be independent, self-reliant. We wanted to be communitarian (not Communist), not only community-based but also community-engaged, connecting what happens inside the exhibition space / headquarters with social life on the street and neighborhood just outside the doors.

As students many of us were involved in an organization called Artists Meeting for Cultural Change. It was like a town meeting that met at the Paula Cooper Gallery in Soho one Sunday night a month. Participants included Kosuth and Sarah Charlesworth and folk like Lucy Lippard, Leon Golub and Nancy Spero, and many others, including, ironically some seriously troubled sociopaths. We were the youngest of the constant debaters. While the experience of those meetings was a unique education, our gang was eventually turned off and disappointed by the relentlessly negative and combative spirit of the enterprise. The old New Left were conjuring up a culture of impossibility, so unlike the spirit of the civil rights movement that I witnessed and experienced as a young kid.

I remember that in our early conversations about the plans for the Group Material project, we all began to realize that no social system and consciousness is hermetic and airtight. Things like these are more porous than we first believe. Under enough outside pressure, things can spring leaks. There were hopeful models of work that excited us: the feminist Heresies Collective, *The Times Square Show* and *The Real Estate Show*, Jenny Holzer's first Truism posters plastered all over downtown, Mike Glier's *White Male Power* show at Annina Nosei's space in Soho, what Keith Haring was doing with his drawings in the ad spaces in the New York City subways, and the whole riotous community-building neighborhood club scene we visited almost every night (Max's Kansas City, Club 57, The Pyramid, Mudd Club, Danceteria, Tier Three, the UFO club, CBGB, Crisco Disco) that induced fresh possibilities for the making and experiencing of new modes and ways of making art.

Could we do this? Could we flow into an organic democracy that would produce works of art and anthologies of social and cultural concerns? Could we create an arena that renegotiates the physical, psychological and class-bound barriers between art and so-called non-art? Could we relearn our thinking and practice to be less reactive and more proactive in coming up with innovative solutions to some very real limitations and problems in very real communities in some very real lives? Often, when the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke of his definition of transformative Love, he would describe this as the kind of Love that would go to any non-violent means necessary to create "the Beloved Community." Could we do this?

An Artwork is a Person

Doug Ashford

> *The impossible demand to start the revolution everywhere at once is replaced by the statement that communication is possible only at the moment when everyone changes places: when the individual loses herself or himself in the effort of showing an image to someone else.*
> Colin MacCabe, "On Godard," 1980[1]

[1] Colin MacCabe, *Godard: Images, Sounds, Politics* (Bloomington: Indiana Univiversity Press, 1980), p. 153.

"Join us!", Protesters to onlookers at the March on the Pentagon, October 17, 1967

The dismantling of the progressive economic and cultural changes of the 1960s began in earnest in the 1980s, and Group Material's overall project was imagined in this period of attempted historical erasure. To design our work we looked to the many layers of human activity that pre-dated this right-wing onslaught by twenty years: the attempted re-invention of American life through civil organization and social rebellion. This book comes at a time of concentrated reflection on the complex political contours of art in the 1980s; fifty years after the world-changing disturbances of Berkeley, Newark, Prague, Nanterre, Watts, Alabama, and Stonewall. Today's ascendant culture of war and its accompanying economic collapse bring home many of the state designed public fictions initiated in the 1980s. That the majority must still live precariously and in deprivation suggests that the darkest fantasies of governmental and corporate coercion were actually quite gnostic: an improbable world of passive spectators forced to endorse a reality imposed on them by executive power. The publication of this book in 2010 is then doubly reflective—representing the work of a group of artists in the 1980s that modeled the revolutionary counter-culture of twenty years before.

Most of the members of Group Material were children during the rise of the civil rights, women's liberation, free love, gay power, and anti-war movements of the 1960s. Even if we were too young to directly witness the physical mobilizations that rejected state totality and corporate greed, the concomitant changes in ethos, fantasy, and feelings were tacitly imbedded in our practice. Group Material understood that connected to the liberation movements against colonialism, patriarchy, and capital were artist-led oppositions to the accepted hierarchies between institutions, audiences and artists themselves. The process of re-imagining ourselves through the rebellious inventing of art objects was, in many ways, a continuation of a larger political momentum.

In this way 60s activisms and 80s interpretive enactments were more than the socioeconomic conditions for Group Material's work: they were the foundations of its aesthetic action. Activist politics presented a moment of collective refusal, but in that refusal came an identification with others, known and unknown. The desire for political change produces conjecture on a number of fronts, and conjecture necessitates affinity with others. Modeling a future by banding together amidst the interests of strangers is a legacy shared by the political imperatives of social organizing and the methodological sensibilities of artists. Although art and politics may still be routinely sequestered in the academy, these two find great sympathy with each other in the actual effective function of people's work to change their circumstances. Artists cannot produce unless connected with others: with those behind the creative acts coming before them or with newly apparent audiences that surround them, real and imagined. This social knowledge invested in creative work is therefore based on a projected kind of empathy—a sense of the ethical coming from imagination and hope. Such feelings are deeply connected to the inevitability of ethical affinity formed in oppositional social agency; its acts of protest and organization are a genesis. That is why during an artistic offering, justice and beauty seem to come from the same dream.

For many of the actual participants, however, memories of the movements of the 1960s are marked by its practical failures: the inability of majorities to recognize the potential liberation those revolutionary movements and their counter-cultures could provide. The tragedies of missed opportunities, internal sexisms, police infiltrations, capitulations, and betrayals complete an almost unbearable chronicle. But the activisms of the 60s also bring a possible philosophical reflection to thinking about the subjective effects of non-governmental organization, a reflection that is encircled by aesthetics. An oppositional movement makes groupings where the desires of others overtake our sense of singular and individual autonomy, a process amplified by protesting actions. If organized acts of civil disobedience put people's bodies on the line, then any sense of the continuation of the self is literally and corporeally opened up to the proximity of strangers. Anyone involved in public acts of political resistance has had such an experience—the look toward another, previously unrecognizable, but made familiar, even loved, in the battle with gigantic repressive authority. The face of the anonymous becomes empathically known. This "new face" producing a fresh affinity found under the duress and risk of social unrest, is an experience of the difference between humans at its most profound: an implicit understanding that however far away liberation may seem, we can still recognize its contours in the work we do together. In times of rebellion, an encounter with the desires of another person allows for the recognition of a radically different future self.

"We are also part of the audience", Group Material

Carl Oglesby of Students for a Democratic Society, writing after the October '67 anti-war mobilization at the Pentagon, tried to come to terms with the shift this massive demonstration mandated: from peaceful protest to direct confrontation and

resistance. "If I am correct in assuming that men resist danger and want freedom from all servitudes, then it follows that rebellion does not take place until it is compulsory. The rebel is someone who is no longer free to choose even his own docile servitude." If the political revolutionary is a figure of tactical refusal then Group Material's refutations were multiple and situation-specific. We said "no" to the false neutrality of the museum that forbade the social context of relations between our imaginations, "no" to the reduction of other public domains to corporatist management and blind consumption. We said "no" to the sequestering of art as outside the purview of audiences and artists; we said "no" to the disappearance of subaltern cultures under imperialism, and we said "no" to the supposed inevitable death of our friends to AIDS. Our set of refusals were shared with each other and with the many other individuals and groupings responding to social inequity at that time. We recognized that the politics of any group is made real in collecting seemingly unrelated refusals, showing how group action can generate new life into an individual—say anti-war sentiment coming to the teacher from the loss of her students to the draft, or the collection of a painter's work by an embassy in a CIA-overturned republic. Any singular moment of individual self-conception, of assumptions of the "ethical and reasonable" can be inspired and rethought through the demands of collective rebellion and its resonance. When an individual is moved outside of their normal setting by the effects of movements for social change, their political function changes; their consciousness changes. And likewise, when a participant's political sense in the world is transformed they are in turn, displaced from their accepted senses.

Similarly, the exhibitions and public projects Group Material produced were a displacement of the art object onto unexpected fields of experiences. By organizing art installations based on political urgency, inquiry, and contradiction, the reasonable expectations for art were upset. Abstract paintings occupied space defined by popular insurgency, children's drawings sat alongside electoral advertisements next to paintings of heads of state, Dr. Seuss books were placed near Joseph Beuys blackboards, institutional critique was overtaken by "easy-listening" versions of revolutionary 60s ballads, and so on. Such an inflection, of the meaning of the one onto the connotations of the many, began with dislocating the historical notion of the supposedly autonomous art object onto a politically activated theme. But in addition, the juxtaposition of artworks with everyday market commodities and publicity design evoked the possibility of revelation in the undoing of what already exists. A revolution can even transform the advertisements in the daily paper, the food in the kitchen cabinet, and the tools of the workplace. In a related way, Group Material's transformation of presidential statements into bus adverts, snapshots into billboards, subway cars into a gallery spaces, and then the museum gallery itself into a town meeting, were all the refusals of established frameworks for the organization of art, refusals of the limited imaginings of what artists and viewers could be.

As Group Material's work matured, it became increasingly clear that in order to oppose the oblivion of the present, a form had to be invented through the visualization of democratic process. How else could an authentic response to the imposed disaster of contemporary life be constructed? As artists we knew that the street and the symposia as forms of response were often beautiful—that collectively diverse declarations of justice have all the qualities of improvisation, comparison, proportion, absence, suggestion, and substitution. In many ways the practices that Group Material developed were un-theorized, suggested by the exigencies of the constituent matters of life over death: be they the formation of Central American independence movements facing American sponsored genocide or the activist response to official indifference to the AIDS epidemic. Our forms of exhibition and public practice reflected the need to invent a dynamic situation, a designed moment of reflection that could include discussion and present dissent. If such an apparatus of artistic presentation emerges from the framework of political assembly—the installation of art can begin to look and perhaps even act, like a *forum*. In calling the exhibition a *forum* we were excavating all its meanings: roundtable, caucus, public assembly, parliament, open framework, anarchic exchange, and more. Making the artwork comparable to the apparatus of democracy did have an actual political effect; it acted as a ground for meetings, associations, transformations of artistic context and real probabilities for the constituents of those represented by and attending to the work. Especially important here in the collected presentation of this book is Group Material's proposal of democracy as a genesis of aesthetic invention, our presentation of the social relations that can be realized by a group of people in an empty room. Group Material's methodology of cultural displacement was anchored in a strong yet abstract image of the process of political work. This abstract image of democracy as a void means that public assembly is visually positioned as a struggle that never ends. It is the template of *forum* that rejects puerile liberal pluralism and replaces it with a radical abstraction—the assignment of discussion's contingency into an imaginable shape that is always irregular and fluctuating.

Art presented as a changeable social shape, as dialogue, presents a context where not just images but political will itself can be personified—a collection of positions and volitions of different people. Encountering this art is equivalent to the experience of viewing a landscape painting where we take the artist's body position, looking across this or that valley toward this or that town square. It becomes unconsciously clear in an experience of a work of art, even in the renaissance convention of occupying the eyeballs of another, that we are in an encounter with someone unknown. Such a formal and physical presence is difficult to discuss rationally because the sense of the point of view of another person is so much more than the strict diagramming of corporeal perspective, the agreement or disagreement with a position. But what can be understood easily is the simple fact that we accept a multitude of artworks as a form of divergent, even oppositional presentations of others' opinions and ideas.

Occupying the sight of a person previously unknown is often a shock. Sometimes even felt like an apparition, it is strangely both erotic and historical, evoking the effect of a long line of encounters that verge on mystical exegesis. Given the ideological hailing of modern institutional life (the way in which we become subjects to institutions outside of any conscious contract), the degree to which artworks can present undiscovered organizations of ourselves is even more surprising. But for Group Material our displaced groupings of visual culture were concrete figurations suggesting that when art insists on new narrations of the self, however mysterious, a political process happens in public. A process, for Group Material, that was designed to be a complex dialogue: with others through affiliation and love, and through others in the political act of showing the unknown, the repressed and yet to be seen. This process created art turned toward ideas of what could be desired rather than existing manifestations of a perceived world, and proposed that art's abstract matrix can figure real techniques of social liberation. To defend the notion of artwork as an

encounter with a person and then to display this encounter in the context of new politics was Group Material's contradictory innovation, the design of a place where the self expands by rupturing in relationship to others.

"Why sometimes do images begin to tremble?", Chris Marker[2]

In rereading the documents now collected in our archive, it becomes clear to me that the kind of work produced by Group Material simply had to be made—it happened, like the social activism it followed, out of desperation. Group Material thought then, and it was not unusual to have such ideas, that one could create meaning outside of the privatizing influence of corporate culture by re-organizing the actual experience of culture independently. The art projects we developed resembled the forms of the political vanguard by reflecting the modern notion that individuals have a right to bind themselves together to produce a context that might retain work and happiness. It is against the 1980s emergence of a right wing culture of physical control and spectacularized consistency that this generation of artworks and collective action need to be rethought: the false stability of religious fundamentalism, the mediagenic degradation of culture into profit, the relentless never-returning value of our labor, a historical amnesia that disintegrates capacities to read or even to speak to each other directly. These are the vicissitudes of 80s economic and political regression and they still weigh upon us, attempting to re-form us into an anti-culture of mutual repression. A repression no longer exclusive to the barrel of a gun—a repression designed through images.

Group Material saw that politics happens at the site of representation itself, not just where information is transferred, but rather at the place we recognize ourselves; where we have the sense that we are ourselves, feel a stability that is hailed and recognized by others. A radical representational moment may be collective but it also suggests that we can give ourselves over to a new vision through feeling, an experience linked to contemplation and epiphany. In this way no public description of another, in frame or in detail can be presented as neutral. So when Group Material asked, "How is culture made and who is it for?" we were asking for something greater than simply a larger piece of the art world's real estate. We were asking that the relationships change between those who depict the world and those who consume it, and demonstrating that the context for this change would question more than just the museum: a contestation of all contexts for public life. In making exhibitions and public projects that sought to transform the instrumentality of representational politics, invoking questions about democracy itself, Group Material presented a belief that art directly builds who we are—it engenders us. This was an insistence that the representations found in art give rise to our sense of self and in the end encompass us as subjects. Accordingly we believed that the existing management of art, and of culture in general through the market, enforces a complex system of limiting notions of what makes "us" us or "me" me, what normalizes and enacts the contours of fixed identity. The definitions of gender, race and power were, and still are, dependent on a visual system—images that make possible the recognition or misrecognition of ourselves, between ourselves.

The museum—like the city and the government that makes us in them—is always already in ruins. The anxiety of the proximity to power that art, and art's management implies, is therefore always part of art's production. The historical dynamism of the museum carries within it all the battles fought over the public domain since its modern inception. For Group Material the market-dominated context for culture in the 80s and its consolidation in the museum were presented to artists unfairly, as universalizing opportunities steeped in false neutrality. The white walls that Group Material re-painted red critically reacted to institutions, critically insisting that they, not artists or audiences, were the producers of meaning. The prevailing notions of aesthetic pluralism at that time, the promotional leveling of all artistic forms onto consumption, the blandly humanist notions of equivalence in scholarship and public record—all partook in the deeply ideological construction of democracy as a kind of blanketing agreement, a blind consensus. If it is true that capitalism is the most creative form of production the earth has ever known, its reservoir of manufactured agreement strangely needed formal and physical protection.

And it still does. The threat felt by the status quo from art is a real threat. The moment of social unrest of the 60s, like the collectively designed exhibition, shows that you are closer to the ideas of others than you think. This is perhaps why the experience of an art that can concurrently untangle, remake, and re-tangle the ideas we have of ourselves is not easy to produce. The struggle to communicate even amongst those invested in a common project seems at times insurmountable. Manifest in this chronicle is the fact that Group Material created work in struggle with itself, with members often in debate and contention, producing artwork that manifested conflict. As part of the audience it is only logical our disagreement with the world would inspire dissent among ourselves. That the work is still here represents the strength, its true protest, the working together of ideas and desires that are in friction. If there is an emotional equivalency to the idea of creative dissensus, it can be found in the resolute presentation of dialogue in Group Material's process and installations. One of the most compelling memories of the work we did in forming the exhibition was the argument. There is not a single artistic product we made that did not come from discussion, opposition, and disagreement. Today, after many artists and many decades of aesthetic experimentation, dissensus can finally be proffered as the basis for imagining social and aesthetic action—it is an emotional invention of great beauty.

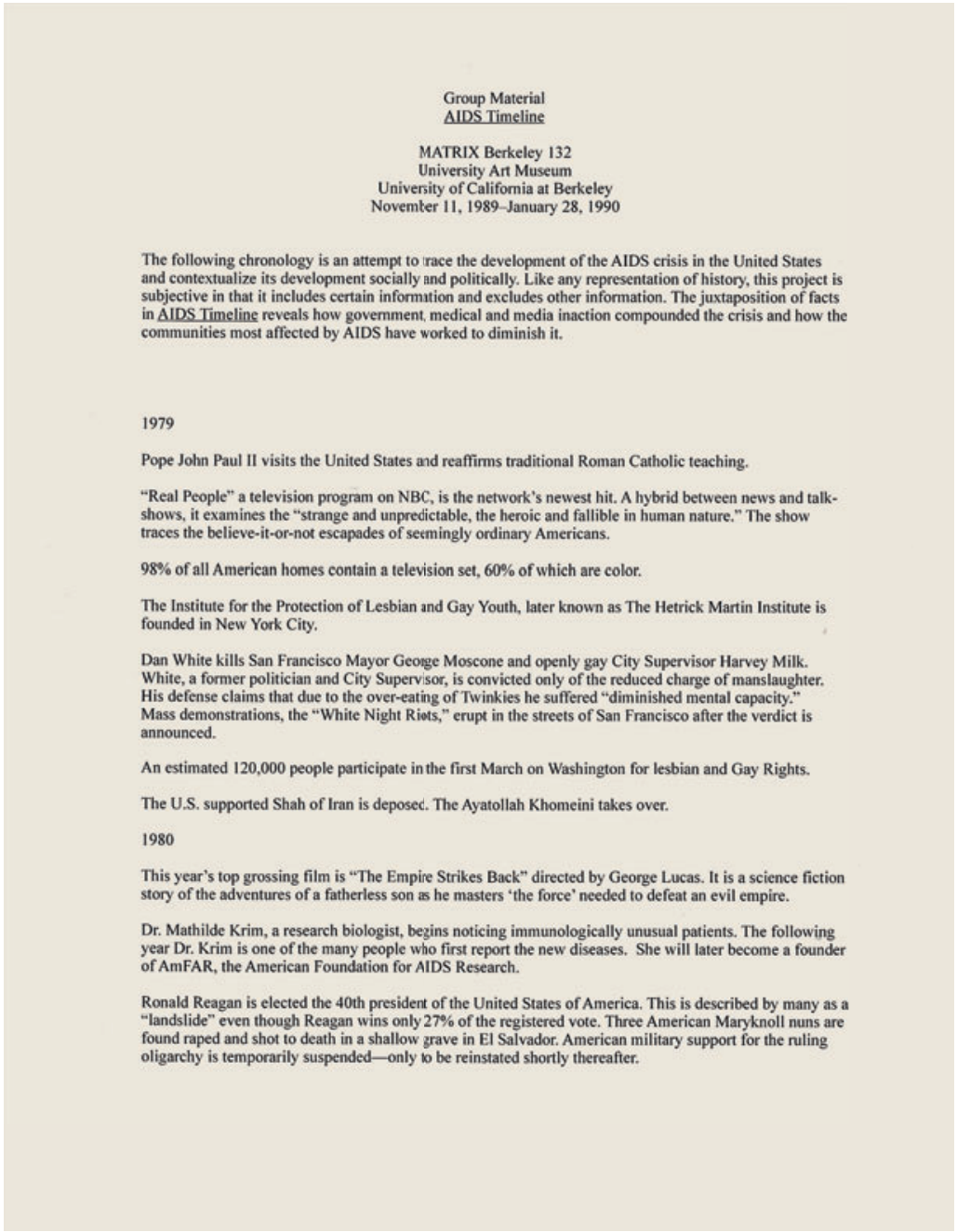
Group Material's self-assignment was to locate the dissensual feelings associated with activism, its emotional reverberations and actual evocations, into a realizable model or design. It meant we had to try to invent visual solutions that would be able to question themselves. By insisting that the presentation of art could approach the experience of dialogue and dissent we showed that when art addresses us as subjects in conversation, we can experience art as an array of personified encounters. We created a site where multiple and conflicting forms and histories cross over and through one another, mutating into paradoxical and unexpected notions of how we could define ourselves as humans. When artworks are engendered as persons in dialogue, the experience of art can make a rebellion.

[2] Chris Marker, *Le Fond de l'air est rouge (A Grin Without a Cat)*, 1988.

This essay would not have been possible without the careful attention of Alyse Yang. I am also indebted to the work of Gregg Bordowitz, Hito Steyerl, David Joselit, and Devin Fore, which inhabited my thoughts during the writing period, and to the writing of William Olander, who first broached the idea of an engendering art. My deepest thanks on this project go to Julie Ault: the entire history preserved in this book would not be imaginable without her.

AIDS
IT'S BIG BUSINESS!
1989
1988
INSIDER TRADING
AIDS

AIDS
Timeline
1989



Group Material
AIDS Timeline

MATRIX Berkeley 132
University Art Museum
University of California at Berkeley
November 11, 1989–January 28, 1990

The following chronology is an attempt to trace the development of the AIDS crisis in the United States and contextualize its development socially and politically. Like any representation of history, this project is subjective in that it includes certain information and excludes other information. The juxtaposition of facts in AIDS Timeline reveals how government, medical and media inaction compounded the crisis and how the communities most affected by AIDS have worked to diminish it.

1979

Pope John Paul II visits the United States and reaffirms traditional Roman Catholic teaching.

"Real People" a television program on NBC, is the network's newest hit. A hybrid between news and talk-shows, it examines the "strange and unpredictable, the heroic and fallible in human nature." The show traces the believe-it-or-not escapades of seemingly ordinary Americans.

98% of all American homes contain a television set, 60% of which are color.

The Institute for the Protection of Lesbian and Gay Youth, later known as The Hetrick Martin Institute is founded in New York City.

Dan White kills San Francisco Mayor George Moscone and openly gay City Supervisor Harvey Milk. White, a former politician and City Supervisor, is convicted only of the reduced charge of manslaughter. His defense claims that due to the over-eating of Twinkies he suffered "diminished mental capacity." Mass demonstrations, the "White Night Riots," erupt in the streets of San Francisco after the verdict is announced.

An estimated 120,000 people participate in the first March on Washington for lesbian and Gay Rights.

The U.S. supported Shah of Iran is deposed. The Ayatollah Khomeini takes over.

1980

This year's top grossing film is "The Empire Strikes Back" directed by George Lucas. It is a science fiction story of the adventures of a fatherless son as he masters 'the force' needed to defeat an evil empire.

Dr. Mathilde Krim, a research biologist, begins noticing immunologically unusual patients. The following year Dr. Krim is one of the many people who first report the new diseases. She will later become a founder of AmFAR, the American Foundation for AIDS Research.

Ronald Reagan is elected the 40th president of the United States of America. This is described by many as a "landslide" even though Reagan wins only 27% of the registered vote. Three American Maryknoll nuns are found raped and shot to death in a shallow grave in El Salvador. American military support for the ruling oligarchy is temporarily suspended—only to be reinstated shortly thereafter.

Tracking AIDS Timeline

Sabrina Locks

An exhibition can function, however provisionally, intentionally or not, as a prescriptive presentation of history, or, as in the case of *AIDS Timeline*, as a call to amend its course.

Begun in 1989 as an exhibition for the Berkeley Art Museum MATRIX Gallery, *AIDS Timeline* is a shape-shifter, re-versioned for the Wadsworth Atheneum, the *1991 Whitney Biennial*, and for print in eleven arts publications.[1] In 2009 I approach the *Timeline* from its future, through the not yet processed archive of Group Material. In boxes, poster tubes, folios, recollections, and documentation, *AIDS Timeline* is out of order and in fragments. The medium and the artwork no longer exist in concert. The archive, like the exhibition, is a partial history, though it provides nothing so linear as a timeline on which to traverse its terrain.

"The *AIDS Timeline* will recontextualize within a historical framework, AIDS as an epidemic that because of social and political conditions in which it appeared became a crisis." This was written in a fax sent to research assistant Richard Meyer at the University of California, Berkeley in September, 1989 (from a copy in the archive). In note form, Group Material lists several objectives of *AIDS Timeline*, including: "Represent the development of grassroots organizations engaged in community education, self-empowerment, treatment research and access."

In the exhibition, the timeline appeared as a black vinyl band running along the gallery wall, marking each year of the decade, with a chronology of AIDS-related time-data, developments and statistics (compiled by Group Material) interspersed around it, along with artifacts, artworks, and other media. A wide spectrum of culture is filtered through a history of AIDS, from 1979 to 1989, manifesting as a crisis in American public response. Countering those in power—from dominant media, government, and medical institutions—voices of activism and ground-level movements organized

All quoted statements by Group Material members—Doug Ashford, Julie Ault, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, and Karen Ramspacher—are drawn from an interview conducted by Maria Porges during the installation of *AIDS Timeline* at the Berkeley Art Museum in November 1989, and published in *Shift*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1990, pp. 20–23.

[1] In collaboration with Visual AIDS for Day Without Art, December 1, 1990, Group Material adapted *AIDS Timeline* for the December 1990 issues of: *Afterimage*, *Art in America*, *Art & Auction*, *Art New England*, *Arts Magazine*, *Artforum*, *Contemporanea*, *High Performance*, *October*, *Parkett*, and *Shift*. Each contained a spread for one year in the *Timeline*, and its re-presentation in print was tailored for the specific formats of each publication.

in response to AIDS emerge in increasing number along the timeline.

> *We did so much research—we've been working on it for months and months, and once we got here and compiled it, all the information . . . we actually had to cut just tons of stuff.*
> Karen Ramspacher

Much of the cut stuff now sits with the uncut stuff. In the archive, *AIDS Timeline* is embedded in the remnants of its process. Its material sources and traces form a seemingly massive field of potential clues that lead me in to and out of the archive, toward the people who inhabit its histories.

> *There's no such thing as just looking. The looking is always invested with a historical text that every person brings in, and what we are really offering are glimpses by which to connect that person with history.*
> Felix Gonzalez-Torres

I realized at a very early stage, amid aggregating traces of *AIDS Timeline*, that the work would require of me certain sleuth-like tendencies. I was trying to locate a position for myself in relation to the material without assuming a set role (art historian, critic, groupie—though I might have been each of those at one time or another along the way). If there was any notion of objectivity at the onset of my investigation, it—along with the idea that I could find out what *AIDS Timeline* really was or really meant on the record and in cultural memory—had to be suspended, or thrown away altogether. In the archive, elements may point to an (imagined) whole, but there is no direct route to get there. There are limits to what can be known, derived, deduced as ascertainable "facts" of *AIDS Timeline*—inaccuracies in documentation, in official and unofficial checklists, internal records; each contain varying degrees of missing information or straight-up misinformation as to the *Timeline*'s specifics, its sources and citations, and the relations of material in the exhibition. Eventually, I understood *AIDS Timeline* as involving a set of histories entered through art: a particular cultural response to AIDS containing within it a wide range of other responses.

> *We wanted to start with 1979, to start with the past and go up to the future . . . the architecture of the space is perfect because the ceiling is lower at the beginning where there's less information then at '83 it starts to really grow. '84 the ceiling gets even higher. The room is designed for a timeline, an* AIDS Timeline.
> Julie Ault

Mounted to the wall at the beginning of *AIDS Timeline*, in 1979, is *Untitled (Future Shock)* (1989) —a work by artist Nayland Blake. It contains five different color paperback editions of Alvin Toffler's 1970 book *Future Shock* (in red, yellow, orange, green and blue) encased in plexiglass. "Too much change in too short a period of time" is Toffler's most concise definition of the condition of 'future shock.' In a conversation from 1973 with artist John McHale, Toffler says:

> *One of the functions of the artist to say, "Look, there are other ways of dealing with a situation!" That's what the artist's 'novel juxtapositions' do. And history is another pool of information, as you call it—previous field tests, laboratory experiments. . . . If you regard history in this sense . . . then the historian and the artist and the science-fiction imaginer and the popular interpreter—at least many of them—are working at the same business . . . In effect, they are saying to the decision-maker, in business, in politics, or in private life, "You don't need to be what you are. You can act or live differently* [2]

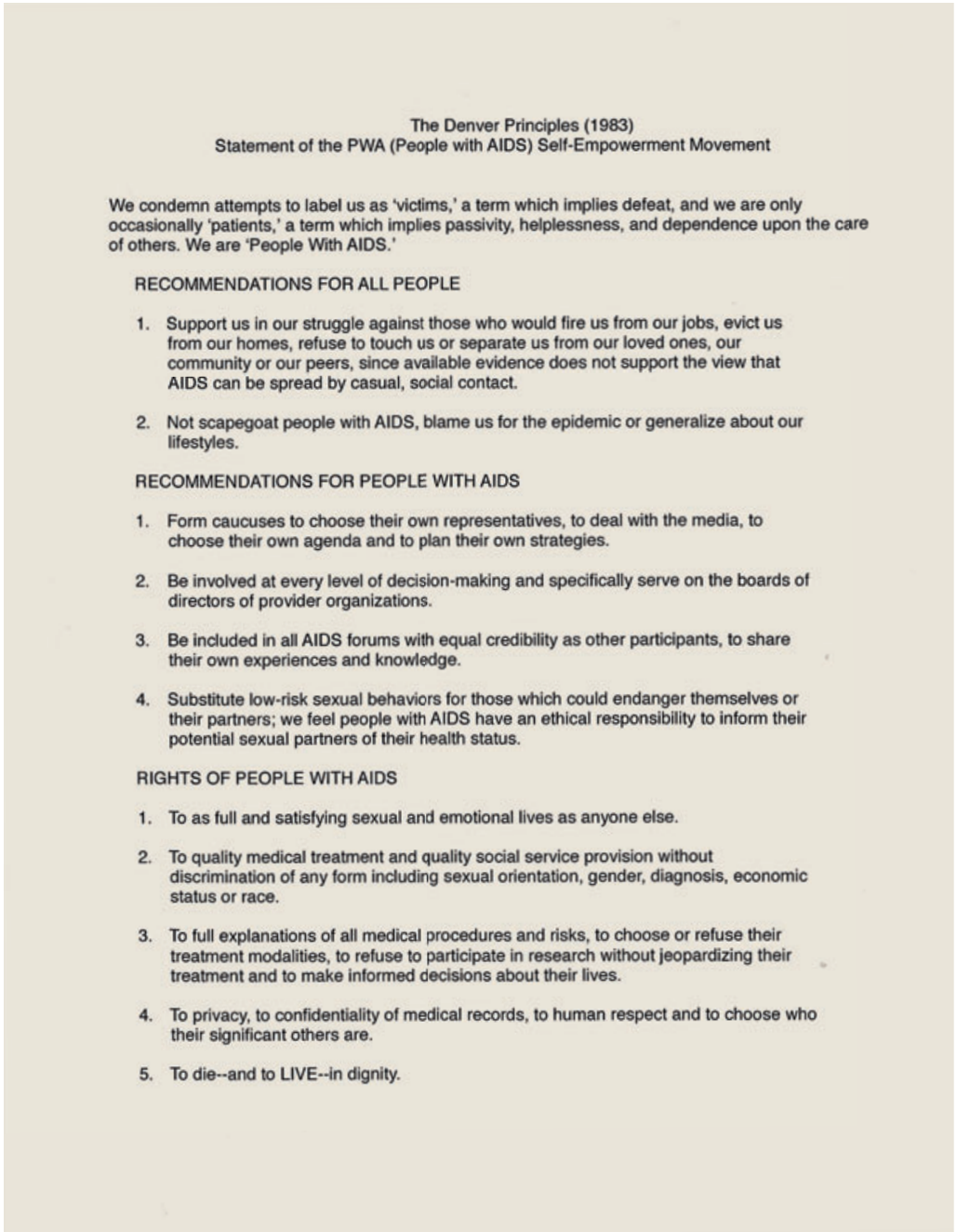
[2] "The Future and Functions of Art: A Conversation Between Alvin Toffler and John McHale," originally published in *ARTnews* 72(2), February 1973. [Reprinted in *LEONARDO*, vol. 20, no. 4, 1987, pp. 391-395]

As the *Timeline* progresses, statistics tracking the reported number of AIDS diagnoses and related deaths in the U.S. are printed on red and white cardboard placards about the size of an index card. (For 1983: 2,972 new cases; 4,450 total cases; 3,991 deaths to date. For 1985: 5,953 new cases; 10,403 total cases; 8,961 deaths to date.) In the archive there's a stack of twelve placards rubber-banded together in a brown envelope containing also: a pair of yellow rubber gloves; a bottle of Tylenol; a stars and stripes U.S.A. necktie; and a 1980 presidential campaign button with an image of Ronald Reagan that says "Let's Make America Great Again."

The rubber gloves are a throw-back to AIDS "household contact" hysteria, spawned by Dr. Anthony Fauci in 1985 (then head of AIDS research at the National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious Diseases) who mistakenly suggested the risk of HIV transmission through casual contact. Ten years later (I'm twelve at the time), I visit my sister whose partner is HIV-positive, and my mother tells me worriedly to try not using the bathroom, don't touch the toothbrushes, avoid the kitchen. Misconceptions feeding fear and paranoia are not easily dispelled, despite proof of their falsehood.

Below the timeline band, there's a piece of paper pinned to the wall with the first CDC Case Definition of AIDS for 1981–1985:

> *For the limited purposes of epidemiological surveillance, CDC defines a case of the Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) as an illness characterized by:*
>
> *1. A reliably diagnosed disease[a] that is at least moderately indicative of an underlying cellular immune deficiency, and 2. No known underlying cause of cellular immunodeficiency nor any other cause of reduced resistance reported to be associated with the disease.*
>
> *[a] These diseases include cryptosporidiosis; Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia; toxoplasmosis pneumonia or central nervous system infection; candidiasis causing esophagitis; cryptoccosis causing central nervous system or disseminated infection; disseminated atypical mycobacterial infection; cytomegalovirus causing pulmonary, gastrointestinal, or central nervous system infection; mucocutaneous herpes simplex virus infection with ulcers persisting more than a month or pulmonary, gastrointestinal, or disseminated infection; progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy; Kaposi's sarcoma; lymphoma limited to the brain.*



The Denver Principles (1983)
Statement of the PWA (People with AIDS) Self-Empowerment Movement

We condemn attempts to label us as 'victims,' a term which implies defeat, and we are only occasionally 'patients,' a term which implies passivity, helplessness, and dependence upon the care of others. We are 'People With AIDS.'

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALL PEOPLE

1. Support us in our struggle against those who would fire us from our jobs, evict us from our homes, refuse to touch us or separate us from our loved ones, our community or our peers, since available evidence does not support the view that AIDS can be spread by casual, social contact.

2. Not scapegoat people with AIDS, blame us for the epidemic or generalize about our lifestyles.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PEOPLE WITH AIDS

1. Form caucuses to choose their own representatives, to deal with the media, to choose their own agenda and to plan their own strategies.

2. Be involved at every level of decision-making and specifically serve on the boards of directors of provider organizations.

3. Be included in all AIDS forums with equal credibility as other participants, to share their own experiences and knowledge.

4. Substitute low-risk sexual behaviors for those which could endanger themselves or their partners; we feel people with AIDS have an ethical responsibility to inform their potential sexual partners of their health status.

RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH AIDS

1. To as full and satisfying sexual and emotional lives as anyone else.

2. To quality medical treatment and quality social service provision without discrimination of any form including sexual orientation, gender, diagnosis, economic status or race.

3. To full explanations of all medical procedures and risks, to choose or refuse their treatment modalities, to refuse to participate in research without jeopardizing their treatment and to make informed decisions about their lives.

4. To privacy, to confidentiality of medical records, to human respect and to choose who their significant others are.

5. To die--and to LIVE--in dignity.

Ultimately an indictment. Any analysis of AIDS has to be an indictment of the government.
Julie Ault

What we're about is trying to be more specific in presenting how different kinds of representation have different purposes. A cultural model is also a political model.
Doug Ashford

Group Material strategically employs the terminologies of politics, the law, and other governing bodies for the purposes of their art, wielding "artistic license" to bring those bodies visibly and critically in the ring of cultural practice. *AIDS Timeline* presents a trajectory—of facts, figures, artifacts, and events—testifying to the purposeful (and by 1989 on the *Timeline*, irrefutable) inadequacy of the government's response to AIDS. Undermining the appearance of a linear progression over time, the *Timeline* also points to a failing holy modern marriage of scientific progress and political rationale as means for action or inaction (regarding matters of public health, the environment, technology)—and affirming against its fatalism in light of these failures, the right and the possibility to live with AIDS.

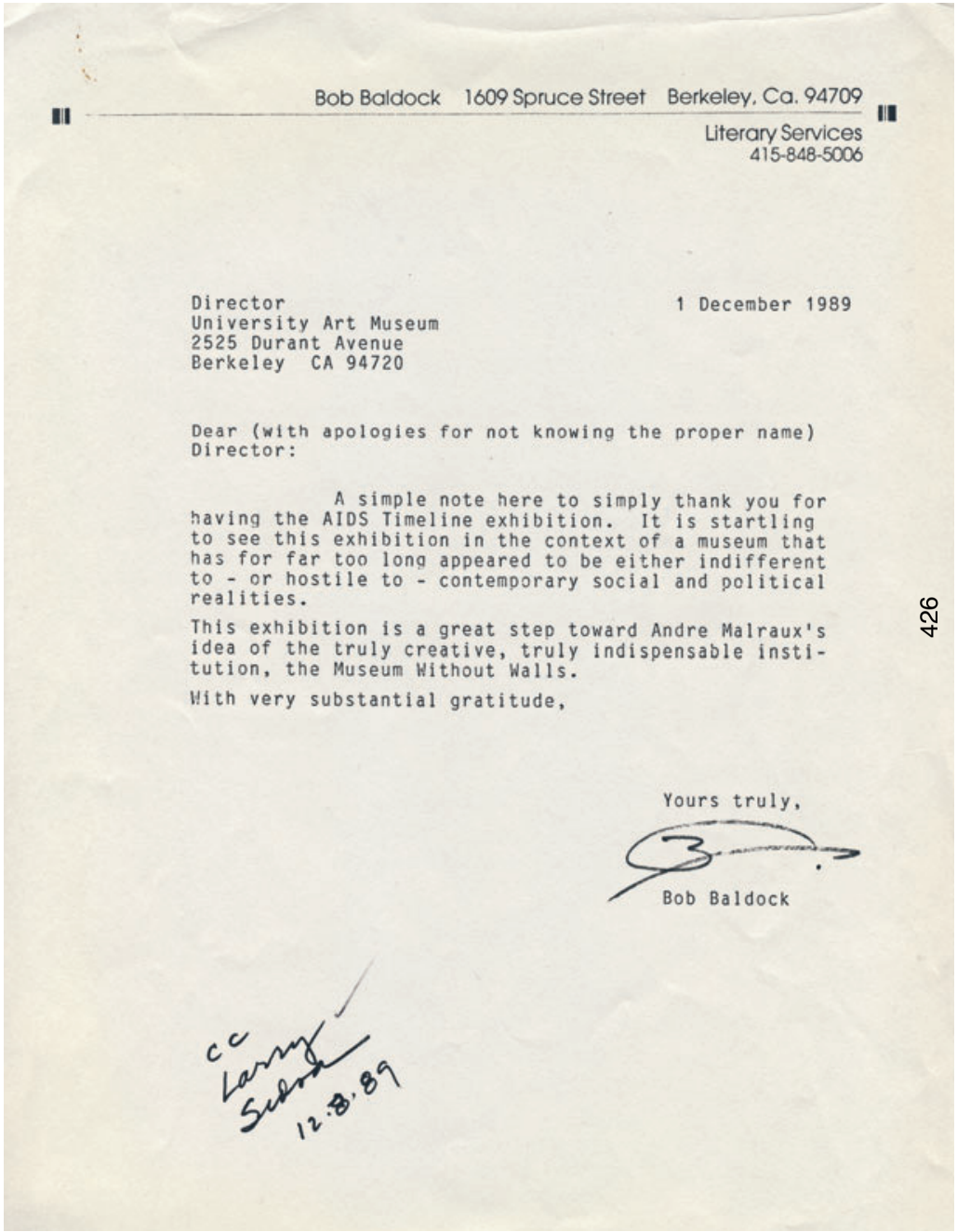
At the end of *AIDS Timeline*, in 1989, a work by Michael Jenkins, *June 30, 1986* (1989), looms large over the MATRIX Gallery. Red and white stripes, hand-painted acrylic on paper (nine by six feet), *June 30, 1986* has the impression and proportions of an American flag—hung vertically and upside down, but missing its stars and containing only nine stripes instead of thirteen. The title, *June 30, 1986*, is the date of a U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Bowers v. Hardwick*, which upheld a Georgia sodomy law criminalizing oral and anal sex between consenting adults in private. Denied a grand jury hearing after being charged with committing "that act" (as Justice White writes in the opinion of the Court) in the bedroom of his own home with another adult male, Michael Hardwick brought suit against Attorney General Bowers on the unconstitutionality of sodomy statutes which target gay men with the imminent threat of criminal charges and the invasion of privacy and property. Reflected in the nine stripes of *June 30, 1986* are the seats of the U.S. Supreme Court Justices and the five-to-four decision of the Bowers case: five red stripes of the majority (Chief Justice Warren E. Burger; Justices Byron White; Lewis F. Powell, Jr.; William H. Rehnquist; and Sandra Day O'Connor), and four white stripes of the dissenting (Justices Harry Blackmun; William J. Brennan; Thurgood Marshall; John Paul Stevens). The absence of the canton points to the inefficacy, or the absence, of governmental structures designed to enforce the constitutional rights of individuals, and the presiding power of nine people over state and federal jurisdiction.

In a draft of a press release faxed from the Whitney Museum to Group Material, which used the terms "artist's collective," someone had neatly circled the word "collective" and wrote above it "collaborative" instead. Collaborative has not yet been adopted as a noun by most. Collective, on the other hand, as a noun, suggests a position of unity among individuals, as a group. Collaborating, a verb, is a way of working, towards something, implying a means of agency. Collaborative suggests process, not entity.

Group Material's work was collaboratively produced and the social processes involved in its making are equally a part of its subject(s) and content(s). In this sense, the people of *AIDS Timeline*—the participating artists, collaborating organizations, research assistants, curators, journalists, and those who took part in engaging its public—are included in the history of *AIDS Timeline*, as an integral part of the work. Exhibitions produce ephemeral collections of experiences, voices, and histories from the culture and moment of their making.

The following collection of interview segments are drawn from much longer conversations that took place in the spring and summer of 2009. They form a new contribution to Group Material's archive, and reflect my desire to make history speak.

My deepest gratitude to Julie Ault for her trust and steadfast commitment to open and critical dialogue in the development of this project. I am grateful to all who took the time to participate in the interviews and reflect on their experiences of *AIDS Timeline*, and to Kristen Lubben for her editorial support in the process. A special thank you to: Doug Ashford for his enthusiasm; Michael Brenson for invaluable conversation; Mia Locks for consistent insight and feedback; and to my parents, Gene and Sueyun, for their incredible patience and support in my endeavors.



Bob Baldock 1609 Spruce Street Berkeley, Ca. 94709

Literary Services
415-848-5006

Director
University Art Museum
2525 Durant Avenue
Berkeley CA 94720

1 December 1989

Dear (with apologies for not knowing the proper name)
Director:

A simple note here to simply thank you for having the AIDS Timeline exhibition. It is startling to see this exhibition in the context of a museum that has for far too long appeared to be either indifferent to - or hostile to - contemporary social and political realities.

This exhibition is a great step toward Andre Malraux's idea of the truly creative, truly indispensable institution, the Museum Without Walls.

With very substantial gratitude,

Yours truly,

Bob Baldock

cc Larry Sultan 12.8.89

INK?
MENERGY
GLINDA
1982
Sentinel
1981

FUNKY TOWN
GOT TO BE REAL
1980
1979

Behind the Timeline: Collected Histories

Mike Glier
(participating artist: *White Male Power*, 1981, photo-litho prints)

In New York when AIDS was starting to erupt, I was sexually active with a variety of partners at a very bad time, and I was scared to death. It first started with guys reporting this immune deficiency, and there was no name to it. And I knew someone who died very early on, John Bernd, who had his own dance company. I was a waiter at the Spring Street bar and a waiter friend died, also very early on, and didn't know what it was, didn't know how it was communicated. And there was no test for it. So there was a lot of denial at first. Then fear. Then all that really nasty stuff, you know, "the gay disease," and making people feel guilty for their lifestyles and for their sexuality through this disease. There were these really complicated emotions—guilt being one of them—and trying to fight not to feel guilty.

When the Group Material thing came along it was such a healthy response. First of all, it was their typical way of looking at things somewhat dispassionately, organizing it in a sweep, and with a lot of different people and perspectives. *AIDS Timeline* had no guilt in it. And I think it was important in the art world to make AIDS a subject that you can just talk about and deal with rationally. Like all of their installations, I found it kind of bracing, and optimistic; like science is optimistic, and not full of gushy emotions.

Group Material was self-consciously taking Conceptualism forward into the political arena to address the issues of the day. In a way, they were working with the idea that Duchamp set up, where selection, just selecting the object, is a creative act. They'd pull stuff up that, isolated, might've been just this piece of crap; but they would contextualize it in such a way that this piece of crap suddenly was like— [laughs]. Group Material opened work up. It all became richer for the combinations that they created. I also think they unleashed a Pandora's box of evil: lots of people putting together work in ways that ended up feeling irresponsible.

I think it's from their heart and soul, because what they believe is that everybody has something to offer and so they could contextualize the work in such a way that you could see that. And it's a political position about a challenge to hierarchies. They were serious but they always had a great sense of humor, and at the end of the day, they had Dadaist spirit in them, so that they would set forth a thesis, and then often in the same show, they'd undercut their thesis in some way. And that was smart.

Richard Meyer
(art history graduate student, University of California, Berkeley, 1989; intern for *AIDS Timeline*)

I was a second year graduate student, really excited to be working with contemporary artists. Group Material—Julie, Doug, Felix, Karen—were all incredibly welcoming. Which for me, as a student and as someone who had never worked on an exhibition before, was very inspiring. They took seriously engaging with AIDS in the Bay Area. Although there was a lot of anger and there was this total activist spirit behind the show, I felt that mostly what they wanted to do was get people thinking and talking about AIDS. I was also a member of ACT UP, which was very inspiring, and I always felt a bit like, Oh, you know, there's not that much room for dissent. With Group Material, which was a much smaller group, one could talk things through and debate the ways that the issues, or the crisis, might be represented in the show, and how it would be historicized on the *Timeline*.

I started as the intern, but from the beginning, because they had a pretty non-hierarchical working method, I felt like I was a participant. Sometimes it was more between the four of them and I was just an observer, but I also felt that they took my ideas really seriously. Their working method was a bit like mine; it was a process that unfolded in the moment. Leading up to the opening, it felt like we were cramming for final exams, not that different from how I deal with writing deadlines, or a semester, which is that there's research, but there's also a lot of casting about and fantasies of all the different forms it might take. It was really down to the wire. We all did different kinds of research, AIDS research, visual research. Then all this stuff was just hauled in to the space.

One of the things that was really useful to see—I don't think this is why they're called Group Material—but it really was a materialist process. At the time, I was worried: Is it going to look good? For some reason I was into the aesthetics. So I was like, is it just going to look like we ran around and got stuff from here and there and then threw it up on the wall?

Because I was trained as an art historian, the other thing I was interested in and concerned about was the moments where the art had a different notion of history than the *Timeline*. The art wasn't always keyed to the moment it was made. These aren't ideas I necessarily articulated at the time, but I wondered: What is your theory of history? On the one hand, the *Timeline* was functioning at the very specific level. There was medical information, scientific information, and activist and popular imagery, and all of that was keyed to the moment, whereas the art floated free. The way I see it now is that it's this really complicated notion of a visual and lived history where images don't have fixed representation. I think it's actually much more interesting as a project because it isn't exclusively documentary.

There was this whole question of: How are we going to do a timeline when we're not strictly interested in a documentary history? I think in retrospect, that it's instructive to have used what could seem like such a fundamental pedagogical device as a timeline, and to actually say, That's what the work is going to be: an exploded timeline, a sort of re-imagining. And it was important that the line was open. One of the things I was fixated on was that it [*AIDS Timeline*] was opening in 1989 and that it was going to go through to 1990, the next decade. That this idea of open-ended history would be embodied.

Nayland Blake
(participating artist: *Future Shock*, 1989, books, plexiglass)

The thing about San Francisco at that point was that the art world and the gay world were utterly separate. Art was for the society people. The place I was working at, New Langton Arts, was this installation-based, artist-run nonprofit. I was trying to let people on the East Coast know that there's a bunch of queer artists in San Francisco—you know, the gay capital—and they're also dealing with all this stuff. The caché of Group Material being from New York brought the high end San Francisco art scene. I remember there being a lot of interest on the part of local artists. But some of that was double edged. Like: Oh, why aren't I in it?

Seeing *Future Shock* embedded in *AIDS Timeline*—in another artwork—was great. One of the things I always felt people didn't necessarily get about my work was the quality of overlapping narratives and stories. The artist who always meant a lot to me is Kathy Acker. And that intertextual quality is so amazing in her writing. So for me, it was great to see *Future Shock* functioning in that way. With *Future Shock*—for me as the maker of it—I mean, was I thinking about AIDS at that time? Yes. All the time. And none of the time. Because you were walking around thinking of it. In San Francisco, Gene, the guy who hired me at my first job died, David Cannon Dashiell was dying, people around you were dying. It was like you would see people, then you'd see them again and … it was at the time when people would go really quickly. So you were always thinking about it; but I was not sitting down and going, I'm going to make a piece about AIDS.

A movie that's always been fascinating to me is John Carpenter's remake of *The Thing*. When you look at it today, you can't help but think it's an AIDS movie. A bunch of guys are isolated out in the arctic. They find this spaceship. They open it up, and there's an organism inside that invades the bloodstream and takes people over and mimics them. It's very gory and very paranoid. And there's only men. And then you look at the release date and it's '82. There was no way they could have explicitly made an AIDS movie at that date. So to me, it shows that the descriptive language for AIDS was already in place before the virus became well known. And that language was previously the language for describing homosexuality. Homosexuality used to be described as this thing that was mysteriously passed in the blood, that had a latency period, where you didn't know when it was going to pop up, and that it caused a kind of inevitable decay. All of that terminology around how AIDS was described as a system—to me, it's an adaptation. That language was chosen, in part, because people were already using it to describe homosexuals.

If you think about the 80s to the early 90s as the era of postmodernism, the hallmark of postmodernism is that meaning is made through the juxtaposition of fragments, as opposed to unified grand statements. And the juxtaposition of those fragments is good news, I think, for queer people because they never stood to gain from the previous state of the kind of grandeur of modernism. They were disenfranchised from that.

I think for Group Material, juxtaposition was not cynical: there was a real belief in social change. I don't think it was wild-eyed optimism that they thought that everything was going to be peaches and cream, but they genuinely felt there was a value in working this way that wasn't simply about recycling the same ideas of the art world.

1984

1. Form caucuses to choose their own representatives, to deal with the media, to choose their own agenda and to plan their own strategies.
2. Be involved at every level of AIDS decision-making and specifically serve on the boards of directors of provider organizations.
3. Be included in all AIDS forums with equal credibility as other participants, to share their own experiences and knowledge.
4. Substitute low risk sexual behaviors for those which could endanger themselves or their partners, and we feel that people with AIDS have an ethical responsibility to inform their potential sexual partners of their health status.

PEOPLE WITH AIDS HAVE THE RIGHT:

1. To as full and satisfying sexual and emotional lives as anyone else.
2. To quality medical treatment and quality social service provision, without discrimination of any form, including sexual orientation, gender, diagnosis, economic status, age or race.
3. To full explanations of all medical procedures and risks, to choose or refuse their treatment modalities, to refuse to participate in research without jeopardizing their treatment and to make informed decisions about their lives.
4. To privacy, to confidentiality of medical records, to human respect and to choose who their significant others are.
5. To die and to live in dignity.

July, The 58 ward at San Francisco General Hospital becomes the AIDS ward, opening with 5 dozen beds.

First posters go up in San Francisco bathhouses warning of the growth of AIDS cases and possible risk of sexual transmission.

Dr. Joseph A. Sonnabend, a progressive medical practitioner, reports to a scientific meeting on AIDS that there may be no single cause for the disease. He, among others, has adopted a theory that there might be co-factors to this syndrome.

An increase in bias related crime against gays combines with the trend of university campuses to deny recognition to lesbian and gay student organizations indicates that intolerance towards homosexuality is growing.

French medical researchers from the Pasteur Institute report evidence of a direct relationship between the LAV/HTLV III viruses and the subsequent development of AIDS. These scientists are convinced that there is a single viral cause.



2,972 new cases
2,450 total cases
3,991 deaths to date

CDC Case Definition

TABLE 10-3. 1981 - 1985

Adult Case Definition

For the limited purposes of epidemiological surveillance, CDC defines a case of the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) as an illness characterized by:

1. A reliably diagnosed disease* that is at least moderately indicative of an underlying cellular immune deficiency, and
2. No known underlying cause of cellular immunodeficiency nor any other cause of reduced resistance reported to be associated with that disease

Pediatric Case Definition

For the limited purposes of epidemiological surveillance, CDC defines pediatric AIDS as an illness occurring in a child who has had a reliably diagnosed disease* at least moderately indicative of underlying cellular immunodeficiency and no known cause of underlying cellular immunodeficiency or any other reduced resistance reported to be associated with that disease.

* These diseases include cryptosporidiosis, Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia, mucocutaneous candidiasis, chronic herpes simplex infection, cytomegalovirus disease, cerebral toxoplasmosis, and Kaposi's sarcoma.





1983



Spring. At the 3rd AIDS Forum at the National Lesbian/Gay Health Conference in Denver, the PWA self-empowerment movement is born. A group of People With AIDS and People With AIDS Related Complex from around the country produce a statement condemning the label of victims; making a set of recommendations for health care professionals and putting forth a list of rights of People With AIDS.

After Denver, a group of PWA's in New York forms "PWA New York" that begins writing, designing, funding, and distributing the first safer sex poster to appear in New York City bathhouses.

May, San Francisco board of supervisors allocates $3.1 million for AIDS programs to develop an outpatient clinic and inpatient ward for AIDS patients at San Francisco General Hospital as well as residences for 46 homeless People With AIDS under the auspices of the Shanti project. At this time San Francisco AIDS expenditures exceed funds released federally by the NIH.

In the New England Journal of Medicine, the CDC reports that there is evidence of immune deficiency among the female partners of males with AIDS. This suggests that the disease may be sexually transmitted between heterosexuals.

On January 4th, the Orphan Drug Act passes in Congress. This allows pharmaceutical companies to deduct up to 63% of the costs of clinical drug trials from taxes, as well as allowing them a legal seven year monopoly to encourage development and the manufacture of drugs that treat diseases which affect so few people that the cost of developing the drug far outweighs the potential profits.

Larry Kramer one of the founders of GMHC, writes an article titled "1112 Deaths and Counting" for the March 7th New York Native. In it, he describes the horrifying inaction of governmental and medical institutions as the AIDS epidemic grows into a national crisis. He calls upon fellow gay men to mobilize politically and to alter their sexual habits. He exhorts the community at large to take action against AIDS.



Massive anti-nuclear marches take place in London, Bonn, Paris, Washington D.C. and Tokyo as well as New York where close to one million people demonstrate for the international reduction of nuclear weapons.







429


LIFE
AIDS
None of these will give you AIDS.
LEARN HOW
The Wicked Witch
1985
SEX


1984
Newsweek
EPIDEMIC
HIGH ENERGY
IT'S RAINING

Stevan Evans
(participating artist: *Selections from the Disco, Various BPM, 1979-1989*, 1989, vinyl text and wall paint)

I think Group Material helped to inform a whole generation of artists' practice because they were able to get people to dialogue about their projects very early on. That was really incredibly important. And that relates to ACT UP—the slogan was Silence Equals Death. A motivation for the *AIDS & Democracy*, 1988 show and the *AIDS Timeline* exhibitions was to establish this discourse about what was going on and not to hide it.

AIDS Timeline is Group Material's most directed show. In terms of the work, some of it I liked, some of it I didn't. But I thought it told a great, encompassing story. As a gay man who was also an artist, whose generation was living through that, and who was a member of ACT UP, I felt it was important for us to document and make our own history. That was likewise an impetus for Group Material and it was a valid history in that it was through their lens.

In 1988, Bill Arning organized a show at White Columns where I made a piece with late 80s disco songs as a kind of concrete poetry. It was called *Late Eighties Play List*. And Group Material collectively responded to that piece and wanted to include a similar work in *AIDS Timeline*. I grew up listening to disco, and that music was very much a part of the fabric in New York at the time. I'd done hours and hours of research looking at *Billboard* magazine from the 70s up to the present for all the dance and disco song titles and all the hits. So I offered this idea, and through conversation we decided that I would supply a song for every year of the timeline, and each song would correspond to the year where it would appear. The song titles are meant to insinuate themselves and, like the music, be a part of the whole.

There was a sense of community with the exhibitions, but it was also Group Material pursuing their curatorial vision; they were artists acting curatorially. There was a little bit of mystery about how they organized a show. How they decided upon their subject, how they decided upon what would be included. I always kind of pictured them sitting in a dark apartment, arguing with each other over what it would be for hours and hours on end.

Tom Kalin
(participating artist: *1968-1988*, 1988, photo and text on adhesive paper, and *They Are Lost to Vision Altogether*, 1989, video; with Gran Fury, *Untitled*, in *The Daily Californian* newspaper, November, 10, 1989)

I had done graduate studies at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and then I moved to New York in the summer of 1987 for the Whitney Independent Study Program. People in the New York art world were organizing and working collectively because there was a strong antagonist, Ronald Reagan. There was the Mudd Club and Danceteria and the Pyramid Club and other social vehicles that were super important. And people were horny. So that animated the art world and animated a lot of social things. There was a cultural world that required people's presence and interaction. And punk rock had happened. Punk was profoundly important in terms of demonstrating to people that you could do it, basically. So a lot of those things were in the soil, what little soil there was in the East Village.

I knew of Group Material as an art student, and I met Julie sometime within a year of coming to NY. Of everyone in Group Material I knew Felix the most. And you know, we were in the two communard organizations. So there was a particular sort of familiarity that often extended to other collectives. Most of us in Gran Fury understood how Group Material worked. They were thinking curatorially and archivally, and they were thinking in an omniscient and edited way. We were in the trenches. Gran Fury was about distilling things down to its kind of root, gut—you know, the language of the locker room, almost. Blunt, really direct, and street, and being engaged and simplifying. And that was our strength. I think that Group Material was engaged in a much more delicate, connected project, in terms of tools and techniques.

In both Gran Fury and Group Material, there was an instinct to list and catalog, in an uninflected way; to let the "facts" stand for themselves; to chart, to show the progression, without having to make a case, really; that was seen as a kind of just laying things out in a line and comparing them. And then letting the narrative that tied them together, the assumptions underneath it, emerge to the surface. That was around in ACT UP—the listing of how many deaths, like a chant, constantly. So there's something about that in the *Timeline* that was both very particular to Group Material's practice, because of the precision and the innovativeness, with all these things emerging, and a faceted portrait of time as this fluid thing. High and low culture and the flotsam and jetsam were all there, but the other stuff was there. That was very much part of their practice, but was also in the air. Group Material had the foresight to sort of wield that as a deeper form that could both connect all those things, make associations between things, and start to create, propose a narrative.

They were doing this thing that was about making a timeline, but there was a consciousness around the fact that the social gathering was part of the work. That social sculpture aspect was present in Group Material's work.

And again, you cannot underestimate the personal loathings and lusts that animated the moment, that made it memorable, and were subtext to everything. I mean, we were fighting for all these ideological things we believe in, but we also had a total crush on that person and wanted to be thought of well as we were dragged away at a protest or whatever, you know? So that was energizing but also doubly devastating when it got shattered or fractured.



Robert Buck (formerly Robert Beck)
(participating artist: *Safer Sex Preview Booth*, 1989, mixed-media; with DIVA-TV, *Target City Hall*, 1989, video)

One channel in *Safer Sex Preview Booth* was for GMHC [Gay Men's Health Crisis] safe sex videotapes. One was for gay men, one was for lesbians and then there was one channel that was just guys and then girls jerking off. So it was even safer sex. The booth was designed for one person, probably four feet across by six feet deep by nine feet high, orange Formica. And there was a question, How can this be exhibited? How can it be contextualized? It was the height of the culture wars, so the museum was reorienting itself to serve two masters, as it were.

Just looking at images of *AIDS Timeline* is a reminder that it was such a lively time in terms of art making. It was like you were part of a wider constellation. Whatever you might be doing was not exclusive, not individuated, and was communicative in ways outside of just art making. And that the *Timeline* was there so that works that were being done could punctuate or could be included in it, was also why there was that feeling of some larger inclusion; that something was being recorded—recorded as it happened, and recorded for the community of makers.

With the *Timeline*, the radicality of making something that was so demonized as AIDS equivalent to a history was profound. It really was an alternative to mainstream television and the press, because it was like: we'll give you that, but we'll also give you X, Y, and Z. There was text, expository material, and voices from the mainstream and from inside, and so it was, in a very radical way: you the viewer decide. We're going to give you this information, and you synthesize it and you parse it.

One of the many things, for me, that made this project so interesting was that it was virtually alive. I mean, the *Timeline* could ostensibly continue, and now what it would have to include is itself. The other part of that would be to see what ACT UP and an exhibition like *AIDS Timeline* achieved fifteen years later. The question hovering would be, Well, who does define history and what does that look like from a historical vantage?

Larry Rinder
(curator, MATRIX Gallery, Berkeley Art Museum, 1989)

There couldn't have been a more important subject to explore at that moment in Bay Area culture and society. AIDS was decimating the community and there was no end in sight. Finding a cure meant not only overcoming homophobia (and racism), but also taking on huge federal bureaucracies and gigantic drug companies. What Group Material showed, in part, was that there was room for many kinds of responses, from leaflets to Ross Bleckner's elegiac paintings.

I was quite familiar with Group Material's work, which I had seen in the mid-1980s when I was living in New York. I liked their approach because it took aspects of the current critical-intellectual currents and applied them to curatorial practice. Among the key issues at that time were considering how, or if, one could create work that stood outside of, or resisted, the mainstream power structures of patriarchy and capitalism. Their work used some fairly well-honed strategies to do this, including collaboration, radical juxtaposition, and ongoing dialogue. I found their combination of fine art and popular culture to be invigorating and I also respected the thematic foci of their projects, all of which seemed quite timely. While quite a bit of the art and exhibitions being made at that time took a removed, ironic stance (which often bordered on decadent, in my opinion, however "political" the implicit or explicit subject of the work may have been), Group Material's practice staked a claim for productive engagement. I found that to be encouraging and optimistic. The only road bump I can recall during the process of putting together *AIDS Timeline* involved my decision to go to the Director of the museum, Jackie Baas, to inform her that Robert Beck's video booth would include hardcore porn. Her response was that we needed to watch every minute of it. Which we did, for about six hours, in the museum's small screening room. When it was over, she turned to me and said, "Well, I don't see anything objectionable in that, do you?" And that was the end of it.

I did not play a "curatorial" role within the project. That is, I was not involved in the selection or placement of particular works. As I recall, I functioned basically as a producer, overseeing the budget and providing assistance in obtaining information, locating art works and other materials, and working as a liaison with other museum departments. There are many ways to be a curator.

Sharon Siskin
(Artist-in-Residence, Rest Stop Support Center, San Francisco and The Center for AIDS Services, Oakland; Coordinator, Positive Art *Life Masks* project)

One day we were doing an art project at Rest Stop, which was a second-story flat that had been rented by a group of folks who were HIV positive and their friends, for people to come to just hang out and talk about drug therapies, or any kind of information that they wanted to share with each other—and Larry Rinder came in with Julie and Felix and Doug. I remember the Group Material people being really amazed by the look of Rest Stop. They kept saying, "Oh, this is so humane. It seems so not institutional." Anyway, they just talked to me for a while and talked to the artists and told us about *AIDS Timeline*, and we were pretty excited. They saw some of the projects we were doing, which were basically body casts—masks and other body part castings—related to the tradition of death masks, but we were calling them life masks. There was something really poignant about making these, because a lot of people didn't have places to live or they were going in and out of hospitals, and they left the masks at Rest Stop. We hung them on the wall. It was a way of keeping a record of people who came through the doors.

I loved the *AIDS Timeline* context for the masks—the mix of activism and education and contemporary media views and other artists' work. All of us with Positive Art were really excited to be involved. Also, I think *AIDS Timeline* and all the other things we were doing to get the work out in public was about AIDS education and AIDS activism—and that when you make the object, you put the object out in a public place in order to create a dialogue.

But I don't know if there's ever a really good understanding of community-based art, except from people who actually do it or actually research it. I remember reading Glen Helfand's review of *AIDS Timeline* in *Artweek* magazine, and having a reaction to his description of our work as not serious enough to review. I didn't want to show the review to anybody I worked with at Positive Art. I thought it was demeaning. So I wrote a letter in response: "I have to take issue with the term art therapy being used to describe the group of masks made by artists at Rest Stop and the Center and the sculpture by Barry Frederick, which are part of the *Timeline*. Rest Stop and the Center are both support service organizations for people living with AIDS or HIV. Many of those people are working artists. I am a California Arts Council artist-in-residence running a visual arts program for those two organizations . . . Artists who are living with AIDS have many of the same motives for making art as, quote, 'healthy' artists do. The fact that a person has AIDS does not turn the process of their art making into art therapy, nor does it make their artwork any less viable or less serious."

By the time the show ended up at the *1991 Whitney Biennial*, a couple of artists who were originally from back east were so thrilled, and one of them who was healthy enough, Leonard Moore, took a train across the country and went to the opening. He was in total heaven. He was a longtime working artist in his mid-fifties or maybe close to sixty at the time. He had always had a day job as a janitor in a school, and it was his life-long dream to be in the *Whitney Biennial*, even if it was just one little mask.

When the masks went to New York it meant shipping all of them, and we didn't have any funding. And then I realized that it didn't have to be me doing all this and it was just all being taken care of by the museum. That was a pretty interesting part of the process—having local art movers come and treat the work as delicate, wonderful objects, wrapping it all up and building this really heavy-duty crate and them taking care of everything. Then having it come back to us in that way and being able to un-package it. I think that sort of respect and honoring of the objects made everybody take themselves more seriously, as makers of objects, whether they were artists or not; and understand that their work was powerful and seen by lots of people.

I was able to go to the Whitney show because Larry invited me to be on a panel with Felix, Chuck Close, and Mary Kelly during the *Biennial*. And Felix told me something that really moved me. When Group Material was installing the work, he looked at the mask by Paul McKay, which had a lot of text on it on the outside. There was also text on the inside for whoever was going to install or handle it, which said something like, "One day, you will be holding this mask and I will be dead." And Felix said when he picked up that mask and read that, he just broke down and started crying. So I was able to go back and tell Paul that his work really moved Felix. And not long after that, Paul died. That's one of the masks that I didn't see again because Paul was one of the lucky ones who had a loving family, and his mom wanted to keep anything he had made. All his stuff adorned her home, and probably still does.



John Lindell
(participating artist, with Gran Fury: *All People With AIDS Are Innocent*, 1988; *Untitled*, in *The Daily Californian* newspaper, November, 10, 1989)

The *Art Against AIDS On The Road* project in 1988 [advertisements on the exterior of San Francisco buses] was the first time I was introduced to the idea of collaborating with Group Material. Group Material had remembered a project that Gran Fury did for "Nine Days of Activism." We did posters, eleven by fourteen inches, that were Xeroxed, and each of us kind of headed up a day. And that's when I made *All People With AIDS Are Innocent*, using the caduceus symbol. So Group Material asked if I'd be involved with them to remake the image as a bus poster. Gran Fury's position was that if anybody wants to take what we do, go right ahead. The bus poster was later shown in *AIDS Timeline*.

Because of the gay community being affected by AIDS, there were a lot of professional people involved, who were feeling disenfranchised for the first time. They had skills that they could bring to it in a way that was profitable to the movement. The moment was so alive with possibility for making change, but a lot of that seemed to fade by the early nineties. I want to say '93 was a critical moment. Neither ACT UP or Gran Fury could respond to the change in the playing field, which with Reagan and Bush, had been really very easy.

Group Material worked under the name of artists, but to me they were actually working as art historians and curators, and were unique in developing sort of a hybrid art/curatorial practice. And that was great to see because they could present information in a way that could wake people up or could stimulate some kind of debate. And certainly, I think the art world then was more about seeing information than it is now. Maybe they are a little bit didactic. Or a lot didactic. But that's kind of great. And there's a place for that.

Glen Helfand
(art critic, "Brave New Material" *San Fransisco Weekly*, November 22, 1989, and "AIDS Reality Enters Art," *Artweek*, November 30, 1989)

Intersections of art and activism were blossoming as of the mid-1980s (projects like Border Arts Workshop, ACT UP, Gran Fury, Tim Rollins + K.O.S., etc), many of them having a presence in the Bay Area. So a project like the *AIDS Timeline*, perhaps being a bit more didactic than other projects, wasn't difficult to approach as a critic (though I would term some of what I was doing as arts journalism—giving the project more public exposure).

The *AIDS Timeline* project stems from a critical position. I recall the controversy around Nicholas Nixon's photographs (which could perhaps be extended to other depictions like the film *Philadelphia*) and the whole idea of "victim art" that came to a head in the *1993 Whitney Biennial* (which contained projects like Glenn Ligon's *Notes on the Margin of the Black Book*). I suppose what I find interesting is the internal critique—that the *Timeline* was as self-critical (or critical of the art context) as of the culture at large. From a current perspective it seems so quaintly partisan, but as noted, the issues were extremely powerful.

In hindsight, the idea that the project was created by a very invested party seems like the more important means of "critic proofing." At least from certain critical angles, that Felix was HIV positive and was a known member of the collective clearly shifts the ways in which the work could be seen. This issue has grown more complex in subsequent decades as artists have come to use science, technology, and various forms of information in their work. When should the artist be "trusted"?

WESTART MUSEUM

Andrea Miller-Keller
(curator, MATRIX Program, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut, 1990)

The program I ran was a small space on the first floor, meant to allow the museum to have a facility where you could do something on a short lead time. The shows were low budget, so you could get away with doing things that would get more scrutiny if I came to the museum with a grandiose plan. There was a kind of permission within that area, but not that anything goes. I talked to the director about *AIDS Timeline* and needed him to sign on. The Mapplethorpe show was right before it. And I remember I went to Patrick and described the project. And he shook his head and said, "We're not going to do two AIDS shows in a row." And I said, "I didn't think the Mapplethorpe was an AIDS show." [laughs] I was floored. But he came around.

Hartford was the insurance capital of the world at that point. And, I think it's fair to say that the status of the gay community is different twenty years later than at that time. It may be hard for you to imagine the discrimination and the secrecy that existed. Just to situate *AIDS Timeline* in a traditional art museum—it was a big deal to have that here.

What interested me most was Group Material's curatorial practice. I mean, that the exhibition was a work of art. Curatorial practice as a work of art.

Edd Russo
(exhibition designer, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut, 1990)

I was one of the museum's exhibition designers at the time. So a lot of time was spent with Group Material figuring out how things were going to fit in. And generating labels, all the texts, photo blowups—you name it. Picking the paint colors, all that stuff.

The artists had a huge hand in placing things, which was good. Because if we had to do it on our own, we probably would've pulled our hair out because there were so many elements to it. Having them there was actually a relief. I wouldn't say that I was frustrated—but it was challenging and kind of exciting because up until it was completely done we really didn't have a sense of what the show would look like. Even though it was one room— it happened several times with MATRIX shows that people would say, "Well, it's only one room. Why is it taking so long?" And it's like, there's 200 things in there, you know? [laughter] It's still 200 things to hang up on the wall. And you have to do it with care and do it right—it's like a major exhibition. There was so much in it, so many different things, that I think people came back to visit on more than one occasion.

People I knew who were not art fans necessarily, or big museum-goers, were talking about it and coming. Because it was such a current thing and everybody knew somebody that was affected. So I think people in the community were kind of revved up that it was happening here, because we didn't usually get that kind of thing. I think it had a huge impact on the local community. And that was gratifying.



Patrick O'Connell
(director, Visual AIDS, 1990)

Because of my history with the National Association of Artists' Organizations, I was one of the founders of the National Campaign for Freedom of Expression and was involved in the Finley versus the NEA lawsuit that went all the way up to the Supreme Court. Around the same time, Susan [Wyatt at Artists Space] gets Nan [Goldin] to do an exhibition to coincide with the first Day Without Art, in 1989, *Witnesses Against Our Vanishing*. The NEA wants to yank the money. And then it just spiraled: there was the incident with the Corcoran canceling their Mapplethorpe show, there was Andres Serrano's *Piss Christ*.

Basically you weren't allowed to be queer. The NEA tried to slap a decency clause on our contract at Artists Space—You can't show this, this, and this, and they starting listing these things, which of course was what we were showing. But for seven years, the government kept losing at every level, because the NEA charter specifically, as written, stated, "no content restrictions." By the time the Supreme Court ruled against us, without reading the letter of the law, they had gutted the NEA and there were no longer grants for individual artists.

We didn't know exactly what form the project would take at first, but we knew we wanted to work with the art publications to do a project for Day Without Art. So we first approached people like Betsy Baker at *Art in America* and Knight Landesman at *Artforum*. It's tricky to get the editors of nine to twelve art publications to agree to do something jointly. And I bet you it was Tom Sokolowski who cast around and thought, Well, hey, wait a second. You know, maybe we could do this with Group Material. Everyone agreed. The editors and publishers of the art publications agreed, which really, in retrospect, was more anticipated worry than difficulty. They wanted to do something. They were not out of touch with what was going on, and they had personal concerns and understood how to use their machinery to address it.

The print version of *AIDS Timeline*, published in 1990, documents the arc of a pandemic and government indifference; the emerging corporate greed; the public ignorance, some of it willful, some of it not; and does it in a way that invites the viewer into the experience and leads them through, and trusts them to understand what was happening. Our projects at Visual AIDS were not about finger pointing. The success of something like the Ribbon Project was that it's an extension of an open hand inviting a broader participation in the public discourse and the dialogue. And you can't just do that, you have to do these in-your-face demands, also. And something like the *Timeline* successfully straddles both strategies. It makes public the personal, and invites more people into that experience. It stands and succeeds as an artwork and not just of-the-moment polemic.

Group Material worked very closely with my partner at the time, Jimmy [Morrow]—or Jimmy worked very closely with them—refashioning, retooling, rediting the *Timeline* to create it in magazine format. You know, it's like, Why would this part work? And if you make something that works across a room, large, it's not necessarily going to work as effectively small, in print, as you go from publication to publication. And one would think you could come back from those meetings with like a headache. But no. He just kept getting more and more excited over it. And was like, "Oh, yes. I've been dubbed a member of Group Material. We. We. We." Well, you see, there's the brilliance; the willingness to share "we."

I'm an artist/art-worker interrupted. AIDS happened to us, and we had no choice but to stop and take note. We could not ignore it in our professional or personal lives. If you choose to take your practice and rethink it because you have no choice, to create something that's important but will not individually benefit you—and that all of us were willing to stop the rest of our lives to do these things? That's amazing.

Interviews conducted May–July 2009.

This fragment of ***Group Material's AIDS TIMELINE*** *is presented as a collaborative project for DAY WITHOUT ART 1990 by* ***Visual AIDS*** *and the following publications in their December issues:* ***Afterimage, Art & Auction, Art in America, Art New England, Artforum, Arts, Contemporanea, High Performance, October, Parkett, and Shift.***

Dieser Auszug aus ***Group Material's AIDS Timeline*** *wird als Gemeinschaftsprojekt für DAY WITHOUT ART (Tag ohne Kunst) 1990 von* ***Visual AIDS*** *und den folgenden Publikationen in ihren Dezember-Ausgaben abgedruckt: Afterimage, Art & Auction, Art in America, Art New England, Artforum, Arts, Contemporanea, High Performance, October, Parkett und Shift.*

ACT UP demonstrators interrupt trading on the New York Stock Exchange for 4½ minutes. The demonstrators call for traders to sell Burroughs Wellcome stock because the drug company profiteers from the AIDS crisis. Simultaneous protests occur in New York, London and San Francisco. Shortly thereafter Burroughs Wellcome lowers the price of AZT (the only federally approved drug that slows the replication of HIV) by 20%.

Mitglieder der Vereinigung ACT UP unterbrechen während viereinhalb Minuten den Handel an der New Yorker Börse. Die Demonstranten fordern die Wertpapierhändler auf, die Aktien von Burroughs Wellcome zu verkaufen, da dieses Pharmaunternehmen mit der AIDS-Krise Wuchergeschäfte betreibe. Gleichzeitig kommt es auch in New York, London und San Francisco zu Protesten. Kurz danach senkt Burroughs Wellcome den Preis für AZT um 20% (das einzige staatlich anerkannte Arzneimittel, das die Ausbreitung des HIV-Virus verlangsamt).



The Centers for Disease Control reports over 100,000 Americans have developed AIDS; almost 60,000 have died. The Public Health Service estimates 1 to 1.5 million Americans are HIV infected.

Die Centers for Disease Control berichten, dass die Zahl der unter Amerikanern aufgetretenen AIDS-Fälle bereits bei über 100 000 liegt; beinahe 60 000 Personen sind an AIDS gestorben. Der staatliche Gesundheitsdienst schätzt, dass zwischen 1 und 1,5 Millionen Amerikaner HIV-infiziert sind.

1990

"Optimistically, AIDS will push this country into getting universal health insurance." Dr. Stephen Joseph, New York City Commissioner of Health.

«Optimistisch betrachtet, wird AIDS unser Land dazu bringen, eine Krankenversicherung für alle einzuführen», sagt Dr. Stephen Joseph, City Commissioner of Health in New York.

This year the Office of Management and Budget plans to zero out funding for 63 federal and state AIDS prevention programs. President Bush wants to eliminate home health services and AIDS drug reimbursement programs.

Das Office of Management and Budget sieht in diesem Jahr vor, 63 gesamt- und einzelstaatliche AIDS-Präventivprogramme nicht mehr zu finanzieren. Präsident Bush will die medizinische Betreuung zu Hause und die Programme für eine Rückvergütung für AIDS-Medikamente abschaffen.



The House Defense Appropriations Committee now estimates that the cost of a single B-2 bomber has increased from $500 million to an estimated $890 million.

Nach Schätzung des House Defense Appropriation Committee haben sich die Kosten eines einzigen B-2-Bombers nun von 500 Millionen US-Dollar auf voraussichtlich 890 Millionen Dollar erhöht.

Fetal tissue research, thought to be effective in reconstructing the immune system, is banned in the U.S. due to controversy over obtaining fetal tissue from abortions.

Die Forschung an fötalem Gewebe, der man in bezug auf die Wiederherstellung des Immunsystems Bedeutung beimisst, wird in den USA aufgrund der Kontroverse um die Gewinnung von fötalem Gewebe aus Abtreibungen verboten.

The Names Project Quilt is displayed in Washington, DC on the weekend of October 6th. This is the last time it will be seen in its entirety due to its massive scale. The quilt weighs 13 tons, and is made up of 10,900 panels—each one measuring 6' x 3" and representing 6 American AIDS deaths. President Bush does not attend.

Die Names Project Quilt wird am Wochenende vom 6. Oktober in Washington entfaltet. Wegen ihrer gewaltigen Grösse ist dies das letzte Mal, dass die Decke ganz zu sehen sein wird. Sie wiegt 13 Tonnen und besteht aus 10 900 Stoff-Feldern, von denen jedes ca. 15 x 7,5 cm misst und sechs amerikanische AIDS-Tote darstellt. Präsident Bush wird nicht anwesend sein.

South Carolina passes a law requiring the reporting of HIV+ people. The number of HIV test requests has dropped 40% since this state has implemented the law requiring disclosure and contact tracing.

South Carolina verabschiedet ein Gesetz, nach dem HIV-positive Personen gemeldet werden müssen. Seit dieser Staat ein Gesetz erlassen hat, das die Entschlüsselung und Umgebungsuntersuchung vorschreibt, wurden 40% weniger HIV-Tests durchgeführt.

The 6th International Conference on AIDS is boycotted by many AIDS organizations, medical professionals and others, due to the discrimination of the United States immigration policy which bars people with HIV infection from entering the country.

Viele AIDS-Organisationen, Ärzte usw. boykottieren die 6. Internationale AIDS-Konferenz aufgrund der diskriminierenden Einwanderungspolitik der Vereinigten Staaten, die HIV-infizierten Personen die Einreise ins Land untersagt.

Masks: Members of the Rest Stop Support Center, San Francisco Photography: Ben Blackwell Art Direction: James Morrow

(Übersetzung: Franziska Streiff)

Exhibition History

Researched and prepared by Elizabeth Zechella.

Inaugural Exhibition
October 4–27, 1980
Group Material,
244 E. 13th Street, New York
Conrad Atkinson, George Ault, Julie Ault, Patrick Brennan, Liliana Dones, Yolanda Hawkins, Margia Kramer, Michael Lebron, Mundy McLaughlin, Tim Rollins, Klaus Staeck, and anonymous works collected from the streets of the Lower East Side.

The Salon of Election '80
November 4–11, 1980
Group Material,
244 E. 13th Street, New York
Respondents to an open call (names unavailable).

ALIENATION
November 22–December 21, 1980
Group Material,
244 E. 13th Street, New York
Julie Ault, Randolph Black, Patrick Brennan, Manuel DeLanda, Victor Ginzburg, Candace Hill-Montgomery, Valerie Hostetler, Susan Katz, Tom Koken, Joseph Kosuth, Dennis Martinez, Craig Massey, Bertell Ollman, Rachel Reichman, Tim Rollins, Ann Marie Rousseau, Michael Udvardy.

Film program: *Harmful or Fatal if Swallowed* and *Ismism*, Manual DeLanda; *Hurricane David*, Victor Ginzburg; *A Child's Introduction to the Wonders of Space* and *In the Twilight*, Rachel Reichman; *Frankenstein*, James Whale.

The People's Choice (Arroz con Mango)
January 10–February 1, 1981
Group Material,
244 E. 13th Street, New York
Residents of East 13th Street between 2nd and 3rd Avenues (names unavailable).

It's A Gender Show!
February 14–March 9, 1981
Group Material,
244 E. 13th Street, New York
Julie Ault, Paul Best, Dara Birnbaum, Ronnie Carson, Helen DeMichiel, Carol Friedman, Vanalyne Green, Esther Grillo, Michael Harwood, Karen Hatch, Jenny Holzer, Lyn Hughes, Glenda Hydler, Daniel Josephs, Kay Kenny, Suzanne Kessler, Dave King, Jim Krell, Barbara Kruger, Louise Lawler, Sherrie Levine, Frank Majore, Micki McGee, Wendy McKenna, Mundy McLaughlin, Peter Nadin, Adrian Piper, Tony Ramos, Shelly Silver, Laurie Simmons, Jean-Claude Vasseux, Julie Wachtel, Glenda Wharton, and others.

Video program: *Incontinence*, Manuel DeLanda; *Cool Hands, Warm Heart* and *Scar Tissue*, Su Friedrich; *Obscenity*, David Lee; *Argument*, Andrew Tyndall and Anthony McCall; sex education films.

Revolting Music
March 7, 1981
The Machinists' Union Hall,
7 E. 15th Street, New York
Abba, The Beatles, The Bee Gees, Chuck Berry, Booker T and the MG's, David Bowie, Brother to Brother, The Brothers Johnson, Chuck Brown and the Soul Searchers, James Brown, Ruth Brown, Johnny Cash, Ray Charles, Chic, The Clash, Merry Clayton, Sam Cooke, Alice Cooper, The Crystals, Miles Davis, Desmond Decker, Fats Domino, Bob Dylan, Marianne Faithfull, Aretha Franklin, The Bobby Fuller Four, Marvin Gaye, Gonzales, Dobie Gray, Al Green, Jimi Hendrix, The Impressions, The Isley Brothers, The Jacksons, Etta James, David Johansen, Dr. John, Gladys Knight and the Pips, Kool and the Gang, Patti Labelle, The Last Poets, John Lennon, Little Richard, Carrie Lucas, Loretta Lynn, Bob Marley and the Wailers, Martha and the Vandellas, Mighty Sparrow, Stephanie Mills, The Monkees, Jackie Moore, Tony Morgan, New York Dolls, Yoko Ono, Parliament, Wilson Pickett, The Pointer Sisters, Elvis Presley, Bonnie Raitt, Ramones, Otis Redding, Martha Reeves, The Richie Family, Jeannie C. Riley, The Rolling Stones, Rose Royce, Roxy Music, Mitch Ryder, The Selector, The Sex Pistols, Shirley and Co., Sister Janet, Sly and the Family Stone, Bill Sommers, The Staple Singers, Stargard, Edwin Starr, Steppenwolf, Barrett Strong, The Sugarhill Gang, Donna Summer, The Supremes, Sweet T., Talking Heads, Temptations, Joe Tex, Toots and the Maytals, Joe Turner, Johnny Guitar Watson, Stevie Wonder, The Village People, Voices of East Harlem, Betty Wright, X-Ray Spex, The Young Rascals.

Consumption: Metaphor, Pastime, Necessity
March 21–April 20, 1981
Group Material,
244 E. 13th Street, New York
Bill Allen, Julie Ault, Randolph Black, Robert Bordo, Patrick Brennan, Moira Dryer, Mike Glier, Karen Hatch, Lyn Hughes, Sally LeLong, Barbara Lipp, Micki McGee, Mundy McLaughlin, Gary Morgan, Andrew Nash, Mattie Peoples, Anne Pitrone, Tim Rollins, Christy Rupp, Juan Sanchez, Greg Sholette, Gregg Smith, Bill Stephens, Cathy Thomson, Michael Udvardy, Mierle Laderman Ukeles.

Facere / Fascis
May 2–June 4, 1981
Group Material,
244 E. 13th Street, New York
Julie Ault, Stephen Blos, Patrick Brennan, Mary Cooper, Liliana Dones, Linda Herritt, Linda Hughes, Katie Kay, Mundy McLaughlin, April Palmieri, Linda Pit, Jonathon Quinn, Joel Resnicoff, Tim Rollins, Andres Serrano, Soody Sisco, Gregg Smith, Michael Udvardy, Chris Zeller, Kristine Zounek.

Atlanta: An Emergency Exhibition
June 14–30, 1981
Group Material,
244 E. 13th Street, New York
Jules Allen, Candace Hill-Montgomery, Jerry Kearns, Madame Binh Graphics Collective, Micki McGee, Mundy McLaughlin, Mattie Peoples, Howardina Pindell, Faith Ringgold, Tim Rollins with thirty-five children from Harlem and the Lower East Side.

Eat This Show
July 11, 1981
Group Material,
244 E. 13th Street, New York
Lower East Side artists, residents, and Group Material members (names unavailable).

Enthusiasm!
October 31–November 28, 1981
Group Material Headquarters,
132 E. 26th Street, New York
Julie Ault, John Fekner, Don Leicht, Yolanda Hawkins, Candace Hill-Montgomery, Dorothy Kohn (Dottie the K), Mundy McLaughlin, Paulette Nenner, Brian Mór O'Baoighil, Anne Pitrone, Tim Rollins, Juan Sanchez, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Anton van Dalen.

M5
December 10, 1981–January 10, 1982
Interior bus advertisements
Fifth Avenue bus lines, New York
Doug Ashford, Julie Ault, Thomas Bassmann, Michael Bidlo, Kim DePole, Louis Forgione, Angela Fremont, Vanalyne Green, Yolanda Hawkins, Candace Hill-Montgomery, Jenny Holzer, Don Leicht, Louis Laurita, Silvia Kolbowski, Marjory Mailman, Mundy McLaughlin, Tom Mellins, Paulette Nenner, Herbert Perr, Juan Sanchez, Greg Sholette, Shelly Silver, Tony Silvestrini, Luis Stand, Michael Transue, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Julie Wachtel, Irving Wexler, Anton van Dalen, Rhonda Zwillinger.

DA ZI BAOS
Installed on April 16, 1982
Former S. Klein building,
14th Street and Park Avenue South,
Union Square, New York
Accounting supervisor, bum, CISPES (Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador), Group Material, Home Health Care Workers Union, housewife, National Prison Reform Board, New York State Division of Substance Abuse, office worker, Planned Parenthood, receptionist, unemployed.

Works on Newspaper
March 25–May 1, 1982
Group Material Headquarters,
132 E. 26th Street, New York
Doug Ashford, Candace Hill-Montgomery, Brian Goldfarb, Anne Pitrone, Tim Rollins, Christy Rupp, Seth Tobocman.

Primer (for Raymond Williams)
May 29–July 17, 1982
Artists Space,
105 Hudson Street, New York
Commissioning curator: Valerie Smith
Mario Asaro, Doug Ashford, Conrad Atkinson, Julie Ault, photograph of Che Guevara taken after his death, Adalberto Badillo, James Brown album covers, *Dawn of the Dead* movie poster, El Lissitzky reproduction, FSLN (Sandinista National Liberation Front) artifacts, Futura 2000, Jean-Luc Godard film still, Yolanda Hawkins, Margaret Harrison, Sharon Hunt, Dorothy Kohn (Dottie the K), magazine interview with Chaka Kahn, Micki McGee, Mundy McLaughlin, Joseph Nechvatal, Paulette Nenner, Brian Mór O'Baoighil, Tim Rollins and six children from the South Bronx, Dr. Seuss book, Solidarity t-shirt, 1968 Summer Olympics news photo, and others.

Luchar!: An Exhibition for the People of Central America
June 19–July 9, 1982
Taller Latinoamericano/
The Latin American Workshop, Inc.,
19 W. 21st Street, New York
Jon Agee, Bolivar Arellano, Mario Asaro, Doug Ashford, Conrad Atkinson, Julie Ault, Dorgenes Balestar, Tom Bassmann, Angelo Bellfatto, Maggie Block, Josely Carvalho, Casa Nicaragua, The Clash, Eva Cockcroft, Sue Coe, Raphael Colon Morales, CISPES (Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador), Daniel Flores y Ascencio, Future 2000, Bobby G, Victoria Garcia, Mike Glier, Leon Golub, Joss Gonzalez, Keith Haring, Helio, Candace Hill-Montgomery, Claudia Hutchinson, Steve Karian, Jerry Kearns, Janet Koenig, Louis Laurita, Tom Lawson, Lucy R. Lippard, Mark Lutwak, Vilma Maldonaldo, José Manco, Micki McGee, Mundy McLaughlin, Susan Meiselas, Camilio Minero, Jorge Morales, Nicaragua Libre, Nicaraguan Ministry of Culture, OSPAAAL (Organization of Solidarity of the People of Asia, Africa and Latin America), Hernand Osorio, Catalina Parra, Herb Perr and Irving Wexler, Tim Rollins, Martha Rosler, Christy Rupp, Juan Sanchez, Nancy Spero, Klaus Staeck, Mercedez Tejada, Maria Thereza Alves, Anton van Dalen, and others.

Revolutionary Fine Arts
April 14, 1982
Taller Latinoamericano,
19 W. 21st Street, New York
Bolivar Arellano, Doug Ashford, Conrad Atkinson, Julie Ault, Casa Nicaragua, CISPES (Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador), Rev. Howard Finster, Mike Glier, Candace Hill-Montgomery, Jerry Kearns, Thomas Lawson, Nancy Linn, Micki McGee, Mundy McLaughlin, Anne Pitrone, Tony Rickaby, RAM (Redistribute America Movement), Tim Rollins and twenty-five kids from the South Bronx, Tony Silvestrini, Klaus Staeck, Anton van Dalen, Julie Wachtel, and others.

Subculture
September 1–30, 1983
Interior advertisements, IRT subway trains, New York. Concurrent exhibition held at Taller Latinoamericano,
19 W. 21st Street, New York
Vito Acconci, Dennis Adams, William Allen, Michael Anderson, Ida Applebroog, Mario Asaro, Doug Ashford, Julie Ault, Thomas Bassmann, Olivia Beens, Joseph Beuys, Chris Bratton, Andrea Callard, John Calvelli, Carlo Cesta, Chris Chevins, Chico, Day Gleeson and Dennis Thomas, Amanda Church, Ellen Cooper, Merrie Dee, Ian DeGruchy, Jimmy DeSana, Johana Drucker and Stephen Rodefer, Brigitte Elgler, Sean Elwood, Andrea Evans, John Fekner and Don Leicht, Sean Flynn, Mathew Geller, Ame Gilbert, Marsha Ginsberg and Dorothy Low, Brian Goldfarb and Garrett Kelleberg, Felix Gonzalez, Vanalyne Green, Mimi Gross, Ruth Guardine, Marina Gutierrez, Marianne Gunther, Richard Hackel, Richard Hambleton, Yolanda Hawkins, Suzanne Helmuth and Jock Reynolds, Lyn Hughes, Malachi Jackson, Bob Jones, Christof Kohlhofer, Dorothy Kohn, Komar and Melamid, Barbara Kruger, Sarafina Landgrebe, Rae Langsten and Herb Perr, Louis Laurita, Tom Lawson, Marjory Mailman, Dona Ann McAdams, Patrick McGraw, Maureen McKeon, Mundy McLaughlin, Brad Melamed, Peter Melville, Ann Messner, Beverly Naidus, Joseph Nechvatal, Bill Neiderkorn, Lisa Neighbour, Vernita Nemec, Paulette Nenner, Aric Obrosey, Saul Ostrow, Carol Parkinson, Cara Perlman, Cheryl Peterka, Brian Piersol, Jim Raglione, Harvey Redding, Roy Rogers and Tim Rollins, Erika Rothenberg, Score, Juan Sanchez, Andres Serrano, Greg Sholette, Dena Shottenkirk, Shelly Silver, Tony Silvestrini, Teri Slotkin, Kiki Smith, Paul Smith, Seton Smith, Luis Stand, Anita Steckel, Stephano, Haim Steinbach, Mindy Stevenson, Seth Tobocman, Michael Transue, Penny Umbrico, Julius Valiunas, Robin Van Arsdol, Julie Wachtel, Tom Warren, John Weber, David Wells, Barbara Westermann, Roberta Williams.

Timeline: A Chronicle of U.S. Intervention in Central and Latin America
January 22–March 18, 1984
For Artists Call Against U.S. Intervention in Central America
at P.S.1, New York
Commissioning curator: Alanna Heiss
Bill Allen, Ida Applebroog, Bolivar Arellano, *New York Times* advertisement by Artists Call, Doug Ashford, Conrad Atkinson, Julie Ault, Adalberto Badillo, Tom Bassmann, Robert Berlind, Chiquita bananas, CISPES (Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador), Casa Nicaragua, Sue Coe, copper sheeting, cotton, news photo of Roberto D'Aubuisson, Honoré Daumier, Öyvind Fahlström, FMLN (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front) scarf, FSLN (Sandinista National Liberation Front) banner, Arne Gilbert, Mike Glier, Felix Gonzalez, Michael John Gonzalez, ground coffee, John Heartfield, Candace Hill-Montgomery, Jenny Holzer, Barbara Kruger, Louis Laurita, Mundy McLaughlin, Susan Meiselas, Ann Messner, Tina Modotti, Paulette Nenner, newspaper articles, Richard Prince, Faith Ringgold, Diego Rivera, Tim Rollins, silkscreen prints of Archbishop Oscar Romero, Martha Rosler, Warren Ser, Andres Serrano, Tony Silvestrini, David Alfaro Siqueiros, Nancy Spero, Klaus Staeck, Haim Steinbach, tobacco leaves, Anton van Dalen, Julie Wachtel, David Wells, Barbara Westermann.

Soundtrack: Hans Werner Henze, Victor Jara, Frederic Rzewski.

A.D.: Christian Influence in Contemporary Culture
January 11–February 8, 1985
Work, 345 E. 12th Street, New York
William Allen, Doug Ashford, Julie Ault, Michael Byron, Stefano Castronovo, Ronnie Cutrone, Sam Doyle, Buckminster Fuller, Rev. Howard Finster, Juliann Kroboth, Louis Laurita, Mundy McLaughlin, Nancy Linn, Ellen Quinn, Tim Rollins and José Carlos, Andres Serrano, Nancy Spero, Klaus Staek, Michael Tracy, Anton van Dalen, Sister Gertrude White, and others.

Americana
March 21–June 9, 1985
1985 Whitney Biennial,
lobby gallery, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
Commissioning curator: Lisa Phillips
John Ahearn, All laundry detergent, Almost Home cookies, American custard mix, Americana landscape paintings made in Mexico, Arnold bread, Doug Ashford, Julie Ault, Alan Belcher, Harvey Bletchman, Bold laundry detergent, Cheer laundry detergent, Marshall Collins, Contact wall paper, Henry Darger, Dash laundry detergent, Jane Dickson, Sam Doyle, eagle-themed clock, Fab laundry detergent, Larry Fink, Rev. Howard Finster, Eric Fischl, General Electric can openers, Mike Glier, Leon Golub, Edgar Heap of Birds, Suzanne Hellmuth and Jock Reynolds, Candace Hill-Montgomery, photo of Thomas Jefferson memorial, Neil Jenney, Jerry Kearns, Kellogg's Cereal Variety Pack, Kleenex tissues, Barbara Kruger, Tseng Kwong-Chi, Lady Pink, Tom Lawson, Sherrie Levine, Peter Max, Maytag washer and dryer, Allan McCollum, Mundy McLaughlin, John Miller, Mr. Coffee coffee machine, Peter Nagy, Joseph Nechvatal, Leroy Neiman, New Freedom feminine napkins, Claes Oldenburg and Coosje Van Bruggen, Osterizer blender, Saul Ostrow, Pepperidge Farm bread, Richard Prince, Lee Quinones, Faith Ringgold, James Rivera, Norman Rockwell plates, Tim Rollins + K.O.S., Christy Rupp, Juan Sanchez, Fritz Scholder, Andres Serrano, Laurie Simmons, Nancy Spero, Stay Free feminine napkins, Joel Sternfeld, Tide laundry detergent, Rigoberto Torres, Total cereal, *TV Guide*, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Anton van Dalen, Julie Wachtel, Andy Warhol, *Woman's Day*, Wonder Bread, Martin Wong, 35mm slide of Andrew Wyeth painting, Jamie Wyeth, Zenith Console television set.

Soundtrack: "Lilacs," Carl Ruggles; "Mind Your Own Business," Hank Williams; "Gotas de Lluvia," El Gran Combo; "The Stripper," David Rose; "You're Blind," Run DMC; "The Ballad of Jed Clampett," Flatt & Scruggs; "The Payback," James Brown; "Old Folks Gathering," Charles Ives; "I Don't Wanna Play House," Tammy Wynette; "Jump Call," Benny Carter; "We're Not Going To Take It," Twisted Sister; "It's Gonna Rain," O'Neal Brothers; "The Devil Gets His Dues," Loretta Lynn; "This Land Is Your Land," Woody Guthrie.

Democracy Wall
April 27–May 25, 1985
Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff, Wales
Commissioning curator: Philip Sky
Family Planning Association; Ellen Sullivan, housewife; National Cleansing Campaign; Kevin Dyer, actor; Alcoholics Anonymous; Janet Taylor, civil servant; The National Front; Sean Bury, unemployed teacher; Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament; Robert Turner, retired post office engineer.

MASS
1985: Hallwalls, Buffalo, NY, May 10–June 8; Spaces, Cleveland, OH, July 5–26
1986: Aljira Arts, Newark, NJ, February 14–March 15; Project gallery, The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, April 12–June 12; Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE), August 1–31; Artspace, Sydney, Australia, October 1–18; Visual Arts Building, University of Texas at Dallas, November 24–December 12
1990: *The Decade Show*, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, May 18–August 19
Safiya Abdulah, Dennis Adams, Alice Albert, Bill Allen, Ida Applebroog, Mario Asaro, Doug Ashford, Conrad Atkinson, Julie Ault, Todd Lindsteen Ayoung, Tom Bassmann, Alan Belcher, Angelo Bellfatto, Ellen Berkenblit, Randy Black, Harvey Bletchman, Jennifer Bolande, Barbara Broughel, Peter Burgess, Michael Byron, Josely Carvalho, Carlo Cesta, Keith Christenson, Amanda Church, Eva Cockcroft, Marshall Collins, Michael Coulter, Judith Croce, Greg Davidek, Vincent Desiderio, Jessica Diamond, Jane Dickson, Gary Dodson, Anne Doran, Eric Drooker, Richard Dunn, Elders Share the Arts, Barbara Ess, Andrea Evans, Sean Flynn, Matthew Geller, Ame Gilbert, Marsha Ginsberg, Mike Glier, Leon Golub, Joss Gonzalez, Felix Gonzalez, Penelope Goodfriend, Robert Gordian, Grace Graupe-Pillard, Vanalyne Green, Howard Halle, Yolanda Hawkins, Edgar Heap of Birds, Suzanne Hellmuth and Jock Reynolds, Candace Hill, Jenny Holzer, Peter Hopkins, Becky Howland, Shedrack Jones, Anne Katz, Jerry Kearns, Janet Koenig, Tom Koken, Brabara Kruger, Charles Lahti, Rae Langston and Herb Perr, Louis Laurita, Greg Lawrence, Tom Lawson, Don Leicht, Daniel Levine, Richard Limber, Barbara Lipp, Patrice Lorenze, Majory Mailman, Master Alomar, Dona Ann McAdams, Allan McCollum, Micki McGee, Mundy McLaughlin, Betsy McLindon, Brad Melamed, Ann Messner, Susan Morgan, Lillian Mulero, Peter Nagy, Joe Nechvatal, Lisa Neighbour, William Niederkorn, Aric Obrosey, Peter Oertwig, Mike Osterhaut, Saul Ostrow, Franc Palaia, April Palmieri, A. M. Paterson, R. Polumbo, Houston Powel, Ellen Quinn, RAM (Redistribute America Movement), Bill Radawec, Keith Rambert, David Robbins, Roy Rogers, Tim Rollins + K.O.S., Rachel Romero, Martha Rosler, Michael Ross, Erika Rothenberg, Christy Rupp, Andres Serrano, Greg Sholette, Shelly Silver, Tony Silvestrini, Paul Smith, Nancy Spero, Klaus Staeck, Luis Stand, Haim Steinbach, John Strauss, Karen Sylvester, Dennis Thomas and Day Gleeson, Leslie Tonkonow, Anny Turyn, Julius Valiunas, Anton van Dalen, Julie Wachtel, Oliver Wasow, Florence Weisz, Barbara Westermann, Richard Ray Whitman, June Wilson, Jody Wright, Charles Yuen, Jody Zellen, and artifacts selected by Group Material.

Messages to Washington
September 1–October 12, 1985
Washington Project for the Arts,
Washington, DC
Commissioning curator: Jock Reynolds
Items sent from people around the country in response to newspaper advertisements placed by Group Material (names unavailable); artifacts selected by Group Material; Mike Glier; Edgar Heap of Birds; Steve Jones; Dorothy Kohn (Dottie the K); Christy Rupp.

Alarm Clock
November 7–December 19, 1985
***The Other America*,**
Royal Festival Hall, London
Commissioning curator: Margaret Harrison
Alarm clocks made in Yugoslavia and China, Doug Ashford, Rudolf Baranik, *The Professional Image* by Susan Baxter, bumper sticker, coffee mug, Mike Glier, Leon Golub, Margaret Harrison, Candace Hill-Montgomery, Jenny Holzer, Sherrie Levine, Fred Londier, manager door sign, office flyers, office memo Post-it pads, Tim Rollins and John Mendoza, Christy Rupp, Nancy Spero, Bruce Springsteen "Born in the USA" poster, May Stevens, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Anton van Dalen, Westclox alarm clocks made in America.

Liberty & Justice
February 22–March 22, 1986
Alternative Museum,
17 White Street, New York
Organized with the Alternative Museum
Commissioning curator: Geno Rodriguez
Dennis Adams, Ida Applebroog, Doug Ashford, Sonia Balassanian, Jennifer Bolande, Chris Bratton, Rene Castro, T. F. Chen, Mel Edwards, Mike Glier, Don Harvey, Susan Harvey, Edgar Heap of Birds, Suzanne Hellmuth and Jock Reynolds, Chris Hurstis, Carol Jacobsen, Jerry Kearns, Mauricio Lara, Louis Laurita, Mundy McLaughlin, Brad Melamed, John Moore, Eleni Mylonos, Ken Nevadomi, Saul Ostrow, Adrian Piper, Krzysztos Pruszkowski, Lee Quinones, Faith Ringgold, Tim Rollins + K.O.S., Connie Samara, Joe Sances, Andres Serrano, Nancy Spero, Anne Turyn, Anton van Dalen, Charles Walker, Andy Warhol.

Soundtrack: "The Star-Spangled Banner," Duke Ellington; "America the Beautiful," The Boston Pops; "God Bless America," Kate Smith; "America," Prince and the Revolution; "America the Beautiful," Statler Brothers; "America the Beautiful" Leontyne Price; "The Star-Spangled Banner," University of Michigan Band; "God Bless America," Mormon Tabernacle Choir; "The Star-Spangled Banner," The Philadelphia Orchestra; "America the Beautiful," Charlie Rich; "God Bless America," Robert Shaw Chorale and the RCA Symphony Orchestra; "America the Beautiful," Concord Jazz All Stars; "The Star-Spangled Banner," Mormon Tabernacle Choir; "America the Beautiful," Liberace; "The Star-Spangled Banner," Vienna State Opera Orchestra; "God Bless America Again," Loretta Lynn and Conway Twitty; "The Star-Spangled Banner,"

Concert Arts Symphonic Band; "America the Beautiful," Robert Shaw Chorale and the RCA Symphony Orchestra; "The Star-Spangled Banner," Jimi Hendrix; "God Bless America," Leontyne Price.

Arts and Leisure
May 24–June 14, 1986
The Kitchen,
519 W. 19th Street, New York
Vikky Alexander, Eve Arnold, Doug Ashford, Conrad Atkinson, Alan Belcher, John Berger, Barbara Cartland, Ronnie Cutrone, Jane Dickson, Jiri Georg Dokoupil, Mike Glier, Group Material, Howard Halle, Edgar Heap of Birds, Suzanne Hellmuth and Jock Reynolds, Christof Kohlhofer, Joseph Kosuth, Barbara Kruger, Justen Ladda, Lady Pink, Louise Lawler, Allan McCollum, Allan McCollum/Louise Lawler, Micki McGee, Mundy McLaughlin, *The National Enquirer*, Aric Obrosey, Claes Oldenburg, JoJohn Plunkett, Richard Prince, Lee Quinones, Tom Rubnitz and Ann Magnuson, Tseng Kwong Chi, Norman Rockwell, James Rosenquist, Kenny Scharf, Haim Steinbach, Bob Templeton and Tom Foreman, Anton van Dalen, Walt Disney Studios, Andy Warhol, Oliver Wasow, Dean Young, and others.

Resistance (Anti-Baudrillard),
February 6–28, 1987
White Columns,
325 Spring Street, New York
Commissioning curator: Bill Arning
Roundtable discussion: January 25, 1987, Doug Ashford, Julie Ault, Judith Barry, Peter Halley, William Olander, Julie Wachtel, Oliver Wasow.
AFL-CIO poster, Catherine Allport, Conrad Atkinson, Bruce Barber, Gretchen Bender, Joseph Beuys, Dara Birnbaum, David Cronenberg, Honoré Daumier, Peter Dunn, Andrea Evans, FSLN (Sandinista National Liberation Front) artifacts, Madge Gill, Mike Glier, Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Mièville, Leon Golub, George Grosz, guerrilla mask, Hans Haacke, Edgar Heap of Birds, John Heartfield, Janet Henry, Jenny Holzer, Impact Visuals, Oskar Kokoshka, Barbara Kruger, Louise Lawler, Lorraine Leeson, Susan Meiselas, Brad Melamed, Gerhard Merz, Michael Nedjar, Odilon Redon, Nancy Spero, Carol Squiers, photos and graphics from SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organization), toy M16 rifle, Gastón Ugalde, Carrie Mae Weems, Krysztof Wodiczko, Martin Wong, and others.

The Castle
June 12–September 20, 1987
***documenta 8*, Museum Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany**
Commissioning curator: Edward Fry
Vikky Alexander, All laundry detergent, Doug Ashford, Conrad Atkinson, Julie Ault, Alan Belcher, Gretchen Bender, Brut 33 deodorant stick, bumper stickers, Peter Burgess, Clegg and Guttman, coffee mug, Combat roach control system, desktop slogans, Mark Dion, Gary Dodson, Nancy Dwyer, Daniel Faust, Forever Krystle cologne, Day Gleeson and Dennis Thomas, Leon Golub, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Peter Halley, Edgar Heap of Birds, Jenny Holzer, Imperial margarine, Alfredo Jarr, Larry Johnson, Ronald Jones, Steven Kasher, Jerry Kearns, King Vitamin cereal, Silvia Kolbowski, Barbara Kruger, Louise Lawler, Tom Lawson, Daniel Levine, Lord cigarettes, Master Blend coffee, Allan McCollum, Meister Klasse soup mixes, Brad Melamed, Mr. Big napkins, Peter Nagy, Northern toilet tissue, Aric Obrosey, Claes Oldenburg, Porcelana fade cream, Jeffrey Pittu, Tim Rollins + K.O.S., Martha Rosler, Andres Serrano, Lorna Simpson, Nancy Spero, Starn Twins, Haim Steinbach, Oliver Wasow, Carrie Mae Weems, Chris Williams, Martin Wong.

Soundtrack: Easy listening versions of revolutionary songs.

Constitution
October 1–November 14, 1987
The Temple Gallery, Temple University, Tyler School of Art, Philadelphia
Commissioning curator: Julie Courtney
Vito Acconci, Dennis Adams, AFL-CIO poster, John Ahearn, Doug Ashford, Bernd and Hilla Becher, Gretchen Bender, Curtis Brown, Walter Clemmons, Luis Cruz Azaceta, Edward Curtis, Sam Doyle, Rev. Howard Finster, Mike Glier, Leon Golub, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Guerrilla Art Action Group, Philip Guston, Peter Halley, Jenny Holzer, Thomas Jefferson, Barbara Kruger, Tom Lawson, Sherrie Levine, Claes Oldenburg, Tom Otterness, Daniel Pressley, Robert Rauschenberg, Faith Ringgold, James Rivera, David Robbins, Tim Rollins + K.O.S., Jack Savitsky, Andres Serrano, Nancy Spero, Orlando Valentin, James Van Der Zee, Robert Venturi, Martin Wong.

Soundtrack: Mahalia Jackson singing traditional hymns.

Inserts
May 22, 1988
Advertising supplement to the Sunday *New York Times*
Mike Glier, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Hans Haacke, Jenny Holzer, Barbara Kruger, Louise Lawler, Nancy Linn, Richard Prince, Nancy Spero, Carrie Mae Weems.

Democracy
September 1988–January 1989
Dia Art Foundation,
77 Wooster Street, New York
Commissioning Curator: Gary Garrels

Democracy: Education
Roundtable discussion: May 21, 1988, John Deveaux, Rodney Harris, Catherine Lord, Tim Rollins, Ira Shor, Group Material.
Exhibition: September 15–October 8, 1988
Town Meeting: September 27, 1988, Chairperson: Tim Rollins
John Ahearn; American flag (classroom regulation size); Angel Amarat with Rachel Romero; Mario Asaro with the students of class 7-333 from Enrico Fermi Junior High School III; Doug Ashford with the students of class F201 including Dwayne Baker, Kisha Currence, Jamal Jonas, Monty Hooker, Anne-Marie Petithomme, and Bobby Pugh; Jo Babcock; Rudolf Baranik; Joseph Beuys; Sam Blinkley with students from Small World Day Care including Arnold Acosta, Jr., Sean Aiwas, Philip Antonelli, Bobby, Lorraine Conigliaro, Melissa Maciorowski, Nicole, Christopher Ortega, Jessica Rodriguez, Yvonne T., and Tito; Nancy Burson; Lance Carlson; classroom wall clock; Lynne Cohen; Eric Drooker; Educational Video Center; Barbara Ess; Öyvind Fahlström; Rev. Howard Finster; Peter Halley; Lewis Hine; Jenny Holzer; Builder Levy and Offsight Education Services at the Puerto Rican Council; Dean McNeil; Meryl Meisler and the Drop Ins; Gerhard Merz; Michael (Hospital Audiences); Ed Morales with Tom McGlynn, Diana Caballero, and Elaine Ruiz from The Committee for a Multilingual New York and Victory Arts; J. B. Murray; New Muse Summer Program with Onnie Miller; Nike advertisement; Tom Otterness; Luciano Perna; Adrian Piper; Keith Rambert with the students of class FZ01 at Boys and Girls High School including Agnes George, Wendy Waddell, Jail House Productions, Emmanuel Tyreli, and Leon Vereen; Maria Reyes; Faith Ringgold; Rise and Shine Productions (highlights from the Poetry Video Learning Project); Tim Rollins + K.O.S.; Rachel Romero and Third Street Men's Shelter and Hospital Audiences; school desks; Dr. Seuss book; Lorna Simpson; Carolien Stikker; Mitchell Syrop; Jon Tower; Robert Venturi; Douglas Walker; Andy Warhol; Gary Wilson

Democracy: Politics and Election
Roundtable discussion: June 4, 1988, Richard Andrews, Leon Golub, Esther Parada, Judge Bruce Wright, Group Material.
Exhibition: October 15–November 12, 1988
Town Meeting: October 18, 1988, Chairperson: Lucy R. Lippard
American flag (oversize), John Armleder, Arnon Ben-David, Curtis Brown, Luis Camnitzer, Lynne Cohen, Robbie Conal, Gregory Davidek, Sam Doyle, Kate Ericson and Mel Ziegler, Rev. Howard Finster, Judy Fiskin, Mike Glier, Leon Golub, Hans Haacke, Bessie Harvey, Ronald Jones, Kenneth Cole advertisement, Margia Kramer, La-Z-Boy chair, Betrand Lavier, John Lindell, Kim Lutes, Christian Marclay, Dona Ann McAdams, Dean McNeil, Brad Melamed, Tony Mendoza, Kirsten Mosher, Antonio Muntadas and Marshall Resse, David Nyzio, Aric Obrosey, Norman Rockwell, Michael Rosario with Rachel Romero, Erika Rothenberg, Christy Rupp, Wolfgang Staehle, Jana Sterbak, Carolien Stikker, Mitchell Syrop, television set, Martin Wong, Wayne Zebzda.

Democracy: Cultural Participation
Roundtable discussion: June 11, 1988, David Avalos, Martha Gever, Lucy R. Lippard, Randall Morris, Robert Farris Thompson, Deborah Wye, Group Material.
Exhibition: November 19–December 10, 1988
Town Meeting: November 22, 1988, Chairperson: David Avalos
Bachman Crunchy Jax; Bachman Jax; Bachman Pastapazazz; BonTon fiesta mix; Bravos nacho cheese tortilla chips; Charles cheese twists; Cheetos puffed balls; Chiffes plantain chips; Cottage Fries; Crunchy Cheetos; Jane Dickson; Doritos tortilla chips; Dutch Style pretzels; Eagle Hawaiian kettle potato chips; Eagle Idaho russet potato chips; Marybeth Edelson; Rev. Howard Finster; Jeff Gates; generic brand potato chips; Arnold Ginsberg; Glade air freshener; Grandaddy's tortilla chips; Bessie Harvey; Carmen Herrera; Jenny Holzer; Larry Johnson; Mike Kelley; Barbara Kruger; Lay's Italian Cheese potato chips; Lay's potato chips; Ken Lum; magazines; Kirsten Mosher; Munchos potato chips; New York Deli potato chips; Aric Obrosey; "outlaw biker" American flag; picnic tables and benches; Richard Prince; Peter Reiss; Alexander Remas; Rolets pork rinds; Rolled Gold pretzel rods; George Romero; Erika Rothenberg; Ruffles potato chips; Fran Cutrell Rutovsky; Victor Schrager; Cindy Sherman; Haim Steinbach; Symbol magazine; Mitchell Syrop; Richard Thatcher; Urban Center for Photography (Detroit) with installations by James Dozier, Bob McKeown, Julio Perazza, Keith Piaseczny, Bob Sanders, and others; Douglas Walker; Judith Weinman; Wise butter popcorn; Wise onion rings; Wise potato chips.

Democracy: AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study
Roundtable discussion: June 18, 1988, Michael Callen, Jan Zita Grover, Maria Maggenti, Group Material.
Exhibition: December 19, 1988–January 14, 1989
Town Meeting: January 10, 1989, Chairperson: Maria Maggenti
ACT UP flyers, Joe Andoe, Gretchen Bender, Ross Bleckner, Terese Bramlette, Ellen Brooks, Brian Buczak, Nancy Burson, Andrea Evans, Steven Evans, flyers, General Idea, Mike Glier, Gran Fury, Michael Jenkins, Ronald Jones, Tom Kalin, Jannis Kounellis, Barbara Kruger, Dorothea Lange, Louise Lawler, John Lindell, Nancy Linn, T. L. Litt, Robert Mapplethorpe, Tom McKitterick, Gerhard Merz, Donald Moffett, Diane Neumaier, Tim Rollins + K.O.S., Andres Serrano, Nancy Spero, Ben Thornberry, Martha Townsend, Nancy Burson, Lola Flash, James Van Der Zee, WHAM! (Women's Health Action Mobilization) flyers, Martin Wong.

Video program: *Work Your Body*, Gregg Bordowitz and Jean Carlomusto; *Prostitutes, Risk and AIDS*, Jean Carlomusto and Alexandra Juhasz; *Doctors, Liars and Women*, Jean Carlomusto and Maria Maggenti; *AIDS: Angry Initiatives/Defiant Strategies*, John Greyson; *Life Guard*; *Showdown in Atlanta*, Ira Manhoff; *1987 National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights*, Nick Papatonis; *Simon Watney Says "No" to Clause 29*, Paper Tiger Collective; *ACT UP at the FDA*, Ellen Spiro; *Testing the Limits*, Testing the Limits Collective; *The Names Project*, David Thompson.

AIDS & Democracy* aka *Elegy
December 16, 1988–February 13, 1989
***Vollbild, AIDS*, RealismusStudio, Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst (NGBK), Berlin**
Commissioning curator: Frank Wagner
Joe Andoe, Terese Bramlette, Andrea Evans, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Michael Jenkins, Ronald Jones, Brad Melamed, Dorthea Lange, Nancy Linn, Tim Rollins + K.O.S., May Sarton quotation, Andres Serrano, Martha Townsend.

Unisex
June 1–December 1, 1989
***The Center Show*, The Lesbian and Gay Community Center, 208 W. 13th Street, New York**
Commissioning curator: Rick Barnett
A Taste of Honey, The Bee Gees, Alicia Bridges, Charlotte Church, Sheila B. Devotion, Yvonne Fair, First Choice, Thelma Houston, Grace Jones, The Jones Girls, Esther Phillips, Sylvia Robinson, Diana Ross, Candi Staton, Donna Summer, T-Connection, THP Orchestra, Two Tons O' Fun, Barry White, John Paul Young, Karen Young.

Shopping Bag
October 14–November 26, 1989
Shopping bags distributed in local shops and department stores
***D&S Ausstellung*, Kunstverein, Hamburg, Germany**
Commissioning curator: Frank Barth
Project coordinator: Ute Meta Bauer

AIDS Timeline
November 11, 1989–January 28, 1990
Matrix Gallery, University Art Museum, University of California at Berkeley
Commissioning curator: Larry Rinder
Research assistant: Richard Meyer
ACT UP photo and posters; *The Advocate* newspaper; "AIDS Profiteer" stickers; *An Early Frost* publicity photo; *And The Band Played On* by Randy Shilts; B2 bomber poster; *Batman* movie poster; Robert Beck; Nayland Blake; Terese Bramlette; *California* magazines; CDC case definition photostat; Climax poppers advertisement; condom case; Michael Flanagan and DAIR (Documentation of AIDS Issues and Research Archives); *The Empire Strikes Back* movie poster; Steven Evans; Tom of Finland; Dr. Robert Gallo photo; Mike Glier; GMHC (Gay Men's Health Crisis) Safer Sex Comix; Gloria Vanderbilt jeans magazine tear sheet; Gran Fury; Group Material and John Lindell; Hans Haacke; Keith Haring; Rock Hudson film still; Michael Jenkins; Tom Kalin; Surgeon General C. Everett Koop photo; Dr. Mathilde Krim photo; Dorothea Lange; Latino AIDS Project booklet; Louise Lawler; Rudy Lemcke; *Life* magazine; Brad Melamed; men's tie; Ann Meredith; Duane Michals; Donald Moffet; *Mother Jones* magazine; The Names Project poster; Diane Neumaier; *New York Native* article; *New York Times* article; *Newsweek* magazines; Daniel Nicoletta; "No on 64" bumper sticker; Oliver North photo; Northrop advertisements; Patient's Bill of Rights; *People* magazine; public service posters; PWA Coalition newsletter; *Rambo* publicity photo; Ronald and Nancy Reagan photo; Reagan/Bush '84 campaign button; Reagan '80 campaign button and inauguration photo; *Real People* publicity photos; Tim Rollins + K.O.S.; Kay Rosen; Erika Rothenberg; rubber gloves; safer sex posters; *Scientific American* magazine; *The Sentinel* newspaper; Andres Serrano; Silence=Death t-shirt; Silencio=Muerte t-shirt; Lorna Simpson; Sharon Siskin and Positive Art members from Rest Stop Support Center, San Francisco and The Center for AIDS Services, Oakland, including Eddie Booker, Steve Brown, Richard C., Steve Curd, Tom Devine, Paul Gronberg, Barry Frederick, Paul Freites, Ken Huff, J.J., Eric Lewald, Richard McMullen, Ben Medina, Gary Ostrander, Max Proudfoot, Steve Rene, Paul Steindal, David Taylor, Lou Troga, Andy Woodward, Teresa Yee, Jeff, Jim, Kat, Oscar, and Terry; Nancy Spero; Sudafed; *Surviving and Thriving With AIDS* by the PWA Coalition; Jimmy Swaggert photo; Mitchell Syrop; Elizabeth Taylor film still; "That's What Friends Are For" 45 rpm record; *Time* magazine; Michael Tidmus; Tylenol; "Understanding AIDS" brochure; *U.S. News and World Report* magazine; U.S. soldiers photo; US magazine; "Unique pneumonia" article; David Wojnarowicz; World AIDS Conference poster; and others.

Video program, Matrix Gallery: *Se Met Ko*, Patricia Benoit; *He Left Me His Strength*, DCTV; *Target City Hall*, DIVA TV; *The Helms Amendment*, Jean Carlomusto; *Doctors, Liars and Women*, Jean Carlomusto and Maria Maggenti; *The World is Sick* (*sic*), John Greyson; *Snow Job*, Barbara Hammer; *We Are Not Republicans*, Bob Huff; *Transformer AIDS*, Bob Kinney and Paper Tiger TV/Southwest; *Ojos Que No Ven*, Latino AIDS Project; *Golden Gate Bridge Blockade*, Arl Spencer Nadel; *Bleach, Teach, Outreach*, Ray Navarro and Catherine Saalfield; *Keep Your Laws Off Our Bodies*, Catherine Saalfield and Zoe Leonard; *DiAna's Hair Ego: AIDS Info Up Front*, Ellen Spiro; *Song from an Angel*, David Weissman, and others.

Video program, Berkeley University Recreational Sports Facility: *Life/Information/Protection*, Yannick Durand and Brooklyn AIDS Taskforce; *"Out" Takes*, John C. Goss; *We're Desperate, Get Used to It*, Bob Huff; *They Are Lost to Vision Altogether*, Tom Kalin; *Testing the Limits, New York City (Part 2)*, Testing the Limits Collective; and others.

Your Message Here
February 23–March 30, 1990
Billboard project
Collaboration with Randolph Street Gallery, Chicago
Commissioning curator: Peter Taub
Project coordinator: Joanne Vena
Cathy Sharley, 32nd Ward Fare Share IPO; ACT UP/Chicago; Anna Stonum, ADAPT of Chicago; Jo Aerne; Sally Alatalo; Aligator/Vito Greco; Margaret and José Guerrero, Artists Against Homelessness; Julian Akins, Artists of Color United; Chuck Bell; Mark Blottner; James Liebner, Catholic Parishes of Pilsen; Jim Taylor, Community Film Workshop; Arlene Crawford, Rose Blouin,

and Judy Massey; John Pitman Weber, December 4th Committee; Susan Duffy; Jeanne Dunning; El Hogar del Niño (J. Alex Galindo); Jeanne Martinelli, Emerson House/ Amnesty Class; Espi Eph; Debbie Gould, Hispanic AIDS Network with Betsy Scheld, Columbus School; Marcus Jefferson and Kiela Smith; Mario Gonzalez, Jr., and Jesus Morales, Inner City 8; Norma Johnson; Stephen Lapthisophon; Martina Lopez; Story Mann; Louisa Hamacheck, Maxworks Co-op Neighborhood Capital Budget Group; Jackie Leavey with Simon Grennan, Neighborhood Capital Budget Group; Mark Nelson; Mary Patten; Kathy Pilat; Felicity Rich; Kay Rosen, Paula Phipps, Jane Addams Resource Corp.; John Schneider; Sister Serpents, Greg Boozell and Sara Frederickson, Chicago/ Gary Union of the Homeless; Barry Bruner and Catherine Cajandig; Whitney Young High School Art Club; Sam Gomez and Kharl Walker, Youth Guidance/Roberto Clemente.

Democracy Poll
June 26–July 5, 1990
Insert in *Der Tagesspiegel*, U-Bahn station billboards, and an electronic billboard
RealismusStudio, Neue Gesellschaft fur Bildende Kunst (NGBK), Berlin
Commissioning curator: Frank Wagner
Content consultant: Monika Idehen
Interviews with sixty people including a banker, business man, cabdriver, construction worker, carpenter, factory manager, financial consultant, homemaker, lawyer, psychologist, retired pilot, salesgirl, seamstress, secretary, students, teacher, waiter, welfare recipient, and others.

AIDS & Insurance
September 1–30, 1990
Exterior bus advertisement
Sponsored by Real Art Ways, Hartford, CT
Commissioning curators: Leslie Tonkonow, Anne Pasternak
"The Insurance Industry and AIDS," brochure by Mary Anne Staniszewski, published by Real Art Ways.

AIDS Timeline
September 30–November 18, 1990
Matrix Gallery, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CT
Commissioning curator: Andrea Miller-Keller
ACT UP photo and posters; *The Advocate* newspaper; "AIDS Profiteer" stickers; *An Early Frost* publicity photo; *And The Band Played On* by Randy Shilts; B2 bomber poster; *Batman* movie poster; Nayland Blake; Terese Bramlette; *California* magazines; Lei Chou; CDC case definition photostat; Climax poppers advertisement; condom case; Michael Flanagan and DAIR (Documentation of AIDS Issues and Research Archives); Philip-Lorca diCorcia; *The Empire Strikes Back* movie poster; Steven Evans; Robert Flack; Peg Forauer; Dr. Robert Gallo photo; Mike Glier; GMHC (Gay Men's Health Crisis) Safer Sex Comix; Gloria Vanderbilt jeans magazine tear sheet; Gran Fury; Hans Haacke; Keith Haring; Rock Hudson film still; Michael Jenkins; Mary Kenealy; Surgeon General C. Everett Koop photo; Dr. Mathilde Krim photo; Dorothea Lange; Latino AIDS Project booklet; Louise Lawler; Rudy Lemcke; Hillary Leone; *Life* magazine; Robert Mapplethorpe; Alynne Martelle; Chris Martin; Brad Melamed; men's tie; Ann Meredith; Duane Michals; Donald Moffet; *Mother Jones* magazine; The Names Project poster; Diane Neumaier; *New York Native* article; *New York Times* article; *Newsweek* magazines; Daniel Nicoletta; "No on 64" bumper sticker; Oliver North photo; Northrop advertisements; "Our Church Has AIDS" watch; Patient's Bill of Rights; People magazine; public service posters; PWA Coalition newsletter; *Rambo* publicity photo; Ronald and Nancy Reagan photo; Reagan/ Bush '84 campaign button and inauguration photo; *Real People* publicity photos; Maria Reyes; Hunter Reynolds; Tim Rollins + K.O.S.; Kay Rosen; Erika Rothenberg; rubber gloves; safer sex posters; *Scientific American* magazine; *The Sentinel* newspaper; Andres Serrano; Silence=Death t-shirt; Silencio=Muerte t-shirt; Lorna Simpson; Sharon Siskin and Positive Art members from Rest Stop Support Center and The Center for AIDS Services including Eddie Booker, Steve Brown, Richard C., Steve Curd, Tom Devine, Paul Gronberg, Barry Frederick, Paul Freites, Ken Huff, J.J., Eric Lewald, Richard McMullen, Ben Medina, Gary Ostrander, Max Proudfoot, Steve Rene, Paul Steindal, David Taylor, Lou Troga, Andy Woodward, Teresa Yee, Jeff, Jim, Kat, Oscar, and Terry; Kiki Smith; Nancy Spero; Sudafed; *Surviving and Thriving With AIDS* by the PWA Coalition; Jimmy Swaggert photo; Mitchell Syrop; Elizabeth Taylor film still; "That's What Friends Are For" 45 rpm record; *Time* magazine; Michael Tidmus; Tylenol; "Understanding AIDS" brochure; *U.S. News and World Report* magazine; U.S. soldiers photo; US magazine; "Unique pneumonia" article; Andy Warhol; David Wojnarowicz; Martin Wong; World AIDS Conference poster; and others.

Video program: *Se Met Ko*, Patricia Benoit; *Mildred Pearson: When You Love a Person* and *Life/Information/Protection*, Yannick Durand, Brooklyn AIDS Taskforce; *Like a Prayer*, DIVA-TV; *AIDS is About Secrets*, HIV Center for Clinical and Behavioral Studies; *We Are Not Republicans*, Bob Huff; *They Are Lost to Vision Altogether*, Tom Kalin; *Ojos Que No Ven*, Latino AIDS Project; *Bleach, Teach, Outreach*, Ray Navarro and Catherine Saalfield; *Keep Your Laws Off Our Bodies*, Catherine Saalfield and Zoe Leonard, *DiAna's Hair Ego: AIDS Info Up Front*, Ellen Spiro, and others.

Collaboration* aka *Economics: Oberlin Project
October 26, 1990–January 13, 1991
***Social Studies: 4+4 Young Americans*, The Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio**
Commissioning curator: Elizabeth A. Brown
Alexander Aptekar, Norman Cohen, Ron Copperman, Miriam Feinstein, David Goldstein, Jeff Gross, Hamann, Shirley Hartman, Rose Jackson, Sue Jones, Peter Kalb, Deanna Lee, Joel Mendelson, Nicole Newman, Nataly Reed, Rebecca Rosen, Joshua Sarantitis, Diana Schlesinger, Terri Weissman, Carolyn White, Beth Wolfe.

AIDS Timeline (New York City 1991)
April 19–June 23, 1991
***1991 Whitney Biennial*, lobby gallery, The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York**
Commissioning curator: Lisa Phillips
ACT UP buttons, photos, and posters; ADAPT brochure; *The Advocate* newspaper; "AIDS Profiteer" stickers; *An Early Frost* publicity photo; *And The Band Played On* by Randy Shilts; B2 bomber poster; Lutz Bacher; *Batman* movie poster; Gretchen Bender; Nayland Blake; *California* magazines; CDC case definition photostat; Dick Cheney photostat; Climax poppers advertisement; condom case; Jeanne Dunning; *The Empire Strikes Back* movie poster; Evan Estern; Steven Evans; Fund for a Feminist Majority material; Dr. Robert Gallo photo; Mike Glier; Gloria Vanderbilt jeans magazine tear sheet; GMHC (Gay Men's Health Crisis) Safer Sex Comix; Gran Fury; Gulf War poster; Gulf War souvenir stuffed Tasmanian Devil; Hans Haacke; Peter Halley; Keith Haring; Whitney Houston "Star Spangled Banner" video; Rock Hudson film still; Michael Jenkins; Dr. Stephen Joseph photo; Surgeon General C. Everett Koop photo; Dr. Mathilde Krim photo; Barbara Kruger; Latino AIDS Project booklet; Louise Lawler; Rudy Lemcke; Life magazine; *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous* video; T. L. Litt; Robert Mapplethorpe; Marlene McCarty; Meryl Meisler and the Drop Ins; Brad Melamed; men's tie; Donald Moffet; *Mother Jones* magazine; The Names Project poster; Diane Neumaier; *New York Native* article; *New York Times* article; *Newsweek* magazines; Daniel Nicoletta; "No on 64" bumper sticker; Noriega/Bush '88 bumper sticker; Oliver North photo; Northrop advertisements; "Our Church Has AIDS" watch; Patient's Bill of Rights; *People* magazine; Raymond Pettibon; Planned Parenthood brochure; public service poster with homophobic graffiti; public service posters; PWA Coalition newsletter; *Rambo* publicity photo; Ronald and Nancy Reagan photo; Reagan/Bush '84 campaign button; Reagan '80 campaign button and inauguration photo; *Real People* publicity photos; Tim Rollins + K.O.S.; Kay Rosen; Erika Rothenberg; rubber gloves; safer sex posters; *Scientific American* magazine; *The Sentinel* newspaper; Andres Serrano; Sharon Siskin and Positive Art members from Rest Stop Support Center and The Center for AIDS Services, including Eddie Booker, Steve Curd, Jorge Dreke, Wilma Dresner, Barry Frederick, Phil Jauchen, Steve Harkins, Lee Harris, Maire Hough, Ken Huff, Paul McKay, Leonard Moore, David Taylor, and others; Silence=Death t-shirt; Silencio=Muerte t-shirt; Lorna Simpson; Rolf Sjorgen; Kevin Smith; Nancy Spero; Ellen Spiro; "Stop the Church" flyer and demonstration photo; Sudafed; *Surviving and Thriving With AIDS* by the PWA Coalition; Jimmy Swaggert photo; Elizabeth Taylor film still; Testing the Limits Collective; "That's What Friends Are For" 45 rpm record; Ben Thornberry; Michael Tidmus; *Time* magazine; Tom of Finland; Tylenol; *U.S. News and World Report* magazine; U.S. soldiers photo; "Understanding AIDS" brochure; "Unique Pneumonia" article; *US* magazine; vinyl-type quotations from James Baldwin, Oscar Wilde, Dr. Mathilde Krim, George Bush, and others; Carrie Mae Weems; *Wheel of Fortune* publicity photo; Millie Wilson; David Wojnarowicz; Martin Wong; World AIDS Conference poster.

Cash Prize
December 17–20, 1991
Advertisements in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*
***In Public: Seattle 1991*, The Seattle Arts Commission, Seattle, Washington**
Commissioning curator: Diane Shamash

Tomorrow
October 8–December 31, 1993
Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, La Jolla, CA
Commissioning curator: Hugh Davies
Artist, jewelry salesperson, legal administrator, photographer, radio personality, retired doctor, sailor, student, teacher, technician, unemployed, waiter.

Democracy Wall
October 19, 1993–January 23, 1994
***In And Out Of Place*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston**
Commissioning curators: Trevor Fairbrother, Kathryn Potts
Five museum staff, MFA mission statement, four museum visitors, two passers-by.

Market
May 6–June 18, 1995
***Kunstverein München*, Munich**
Commissioning curator: Helmut Draxler
Acid rain test, *Advertising Age* advertisements, "AIDS: It's Big Business" poster, All laundry detergent, American Express advertisement, American flag shopping bag, Ariel laundry detergent, Aunt Jemima pancake mixes, Batman mask, *Best of Cops* video, Betty Crocker cake mixes, Bold laundry detergent, Bounty candy bar, Brawny paper towels, Carefree feminine napkins, Cheer laundry detergent, Chevrolet advertisement, child leash, Bill Clinton *Rolling Stone* cover, Coca Cola advertisements, Dark and Lovely hair color, Dash laundry detergent, Deutschlander sausages, Dickmann's cakes, DKNY advertisements, dollhouse furniture, Dunkin' Donuts advertisement, Era laundry detergent, FBI recruitment advertisement, flashing rotary emergency light, Freedom wallet, Gain laundry detergent, gay parent booklet, generic food products and laundry detergent, Glade room fresheners, "Grand Opening" banners, Hamburger Helper, home pregnancy test kit, Homestyle Hamburger Helper, *How To Organize Your Home* video, Huggies diaper packages, Hungry Man TV dinner, imitation security camera, *Inspire Your Lifestyle* video, Ivory soap, Kente cloth shopping bag, Kraft Foods advertisement, magazine tear sheets, magazines, men's faux ponytail, men's ties, motorist alert HELP sign, The Names Project postcard, natural coffee filters, "Negro Kisses," Nestlé "Sweet Success" snack bars, New Freedom feminine napkins, *New York Times* articles, Nike advertisement, Northern napkins, Northrop Grumman advertisement, "Ocean Voyage" and "Echoes of Nature" environmental cassettes, coffee mug, Post-it pads, pink triangle key chain, planetarium kit, Political Commercial Archive video, Possession cologne, posters, rainbow flag and postcard, red ribbon pin, refrigerator magnets, Saab advertisement, Seventh Generation Kleenex, skin whitening and fade cream, Slimfast snack bars, solar system model, Surf laundry detergent, Tide laundry detergent, Topkuss cakes, Tuna Helper, U.S. Army recruitment brochure, *Under Fire: An American Story* by Oliver North, bumper stickers, Vietnam calendar, vinyl-type advertising slogans, Wheaties cereal, world map.

Program
June 7–23, 1996
Three Rivers Arts Festival, Pittsburgh, PA
Commissioning curator: Jeanne Pearlman
Thirty-eight anonymous interviews.

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Show and Tell is dedicated to all those who participated in Group Material's seventeen year project, and to the memory of Felix Gonzalez-Torres, who frequently referred to the group as "the best kept secret in the art world," and badly wanted us to someday make a book.

Julie Ault

Contributors

Julie Ault is an artist and author who independently and collaboratively organizes exhibitions, publications, and diversiform projects. Her recent projects include collaborating with Danh Vo on the publication *Where the Lions Are* (Kunsthalle Basel, 2009), and with Martin Beck on *Installation*, Vienna Secession, 2006. Ault is the editor of *Felix Gonzalez-Torres* (steidl/dangin, 2006), and *Alternative Art New York, 1965-1985* (University of Minnesota Press, 2002), and is the author of *Come Alive! The Spirited Art of Sister Corita* (Four Corners Books, 2006). She has taught extensively, including at Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard; Critical Studies, Malmö Art Academy; Ecole supérieure des beaux-arts, Geneva; and UCLA. In 1979 Ault co-founded Group Material; she was a member of the collaborative until it disbanded in 1996.

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Tim Rollins is an artist, educator, community activist, and writer. A co-founder of Group Material in 1979, soon after he and a team of his junior high school students from a public school in the South Bronx founded an after school studio, The Art and Knowledge Workshop. The Workshop serves as headquarters for the group K.O.S. ("Kids of Survival") creating paintings, prints, and sculpture inspired by classics of world literature and music. The collaborative artworks of Tim Rollins + K.O.S. are now in the permanent collections of over 90 museums worldwide and the collective have had over 100 solo exhibitions in over 25 years of working together. Rollins is currently a senior year professor of fine art at the School of Visual Arts in New York. He lives and works in the South Bronx and Chelsea neighborhoods in New York City.

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At **Nick Bell Design** we spend most of our time helping people interpret and engage with the content they find in museums. Ours is a curatorial method of editorial design we learned designing *Eye* magazine (the international review of graphic design) that we now apply to spaces and places: cultural attractions mostly. These days we don't design many books – who can afford to? However, every so often a publisher will tempt us with a testing subject we can't resist. Just as it was with Sister Corita, so it is with Group Material. Thank you Julie and Four Corners Books for helping to maintain our interest and expertise in book design.

Nick Bell

Four Corners Books is an independent publisher based in London, specializing in books by artists and books about art. Publishers Elinor Jansz and Richard Embray work closely with artists and writers, tailoring each book to the individual needs of the project. Other titles include: *Come Alive! The Spirited Art of Sister Corita* by Julie Ault, *About the Relative Size of Things in the Universe* by Martin Beck, and *The Jet Age Compendium: Paolozzi At Ambit* by David Brittain. The Four Corners Familiars series invites artists to respond to classic novels and short stories to produce new illustrated editions. The Familiars published so far include *The Picture of Dorian Gray; Dracula; Blumfeld, an Elderly Bachelor; NAU SEA SEA SICK;* and *A Stick of Green Candy*.

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