

# UPFRONT

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■ SPECIAL SECTION: STATE OF MIND / STATE OF THE UNION

# UPFRONT

A PADD PUBLICATION © 1985  
(Political Art Documentation/Distribution)

PADD 339 Lafayette St., NYC 10012

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## EDITORIAL

# THE NEXT STEP

**T**his issue of *Upfront* has been long in the works. We're sorry to have kept you waiting, and hope you agree it's been worth waiting for. We began working on it shortly after last January's "State of Mind/State of the Union" project. In the interim, it has moved from documentation of that part of our past toward the future. The project itself sparked many questions and connected to a wide range of issues shared by the New York cultural activist community over the last year.

A lot has happened here in NYC since the last issue. It has been happening in the museums (for a change) as well as in the streets, alternative spaces, galleries, and publications. In fact, so much is happening these days that it's almost impossible to keep up with it all. (We're not complaining.) The growth has been in many directions at once, and it is characterized by an increased interaction between all the arts, and between the cultural activists and the political groups.

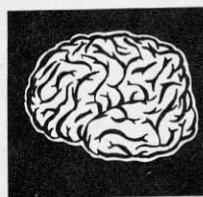
We know now how many people are out there working. Consequently, one issue—coalition building—has taken on a particular importance. The following is a paraphrase/quote from the flyer for a meeting called as we go to press. It was signed by individual members of PADD, Elders Share the Arts, Artists Call Against US Intervention in Central America, PAND, Pregones/Touring Puerto Rican Theatre Collective, Art Against Apartheid, Artists/Teachers Concerned and the Alliance for Cultural Democracy:

*We have reached the next step: we need a coalition for our efforts for Jobs, Peace, and Justice, and against Apartheid, US intervention, and nuclear holocaust. We need a multi-racial, multi-cultural, multi-gender, multi-issue, coordinated effort. Each person's oppression is everyone's oppression. If we network, we can learn from each other—what work has been effective, how we can best produce and distribute art work in all forms and mediums to make a difference, how we can help communities and people find their own power to change the way things are. We need dialogue and collaboration to discuss the visions that inspire us and the nuts and bolts of how things get done.*

PADD's "Out of Sight, Out of Mind" series, begun three years ago, which has brought together Black and Native American artists, Hispanic and Asian artists, Gay and Lesbian artists, had a similar goal. Now the time has come to step things up. This is a unique moment in the history of cultural activism, sparked by fear and fueled by hope. Coalition work is a long political process, but in the end it may be the most satisfying work to which we can devote our arts and minds.

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Organized by PADD

COUNTERVISIONS: An Inaugural Challenge

**STATE of MIND**  
**STATE of the UNION**

# THE FORGING OF ANSWERS

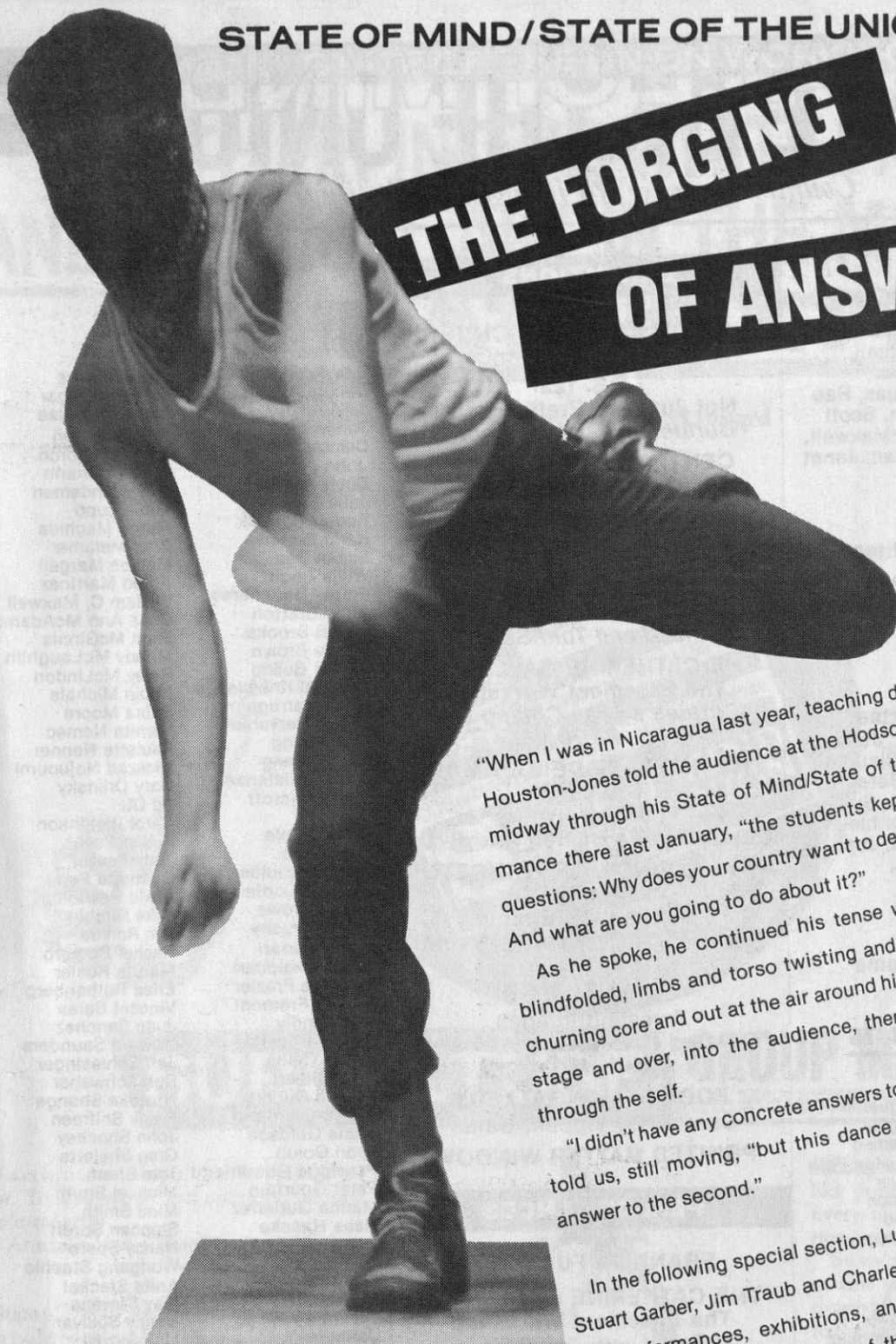


photo: Dona Ann McAdams

"When I was in Nicaragua last year, teaching dance," Ishmael Houston-Jones told the audience at the Hodson Senior Center midway through his State of Mind/State of the Union performance there last January, "the students kept asking me two questions: Why does your country want to destroy our country? And what are you going to do about it?"

As he spoke, he continued his tense whirl of movement, blindfolded, limbs and torso twisting and thrashing around a churning core and out at the air around him, to the edge of the stage and over, into the audience, then back, into and out through the self.

"I didn't have any concrete answers to the first question," he told us, still moving, "but this dance is the beginning of an answer to the second."

In the following special section, Lucy Lippard, Jerry Kearns, Stuart Garber, Jim Traub and Charles Frederick take a look at the performances, exhibitions, and streetworks projects of PADD's State of Mind/State of the Union Counterinaugural Series, at the the NYC cultural activist movement of which the series was a part, and at the larger cultural climate this movement is working to change. They examine the accomplishments we've made in our work here, and the areas in which we need to grow. They pose questions we need to ask ourselves, and attempt—like Houston-Jones, and like all of us asking these questions—to forge the beginnings of answers.

# STATE OF MIND

# STATE OF THE UNION

*Counter-Visions; An Inaugural Challenge*

## Exhibitions Committee

Kathie Brown, Michael Corris,  
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McLindon, Vincent Salas, Sue  
Strand, Nancy Sullivan, Kathleen  
Sweeney, Seth Tobocman, Josh  
Whalen, and others.

## Documentation by Dona Ann McAdams

## PERFORMANCE ARTISTS

Elena Alexander	Michaela
Jerri Allyn & Joe	Gloria Miguel
Lowery	Muriel Miguel
Joey Arias	Vernita Nemeč
The Changing Times	Off the Beaten Path
Tap Dance Company	Edgar Oliver
Fay Chiang	Loretta Orion
Joel S. Cohen	Alyson Pou
Alvan Colon	Rebecca Perrin
Hortensia Colorado	Pronto
Vera Colorado	Pregones
Betsy Damon	Vito Ricci &
Charles Dennis	Ann Rower
Jimmie Durham	Sandra Rodriguez
Elders Share the Arts	Rosalba Rolon
Gary Eller	Julio Santana
Joan Evans	Margo Lee
Fourth Wall	Sherman
Repertory Company	Lari Shox
Hermaphrodites from	Michael Smith
Santo Domingo	Kaylynn Sullivan
Jim Ferraras	Sekou Sundiata
Karen Finley	Blaise Tobia
Ellen Fisher	Danitra Vance
Charles Frederick	Gina Wendkos
Claire Fergusson	Irving Wexler
Iloana Granet	Paul Zaloom
Ishmael Houston-Jones	Paul Zimet
Tannis Huggill	Phil Zwickler
Jose Melendez	

## EXHIBITIONS

### JUDSON MEMORIAL CHURCH Counter-Intelligence

P.S. 122

Not Just Any Pretty Picture  
*Curated by Michael Lebron*

**CENTRAL HALL GALLERY**  
Choice Works  
*Curated by Kathie Brown, Josely  
Carvalho and Janet Vicario*

**WHITE COLUMNS**  
Transference  
*Curated by Tom Halsall, Angelo  
Jannuzzi and Tom Solomon*

**THE CATHERINE GALLERY at  
The Basement Workshop**  
*Curated by Fay Chiang and  
PADD*

**THE INTERART DE ST. AMAND  
GALLERY**  
Four More Years  
*Curated by Janet Heit and PADD*

**ARTS COUNCIL OF PRINCETON  
GALLERY**  
Alternating Currents  
*Curated by Gary Orlinsky and  
PADD*

**10 on 8**  
Arresting Images  
*Curated by Rae Langsten and  
Alfred Martinez*

**FOOD STAMP GALLERY**  
*Curated by Vincent Salas*  
**PRINTED MATTER WINDOW**

## PERFORMANCES

**FRANKLIN FURNACE**  
**THE CATHERINE GALLERY at  
The Basement Workshop**  
*Curated with Fay Chiang*

**PERFORMANCE SPACE 122**  
*Curated by Ann Rosenthal and  
Mark Russell*

**THE BRECHT AUDITORIUM**  
**CENTRAL HALL GALLERY**  
**THE HODSON SENIOR CENTER**  
*Curated with Susan Perlstein*  
*Elders Share the Arts*

**FOURTH WALL REPERTORY  
THEATRE**

## VISUAL ARTISTS

Vito Acconci	Steven Korns
Dennis Adams	Barbara Kruger
Jerri Allyn	Elizabeth Kulas
Tomie Arai	Rae Langsten
Diane Arndt	Dona Ann McAdams
John Arvanities	Greg Lehmann
Doug Ashford	Nicky Lindeman
Julie Ault	Maria Lupo
Rudolf Baranik	Margo Machida
Karin Batten	Brad Melamed
Susan Bee	Marcos Margall
Willie Birch	Alfred Martinez
Frantz Bouchereau	William C. Maxwell
Chris Bratton	Dona Ann McAdams
Daniel Brooks	Mark McGinnis
Kathie Brown	Mundy McLaughlin
Phyllis Bulkin	Betsy McLindon
Carnival Knowledge	Robin Michals
Linus Carraggio	Sabra Moore
Josely Carvahlo	Vernita Nemeč
Fay Chiang	Paulette Nenner
Jean Chiang	Nickzad Nojuoumi
Keith Christensen	Gary Orlinsky
Eva Cockcroft	Ed Ott
Sue Coe	Carol Parkinson
Donald Cole	Susan Peehl
Papo Colo	Judy Penzer
John Copoulos	Quimetta Perle
Michael Corris	David Reynolds
Susan Crowe	Mike Ritchie
Ian de Gruchy	Tim Rollins
Carrie Ferrari	Rachel Romero
Tom Finkelpearl	Martha Rosler
Suzanne Frazier	Erica Rothenberg
Angela Fremont	Vincent Salas
Ed Friendly	Juan Sanchez
Ismael Frigerio	Howard Saunders
Sandy Gellis	Jeff Schlesinger
Ame Gilbert	Rob Schweber
Sharon Gilbert	Ntozake Shange
Enrico Giordano	Frank Shifreen
Annie Goldson	John Shockey
Leon Golub	Greg Sholette
Penelope Goodfriend	Tom Short
Peter Gourfain	Michael Smith
Marina Gutierrez	Mimi Smith
Hans Haacke	Stephen Soreff
Doreen Halsall	Nancy Spero
Tom Halsall	Wolfgang Staehle
Kevin Hanna	Anita Steckel
Susannah	May Stevens
Hardaway	Nancy Sullivan
Janet Heit	Lisa Suzuki
Candace Hill-	Jorge Tacla
Montgomery	Seth Tobocman
Tim Hillis	Bob Trombetta
Wopo Holup	William Tucker
Gilbert Hsai	Julius Valiunas
Arlan Huang	Anton van Dalen
Bob Huot	Janet Vicario
Alfredo Jaar	Carol Waag
Carol Jacobson	Tom Wachunas
Angelo Jannuzzi	Jim Whiting
Jeff	Sam Wiener
Noah Jemison	Thlomena Williamson
William Jung	Xchange TV
Jerry Kearns	Andrea Zakin
Carol Kinney	Holly Zox
Janet Koenig	Laura Zelasnick

# WITH RR IN THE WHITE HOUSE AND POLITICAL ART IN THE MUSEUMS, WHAT NEXT?

By Jerry Kearns and Lucy Lippard



## SUBCULTURE GROUP MATERIAL

AN EXHIBITION OF ART IN THE ADVERTISING SPACES OF THE 1ST SUBWAY TRAINS, SEPTEMBER 1 - 30 1983  
CONCURRENT EXHIBITION OF ALL ARTWORK AT: THE TALLER, LATINAMERICANO 19 WEST 21ST ST., 2ND FLR.  
THIS EXHIBITION MADE POSSIBLE WITH PUBLIC FUNDS FROM THE NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS.

*"To confuse art and politics is a political error. To separate art and politics is another political error."*

—Armando Hart, Cuban Minister of Culture

"State of Mind/State of the Union" was not an isolated event. It is part of a long process, begun before PADD was founded in 1979, and continuing into the future through its effect on what comes next. Six years into this period of activist culture seems like a good time to step back and look at some basic conditions under which we are working today. It's not enough simply to oppose the Bitburgers; we have to clarify our goals.

The artist determined to combine social action, social theory, and esthetic experiment faces a confusing number of options that can further disintegrate already complex and often splintered lives. It helps to understand that most experience is constructed of seemingly contradictory elements



Artists Call

and tension between them is inevitable. Under certain conditions these elements are interdependent, and under others they are antagonistic. Within recent memory—very recent memory—we were still trying to convince people that art and politics could mix at all. Now, along with fighting in the mainstream for the idea of making art in social contexts, we also have to fight within the progressive movement for the idea of

making social art in conventional contexts like museums and commercial galleries. Every success brings new problems; solutions remain elusive.

So we're all wracking our brains to think of new ways to integrate the art and activism in our lives, ways that are satisfying to the artist in each of us as well as to the activist in each of us. We're thinking about the relationships between individuals, between individuals and groups, between groups and groups, between the art community and the progressive political community—all of which amounts to a two-pronged strategy to bring more activism into the mainstream and more culture to the political left.

At heart, artmaking is about self-transformation. And remaking the self is a prerequisite for remaking society, a transformative enterprise that begins at home, but can't stay there. To succeed, activist culture is going to have to develop models for con-

# Arts for a new Nicaragua



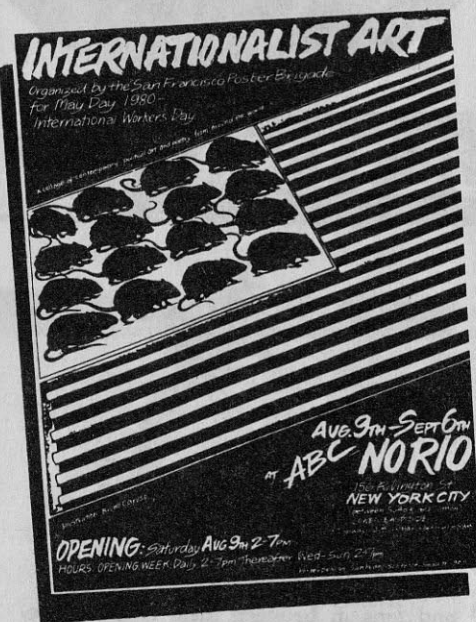
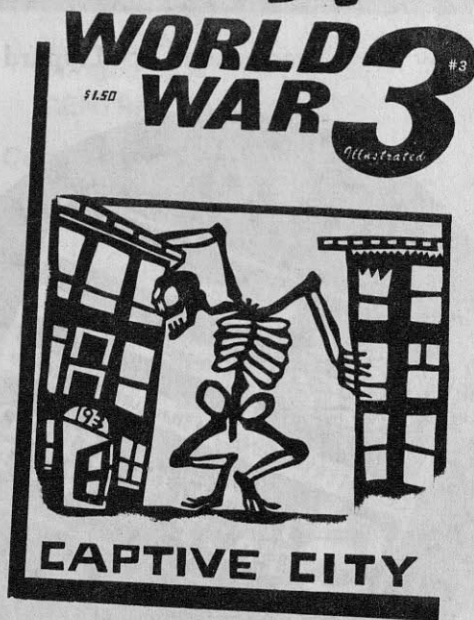
necting self growth and social justice. We have to participate while a new society is being planned, not come in later and decorate it. That means work *in*, not just *with* the Left movement.

But how? Who's got the time? Progressive artists want to be part of a whole. We want to affirm and grow with our community and at the same time we have a profound desire to speak for ourselves. We are constantly frustrated by the apparent conflict between getting immersed in our work, nurturing its subtleties (often with an exhibition in mind), and reacting to the latest global horrorshow with a more public art.

And we struggle with the relationship between the great mass of suffering we see around us and the privileged, concerned individual who wants to make art that doesn't simply reflect that pain, but transcends it, fights it, illuminates its causes as well as its symptoms. There is no reason for us to abandon an issue when the immediate reaction has been stated. The issues themselves and the conflicts they raise have to be drawn into the depths of the esthetic process. And once that is accomplished, how do we distribute our art, and to whom? We are useful to the Movement as creative people, and if we're not creating we have less to contribute. How, then, do we care for and respect the products of our creative selves, develop a nurturing environment for them, and still remain responsible to the image wars we're collectively waging?

What, in other words, are the implications of being a politically active, professional artist? Our future may depend on our capacity to understand and transform the antagonism between professional and political action, the conditions which make artists notoriously reluctant to organize. For a lot of us, the current scenario runs more or less like this: we work in our studios for all of our "free" time; at some point the news or our activist friends get through to us; we join a project, then maybe a group, which in turn leads to more projects and sometimes more groups. As more tasks loom, as the complexities become obvious, leaving us with still more meetings to go to, we often burn out, go back to the studio, slam the door, until there's another Soweto or Vietnam or Nicaragua and . . .

For an activist culture to grow and build beyond these groundswells, we have to construct a stronger, broader base (and a softer place to fall back on when we need some space to think and create—a launching PADD instead of a PADDed cell). The process starts within our lives and our own community and it keeps on moving out. As activists and artists, we choose to express directly the conflicts and contradictions in



which we live. We do this not only in demonstrations and political actions, but in our art. That's a courageous stance, which threatens to further disintegrate our lives unless we learn to understand it and use it to build a context for survival.

A surprisingly large proportion of the artists' community has at one time or another

participated in some sort of collective activity, no matter how briefly. New skills and awareness are often acquired in the process. A lot of artists who would not see themselves as "members" of any group are available for specific projects and exhibitions, attend events and even financially support those who are more active.

In the anti-Vietnam war period, artists came together first as a professional interest group to combat the art institutions. Then they became antiwar activists within the art world, and then they entered the larger structure of the Movement. Throughout the supposedly laidback '70s, a good number of co-op galleries, grassroots groups, truly alternate spaces, video and performance collectives, and publications were formed. After the Artworkers Coalition (1969-71), Women Artists in Revolution (1969-70), Ad Hoc Women Artists/WEB (1970-74), and the Foundation for the Community of Artists (1971-), came Artists for Cultural Change (1975-77), the Anti-Imperialist Cultural Union (1977-79), and *Heresies* (1976-). Most of these explosions of reaction to war, corporate culture, sexism and racism foundered on internal factionalism. But they provided a process of self-education that is responsible for today's expanded politics of culture.

Today, for the first time in decades, activist art groups are lasting long enough to grow up a little; PADD, Group Material, Colab, Fashion Moda and ABC No Rio all began 5-6 years ago. We know now that a group has to work for its active membership while it reaches out to more participants and broader audiences.

We work in four places: within the accepted art system—from schools to museums to galleries and the institutionalized "alternate" spaces; within the cultural groups and organizations, such as PADD, Art Against Apartheid, Artists Call Against U.S. Intervention in Central America, Group Material, ABC No Rio, Basement Workshop, Taller Boricua, and others—to list those in New York alone; and within the progressive political movement where groups like CISPES and the Taller Latinoamericano do cultural work themselves. Among and within these cultural groups there is a wide political spectrum. Some relate directly to the art system and function primarily to open up that system to broader, livelier, more conscious ways of operating. Others relate most directly to the Left, and are exploring new art forms (especially within the demonstration format) that allow artists a public esthetic political voice. PADD itself tries to mediate between groups with regular discussion vehicles (*Upfront*, the monthly Second Sundays), and with big annual projects that attract more artists to this kind of work. Recently we have also been thinking in terms of small collaborative workshops, perhaps inter-organizational.

Artists Call and Art Against Apartheid can periodically mobilize large numbers of

people around their specific issues. providing contexts in which people can act politically with or within their art. Group Material concentrates on organizing group shows for different publics (in subways, buses, and recently, the Whitney Museum). ABC No Rio works out of its own Lower East Side space. Artmakers makes murals for different communities. Basement Workshop and Taller Boricua work primarily with the Asian and Hispanic communities, respectively, and Colab... well, it's hard to tell what Colab and Fashion Moda are doing now, but in the past, they have offered lively options for artists and broken down both institutional and cultural barriers.

Over the last year, the combined activity of these groups has been impressive. Art Against Apartheid has continued nationally from its big October campaign and plans another cluster of events in the fall. ABC No Rio has published a book that is an exuberant compendium of five years of activity in the more-or-less activist sphere. Artists Call has "chapters" in some 40 cities nationally and, from New York, has organized performance events and cabarets, street art and street theatre, public video and film programs, poetry readings, and a Central American exhibition; and it coordinated the four-part Spectacle of Transformation at the April 20th demonstration in Washington, D.C. Group Material did "A.D.: Christian Influence on Contemporary Art" in the East Village, the cross-cultural "Americana" installation at the Whitney, and "MASS" is traveling nationally. The Alliance for Cultural Democracy had a successful conference in Washington (and plans a real dilly for Chicago in October), continues to publish *Cultural Democracy*, and has added regional bulletins to its output. PADD has published *Upfront*, though *Red Letter Days* has "temporarily" folded; the monthly *Second Sundays* are now performance/discussion evenings, and we sponsored the big performance, exhibition and streetwork series on which this issue of *Upfront* focuses—"State of Mind/State of the Union."

So what is our state of mind, what is the state of our union? With Rappin' Ronnie in the White House and political art in the museums, what next? Activist art seems to be at a particularly fertile point in its history. The relationship of culture to left political organizations has greatly developed since 1980, though like all relationships it has its problems. Despite the continued fragmentation of the political left itself, cultural workers are more respected, more organized, and more politically savvy than we have been in a long time. We now understand (though the politicians don't quite get it yet) that cultural workers know things that other activists don't know; that for the Left to be most effective we must be full participants. When we are effective, then the Movement itself has better access to its own vision.

At the same time, the mainstream has

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even to some extent legitimated certain kinds of "political art"—sometimes by hating it and sometimes by loving it almost to death. The New York Times is being forced to write about "political art" (however biased and ignorant its coverage). And there are even a few "political art stars" who make money and get invited to the best places. That's great, but it poses new problems for activist artists. Now that we're in the door, the time has come to do some housecleaning, raise some dust in there, see what's changed when it's settled. And as we learn to act on both sides of the fence, we have to maintain our critical faculties, to resist the Left's "censorship" as much as that laid down by corporate culture, to question our own lines and where we're drawing them.

Presently, each cultural group is dependent on the success with which its core members can juggle their roles as artist, wage earner, and activist. (Sometimes we even have personal lives.) Each group has a center of dedicated souls who keep things going. This core stimulates and maintains, but it can sometimes impede progress by becoming cliqueish and unable to delegate responsibility. These charcoal phoenixes—cyclically burning out and rising from the ashes—either catalyze others by lending their energy to those who can't do as much, or they make others feel guilty when they get desperate for help... at which point help is often withheld.

We are beginning to see that membership in each group will continue to swell and fall in relation to fashions in art and issues. Raygun squeezes one off and artist/activists summon the energy to express their collective outrage *one more time*. It's a reflexive mechanism, doomed to reflect the whims of the opposition. The only way to get beyond this burn-out roller coaster is to coalesce the energies and talents of the multiple core groups—to build an ongoing coalition.

Police killings in Pretoria, death squads in El Salvador, gentrification in Manhattan, and Star Wars "defense screens" are inter-related. To consistently underscore these and other connections through oppositional culture—to unite and advance an understanding of how such madnesses feed off each other—would be an important step in building that "context for survival." When we work together, uniting our separate issues and interests, we form a lattice of cultural opposition—a counter vision begins to take shape.

In recent meetings, PADD members have discussed various coalition options. We are hopeful about meetings with other organizations this fall. We don't envision a new "supergroup," so much as ways of moving toward closer communication, coordination, and cooperation. Effective coalition work can enhance and expand each organization's capacities. But this isn't the place for specific proposals. They should evolve through mutual discussions, and meet real needs. No time like the present to ensure that we have a future.

# WRESTLING

# WITH



photo: David Reynolds

# THE

# DARKNESS



By Stuart Garber

Leon Golub, *Heretic's Fork*

## I. THE EXHIBITIONS

**S**tate of Mind/State of the Union was the most ambitious project of PADD's five-year history, a culmination of our efforts to promote the production and visibility of socially concerned art, and the influence of this work not only on the artworld, but on society at large.

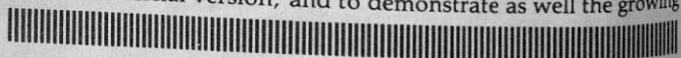
We've worked in many ways to do this over the years. We've organized exhibitions, a continuing series of monthly discussions and performances, and a national conference of cultural activist groups; we've organized artists and exhibitions against gentrification on the Lower East Side with Not For Sale and used our art to enliven demonstrations on a variety of political issues; we've assembled a vast international archive of socially concerned art; and we've published a monthly left-cultural calendar and nine issues of this magazine.

With the exception of Not For Sale, our demonstration work, and several other, smaller projects like *Death and Taxes*, though, most of PADD's efforts have taken place within the confines of

NYC's downtown progressive cultural community. State of Mind/State of the Union (SMU) was our first major attempt since Not For Sale to move outside of that realm, to address a broad public audience with works by socially concerned artists.

As a multi-media political art festival of exhibitions, performance events and streetworks, SMU's form was inspired by the successful debut efforts of Artists Call and the plans that were underway at the time of its conception for the equally significant Art Against Apartheid campaign. But while those projects focused on very specific issues, SMU directed itself to the entire range of issues facing—and imposed by—this society, at a time when, at least in theory, such issues were to be a major focus of public attention: during the Presidential Inauguration and State of the Union Address.

We wanted to present, to as wide an audience as possible, a diversity of views on the state of the union that would serve to unmask the official version, and to demonstrate as well the growing





number of artists who are addressing their work to issues of the society. We invited artists to be as imaginative as they desired, to make works that were deeply personal as well as profoundly political, that presented "countervisions" for a more responsive society as well as critiques of current policies and conditions.

In terms of sheer volume, the series was an enormous success. Over 130 visual artists contributed works in an exhilarating range of styles and themes for the exhibitions, which were held at eight locations. More than 40 individuals and groups presented an equally diverse and imaginative series of performances in seven programs of works. Nearly two dozen artists participated in the Streetworks campaign, making images and word messages aimed at breaking Ronald Reagan's seemingly hypnotic hold on the voting public, and nearly 200 artists around the country sent mailart works to the White House as part of our ImageGram campaign. In addition, we worked together with 14 other cultural organizations as diverse as The Food Stamp Gallery in East Harlem, The Hodson Senior Center in the South Bronx, The Princeton (NJ) Arts Council

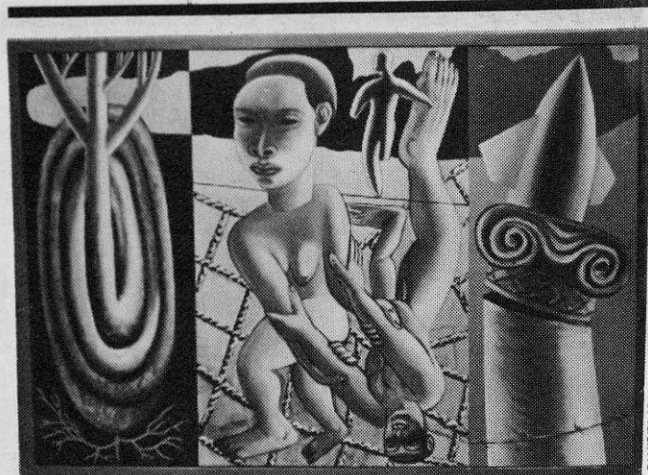


photo: Dona Ann McAdams

Keith Christensen, *Between Hope and Fear*

Harlem and in the 10 on 8 windows on Eighth Avenue (between 53rd and 54th Streets in mid-Manhattan) did reach audiences that would otherwise be unlikely to see a political art show. But for the most part the exhibitions spoke mainly to the already converted progressive cultural community.

For the record, we had negotiated with several other exhibition spaces and organizations, both deeper in and further out of the art world, who were interested in the project but for various reasons either declined to participate or, in the case of P.S. 1, never decided at all due to a rocky administrative changeover. The participation of any of these might have significantly altered the character of the series.

While the audience problem was a severely limiting factor in the project's impact, the limitations of the forms of most of the exhibitions themselves were, in a more subtle way, ultimately just as serious—and intimately related to the issue of audience as well. As a forum for artists' critiques and "countervisions," the SMU exhibitions were similar in form to traditional town meetings or caucuses, except that the throngs of interacting minds and voices that these involve were replaced by static images, which addressed, but rarely actively involved, their intended audiences. As such, the series generally remained at the level of spectacle, another experience for public consumption, for contemplation rather than participation. This quality was further exacerbated by the formats of many of the works themselves, which in many cases implicitly echoed—even as they transcended—the commodity forms that are an intrinsic aspect of the society we're seeking to transform.

At the same time, though, there is an important value in using conventional cultural forms to represent the ideas and demands of an oppositional cultural movement, and as a means of extending the meanings and functions of culture in this society itself. Two of the exhibitions in the series succeeded quite well in doing just this: *Not Just Any Pretty Picture*, an exhibition of works combining images with text at P.S. 122, and *Choice Works*, a show of work by women on reproductive rights and related issues at Central Hall.

The form-related theme of the P.S. 122 exhibit, curated by Michael Lebron with the assistance of Rae Langsten, was specifically geared toward the "sophisticated" art-viewing audience that P.S. 122 draws, and thus functioned very effectively with the context of the site. The exhibition's theme provided a common thread through the works in the show while at the same time allowing for a wide variety of approaches; this, combined with the general strength of the work itself, made for a highly stimulating viewing experience. The format of the show allowed us to be no more than observers, but the experience was so satisfying that we were less likely to mind.

The standout show of the series, though, by general consensus, was *Choice Works*. Curators Kathie Browne, Josely Carvalho and Janet Vicario carefully selected the artists for the show and, in many cases, worked with them to develop work around its very specific and yet broadly defined theme. As a result, the works,

**CENTRAL HALL GALLERY**  
384 West Broadway, New York City, 8th floor

**JAN 22 TO FEB 10, 1985**  
Opening Jan 22, 6-9pm

# CHOICE WORKS

ARTISTS SPEAK OUT ON REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

**Birth control, contraception, abortion when necessary is fundamental to achieving the full emancipation of women of all classes and all races. Choice works.**

JERRI ALLYN	MARGO NACHICA
DIANE ARENT	BETSY MUNDON
MINN BECKER	SABRA MCORE
KATHIE BROWN*	VERNITA NEMEC
CARNIVAL KNOWLEDGE	PAULETTE NENNER
JOSELY CARVALHO*	CAROL PARKINSON
SUSAN CRONE	NTUZARE SHRANGE
SUE COE	AND WOPK HULUP
ANGELA FREMONT	MIMI SMITH
SARAH BELLS	NANCY SPRO
AIME GILBERT	USA SUZUKI
SHARON GILBERT	JANET VICARIO*
FENELUPE GODOFREDO	ANDREA ZAKIN
MARINA GUTIERREZ	HOLLY ZOK
JANET HEIT	*CURATORS

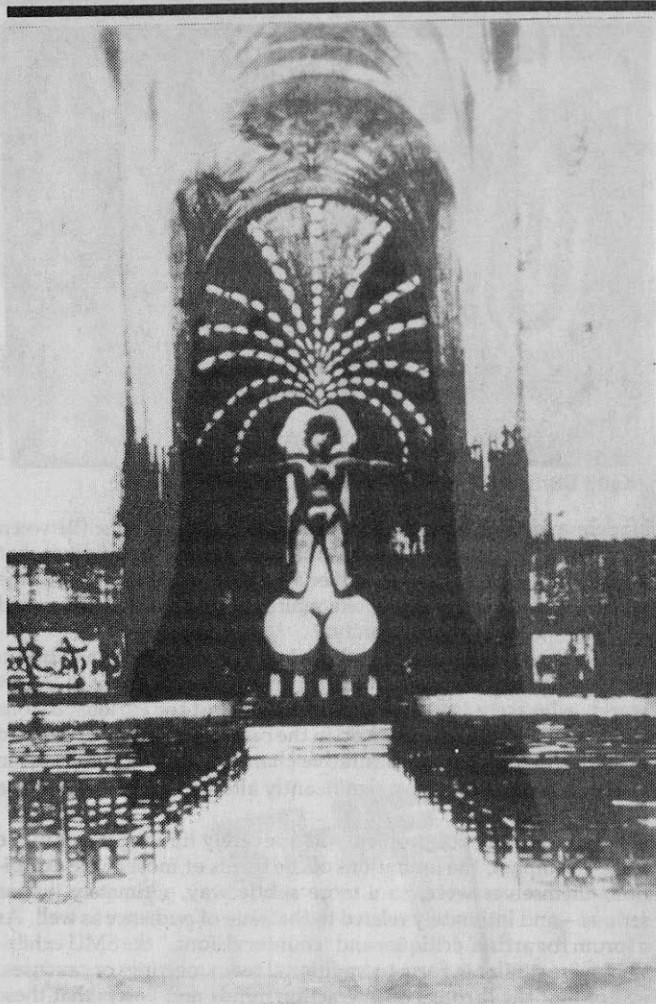
CO-SPONSORED BY PADD (Political Art Documentation/Distribution) IN CONJUNCTION WITH STATE OF NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE AND THE ARTS  
The exhibition has been funded by National Emergency Child Location Fundations, North Star, Food, and Friends of Choice.

Janet Vicario and Kathie Brown, *Choice Works* Poster

and P.S. 122 (an avant garde performance space in Manhattan's East Village) in putting on the series' various exhibitions and performances.

For all its strengths, though, there were some gnawing limitations to the series, in the very forms that much of the project and many of the works included took, and in the audiences that we were able to reach, both of which are profoundly interrelated. (The rest of this discussion will focus on the SMU exhibitions, the performance series and streetworks being examined elsewhere.)

The most frustrating aspect of the series was its failure to reach the broad, non-artworld, community-based audiences we had desired. An exhibition at the gallery of the Princeton (NJ) Arts Council and installations at The Food Stamp Gallery in East



Anita Steckel, *Death by Illegal Abortion*

which were as varied as those of any of the other shows, functioned collectively, becoming like a grand chorus of voices, each adding its own unique element to the whole, and drawing power as well from the others around it. In addition, the show's theme emphatically placed it in relation to the activities of the feminist community of which it was a part, as well as to the lived experience of women in this culture as a whole.

The success of these shows, along with last fall's Art Against Apartheid efforts and other projects, more than adequately demonstrates that traditional exhibition forms can, in fact, be highly effective tools for political activism, but only when they're assembled with keen attentiveness to their intended goals—and particularly, within that, to their intended audiences.

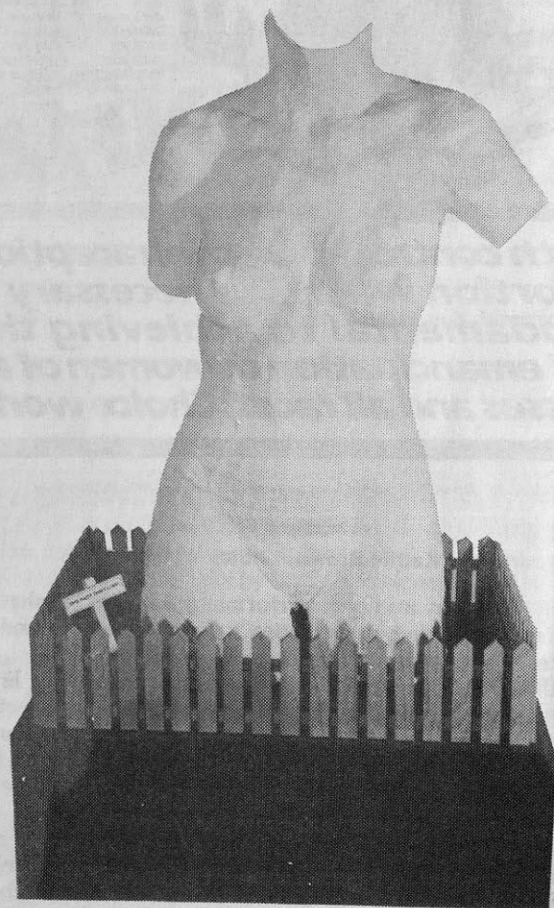
At the same time, though, we need to be more attentive to how we conceive and organize our work in relation to other political communities and organizations whose goals we share. It's one thing to use our work to represent, "to dramatize the voices of those usually unheard, and to make visible" through our work "their needs, aspirations and views," as we wrote in our call for work, and quite another to work with these "voices" as active participants in the work itself. We need to work more diligently to connect not only with other left cultural groups outside the downtown arts community which has been PADD's main constituency, but with the broad spectrum of other, non-art progressive organizations and peoples, in the conception, the execution, and the presentation of our work. The organizers of Art Against Apartheid in particular have given a great deal of energy to this, and it was an important factor in the success of their debut series last fall; PADD's failure to do this more effectively was an important source of many of SMU's

limitations. It is increasingly important that our work be done not merely *at* or even *for*, but *with* the growing numbers of other progressive people working for social change.

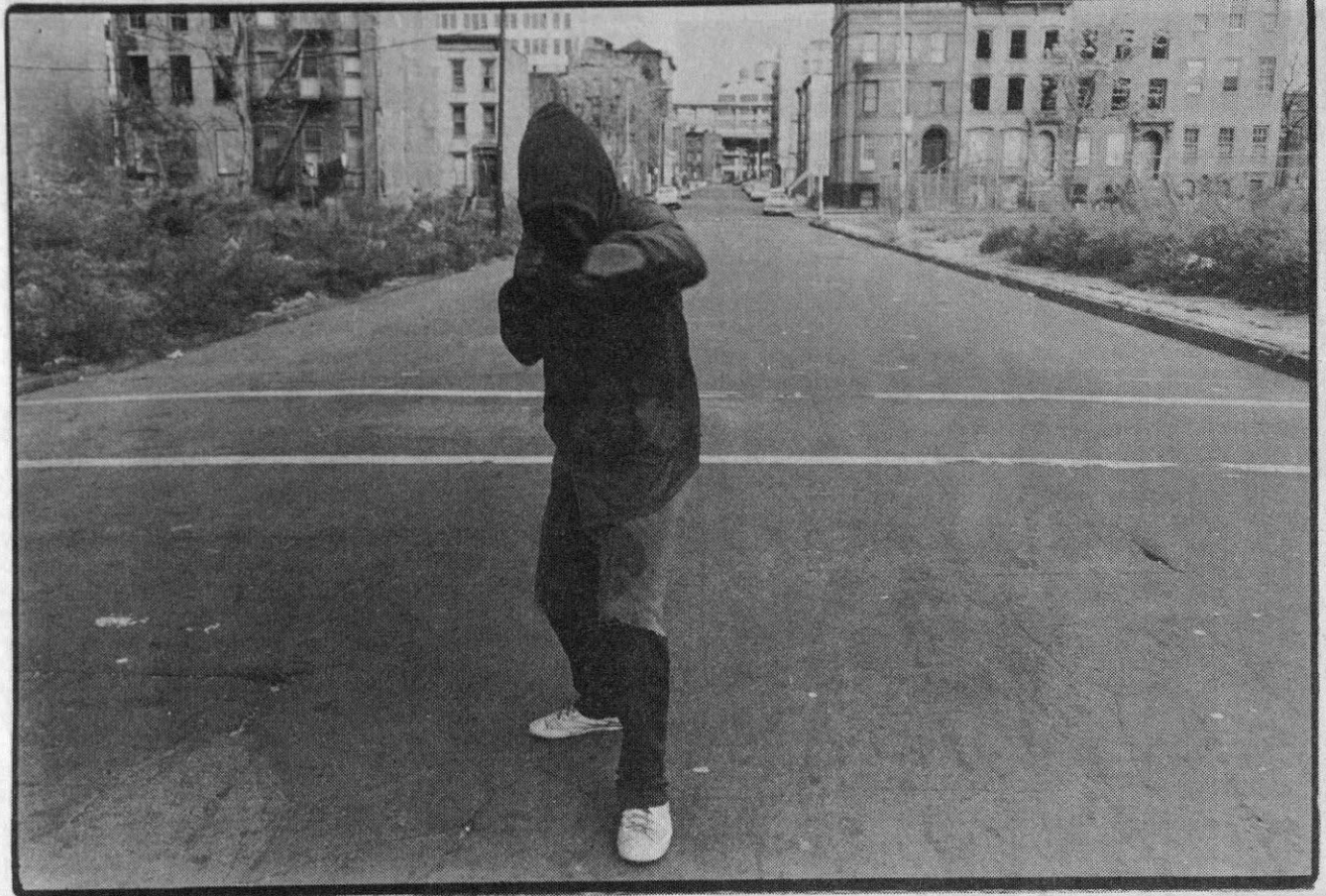
It would be naive to say that this is easy. As many of us have learned from experience, the power of cultural work is still considerably undervalued by a large segment of the left, and the time and care involved in networking is considerable, and sometimes more than the small organizational cores of many of our projects can successfully sustain. But it is essential that we keep these needs in mind in our future work. It is only through this that a long-term progressive movement with all the strength and vitality we desire for it can be brought into being.

And, to return once again to the galleries, we need to develop exhibition forms which more actively engage their audiences, which touch the individual viewer in the realm of his or her own lived experience, and awaken through this an expanded sense of possibility—both for the individual and for the society as a whole. Part of the burden of this task, of course, rests with the individual imagemakers. But the ways that an exhibition, a medium itself, is conceived can both shape the images that are produced for it and frame the experience of the works for the viewer. On the simplest level, activating the viewer within the exhibition's physical space and adding music and objects from everyday life, as Paper Tiger and Group Material did to tremendous affect in their recent stints at the Whitney, are good places to start. Perhaps some of the knowledge we've gained through our work with demonstrations—to shape their forms and thereby activate their participants—could inform our work with exhibitions as well.

We must begin to bring our fullest understanding of culture—of the power that culture has and how that power functions—to our work with exhibitions, in order that this work can function more effectively in the furthering of our larger goals: the building of a more deeply responsive, truly just society.



Susan Crowe, *Property of the U.S. Government*



Dona Ann McAdams, *Alphabet City*, 1984

## II. THE WORKS THEMSELVES

**W**here the SMU exhibitions were most effective was in their presentation of a large body of works, which amply demonstrated the growing number of artists addressing their work to the injustices of the society, as well as the variety of approaches that artists are taking in this work: in the styles and media they're using (within the contexts the exhibition formats allowed for); in the issues they're addressing; and in the strategies they are taking within these works to get their messages across.

Some artists directed their work to the darkest aspects of this culture's oppression through metaphor and symbol; others showed the faces of specific perpetrators and victims of injustice. Some told personal stories that referred only implicitly to larger cultural forces; others recounted incidents that could be read in the headlines, emphatically framing them to make their polemical points. Some artists used forms that led us to quietly contemplate our predicament; others made work to speak loudly, on the streets.

Few artists, though, chose to convey alternative "countervisions" to current conditions, as we had hoped and even encouraged in our calls for work. If artists were, in fact, depicting their states of mind as they were describing the state of the union, as the series' theme suggested, then things look pretty grim, as they certainly sometimes seem. But the works, of course, functioned in other ways than that, for their makers as well as for their audiences. In their portrayal of the society's darkest aspects, the works reflected not so much despair as the wrestling with despair, with the darkness of vision, the struggle of their makers to balance their outrage and abhorrence and fears with their desire and determination to work for change. Even the most "negative" of the series' works were in some sense assertions, implying within their critical stances both demands and the nascent possibilities for alternative societal forms and practices.

Alan Bolt, the renowned Nicaraguan theater worker, spoke when he visited New York last spring of the need to learn not to conquer our doubts and fears, because it is through these that a great deal of wisdom flows, but to learn to "manage the insecurity," in order to develop a more profound vision and a more effective and responsive practice. It is this process that the SMU artists had to grope through in making their work for the series; the strategies they took in doing this deeply inform their works' final form.

Wrestling with the darkness is an important part of the work we need to do now, to make this darkness visible to a society determined to deny its existence, and to come to terms with it ourselves in the process of moving through to a more affirmative vision. In time, this process will lead us through to greater strength, to carry us through the work that lies ahead.



Jerry Kearns, *Deadly Force*

photo: Dona Ann McAdams



# UNION CARBIDE FIGHTS FOR ITS LIFE



CHAHEMAN WARREN M. ANDERSON

Alfred Jaar, *From Business Week cover, December 24, 1984*

## THE HEART OF THE DARKNESS

One tack that many artists took to do this was to portray, through very concrete images, the ways in which the culture perpetuates its grip of control. Leon Golub's *Heretic's Fork*, perhaps the grimmest work in the series, shows a man who happens to be black with a device around his throat that prevents him not merely from speaking, but from even seeing the world around him. Golub writes that, "while the heretic's fork, which was used to punish heresy from the 16th to the 18th century, is not in actual use today, contemporary ingenuity finds all kinds of techniques and technologies to try to enforce compliance."

Anita Steckel's small doctored photograph, *Death by Illegal Abortion*, shows a naked woman spread-eagled and crucified on an ejaculating cock that sits on the altar of a church. The piece, for all its crudeness, is a gritty exposition of the relationships between patriarchal power, church hierarchy, sexual oppression and the corruption of the liberatory values that the church purports to represent, as well as of the pain and perversion to the human spirit, of men as well as women, that this confluence of forces produces.

Susan Crowe's contribution to *Choice Works* displayed a white, plaster-cast woman's torso on a field of astroturf, surrounded by a white picket fence. From behind the figure we see, nestled in its belly, a pair of little doll babies, painted red, white and blue. Entitled *Property of the U.S. Government*, the piece is a powerful evocation not only of the threats that are felt from those who seek to deny women's rights to abortions, but of the threats to the sanctity of all that we produce in a culture amazingly adept at absorbing and transforming the most varied fruits of our activities—our offspring, and our art work as well.

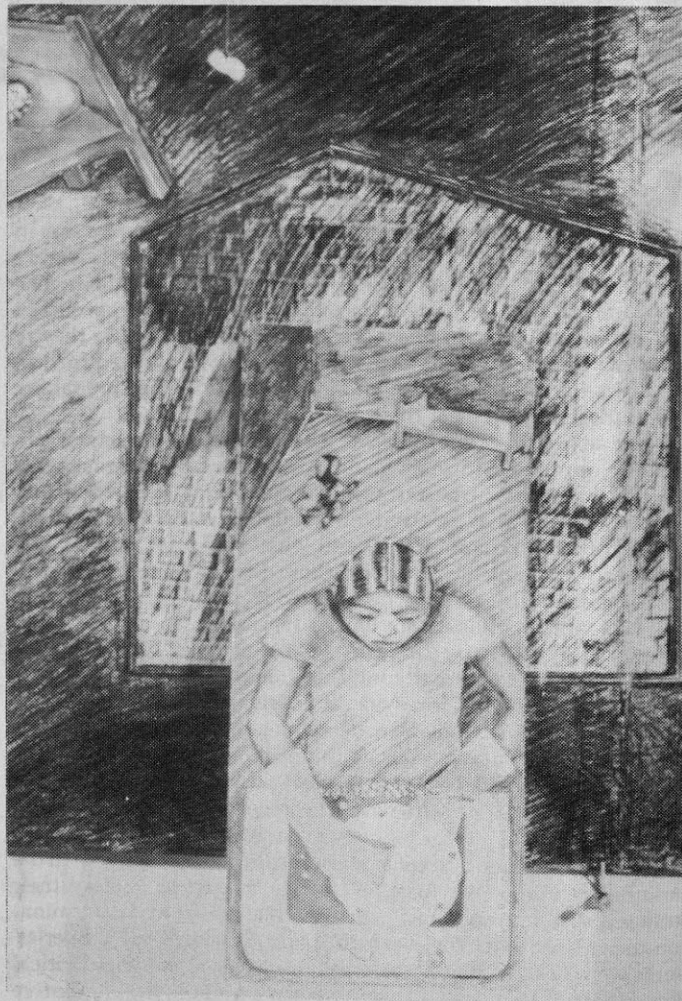
In Carol Jacobson's *Combatition Series VII* at Interart, a stuffed pheasant with a condom pulled over its face and neck was strangled in a basketball net in an effective contemporary retelling of the age-old nature/culture conflict.

These pieces refer through their dark hearts to the deepest currents of this culture's oppression, and in doing so, serve an important role in pointing the way toward taking power.

In Margot Machida's painting, *Bad Dream*, a seated woman is accosted by a man who stands by her, holding his cock to her face—an image similar, in many ways, to the ones just described. We are kept powerless not merely by those things that are done to us—recent studies have revealed that an enormous number of women in this culture that have been victims of sexual abuse—but by our fears of what might be done. The painting of these images, as well, is a way of taking power.

Other artists explored aspects of cultural brutality through various styles of documentary. Greg Lehmann's pair of huge, untitled color photographs at Interart, part of a larger project on militarist indoctrination, showed Black and Hispanic men watching in absorbed fascination as white marines demonstrate the use of their weapons. Dona Ann McAdams' three black and white photographs from a forthcoming book show familiar, archetypal images of a community under siege: a shelled building, a crowd watching a fire and, most chilling of the set, a hooded young man throwing punches directly at the intruding eye of the camera. Judy Penzer took a different documentarist approach in her evocative painting of a group of Central American women *Waiting at the Central Police Headquarters for Missing Relatives*. Sue Coe's *USA 1985* and *Dr. Dollar* illustrated in hyperbolic fashion the threat of the growing fanatical fringe of the anti-abortion movement in lurid form and color; thugs that make Golub's mercenaries look like law school students sneer and piss on a woman as a tank rumbles along the street behind them. In various ways, these images fuel our anger, and incite us to action.

Marina Gutierrez, *Untitled (detail)*.



## VARIATIONS ON COLLAGE

A number of artists used strategies of combining various images, or images with text, in order to examine our responses to living in this culture. In his painting *Deadly Force*, Jerry Kearns combined photographic imagery, images from horror films and fifties-styled comic forms to create a disturbing comment on our frequent sense of powerlessness. A woman stands on a pedestal before an equally passive crowd who fail to notice the brutal murder of a man who stands among them; the killer is visible only in a mirror. The audience here is both victim and accomplice, innocent and complicit in relation to the act. Effective in its dislocating effect, Kearns' piece demands that we ask ourselves what role we will play in this action at the same time as it holds us back from it, like the passive observers in the work itself. A horror-stricken Phantom of the Opera and a laughing black child watch us from the crowd, in turn reflecting and mocking our condition.

Doug Ashford's *For William Blake* also used comics-styled figures to comment on our powerlessness, while at the same time leaving us a wider opening for hope. A series of scared and angry faces were printed, black and white, on the backs of nine metal pennants which were mounted high on a wall of the Judson Church auditorium; on their front sides, one word per pennant, was the message "No One Can Desire What Is Not Perceived," followed by an answer of hope, "Nicaragua Libre!" An explanation for our dearth of countervisions, Ashford's message also suggests a clue as to why our administration has so vilely twisted its descriptions of the Nicaraguan revolution.

Brad Melamed's painting, *Allegiance (God and Country)*, combines the personal, the public and the mythic in a simple juxtaposition of three images: the heavens break in the first moment of

### Elizabeth Kulas, *Stolen Moments (detail)*



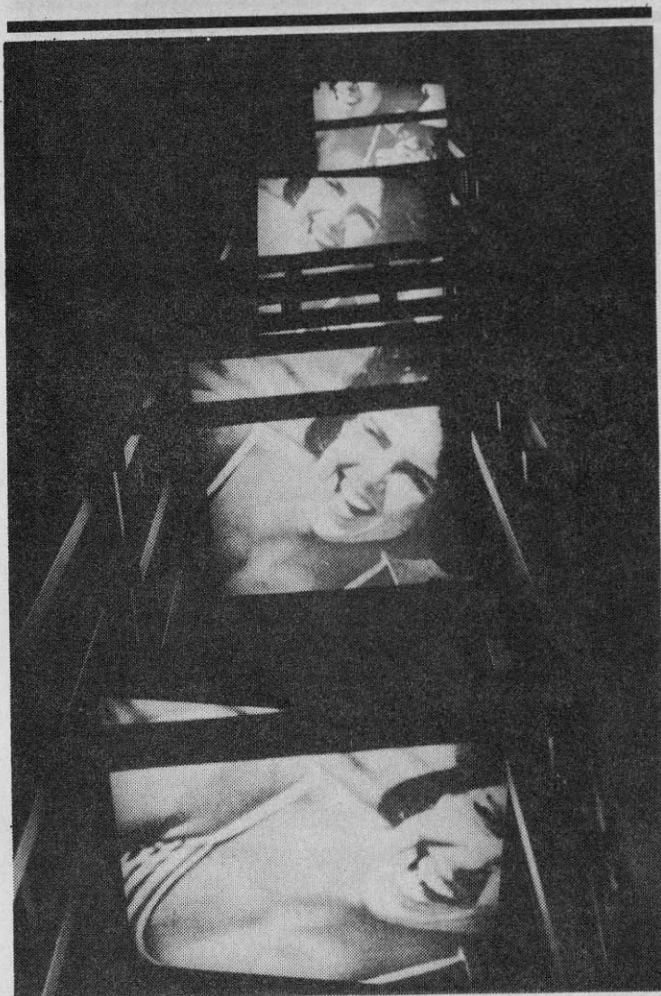
Juan Sanchez, *A Puerto Rican Prisoner of War and Much More*

biblical creation; a saluting hand is raised before a flag; and what appears to be a group of children, each alone, scurry through what might be a school yard. The piece is a remarkably effective meditation on enculturated subservience to various forms of power and authority, capable of stirring a chorus of profound memories and feelings.

## SELF-DETERMINATION

A number of artists made use of personal strategies for self-determination as a way of tackling larger cultural issues. This practice was particularly in evidence in Central Hall's *Choice Works*, in which the exhibition's theme—reproductive rights and related issues—opened the door for all sorts of expressions on how this culture withholds power from women. Works by Kathie Brown, Sabra Moore, Holly Zox (with Pauline Turtle-Bear Guillermo, Lisa Susuki, and Laura Levin) employed different forms of narrative (in conjunction with beautiful craftsmanship) to tell personal stories that were implicitly situated with the larger societal context. The connections were more explicit in an untitled work by Penelope Goodfriend, which showed color photographs of Third World women accompanied by statements reflecting the impact their limited reproductive freedoms had on their lives, and in a purely documentary work by Nan Becker about the various consequences—and racist undercurrents—of the disparities in access to healthcare for America's poor. One of the most harrowing works in the series was Andrea Zakin's *Choice: You Can't Live Without It*, a video installation work that re-created the seedy back room the artist was forced to turn to in order to end her unwanted pregnancy, with the artist's recounting of the incident played repeatedly on the screen.

Elizabeth Kulas explored a different realm of issues by documenting the mundane activities of an average working day in



Dennis Adams, *Ba(bb)le (version)*

*Stolen Moments.* Her autobiographical photo-comic strip illustrated the artist's efforts to balance the pressures of wage labor, activism and artmaking while commenting on the hazards of new technology, labor and class relations, and the generally spirit-numbing quality of modern day office work.

### VIVA PUERTO RICO LIBRE!

Vinnie Salas also made use of his own experience, though in a very different way, in his examination of American class relations in *Above and Below the Flag*. This imaginative installation included images of the dominant culture—an American Express Card application, a catalog of icons from the Republican National Committee, lots of dollar bills—suspended over an American flag, with items representing the dependency of poverty—food stamps, lottery cards, rent receipts, a hand-sized booklet of the Lord's Prayer, an empty bottle of Night Train, and a black panther, chained and guarded by toy soldiers—below. Looming over the scene was a clock ticking one minute to midnight. A statement by Salas, which we are unfortunately unable to include here, described the connections between the imagery in this piece and his experience as a Hispanic-American, in which "the American flag is [seen]... as a subjugating symbol to the freedom of my people." (Salas has been doing installations of this sort for several years at his Food Stamp Gallery at 2033 Second Avenue, including one for the SMU project, where they've been enthusiastically received by the neighborhood's Hispanic community.)

Juan Sanchez took another approach in grappling with the experience of Hispanic-Americans in *Racism and Other Things*, which was included in *Not Just Any Pretty Picture* at PS 122. One of the most beautifully rendered works in the series, Sanchez's collage/paniting combines a photograph of a wall graffiti asserting

Puerto Rican pride which has been defiled by racist insults; leaflets espousing Puerto Rican independence; a 1971 statement by the Young Lords Party ("... the chains that have been taken off slaves' bodies are put back on their minds"); and a riddle-like statement etched into paint that reflects the depth of internalized confusion that this climate of racist oppression can bring. All of this is set in a richly textured paint surface whose sensuous physicality contributes as much as the other elements in giving the work its link with lived experience. In combining the voices and images of an organized political movement with a highly developed personal aesthetic, Sanchez's work was in many ways one of the most politically sophisticated of the series. (Sanchez, by the way, reports of a number of people who have first learned of the Young Lords Party through his work, and have then gone on to learn more about the group on their own.)

### THE ART OF PROPAGANDA

Several artists used various propaganda forms to directly state their messages. Karin Batten's multi-media installation piece for 10 on 8 included illustrated statistics on the numbers of school buses and other social goods various weapons systems could be traded for, images from armed forces recruiting ads, photographs of a decimated Hiroshima, and a bumper sticker reading "You Can't Win a Nuclear War" as a backdrop to a scene in which Ronald Reagan, dressed as cowboy, rode horseback over a field of fallen soldiers.

Howard Saunders and Ed Ott used techniques from advertising in their contribution to the exhibition at P.S. 122 entitled *Constructive Engagement*. Part of an ongoing series called *Distortions in Democracy*, the work illustrated the links between U.S. support of South Africa and its attacks on civil rights programs at home.

Some artists took a lighter view, using humor to disarm the forces that assail us. Jeff Schlesinger contributed a delightful

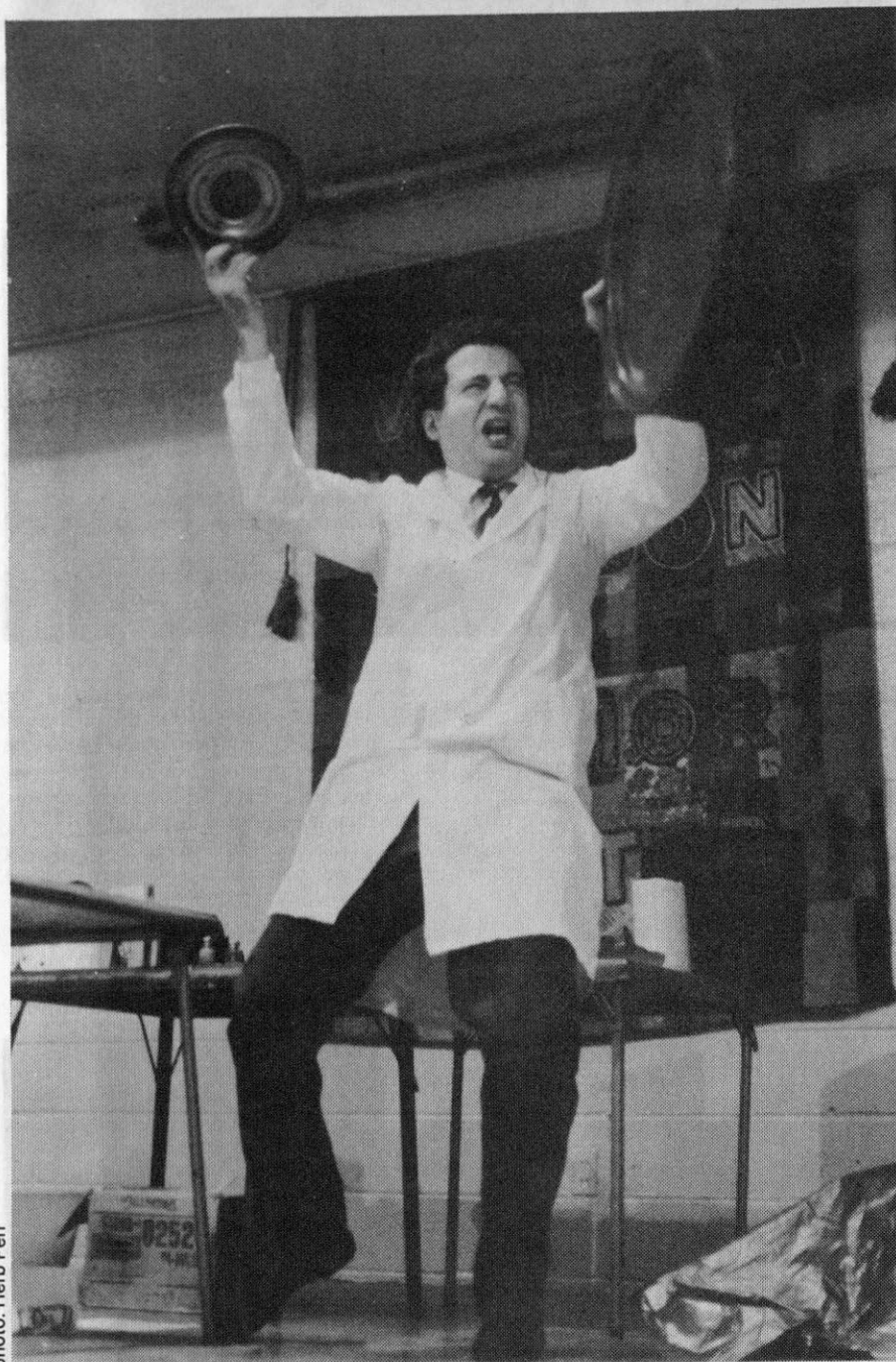
### Quimetta Perle, *If Living is Sacred*



photo: Linda Eber

# A DOSE OF COLD REALITY

By Jim Traub



Paul Zaloom reflects on the Future at Franklin Furnace.

photo: Herb Perr

**A**s PADD presented its January State of Mind/State of the Union (SMU) performance series, Bernhard Hugo Goetz was hailed as a hero on radio and television and in the newspapers. Members of a group calling itself the Army of God bombed abortion clinics to mark the tenth anniversary of *Roe vs. Wade*. Caspar Weinberger insisted that the Pentagon

could not do with less than a \$30 billion increase in the military budget. And Ronald Reagan's inaugural theme song, quoted by Michael Smith in his funny SMU performance at P.S. 122, told us that:

*If more people were for people  
There'd be a lot less people to worry about  
And a lot more people who care.*

This is the Reaganized America to which PADD invited performance artists to respond with countervisions for SMU. It is an America which misunderstands its guilt and paranoid racism as self-defense, its sexism as a human rights movement (though one only for the unborn), and its imperialism as the fight for peace and freedom around the world. As the song lyric suggests (if so vapid a lyric can suggest anything), Reaganized America wants to believe that whatever problems exist in the U.S. are attitude problems, solved not by social action based on an acknowledgement of social problems, but by a more positive attitude based on a fantasy of success in a resurgent America. "The U.S. is back," smiles Reagan, and if that actually means that America is ready to kick ass for its interests anywhere and everywhere, then so be it says most of America (or at least a large majority of the voting public).

In such a grim time, it's not surprising that most of the work in SMU conveyed an essentially grim state of mind about a deteriorating state of the union. The great majority of countervisions in the PADD series were not images of an alternate present or better future, but images of the social/historical/psychological reality that Reagan encourages the country to ignore and deny. Their generally downbeat messages were not defeatist but realistic. One of Reagan's most amazing accomplishments is to have made any criticism of what he's doing into that most heinous of American crimes: negativity. He's marginalized even his tepid critics in the Democratic Party by charging them with being naysayers. So, force-fed as we are on Reagan's warm baloney, SMU's dose of cold reality was real food.

Which is not to say that there were no problems with SMU. For an event calling itself a counter-inaugural challenge, there was scarce mention of racism or poverty. With the important (and very successful) exception of the Hodson Senior Center in the South Bronx, the venues chosen for performances made it unlikely that new audiences would see the work. Regrettably, there was no organized discussion after performances. And the combination of performers in some programs seemed uncoordinated. But while some of the work in SMU was underdeveloped, underrehearsed, or just plain uninteresting, the best work confronted us with the bad news about U.S.A. 1985 powerfully enough to disturb complacent cynicism, complacent confusion, and complacent complacency. In the absence of a mass movement (or movements) to agitate and propagandize,

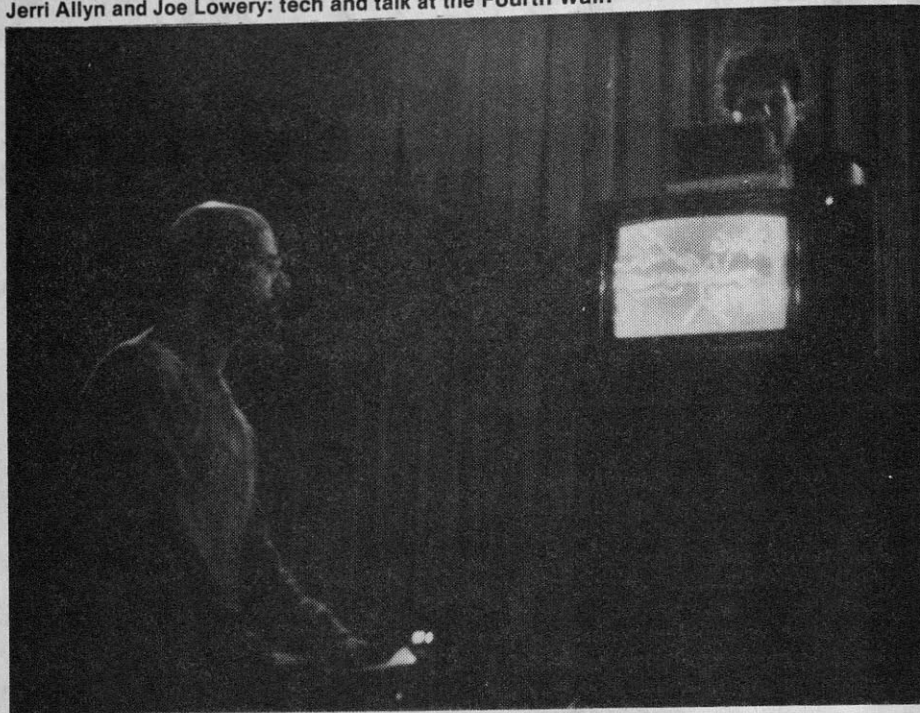
disturbing the audience may be the best that political art can do right now.

In their pieces, Elena Alexander and Jimmie Durham used history to suggest that all has not been well in America for some time, confronting us with the U.S. historical identity as violent exploiter/oppressor. In her dance piece, Alexander creates an image of Uncle Sam as a slithering snake, a swaggering Frankenstein. He sings a chronicle of his victorious invasions of various Central American and Caribbean nations, swinging clubs in helicopter-propeller style. Alexander's Uncle Sam wriggles and struts, a cheerleader, a bully, a monster, maniacally excited by militarism, sexually aroused by imperial domination.

Alexander's piece prompts us to see the U.S. as its victims of the last 100 years see it. But though the U.S. is us, we could avoid identifying ourselves with Alexander's Uncle Sam by taking refuge in the distinction between the U.S. government and the U.S. people that the Vietnamese used, so kindly, to make. Jimmie Durham's *Giveaway* was another matter. We could not separate ourselves from the history that Durham presented because he found a simple device to gently force each audience member to experience that history directly. As projected slides illustrated the history of the white man's genocidal murder of the Indians, the ceaseless expropriation of Indian lands, and the Indians' resistance, Durham distributed gifts to the audience—books, jewelry, art work, the shirt off his back. He talked briefly about Reagan's plan to sell rights to the water on which 125 Indian reservations depend and closed with a chant, accompanying himself with a scratch stick, and then he left us holding our gifts. The effect was deeply disquieting. Sitting on stolen land, we held gifts received from those from whom we stole. The point, I think, was not to feel guilt, but to accept responsibility for that history—history which continues today. The discomfort, even embarrassment, that the audience felt indicated that the piece worked profoundly, touching some felt knowledge that we have about ourselves as the beneficiaries of exploitation.

Paul Zaloom and Paul Zimet used comedy to laugh us into a confrontation with our likely future. Zaloom was a mad scientist presenting us with a future very much like the present—a future of polluted oceans, acid rain, inane television shows, insistent advertising, and foolish politicians. The charm of Zaloom's performance—his wordplay, his funny voices, his animation of discarded auto parts and household bric-a-brac—contrasted with the content of the piece, inviting us to laugh first and think about what we're laughing at later. In *Daily Drill*, Paul Zimet taught us a procedure to follow to best use the little time we'll have between the launching of the missiles and their arrival. Zimet's piece was a resonant image of our insane sanity, our simultaneous acceptance and denial of nuclear war. Zimet's character accepts that there's no hope of preventing nuclear

Jerri Allyn and Joe Lowery: tech and talk at the Fourth Wall.



photos: Dona Ann McAdams

destruction and tries to deal with the inevitability in the most cheerful, constructive way possible. The drill itself—a quick final sampling of all of life's pleasures—suggests that everyday life—food, music, love, friendship—is good enough to save from annihilation, a radical position in Reaganland, where it seems to be better dead than red.

Two pieces which epitomized for me the

issues—political and artistic—raised by SMU were Ishmael Houston-Jones' movement piece and Jerri Allyn and Joe Lowery's video/rap poem piece. For me, Houston-Jones' movement is a richly expressive image of the left's present historical moment. His dancing—tense and agile—suggests tremendous potential and power frustrated and hemmed-in, implying both possibility and impossibility of free, expansive move-

Betsy Damon blends ritual and fantasy with worldly concern in *Do Respect This Life*, with Marge Helenchild, Delores Hajosy, Pat Preble and Regina Corritore, at Brecht Auditorium.





ment. In his SMU piece at the Hodson Senior Center, Houston-Jones performed in black pants, army boots, and undershirt, his face covered by a kerchief. His appearance suggested at once a condemned prisoner, a guerrilla, a faceless energy looking for the way forward. Unaccompanied by music, his movement was at once tentative and bold. When he played at the edge of the stage, blindly measuring the leap that would take him into the audience, the prospect of a step over the edge was at once exhilarating and frightening. After removing

his mask, Houston-Jones told us that he had taught dance in Nicaragua and that his students had asked him repeatedly why the U.S. government was attacking their country and what he could do to stop this. "I didn't have any concrete answers to the first question," he told us. "But this dance is the beginning of an answer to the second." Hearing this, we understood his dance anew, seeing the twists, turns, jumps, whipping arms, and clenched fists as indignation, as protests, as movements of resistance.

Jerri Allyn and Joe Lowery's piece also ex-

pressed, with sardonic irony, outrage about the state of the union and confusion about the capacity of left political culture to respond to right Reagan culture. Allyn's rap surveyed the lives of New York City friends in the age of Reagan, describing their withdrawal into private concerns—love, career, children—in protective reaction against the threat of nuclear disaster which Reagan represents, which the news media reports so dispassionately, which the left opposes so ineffectively. After teasing herself, her friends, Reagan, and the left, Allyn mocks her own protective irony, ending her rap with a fantasy of destroying Reagan at his own public relations game—through superior manipulation of video imagery.

Allyn performed standing above and behind a television which displayed video images that underlined and counterpointed her themes. A crumbling solidarity fist suggested the fragmentation of the left, flashing pulses seemed to be overloaded brain synapses, a profile of a breast filling with agitated milk promised nourishment. She delivered her rap at high speed, electronically distorting her voice with echo and feedback. She modulated between a sarcastic monotone and a scream on the edge of hysteria, repeatedly bringing herself back into tense control with her yuppie-sounding refrain—"I don't have to worry about how to stay on top in this country run by a crazy lunatic." The performance was a subversive use of electronic technology. Juxtaposing a text, a live voice, an amplified voice, a live body and computer imagery, the rap demanded imaginative involvement rather than passive consumption.

In her prose poem at the Basement Workshop, Fay Chiang also confronted the problem of political culture, with a different perspective. She wove together strands of family history, Chinatown experiences, and stories about the art world to explain the ethos of the Basement Workshop and to suggest the importance of creating neighborhood arts centers to preserve and express local culture and history. I think we need both Allyn's national video attack on Reagan and Chiang's patient nurturing and encouragement of local culture to make our countervisions seen and heard.

In their very essence, these pieces seemed to acknowledge the hegemony of Reagan ideology and politics, to express the degradation of life under that hegemony, and to assert strongly the need for a way forward. In at once affirming the necessity and possibility of a way forward and admitting that that way is not yet clear, they fulfill what Gramsci said was the duty of a revolutionary—to tell the truth. And in making their lives as politically concerned artists an issue in their pieces, they alluded to the main concern which animated SMU and which animates PADD's continued work—how to make oppositional culture and how to create for that oppositional culture an organized and visible relationship to society.

Margo Lee Sherman performing poems by Cesar Vallejo at the Basement Workshop; Sculpture by Jean Chiang.



Paul Zimet in *Daily Drill* at the Fourth Wall.



Joel S. Cohen as *He* at the Brecht Auditorium.



# SM/U WITHOUT WALLS: E-Day and After

By Stuart Garber

While Ronald Reagan's winner's image soared virtually untarnished through the national media for most of last fall's campaign, on the streets of New York it was a whole different story. Whereas in some neighborhoods hardly a Reagan button could be found, anti-Reagan messages and artists' images could be seen nearly everywhere, from Times Square down to Avenue D, out to the South Bronx, and back through the subway to the Plaza Hotel.

The pre-election streetworks on view here this fall represented a wide range of strategies, in terms of tone and style, scale and medium, expense, mode of funding, organizational structure, and intended audience—and blew away, too, the notion that political art has to be shrill, shallow, strident, or humorless.

The Artists Poster Committee made their ubiquitous poster of Reagan with his famous gaffe, "We Begin Bombing in Five Minutes," 60,000 copies of which were distributed around the country for about \$15,000, less than the cost of a full-page ad in the *Sunday Times*. A group called Artists in Action created a witty *Playbill* spoof for a fictitious musical, "Old Faces of 1984," that included zippy bios of the cast (Meese, Falwell, Watt, etc.) and a lineup of songs like "Anything Glows" and "Trickle on Down the Road" which they distributed nightly outside Broadway theatres for three weeks prior to the election. Jenny Holzer's *Sign on a Truck* project, which was funded by NYSCA, Colab and others and sponsored by the Public Art Fund, presented 22 videos by artists including Barbara Kruger, Vito Acconci, Keith Haring and Jonathan Borofsky along with live interviews with passersby on a huge video screen mounted on a flat-bed truck, which was brought to the Plaza Hotel and Bowling Green in the days before the election.

PADD's State of Mind/State of the Union (SM/U) Streetworks campaign brought together the energies of some two dozen artists, who met to share ideas on effective images and strategies for taking our anti-Reagan messages directly to the public and to organize late-night "tagging" expeditions to various parts of the city. Together we produced an exciting variety of works



PADD/Artists Call Counterinaugural Procession at the New York Public Library. Left to right: Lucy R. Lippard, Elena Alexander, Amy Lieberman, Jim Traub and Seth Tobocman.

ranging from street stencils and freehand subway ad alterations to label art and wheat-pasted poster works, as well as a rousing call-to-action/how-to primer which was sent to artists around the city.

Our original plans were even more ambitious. We spoke of networking with groups working on voter registration drives to get ideas of what kinds of issues and images they felt would be most effective in their areas. We wanted to develop a network to help disseminate reproducible work such as stencils, stickers and posters in order to achieve a more extensive saturation of the city. And we wanted to develop a logo that would show that the various works were part of a concentrated, organized project.

Coming together as we did, though, just over a month before Election Day, we simply did not have the time—or the inclination, it seemed, just then—to do the extensive networking that these ambitions required. In the end what we wanted most was to make works and get them out on the streets. Meanwhile the ideas generated in these meetings have remained in many of our minds, and have informed the work of our subsequent projects. More on this later.

One project, in fact, did take on a more elaborate form: Eva Cockcroft's, Daniel Brooks's and friends' *Reagan's No Treat* campaign. Using Halloween as their organizing theme, the group made street stencils, T-shirts, and "trick" candy wrappers with Reagan's face as a skull with crossbones and the slogan "Reagan's No Treat—Don't Be Tricked." Work kits containing paper stencils, sample wrapper sheets, instructions, and a call to action were sent to 150 cultural activists across the country. In New York, the images were stencilled onto walls and sidewalks around town and t's and sweat-shirts were sold at fall street fairs, rallies, and meetings to subsidize the mailing. The

most public of the group's New York activities was its participation in the Village Halloween Parade, where they handed out more than 1,000 specially wrapped "candies" to the crowd, along with leaflets detailing some of Reagan's more despicable tricks.

Other projects, while smaller in scale, were just as feisty in spirit. Stencil works were the most popular form and were brought to sites ranging from East Village sidewalks to the New York Public Library to the Washington Square arch. Particularly memorable pieces were made by Seth Tobocman, Betsy McLindon and Josh Whalen, as well as Eva Cockcroft and Daniel Brooks, above. It is worth noting that the more public of these works rarely lasted more than a day before they were removed, and that several stenciling crews reported being followed by police cars.

Vinnie Salas made multitudinous leaflets which he posted all over East Harlem, as well as a spirited anti-Reagan installation for his Food Stamp Gallery windows at 2033 Second Avenue at 105th Street.

Stickers were made by Nancy Sullivan which showed Reagan as, among other things, a court jester, the pope and Pinocchio, and by Elizabeth Kulas, which showed Reagan sneering, "I'm Rich—Kiss My Ass and Don't Vote," with statistics on the country's distribution of wealth. More than 1,000 of these stickers made their way to subway cars, phone booths and other public spots in the weeks before the election.

One artist appropriated the graphic black-and-white "Eyewitness News" subway ads so that the emoting newscasters were seen to be alternately telling their listeners, or else listening to them say, "We've Got to Get Rid of Reagan!" with an urging word to "Vote!" tagged in the corner. The alterations were executed without incident in more than a dozen subway stations, gen-



Betsy McLindon

erally during rush hour in full public view. Though a few of them were covered by Reagan-Bush stickers, most of them remained untouched for several weeks.

The most "sophisticated" of the PADD Streetworks projects used a series of verbal "equivalencies" based on the theme, "Reagan Equals Lies." The central slogan was hand-painted in red on 10-foot sheets of paper and surrounded with various sets of equivalencies, phrases such as "rich = richer," "poor = poorer," "U.S.S.R. ≠ Evil Empire," "Grenada ≠ Liberation," etc., which were produced by repeatedly enlarging typewritten words through photocopying, with the final versions printed onto colored 8½" by 11" sheets. The work expanded and contracted depending on the site, and appeared in 15 locations, including Union Square, the New York Public Library at 42nd Street, and sites close to the World Trade Center and Federal Plaza in Lower Manhattan.

After the election, the group joined forces with Artists Call for a counterinaugural project which appropriated the official inaugural theme, "We the People." Images based on the opening lines of the Constitution were painted onto wonderful double-sided, foam-core sandwich boards designed by Julia Demaree which came complete with fabric shoulder straps and cord fasteners at each side. On their front sides, in glowing color, were images with our affirmative interpretations of the Constitution; on their backs, in black and white, the often harsh realities. *Declare Ourselves Equal* showed a black female worker, contrasted with *Declare Ourselves Superior*, with a Nazi-like soldier; *These United States*, a biracial couple, with *These Divided States*, a group of Klansmen; *In Order to Attain Justice*, a man crying in outrage over a fallen victim, with *In Order to Maintain Injustice*, a group of policemen clubbing a black man; *Spend a Little on Food with Billions for Defense*. (The images were designed by Seth Tobocman, in collaboration with Robin Michals, Sabrina Jones, Alan Uglow and Addie Demaree.)

A choreographed procession through the streets of Manhattan had been planned for Inauguration Day, but the bone-chilling weather that forced the Inauguration itself indoors led us to hold off till the following week. The journey was accompanied by Tony Clemente and helpers, who handed

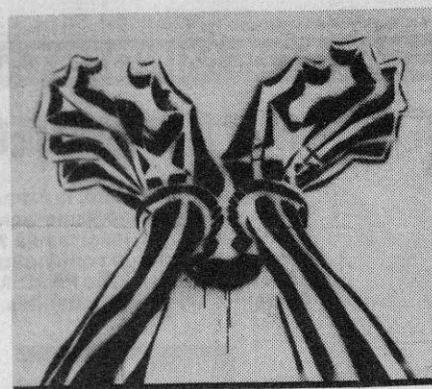
Eva Cockroft



Nancy Sullivan

out little fold-up paper houses that people could assemble themselves, which read *Mi Casa Es Tu Casa* (*My House is Your House*) and bore an abbreviated version of the Artists Call creed.

Members of the project went on to form the core of the cultural task force of the April Actions Coalition, an alliance of scores of progressive groups which organized a weekend of demonstrations, lobbying and civil disobedience in Washington, D.C. April 19-22. The New York cultural contingent brought to the project ideas about demonstration forms which its members have been working with for several years now—ideas aimed at developing and promoting more decentralized, participatory, *activating* demonstration forms, which they've employed most notably at the November 12, 1983 D.C. and June 9, 1984 NYC anti-intervention rallies. (See *Upfront #8* for a good theoretical discussion



Seth Tobocman

by Charles Frederick on demonstration form and the November 12 rally and *Upfront #9* for a short piece on June 9. The April Actions are described briefly in the *News* section at the back of this issue.)

As the activities described here make clear, there's an enormous range of strategies that cultural workers are taking to address social issues on the streets, and a continuing discussion within the cultural community here as to the ways in which this work can be done more effectively. This summer a number of cultural workers from PADD, Artists Call, Art Against Apartheid and other groups began to meet to discuss ways in which their organizations could work together as a network to respond quickly with visual and theatrical streetworks to various political developments. A special emphasis would be placed on works which could be replicated or disseminated, such as posters, stencil works, freehand subway ad alterations and simple performance pieces, along the lines of what the SMU Streetworks collective had in mind.

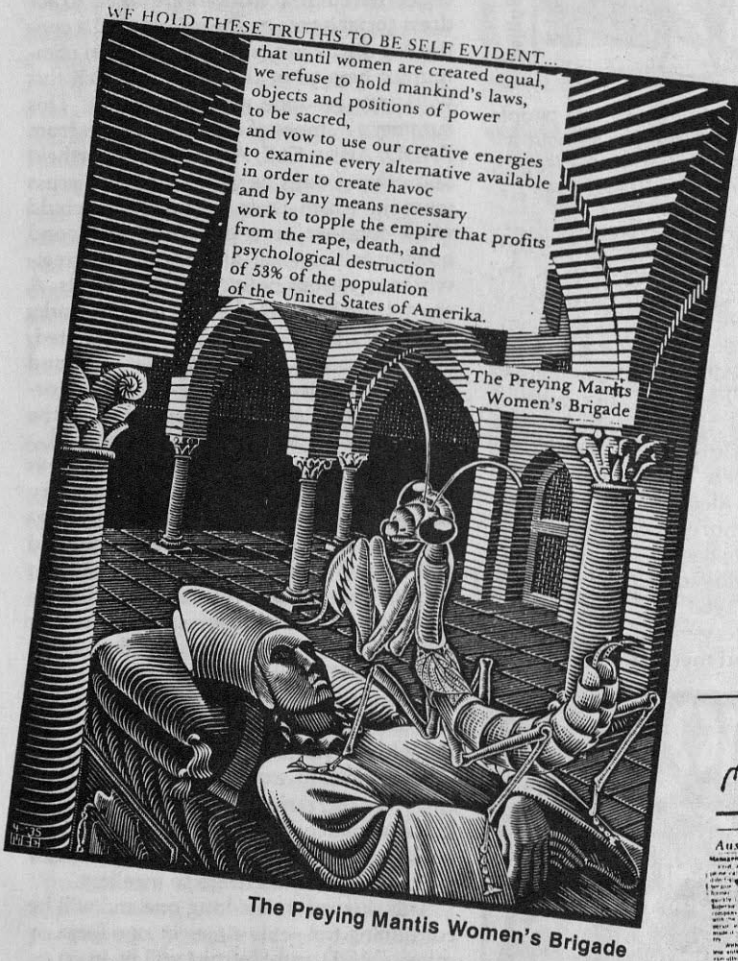
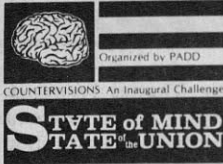
But while being able to respond quickly is of vital importance, it is equally necessary for us to develop a greater theoretical understanding for how different images and textual and aesthetic strategies function in various contexts and for various audiences so as to maximize the effectiveness of our work. With the media so resolutely content with following the conservative consensus on so many issues, it is increasingly important that cultural workers begin to think more broadly of how we can use alternative media forms to express oppositional perspectives on various issues in an imaginative and timely manner, and to reach those audiences who might not read, much less take a leaflet, let alone go to a gallery.

This discussion is a long one and will be continuing for some time; in one form or other, PADD and *Upfront* will be in on it. We'd like to hear from you—your thoughts on the theoretical, if you're so inclined, as well as news on effective streetworks, you've either seen or created both in and outside New York City. For this and for information on the networking project above, write: PADD Streetworks, 339 Lafayette Street, New York, NY 10012.

Portions of this article originally appeared in *Art & Artists*, March/April 1985.

FROM THE IMAGEGRAM CAMPAIGN...

Throughout the nation, hundreds of diverse SM/U Imagegrams were sent to the White House, local media and PADD. They were shown in conjunction with the series exhibitions. The PADD Archive holds the collection in its files.



Stephen Ronan, Berkeley, CA



Gene Elder, Kilgore, TX

THE PRESIDENT  
WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON  
D.C.

DEAR

MR.  
PRESIDENT

STOP

STEALING

MY

TIME

TO  
MAKE  
YOUR



PAUL RUTKOVSKY  
227 WESTRIDGE DR.  
TALLAHASSEE, FL  
32304

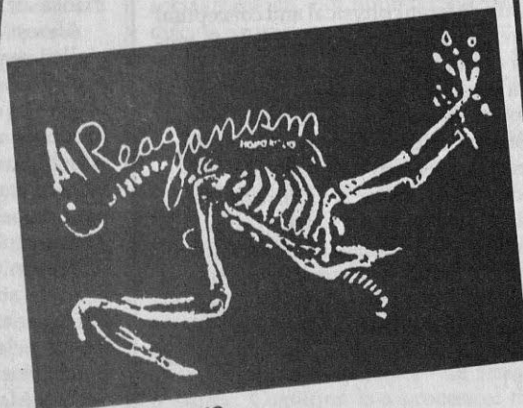
Line 1/5



Anonymous



Carlo Pittore, NYC



Vinnie Salas, NYC

Paul Rutkovsky, Tallahassee, FL

# TO COMPARE APPLES AND ORANGES START BY CALLING THEM BOTH FRUIT

By Charles Frederick



photo: Herb Peir

Dancers for Disarmament at the foot of the Capitol, April 20, 1985.

## CRITICISM IS THE POLITICAL EDGE OF IMAGINATION

We need a way to talk about art which helps consolidate a new community of artists and a new recognition of how diverse forms of cultural work created in vastly different physical and conceptual locations are part of the same overall effort to establish an empowering cultural tradition in this country.

Criticism is a primary, not a secondary activity of this effort. In its reflective function, criticism is a connecting discourse, referring examples of work to larger issues of culture, community, ideology and history—thereby connecting them to one another. In its evaluative function, the objective of criticism is to increase the effectiveness of work by examining how an art work creates new knowledge and consciousness in an audience. All criticism, whatever its hermeneutics, whether in the mode of deconstruction or advocacy, must be based on this radical question: how does the work add to the capacity of a community to name themselves as subjects of history with the power to determine their political, economic and cultural destiny?

## PERFORMANCE IS A LAWLESS FORM

With these principles in mind, I attended the performance art events of PADD's State of Mind/State of Union series. The task I

set myself was to recast the consideration of performance art within the larger cultural issue (and tradition) of performance. First, however, a couple of reminders about the tradition of performance art.

Almost all of the twentieth century avant garde "isms" have included performance work by artists. Performance art as a performance phenomenon cannot be contained within the aesthetic categories of dance, theatre, or music. In fact, one ambition of performance art is to subvert these Robert's Rules of Aesthetic Order, which parcel out as separate (alienated) activities what in many cultural traditions (including some in the West) are simply elements of composition within the more encompassing cultural activity of performance.

Remember also how often these performances were an attempt to shock an audience out of their complacency, to newly invigorate the experience of art by shattering high art decorum, and to ridicule middle class manners and the humorless philistinism of the booboosie. These performances ran the spectrum from the Right—Marinetti's Futurism—to the Left—as with the Constructivists in the Soviet revolution. Another stream within these activities to keep in mind were the attempts to recreate "ritual" experience and other "primitivisms" in "art" experience—particularly some of the Surrealists and some of Symbolists' dance theatre.

When looking at contemporary performance art, we need to remember that our performance art traditions in the U.S., although sometimes bearing superficial resemblance to the European avant garde tradition, do not have the same historical task. In the U.S., the avant garde is a genre, not a subversion. When we think of breaking the perceptual frames of art, we have to break more than the pieces of wood around the picture. One of the monstrous achievements of U.S. capitalism is a deeply penetrating hegemonic culture of international scope with an apparently limitless capacity for reproduction in all its mediated forms. This imperial culture has corrupted the meaning of democracy and our very dreams of satisfaction into free-market ideology. This creates for us an historical responsibility to break frames of a more radical cultural confinement: race, sex, class, and other cultural, political, and material forms of domination.

The immediate critical challenge is to talk about contemporary

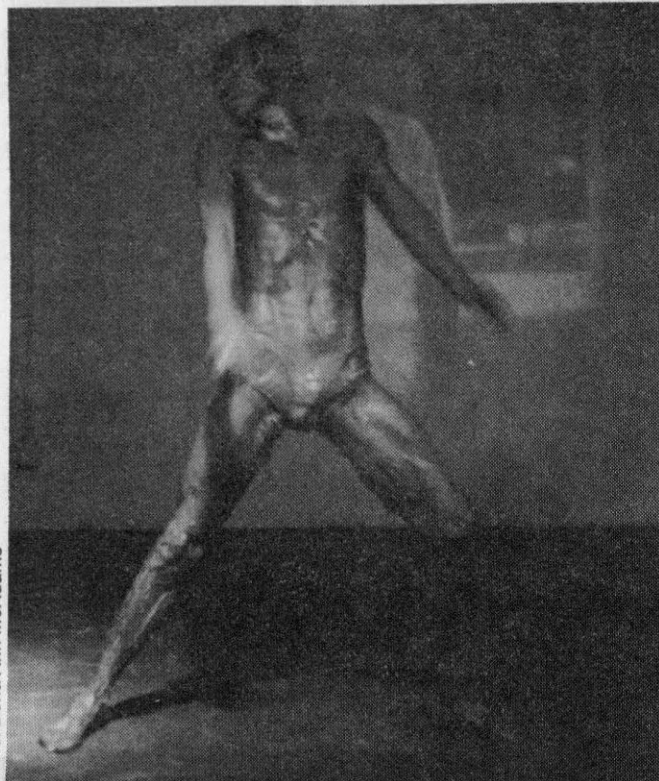


photo: Dona Ann McAdams

Charles Dennis in *Clearinghouse*.

performance art not just within the avant garde tradition, but within a much larger historical tradition. By placing performance art within this larger discussion of performance, it will be possible to see how performance art can function as part of a radical historical critique of our imperial culture. Performance, however, is aesthetically lawless from the perspective of the Western "high art" tradition. Performance in most examples is an activity that is *cultural*, not *artistic*. It is an expression in ritual and profound entertainment of *community* experience, tradition, and values using both collective participation and artistic representation.

When I am using the word performance, I am referring to entertainments and/or rituals large and small, serious and pandering, sacred and profane, tragic or joyous, more or less immediately participatory. Such as: circus, the Catholic Mass, Elizabethan court masques, hippodromes, Disneyland, the vision quests of North American Indians, music hall, vaudeville, cabaret, Sufi dancing, Irish wakes, football, Memorial Day parades, the crowning (anointing) of the king, Passover seder, the Democratic Presidential Convention, marriages, street theater, political demonstrations, clown performance in Bali, the Sun Dance, funerals of black people in South Africa.

These examples collectively compose a cultural activity that permits a community to manifest itself to itself, either as a whole or in a

particularly mandated part. They use all the available resources that are not materially, politically, or conventionally restricted to enact and display in symbolic languages the community's essential concerns, either sorrowful or happy. (Remember that in many cultural situations the enactment of ritual ensures the maintenance of the universe in ordered form.)

Performance mirrors the community, represents the image of the community identity, encoding it within traditional lore. This identity is comprehensively expressed within images, language, music, masks, make-up and body paint, costume, and the structured behavior of ceremonies, rites, dance and acting. Performances happen on occasions of specially framed (timeless) time, in seasonal sequence, to mark moments of development for individuals in the community, or because of a crisis in the community. ("Art" performance happens in specially designated leisure or "non-productive" time.) Performance has a specially prepared place, either temporary or permanent, with its own aura.

I would describe performance as the totality of human faculties—physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual—in a community with their environments, traditions, and histories, reconstituted in a symbolic world, taken out of the chaotic material world—in essence, into the world of pure culture, purely human. In this world, there is no possibility of accident, there is only signifying event.

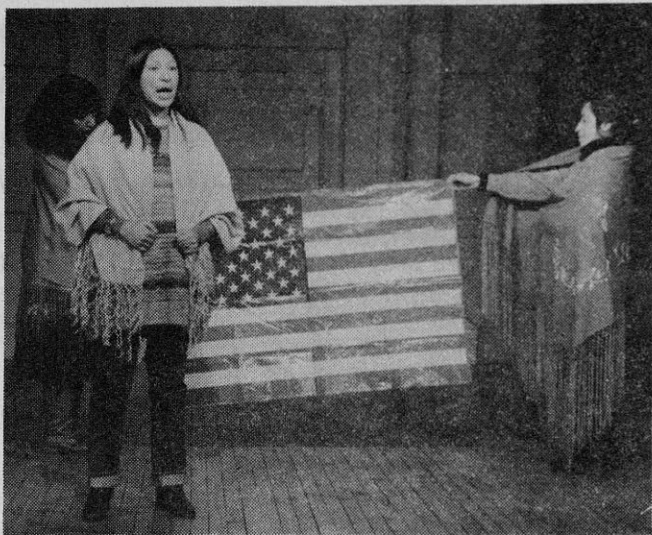
Performance art, too, is for the most part involved with the "rituals" of a very specific cultural community—the "downtown" art world, or other "scenes." An important political dimension of the discussion of performance art then is to consider what identity the performers articulate (for themselves and for their audience) with their work. Remember that this domain of performance chooses for itself the title of "art." Many artists feel themselves alienated (often proudly) from more traditional ideas of community—groups of people rooted in specific locations—geographically, socially, culturally, historically—which provide the cultural ontology of each person who inhabits the community. This alienation the artist feels of course is the ruling culture's ontological definition: the Bourgeois Individual—the Nameless God of our time.

Much performance art, however, contains a radical aesthetic act. Performance art often strips the fiction of character from this god, and presents the actual individual as the performed character, creating for the artists an immediate, non-representational participation lacking in other experiences of bourgeois art, which are also (to speak most generally) bound up with the commanding myth of the Individual, the Nameless God. (This god is nameless because, since he inhabits isolation, he needs no name to recognize himself, no name to tell to another.)

## THE RADICAL THOUGHT IS FELT WITH PASSION

So far I have been presenting performance as an *object* of culture in order to be able to place performance art within a more continuous social tradition, not limited by a particular aesthetic tradition. To discuss some concepts of evaluation for performance art, I want next to look at performance as an *experience* of culture. How does it work to be empowering? For this discussion, my perspective must switch from an identity with the creator's point of view to that of the audience or participating community.

Performance is an event experienced over a period of real time in a continuously or temporarily constituted community (audience). Its enabling, empowering force does not primarily come from the choice of material (old left idea), or from some idea distilled at the end, but more from the actual experience itself of the performance event. It comes from what happens to the audience, emotionally, sensually, intellectually. These are equally important faculties of perception. It is in this combined talent of perception that an audience recognizes meaning—all senses are employed in creating meaning. Cognition is a process of mind, body, and feeling. So, these are the political questions we need to ask at a performance: how does the community of people in attendance participate, how does that participation create new knowledge, and through what means of perception?



**Off the Beaten Path, a Native American Theater Group, at P.S. 122.**

In many circumstances the subject matter of the work answers such a crying need in a community that this need for the statement of the "subject" overpowers all other "artistic" considerations of what makes up the event. I think here of some specifically "political" subjects that might be performed on the streets, or in special communities where even to name a subject may be to liberate self-empowering knowledge in a community—as has been the case at certain stages in the creation of their identity by particularly oppressed communities. In a moment of desperation, crisis, or action, meaning is directly articulated in the political movement of people, and rhetoric can become poetry.

Even in these cases however, as with performance under less urgent conditions, the experience is still the knowledge. In art work made to take place in some kind of community situation (again—either traditionally or temporarily constituted) rather than in situations of more individual reflection, there are always three subjects of the work. There is the consciously chosen subject matter of the work, there is the subject of the composer of the work (group or individual), and there is the audience itself that is the third subject of the performance. Depending upon the kind of work, and the situation of performance, the individual creator(s) may have more or less made their identity continuous with the audience, or may have made the subject matter more or less continuous with themselves as a personal subject.

The prejudice of Western aesthetics has been to privilege the complexity composed *within* the art object at a *distance* from the audience. By extension, this prejudice assigns special status to the *individual* creator, or artist, as well as the individual spectator. However, aesthetics can be based on more democratic social assumptions, less interested in reinforcing the supremacy of the commodity as the highest form of social production. Aesthetics can be more committed to community self-knowledge—ethical, personal, spiritual, etc.—and consequent principled social praxis as the highest form of social production.

Then the art object or event may serve as a temporary creation whose purpose is to facilitate a community's collective focusing on itself, revealing to itself, on the occasion of the "art" event, its own complexity. The complete act of culture is both the specific, artfully composed performance, but also the continuation of the event in the community's discussion or other group participation.

In sum, it is the total experience, of which the audience is a principal part, which is the meaning of the performance event, a meaning known equally from faculties of thought and feeling. What this has to contribute to politics is the reminder that all knowledge, within whatever faculty of human sense and reason, creates the possibility of practical action.

The radical understanding is that the distinction between conscious and unconscious is false. In every public and private part of our communities, we are pervaded by the social, everything is both

known and not known, all is in constant contradiction. What is recognized as order and identity is the assertion of self within a consciousness of experience that forms within traditions of knowledge. This sense of self and community is limited (or given another, outer boundary) by the power of the commanding, rationalizing ideology. The identity negotiated among these forces is reinforced by people's assessment of the prevailing mechanisms of power, reward and punishment. Political action in the material and social universe must comprehend this complexity, the full depth, effable and ineffable, of the human subject.

The traditional didactic content, considered as it usually is from an impoverished understanding—that is to say, privileging the analytic and verbal faculty of expression—of how people empower themselves to new action and creation of their social reality, may be the least important element of knowledge in the performance event.

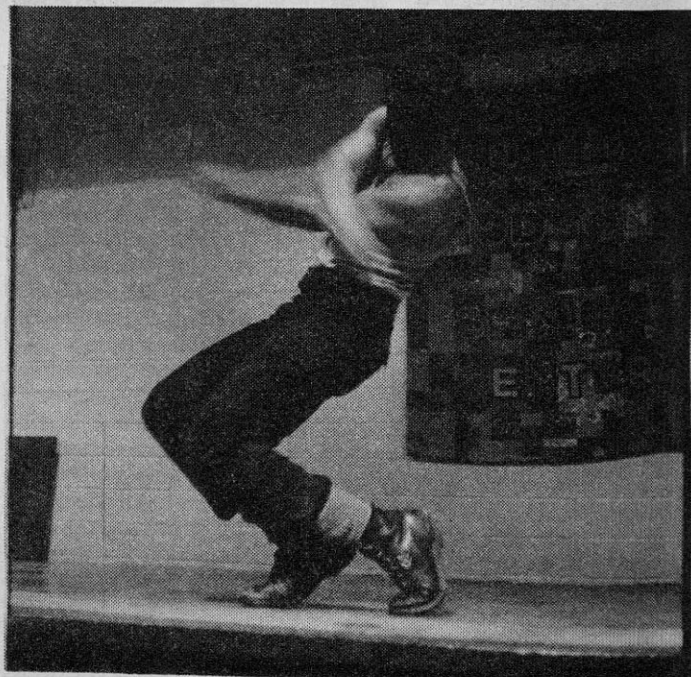
The experience of symbolic reality is full to the brim with emotional, intuitive, irrational, unconscious recognition of the world. Symbolic experience, so entangled with desire and fantasies of satisfaction, must permit what is unstable, contradictory and subversive as elements of composition. Since the recognition of freedom is the character of imagination when imagination is not repressed, experiences in symbolic reality can be powerful motors in the efforts people make toward seizing their own human reality and sustaining their will to act consciously in history. Any political program that is to last must take place on both the collective symbolic and the collective material planes of people's cultures.

### **THERE ARE NO KINGS; EACH PERSON IS THE ACTUAL SUBJECT OF HISTORY**

A year before State of Mind/State of the Union, I visited Nicaragua with a theatre delegation from the U.S. While we were there, we saw many performances, in a festival setting, out in the country where cultural brigades were performing for and working with the people who were harvesting the cotton and coffee crops, and in the National Theatre Workshop, directed by Alan Bolt.

Much of what I saw in Nicaragua was a story-based theatre. But the stories, because composed with the specific intention of assisting the development of the people in their new society, and because of the community locations of performance, were a radical departure from Western realist story-telling theatre. In the Western middle class theatre tradition, the production process and the play are absolutely separated from the audience. The current of connec-

**Ishmael Houston-Jones in motion at the Hodson Senior Center.**





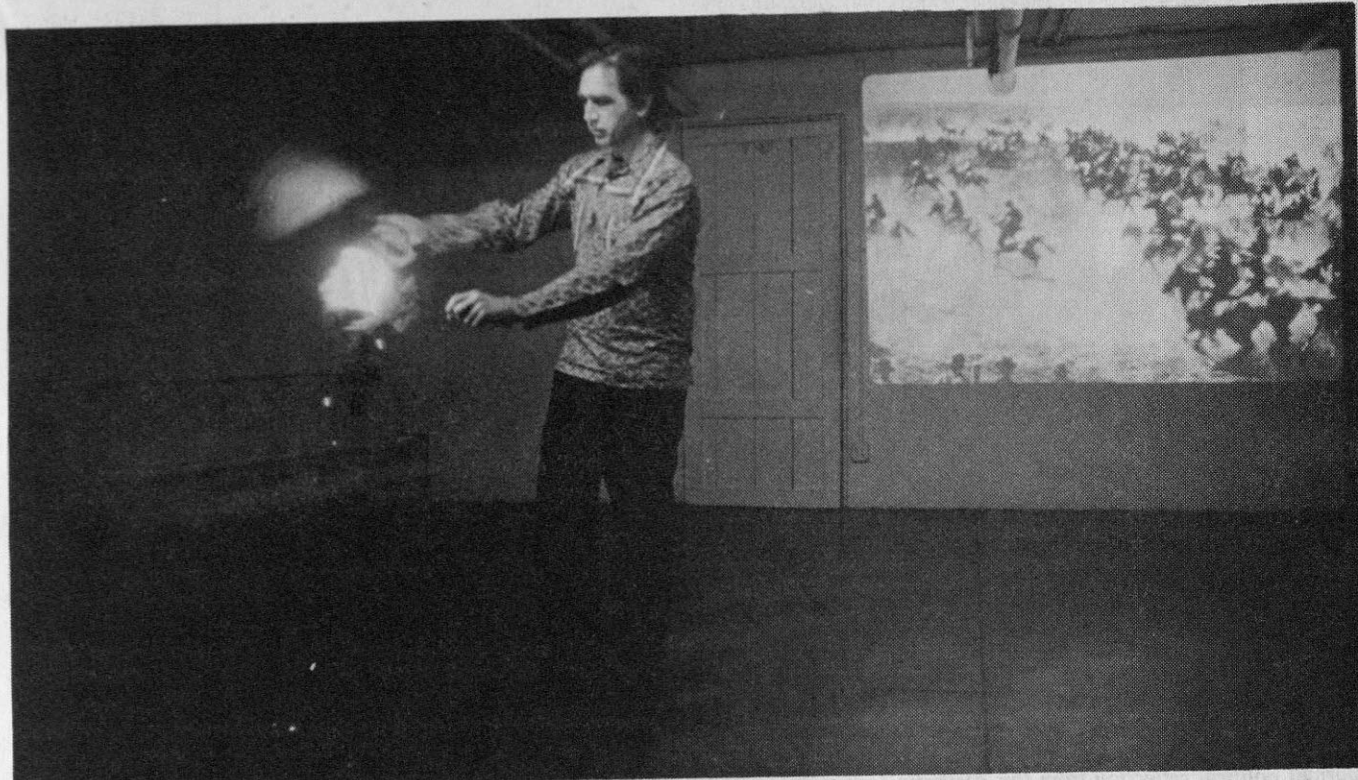


photo: Dora Ann McAdams

**Jimmie Durham burning cedar at the beginning of his *Giveaway* ceremony which opened the State of Mind/Union Performance Series.**

tion is emotional and intellectual (representational), not actual and participatory (revolutionary).

Although most earnest theatre claims for its purpose to create some effect of social consciousness in an audience, the emphasis in the revolutionary theatre in Nicaragua was much more immediately concerned with how to retell the experience of poor people so they might feel they have more control in their lives. How to give their lives back to them in cogent, but mutable articulation? The performances present their experiences as a series of choices of what to do. The plays were often (although not always) what we would call didactic. They were not, however, didactic in the pejorative sense with which we often apply the word. The most immediate experience and social reality of these people—involving, for example, questions of the responsibility of community involvement, speculation and hoarding, connivance with Contras, were placed before them so they might discuss as part of the performance what their responses might be, both compassionate and effective.

Additionally (I found), particularly in Bolt's work, the theatre people were trying to find from the old traditions of performance and symbolic language—"folk" tales, dance and acting forms, traditional symbols—a language of the theatre that would allow people in the communities where the work would be performed to retrieve their history, but at the same time to make use of it to create the new reality of the reconstructed Nicaraguan society. The process of composition and performance was continually subject to the perceptions and interventions of the community.

Working with the community *at their work*, and sharing their daily lives. Finding out which issues were important. Listening to stories of the communities. Finding the generative symbols both traditional and currently popular that were dwelling in the common culture. Shaping a work of performance. Re-composing the work after discussion with the community.

My experience in Nicaragua compelled me to rethink and refocus some of the critical categories for performance I have used in the past for New York performance art. Where I had written before about the fluid art object and its imagining—the sequence of images, the sensual fantasy, the concerns of composition and combination of idea and image compelling the artist, the craft and formal artistry—I became much more interested in thinking about the effect of the work within the audience.

This way of thinking frees me from the genre and medium specializations of the work, and allows me to understand the work by what I call a *composition of affects* which might allow us to better understand the complex experience of the work. By composition of affects I mean the accumulating episodes of experience the audience goes through. What does the performer do to create response in the audience? What score does the performer compose which creates the occasion of sensual, emotional, intellectual experience? What knowledge or experience of consciousness do these accumulating sensations create in the audience?

This kind of analysis should expand the political respect for how different kinds of work, created from often radically different composition practices and performed in radically different locations, may each provide models for the creation of politically effective performance art. By politically effective I mean here work that brings people to a more intense experience or knowledge of themselves in the world which contributes to their more actively identifying their role as aggressive subjects in history.

#### **HISTORY IS LIKE A CRYSTAL: THE WHOLE STRUCTURE IS PRESENT IN EACH PERSONALITY**

As I discussed above, much of performance art uses the performer as the immediate presence of meaning. He or she is both the subject and the agent of the work. There is no "fiction" of character, of becoming some "other." This is not to say that the performer is without a persona. Since performance is a symbolic activity, the self is presented in a different reality. Even the possibilities of improvisation and audience control of a result are contained within a *crafted* experience.

In the two examples from State of Mind/State of the Union I want to look at, Jimmie Durham's *Giveaway*, and Ishmael Houston-Jones's dance at the Hodson Senior Center, the performers both used themselves and their bodies, but to express a different politics of the personal subject.

So, *why is it that performance/art so often incarnates social meaning in the personal (body), in the immediately physical, not disrupting self and character as in conventional theatre? It is true that much of the work in the history of post-WWII New York art and performance emphasizes the fact of personal presence. An im-*

photo: Herb Perr



New York Cultural Workers leading Pac-Sam through the streets of Washington, April 20, 1985 (see International News).

portant political reflection from this aesthetic convention is that the insistent presence of the actual person as the subject of the art work becomes a critique (by extension into radical democratic possibility) of individualism. We can only represent ourselves with our presence. Power should be continuous with our own participation. Each individual human being is equal in importance to every other; no class or ceremonial costume should privilege anyone over another.

Also, within the secular culture of democracy—think, for example, of Whitman's Song of Myself—this profound experience of democracy is ecstatic, present time is eternal, the self is a body—material, sexual, biological, hedonistic, polymorphous. These are the entrances to and the real experiences of the transcendental.

Ishmael Houston-Jones has performed his work widely in New York, around the country and abroad. He has also taught in Nicaragua. For the PADD performance series, he performed at the Hodson Senior Center in a poor area of the Bronx for an event co-curated by the PADD committee and Susan Perlstein (who has done extensive theatrical work with elderly people at the Center through her organization, Elders Share the Arts). I had seen Ishmael perform before in various places downtown. It was my feeling that Ishmael's performance at the Senior Center—simply by the performance context—fundamentally re-interpreted a work which he has shown before in other variations. The presence of this audience of elderly people reworked the work.

Ishmael has composed a great deal of work which has two running streams of consciousness, intertwined, simultaneous. He tells a text, a personal monologue about issues of his life, his questions, his experiences. The text always feels open-ended, as though it were created just in this moment when you are in attendance. Almost as if there were a compulsion to talk, but where the audience might enter, or begin to listen at any moment within the monologue. The energy is extremely intense—although not conventionally dramatic. I have the feeling that Ishmael, the subject, knows that he must communicate a tremendous urgency while avoiding affectation or self-importance, that he must carefully but rivetingly hold attention because at any moment the audience might turn its head (like switching the channel on TV) and he would then disappear; he would cease to exist.

While he talks, he composes his other stream of consciousness: he moves—this is another way to say, he dances. And he works very hard at it. You can see his work. It's real. There is no stinting,

no surface of ease. So you trust his wish to tell you something. And the gestural/body work seems to erupt from different locations. The dance is entropic, as though the world with its static continually disrupts the possibility of a center, interferes with transmission. The work looks like he is constantly putting himself in danger. At the Hodson Center he danced with a bandana blindfold. We were anxious for him.

Ishmael's text told about Nicaragua, about his own work, about his own perplexity of what to do about Nicaragua. Meanwhile his hands grip together, quivering, thrown out and held out in front of him, like he is in a struggle with someone else. Then he hammers with his entwined fists, up and down to his bent knees before his hands explode out. He suddenly falls backward; he jumps and lands hard. His head moves like it has been hit. From some pivot of body you would feel only if you too had slept in some cramped corner of fear, he wrenches himself up from one place on the stage into another. He breathes hard and sweats. His muscles are like confining ropes; but they are his strength, he cannot break his way out to freedom.

Still blindfolded, he suddenly flung himself off the little old-fashioned assembly hall stage and landed, unsteadily on a wobbling ankle, in the aisle in the audience, panting. I could hear the old people gasp and then murmur nervously among themselves. And at that moment, Ishmael's work became re-interpreted for me. Although I had seen a version of this piece before, it became a new work for me—from the sensibility of these frail, old people, frail in body because of their age, and since so many of them were poor, black, Hispanic, their life histories had also made them frail. They had strength, but they were also frail. These people did the work of art in their response.

And when Ishmael threw himself off the stage, blindfolded, like an animal, or a child, or a campesino kicked out in the night, these people deeply sensed the risk, and the risk of what might happen to Nicaragua, the urgency of taking risk, the anxiety of risk, how much risk there is in every choice—the fear and the fragility exploded as a feeling and knowledge in all of our bodies, because for some of those old people just their walking across the street could have that much risk of broken bones. The immediate and tremendously intense experience of body that Ishmael displayed in episodes of physical expression and danger made us know, by feeling the same risk in our bodies—at the gut—that the world was dangerous for Nicaragua, and that it was very difficult, anxiety-ridden, to choose what to do.

For Jimmie Durham's piece we were gathered at Franklin Furnace, an alternative space in Lower Manhattan. When we were settled, Jimmie casually began to show slides. The slides were images of the trials of oppression of American Indians. Jimmie is also an American Indian.

Jimmie spoke softly and said that he had to prepare the space in a traditional way, and he burned some cedar wood, fanning it with feathers, softly chanting and singing. Meanwhile we continued to see the images from old photographs, posters, illustrations of the slaughter of the buffalo, the Wild West shows, a Wounded Knee tourist billboard, the degradation and the destruction of the native peoples of the North American continent. With the images, the singing and the dim lighting we were removed from a performance, we felt placed in the past, and we felt sorrow, we felt anger, we felt loss.

Jimmie spoke of water, of river rights. We were brought to the present. The Reagan administration is stealing the water rights, the rivers of the Indians, and selling them to commercial interests. We were no longer in the past. This was happening now. And its meaning was clear. We saw the image of a dead Indian on one of the slides.

If this had been the extent of the performance scope—even continued—we would have been left with knowing and feeling some meaning of the history of American Indians, but it would have been a lesson to memorize, not one experienced. Jimmie, however, took us much further.

While watching a series of slides which began with a big red map of the U.S., Jimmie began to pass objects, artifacts, images into the crowd. The slide series began to show the encroachment of the white man on Indian land. When Jimmie started to give out some things—small statues, cards with drawings, woven cloth, clothes with figures embroidered on them, shaped stones, wood, feathers—people at first passed them among themselves, thinking that they were being shown things—another sequence of images like the slides.

Then it became clear that Jimmie was passing out many things. Perhaps he meant people to keep them. So the flow of objects in the audience went slower; people began to keep things and pass others on. There began a sense of unease. What to do? Were the things to be ours? The objects were shapely, interesting, beautiful—but their meanings were enigmatic. Jimmie knew what each thing was. He said he was passing out things he had gathered in his life.

People came to understand that they were to keep the objects—they almost seemed like prayer pieces. Nervously, people looked around themselves, and they began to compare surreptitiously or openly with their neighbors. Some seemed envious of what some others had. Meanwhile the red map was carved away and carved away, the Eastern and Southern coasts gone, the prairies gone, the plains gone, the West gone, until there were only the reservations, small red geometric shapes on a map surrounded by the U.S.

Jimmie asked if there was anybody who didn't get something. And some people raised their hands. So Jimmie said he didn't have anything else. Then he took off his bracelet and threw it into the audience. And then he took his shirt off and threw it into the audience. He sat and sang and played music. Then he stood up and told us the performance was over. He walked to the side and people sat for a bit, unsure of what to do. Then they left for intermission.

Jimmie presented himself as an actual and continuous subject of history. The form of the performance, borrowed from ritual performance, reproduced in our immediate experience the complex conflict that has characterised the encounter between European and Native American cultures—so far only resolved by brutal domination. The disturbance that was created in this downtown "art" audience by their uneasy participation in the performance brought them to a new encounter with their own culture. The oppression of the American Indians is not safely containable within an abstract political awareness. The struggle to end that oppression must include a change in our daily habits and assumptions. This is difficult, even painful. But Jimmie offered us the opportunity of a deep recognition that might lead to our healing ourselves. This was the great gift of his Giveaway.

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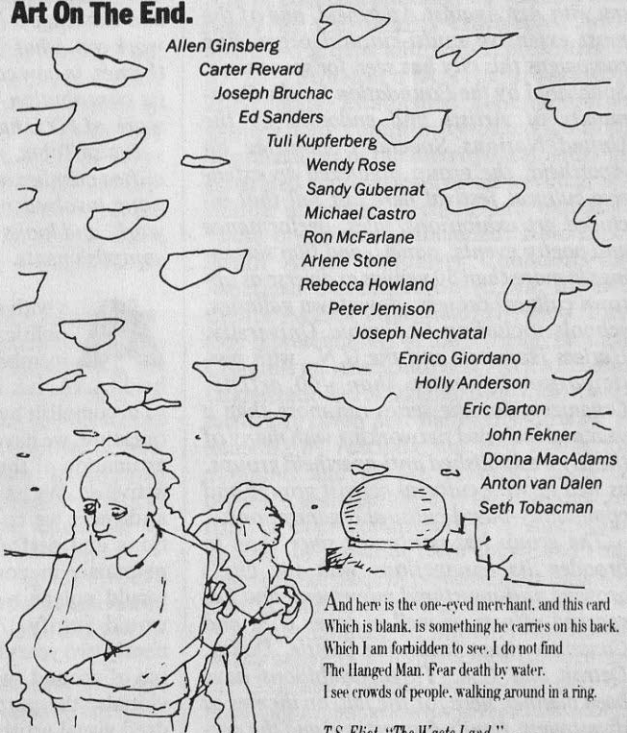
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T.S. Eliot, "The Waste Land."

48 pp, illustrations, original art, prose and poetry. ISBN: 0-936556-005. FALL, 1985.

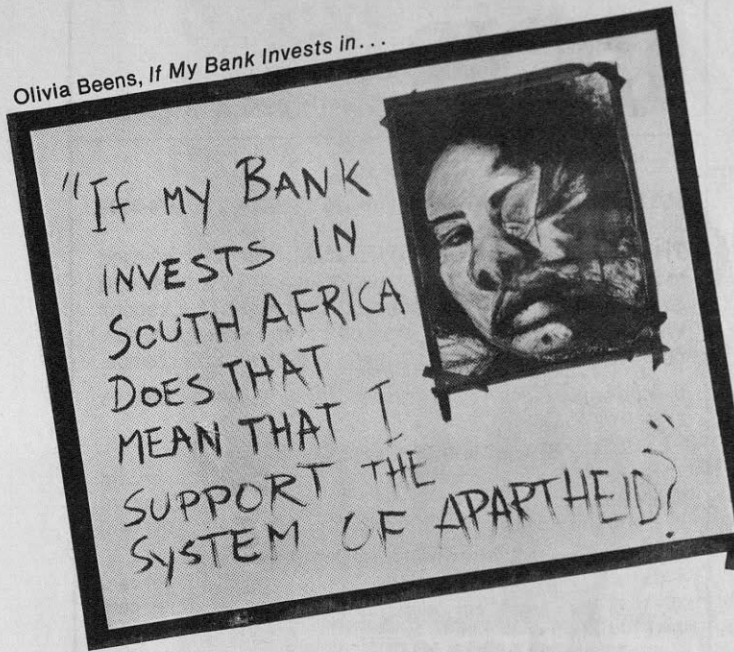
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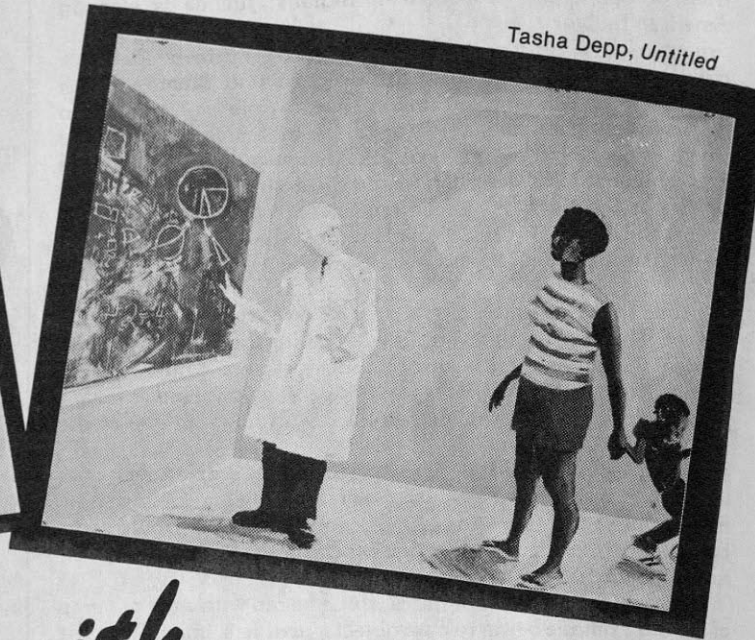
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## ART AGAINST APARTHEID

Olivia Beens, *If My Bank Invests in...*



Tasha Depp, *Untitled*



# Wrestling with Question & ?'s

By Blaise Tobia

**P**ADD's October Second Sunday presented an evening of slides, poetry and performances by artists working with Art Against Apartheid, one of the most extensive multi-cultural organizing campaigns this city has seen for some time. Sponsored by the Foundation for the Community of Artists and endorsed by the United Nations Special Committee on Apartheid, the group organized an extensive cultural festival here last fall that included art exhibitions/sales, performance and poetry events, panels, and film screenings in more than 50 venues as diverse as uptown cultural centers, downtown galleries, schools including Columbia University, Harlem Hospital, and the U.N., with participation by more than 400 artists. Organizing for the series ran more than a year and included networking with many of the city's established anti-apartheid groups, as well as with cultural activist groups and community-based cultural organizations.

The group has continued since then to broaden its connections with the city's growing anti-apartheid movement, and has sparked efforts as well in other U.S. and Canadian cities, including Seattle, Dallas, Detroit and L.A. Three exhibitions have been planned here for the fall, on themes of divestment, family & apartheid and the parallels between apartheid & American racism, with sites still under consideration.

In its extensive networking, in its raising of political issues through culture in com-

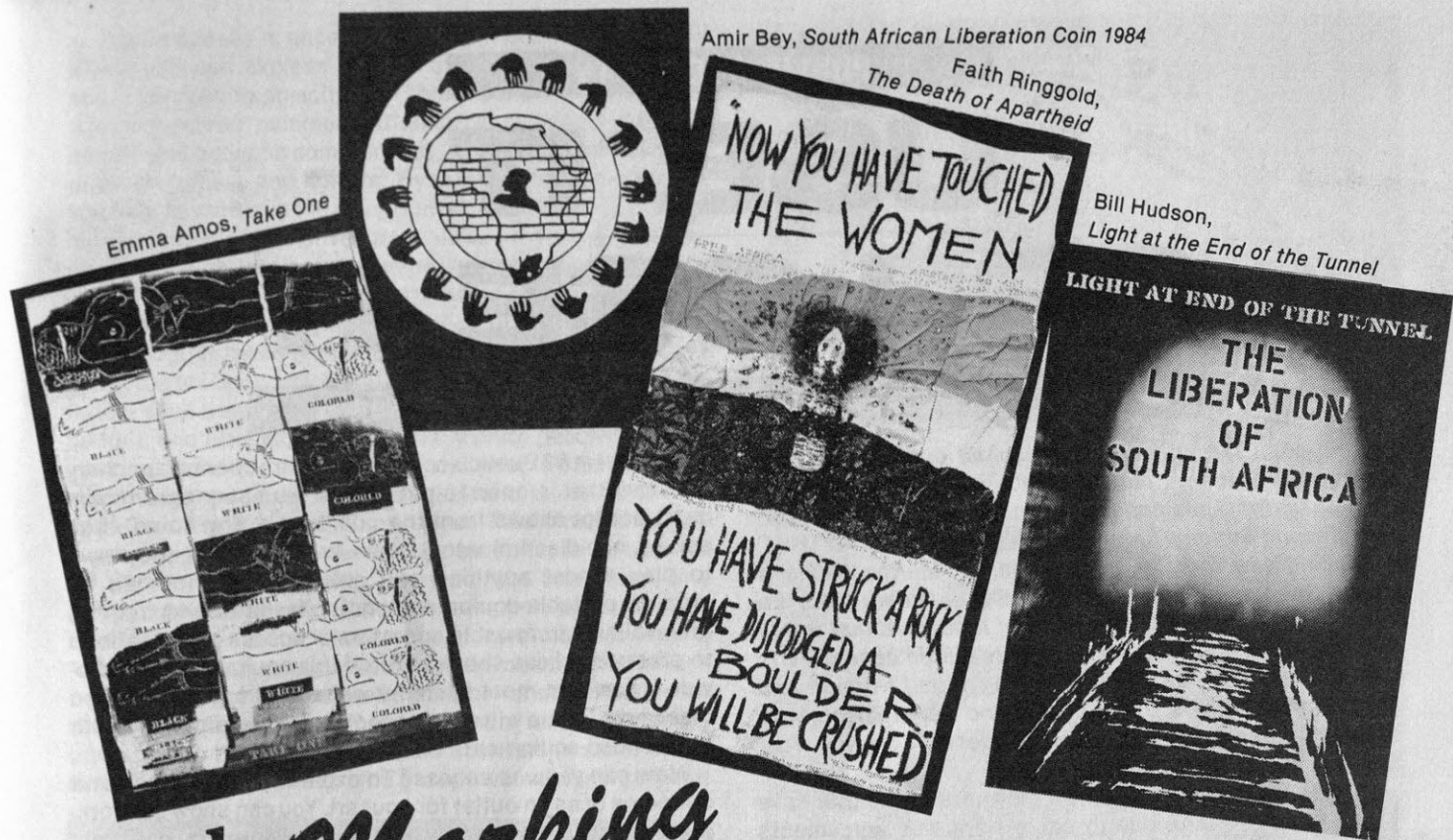
munity-based settings, and in the chance and challenge it has given to artists to make work on what for some have been new themes, in new contexts, for new audiences, its contribution to the cultural organizing work of NYC has been enormous.

Blaise Tobia, former AAA steering committee member, examines some of the questions involved in organizing with cultural work, and looks at some of the group's accomplishments.

**A**s with any venture linking art and politics, a central question for members of Art Against Apartheid (AAA) has been: what would we hope to accomplish by our efforts? In facing this question, we have been fairly realistic in our estimation of the potential visibility of our activities. We have also been aware that the audiences we could reach through exhibitions and performances—even when held primarily in community-based spaces—would not be massive. What results then would justify the extensive efforts over nearly two years by a coordinating committee of around twenty-five committed individuals; the participation of several hundred visual artists, writers and performers; granting agencies, the Foundation for the Community of Artists (which sponsored us throughout 1984) and the UN Special Committee Against Apartheid?

On the most basic level of effectiveness, any artwork, performance, speech or action by an individual or small group publicly proclaiming opposition to apartheid, adds to the struggle for liberation in Southern Africa. As necessary as these basic building blocks of struggle are, the primary thrust behind AAA was to take the effort beyond the individual and/or the small group. A united effort among individuals and coalition building among groups would achieve a synthesis which would be greater than any, or even the sum, of its parts. AAA's effort would have to seek to bring the issue to a generally broader consciousness, in pursuit of achieving even broader activity in return.

Whatever our results have been and will continue to be, we have always known that the audience among whom we could have an immediate effect would be our specific community—that of artists. AAA has striven to make it the normative moral stance among artists that we must each take a clear and visible position counter to the continuation of apartheid in South Africa and any U.S. activity making its continuation possible. The most urgent and convincing forms we could use to express this position would be the very forms of our greatest dedication and expertise—our artworks themselves. Whether or not this corollary is true remains part of the central question of the entire contemporary art-and-politics linkage.



# and Marking Accomplishments

The members of AAA decided from the very beginning to improve the likelihood of effective communication in the artworks that they would sponsor by insisting that the work contain clear and comprehensible references to the apartheid issue. This decision contrasted with a highly publicized exhibition of "major" artists in Paris the previous year, dedicated in title, but not in content, to the anti-apartheid cause.

The very name of our group—*Art*, rather than *Artists*, Against Apartheid—was adopted to reflect our insistence upon communicative, thematic works. So, in a very real sense, the AAA exhibitions represent a major demonstration of the possibilities of political art at this time. They are an answer to criticisms of the negative effect of political content in artworks. Artists, performers, and poets alike responded to the issue in a wide variety of forms, styles and approaches. Some of the works that have been displayed utilized a "Propaganda-like" mode, but others are nuanced and subtle. Some are very straightforward and prosaic; others are expressive or poetic. Virtually all are representational, although often with a surprising degree of abstraction or decorativeness. Admittedly, some achieved anti-apartheid meanings only within the defining contexts of the exhibitions. But the vast majority of the work displayed, read or performed demonstrated a consciousness on the part of the participating artists who were clearly cognizant of

the issues in the art-politics debate, yet who remained undeterred by those saying art and politics shouldn't mix.

For some of the artists who participated, this was their first venture into consciously political art; for others it was a chance to continue the kind of work to which they have long been committed. For this latter group, who have been consistently producing works dealing with questions of racism, injustice, militarism, etc., AAA provided a welcome opportunity for exhibition, exposure and response.

Another aspect of AAA's special relationship within the art community has been less based on professional identity—as artists—and more based upon our political status as persons and citizens. Realizing that artists are a significant segment in New York City, we have attempted to organize them as a specific, recognizable political constituency active against apartheid in many ways, including, for example, demonstrating in front of the South African Consulate.\* Reaching them and activating them politically proved to be a fully worthwhile effort.

From the onset, the members of AAA have been extremely interested in the con-

\*We also held our initial AAA press conference at the Consulate, back in September 1984, and were among the first to recognize the vulnerability of the site.

cept of coalition building. By working with many of the already-established anti-apartheid groups and with representatives of the Southern Africa liberation movements, established art-and-politics groups and community-based cultural organizations in the metropolitan area, we generated more extensive networking, resulting in greater strength and outreach. These organizations included: New York-South Africa Solidarity Coalition, the American Committee on Africa, the UN Centre Against Apartheid, the New York City representatives of the African National Congress and the Southwest Africa Peoples Organization, PADD, Artists Call, Basement Workshop and the Henry Street Settlement. By reaching out and asking individuals and groups in other cities to organize anti-apartheid efforts among artists in their communities, a significant number of activities have taken and continue to take place in Newark, Los Angeles, Seattle, Dallas, Detroit and elsewhere.

AAA continues to stimulate organizational activities in other cities throughout the U.S. and Canada. Internationally, we have had exchanges with artists and others in the anti-apartheid movement in Southern Africa, who have been encouraged by the news that many of their North American colleagues are in support of their struggles.

*Continued on page 35*

PUBLIC ACCESS TV

# USE IT OR LOSE IT

by Diana Agosta, Caryn Rogoff, and Abigail Norman

Paper Tiger TV, a collectively produced public access TV series which critiques mass communications drew an overflow crowd for tapes and discussion of PADD's November 1984 *Second Sunday*. Kathleen Hulser's "IF U CN RD THS," debunking New York City subway ads, and Martha Wallner's "Jack Spence and Judy Butler Read Nicaragua's La Prensa" were both well received. But it seemed that few in the audience were familiar with what public access TV is and how it works, so *Upfront* asked Abigail Norman and Paper Tiger members Diana Agosta and Caryn Rogoff, who are completing a study of public access TV in New York State, to introduce the subject.

**F**orty-four percent of the TV owners in the U.S. have cable TV, and due to cable franchise agreements with individual cities, most cable systems must offer some form of public access. Yet public access cable TV—apparently the perfect medium for building a democratic culture—is under-utilized by political artists. Many don't even know what it is.

*So what is it?* Public access is an entire channel, or channel time, that is open to public use. Access programmers must accept shows from the public on a first-come, first-served, non-discriminatory basis. In other words, they have to play almost anything you give them. Sometimes TV studios, portable equipment, editing facilities and training are available from cable operators or access organizations to produce access shows. Even if this equipment isn't provided, however, most systems will accept tapes produced elsewhere. Some will even accept 1/2" tapes produced with home video equipment.

*How can you use access?* To express your opinions and concerns or as an outlet for your art. You can show art work, performances, community or political events. You can highlight local or visiting artists in documentary or interview formats. You can show tapes by other access producers to share information or inspiration.

*Why use access?* Because you can reach a broad audience. Almost everybody watches TV, at least occasional-

Paper Tiger Television filming "Jean Franco reads *Photonouvelles*."

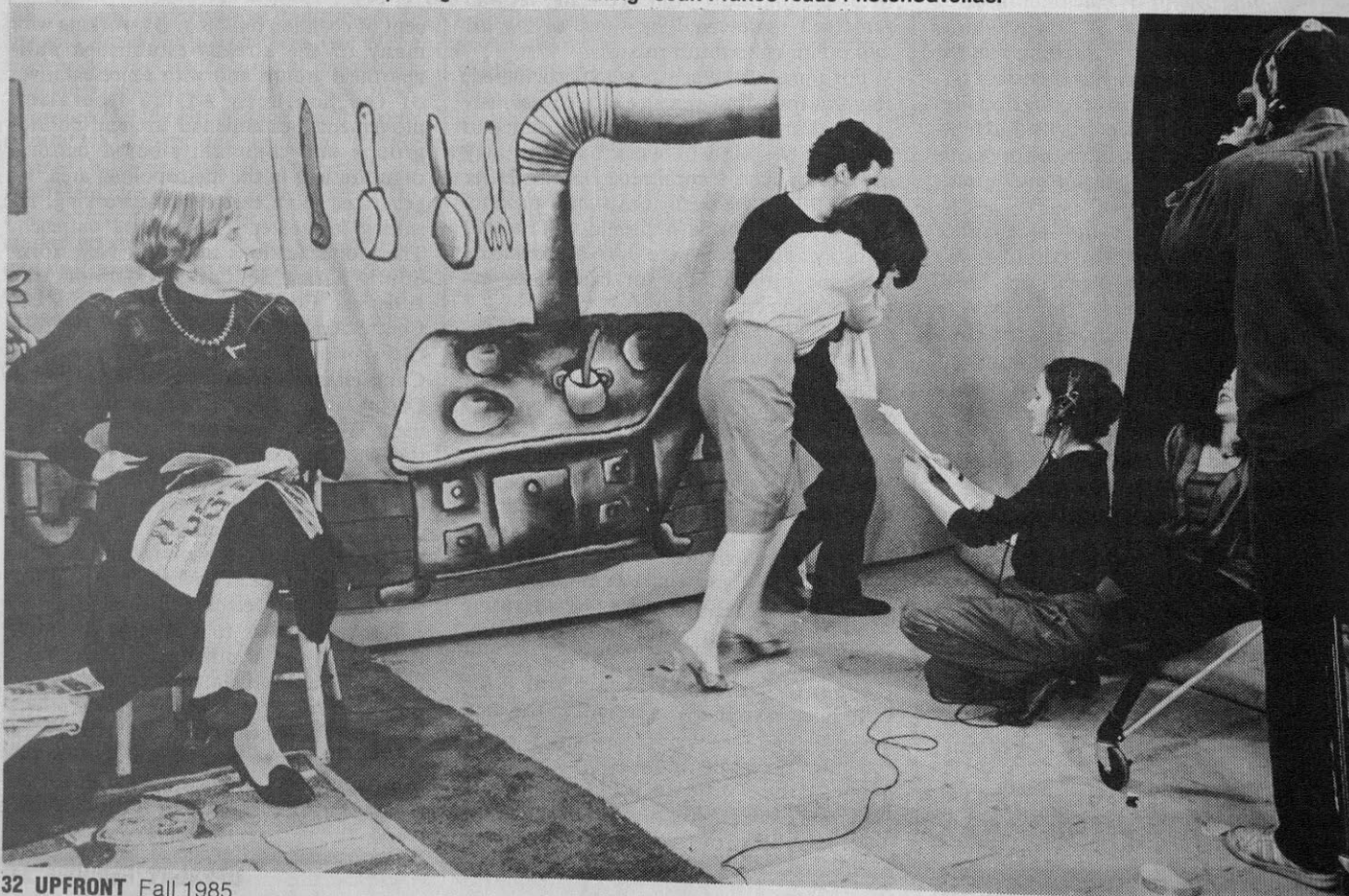


photo: Diane Neumaier

ly. Public access is uncensored; it is the only place on TV where you can express a point of view without worrying about the pseudo-objectivity of "balance" and "equal time." It provides direct communication between people in a community and between communities, without the intervention of programmers and editors. By training local producers, you help to continue the development and visibility of local culture (video is addictive), as well as creating a video archive. By highlighting, documenting, sharing and giving greater visibility to local culture and activism, public access TV can concretely help to build cultural democracy.

Although it takes time and energy to produce an access show, it's probably not as hard as you think. Attempts to imitate a slick broadcast style with low quality equipment, no budget, and little experience usually bring poor results. Access has its own forms—direct and people-oriented. Successful access tends to use its limitations as creative inspiration. For example, *Paper Tiger TV's* simultaneously humorous and serious media criticism series is well-known for its handmade graphics, funky painted backdrops, and semi-advertent glimpses of the production process. With less money on the line, a self-defined target audience, and no "executive" producer, access demands experimentation.

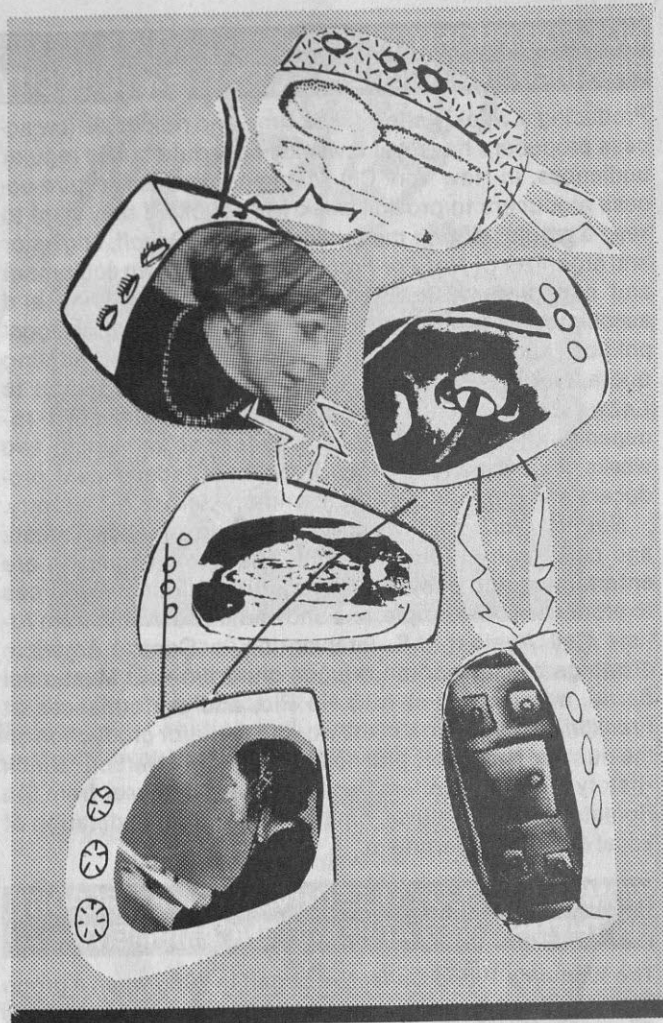
However, access channels are now underutilized, and thus endangered. The new federal cable law allows cable operators to take back underused access channels. *Use it or lose it.* Here are some of the groups who are using it best.

## X-CHANGE TV: THE U.S./NICARAGUA CONNECTION

*X-Change TV* does just what it says: it is a collective of video producers and media activists who exchange programs made in Nicaragua by Sandinista TV, Taller Popular, MIDINRA Division of Communications and others, with programs made about Nicaragua and Central America made in the U.S. *X-Change TV* was founded in part to counteract the anti-Nicaraguan propaganda that is repeated every day in U.S. government rhetoric and mainstream media reports. It provides instead a means of *direct* communication between the people of both countries. *X-Change TV* is shown as a public access series in Manhattan and elsewhere in the US. One show, "La Dalia," produced in Nicaragua by Taller Popular, interviews two militia women living near the Honduran border; it is paired with "Ruben Dario Poetry Review," which excerpts an all-night reading in memory of the Nicaraguan poet, where over 300 U.S. and Central American poets read, including Amiri Baraka and Allen Ginsberg. *X-Change TV* members also provide material aid for video production in Nicaragua, sending tape stock and other supplies; recently two U.S. members ran a video workshop for women in Managua.

## MEDIA BUS: COMMUNITY TV IN WOODSTOCK

*Media Bus* isn't an access show, but a group of media activists in Woodstock, New York who convinced the local cable company and Town Board to activate the public access channel under their management, and then formed Woodstock Access TV, a non-profit organization, for that purpose. Presently, WATV programs Channel 6 for 20 hours a week, not including the hand-lettered rolodex of classifieds and community announcements which is the station's trademark. A sturdy patchwork of resources supports the channel—a live connection into the cable system and technical assistance from the cable company, rent-free



Marguerite Bunyan

studio space and some operating expenses from the town, and much equipment, staff, and training from Media Bus. A \$5 annual fee gives Channel 6 members free access to training and industrial-quality equipment to produce their own shows, or they can hire Media Bus or other independent producers affiliated with the station as crew or co-producers for as little as \$35 an hour.

Long-running shows on Channel 6 include a live poetry series, a local potter demonstrating ceramics techniques, a lively discussion show on gay issues, and "This is Not the News," a weekly satire produced by pioneering community TV producer Tobe Carey. In the last year, viewership has jumped as frequent near-live coverage of Town Board meetings have focused on the significant ground-water pollution in the area. Channel 6 crews have been known to follow the county Health Department inspector as he inspects, for example, the sewer system of local motels.

Predictably, not all this coverage has been welcomed by the town's political forces, and there have been frequent battles between WATV and the town government over censorship and channel management issues. But Media Bus member Bart Friedman feels that the channel reflects what is actually going on in the town, and the town doesn't always like what it sees. The essentially democratic structure of local government, community support for the channel, and the balance of power in the town, added to the access channel's legal mandate to be open to the public, all weigh in favor of WATV and the channel's long-term success.

## NOT-FOR-PROFIT TV: PROGRESSIVE HODGE-PODGE IN NEW YORK CITY

Producing a weekly show takes time and resources few access producers have, yet a weekly schedule builds regular audiences. In New York City, cable companies *require* access producers to provide weekly programs if they want to keep a regular slot on the schedule. Caryn Rogoff, originator and organizer of *Not-For-Profit TV*, uses her own equipment and conspires with a loose-knit group of friends and associates to produce one half-hour per month on local political and cultural events. To complete its scheduling quota, *Not-For-Profit* hands over one week per month to *Labor Journal* for its own commentary and independently produced tapes, and for the remaining two weeks Rogoff solicits tapes from local independent producers and other access programmers across the country.

*Not-For-Profit's* shows cover local performances, music and community cultural events. The short segments are entertaining and easy to edit, requiring minimal resources to produce. For example, one showed three events from Artists Call Against U.S. Intervention in Central America: drawings by Salvadoran refugee children at El Museo del Barrio, a "paint-in" at ABC No Rio, and performances at Franklin Furnace. Now in the works is a major production on the nuclear Navy port planned for New York Harbor; "Black History Month in Harlem" won an award last year from the Hometown USA Festival, run by the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers.

## WOMEN'S VIDEO COLLECTIVE: WOMEN REPORT ON THEMSELVES AT PEACE ENCAMPMENT

The *Women's Video Collective* began in 1983 when a group of eight Boston-area women already involved in access decided that they could better expand and share their skills in an all-women's production group. From the beginning, the *process* of production has been as important as the subjects documented. This philosophy was evident in their first project—documenting the Women's Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice near the Seneca Army Depot in upstate New York. The women wanted to make the information available as soon as possible—to use the immediacy of television, but without the time and content constraints of night news "stories." The women also knew that they couldn't depend on the media to communicate their message, and they wanted to do it themselves.

Using equipment made available by cable-access centers, the group went beyond a daily video record of events by conducting video training for women at the peace camp, and playing back after dinner each night the tapes shot that day. Women went home afterwards enthusiastic, which was key to grassroots distribution of the 15 short peace camp tapes on access channels from Tennessee to Georgia to Colorado. The process also planted seeds for local access production in those areas.

## RSEC-TV: CATSKILL MOUNTAIN HOMEGROWN

In upstate New York, Patrick Murphy manages RSEC-TV, coordinates student productions for eleven schools, runs a student quiz contest and produces his own local cultural showcase series, all on a budget of \$33,000 per year. The country's first low-power TV station, RSEC-TV serves four

Catskill counties whose mountains shield them from high-power network TV waves, retransmitting public television from a nearby county and inserting 10 to 20 of its own shows per month. Three local cable channels also incorporate RSEC-TV's local programs into their schedules.

RSEC-TV offers a model of television firmly rooted in a place and a population. In *Mountain Update*, high school students produce half-hour programs, diverse in content but all locally based. One show portrays the Delaware River, its history, fables, economics, and images in postcards and photographs. In *Catskill Mountain Homegrown*, Murphy pairs artists and other talented people such as a wood-carver and a chimney sweep. He also helps Catskill residents tape and edit their own shows.

## MILL HUNK STORY HOUR: TRUE TALES FROM STEEL VALLEY

In 1980, some folks from the *Mill Hunk Herald*—"a democratically run quarterly magazine for the reports, opinions, and stories of the average person"—got into TV when Warner-Amex Cable came to Pittsburgh with equipment and channel time available to the community. "Most working people rely on the tube for information," said producer Larry Evans, explaining the group's decision to expand its local audience to reach Warner's 78,000 cable subscribers in addition to the *Herald's* 4,000 subscribers. Each *Mill Hunk* production is repeated six times in two weeks, on different days and in different time-slots, allowing a variety of people to catch it.

The *Mill Hunk Story Hour* ranges from "Shut Down Cabaret" with local artists performing skits ("Alice in Working Wonderland" and a steelworkers' version of "Flashdance") to contract debates at union locals and public hearings on steel plant shutdown legislation. The Hunks have also taken their cameras on the road, travelling with Pittsburgh-area contingents to events such as the June 12, 1982 peace demonstrations in New York City, giving a local angle to the TV audience at home.

## WHAT TV: VIDEO ARTISTS CONFRONT MASS MEDIA IN SYRACUSE

*What TV* was a short series of access shows exploring the subjectivity of media in a range of styles and approaches. It was produced by LAMP (Light Audio Media Production), a loose collaborative of academics, artists and graduate students at Syracuse University, in 1983. LAMP's ongoing collaborations include a critical journal and a video screening series.


Each *What TV* show consisted of a short, provocative video art segment produced especially for the series with a combination of personal, university, and public access equipment, followed by a live call-in segment. LAMP producer John Orenlichter says the heartening volume of audience response ranged from intelligent criticism of the productions and the media issues raised to the semi-crazed obscenity that call-ins seem inevitably to attract. ■

For more information: X-CHANGE TV: 212/674-8883; NOT-FOR-PROFIT TV: 212/663-3387; PAPER TIGER TV: 212/362-5287; other shows: 212/663-3887.




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**Apartheid from page 31**

They have reported back to us about the particulars of their cultural work in the movement in South Africa.

Despite all these positive results, we are still faced with the larger question—what about our efforts in the community-at-large? As already admitted, the direct audience for our exhibitions and performances, despite the fact that many of these occurred in community settings, has not been on a "mass" scale—certainly not in the sense of the reach of the "mass" media. This issue, of the value of reaching only limited audiences, brings us back to the center of the art-and-politics question. It appears that most artists, whether or not politically committed, have recognized the limited size of their potential audiences and have decided their activities are worthwhile nonetheless. The reasons are varied. Some believe that the quality of the communication they can achieve, in comparison to the mass media, is a counterweight to the smaller audience size. Others believe that continued efforts at presenting quality art which addresses important and close-to-home issues, combined with additional education efforts, will slowly build up the size and responsiveness of its audience, as frustration with the banality and misinformation of the media grows.

There is also the somewhat mysterious process by which ideas and images work

themselves into the mass culture, often despite the best efforts at control by the power structures. In the case of apartheid and the U.S. relationship with South Africa, the dogged efforts of more and more groups are forcing the issue into the media. It may be coincidental that an AAA exhibition occurred at Columbia University Teacher's College approximately six months before the student actions caught the media by surprise, but there may be a relationship. It may also be coincidental that our exhibitions and attempts at consciousness-raising in Harlem, at the Abyssinian and Canaan Baptist Churches and elsewhere, preceded some of the greatest turnouts on a political issue that have occurred in that neighborhood in some time, including the rousing welcome that was given ANC President Oliver Tambo at the Canaan Baptist Church.

Relationships are hard to measure. But in any case, because of its timeliness, AAA has been able to lend artists' voices to this overall effort. Combined with the actions of demonstrators at embassies, consulates and universities, AAA's activities have been one of the building blocks of a dynamic and broadening movement, which is creating a synergistic effect which is presently forcing U.S. corporations into divestment, and ultimately helping to speed the process of democratization in Southern Africa. ■

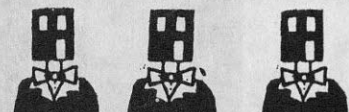
■■■■■■■■■■

## ABC No Rio DINERO: THE STORY OF A LOWER EAST SIDE ART GALLERY

EDITED BY ALAN MOORE  
& MARC MILLER  
216 PAGES • \$12



Order from: *The Publishing Center*  
625 Broadway, New York, NY 10012  
Or look for it at your local bookstore.



Published by ABC No Rio



FRED HOLLAND

# NOVEMBER 18, 1978

(The People Divided) Work In Progress

Fred Holland's November 18, 1978, an installation/performance work in progress, shared the December Second Sunday with the New York Street Theatre Caravan. Staged in the Franklin Furnace basement, transformed for the occasion, the work consisted of several tableaux, including a film projected on a dancer's chest, a woman reading and talking to her child, leafletting for the People's Temple, and the vestiges of the mass "suicide." The audience moved through the different, small spaces at random, while the performance continued in each one. Along with Holland, the performers were Barbara Chang, Irving Gregory, Ishmael Houston-Jones, Phillip Johnson, Rrata Jones, Pyeng Threadgill, and Steve Staso.

The People's Temple members were 80-90% black and from poor and lower class backgrounds. There were a few whites in the group and they seemed to "flow upward" into the upper echelons of the authority structure. People's Temple was a preponderantly black group even though all defectors seen on television were white. The media's manipulations of this fact and other material pertaining to the People's Temple has kept me frustrated (my inability to obtain the names of the over 900 bodies found in Guyana has added to it). Most books, films, documents I have come across have not dealt with, or researched People's Temple's 80% who were black.

-F.H.

"... Oh God, I tell you I don't care how many screams you hear. I don't care how many anguished cries, death is a million times preferable to ten more days of this life. Will you quit telling them they're dying. If you adults would stop some of this nonsense... Adults, I call on you to quit exciting your children when all they're doing is taking a quiet rest, when all they're doing is taking a drink that makes them go to sleep. That's what death is, sleep."

Excerpt from a tape recording of Jim Jones's final speech to his congregation



"When you commit suicide, it's an act of revolutionary suicide to protest against the conditions of an inhumane world."

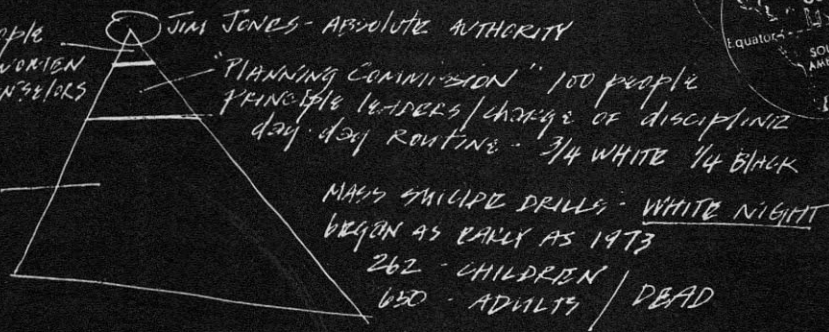


PEOPLE'S TEMPLE OF THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST - JONESTOWN



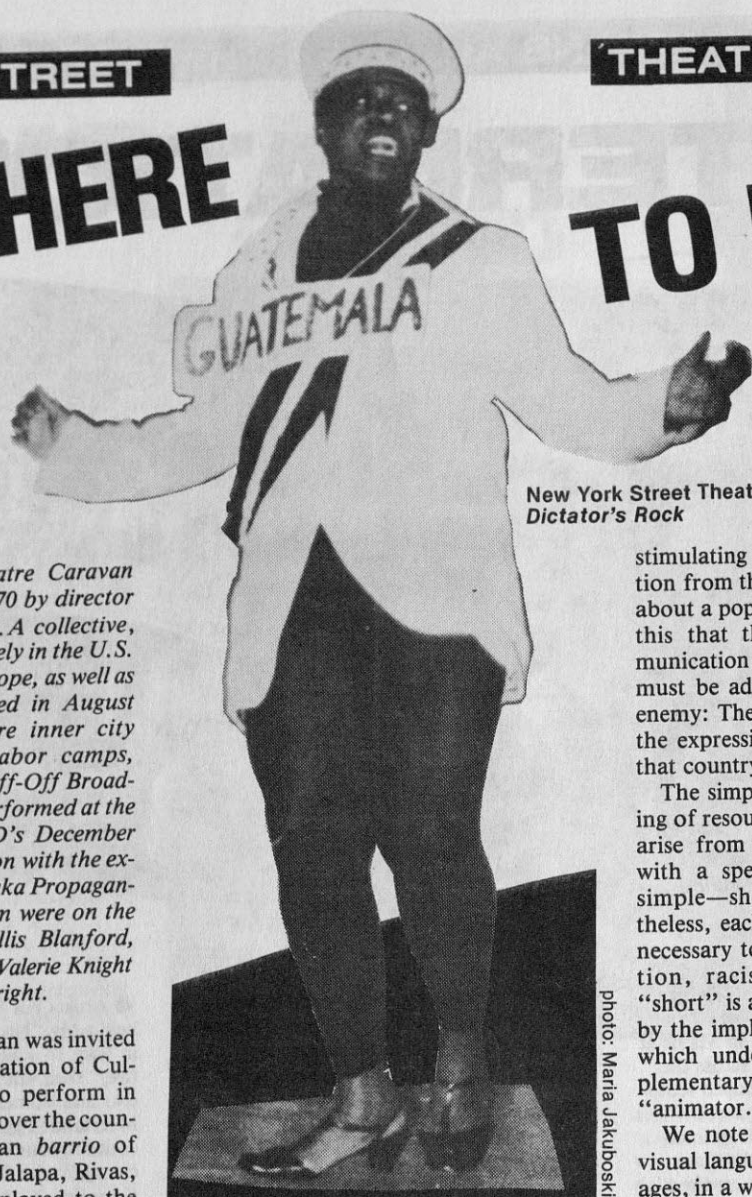
"ANGELS" 15-20 people  
MOSTLY TALL WHITE WOMEN  
PRIVATE GROUP OF COUNSELORS

"FOLLOWERS"  
MOSTLY BLACK



FROM HERE

TO ESTELI



New York Street Theatre Caravan,  
Dictator's Rock

The New York Street Theatre Caravan (NYSTC) was founded in 1970 by director and writer Marketa Kimbrell. A collective, the group has toured extensively in the U.S. and Western and Eastern Europe, as well as Nicaragua, which they visited in August 1982. Its chosen venues are inner city streets, prisons, migrant labor camps, union halls, hospitals, and Off-Off Broadway theaters. The NYSTC performed at the Franklin Furnace for PADD's December Second Sunday, in conjunction with the exhibition, "Public Relations, aka Propaganda." Performers (all of whom were on the Nicaraguan tour) were Phyllis Blanford, Ted Hannan, Doug Hudgins, Valerie Knight Linda Segura, and Cyndy Wright.

In August 1982, the Caravan was invited by the Sandinista Association of Cultural Workers (ASTC) to perform in Nicaragua for two weeks. All over the country—in Subtiava (the Indian *barrio* of Leon), in Somotillo, Esteli, Jalapa, Rivas, and elsewhere, the NYSTC played to the most varied, and enthusiastic, audiences. They went to the maximum security prison where most of the Somocistas are, and to *La Granja*, the model farm prison. They performed in shift breaks at factories. They went to a hospital for the wounded from the revolutionary struggle and from the contra war, and to a hospital for the emotionally disturbed. Everywhere they performed they were integrated into the daily schedule, with total access to their audiences, eating meals and discussing the plays with them.

They performed for two farming collectives as the people finished their work in the fields. Both collectives had theater groups of their own, and performed in turn for the gringos. One of them consisted of very stylized clowns—heroes, who had all kinds of social problems with the new revolutionary society; they were never on time, they drank, they womanized. In a very human way, one member recalls, they dramatized with artistry and humanity the very flaws the revolution was trying to resolve—not by extolling the virtues of the new ways, but by understanding the old.

The troupe also performed at some five

army camps along the Honduran border where they would be met by a constant roar of highly organized cheering, clapping, singing, and sloganeering. At first they were somewhat put off by the regimented aspect of the responses. After the performance, however, the soldiers would all break ranks and with equal energy would play the instruments, read their own poetry and join in the dialogue. The NYSTC realized that the soldiers purposely kept themselves at a really high pitch and were able to carry this over from their work into creative expression.

The following passages are excerpted from a 1982 article by Pepe Prego, from the ASTC, about the New York Street Theatre Caravan's visit:

It never ceased to surprise us that in spite of the social and cultural differences, including language, the group established a profound communication with the Nicaraguan public. . . . In a simple manner, with just the bare necessities and the minimal support of those technical resources offered by the experimental theater, the show succeeded in

stimulating great receptivity and participation from the audience. . . . We are speaking about a popular theater, and it is exactly in this that their great capacity for communication with our public is rooted. What must be added is that we share the same enemy: The North American government, the expression of the dominant classes of that country. . . .

The simplicity, the spontaneity, the saving of resources, the sobriety of the acting, arise from the necessity to communicate with a specific public. . . . The staging is simple—short and agile scenes. Nevertheless, each scene reflects the complexity necessary to situate each theme (exploitation, racism, machismo, etc.). Each "short" is a unity in itself, linked together by the implicit denunciation of capitalism which underlies each, and by the complementary information offered by the "animator."

We note as well a certain emphasis on visual language and the elaboration of images, in a way that the oral becomes complementary. The group uses recurrent dance and choreography, synthesizing visual sequences and images very effectively. Sometimes the corporal expression, integrally incorporated, assumes the weight of scenic language, as in the piece about the Salvadoran peasants supporting their combatants [which was also performed for PADD]. . . . This style is repeated in the acting, broad and novel in what is continually "shown" of the character. They demystify the "magic" of the stage. The actors assume a critical perspective with respect to their characters, showing them in a way that does not distract from their ability, versatility, handling of staging. . . . Finally, we wish to refer to those elements of popular culture (or counter-culture) which the group has recovered and incorporated in their shows—their use of street bands, spirituals, reviews, and musical theater.

We welcome the effort of this group which makes manifest the solidarity between the peoples of our countries and shows how their struggle is linked to the national liberation movements of our America.

Photo: Maria Jakuboski

# INTERNATIONAL



photo: Valenti

"The Bombing of the University of Maine at Orono"

## Bombing Out

● *From Maine to California:* "The Bombing of UMO" took place one morning last November when students at the University of Maine at Orono awoke to an eerie sight. All across the campus, 50 black wooden, bomb-shaped sculptures had been planted heads down in the grass, like gravestones, or as though an invasion had happened in the night. Although a group called "Freeze Voter 84" was credited, they denied responsibility. *Upfront* was in touch with the (female) perpetrators—from the Art Department, of course. Reaganites stuck "Peace Through Strength" stickers on some of the bombs, but the college's vice president said, "Whoever put them up can be satisfied that they accomplished something... some thought and expression toward nuclear arms."

● Anti-nuke, antiwar activities proliferate almost as fast as the missiles themselves. In the fall, the Art Gallery of Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, Canada, will mount a national exhibition called "Women and Peace" which deserves mention because it has called for "quilts, posters, video, ceramics, samplers, jewelry, books and banners" as well as the usual painting and sculpture.



Photo: N.B.N. Zohadatech

Miriam Sharon, Black Ravens

● In a similar pattern, a 15-mile long "ribbon" was used to encircle the Pentagon, White House, and Lincoln Memorial just before Hiroshima/Nagasaki Day. Conceived by a Denver teacher and grandmother, The Ribbon Project gathered a reported 25,000 embroidered, knitted, crocheted, quilted, sewn panels, from all over the world on the theme "what I cannot bear to think of as lost forever in a nuclear war," with an estimated 17,000 people coming to Washington to help with "the wrapping." Sections of The Ribbon will be exhibited at the U.N., the Washington, D.C. textile museum, the Peace Museum in Chicago, and the Oakland (CA) Museum. A history of the project which includes 400 photographs is available from Lark Books, 50 College Street, Ashville, NC 28801.

● The 1982 Shadow Project was revived this year in international form, with a reported 10,000 activists painting some 130,000 "shadows" in hundreds of U.S. cities as well as scores around the globe on the eve of H/N Day (August 6). In New York alone artists painted 4,000 shadows, recalling the tracings of bodies left on the walls and ground of Hiroshima and Nagasaki after the atomic bomb blasts. The project was organized by Allan Gussow in New York and Donna Grund Slepach in Portland, Oregon. "Some people called our work vandalism," said Gussow, "but others responded, 'What's worse vandalism—nuclear war or this?'"

● Artists For Survival in Waltham, Mass., held a big "Nuclear Free Fire Zone Festival" in May. In June, Roadwork presented "Sister-fire," their 4th annual festival of women artists and women's culture in Takoma Park, Maryland. Thousands celebrated "women's contributions to the struggle for progressive change" with Sweet Honey in the Rock, Sara Gonzalez, Thunderbird Singers, and Urban Bush Women, among others.

● In Israel, feminist artist Miriam Sharon has organized a series of demonstration artworks, including a very long banner of "Black Ravens" to oppose racism on the entrance of Meyer Kahane into the Knesset. Not at all the usual polemic imagery, it was particularly popular with youth from the *kibbutzim*. Yet only the Communist papers in Israel reported on this "art/peace/action" campaign. A joint exhibition of art by Israeli and Palestinian painters was held in January at three galleries in Tel Aviv and is now travelling. "We hope that this joint exhibition will break the ban that prevents Palestinian painters from presenting their works to their own people in the occupied territories," said one of the leaders, according to *The Guardian*. "This is our own way to demonstrate to the Israeli authorities that art will not submit to the constraints they impose on the freedom of expression." Palestinian artists are not even allowed to use their national colors in a flower painting, and Fatti Raban spent six months in jail for just such an offense.

# NEWS

## Mediations

● *Mediations*: In Minneapolis, a young artists' collective has opened a new gallery called Medium West (413 First Ave., N., 612-339-1439) and, inspired by Paper Tiger, has produced a videotape, "Noam Chomsky Reads the *New York Times*." One of its members, Kevin Wahl, has been making handsome xerox diptychs which he is posting publicly in the Twin Cities, especially in the newstand slots that are the same size, so when you buy your paper you get an alternate view of the news. They pair an advertisement (for instance, a giggling glamor queen with caption "having a lot is rich") with a mushroom cloud or a starving African child.

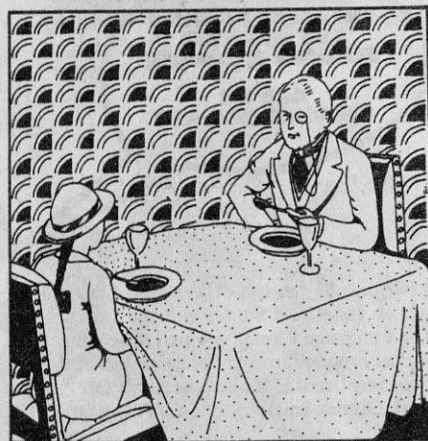
● Coming soon is *Film and Politics: Towards an International Left Bibliography*, listing books, pamphlets, and film reviews from 1912-1983 in five languages, annotated and introduced by editor Andre Paquet. It's the product of the Paris-based International General Mass Media Research Center, co-founded in 1973 by ex-conceptual artrepreneur Seth Siegelau, who also brought you the classic Dorfman/Mattelart "How to Read Donald Duck" and 10 volumes of basic bibliography on Marxism and Mass Media. (Order from International General, POB 350 Canal St. Station, NYC 10013.)

● More publications are appearing than you can shake RR's big stick at: *Red Bass* is doing a "Women's International Arts" issue to appear in the fall (Eugenie Nable, 122 S. Franklin Blvd., Tallahassee, FL 32301); *Left Curve* is out again (Box 472, Oakland, CA) with an issue on working-class culture; *Heresies*' "Mothers, Mags and Movie Stars" on feminism and class, is creeping toward completion (P.O. Box 766, Canal St. Station, NYC 10013). The theme for the latest issue of *Wedge* is "The Imperialism of Representation; the Representation of Imperialism." It is beautifully designed and crammed with deadly information by, among others, Edward Said, Silvia Kolbowski, Jurgen Habermas, and Gary Indiana (\$15 for 4, to Wedge Press, 141 Perry St., NYC 10014); *Community Murals* magazine (see ad) is an ongoing source of data and discussion on murals, graphics, banners, etc. all over the world. They just lost their funding base, so you'll want to subscribe immediately, because it would be much missed if it went missing.



Kevin Wahl in Minneapolis

● Another good-looking and contentful progressive magazine that was new to us is *Another Standard: Community Art Culture and Politics* out of Manchester, UK. One of their contributors was in NYC this winter and brought back some good photos of the doctored "We Begin Bombing in Five Minutes"



"ARE YOU SUGGESTING THAT THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR INEQUALITY LIES WITH NATURE?" ASKED JANE. "WELL," REPLIED UNCLE WILLIE "IF WE WERE ALL MEANT TO BE EQUAL WE'D ALL HAVE BEEN BORN WHITE, MALE AND HETEROSEXUAL WOULDN'T WE."

Rod Henderson, *Another Standard*

anti-Reagan poster that was unavoidable here at election time. The artful doctoring (which was easily distinguishable from random vandalism) was not the work of the poster's anonymous producers (The Artists Poster Committee), but other artists who put it up in the streets and found that to many people it looked pro-Reagan. The producers, on the other hand, feel that it was effective as it was made; they point to the fact that the election-day *Los Angeles Times* showed RR himself, waving away, juxtaposed against someone holding up the poster. The Committee plans a new work on Central America.

*Another Standard* is published by the Shelton Trust, which is proposing a "Campaign for Cultural Democracy" which grew out of a series of seminars to redefine the field for community arts workers, to extend the debates of the British Left into the cultural arena, and thereby to resist more effectively their own New Right. The agenda is a reversal of the flow of ideas and images through community arts practice—"the power to know, power to speak, and power to be responsible." We put them in touch with our own Alliance for Cultural Democracy, which will hold its definitively best conference yet in Chicago, Oct. 11-14.

# NEWS

● "Women of Sweetgrass, Cedar and Sage"—the first national show of contemporary Native American Women artists, curated by Jaune Quick-to-See Smith and Harmony Hammond—opened at the American Indian Community House gallery in NYC and will travel all over the country, ending in Santa Fe next year. It is accompanied by an 88-page illustrated catalogue with text by the curators, the artists, Erin Younger of Atlatl, and PADD member Lucy Lippard.

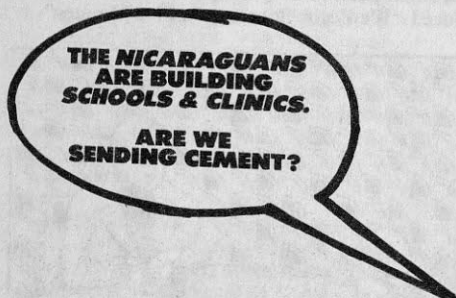


Otellie Loloma, *Birdwoman* from "Women of Sweetgrass, Cedar and Sage" exhibition

● Native American artist and activist Jimmie Durham's pamphlet on "American Indian Culture: Traditionalism and Spiritualism in a Revolutionary Struggle" contains a friendly but acute criticism of the American Left in relation to Third World cultures and everybody should read it and take it to heart. (Available from: Cooperative Distribution Service, Rm. 1222-93, 17 N. State St., Chicago, IL 60602.)

● Kala Press (9 Fawley Rd., London NW 6 UK) has just published *Making Myself Visible* by Rasheed Araeen, a Pakistani who is unquestionably England's most visible Black artist, and editor of the now sadly defunct *Black Phoenix*. Critic Guy Brett calls Araeen's art "the most passionate and intelligent body of work in the visual arts to concern itself with the issues, the experiences," of millions of immigrants from non-European countries, whose arrival is "undoubtedly one of the most important historical events for Europe since the end of the last war." (Incidentally, it was an Araeen postcard about police brutality that we used on the first PADD postcard, a call for the archive, in 1979.)

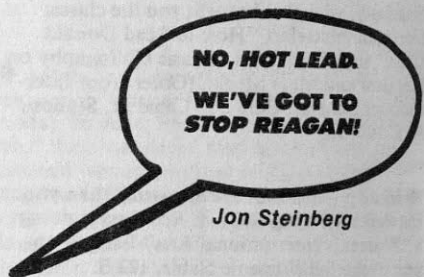
● In New York, Charles Frederick and Seth Tobocman produced an effective ad hoc poster the week after Philadelphia police bombed a Black neighborhood (the first civilian air raid in US history). Connections were made with poem and image between this shameless event and the ongoing civilian bombings in El Salvador ("You Don't Bomb the People"). NY CISPES (Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador) greeted Salvadoran president Jose Napoleon Duarte with a fleet of stylized airplanes on sticks, and just before the disastrous *contra* vote in May, the planes were joined by 100 painted, mutilated, dummy corpses on rush-hour 42nd Street, in Grand Central Station and at the UN. The leaflet noted that, while these might be fakes, there were plenty of real dead people in Central America, and we are paying for it. Around the inauguration period, Artists Call NY and PADD appeared in the streets with brightly painted sandwich boards (good guys on the front in color, bad on the back in black and white), with lines from the Constitution, beginning "We the People..." also the title of a political cabaret held with the New Heritage Theater in Harlem in February.



● For only \$8 you can order two chilling radio plays on cassette—"Situation Room" and "The Campaign Game"—which dissect the political process through the metaphor of the videogame (from E-Radio Theater, POB 20150, Greeley Square Station, NYC 10001).



Charles Frederick, Seth Tobocman, *You Don't Bomb the People*



Jon Steinberg

## Conver(t)sations

● *Conver(t)sations*: New York subway ads are being transformed by Jon Steinberg's pair of cartoon bubble stickers—applicable to anyone's big mouth—reading: "The Nicaraguans are building schools and clinics. Are we sending them cement?" The reply: "No, Hot Lead. We've got to stop Reagan!" Another biting use of public humor was a tactic that surfaced in last year's Artists Call campaign in Winooski, Vt. and has been used by CISPES in New York and elsewhere: A "waitress" offers a tray with a map of Central America and toy helicopter on it. "Did you order this?" she asks innocently. "No? Well, you paid for it."

● Back in the subways, an anonymous artist appropriated ads for the popular *Breakfast Club* flick to pose, through the mouth of one of the characters, the question, "Why is our President lying to us about Nicaragua?" Conversions were made freehand, generally at rush hour, in more than two dozen subway stations where they could be seen daily by thousands of commuters.

# THE SOAP BOX



Promo sticker for The Soap Box project by Community CopyArt, Ltd. of London.

● A much more technical approach has been taken by a London group called Community CopyArt, Ltd., who have developed an imaginative contraption they call "The Soap Box" that combines video and slide screens, soundtracks and lighting with life-size (and smaller) motorized cut-outs that together make up an exciting tool for addressing social issues in public venues. Funded by the soon-to-be-defunct Greater London Council (GLC), the project has been used to address issues surrounding the battles over cultural funding and other aspects of local and national policy, and has travelled to GLC-funded festivals and venues as well as work places, community centers, etc. Easily adapted for various sites and themes, it employs opportunities for viewer participation and is especially useful for drawing in audiences to consider and discuss controversial questions of public policy. The group is currently planning to bring the project on a U.S. tour. Totally self-supporting, they are seeking individuals and organizations interested in sponsoring performances, setting up venues, etc., and artists who will work with them to develop content and imagery appropriate to American audiences (contact: Community CopyArt, Ltd., 15a Hawley Street, London, NW1 8BY).

50,000 DEAD IN EL SALVADOR  
U.S. BULLETS. U.S. CONSCIENCES.



Cut-out paper figures by "Walking the Dog"

● CANTO (Cultural Workers and Artists for Nicaragua Today—surely one of our more innovative acronyms), have come up with an innovative, and collectible, strategy—a little coupon book that you clip, send to them with a check, and the pictured item will be bought and sent to Nicaragua: school supplies for the literacy campaign, guitars, paintbrushes, staple guns (*real* humanitarian aid), cameras and batteries. The Red Pages. A great idea for any community. Let your heart do the walking. (CANTO, 911 Pine St., Seattle, WA 98122).

● Several Artists Call groups have taken to the mails. Chicago did a big mail art show at the NAB Gallery in April, and Los Angeles is printing a blank card addressed to Reagan that can be sent as is, or with an image added, or it can be submitted to a juried show before being sent to the Whiteout House (contact: Suzanne Siegel, 4563 Marmion Way, Los Angeles, CA 90065).

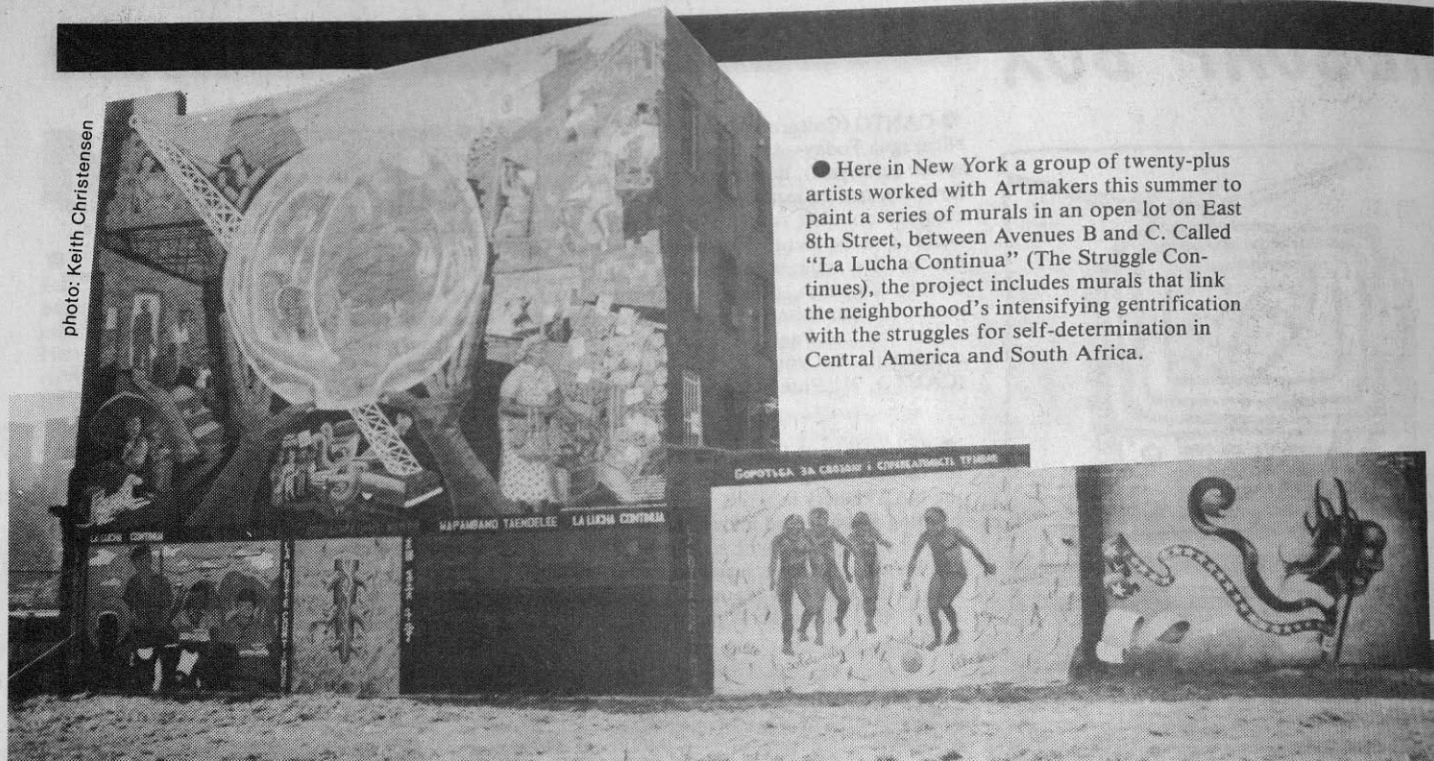
● Three New York artists who recently returned from Nicaragua did a unique postcard piece in the spring. Sarah Drury, Joy Johannessen, and Robin Michals mailed postcards of happy Nicaraguans montaged on a map in a landscape (a typical "tourist" card, though black and white by economic necessity) to over 600 unknown people in Ellenville, NY. The cards, handwritten and addressed, appeared to be from a friend dropping a line from Nicaragua ("Hi, went to market this morning. Had my nails done by a beautician named Sara Maria. In PM dropped into local high school and met music teacher. He was so proud of his collection of instruments... Wish you could see this country too!") When the cards had been received, the artists sent press releases explaining them to local newspapers, and got coverage. The project made quite a stir in Ellenville, and is a wonderful way to personalize a political situation that seems very foreign to many North Americans.



Sarah Drury, Joy Johannessen, Robin Michals, Nicaragua

● Another project that has addressed U.S.-Central American relations in very personal, even intimate, tones is being conducted by a group of Santa Cruz, CA women who call themselves "Walking the Dog," after a security trick for night-time street stenciling forays. (When cars are spotted, the scout just whistles for the dog.) Both hand-made and xeroxed versions of small cut-out paper figures with messages written on their reverse sides are planted in newspapers, women's magazines, supermarket shelves and women's room stalls, to be discovered by a random public in the midst of mundane daily activities. Sample message: "When mothers are killed what becomes of their babies? When babies are killed what becomes of their mothers and fathers? ... Could such a strong bond be extinguished so easily, by U.S. bombs sent from far away? Who sends them? Does the physical body of America sleep endlessly, with never the slightest recognition of this dream, this nightmare? No! Stop the Bombing of El Salvador!"

photo: Keith Christensen



● Here in New York a group of twenty-plus artists worked with Artmakers this summer to paint a series of murals in an open lot on East 8th Street, between Avenues B and C. Called "La Lucha Continua" (The Struggle Continues), the project includes murals that link the neighborhood's intensifying gentrification with the struggles for self-determination in Central America and South Africa.

Artmakers, La Lucha Continua Mural Project

### And Now This . . .

● *And Now This* . . . Messages on a large scale live in the San Francisco Mission District's Balmy Alley, where some two dozen murals cover the walls. Thirty people formed the PLACA mural project in October 1983—North and Latin Americans, "fine" and graphic artists, students and teachers, community organizers and others—they have found much support from the Alley's residents, who include "a lot of children, six dogs, two macaws and various cats." A mural site for ten years, this new initiative makes the Alley a landmark. One original contribution is *La Cinca's New Un-Improved WASH N' WAR*—a sculptural installation of a clothesline with permanent clothes made from fabric dipped in rhoplex, symbolically decorated, and still real enough to unite visually with the real lines that flap over the fence they hang on. PLACA means "to make a mark, to leave a sign, to speak out." (Contact at 2857 24th St., San Francisco, CA 94110.)

● Back on the postcard front, the inimitable Center for Constitutional Rights has found time in the midst of defending the oppressed and attacking the oppressors to publish the first pair of a series of postcards. By Juan Sanchez and Donna Slepach, on Central America (in color) and on Silence as "the voice of complicity," they acknowledge that "culture is an important part" of CCR's work (order from CCR, 853 Broadway, NYC 10003).

# SILENCE

... is the voice of complicity

Donna Grund Slepach, *Silence is the Voice of Complicity*, for the Center for Constitutional Rights





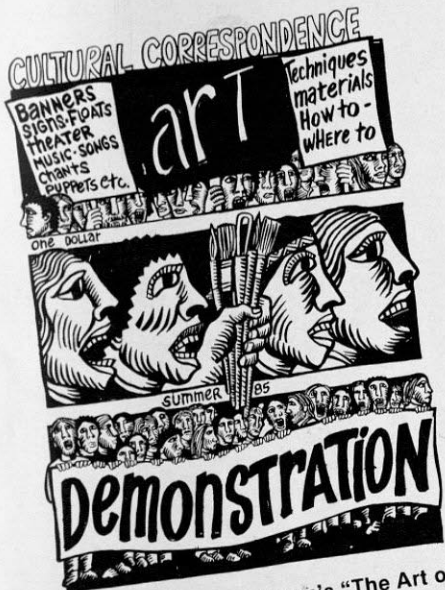
Lee Nading, *Declaration for an Exodus from the Nuclear and Toxic Specters*

● A loose coalition of New York activists representing PADD, Artists Call, Ad Hoc Artists, Dancers for Disarmament, and other groups that has been working for several years to enliven the art of demonstrations (see *Upfront*, Winter '83-'84) worked together again this spring on the April Actions effort for Washington, D.C. Charles Frederick worked closely with the coalition's steering committee to help plan the structure of the weekend's central day, which included a Festival of Cultural Resistance with several dozen musical performers, poets, and others, organized by the coalition's cultural staff person Susan McCarn, and a series of dramatic "dismantlings" of symbols of racism, militarism, interventionism, and greed which was performed at the day's rally at the Capitol steps. New York artists contributed a giant Pac-Sam, a monstrous, inflatable Uncle Sam-Pac Man hybrid that, once downed, let forth torrents of revolutionary red balloons; and an ingeniously crafted Palace of Wealth (made of tyvek fabric, velcro, and wood dowels) which was pulled inside out and disassembled into smaller, gaily colored lodgings. An artists group from D.C. made a huge MX missile

which opened to reveal the missing parts of the human services budget the weapons programs have gobbled up, and Chicago artists contributed a gigantic painted kruggerand that unfolded to reveal a spirited group of South African women united in struggle. (This last piece was donated after the rally to a local school.) Another project of the April Actions artists was a handbook on "The Art of Demonstration," published by *Cultural Correspondence*, which was sent to cultural activists and others across the country (for copies, send \$2.25 to *Cultural Correspondence*, 505 West End Avenue, New York, NY 10024).

● "It was not Hitler that murdered six million Jews. He merely gave the order. It was business as usual that murdered the six million," said Gonzalo Santos at a recent student protest. On April 29, a national No Business As Usual Day was organized by a vast coalition of groups, with events in around 40 cities across the country. While activities included teach-ins, film showings and other commonly used organizing techniques, the day was particularly distinguished for its widespread use of street theatre performance actions (lots of die-ins), which were loosely choreographed to disrupt "business as usual." Participants in NYC staged an "Illegal Art Show" to blockade the entrance of the Riverside Research Institute on Manhattan's 42nd Street, whose staff draws plans for protracted nuclear skirmishes, and managed to infiltrate the famous electronic *Spectracolor* billboard at Times Square for hourly flashings of the campaign's motto, "Prevent World War III, No Matter What it Takes."

● In downtown Bloomington, Indiana, public message artist Lee Nading made a handsome abstract calligraphic black-on-yellow mural on the facade of the old Princess Theater, entitled *Declaration for an Exodus from the Nuclear and Toxic Specter*, and brought the wrath of reactionaries down on his head. A letter to the local paper called it a "blight," an assault on our retinas" and "an insult to our intelligence." The mural is the most ambitious step on Nading's "Trail of Rising and Falling Birds"—a cross-country journey that marks sites where the environment has won, and sites where it has lost. Nading has developed a vocabulary of symbols to indicate victories, losses, and jinxes on the perpetrators which somewhat resembles



Cultural Correspondence's "The Art of Demonstration" issue, cover by Peter Gourfain

# NEWS

Native American imagery. He paints them hit-and-run on public roads, "endeavoring to bring about a new lifeway for civilization that is appropriate to inherent patterns in nature."

● The beginning of what could be a Great Friendship took place last October in New York when *Rock & Roll Confidential* magazine (R&RC) brought together for a day of discussion and a night of speeches, entertainment and partying the left cultural community and union men (yes) from Pittsburgh Steelworkers Local 1397, including president Ron Wiesen (recipient of a \$10,000 donation from Bruce Springsteen). A central participant was John Tirpak, labor writer and editor who was fired from his newspaper job by a company riding roughshod over independent journalism and the First Amendment, in true cowboy style. "The real work of the meeting," reported R&RC "went on before and after the brief speeches. Art critics traded experiences with shop stewards from an Ohio steel mill. . . Latin singing star Ruben Blades exchanged ideas with Brooklyn Congressman Major Owens and columnist Alexander Cockburn about how to mobilize the Latin vote. . . New York transit workers got to know painters, poets, club DJs, and record producers. . . The evening brought home the point that without the potential power of the labor movement, artists will never see their dreams of peace and equality come true. Nor can even the most dedicated labor leaders exert sufficient influence without the support of artists—whose voices, images, and inspiration can touch millions." (Hear, hear. Or listen, listen.) R&RC, by the way, is a monthly newsletter with wit, good, fast writing, and terrific politics (subscriptions; \$15 to Duke and Duchess Ventures (!), Dept. 18, Box 1073, Maywood, NY 07607.)

● Not to be outdone by rock musicians, visual artists held a giant auction for "Famine Appeal for Ethiopia and the Sahel" in London on May 1.

● Finally, welcome to a new activist art group in the Bay Area. Artists in Common was organized ("loosely") in the fall of 1983, after the invasion of Grenada. They solicited artists' signatures for a large pictorial ad in two local magazines and continued to meet to collect art supplies for Nicaragua, do Central American slide shows and an anti-Reagan poster (printed with and without image, so people could make their own caricatures). For the Democratic Convention they constructed a big funnel sculpture of Central America with outsized dollar bills (social programs cut by RR) floating into the top, and guns, helicopters, and tanks emerging from the bottom. They also participate in events with Artists Call and Art Against Apartheid, with whom they did an outdoor paint-in. Artists in Common's latest statement says: "No longer can we remain isolated and politically passive in our studios—for they are in reality hot beds. The function of art in society is something all of us can determine." (Contact: PO Box 4062, San Francisco, 94188.) □

# P A D D A C T I V I T I E S

PADD is a progressive artists' resource and networking organization coming out of and into New York City. Our goal is to provide artists with an organized relationship to society, to demonstrate the political effectiveness of image making. One way we are trying to do this is by building a collection of documentation of international socially concerned art. The PADD Archive defines social concern in the broadest sense: any work that deals with issues ranging from sexism and racism to ecological damage and other forms of human oppression. The PADD Archive documents artwork from movement posters to the most individual of statements.

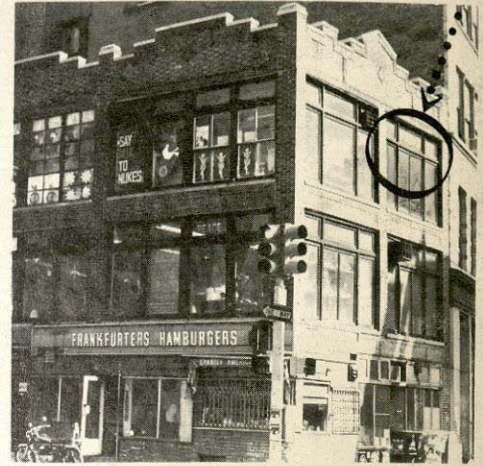
PADD is also involved with the production, distribution and impact of progressive art in the culture at large. We sponsor public events, actions and exhibitions. These are all means of facilitating relationships between (1) artists in or peripherally in, or not at all in the art world, (2) the local communities in which we live and work, (3) Left culture, and (4) the broader political struggles.

We hope eventually to build an international grass-roots network of artist activists who will support with their talents and their political energies the liberation and self-determination of all disenfranchised peoples.

## PADD STATEMENT

**UPFRONT BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE:** \$3.00 each. No. 3 Against Inner Exile; Art Politik in Seattle; Anti-WW3 in NY; NAM in Milwaukee; No. 4 February 26th Movement; Illustrated directory of progressive art groups in the U.S.; No. 5 Hispanic Art from Outrage; Who's Teaching What to Whom and Why?; plus National News. Nos. 6-7 Not For Sale—A Project Against Displacement; Street—An Image Brawl; Cuban Photography Now; Out of Sight, Out of Mind (I); Native American, Black and White Artists in Search of Democracy; Turning Points in the Lives of Art Activists; International Art News, etc. No. 8 Cultural Democracy as a National Movement; Artists Working with Labor; November 12 Anti-Intervention March: The Making of a Political Document; Sisters of Survival's European Tour; Artists Call Against U.S. Intervention in Central America; Not For Sale. No. 9 State of Mind/State of Union Preview; Art Against Apartheid; Sue Coe and Anton van Dalen Talk; Not For Sale—The East Village Art Scene; Out of Sight, Out of Mind (II); Asian and Hispanic Artists; Carnival Knowledge: Feminism, Art and Pornography; Artists Call Against U.S. Intervention in Central America; Update and more.

PADD's **SECOND SUNDAY** programs of performance, discussion and all-around good times take place at Franklin Furnace, 112 Franklin Street, the second Sunday of every month at 7:30 PM.



**PADD OFFICE in the War Resisters League Building**  
339 Lafayette, NYC 10012

**PADD WORK MEETINGS** are held on the third Sunday of every month at 5:30 at the PADD office, 339 Lafayette Street. Come and join us in organizing Second Sundays, producing *Upfront*, and developing new ideas and means for practicing cultural activism in NYC and beyond. There's plenty of work to do—and plenty of fun to be had in the doing.

PADD is a proud member of the **Alliance for Cultural Democracy** and recommends that everyone else become one too. For information write Bob Feldman, P.O. Box 2088, Station A, Champaign, IL 61820.

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