VOICE = SURVIVAL

June 15–August 11, 2017

VOICE = SURVIVAL examines voice as a medium and a metaphor used by artists and activists confronting oppression amid the ongoing HIV/AIDS epidemic. The multidisciplinary exhibition features work and archival materials by ACT UP, Jordan Arseneault and PosterVirus, yann beauvais, Mykki Blanco and Adinah Dancyger, Chloe Dzubilo, Gran Fury, Andrea Geyer and Sharon Hayes, Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Gustavo Vazquez, Shan Kelley, Audre Lorde, Donald Moffett, Pat Parker, Bob Rafsky, Kamel el Janai, Rashied, Marion Riggs, LJ Roberts, James Rombler and Marguerite Van Cook, Vito Russo, Kiki Smith, Ultra-red, Rosa von Praunheim, and David Wojnarowicz. Curated by Claudia Maria Carrera and Adrian Geraldo Saldaña for Visual AIDS. VOICE = SURVIVAL is presented by the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation at The 8th Floor.
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SILENCE = DEATH
Adrian Geraldo Saldaña

SILENCE = DEATH. This powerful equation, beneath a pink triangle against a black backdrop, began appearing on posters wheatpasted around Manhattan in early 1987. Small white text at the base of the poster pointedly questioned the failure of political, medical, and religious establishments to address the AIDS crisis; followed by a series of directives:

Use your power... Vote... Boycott... Defend yourselves... Turn anger, fear, grief into action.

The design from 1986 grew from the discussions and consciousness-raising efforts of the SILENCE = DEATH Project, a group of six gay activists—Avram Finkelstein, Brian Howard, Oliver Johnston (d.1990), Charles Kreloff, Christopher Lione, Jorge Socarrás. Each element was carefully chosen to provoke discussion and direct action in the LGBTQ community amid the rising numbers of AIDS-related deaths, which by the end of 1986 had reached nearly 25,000 in the U.S.

The SILENCE = DEATH graphic would become emblematic of ACT UP, serving as a worldwide call to protest and advocacy in stark contrast to government inaction and stigmatizing media coverage. It inspired a range of interpretive re framings, such as ACTION = LIFE and IGNORANCE = FEAR. It also spread across borders and languages, as with the multilingual SILENCE = MORT by ACT UP Vancouver that highlights the impact of AIDS on communities across the globe. In the same tradition of open-sourced reimagining, the
underpinning public indifference and outright aggression towards the AIDS community. The activists knew that controversy surrounding their campaigns would fuel the media coverage they needed to spread awareness of their cause.

Donald Moffett produced the iconic *He Kills Me* poster using bold, graphic elements in an op-art style. The poster condemns President Reagan’s persistent silence on the AIDS epidemic during its early years and throughout his administration. By turning the ironic phrase into a literal statement, Moffett places the blame for American deaths squarely on Reagan. Both the represented target and its metaphoric testimony to physical vulnerability still resonate today amid the symbolism and slogans used by contemporary activist groups, such as Black Lives Matter.

Russo delivered his impassioned speech “Why We Fight” at the New York State Capitol in Albany, on May 9, 1988. Denouncing the erasure of queer humanity, Russo also envisioned a future without AIDS:

Two and a half years ago, I picked up Life Magazine, and I read an editorial, which said, “It’s time to pay attention, because this disease is now beginning to strike the rest of us.” It was as if I wasn’t the one holding the magazine in my hand. And since then, nothing has changed to alter the perception that AIDS is not happening to the “real people” in this country.

…Someday, the AIDS crisis will be over. Remember that. And when that day comes—when that day has come and gone, there’ll be people alive on this earth—gay people and straight people, men and women, black and white, who will hear the story that once there was a terrible disease in this country and all over the world, and that a brave group of people stood up and fought and, in some cases, gave their lives, so that other people might live and be free.

When Bob Rafsky heckled Bill Clinton at a fundraiser in 1992, he and Clinton’s now well-known rejoinder, “I feel your pain,” made national news. The incident also prompted a meeting two days later between the presidential candidate and members of ACT UP to discuss Clinton’s AIDS policies. On the eve of the election later that year, ACT UP carried the corpse of Mark Lowe Fisher, Rafsky’s partner, to the reelection campaign office of George H.W. Bush in Midtown Manhattan. There, he delivered a powerful eulogy honoring Fisher’s wish to be buried “furiously,” while placing a hex on President Bush.

This isn’t a political funeral for Mark. It’s a political funeral for the man who killed him, and so many others, and is slowly killing me: whose name curls my tongue and curdles my breath.

George Bush, we believe you’ll be defeated tomorrow because we believe there’s still some justice left in the universe, and some compassion left in the American people. But whether or not you are—here and now—standing by Mark’s body, we put this curse on you. Mark’s spirit will haunt

Mykki Blanco and Adinah Dancyger
stills from I Want a Dyke For President, 2016
you until the end of your days. So that, in the
time of your defeat—you'll remember our
defeats, and in the moment of your death—
you'll remember our deaths.

In that same election year, Zoe Leonard was motivated to
write the text I want a president. In it, she proposes a variety
of disempowered people as candidates, suggesting margin-
alization as a prerequisite, rather than a disqualification, for
holding the most powerful office in the world. The work was
adapted by filmmaker Adinah Dancyger during the lead-up to
the 2016 presidential election, in I Want a Dyke For President
(2016). The performance by Mykki Blanco, a genderqueer,
HIV positive performance artist and rapper, circulated widely
online, demonstrating the continuing resonance of Leonard's
words for a new generation of activist artists.

Attesting to the historic erasure of violence against black
people from political and social narratives, Kameelah Janan
Rasheed's text-based series How to Suffer Politely (And Other
Etiquette), 2014 satirically appropriates the structure of
etiquette guides and advice columns. Lower the Pitch of
Your Suffering and Tell Your Struggle with Triumphant Humor
reveal the politics of politeness rooted in white supremacy
and heteropatriarchy. The implication of this politeness is
that the violence enacted against oppressed groups cannot
be named because it makes those in power feel uncom-
fortable, and possibly accountable for that violence. She
writes, "Performing perfect victimhood demands that we
suffer politely and not call attention to the systems that
weigh on our daily lives. The violence...is also the expecta-
tion of silence, cooperation and smiling after the harm." In
turn, Rasheed's naming emphasizes the necessity of shedding
light on this problematic practice.

The exhibition highlights two black lesbian activists whose
writing frames language and activism as crucial to survival.
Audre Lorde, the West Indian-American essayist, feminist,
and self-described “warrior poet,” dedicated her life and
creative work to confronting oppression around gender,
sexual orientation and race. In her speech, The Transformation
of Silence into Language and Action (1977), she reflects on
the relationship between silence and fear. Lorde begins by
describing the period between hearing she has a tumor in
her breast and an exploratory surgery three weeks later.
Prompted to reflect on and completely reorganize her life,
Lorde realized her greatest regret was remaining silent out
of fear. She traced this fear to the vulnerability, and poten-
tial violence, that can arise from increased visibility as a
minority. She reasoned that remaining silent had not protected her from pain, as it wouldn’t protect her from death, and chose instead to speak out, transforming vulnerability into strength:

For we have been socialized to respect fear far more than our own needs for language and definition, and while we wait in silence for that final luxury, that epiphany of fearlessness, the silence will choke us to death.

The fact that we are here and that I speak, even now, these words are an attempt to break that silence and bridge some of those differences between us. For it is not difference that immobilizes us, but silence. And there are so many silences to be broken.

A contemporary of Lorde, Pat Parker gained prominence in the 1970’s with her singular style of feminist poetry addressing issues such as racism, lesbian sex, motherhood, and gender-based violence. Living as an out and proud lesbian of color shaped her revolutionary voice. At the opening event for the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights in 1979, Parker delivered her powerful poem Where Will You Be When They Come, invoking the legacy of the Holocaust to demonstrate the need for queer solidarity to prevent a gradual stripping of civil rights. Parker condemns the politics of respectability promoted by some in the LGBTQ community, cautioning that distinctions of class, race, and butch/femme will not matter when homophobia is legitimized and institutionalized. Her message resonates powerfully in a moment when the rights of LGBTQ communities continue to be violated and rescinded, despite decades of activism focused on the “respectable” goal of marriage equality:

Everytime we heard “Who I go to bed with is my personal choice— It’s personal not political” and said nothing— It was an act of perversion.

Everytime we let straight relatives bury our dead and push our lovers away— It was an act of perversion.

...
They will come for
the perverts
and where will
you be
When they come?

Parker’s call is echoed in the collaborative piece *In Times Like These, Only Criminals Remain Silent* (2005), by artists Sharon Hayes and Andrea Geyer. Created during the administration of George W. Bush, the work is comprised of five double-sided posters that fold to form a newspaper. On the front side of each page is a line drawing depicting street protest with the details omitted, allowing the viewer to insert any number of social causes into the scene. The reverse features a litany of interrogative questions that draw out the layers of political identity, authenticity, and subjectivity that motivate activism. Intended to circulate between the public and private spheres in their newspaper form, these posters establish protest and mobilization as central to the function of democracy, regardless of cause.

Also produced during the second Bush administration, the audio works by sound collective Ultra-red exhibit a similar need for continual activism amid the departure of AIDS reporting from mainstream media. Founded in 1994 by AIDS activists and sound artists, Ultra-red includes an international roster of visual artists, social researchers, and organizers affiliated with diverse movements such as immigrant rights, affordable housing, sexual and gender rights, and struggles against racism and poverty. While investigating the contribution of experimental sound art to political organizing, the collective emphasizes the structures of listening through conceptually-derived performance protocols. In 2006, they released a collection of site recordings and audio remixes titled *An Archive of Silence*. The project reflects on the AIDS activist strategies of the past, “interrogat[ing] the record of those actions and practices, listening for some remainder haunting the present, to act as a kernel for a new radicality... This is the art of a broken silence.”

Their 8-channel sound installation, *Untitled (for multiple voices)*, 2010, is assembled from seven performances of *SILENT/LISTEN* (2005–2006), a museum-based project the collective describes as “a series of public meetings designed to build a record of the past, present and future trajectories of the AIDS crisis on a local basis.” In excavating the memory from that period of activism, Ultra-red acknowledges its absence from the public sphere, which has gravitated towards marriage equality in the U.S.
In recent years, new conversations around living with HIV have emerged using web-based modes of communication alongside traditional street art tactics. PosterVirus, a public art intervention founded by Alex McClelland and Jessica Whitbread as an affiliated project of AIDS Action Now, develops artist designed poster-based responses to contemporary issues around HIV, such as undetectable viral loads and PrEP. McClelland and Whitbread then circulate the posters throughout Canadian cities, as well as online through postervirus.tumblr.com.

As PosterVirus, they partnered with performance artist Jordan Arsenault, adapting a line from his poem “The New Equation” to create the bilingual posters Silence = Sex and Silence = Sexe (2012). It denounces the contemporary pressures underlying increasing rates of transmission in young men who have sex with men, ranging from hypocritical serophobia (the fear of those living with HIV) within radical queer communities, to punitive legislation in the U.S. and Canada requiring people living with HIV to disclose their status to sex partners. Arsenault employs the original SILENCE = DEATH design to promote ongoing dialogue around disclosure and stigma, affirming that the activist strategies supported by the original poster live on in new permutations. Discussion, text, and language remain, and so does resistance against silencing in its many insidious forms—censorship, cultural amnesia, stigma, marginalization.
When the Living Can No Longer Speak, the Dead May Speak for Them

From the onset of the AIDS epidemic to the present day, the fight for survival through outspoken activism and communal connectivity has been accompanied by continual illness and death that threatens to fracture communities through the overwhelming experience of absence and loss. In the early 1990s, when a rapidly mounting death toll was spreading despair among activists, the voice emerged as a tool to enable a spiritual form of survival beyond the borders of life itself, queering normative experiences of time and space to make room among the living for the presence of the deceased.

This process is exemplified in Bob Rafsky’s *Eulogy for Mark Fisher* (1992). Rafsky, a member of ACT UP NY, delivered the speech at the political funeral of his partner Mark Fisher, a central activist in the movement who had requested a protest to mark his death in his written statement “Bury Me Furiously.” Rafsky’s eulogy thematizes the potential of the voice to transcend death while calling for the use of activism to prolong life.

Rafsky’s mobilization of the voice as both a medium and a metaphor functioned to extend Fisher’s vocality beyond death, rendering the voice a site of absent presence and ghostly survival that enabled the presence of the dead to be felt during a period of mounting despair. This affective transformation challenged the disruptive effects of death on
the collective effort to fight the epidemic, enabling a form of survival not only for ACT UP's individual members but for the movement itself.

This remarkable speech is only accessible today thanks to multiple stages of archival activism. The speech was filmed by James Wentzy for DIVA TV, one of several efforts developed by activist videographers in the 1980s and '90s to document and publicize the unfolding movement to fight AIDS. After years of scattered storage, this videotape and countless others collected through The AIDS Activist Video Project, a massive preservation effort spearheaded by Jim Hubbard, were rehoused at the New York Public Library in the early 2000s. More recently, the footage was digitized by David France, and since 2012 has recirculated through two documentary films, France's How to Survive a Plague and Hubbard's United in Anger. This multi-step process reflects a strong commitment by AIDS activists to preserve, historicize, and disseminate voices that would otherwise be lost to us today.

Take the Absence of a Human Being and Make Them Somehow Physical

The potential of a human voice like Rafsky's to persist and circulate beyond absence or death relies on the continued stewardship of survivors. Several works in this exhibition frame communal care as essential to survival, both in life and after death, and in many cases have resulted from the efforts of artists and activists to preserve essential elements of voices from the past. In the context of AIDS, the practices of portraiture and memorialization function as powerful acts of resistance to erasure.

An intimate portrait of David Wojnarowicz emerges from the comic book 7 Miles a Second (1996), illustrated by James Romberger and colored by Marguerite Van Cook. Developed in collaboration with Wojnarowicz before his death and completed by Romberger and Van Cook afterwards, the work uses Wojnarowicz's own writing to disseminate his words, ideas, and life story in a vivid and accessible manner. Set against the saturated backdrop of seedy 1970s New York City, his description of his life as a child sex worker and then a person living...
with AIDS is raw and highly personal. Hallucination and dream sequences powerfully communicate the surreal and alienating experience of witnessing loved ones’ bodies succumbing to disease, and feeling one’s physical self deteriorate while combating a victim-blaming rhetoric with resonant rage.

The pages displayed in the exhibition feature Wojnarowicz’s poignant reflections on the potentials and pitfalls of the voice—especially as mediated by technology—when seeking connection and relief in the midst of intense illness. One caption declares, “I wish I could dial the telephone and speak to my dead friends,” while the panels behind it show him letting a call go to his answering machine because he feels “dizzy and fucked up from a jaw infection,” and anyway “it aggravates [him] to speak to people with a degree of normalcy to their lives.” Another spread depicts Wojnarowicz turning on the TV “to try to get some focus outside of my illness,” only to be confronted with a talking head spewing hateful narratives about people with AIDS. Yet these accounts of the failures of vocal communication themselves are articulated clearly, thanks to the careful renderings of Romberger and Van Cook.

As reflected by his involvement in developing 7 Miles a Second, Wojnarowicz thought deeply about the politics of preservation in relation to the voice throughout the final years of his life, saying “I think what I really fear about death is the silencing of my voice—I feel this incredible pressure to leave something of myself behind.” In audio recording, he found a powerful means of confronting the continual and compounding losses of the AIDS epidemic. Always sensitive to the ephemerality of experience and precarity of existence, he maintained a practice of recording sounds and soundscapes to preserve impressions and experiences, and sporadically created “audio journals” to document his thoughts, feelings, and dreams in a fluid, spontaneous way. As friends fell ill in the 1980s, he began interviewing them and their loved ones as a means of preserving their voices in perpetuity.

Inspired by this practice, an arrangement of audio recordings drawn from the David Wojnarowicz Papers at the NYU Fales Library & Special Collections for VOICE = SURVIVAL creates a sonic portrait of the artist out of his own practices of audio documentation. The selections, which play through recording devices of the period, center around the death of Wojnarowicz’s mentor and former lover Peter Hujar, perhaps the most profound loss he faced. In the installation, his intimate, light-hearted interview of an ill Hujar about his photography career plays from a shoebox recorder, while a handheld recorder plays an audio journal created one year after Hujar’s death, in which Wojnarowicz discusses his feelings about living in Hujar’s apartment while experiencing similar symptoms to those Hujar had described. Nearby, an answering machine plays voice messages from a tape labeled “Time period of Pete’s death” that features a broad array of people’s voices coordinating hospital visits and expressing collective concern about Hujar, and later Wojnarowicz.

This sound installation aims to memorialize the artist through his own efforts to memorialize others. Of the affective power of sound to preserve one’s presence beyond death, Wojnarowicz wrote, “I have loved the way memorials take the absence of a human being and make them somehow physical with the use of sound.” Much like the effect at the close of Rafsky’s speech, the voices of Wojnarowicz’s community carry forward his own, enacting its own kind of queered temporality and spatiality while testifying to the communal networks of care that enabled survival and eased passing.

LJ Roberts’s work Portrait of Deb from 1988–199? (2012–2013) exemplifies the deep effort and care involved in bringing an archive to life. The artist uses the painstaking practice of single-strand embroidery to create a highly unique portrait of one person’s history of activism. In 2011, Roberts was given an archive of activist buttons, stickers, and other ephemera belonging to a friend’s ex-partner, who had been active in ACT UP-NY, the Women’s Health Action Mobilization, and the Lesbian Avengers from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s. Inspired by the materials, Roberts sewed together a rich representation of the network of intersectional politics for which Deb advocated.

Shan Kelley’s text-based piece Self-Portrait (2013) turns to the future instead of the past, addressing itself to viewers with a plea for communal care. It reflects the persistence of Wojnarowicz’s own desire to “leave something of [himself]
behind,” a concern among a younger generation of HIV+ artists. With each letter of the title imprinted through light exposure on a separate cyanotype, the piece highlights the potential for traces of one’s voice and agency to survive beyond one’s lifespan.

The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action

Several works explore the empowering capacity of the voice to express subjective experience, communal identity, and critical analysis as a means of breaking through isolation and internalized oppression. By calling out hate speech that induces silence and overcoming the fear to speak out on behalf of oneself and one’s community, the works in the exhibition break down taboos and connect people to create recognition, pride, and collectivity.

German filmmaker Rosa von Praunheim’s documentary Silence = Death (1990) confronted the culture of silence around the early AIDS crisis by revealing the responses of HIV+ artists in 1980s New York. The iconic image of Wojnarowicz with lips sewn shut on the film poster sets the stage for vocal performances by Wojnarowicz and singer Diamanda Galas that rage against the social forces behind such adversity. Through wracking shouts and cries, the artists attack the theocratic ideologies underlying the processes of moralistic othering and fear-mongering that enabled the pandemic to flourish by rendering certain lives expendable. Tracing the proliferation of these discourses from the Old Testament chapter of Leviticus to the political and religious leaders of the 1980s and ‘90s, these passionate performances suggest that the most appropriate response to the “murderous” hate fueling “this killing machine called America,” as Wojnarowicz put it, may in fact be violence, in vocalization if not action.

Tongues Untied (1989) by Marlon Riggs focuses instead on the subjective experience, exploring the impacts of speech—both liberatory and hateful—and silence—both protective and oppressive—on the black gay experience in the context of the early AIDS crisis. Using a collage aesthetic, the film blends together autobiographical monologues by Riggs and poetic performances by other black gay writers, archival footage and performative enactments of homophobic hate speech in the black community, and documentary recordings of black queer discussion groups and protest marches. Through these varied modes of verbal expression, Tongues Untied traces the empowerment of moving past shame and fear to embrace one’s intersectional identity with communal pride and speak one’s truth with “tongues untied.”
Rosa von Praunheim
stills from Silence = Death, 1990

Marlon Riggs
still from Tongues Untied, 1989

Marlon Riggs
still from Anthem, 1991
Anthem (1991) by Marlon Riggs, Still Life (1997) by yann beauvais, and A Declaration of Poetic Disobedience (2005) by Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Gustavo Vazquez explore the potential of language both to enforce and to challenge the global systems of oppression that enabled the pandemic to spread. Through animated text, poetic declamation, chanting, song, and dance, these short films re/claim suppressed and alternative modes of communication to confront slavery, settler colonialism, and the very concept of the nation-state, reframing discourse to reject political border control of land, body, and identity.

In Anthem, Riggs uses a music-video aesthetic incorporating poetry and spoken word to examine the meaning of citizenship for gay African Americans in a nation built on slavery. In the film, Trinidadian poet Colin Robinson confronts the suppression of language, culture, and identity among African slaves and indigenous Carribbeans when he declares, “I must remake my history, rewrite history, redenounce a past and conjugate a future—rearranging syllables is revolution.” Blending vogue sequences and house music beats with ethnographic footage of tribal drumming and dancing, Anthem situates cultural production by queer people of color in the same lineage as traditional African cultural practices, putting forward the adoption of a queer-embracing, pan-African diasporic identification as the means for “a chain of tongues unchained” to reclaim their cultural inheritance.

In Still Life, French video artist yann beauvais makes jarring use of text, color, sound, and translation to indict the forms of obfuscation and disinformation used by those in power to perpetuate the systems of othering that exacerbated worldwide infection rates. The work translates the impacts of colonialism, capitalism, moralism, and neoliberalism on the experience of AIDS across different contexts and languages in order to voice a powerful, unified critique of the repressive structures underpinning Western society. In A Declaration of Poetic Disobedience, filmed by Gustavo Vazquez, Chicano performance artist, writer, and activist Guillermo Gómez-Peña of La Pocha Nostra performs a fierce incantatory proclamation of refusal to be silenced by those in power. Positioning indigenous practices and identities, diasporic connections, and migrational networks of solidarity as subversive processes, it resounds powerfully amid the heightened violence against im/migrants and indigenous peoples today.

Works in other media feature parallel testimonials to the subjective effects of hate speech and call out the hypocritical use of such speech to silence and marginalize specific groups.
immoral were hijacked by a virus that takes advantage of human connectivity, the erotic capacities of the embodied and relational voice were explored by a number of artists. In the face of widespread condemnation, bold demonstrations of homosexuality and promiscuity functioned as ways to challenge sexual hegemony. The voice sustained the erotic capacity to flow across newly necessitated boundaries between bodies, preserving life-sustaining forms of connection.

A series of plaster sculptures made by Kiki Smith between 1983 and 1993 strongly insinuates the erotic entanglement of voice, sound, and the body. Typically titled *Tongue in Ear*, each sculpture features a long, sinuous red tongue reaching toward a green-tinged ear, evoking elements of sexual play such as licking and kissing. The alternate title *Sound Search*, used for an edition gifted to David Wojnarowicz in 1983, highlights the voice as a tool of intimacy by foregrounding the sonic elements of close tongue to ear interactions such as

Chloe Dzubilo’s text-based works confront the ongoing pathologization of trans people by individuals and institutions alike. In *Pathologizing Me/Us* (2009), Dzubilo succinctly denounces the complex practice of gaslighting, declaring, “Don’t call me crazy / To make ur position less insane.” Presented as an audio recording, Pat Parker’s emotionally evocative poem *Don’t Let the Fascists Speak* (1977) reveals the implicit violence of white supremacist speech. With the same resonance today as when it was written, the poem argues that the effects of such rhetoric should disqualify it from protection under the First Amendment right to free speech.

*How to Have Promiscuity in an Epidemic*

Beyond their capacity to resist, language and voice are imbued in many of the works with the potential to express subversive sexuality. In a context where sexual practices declared...
whispering, dirty talk, or just breathing. The visceral quality of the sculpture prompts reflection on the contours of the internal organs and passageways that shape the vocal sounds that flow from a person’s mouth to another’s ear.

Gran Fury’s Read My Lips posters from 1988 represent the blending of the voice and sexuality in AIDS activism. They pair historical images of gay and lesbian intimacy with a phrase appropriated from George H.W. Bush, typically used for emphasis. The posters promoted a kiss-in protest, staged to counter homophobia and the stigma around kissing due to misconceptions about HIV transmission, through an act of eroticism that “spoke” louder than words. In her book Moving Politics, sociologist Deborah Gould highlights the erotic charge arising from such meldings of speech and sexuality as a sustaining factor in the AIDS activist movement.

Closely weaving sexuality and vocality, Marlon Riggs’ Anthem urges listeners to “pervert the language” and positions the black gay poet community as “griots shaping language into power, food, and substitute for sex, into tools like weapons of survival, rage, and passion, with the clarity of spit.” In Tongues Untied, Riggs’ overcoming of shameful silence to speak his truth is inseparably linked to his racialized experience of sexuality. The film culminates in the declaration, “Black men loving Black men is THE revolutionary act.”

VOICE = SURVIVAL celebrates the survival of subject-hood, the marginalized and disempowered, communal values, connectivity and networks, and even the dead that are enabled through the voice. In the exhibition, the multivalent metaphors and potentials of vocality, rendered particularly meaningful in the context of the AIDS epidemic, reveal the impact of vocal expression to carry life-or-death implications. Today, these works are a call to arms, in a moment when entrenched advocates of right-wing fear-mongering threaten to drown out hard-won progress—together we must continue to challenge the causes of inequity and repressive societal structures through the virality of the voice.

NOTES


EXHIBITION CHECKLIST


Chloe Dzubilo and PARTICIPANT INC, New York.

Kameelah Janan Rasheed, Lower the Pitch of Your Suffering from the series How to Suffer Politely (And Other Etiquette), 2014. Archival inkjet print, 24 × 36 in. Courtesy of the artist.


Ultra-red, Untitled (for multiple voices), 2010. Multi-channel sound installation with Mac Mini, 8-channel sound card, eight monophonic audio speakers, 45:33. Courtesy of the artists.


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The 8th Floor is an exhibition and events space established in 2010 by Shelley and Donald Rubin, dedicated to promoting cultural and philanthropic initiatives and to expanding artistic and cultural accessibility in New York City.

The 8th Floor is located at 17 West 17th Street and is free and open to the public. School groups are encouraged. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Friday, 11am-6pm. The8thfloor.org

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

Founded in 1988, Visual AIDS is the only contemporary arts organization fully committed to HIV/AIDS awareness through producing and presenting visual art projects, exhibitions, public forums and publications—while supporting artists living with HIV/AIDS and honoring the artistic contributions of the AIDS movement. VisualAIDS.org