remixed MESSAGES

curated by JOHN CHAICH for VISUAL AIDS
remixed
MESSAGES

JULY 24 — AUGUST 4, 2012

Co-produced by Visual AIDS and Transformer at Fathom Gallery
1333 14th Street NW
Washington, DC

GALLERY HOURS
Tuesday July 24 – Friday July 27
2 – 6 PM
Saturday July 28
12 – 6 PM
Tuesday July 31 – Saturday August 4
11 – 3 PM

FOR MORE INFO
Transformer
202-483-1102

OPENING RECEPTION
Tuesday July 24
7 – 9 PM
Curator’s Talk at 6:30 PM
Sponsored by Accordia Global Health Foundation

CLOSING RECEPTION
Thursday August 2
6 – 8 PM
Artist’s Talk with Tim Tate at 6:30 PM
Sponsored by the Logan Circle Community Association

EVENTS ARE FREE & OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
Fathom Gallery
1333 14th Street NW
Washington DC
fathomgallery.org

First presented at La MaMa La Galleria, NYC in 2011, this exhibition is remixed for the International AIDS Conference 2012 and co-produced by Visual AIDS and Transformer at Fathom Gallery.
First shown at La MaMa La Galleria in New York City in June 2011 as Mixed Messages: A(IDS, Art + Words, this DC exhibition, ReMixed Messages revisits many of the text-based works originally included while introducing new works that reexamine connections through and reactions to HIV/AIDS and the questions they invoke.

Why remixed? In music, a remix extracts vocals and instrumentation from the first production and molds them into a new sound, feeling, and experience. My curatorial process included works not specifically intended to speak to HIV/AIDS, but whose tone tapped into the hope, fear, loss, longing, longevity, and ambiguity that frames our experience of the disease. In this context, for example, Jack Pierson’s Desire/Despair suggests that the behaviors that put us at risk for HIV infection reside in the emotional intersection of desire and despair. Remixing is reframing.

Why words? Text-based works ask the viewer to provide more of your own visual associations and connotations. In doing so, every viewer remixes a text-based piece. This individualized experience parallels the ways we chose to let HIV/AIDS enter our worldviews. When Sam McKinniss scrawls the typically polished brand slogan “Lifestyles Ultra Sensitive” on corrugated cardboard, he creates a space for each of us to project our own sensitivities and insecurities while hinting at the omnipresence—or lack thereof—of safer sex messaging. Remixing is reengaging.

Why DC? Visual AIDS has brought ReMixed Messages to the capitol to coincide with the International AIDS Conference. The IAC is being held in the United States for the first time in over twenty years: an occasion that sharpens the bite of J. Morrison’s aids: Made in U.S.A. silkscreened American flags. Just two years after his censorship at the National Gallery in DC, the oversized reprint of David Wojnarowicz’s seminal 1990 Untitled (One Day This Kid...) amplifies the dislocation and fury that lives in the work both then and now. Several respected DC-based artists add to the (re)mix: Linda Hesh, Maggie Michael, and Tim Tate. A Visual AIDS artist member, Tate’s two works, On the Threshold of Liberty and Two Paths Taken, both recall the personal and political aspects of living with HIV and rely on their mediums—video and glass—to sensitively and provocatively inform the message.

We also honor the legacy of artist and performer Chloe Dzubilo, perhaps the most prominent HIV+ trans activist whose face graced the cover of POZ magazine and whose voice resonated at conferences like the IAC. And we dedicate ReMixed Messages to the late artist and friend of Visual AIDS, Lou Laurita, whose work accompanies this essay. Remixing is remembering.

I am grateful to the artists, collectors, and estates who contributed work, to the tireless enthusiasm of Victoria Reis and Natalie Cheung at Transformer for championing the exhibition, to the generosity of Drew Mitchell and Bill Fischer of Fathom Gallery for donating their beautiful space, and to Amy Sadao, Nelson Santos, and Ted Kerr of Visual AIDS for the creativity and opportunity they have afforded.
We were the fuck-ups or so we thought we were, lacking a system to make it through the day, much less a year, a lifetime. We clung to lifelines, like aging spiders clinging to the last silken thread hanging off their ass, the last chance for nourishment, protection, defense, identity. We clung to fistfuls of clutched straw, weaving a manger, a cozy forge to call our gulch a home.

We grew up to be children, infants, stillborn even. And like children of every generation, we felt it in our bones to taunt death, tempt it to cross this line we drew in spit on the ground; some days we even mixed our spit to draw our always maddening, never intersecting, ever widening lines; we train tracked into our nevermores.

And like children of every generation, we tested the firmaments of our maturing bodies by vowing never to toe the line, we tested the dribble of our growing up by crossing the line. Our decapitated taste buds long accustomed to day-old meat, desired the belly-fill of a thousand & one tales of better feasts. How then could we help our bleeding gnashed chewed tongues? Oh, kiss kiss! kill kill! Our blood-mixed spit-scored axis drawn, all pistons fueled, we would walk the line: we went to war, we walked the line – scattered, infrequent & lonely, private & barely – when assembled, when called together could form a skein rich enough to make anyone see us.

We were the atom that stubbornly refused to split, the element that secretly & selfishly held more elementary particulars. We were the Lost Boys if they had dicks to use, & understood their perverse urges, their untinkered bells. We were Lost Boys who declared ourselves found.

We ripped the rubbers out of their foils and made balloon animals from them, great beasts with slippery spermicidal hides, slicked-backed pelted for every poke. We punctured, penetrated & connected end to end to the very end: A procession of rutting animals from here to the icy outer rings of Saturn.

We chased bugs. Such entomologists we were, even as we lacked a system of nomenclature. We would write our own field guide, we believed, and so went scouring wild in the fields & swamps with our butterfly nets & specimen jars. We substituted taxonomy with taxidermy. Our display cases were legendary. Bug meet pin. Hello, Pin! Is that your friend Needle? Does he want to play? Ouch! You’re a pokey pair, aren’t you? Watch where you put your prick now. Envious of our subjects, we were pupael & larval in all we sought, we glistening crystalline in our out-strung useless beauty.

How the judges on their yachts in the marina, cocktails in hand, laughed & mocked as we stood at the shoreline. Look at them, so useless in the shallow! they tittered. Little did they consider nor care that we were preparing to wade all the way in to the deep end. En route we would learn to ride barracuda, learn the finer whipping stabs of personal poison from stingray & catfish, we would trade dental tips with sharks of all stripes, trade potions with fugu.

But still those ancient sun-leathered mossbacks remained unmoved, senile & contemptuous in their scorn. They thought their moors solids. They did not believe the coming storms even as they watched us write the weather forecasts. But still, we did not even have a system to move the doldrums, set twister to seed sky, to rain lava & ash.

They said, “You don’t know what it’s like! To love & fight & struggle & need, to want & to bury, to heal & hope & can-can, to despair, to decay, to sparkle & to screw down to the bone. You don’t know what it’s like to be, but We do! We Do! Why won’t you listen to us? Why won’t you do as you’re told because we know so well. Look at our bombed-out corpses? Isn’t that evidence of our knowledge?” They said and soon we would too, & you will, & refrain till the last intake of oxygen on our living square.

“Show us your rituals of hope,” they said. And we did.

We sought shelter & peace. Our musk was survival, our slick-back stamina. We ate bullet-ridden crow. We armed up and went on crusade: righteousness our tit-shield, superiority our cup firmly tucked. We stamped our feet and stood our ground. With our glower intact and in overdrive, we faced down god & man & all the arms & armaments of authority. We did not have the system to know there was no greater God nor good, no higher authority nor flexing arm than our infinitesimal germinating selves.

We ran our bodies into the ground trusting we would heal, we would resurrect, trusting we would regain strength, composure, might. We are the gutted & the chawed. Our conga line was glorious on Monday, invincible by Wednesday, cortège by Thursday and when weekend rolls around, after fasting on Friday, feasting & fucking on Saturday and all-day Church on Sunday, we regroup and we become glorious if not quite whole again in the new week.

Like disciples & addicts of all stripes, who tasted one flash of clarity, once so brief as to be torture, we emptied our coin purses, ever in pursuit of that quench, ever only gaining bibble, but greedy little piglets that we are, oinking for more than droplets, we wanted Unlimited Refills at the fountain. We did not know nor realize that each flash & drop, each dew & those flashes counted for something, credit not to a life, but a living.

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We harbored hope – not for the perfect epic sunset to ride into, but that the closing, no matter how it ran itself down & out, would come with purpose, with sense enough to feed our starving destructive need for salvation. Not everyone was made to be a hero, the mud was never all that pure. “Either we are all saved or we are all damned, that’s it, end of story.” Oh my heart you have nothing to fear now.
In the last scene of the dream: The family sits down to dinner. There is a condor with razor savage talons chained to the center of the table, and we are afraid to approach, whereas everyone else has hungrily begun eating. In the last scene of the dream: Over the vista, the land is liquefying, buildings collapse methodically. But we are not surprised, nor afraid.

We create monsters, then live in such dizzying fear of them. We create Gods who abandon us in our time of need. We worship Gods who demand more than our capacity of grace. Then we lose face, toss faith to deep sea depths for fishes to fat on, while creating another set of idols, puppets, divinities, demons, all equally flawed & beautiful, all equal fuss & fill.

And at the end of the long road, what have we built? what was created? does it even exist, or is it just a name we give to an abstract idea, one we cannot, know not how to properly name. Or use. Or dispose of.

The path ahead is littered with banana peels & anthills, diamonds & oxide, scripture & stress tests, crack & crybabies, buckshot & ballots, wedding rings & discount coffins, deeds & donefors.

The beach is glorious, in plain view.

And there we stand.

Our bonfires guttering.

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This version of The Gutted was redacted & remixed by the author specifically for this publication. The full poem (or at least one of its full-length versions) can be found in Gutted (Manic D Press, 2006).

Justin Chin is the author of three collections of poetry, Gutted, Bite Hard and Harmless Medicine, and three collections of essays, Burden of Ashes; Mongrel: Essays, Diatribes & Pranks; and, Attack of the Man-Eating Lotus Blossoms. 98 Wounds, a collection of short fiction, is forthcoming in fall 2011. He lives in San Francisco.
I didn’t ask for this

JAMES JAXXA

LINDA HESH

LISA IGLESIAS

FRANK H. JUMP
JAYSON KEELING

LIFESTYLES ULTRA SENSITIVE

SAM MCKINNISS

LARRY KRONE

YOU CONQUER ME

MAGGIE MICHAEL
Annoy them... survive

Ivan Monforte

J. Morrison

Night sweats & T-cells

Yoko Ono
AIDS – assistance, advocate, save, assist, secours, socorro, ayuda, help, stand-by, accommodation, ally, lift, succor, recourse, service, resource, benefit, friend, helping hand, rally, care, subsidy, relief, humanitarian, co-operation, sustenance, support

One day this kid will get larger. One day this kid will come to know something that causes a sensation equivalent to the separation of the earth from its axis. One day this kid will reach a point where he senses a division that isn't mathematical. One day this kid will feel something stir in his heart and throat and mouth. One day this kid will find something in his mind and body and soul that makes him hungry. One day this kid will do something that causes men who wear the uniforms of priests and rabbis, men who inhabit certain stone buildings, to call for his death. One day politicians will enact legislation against this kid. One day families will give false information to their children and each child will pass that information down generationally to their families and that information will be designed to make existence intolerable for this kid. One day this kid will begin to experience all this activity in his environment and that activity and information will compel him to commit suicide or submit to danger in hopes of being murdered or submit to silence and invisibility. Or one day this kid will talk. When he begins to talk, men who develop a fear of this kid will attempt to silence him with strangling, flails, prison, suffocation, rape, intimidation, drugging, ropes, guns, laws, menace, roving gangs, bottles, knives, religion, denigration, and immolation by fire. Doctors will pronounce this kid curable as if his brain were a virus. This kid will lose his constitutional rights against the government's invasion of his privacy. This kid will be faced with electro-shock, drugs, and conditioning therapies in laboratories tended by psychologists and research scientists. He will be subject to loss of home, civil rights, jobs, and all conceivable freedoms. All this will begin to happen in one or two years when he discovers he desires to place his naked body on the naked body of another boy.

DAVID WOJNAROWICZ

NO CONOCO
EL SEXO
SIN LATEX
Y ME
ENTRISTECE

CHARLIE WELCH

TWO PEOPLE

ROB WYNN
Robert Blanchon  
*Untitled (Sympathy)*, 1992  
c-print and wood frame  
13¼ x 10¾ inches  
*Courtesy of the Fales Library & Special Collections, New York University and the Estate of Robert Blanchon*  

Paul Chisholm  
*Love & *H*T*V*, 2010  
vinyl letters on wood  
57 x 53 x 1 inches  

Cammi Climaco  
*Please Release Me*, 2010  
screenprint and hand additions on paper, silk, plexiglass  
23 ¾ x 15 x ¼ inches  

Amanda Curreri  
*Leveller*, 2009/11  
enamel on floor mat  
48 x 36 inches  

Craig Damrauer  
*Silence*, 2003  
offset printing  
15¼ x 22½ inches  

Joe De Hoyos  
*Stay Stay Stay*, 2010  
collage  
28 x 23 inches  
*Courtesy of the Murphy Alberson Collection*  

Chloe Dubilo  
*There is a Transsolution*, 2007  
metallic ink on canvas  
9¾ x 12¼ inches  
*Courtesy of T DeLong and the Estate of Chloe Dubilo*  

John Giorno  
*Life is a Killer*, 2009  
oil on canvas  
12 x 12 inches  
*Courtesy of the Artist and Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery, NY*  

Felix Gonzalez-Torres  
*Untitled*, 1989  
framed silkscreen on paper  
16½ x 21¼ inches  
edition of 250, 10 APs  
PUBLISHED BY PUBLIC ART FUND, NY  
© THE FELIX GONZALEZ-TORRES FOUNDATION, COURTESY OF ANDREA ROSEN GALLERY, NY  

Nolan Hendrickson  
*Love Hangover*, 2010  
ink on paper  
8 x 5 inches  

Linda Hesh  
*I didn't ask for this*, 2007  
commercially printed card stock  
11 x 4¼ inches  
1 of a set of 8  
“Desolation Doorknob Hangers”  

Lisa Iglesias  
*Always and Forever*, 2010-11  
scavenged cardboard  
dimensions variable  

James Jaxxa  
*Take/Need/Fear/Junk*, 2010  
styrofoam, glass & plastic beads, straight pins, fabric, acrylic paint and medium  
45 x 40 x 1½ inches  

Frank H. Jump  
*Sweet n’ Low—the Perfect Sugar Substitute*, 2007  
*Cumberland Packing Factory—Brooklyn Navy Yard August, 1997*  
c-print  
16 x 20 inches  
*From The Book: Fading Ads of New York City (History Press, 2011)* © Frank H. Jump  

Jayson Keeling  
*New Graffiti, Old Revolutions*, 2010  
c-print  
30 x 40 inches  
*Courtesy of the Artist and Third Streaming, NY*  

Larry Krone  
*Love is in the Air (Healing Retreats & Spas Small)*, 2002  
in ink on printed paper, acid free tape  
4 x 3¼ inches  

Sam McKinniss  
*Untitled*, 2010  
acrylic on cardboard  
13¼ x 15¼ inches  

Maggie Michael  
*You Conquer Me*, 2008  
later, ink, enamel, vinyl letters, and nails through canvas  
24 x 20 inches  
*Courtesy of the Artist and G Fine Art, DC*  

Ivan Monforte  
*Sorry*, 2008  
handset letterpress and pressure print  
15 x 19½ inches, AP 2/5  

J. Morrison  
*aids: Made in U.S.A.*, 2010  
hand-silkscreen on 50 stacks of polyester flags as a take-away piece  
7½ x 11¼ inches each  

Night sweats & T-cells  
*Annoy Them…Survive*, 2011  
silkscreen on paper  
17 x 11 inches  

Yoko Ono  
*Touch Me*, 2008  
acrylic on canvas  
5¼ x 7 x 1¼ inches  
*Collection of Amy Sadao*  

Jack Pierson  
*Desire/Despair*, 1998  
c-print  
20 x 16 inches, AP 2/2  
*Courtesy of the Artist and Cheim & Read, NY*  

Hunter Reynolds  
*Why We March (Page 16)*, 2011  
photo-weaving, c-prints and thread  
48 x 60 inches  
*Courtesy of the Artist and P.P.O.W Gallery, NY*  

Kay Rosen  
offset lithograph  
11 x 17 inches  
*Courtesy of the Artist and Sikema Jenkins & Co., NY*  

Tim Tate  
*On the Threshold of Liberty*, 2007  
mpeg 1, 60 seconds, black and white  
dimensions variable  

Two Paths Taken, 2005  
blown glass, found objects, etched text  
18 x 6 x 6 inches  

Charlie Welch  
*Expressa’t*, 2007–11  
collage on paper  
18 x 24 inches  

David Wojnarowicz  
*Untitled (One day this kid…)*, 1990-91/2010  
banner  
70 x 92 inches  
*Reproduction for exhibition purposes only*  
*Courtesy of P.P.O.W Gallery, NY and the Estate of David Wojnarowicz*  

Rob Wynne  
*Two People*, 2009  
hand poured and mirrored glass  
35 x 32 inches  

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All works and images courtesy of artists unless specially noted.
ABOUT THE CURATOR
Beginning his career as an HIV testing counselor and community educator, John Chaich has designed a range of multi-arts projects to raise AIDS awareness, from an educational theatre project funded with support from Do Something and LifeBeat, to a nationally distributed edutainment zine by and for young adults, to social marketing campaigns recognized by Print magazine and annual artist edition broadsides for Visual AIDS.

He has presented at national conferences on AIDS and the arts and has written on visual responses to HIV/AIDS for Art & Understanding magazine, as well as contributed the catalogue essay for Flesching Out the Grid: David Wojnarowicz and Hunter Reynolds for P-POW Gallery.

Chaich holds an MFA in Communications Design from Pratt Institute. johnchaich.com

VISUAL AIDS
Visual AIDS utilizes art to fight AIDS by provoking dialogue, supporting HIV+ artists, and preserving a legacy, because AIDS is not over.

Visual AIDS is the only contemporary arts organization fully committed to HIV prevention and AIDS awareness through producing and presenting visual art projects, while assisting artists living with HIV/AIDS. We are committed to preserving and honoring the work of artists with HIV/AIDS and the artistic contributions of the AIDS movement. visualAIDS.org

TRANSFORMER
Transformer is a Washington, DC based 501 (c) 3 artist-centered non-profit visual arts organization, providing a consistent, supportive, and professional platform for emerging artists to explore and present experimental artistic concepts, build audiences for their work, and advance their careers. A catalyst and advocate for contemporary artists and emergent expression in the visual arts, Transformer connects and promotes emerging visual artists within regional, national and international contexts through exhibition and programs partnerships with artists, curators, commercial galleries, museums and other cultural institutions.


SPECIAL THANKS
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Victoria Reis and Natalie Cheung of Transformer
Amy Sadao, Nelson Santos, and Ted Kerr of Visual AIDS

FATHOM
Fathom is a DC-based creative agency that delivers strategic interactive, design, and branding solutions to industry-leading organizations. For almost 20 years, Fathom Creative has helped their clients overcome business challenges by applying a powerful combination of concept-driven creative, thoughtful user experience, and deep technical expertise. Supported by Fathom Creative, Fathom Gallery brings together artists, technologists, and members of the local cultural community. fathomcreative.org

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