



(re)Presenting AIDS:

Culture and Accountability

Public Forum

Tuesday, August 20th 2013, 6-8pm
Skylight Room (9100) The Graduate Center,
CUNY 365 Fifth Avenue New York NY

Organized by: Visual AIDS and the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History
Co-sponsored by: The Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies (CLAGS)

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Event Set-Up

How “should” HIV/AIDS be represented in the public sphere?

In what ways do museums and galleries create history as much as they display it?

When “history” still has dire consequences for the present moment, what kind of engagement should historical institutions have with the communities whose stories they are telling?

Coming off the heels of the NY TIMES op-ed, [How to Whitewash a Plague](#), [Visual AIDS](#) and the [Pop-Up Museum of Queer History](#) hosted a public forum which explored the role museums, galleries and cultural institutions play, and can play, when presenting exhibitions related to HIV/AIDS.

The forum included voices involved in the curation, marketing and administration of AIDS related exhibitions, as well as artists, critics, and others with an invested interest. The evening was an interactive discussion which provided an opportunity to consider the needs and wants related to an exhibition about HIV/AIDS, and a chance to tackle the following questions:

1. What responsibility do institutions with little to no relationship with those most impacted by HIV/AIDS have when mounting an exhibition related to the ongoing epidemic?
2. As a community of people living with, and impacted by HIV, what do we want from cultural institutions when they engage with HIV/AIDS as a topic?
3. As the crisis of AIDS continues, how do we ensure that the stories that need to be shared are told and heard by those who need them the most?

Moderated by: Ann Northrop

Panelists:

- Jason Baumann, Collections Strategy/LGBT Collections, New York Public Library
- Kia Benbow, Artist, grenAIDS
- Jim Hubbard, Filmmaker, United in Anger
- Karl McCool, Assistant Director, Dirty Looks
- Kris Nuzzi, Curator, *Not Over*
- Hunter O'Hanian, Museum Director, Leslie Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art
- Edwin Ramoran, Public Programs and Community Engagement, Studio Museum in Harlem
- Hugh Ryan, Writer, Founding Director of the Pop-Up Museum of Queer History
- Amy Sadao, Director, Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania
- Nelson Santos, Executive Director, Visual AIDS

In Conversation with: Ian Bradley-Perrin, Jim Bredeson, Avram Finklestien, Dan Fishback Jim Fouratt, Zach Frater, Kate Huh, Bradford Nordeen, Trina Rose, Jim Saslow, Hannelore Williams.

INTRODUCTION and STATEMENTS



ANN: Hi, I am Ann Northrup and I am the moderator for this event in the Skylight room of the CUNY Grad Center. We have what I hope will be a very honest and provocative discussion, *(re)Presenting AIDS: Culture and Accountability*, sponsored by Visual AIDS, the Pop Up Museum of Queer History and of course the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies. I am glad everyone is here. We are short some chairs so I am glad everyone is making themselves comfortable at the back and the sides.

We have an illustrious panel of people who we will be introducing as we go along, who have been asked to make statements of three to five minutes. I am asking them to keep them on the shorter side. I have warned them that they will get cut off if they go over because we want this to be a conversation.

What I think we hope comes out of this is something productive for future work. It is not my intention to run a navel gazing operation, rather a conversation that leads to better work by all of us. Maybe even a statement of best practices related to our work. There has been some questions laid out by Visual AIDS. I have been working with Ted Kerr on this and Hugh Ryan, who wrote a very insightful piece about the New York Historical Society's exhibit. So they are:

- How "should" HIV/AIDS be represented in the public sphere?
- In what ways do museums and galleries create history as much as they display it?

- When “history” still has dire consequences for the present moment, what kind of engagement should the historical institutions have with communities whose stories they are telling? And as the crisis of AIDS continues how do we ensure that the stories being shared are being heard by those who need it the most?

As I have tried to prepare for this forum I tried thinking about all the ways HIV/AIDS are represented across the board. From emaciated people on television at the beginning of our recognition of the epidemic, the red ribbons, the quilt, the fight over the Mapplethorpe exhibit in Cincinnati, the fights over the various Wojnarowicz representations. It has been in TV movies, in dramatic episodes in TV, in art, in magazines, newspapers and every possible representation of life that you can imagine. So our discussion tonight is specifically targeted at cultural institutions—but it is a broader world out there. Is Sarah Schulman here? I was going to tell her to cover her ears while I mention *Rent*. And the movie *Philadelphia*. And *The Normal Heart*, and *Gay Sex in the '70s*—the Joe Lovett film. We could go on and on, but we are not going to.

Part of this discussion, or a core of this discussion, is the way communities interact with cultural institutions, and I've asked Bill Dobbs, who has really been a terrific conscience of the cultural community in many ways, to give us a little insight and a few cases studies that have happened over the years and the fights that have been raised. Bill, can you come up and tell us a couple of things.



BILL: I just want to sound a note for activism and organizing. The queer histories and herstories have been censored or destroyed or never come to light for thousands of years. And in modern times things have gotten somewhat better, but it is a struggle. I brought a bunch of handouts, some extra ones on the counter.

One I will draw your attention to is "QUEERS DROP DEAD." That was a leaflet given out at a protest outside the New York Historical Society in 1990 and if you scan it you can see the demand for an AIDS show. That is 22 years ago. So when I read Hugh Ryan's editorial and when I heard about this show I thought, oh, and wrote my aunt. That bruising fight with the New York Historical Society though, because it was a public fight, caused some other dominos to go over and led to a project that eventually resulted in a groundbreaking show at the New York Public Library. So there is some material about that. And I also want to get in that institutions, cultural institutions, certainly have the responsibility, now that many of us are out, to give this a culture where it needs to be seen, both on the high art side and on the historical side.

At the same time, as community members, we have got a responsibility to protect that. In 2011 there was a controversy at the Smithsonian institution. The folks inside didn't go, or couldn't do very much and it was left to those of us on the outside to wage that battle. There is a leaflet about that.

On the AIDS front, I xeroxed some materials from the Brooklyn Historical Society. If the New York Historical Society was chilling, the Brooklyn historical society was really warm, and put together a groundbreaking show about AIDS in 1992. And they had a community advisory panel. So that is one way that this dynamic tension can play itself out. I would not want to lose the arm's length distance so that it becomes folks in a community dictating what cultural institutions should do. But they certainly ought to be open to us. That's it.

ANN: Thank You. Bill's material are interesting to take a look at. Now I see that our guests are listed alphabetically. That is how I tend to call on them but that may not be as coherent programmatically as they would like. Jason Baumann - you are up first because you are a B. A. Jason is at the New York Public Library and is running the show on AIDS activism that opens in October. It will be a major show that will run for six months.

JASON: My name is Jason Bauman. I work at the New York Public Library (NYPL) as the Coordinator for LGBT collections, and I also and deal with collection assessment. As the Coordinator of the LGBT collections I work with cultural programming around the libraries collection. I am just one people working around the LGBT collection and the AIDS activist collections in the NYPL. We do public programming for young adults. There's a wide range of people across the library who work on this, not just me.



Going through the questions for today I really just thought about the challenges I am working through with trying to put together this exhibition. I think the first issue is, creating work that has a sense of emergency. AIDS has been normalized at this point in our culture and we have lost the kind of sense of crisis or emergency and it is what I am trying to do for the exhibition. Part of the problem is building this exhibition out of historical materials about AIDS and AIDS activism, the historical things that happened in the '80s and '90s, and then trying to tell two stories at the same time - both the story of the activism in the '80s and '90s, and how are things today. Trying to weave both of those stories together at once.

Secondly: About museums creating history. Thinking about these exhibitions, I think you also have to think about the unique missions of different institutions and so the reason for an exhibition at the NYPL has to be different than at different institutions. The reason for us is to highlight archives and histories we take the responsibility of persevering and to communicate (them). So for us exhibitions have to be within our own collections and also within that—based on historical archives and artifacts—always realizing how contingent we are on what is saved. We have our wish that every bit of history was saved, but we always know it is what we happen to have gotten, right? So looking at the archive that we inherited and both what is in it and what is not in it and trying to supplement what is not and work with this contingency of what happened to have been kept, and what we have to work with.

The other thing is, showing how elective it is, showing disunity, showing multiple agendas, multiple senses of what was effective politically, continuing to be effective politically. One thing that I thought was odd about how this panel was framed—or at least how the questions were framed—was the idea that there was one coherent community that one could turn to. There's a highly problematic sense of the "we" that has been constructed for the text about this panel. Who is this "we" that we are talking about?

For institutional engagement, what I try to do with exhibitions is focus on civic engagement, and I like to talk to folks about curriculum. But I try to create exhibitions that empower people to know that they can make a difference in the world. I think the media is allergic to stories about historical change, particularly about activism. Activism is irritating and annoying, and at times boring and means being in a room of people that you don't agree with and argue with, and doing all this work to make things happen. And I think that the nuts and bolts of making things happen, and realizing that they can make a difference in the world, collectively, is something that is left out of histories. That is something I try to bring to the surface.

And lastly, stories to people who need them most. And I think the NYPL has been trying to digitize as much as their material to get it out to the world, and making this exhibition travel to our branches across Staten Island, Manhattan and the Bronx.

ANN: Kia Benbow

KIA: Hello everyone. I hope you are all doing well today. Thank you so much for coming and thank you so much Ted for inviting me. My name is Kia, I am HIV+. I have been positive for 23 years, I was born with HIV, I lost my mom when I was 14 and since then I have been trying to piece together how to help the younger generation deal with this. I feel like something that is not spoken about a lot is the children that are born HIV+ and I think that is a big issue. A lot of us born to positive parents we lose our parents, and we lose that kind of guidance of how we relate to the world, being positive, being young, being sexual, being all these kinds of things. I am a co-founder of grenAIDS, a new artists' collective, and what we are trying to do is reach out to the younger generation by using our art and connecting with popular culture. We really want to create something the younger generation can really cling on to, not just because it is something important to talk about, because it is something interesting to them, it catches their eye. I feel like there has been a lot of art - not just art - but I feel like the representation of HIV/AIDS is kind of little old. I feel like it needs to be brought to the forefront, it needs to have a fresh look. It is not over, it's not done. It's not dead, it's still happening.



I feel like one way we can get people to notice is if we do work that is aggressive and stuff that people will really take notice of. It is interesting, innovative, and colorful. You know, it does not have to be sad. It does not have to be black and red. It can be pink, and blue, and all these other things, you know? And what we are trying to do is really trying to help de-stigmatize people living with HIV. We want to help differentiate between HIV and person. Because there is a very big difference and I feel like a lot of people just don't see that.

Some of the things we are working on are things like posters and t-shirts and things that are interesting to carry around. You know, bags and things that will say something like, "HIV is not racist, but you are". That is kind of what we are trying to get at. You know, "HIV is not sexist, but you are". "HIV is not homophobic, but you are homophobic". I am really happy to be here today and that is all I have to say right now.

ANN: Can I ask a question? Are you trying to politicize people at all? Or are you trying to educate them about basic facts?

KIA: Well, it is kind of both. We want to educate and we also want to point out the people that are doing wrong. I spoke at an HIV/AIDS assembly at my high school that I went to, a performing arts high school in midtown, and I spoke to all the high schoolers and the middle schoolers. And after I was done I had all these middle schoolers coming up to me, 6th, 7th, and 8th graders, saying "Oh my god, thank you so much for coming to talk to us about it because we don't know anything about this. I don't know anything

about this. No one ever talks to us about this, I don't understand it, and I don't get it." That is the reason why there are more cases of people getting HIV, because it is not being talked about to the youth, it is not being talked about to them. And that is so important. And then they can't protect themselves. And it makes me go - I didn't even have the chance to protect myself. I didn't have that chance. And I would like to give that opportunity to everyone else, to the people who are in those situations, you know. I hear friends of my mine talking about having unprotected sex and all this kind of stuff and I am like, guys, c'mon. Think.

ANN: We could have a long conversation about the schools.

KIA: Yes!

ANN: Jim Hubbard. Jim is the co-creator and producer of The ACT UP Oral History Project, which is a brilliant online production that has now put more than 100 interviews online. These are interviews with members of ACT UP and out of that, and a lot of footage at the time, (came) the movie *United In Anger*, of which I am a big fan.

JIM: I have to say, I feel completely unprepared.

ANN: Oh come on Jim! You have opinions about the representation of AIDS.



JIM: I have been thinking about this for thirty years. The reason I feel unprepared is I have been curating these screening for the NYPL exhibition in the fall and I find that spending two days in the Brooke Astor Rare Books Reading Room watching memorial tapes, and watching sixteen hours of these tapes is more than I ever wanted to see in my life. Going back there and seeing them again has actually been interesting. Phil Zwickler's memorial, which I remember as an emotional nightmare, comes off great on tape. But others I remember as being really moving are just incredibly weary.

These questions have been brewing around since the beginning of the AIDS crisis: Who gets to tell the stories, who gets to define it? And we have been fighting for something. There is that cliché that history is told by the victors, and I feel that in a real sense, people with AIDS and ACT UP were the victors in this. We are the ones who should be telling the story. In a certain way, these institutions are fighting back and what it reminds me of is, one of the questions I get from time to time when I show *United in Anger* is, "What about the other side?" And it is a question that really threw me for a while because there is no other side. They were wrong. We have to say that over and over again. Those people who are wrong are going to try and reinvent the story to make themselves look better. And in a way when Jason asked the question "Who are we?" it is hard to answer the question, who are we? But I think we know who they are. And in way that has been the story of the AIDS crisis. We know who they are. And I guess that is it, except to say my whole life has been a critique of institutions and when institutions ask me to curate something, they want that side, and the story I have to tell, I have this responsibility to tell the story of all my friends who died. That is my responsibility. And that is what I have been doing for 25 years.

ANN: Thank you. Karl, Karl McCool.

KARL: I am pretty humbled to be on this panel. I am the assistant director of Dirty Looks, which is roaming queer experimental film and video series around the city. All I can speak to is our own experience in programming work around HIV/AIDS, which has largely been work about AIDS activism.



We sort of followed the model we already had with our screenings. When Dirty Looks started we were inspired by this idea of film societies and cinema clubs in the '60s in the New York underground, this idea that artists and cinephiles and the general public would come together in a social space and experience experimental film, not as a museum piece but as part of a community. I think that has guided us through all of what we've done, including that which is shown around HIV/AIDS. We screened some contemporary work, but a lot of it has been older work and we were acutely aware there was a danger there, that in showing that older work we were historicizing it, putting it in a box, marking it off as something memorializing, as the past, and we wanted not to do that.

Part of what we do with Dirty Looks is we try to engage the public now with artists, artists making work, and to put older works in dialogue with new work and future work. I kept thinking, when looking at the questions that guided the discussion tonight, around how AIDS should be represented, of the Visual AIDS tote bag that is going around right now that says "AIDS is ON GOING" and I think that is part of what we try to do when we show historical work - presenting it in a way that it's seen as part of a larger current of queer activism and AIDS activism that isn't of the past. We didn't want to memorialize it. I think in the last few years there have been a lot of books, exhibitions, because there have been so many anniversaries - we just had anniversaries of Visual AIDS and ACT UP not that long ago. I think it is appropriate to mark those anniversaries. And to look back at past work at these institutions, and these forms of activism but I think not only is the virus ongoing but as a lot of recent scholarship and discussions that have come out of

our own screenings with artists, have made me realize is that even the past AIDS crisis, even when we show these older works, we are showing something that is ongoing, we are still living through the effects of that previous period. We are only just realizing it.

So I would say, what at least for Dirty Looks, our idea has been, even when presenting these more historical works, to tie them to current politics, and current activism, and to engage a community. We try and have the artists present, to have panel discussions, to avoid simply memorializing, but to create a screening that is more than just a screening but a gathering of the queer community. And hopefully that will foster further activism.

ANN: Kris



KRIS: My name is Kris, I am an independent curator and recently curated *NOT OVER* for Visual AIDS along with Sur Rodney (Sur) who could not be here today but has given me lots to say to you all.

I am going to start by sharing a few things I have learned along the way curating *NOT OVER*. We were asked to do this and the first thing that came into our heads: this is a anniversary show but how do we make this not a celebration, even though there is so much to celebrate, to kind of remember that this is an ongoing crisis. For us it was important to blend the past, present, and also the future of the ongoing AIDS crisis. So we met with - it seems like a hundred artists - but probably twenty to thirty artists, and I think the biggest thing I learned (is) the amount of exhibitions that have been curated on this subject are kind of endless. Even tonight, just hearing Kia speak, I want to curate

another show. You are always going to exclude someone, or find out about someone afterwards, but I think that is what makes it most exciting, there are these endless subjects.

I think another thing we decided, that was interesting, was not to just create this historical exhibition that outlined the history of Visual AIDS, but instead work with artists that were born in the '70s and '80s that were affected by the AIDS crisis and continue to be inspired by either the work of the past, or their own struggles today. We worked with a lot of artists who created work specifically for the show, hand in hand, and explored subjects of today that were relevant for people to see.

Not being so rigid in our interpretation, and not being afraid to contradict ourselves and put a lot of faith in artists, helped us to create what we feel was an honest exhibition that explored the intergenerational expression of AIDS and art.

ANN: Thanks Kris, and next to you is Hunter.



HUNTER: Hello Everyone I am Hunter O'Hainan, Director of the Leslie Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art here in New York. This is a real pleasure to be here, and I want to thank everyone for inviting us here. Let me start with a minute about the Leslie Lohman Museum. We were founded, the foundation that runs the museum, was founded in 1987, really because of the AIDS crisis. At that time families would come in, given the climate, and throw away that was in someone's house. Everything was believed to be

diseased, trash, no good, and artwork was being thrown away at the same time. So Charles Leslie and Fritz Lohman put together the foundation as a way of preserving what was really intimately important to art makers and those of us who appreciate art. So it really is born out of that part of the crisis.

We were recently accredited by the New York State Board of Regents as a museum, and as a museum I think any of us involved in this business of museums have to realize what are responsibilities are. For me the responsibility of the museum is to educate the public, those who actually come walking through our doors. And I know no other way to educate someone than through the truth. And I can't imagine any organization putting on an exhibition designed to educate and then doing anything else. That is the role we as organizations have to play.

Now the question, what do we as a community expect: we should expect what we want from them, whatever perspective they are bringing, is a truthful and complete perspective. You want to be able to see that perspective as honestly and clearly as it can be represented to you with the resources that they have. And if they are not presenting it to you, it is all of our obligations to let them know. And we do that by giving them honest feedback and the advocacy that we all do.

I think that is very important. The comment that Jim made earlier about history belongs to the victors is ability right. If you really think back about what has happened, we have changed the way medicine is delivered; we changed a lot about the pharmaceutical companies. This world today is a very different place than it was 20 and 30 years ago. And the crisis continues in a very real way and unless we are out there saying something, advocating for it (nothing will change).

We all go to major museums and institutions, and we all see major mistakes being made, we see educational missions being directed by donors and curators, and by board members, and other individuals who have particular motivations to tell particular stories. That is the world they live in, and it is our job to tell the truth and say, you know what, you got it right, except for this. And let us tell you how you can make it better. I am going to stop there. Thank you for the opportunity.

Ann: Thank you. Edwin.

EDWIN: Hi everyone. I am actually currently at an institution so I am leery about talking about the institution. You have to think of the institution as being a conservative cultural context. So that is how I have always approached it and that is one of the things I am interested in, how do you make it progressive? I currently work at the Studio Museum in Harlem; I'm the Manager of Public Programs and Community Engagement. I came from a curatorial background and that is why I have a history with Visual AIDS. They really pushed me a lot. That is one of the things I am really excited about. I am just going to give a story. I think the answers will come out later. I am more interested in the

sort of story telling part of what institutions do and what curators do - which is to tell stories.



This weekend I went to UNIQLO and I bought a shirt, it has Keith Haring all over it. It is too large so I had my friend; an artist named Ethan Shoshan, cut it down and take it in.

I was very happy to see Chitra Ganesh introduce *My Beautiful Launderette* at the Queer Art Film series at the IFC Center. It was really exciting. I wanted to share these quick things.

What Karl said earlier, AIDS is ongoing, and it is also going on - there are 2 parts to [the Kay Rosen tote bag]. I love the fact that it is also about AIDS going on. To give a quick thing about what I have done as a curator, it goes way back. It actually started with the Longwood Arts Project and the Bronx Council of the Arts and actually, it was propelled by Revolutionary Permit and Visual AIDS, and there are a lot of us here. I just have to say, this audience is illustrious and this whole room is full of it, and I can't wait to get the conversation going.

Anyway, Revolutionary Permit definitely looked at the club scene. I am definitely the type to look at popular culture, so I am going to look at Kia, and I am really excited about how popular culture can get into it. I am excited that you can go buy your T-shirt on sale, and see your mid-'80s film that really looks at the intimacy as a natural occurrence not as special or something that needs to lead up to, some sort of coming

out story—which I think of as very American. I am interested in looking at house culture - and I am glad Kia is here because she is house of Labeija too. I heard you did really well at the Ball. The Latex Ball was this weekend, but I did not get to go and see you. But that is where I am coming from as an individual - not just someone from an institution - and I think something we need to really think about and be critical about how AIDS is tied to capital and capitalism on a lot of levels. ACT UP has taught us this many times.

ANN: I think the conversation we will get to be, yes the world has changed, and no it hasn't. Hugh.



HUGH: Hi, I'm Hugh Ryan. I'm the founding director of the Pop Up Museum of Queer History. And I just wanted to start by saying—thank you to everyone for being here because one of my biggest answers to the questions is engagement. I think we have to engage with each other, we have to engage with the generations before us, the generations after us, the institutions that support us, the institutions that scare us. It's about engagement. It's only when we're talking to each other, sharing our stories, and sharing what we know and have experienced that we actually can move forward with any of this.

I recently wrote an editorial about the New York Historical Society's show, and I was very critical. And I regret that the one thing that I did not say was: please go. I want everyone to see that show. I want everyone to see every one of the shows that we're talking about and to talk about what is good, and what isn't good, or what we did like, or

didn't like, or did understand, or didn't understand because we don't really move forward without doing that.

The Pop Up Museum of Queer History works around the country with organizations to create community-sourced displays on queer history. What I think differentiates us, or what we try to accentuate in our model is, we believe when and where queer history has been kept, it's been kept by queer people ourselves. And this is a virtue; it's not a problem. It's not something we need to solve.

It's not to say that we don't believe in authorities or in experience and in learning but, you don't need, necessarily, to go through some institutional practice to have that and that, by valuing the authority that we have in the room and by sharing it we actually learn from each other. What we, as a museum, try to do is to work with individuals to create exhibits. So, our shows will have 30 exhibits created by 30 different people, some of whom may consider themselves artists, some of whom may consider themselves historians, many of whom have never thought about making an exhibit for a museum before. Our shows tend to be overlapping, they tend to be a little messy because of it. We believe that interplay is where we really learn the most, so we believe that one of the most important things in terms of how should AIDS be represented, is that we should all be representing it ourselves.

History is a tool we all have access to and we're in this really odd moment right now, around queer history specifically, where it's going from a "for us / by us" model of history to one that is more concerned with mainstream recognition and straight audiences. We're suddenly interesting to people. And that's not a bad thing. And that's not something to be afraid of, but it's something to note and something to remember when we engage, we shouldn't give up what we had before. And what we had before was a model of history where we kept our history because no one was going to give it to us. And when we had it, no one could take it from us. I think that is kind of my broad answer to all the questions on the sheet. We can get to more, but...

ANN: And I think we can take that across communities, across centuries. And it raises a lot of questions, which Amy will answer for us.

AMY: Hi, I am Amy Sadao. I'm currently the director of the ICA at the University of Pennsylvania. But, I was formerly the director, for 10 years, at Visual AIDS, so it's amazing to be back in this room and it makes me very home sick and very heart sick because I have really only been at ICA for a year and Philadelphia is a new town for me.



I think what Edwin and Karl were speaking about—the way in which institutions really are conservative—that’s something I know. I’m the director and I’m the visionary for this museum, which has been a pretty radical museum if you look at its 50-year history. It’s non-collecting, it’s very much a Kunsthall. And I think they have never shied away with having curators and interim directors, like Judith Taunembaum, from exploring the intersections between social and political histories and what is happening in contemporary art.

That said, it’s still a learning curve for me and—I’m just speaking honestly because I feel like I am home—that it’s very much...I’m unsettled on how to adjust to working in a contemporary arts museum, which has a much broader mission than what we were doing at Visual AIDS, which was, you know, to continue to utilize contemporary art just to keep it talking, to provoke dialogue, and to really push. And that’s what we did everyday. And everyone who came into the office, and everyone who gave \$5 at Visual AIDS was like, "Why aren't museums doing more," and, "Why aren't they...?" And we were just like, "Wow, you know, really? You’re just going to do things on World AIDS Day? That’s it?" You become this weird tokenized thing. So, it’s a challenge for me to have a broader scope. Not every show we’re going to carry at ICA is going to have to do with HIV/AIDS, and at the same time, to not lose the thread either. I believe—and I know this from years of working with artists, and young writers, and art historians, and, you know, all the people who really trained us, and all the people who have come before us—that the historical impact of HIV and AIDS on our cultural field pervades so much and it’s just not really opened up for discussion.

I just have a couple of examples; one was a show that was on, that was scheduled before I came. I have to give the credit to my predecessor, and to the fantastic independent curator Stamatina Gregory for curating an exhibition of the late artist American photographer Brian Weil, who was also one of the founders of the first harm reduction (centers) and needle exchanges in New York City, which eventually became CitiWide Harm Reduction. So, contextualizing Brian's six or seven series of documentary photography—his AIDS series being one of the most well-known—looking at all of these different sub-cultural things he was doing, and pushing it up against a time. In the late 80s / early 90s, his contemporaries were really the Picture Generation. And so why?

So what I am trying to say is exploring and allowing the curators (and the programming and the dialogues we had) explore why—perhaps aesthetically—how HIV/AIDS and HIV/AIDS activism impacted this artist's work and his aesthetic choices. Did he find the Picture generation too cool? And not be invested so much in direct documentary work but having to have a relationship. The photographs he took really came out of stories he wanted to tell and people he wanted to meet. That was true in the Hasidic communities, or with HIV/AIDS/safe sex workers internationally, with IV drug uses, and with transgender people in the Midwest (which were his last four series).

And the other thing I was just thinking of, some examples perhaps not only from ICA but other places that would mix in and give credit to the impact of people living with HIV, people who lost to AIDS, and the artists' works that reckon with the crisis, are a lot of story telling that happens in the museums. I'm thinking particularly of Bennett Simpsons' exhibition *Blues for Smoke*. When it came from Los Angeles to the Whitney Museum, there was a program that Bennett asked Gregg Bordowitz to put together and it was artists and performers reading the works of gay black men, many of whom were dealing with HIV/AIDS, folks like Marlon Riggs who died of AIDS. And it was incredibly moving—in a really tight room, just like this—but it also put a spin on these ideas around blues as an aesthetic and the ideas around loss and moving from a place of mourning into a celebratory space, and it also brought back the voices of people from '89, '92, '96. And that in some ways was like getting together a community panel or something; giving it back to the people who wrote these stories at the time.

And that was also something that ICA did on our World AIDS Day event when we asked Joy Episalla and Carrie Yamaoka as part of not only fierce pussy, as a lesbian visibility project, but also as New York ACT UP-ers, to come and make a presentation in advance of screening Jim and Sarah's film, which we ended with a Philly film, Che Gossett's film, because Philly ACT UP was like not hearing it like, "Oh, great, ACT UP NEW YORK..."

Joy and Carrie, one of the things they brought was stories from artists and activists, both living and those who passed—David Wojnarowicz, Frank Moore, or Mark Harrington—about the crisis. And I think filling the museum with those stories and those voices really gave rise to a different type of conversation. So that is what...thank you.

ANN: And Nelson...

NELSON: Okay, once again, following Amy, which is always a challenge because Amy is my mentor (so, to take this chance, thank you Amy). I also want to thank everyone's who is here; I know everyone has said it, but once again, thank you all for coming. Thanks for everyone on this panel (which is really amazing), thanks to Ann for moderating, but also I really want to give a little shout out to Ted and Esther, who helped put this together.



All of us were having discussions about all of the shows going on right now and how we were really excited about the shows that Visual AIDS put together. Wait, I am just going to back up one second...

There are so many familiar faces here, that I kind of go into automatic mode and assume that everyone knows what Visual AIDS is. Just to back up a tiny bit. So, Visual AIDS was founded in 1988, so this is our 25th anniversary. It is the oldest and the first organization to organize not just artists, but actually organize the arts community to create action within the arts community. There was certainly artists, like, you know, Gran Fury and other groups who were doing direct actions as artists themselves, but Visual AIDS was the first one who said, "What about the institutions? You know, why is MoMA not doing something? Why are these other organizations not doing something? The artists are dying left and right and they are sort of being ignored." So just a little props to Visual

AIDS for being that organization who took that initiative to do that. And we continue to do arts projects, and exhibitions, the tote bags, and 3 summer shows. And we also assist artists living with HIV/AIDS and preserve a legacy for those artists who've passed away through what we call The Archive Project. So, I'm happy to talk more about that, but I kind of want to refocus back in on why we're all here.

Again, so we had these 3 exhibitions this summer. One called *NOT OVER*, the one that Kris and Sur curated that we were so excited about. I was excited about bringing these different individuals, different generations, different points of views together to create what I thought was just an amazing show. We also curated a show at the Fales Library that Andrew Blackley curated called *Not only this, but 'New language beckons us'*. Which also took historical works, in the Fales Library—mostly from the downtown collection show, mostly individuals who have passed away but also Hunter Reynolds and others involved—And then had contemporary writers and artists respond to that work. We had another show, at Printed Matter, called *House in Vermont*, which, if people have not heard that term before—I had never heard of it until it was told to me—House in Vermont—the abbreviations are HIV, right? So, it's a term that came up—like, you know, you see some cute guy in the bar and the person next to you goes like, "Oh, he has a house in Vermont." So they took that term and prvt dncr and bodega vendetta curated a very contemporary show at Printed Matter.

I mention those three show because I was so excited to have all of these things going on at the same time and excited that all of those shows not only looked at parts of the history but brought them to today. All of the shows had somebody either responding today, making work today. It was about AIDS ONGOING, GOING ON. And that's something that I am very proud about; being at an organization that has always tried to keep that in mind when we're producing shows and exhibitions and such.

So we were sitting around the office and we were talking about all of the other shows. We were talking about the Hysterical Society show, and the 1993 show, the Whitney show, the Helen Molesworth show looking at the 80s, the Clamp art show, which was about 1985, and Rosalind Solomon's exhibition *Portraits in the Time of AIDS, 1988*, and then, of course, all of the films. So, there's certainly this in the air, right? There is this looking back. And none of those shows all in of themselves are all wrong or all problematic, and they're also not all looking at just AIDS. Which is always when I go in as my focus. They're placing it in a different context. But I was both excited to see all of these shows, and then frustrated that it was just ending at these times. All of them you could say like, "These were historical." And so I was excited that we could do what we did. And so the discussion started with a desire to do more, and then Hugh's great article—and I want to thank Ted for and Hugh for starting this spark and deciding like, "we're going to do this now. We're not going to wait until everyone's back from their August vacations; we are going to do this now." And so, again, thank you all for coming. And I'm going to even skip those questions...

ANN: (I'm going to take your microphone.) I'm going to remind us for a second that Hugh's article on the New York Historical Society's show, which was *AIDS in New York: The First 5 Years*, complained about it being aimed at neophytes and coming out of an apologist background with rose tinted glasses. And, I am going to open this up now to you for questions and discussion. And I want to thank the panel who I think have given us a little taste of their work on this and where they are coming from. I, as an activist, find myself yearning for more blood and guts in all of this. And I have to say that the thing that affected me most in what I've just heard is Kia's description of her encounter with these 6th graders, who are yearning and hungry for engagement and information. And I worry that all these institutional shows, while certainly well meaning and coming out of an understanding and desire for communication, seem a little bloodless to me. And that's me as an activist talking.

So I'm going to throw that out there as also context I hope for this conversation. Because I want to know what the point of all of this is. You know? Are we here to feed the hunger of people who want knowledge and experience? Or are we putting things on walls so that people come and look at it and say, " Um hm, Um hm." I want to know what the point of all of this is.

So that's my bias in this and my challenge to the audience and the panel. And I'm going to open this up for discussion.



Conversation

TED: I can be a mic runner!

ANN: Okay, we've got a couple. I'm not going to resist comparisons to Tinker Bell.

TED: You did a good job resisting Ann.

ANN: I knew you would catch that. All right so comments, questions, conversation...Jim, you put your hand up first so you get to talk first. And briefly please everybody.



JIM: Hello, my name is Jim Fouratt. And I'd like to thank everybody for being here. I think that I hated the show at the Historical Society because there were so many inaccuracies in it that made me question the research and the bias of the research. Things did happen before, during, and after ACT UP. And everything seems to be—as an ACT UP member—everything seems to be a focused either upon Larry Kramer's history or ACT UP's history.

ANN: And ACT UP New York in particular.

JIM: And ACT UP New York. There were other ACT UPs in LA, and San Francisco, and Chicago, and Philadelphia...

ANN: Paris...

JIM: As if the other ACT UPs are not happening. Then they had these films, true films like “We Were Here” which is stories of real people in San Francisco—if you haven't seen it I suggest that you do. Go see it. It's an honest film. And Jim Hubbard and Sarah's film, which is beautiful in terms of the (audio cuts out).

What I want to challenge everyone with is, we really need to not be politically correct. You really need to not be afraid that someone is going to criticize you. You really need to find the voices of the other people that the media hasn't already found before you. And Jim and Sarah's history of ACT UP, just the story telling of all the different people, you get a real...of how complicated and complex and how vicious the plague was.

My own personal feeling is, I have been involved since 1981, in terms of history and experience, no one has ever come asked me about those first 5 years. When I wrote to whom I thought were the curators of the Historical Society, I got a letter back that said, “There are many stakeholders who want their point of view told. We're so sorry we could not tell yours.” But its not about me, it's about the experiences of other people, and the PWA community has been left out in the dust, the activism of the PWA community. I will tell 2 little stories and then I'll give the mic back. Yes, 2 little stories...

The first person who I heard talk about needle exchange was someone who was not a drug addict. It was about the PWA coalition, his name was Michael Callen, and he had been meeting with people of color—most people didn't recognize drug users as being a part of the AIDS community, and he went and gathered the needles of the other members of the PWA coalition because he was going to break the law, with other PWAs, bring those needles so that people could live, and inject drugs, which people in the AIDS activism politically correct group did not like.

It's that kind of story that gets left out of—or the story in Philadelphia. A Japanese American, a founder of the gay liberation front, went and started an online archive of information for PWAs. He was a PWA himself. These kinds of stories are from the first five years.

The first person I saw die, in the hospital, was Klaus Nomi. The impact of the initial artists and performers: John Sex, the Pyramid Club, Danceteria, all of that needs to be weaved into the story telling. There are some attempts to bring in poetry and spoken word, but it's usually not the poetry or the spoken word of the people who have died. Usually it is not.

So, I really challenge the curators; I particularly challenge the young people to seek out those voices, not just the chosen ones. Dan Fishback had this piece about becoming 30 and having grown up and coming out as living in a world with AIDS. He didn't talk to old people, like me. He didn't talk to old people. That is what you need to do. Thank you.

Bradford: I'm Bradford Nordeen, creative director for Dirty Looks. Jim, I think you are absolutely right. I think applause should really go to Carl George and Lia Gangitano for putting together the Gordon Kurtti project this summer, which I think was a really landmark exhibition because it focused on an unknown artist's works, his life's work, which spanned 3 years. Was Gordon Kurtti one of the most exceptional artists that we have ever seen? No. But in not being exceptional, this exhibition was remarkable because it showed the development, the spark of an artistic career which could have yielded remarkable work but that was cut short so soon. Gordon Kurtti died in 1987, I believe. But, what was done with that artwork was remarkable, pulling together, I think, five nights of performance, we contributed to a screening.



I think you are absolutely right. And I think the time is now to look at these histories that are un-mined. I think more important than having another show of the polished work which, you know, encapsulates an AIDS crisis, or an AIDS legacy that we all know, I think the more and more that we can do the research and air these unknown histories. I think that is what we do with Dirty Looks.

As a point number two, I know that we have a very young following, and even at the beginning when I was watching people come to our screenings, it was typically people in their mid twenties, and I think that growing up they/we sensed an absence of a history. We can't go visit Jack Smith; we can't go see John Sex perform. And I think people are

looking for what that history was because we can't find it immediately and I think that is really a place for increased representation of those artists of that work.

ANN: Thank you. Ted, did you want to quickly read a statement or two?

STEPHAN GEORGIU reads a statement from JACK WATERS and PETER CRAMER Jack and peter's statement.



HANNELORE: Hello I am Hannelore Williams, I am nervous. I am a new voice in this conversation.

ANN: Welcome!

HANNELORE: I have created a doc series called *Dirty Thirty* and I just released the trailer for this week and basically my impulse to create this series was that I felt the narrative around HIV/AIDS in my personal experience was problematic on a lot of different levels.

So I wanted to create a series that I thought reflected the culture of HIV/AIDS. So I actually started shooting in Johannesburg for 3 weeks, I just got back. I went to LA, and Paris to shoot for a little bit, and then to the Bible Belt to explore, what does this mean. What are these symptoms in our culture that perpetuating the identity around HIV/AIDS today that I feel is not right? I grew up in a household where my stepfather died of AIDS—and I have a cousin who is working with AIDS—and no one was speaking about it.

We were just sad when he died. No one actually spoke to my cousin about what his life was like, and I was like, that is not cool.

I can't really deal with the lack of conversation. Then I realized why we weren't talking, there were these cultural pods already not being addressed, so that is what my traveling is about. I just feel, what I am hearing today, I am really excited to join the conversation, as people who have been working in this a longer time than I have, I am sure you understand what it means to be a new person, so I hope I can tell this story. I am happy to be a room of people who understand.



ANN: Can I ask you a question or two? I have had the chance to see the trailer. So if you go on You Tube and search *Dirty Thirty* and search Hannelore Williams, you will find the trailer to her film. *Dirty Thirty*. Hannelore Williams. I found it very provocative because there were things in there that were really ignorant, so people who told me about it, said what is this going to be? With a little fear. One hand I am really excited to see it because it is what is out there and not covering up, and not trying to tell a politically correct story, it was really going at the reality of people's continuing questions and biases and ignorance, and I wonder if you are going to explore and confront that or what.

HANNELORE: Yes! I will I initially went to UCS and then I went to NYU and the first thing they teach you in film school is sugarcoat the pill, they are very big on genre and so forth.

ANN: They are in favor of sugar coating?

HANNELORE: They are in favor. I don't like the way things are now, but it does make things more consumable. So what it is, for instance, my sister, the way I got her to agree to it is that she always wanted to be in a reality show.

ANN: Which one?

HANNELORE: Housewives, basketball housewives. So basically what I said was, "Look, I am going to make a reality show about your experience with HIV/AIDS." So I can look back and say to her, the ideas I am trying to excavate are these awful, very embarrassing things we say in our own lives, that our families have said, our communities have said, as if they are triggers. And then when you are triggered I want to delve in and explore what the effects are in our culture, and how that is perpetuating homophobia and how that is perpetuating people not getting tested. And what that perpetuates the spread of the disease.

I don't think you can really address—the non political or scientific—I don't think we can address the history of it until we really attack the problems of the community without addressing where we are being assholes all the time. We have to hold a mirror up to it. So I try to say that the series is going to explore what can be done but in the episodes I want to draw focus on the abstract ideals in our culture. And there is a whole interactive with the show that I didn't mention in the first trailer, but in the second trailer you will see there is a whole interactive look that looks at the history, and it is really educational.

ANN: And you are going to show it to 6th graders?

HANNELORE: Yes!

TED: So now we should read the statement from Jonathan David Katz.

ANN: Together?

TED: Oh Regis do you want to read the first paragraph or the second?

ANN: You read it.

(Ted reads statement)

DAN: Hi My name is Dan Fishback. I have been touring a solo performance called *thirtynothing*, about my encounter with artists and writers in the 80s and 90s that is being adapted into a book that deals more broadly with the topic we are all talking about here. And so I have lots of things to say about this. So I will just condense.

My encounter with AIDS history and my idea of AIDS history naturally and organically brings me back to the present and sort of radicalizes me. I started this process identifying as a queer radical and this encounter as made me challenge my own radicalism, my own knowledge and ways that I am accountable to my privilege and all sorts of other things. Learning about the past always ends up with me encountering HIV criminalization today, encountering the prison industrial complex in general and all sorts of other issues today.

What disturbs me is I keep encountering people who are excited about *How to Survive A Plague* and the New York Historical Society exhibit who don't believe that it is possible to package AIDS history in such a way that other people will have a similar experience as mine. I encounter the idea that AIDS needs to have it's Anne Frank's first: the likeable, middle class version of the person we are suppose to be identifying with because we couldn't possibly with any other kinds of people. We are at a stage where we have to be okay with, and we have to support super white washed, vanilla, versions of this history, so the details can come later. And so that the more radical version of history can come later, because some how, inevitably it will. So, I guess what I want to throw to the room is this conflict between well-intentioned queer people that are too satisfied with a simple banal version of history.

And also, just to say, when I started to research this in 2009, there was almost no interest or dialogue from people my age on this. And in the last few years there has been a huge explosion of interest. Back then it felt like there was a communities of younger people and older people in New York, and now it feels more and more that in the queer arts world in New York, it feels more and more there is an intergenerational community. That is where history gets passed down with the most nuances and the most substance—the actual relationship, people actually talking to each other.

KATE: Hi I am Kate Huh, an artist, filmmaker and curator. I wanted to respond to something Ann mentioned that I think ties into something Jason had said..."these shows, what do they really do, and why, what is really happening here?" And that is a conversation I have had with so many activist friends of mine. My feeling about it, different people received different information through different venues, and things in a verbal way touch not everybody. Some people are moved by music, by visual things. And you don't necessarily know what is going to hit somebody at a practical moment and politicize them. And when I think about my own political history it is sometimes the most random thing that has gotten me to where I am. But then I was thinking about what Jason had said, about who are *we*, what is this community, and I think this is something I will never be able to know. It is vast and complicated, just as HIV/AIDS is.

But when I was thinking about what to say it flashed in my head, I remember when I was leaving the NYU Gran Fury show. I saw that show several times when it was up and as I was leaving on the last day it was up and some random women, young women, were

walking down the street, and they were like - "Oh cool, what is this?" And as I was walking out I said, "You should really go in there. There is some amazing stuff in there. I really suggest you take a look at". And they were like, "Cool, we are not doing anything." and in that moment they walked in.

That for me is the reason for political art, or even art that touches on AIDS that isn't overtly political. You just never know what is going to spark someone in one direction or another. That for me is a reason for artists to make work about AIDS or artist with AIDS making work. This is showing their viewpoint and you never know how someone is going to encounter it and at one venue.

TED: So we are going to play Occupy Wall Street. We are going to call stack. Raise your hand if you want to talk, Noam will get your name, or your shirt color at least.

TRINA: Hi my name is Trina Rose and I am an artist. I call my work an exploration of the identity politics and intersections of gender, sexuality and disability. I identify as Crip, which is really an academic way of saying queer theory meets disability studies. I find there is very much an overlap of political movements within the two movements.



In disability studies there is critical look at the way personal individual stories are not the way to go politically. It obscures the politics; it obscures the systems that reinforce the oppressions. For example in 1996 in Canada there was an organization for Intersex activists and now there is no longer one because it is considered a disorder and it's the

medicalization of these things that can obscure the bigger and larger meta stories. I think about this a lot.

There is an archetype that we use in disability studies called "Super Crip", and it is the one who overcomes the tragedy. They are like super man, like Christopher Reeves. This super crimp, they are standing with their muscles in a wheelchair, you know? So we find that often problematic, and I was just wondering, you know I heard, "PWAIDS" in the John Waters' story, which I image comes from PWDs - people with disabilities - it is a short cut we often use. I have heard people say HIV versus person, and also Hugh Ryan said "for us, by us" and one of the big slogans in disability studies is "Nothing about us, without us." So I see a lot of these over laps and I often wonder what kind of conversations we could have about that and about the individualizing of stories that bring forth this kind of heart touching tragedy mode, that makes us reach out to each other in a way that obscures the who the "they" actually is? And I think more of our conversations need to be about defining the "they" and the "what" that the "they" are doing.

ANN: Yes

TRINA: I think the younger generations want to make differences they just don't know where or who or what or how and I am not sure if that is the institution's role. I don't know if it's the museum's role. But I feel like those of who are involved in the struggle need to make that more clearly defined.

TED: Going to Joe in the Green Shirt

JOE: These questions are for Hugh Ryan about your Times op-ed piece. I just want to say thanks a lot for writing it and publishing it. I am wondering what your impetus for writing and publishing the piece instead of just thinking about it? Why did you choose another major New York institution to publish it? And also what you think about, what seems to me to be the most feared position —I know you represent the POP UP MUSEUM—but it just struck me as a piece written by an individual to an institution and it is a very difficult position to take especially in relation to representations of HIV/AIDS that are often made by collectives or individually made collectivity, having that position now, and speaking to the New York Historical Society.

HUGH: The way I ended up writing it was really by accident. My partner had wanted to see the show and he had not seen it yet, and I was furious the entire way through it and he was fine. I was URRGH! We had this very long conversation towards the end and we were lucky enough to come across someone at the museum, by coincidence, that I had happened to interview many years ago who worked in HIV testing. He had a very different reaction to the show. We had this really great conversation in the little alcove before you enter the show, really being frustrated by the curatorial viewpoint of the show. I wanted to talk about that. Both of them had experienced the show mostly by

avoiding the curatorial wall text, and looking at the objects. So they had a very different perception of the show. And I realized that it was like we had seen two different shows. So I left the show, and I was like, I am not the be all and end all of all this, I am going to think about it and I was really frustrated. By the end of the day I sat down and wrote down why I was frustrated and then I articulated the particular panels that were frustrating. I needed to write something to figure out what exactly was I feeling, and then I needed to talk to other people about what I had been struggling with from there. I ended up with a short piece expressing my frustration and I had no idea what to do with it and then I thought the most frustrating thing at the end of the day was that I had no way to talk to the curators at the New York Historical Society, there was no platform, which was really unfortunate. But I thought, there is one big platform out there that is theoretically open to everyone. So I just took a chance. I emailed the editors there and they liked it and it worked out shockingly well. It really was because I went in felt frustrated and talked to other people about it and that is how the piece came out. I am trying to remember the 3rd part...

JOE: What you might think about being an individual who speaks to a major institution.

HUGH: I will say this, as I mentioned it earlier, one of the things I did not think about in writing the piece was the reception of the piece by those who may be turned off from ever going to the show or engaging in any way with the show. And also the reception by the curators of the show; regardless of what happened I do think that they were well intentioned. And I wish going back I had said, if you disagree with this show see it during the free hours, don't pay. And I wish that I had contacted the curators at the time and said, listen I am publishing this; I would like to talk to you about it.

I do worry that so often we think of ourselves as individuals with limited power facing these institutions and then to have a moment of power and in that moment, at the same time engage with the institutions itself and say, look, I want this to be a dialogue. I regret, not having done that, which is one of the reasons I was so excited about this—to have dialogue about the broader issues of the piece. But I was worried about doing it in many ways, I was scared about what the response would be, scared that they would be mad at me, which I think is part of doing activism, you worry what people are going to think of you. All they know of you is 800 words on a page. What if you say something wrong?

Jim you were saying earlier about not being afraid of not being politically correct. And I think a part of that is not being afraid to put an idea out there that creates feedback and not being afraid to talk to those people who will give you that feedback.

One of the greatest things to come out of the piece was I have had people come out to tell me things that I was wrong about. Or things they disagreed about. I have been having a great email conversation with someone in Brooklyn about the word queer, and his response to it and why I use it, and why he doesn't. It has been fascinating but I do

think that anytime you engage in that kind of criticism, one of the biggest parts of the work is preparing yourself to be criticized back.

ANN: What was the reaction of the New York Historical Society?

HUGH: They printed a Letter to the Editor in the Times the next week that was fairly unfocused. They said they felt that I wanted to reduce the early years of the epidemic only to homophobia and that they had an audio tour. We also contacted them to come be part of this discussion. I don't know if anyone from there is here tonight. If you are I want to say thank you, its got to be hard to walk into. But that has been the extent of the response that I have seen.

JONATHAN NED KATZ: Did you ask for someone to be on the panel?

TED: Yeah, we should say that we asked a lot of different organizations and some of them sent responses and some of them sent statements and some of them ... well maybe they are on vacation. And now we are going to talk to the guy in the plaid shirt.



AVRAM: Hi, my name is Avram Finklestien. I am a seasoned wise ass and I am a founding member of Gran Fury and The Silence = Death Project, and I just want to throw my hat in the ring by saying a couple years ago I was approached by the UN Office of Drug and Crime to curate one of these types of shows and take some of the meaning of agitprop and the early days of the AIDS crisis, and as somebody whose practice has always been

focused on institutional critique and was dragged into the canon screaming, I made a counter proposal of a roving series, an international network of activists / artists, collectives, rotating memberships that would go from locality to locality and each cell would be working on a pop up project about whatever their particular issues were. Which of course did not happen, but my thing about this domesticizing our history, or the history of the AIDS crisis, is exactly what happens when we take something off the streets and put it into any sort of institutional setting.

I do think we have an opportunity through programming to actually steer the ship around and make the subject the work, rather than the making of the work, the process of the work, the collectivity, or as Hugh was saying - the engagement, which is really the point of this.

To be shown a poster on the wall and be told that it was really significant but you have no sense of context or no other way of being told, you have no sense of why it might of actually been significant, we have an opportunity, and sort of a responsibility as culture makers, queers, whoever we are to share that conversation and make it about the reason the work was made, not the work.

TED: Anybody have something to say while I run to Zach in the white t-shirt?



ZACH: Hi everyone, I am Zach Frater. This question is for Mr. Ramaron and Ms. Sadao. We were talking a little bit before there are these histories that need to be shared. We

all know friends whose work we want to have a platform. I would love Kia's work—both with grenAIDS and LaBeija—to be better known. I think at the same time, as a queer of color I fear that institutions tend to cannibalize a lot of the work that we make, not just for institutions, but work we may even make for ourselves or outside of that institution, in clubs - like voguing for example. I don't think it is a coincidence that we have - I tend to feel more comfortable at Dirty Looks or the Pop Up Museum, we don't - we almost, fear institutions. We don't want our work to be misinterpreted, I think. I guess my question is, how can we solve it - I mean not solve it - how, as people of color in institutions, how do you navigate - I mean, I feel sometimes - I would love to have an internship at the studio museum - well that is different - I would love to do an internship at MoMA. But at the same time I don't want to be the only one that looks like me and have to explain what this work is about, or on the other hand, hear what they think the work is about. How do you navigate that as people of color in intuitions?

EDWIN: It's funny that you said you wanted to do more related programming. World AIDS Day, Day With(out) Art—Can you imagine the Studio Museum being asked to do more Kwanzaa? So it is very much the tokenizing that happens. And you know what? Go get that internship at MoMA, because we need you there. Navigate is one thing. I glossed over a lot of the stuff I had done because we have a huge panel but I have been very fortunate to have been pushed by organizations like Visual AIDS as much as they are not institution, they are not MoMA, they are not the Met.

We put too much faith in museums. I came from a museum - so here I am. I think we do, we honestly do, put too much faith in museums, and they are not going to be the best, the most progressive the way we are thinking about it today—too be honest. And I have to give props to the organizations that do, to the alternative spaces that have been doing it for a long time, that were oppositional to the institution. I was fortunate to work with a lot of groups: APICHA in particular, a lot of street work that happened out of there, Street Works, the Latex Ball. These were all founded on very separatist notions, in a way. And this is important.

We always talk about de facto, de jour, like separatism within the US context; we have a lot of institutions and organizations that were founded back during the civil rights and gay and lesbian movement. They were founded to push forth—not a separatist notion—but really to find a way to integrate a lot of different voices and histories.

It is funny to always ask Visual AIDS to do World AIDS Day - don't ever ask them to do that. Cause every day is World AIDS Day. Everyday is Day Without Art. Everyday is Kwanzaa, every day is Christmas. I have always been, the most progressive work I have done, has not been at museums. So I am never going trust them to tell my story. Not to be a pessimist. Yeah, Amy!

AMY: That is a hard one. When I got to the museum I was like wow, I was talking to so friends in Philly and I actually did an event where I went with my assistant and some

artists I have worked with in the past and a few people I knew from Philly like Dan (Fishback) and Ezra (Nepon) and just put the word out to queer and trans activists, and also cultural workers to say, come over, meet the new director and why don't we all have a coffee and do a potluck or something. About 40 or 50 people showed up, and it was interesting. A lot people said "we want to see this in the museum", or "we want to program this in the museum" and I said, I just got here in Philly and I will tell you that we do six shows a year and that is that and some of them will come from these ideas—and we are going to take that to the curatorial team. And part of that is by me. Like I do things outside.

I am coming from New York where my world was working with a lot of different people. Inside and beyond Visual AIDS, which was not even—it's an institution but not. And that I want a part outside of the museum and that is really important to me. I mean, I am with Edwin, take the internship at MoMA.

During these conversations I kept saying—it is interesting what ICA programs. Like, how they have Wu's film and they have all the people talking there, but the institution itself seems really straight and white and I went, yeah, cause it is an institution. What is great about ICA is it's connection to this Ivy League institution - but it's an Ivy League institution. And that is what it looks like, and trying to change that...I remember talking to Pato Hebert before I left, and he told me about how when he played football in high school and when he got to college there was a draft and you bring the kids up from pee wee, and think about that not only in terms of bringing people to museums. That is why we work here. I totally work here because people of color, queer people, activists, went out of their way and said, "you are smart, you can do this, come do this with us". I think bringing people into an educational system, bring people in to Penn and—at the very least—what I am trying to do is create a sense of transparency. Because I don't really know another way to interact with people because of where I come from, which is bringing kids in. Queer, trans kids in from places like The Attic, or The In-School Project and literally have them come and sit in my office and I can tell you about ICA and why I am the Director: *cause I worked for 10 years for Visual AIDS, and this incredible artist did this and taught me this. And this is the back of the museum, and it is not that much different. That girl down there is now the program curator. She got a scholarship.*

At least for the people that work in the institutions there is more of a level - a sense people can break in there and hopefully we can transform these institutions.

JIM: My name is Jim Saslow and, Amy, you mentioned Ivy League institutions. I went to three of them and it was not all together pleasant or unpleasant. I ended up a professor and I would like to inject a teacherly point of view, about institutions. I think there is an underlying issue in all of the comments I have been hearing. It sort of boils down to this or that, this or that show is too simplistic, it is not explicitly radical, it's not politically aggressive, therefore there is a problem.

Now sure we would all like the head of the New York Historical Society to come out as a Marxist, she is not going to do that. She use to be at CUNY and is not known to me to be very progressive. My point is, we have to understand that the people in this room are relatively small minority in the world at large. We think what we would like to be presented is not what most people want. And not what most people are able to take in. The mainstream institutions have mainstream voices; they are not starting from where most of us are starting from.

I saw the New York Historical Society show, I wept every time I saw a photo of one of my old friends who is dead. Most people going to that show do not know whom any of these people are; they have no emotional response to Vito Russo. Who they hell is Vito Russo? And I think we have to acknowledge that when we get to the work, the mainstream audience is the basis before we can get to the next step of critical analysis.

Just an example, in my field, which is Renaissance art, now considered trendy and progressive to teach it as colonial art, from the Americas as part of the story of the Renaissance. Why separate one from the other? And so I thought this was great. I am going to start out now with a whole new unit in my history course and I am going to tell them about intellectual suppression of alternatives and we are going to talk about how representation has power, how the Europeans were trying to change their mind set on colonial people by restricting images, and the first question I get from the students is, Where is Peru? So, you know let alone what is censorship, what is intellectual suppression? Or what is social construction of reality through discourse? They are not there. We can't talk about that until we do something else first and so I understand the criticisms you had of the show but I wasn't as upset about them as you are because I sort felt like the people coming in there needed what was given to them before they could go any place further.

DAN: Seriously Why? (Sorry, sorry)

IAN BRADLEY-PERRIN: Hi My name is Ian, from Montreal. Everyone was wonderful. I hear a lot of people talking about, what do we want and it is a huge we, an urban we, and it is an activist we in terms of history of AIDS. I am just wondering how we can expand our notion of "we" beyond the city, beyond activism, beyond the people who were in the city fighting to include people who didn't live in the city? Didn't have the energy or the time or the health to fight for themselves? How can we incorporate them into this piece so we can tell our own history, and even make it more inclusive? I am not sure if anyone wants to answer it?



KARL: I would say that is what is at stake at Hugh's piece. I thought it was really interesting and important that you ended the description on the subway and seeing that guy frightened to sit next to you to a couple that was Middle Eastern, I think. You make this connection between how by whitewashing this history of homophobia from this exhibit that has larger repercussions beyond the politics of HIV/AIDS; it has larger repercussions about how people view their power politically.

It was interesting, Dan, how learning AIDS history has lead you to other things like the prison industrial complex, and I think that is where I would disagree we need to simplify the stories we tell because we are also working those stories and they have larger political effects beyond HIV/AIDS to prison industrial complex, racism and so I think that is how we enlarge the "we". That is sort of the activist approach. It is true what Jim said, we are the victors. The activists are the victors. We should tell that story.

HUNTER: I agree completely and I would add what we need is the local aspect, and use that to build a true story and use that to have an emotional impact. It is very easy to look at different exhibitions out there and be distracted. I heard someone earlier say something about work on the walls, and how it doesn't impact them. And I actually hate that. There is almost no community on the planet that has not been affected, or isn't being affected by someone with HIV/AIDS. So it is not an urban problem or problem that anyone is free from. So find that piece of the story and truthfully tell that story.



JIM: Hi, I am Jim Bredeson. I want to add what we are speaking about, I started 3 years ago a project to research Michael Callen, before that I could not have told you about ACT UP meant, what its acronym was. I think there are a lot more of me than there are of us in this city and in this country. I think it is important that we go to where Hugh went in the end and where he went today. We can critique these things and we should go there to look for truth. We should go to museums to look for truth. But they are not really giving us that truth—the conversation that happens afterwards is.

I had an amazing experience at the New York Historical Society exhibition because I walked in with two elders and two young men my age. We came together with common knowledge. And some how walked away with truth and an idea. But the idea we should take neophytes and through them into this room and ask them to participate seems outlandish and extraordinary and I can't think of a better example than Peru. When I didn't think that 6th graders could tell us what AIDS stood for. And so for me I have lots of complaints about the exhibit. I enjoyed trashing it with people walking out. But I did enjoy the fact that it sat on Central Park West and that tourists and young people went there.

QUESTIONS FROM TWITTER and CONCLUSION

TED: We have questions from the Internet. We are going to ask the four questions and people can just think about them and respond. This is not from Karl McCool but it is directed to him. (Buzz tries to explain to Ted that it is not directed at Karl) Oh, someone is using your twitter feed to ask a question: Why are you so handsome? No.

“How do we use old material without placing it in the past?”

“How do we talk about the AIDS crisis of the ‘80s and ‘90s without insinuating that it is over?”

This is from Amy Fung, who wants her twitter handle read, @someasianbitch. She is my friend so I can say that. Her question is, “Are we telling stories about PWAs or are we telling stories by PWAs?”

And, aside from an op-ed in the New York Times, how can and how should one voice dissent to cultural institutions? Should we just go down the row?

ANN: Burn it down.



AREIL FEDEROW: I am the other half of the Internet. So a larger statement from Amy is, "I am curious about stories about people with AIDS and by people with AIDS. I am interested in the existing institutional hurdles and frameworks for how we can tell stories in museums by non-professional artists without reducing the curatorial premise to being outsider work that is just fetishized for its marginalized position."

EDWIN: Hot potato

JIM: The problem I have confronted in several ways is how to talk about the past without it being dead and in the past. Both in *United in Anger* and in curating these screenings for the NYPL, to try and say this is not the whole story, there is more to it, and in some way it continues into the present and the future. That is the function of the timeline in *United in Anger*. ACT UP did not end in 1993. It is still going on. In the screenings for the NYPL I am adding a couple pieces from outside the collection, shoe horn them in. To say that people in 2013, people are still talking about this and dying of AIDS.

JASON: For me it is the curatorial context constantly has to refer to the present moment. That is how they stop being artifacts that are dead even when they include statistics. So many of ACT UP's visuals had statistics. There is one poster that said "One AIDS Death Every Half Hour." And every time you see a statistic you have to ask what are the numbers like now. So how does this compare to this present situation we are in?

And to the question that has been going around, I think part of the challenge as a curator is that part of the challenge in these larger institutions, you actually get to speak to all these various people, all these audiences at the same time. Speak to the total novice and the total expert because I have to assume that everyone in ACT UP is going to come into the show and have something to say so I have to try and make something accessible to someone who knows nothing and speak to some body who knows a lot. And to your point, I am trying to have both the actual voices and cultural products created by these activists and people living with AIDS, and people just cared very passionately about the AIDS crisis and loved ones and made those voices come to life in the show. I think it is a combination.

HUGH: I think I want to flip the lens on the question a little bit. I do believe we have to figure out ways to talk about the past and their relevance today and not to relegate them so they are done with. But I also think there is nothing wrong with the past. And we have an education system in this country that has taught us that the past is dead and boring and we are over it, and it is received wisdom handed down to us and we simply write it down from a text book and then get a multiple choice on it later. And I think that idea of the past is terrible. I think it undercuts our ability to do any kind of organizing. We can't look backwards and have an argument about what the meaning of the past is when the past is presented to us as dead for the first eighteen years of our educational life.

I think it is very hard to actually engage in the past in a meaningful way. One thing that the pop up museum is concerned with is putting the tools of history in our hands. We run a program for K thru Twelve educators at all our museums on how they are already incorporating queer material into their curriculum. And they will learn how to do it more

so, strategies they are working on. I think it is important that we begin to understand that the past is contested grounds and it is important that we don't let it go.

KIA: I want to talk about stories. Could you actually read that question again?

ARIEL: I am curious about the difference between stories about people with AIDS, and stories by people with AIDS. And I want to hear about the existing institutional hurdles to how we can tell these museums by non professional artists without reducing the curatorial premise with how the works are presented to just outsider work festished to the marginal position?

KIA: I think that is interesting because I think it is very problematic to tell someone else's story. Because it is not coming from their point of view. And it can be put out there in a perspective of the person looking in; you know what I am saying. It is very much like when you are making a documentary, you are showing everything that is happening but it is your voice you are portraying, the images that you are showing. So I think it is very important for us living with HIV, us living with AIDS, that we are able to tell our own story and we are able to find different places to share our stories. I feel like they are not always heard.

I know for example my mom before she passed away left me boxes of things because she kind of knew that eventually she would not be here. Unfortunately it was a lot sooner that we thought. She left me notebooks that were here personal stories. And that is something that I would like to share with the world as well as my own story. When I think about someone handling something so fragile, so personal, so deep is a very scary thing I feel. I know for me, that is why I am doing the same thing. I am writing all my stories down so that when I am gone no one else can tell my story expect for me, the way I saw it the way it came from my mouth, the way I experienced it because of having someone else speak for me can be scary. So I think it is a really great question.



NELSON: The two questions that stuck in my head; the same one, the one about stories, and of course there are different ways to tell stories - narratively, but also the difference between language and visual. I work at Visual AIDS and visually I think of with that question is the archive project at Visual AIDS. The only parameters when the archive project started, in '94, were as a way of keeping a record, were that you were self defined as an artist, not even a working artist, just an artist, and at the time that you were open about your HIV status because it is a public archive.

I remember when I started working at Visual AIDS, it was 2000, I was three years out of grad school and all of the sort of critique of art work and contemporary art work and what is good art work - and then seeing this range of work from the Keith Haring and David Wojnarowicz to the Frank Moore and to the artists that make work to survive, it is their own therapy or what not and evaluating well what makes it more important or not. And I think one of things that's kind of amazing about the Archive is that we bring people in to bring web galleries. There is 18 000 images, there is a lot to look at. And in the end it is the context that creates the show. The work is not all about HIV/AIDS. The majority is not. So you are looking at the context of who has created the work, and the context of the archive / curator then puts this work together. So we have had amazing shows about abstraction, and landscape. And things you would not necessary relate to HIV/AIDS and then you read the context and that sort of builds. That allows the artist to tell that story, and then a curator puts the story into a context. And along those lines, someone asked how do you use old images and keep it contemporary, that is something that happens as well. There are older works in the archives. There is that fear of

nostalgia. I agree that it is important that we look at the past but then there is the concern, oh are we in a generation when we are making activism look cool. In some ways I think that is fine as a starting point, almost in the same way as, "Where is Peru?" Like if you think that David Wojnarowicz is cool to start with and then that gets you seeing and thinking about the rest of the work, then that is great. But I think the way to break nostalgia is to keep contemporary, to keep it together.

TED: There are cookies.

(Cookies were passed around)

ANN: There will be breakfast at midnight.

HUNTER: Before I answer I want one of those Chocolate Chip Chips Ahoy.

I want to start someplace different than the question, which is how do you perform feedback, simply write to them, go visit them, begin to develop a dialogue. Every major institution (a cookie arrives) Oh, thank you. I will have a class of milk with that, sir. Every major institution has been interested in that feedback and I encourage everyone to provide it. There is no point in doing these shows unless you are going to impact the people. I have no interest in doing it unless we are going to make impact, as for as those show by PWAs, or about PWAs, I say yes to them both. It is an important aspect in how to get the idea across, and a curator can actually make that happen.

And the last point about the past is about context. I can't image talking about racism or sexism or feminism or civil rights or how it relates to us today and how it related 200 years ago. And when you are able to bring those to things together, this crisis and everything else has impact on your choices.

KRIS: I think, talking about art in the past, I think it is important that a lot of these works have never been seen before, displayed before. I know a lot of the works in the *NOT OVER* show were displayed for the first time. And also second point, realizing that there are long-term survivors who are creating work that should be seen and that is a way of re-contextualizing the work and it is not so much in the past. Keeping it fresh.

KARL: In answering the questions, how do you show works from the past and make it part of the present. At Dirty Looks we try to combine contemporary work with past work as Bradford said, my cohort from Dirty Looks, we have a fairly young audience a lot of the time and it is important for us to show works from the past. They have not seen them, we have not seen them. What we have shown we discovered we didn't get to see it and we wanted to see it. So I feel like when we show works from the past sometimes, we don't view it as - oh we are giving you a history lesson - we are thinking, oh we finally got a copy of this and now we need to share it with others. So I think that combined with others, with the context of the work being viewed as part of an ongoing queer art making, queer community. I hope it engages an audience that speaks to the fact that these works are still speaking to us today. And hopefully inspiring future works.



AMY: I am not sure how to grapple with it. And in some ways answering Amy's question, and responds to a lot of the issues we have been discussing tonight. And my own hopes in running an art presenting institution that while part of an Ivy League institution is free, and I really consider it a public space. I consider it a civic institution. And that our goal, our mission, is to create an invitation to people who are not just artists or art aficionados. Of course we are working with them. But to create invitations to people who didn't think a contemporary art museum was their space. I am longing for this (gesturing at the room), in Philadelphia, at the ICA. I know those people exist who want to have these conversations. And I think we should flood the institutions, and take over the conversation.

I believe in exhibition and what exhibition can be. I wouldn't work for a museum or gallery otherwise. I believe in curatorial practice, and an exhibition you can travel by yourself, independently, silently—have these experiences with visual art works, with performing art works. What I think institutions provide is a place where we can have conversation, and say, "oh I don't believe in your curatorial premise." Or "that didn't work " or "that painting is ugly." Or "that thing doesn't work or why are there no HIV+ artists in this show."

The creation of those public programs can also bring in people are not trained artists or you bring a poet in and a CitiWide Harm Reduction founder, or activist, and you have that conversation. And it is that place where we can really occupy and take over these institutions to create more spaces like this. Cause, you know we want to be together,

and in the larger scheme, that is my interest. And that is something I learned at Visual AIDS.

EDWIN: I will make it real quick, actually about 80s and 90s history, and looking back. I know its tired to think about it being in the past but it is very recent. It is still the issues of representation—just to use the 90s term, I know people hate that term—but it is about representation on so many level, and we are representing what we want on a progressive level. And I am so glad you're at ICA, Amy, because that is going to make a difference. That is why we have to congratulate those who have come up before us, and after us.

I want to address the question of the fetish. It is an idea of history of being a fetish or an object, object will always become fetishes and in fact archive becomes fetish and that is okay for us to look at the fetish but we have to look at it critically. It is good we prop our own. The idea of fetish is a power object so that is okay, to show it has the power to sharing the narratives we have here.

I am also like really interested in the artists in the house - I am going to give shout out - and that is going to be about living - we got Steed Taylor in the house, we have Scouter Paston in the house, Eric Rhein in the house, we have John Hanning, a whole bunch of folks. All the show that I have always done have been about doing studio visits and just going out to the clubs, and finding people where ever you are at. And places where you can't find them. And Ted really pushed me to make this point: one of the ways I was finding out about artists is going online, which is what we all do, but the reality is a lot of our artists don't have access to go and show, you know that is what I have always been interested in. If it is about the quality of the curatorial thrust, that is one thing, the thing is we get to define what that quality is, not letting other define it. I think that it is important that we do reach out to folks who don't have the access to the traditional curatorial and gallery museum context. So good luck.

ANN: First of all, Thank you. Thank you to the panel. Take a cookie! Now move along!

This has been an embarrassment of riches. I think this is the beginning of a conversation, not the end. Clearly there is a lot to talk about and this is just the start, as it seems to me there is much more work to be done in exhibitions in all sorts of venues. When we talk about limited time and resources that is when we get into trouble. We need more conversations.

We have hoped to record this session tonight; technical difficulties prevented that. So it is up to you to take this conversation out into the world.

Thank you all for coming. See you next time.

Statement by Sur Rodney (Sur)

How “should” HIV/AIDS be represented in the public sphere?

Organizing the exhibition NOT OVER: 25 Years of Visual AIDS offered a lot of to consider. The image we had planned to use for our exhibition’s announcement card was a reproduction of a block print by Nancer LeMoins titled: *Will Art Change My Life? Will it bring my fucking friends back?* The square format was not ideally suited for the rectangular announcement format our designer was working with. At cause, we used a video still that pictured the artist Vincent Chevalier, when he was 12 years old, wearing a curly blonde wig. A text ran along the lower border of the image that read: "So when did you figure out that you had AIDS?" In the video, a young Chevalier plays the role of a man blaming his wife, who he had just buried, for infecting him with AIDS. His play-- acting dramatically expressed from the mouth of a 12 year old. Everyone I presented this card to was struck by the image of this child speaking on living with AIDS while pretending to be on a television talk show hosted by his 13 year old girlfriend. This now has me thoughts regarding How HIV/AIDS should be represented in the public sphere, suggest ---- more representation, engagement, and propagation of concerns with AIDS and our youth.

In what ways do museums and galleries create history as much as they display it?

When it concerns a collection of artworks presented as a statement on the AIDS crisis, truncating or eliminating links between the present and past leans towards offensive. That’s what bothered me most about, what appears to be a memorial installed in the side room section of the exhibition *I, You, We*, currently on view at the Whitney Museum of American Art.

When “history” still has dire consequences for the present moment, what kind of engagement should historical institutions have with the communities whose stories they are telling?

Have intergenerational voices represented from as a broader demographic to better present the affects of the story being told. Providing audiences more food for thought and a greater and more balanced awareness to understanding consequences and the inherent diversity of present concerns. As a black, queer, feminist and wanna--be trans activist with a commitment to silver nail polish, I’m looking at so much of this differently than what I see presented. When highlighting histories of the East Village 80s propagated in the most of the material I’ve read ignore the prevalence of gay men and their relations with women as the fuel in the engine driving so much of that period in culture, with black folks most often in the shadows where no one is looking. BOO!

As the crisis of AIDS continues, how do we ensure that the stories that need to be shared are told and heard by those who need them the most?

The first thoughts that come to mind – create more engagement with media; locate more available sources for distribution; and consider segregated communities. That would help a lot.

Statement by Peter Cramer and Jack Waters

We first want to thank Hugh Ryan of the Queer POP UP Museum and Ted Kerr of Visual AIDS for assembling this distinguished panel and Stephan Georgiou for representing us here today. Our experience in creating presentations on this subject has been with cultural institutions like Bronx Academy of Arts and Dance (BAAD), the Shedhalle in Zurich, Switzerland, and most significantly for the Center for Contemporary Culture of Barcelona (CCCB) in 2005.

Our curation titled "Lo Vamos a Hablar (Let's Talk About It)" was the first time that the CCCB had ever observed World AIDS Day. While it seemed odd to us to be asked as foreigners to represent such an auspicious event, we've had a long history in Barcelona and welcomed the chance to further expand our ongoing multi-platform work in process, "Short Memory /No History: A Case of Cultural Amnesia" that was first installed at Shedhalle in 2000.

SM/NH is a living archive of an art practice that intersects with AIDS, Art and Activism. Our approach at CCCB was to give a perspective on how AIDS affected New York City's Latino community, and how that community responded to the epidemic. As a site specific variable media project "Lo Vamos a Hablar" presented conditions that we feel are essential in addressing AIDS themed exhibitions.

First there must be adequate resources to meet the requirements of presenting the material if it is to be relevant to both curators and audiences alike. The support we received from CCCB was enough to commit ourselves as HIV positive people who feel an absolute necessity to relate our version and vision as an example of an expansive story.

Secondly, there must be direct community involvement from wherever the show happens. This means that outreach must be made not just to artists and arts organizations, but to social workers that deal with the subject on a daily basis and know firsthand the situation of not only the disease, but the social and economic disparities of healthcare, housing and education. In the case of the CCCB installation we were New Yorkers who had been to Barcelona many times over the course of 20 years for reasons as disparate as our first European dance tour and later as spectators at the 1990 Summer Olympics. Prior to our mounting "Lo Vamos a Hablar" we'd met local artists, activists and anarchists from the Queer anarchist gathering known as Queeruption in Barcelona. We knew from our social and political engagement with them that they were affected and involved in the subject of AIDS. We asked them to present their works and performances in an institution that they would normally not have had a relationship with - seeing it as out of touch, conservative and part of a system that they opposed. From the institutional perspective of the CCCB the Queer anarchists were marginal troublemakers. Our agenda was to use our position as outsiders as a means bring these disparate factions together. We were told that the initial conflict between the queer anarchists and the staff of the CCCB was assuaged over time as a result of the events and conversations we initiated. Not only were we successful in bridging this cultural divide, we were able to facilitate the institution's PAYING the activists for their involvement.

The third condition is that there must be a relevance as it pertains to the subject without pandering; to not pose as an authority on the subject. In fact, we view our projects as opportunities for our own continuing inquiry. We used the CCCB as an opportunity to relate SM/NH to a trans continental Latino Diaspora. We learned the relationships, commonalities, and distinctions of how the epidemic affected the various Spanish speaking communities of Europe and the Americas by interviewing latinos that were involved in the responses to the AIDS epidemic in New York, Brazil and Spain. We developed a further understanding of what we know as Spain as a nation of diverse, and often oppositional cultures, in the case of Barcelona being the center of Catalonia where radicalism and anarchy informed the cultural resistance to Castilian oppression under the Franco regime. This presented the detail of translating the

written texts and spoken presentations we made during the course of the performances and public forums we presented into Catalan as well as Castilian, in addition to prioritizing the curation of our film and video programming in Catalan, and creating Spanish subtitles for the English spoken documentary we created that has been the centerpiece of the SM/NH project. Importantly we brought Carlo Quispe with us because 1: his Spanish language fluency was essential for communicating with various contacts. 2: his Latino status as a Queer Peruvian American drove home the point of diaspora, and 3: his youth and curiosity brought an objective perspective to the historical nature of the project while appending a present tense context to the epidemic as we currently experience it.

Fourth is that any effort to address the AIDS crisis needs to be a hard, knotty refusal to overcome the social stigma of a disease branded as affecting a marginal portion of the population. Homophobia is endemic in institutions and funders but there are allies that help to move the realities of our LGBT lives to the foreground. The fact that the LGBT community has made a considerable impact in the conversation is a statement that we will not be ignored or silenced.

The project spanned a week of performances and screenings. We collected fliers, brochures, announcements, posters and other literature spanning the heyday of NYC activism to present day activities in Barcelona. The subjects ranging from AIDS/HIV services, drug trial information, treatment options, lobbying actions and demonstrations were displayed and distributed in the gallery and at the events we presented. The topics from our local interviews, public demonstrations, private conversations and dialogues we both instigated and participated in were channeled into the panels and performances we organized.

Our audiences and participants ranged from local AIDS activists; mainly gay men in their 40s and 50s, some of whom were directly influenced by their New York Latino counterparts and others whose experience was their own involvement in the AIDS community of Barcelona. Most of the women we encountered were of the younger generation of queer anarchist activists we invited to participate integrally in the event, with the exception to this being a middle aged woman who spoke at one of the panels about an architectural memorial project she'd designed.

Ultimately any effective presentation must include people with AIDS. We as PWA's must assume responsibilities and actions to guarantee our voices will be heard. All too often history is left to be written by another generation not directly involved- in this case one still aware of the ongoing effects of the disease. Together we must confront the subject directly and humanely in language that delves into the failures and triumphs of our collective experience.

Thank you,

Peter Cramer & Jack Waters

Statement by Jonathan David Katz

Beginning in the early summer of 2015-16, we'll be mounting a traveling, four-museum exhibition called *ArtAIDSAmerica*—a project whose very title, with the word AIDS mediating between Art and America, gives a clue as to its politics. Refuting the view of AIDS as merely a tragic tangent to American culture, with no lasting or generative import, *ArtAIDSAmerica* instead makes it clear that AIDS has long been a motor of change in American cultural life—often most powerfully when and where it has been most powerfully repressed.

Refusing minoritizing narratives, ones that suggest that others, or *the Other*, had AIDS, we begin from the recognition that AIDS is collective and communal. From this perspective, we then explore how and why AIDS culture developed a range of strategies, from activist declaration to the most baroque codings, to negotiate the variously phobic contexts of the last 30 years. Central to our thinking is that AIDS is always in dialog with a larger cultural context, its meanings never its own. As a result, AIDS activism often took on a double charge—to refute general prejudice and ignorance while mobilizing isolated individuals into a community with the power to begin to define themselves.

Credits



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Organizers:

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

The Pop-Up Museum of Queer History is a grassroots organization that transforms spaces into temporary installations celebrating the rich, long, and largely unknown histories of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. We believe that our community – and especially our youth – deserve to know our history. If you don't know you have a past, how can you believe you have a future?

www.queermuseum.com

Co sponsor:

The Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies provides a platform for intellectual leadership in addressing issues that affect Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender individuals and other sexual and gender minorities. As the first university-based LGBT research center in the United States, CLAGS nurtures cutting-edge scholarship, organizes colloquia for examining and affirming LGBT lives, and fosters network-building among academics, artists, activists, policy makers, and community members.

www.clags.gc.cuny.edu

Note: If you have any questions about the transcript or would like to report any errors, please email Ted Kerr at tkerr@visualaids.org or call (212) 627-9855.