Rearrangements: Participation and Politics at the Dia Art Foundation, 1988-89

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Vanessa Adair Rounthwaite

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Dr. Jane Blocker, Co-Adviser

Dr. Jennifer Marshall, Co-Adviser

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DEDICATION

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Introduction –Audience Participation, c. 1988-89

The Dia Art Foundation keeps its small archive of Group Material's *Democracy* and Martha Rosler's *If You Lived Here…* in two binders in its New York office, on West 22nd Street. These binders, and a row of audiocassette recordings, are all the material remains that Dia retains of these two projects, which lasted for ten months between September 1988 and June 1989. The Dia Art Foundation began in 1974 as a vehicle for oil heiress Philippa de Menil's private patronage of large-scale Minimalist artworks. The foundation made its name with its sponsorship of site-specific artworks such as Walter de Maria's *The Lightening Field* (1977) [Fig. 1], a series of 400 stainless steel poles inserted in a grid measuring one mile by one kilometer in New Mexico, and *New York Earth Room* (1977) [Fig. 2], 250 cubic yards of earth piled 20 inches deep in a room in Soho. De Maria's Minimalist works, and many of the pieces that Dia has acquired more recently, such as Richard Serra's *Torqued Elipses* (1997-98) [Fig. 3], steel spirals standing approximately 12 feet tall, possess an assertive physical materiality.[1] When the viewer encounters the Serras at

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[1] De Maria's works were funded during the first phase of Dia's activities, when the organization was run by its founders, oil heiress Philippa de Menil and German gallerist Heiner Friedrich. Serra's ellipses were a gift to Dia made in 1998 by Barnes & Noble chairman Leonard Riggio, Dia's second major individual patron following the De Menils. For details on the gift of the Serra's, see Dia's press release, http://www.diaart.org/exhibitions/pressrelease/47 (accessed November 15, 2012), and also Joe Nocera, "Money in New York; the Patron Gets a Divorce." *New York Times* October 14, 2007.

Dia's museum in Beacon, New York, they tower overhead like bulky elephants, their massive weight seeming simultaneously imposing and somewhat bashful.[2] The *Torqued Elipses* have an almost prehistoric quality, appearing as monuments to sublime artistic experience that were built to last, and last, and last.

Democracy and *If You Lived Here…*, by contrast, were ephemeral art. Each project lasted for approximately four months, and included multiple segments dealing with specific social and political issues. Group Material's project comprised the segments "Education and Democracy," "Cultural Participation," "Politics and Election" [Fig. 4], and "AIDS & Democracy: A Case Study," while Rosler's was made up of "Home Front," "Homeless: The Street and Other Venues," and "City: Visions and Revisions" [Fig. 5].[3] Each of these segments encompassed an exhibition, consisting of contributions by recognized artists, and also other participants whose work was less typically shown in art galleries, including children, activist groups, and homeless people. Group Material, consistent with its established working practice, used the color of the walls as an important part of the overall effect of each exhibition, and hung carefully a mix of works – contemporary art with children's drawings, for example – salon-style, at different heights on the walls. Rosler's exhibitions were more free-form and less restrained in terms of the number of objects they contained. Her shows featured artworks by professional and non-professional artists, but also many videos, posters, and print materials that pertained the issues under discussion. In addition to the exhibitions, Group Material and Rosler, with each changing show, put out posters and newspaper ads inviting the public to come to a "town-hall" meeting to discuss the social issue dealt with in the exhibition. Dia recorded these participatory events, and made them the basis for two books, *Democracy: A Project by Group Material*, and *If You Lived Here…: The City in Art, Theory, and Social Activism / A Project by Martha Rosler*, published in collaboration with Bay Press.[4] These books were not conceived as catalogues, but rather as a textual resource dealing with the social issues that each project addressed.

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[2] Dia:Beacon Riggio Galleries, located in Beacon, NY, opened in 2003, and was made possible by a gift of at least $35 million to Dia by Riggio.

[3] The dates of the individual shows were as follows. For *Democracy*: "Education and Democracy," September 14 – October 8, 1988, "Cultural Participation," October 15 – November 12, 1988, "Politics and Election," November 19 – December 10, 1988, and "AIDS & Democracy: A Case Study," December 17, 1988 – January 14, 1989. For *If You Lived Here…*: "Home Front," February 11 – March 18, 1989, "Homeless: The Street and Other Venues," April 1-29, 1989, and "City: Visions and Revisions," May 13 – June 17, 1989.

Group Material and Rosler's social projects at Dia were not any less material than De Maria's room full of earth or Serra's huge hunks of oxidized steel. But the projects' materiality centered around the audience's live presence, a presence that is now past, and in large part lost both to documentation and to memory.

Moreover, it was not just at the level of their different format that *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* departed from the monumental Minimalist art that Dia had supported up to that point, and that still remains its institutional hallmark. The projects also represented a form of social criticism not typically associated with Minimalism in general, or with Dia in particular. In Group Material's introduction to the project book for *Democracy*, the artists state their surprise at being invited to do a project at Dia: “One of the first questions we asked was: ‘Why are they asking us?’”[5] The artists, and also a number of critics who remarked on the strangeness of this particular collaboration between artists and institution, located Group Material and Rosler’s difference from typical Dia art in terms of the overtly political content of *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…*. Elizabeth Hess, for example, wrote in the *Village Voice* in 1989 that “[t]aking over Dia with a four-part series about ‘Democracy’ was a most unexpected coup [for Group Material].”[6] In a *New York Times* review of Group Material’s show, Roberta Smith wrote that the show and the *Democracy* project “is something of a departure for Dia, which in the past had devoted a great deal of time and money to a substantially more self-contained, purely formal kind of installation art.”[7] Indeed, Group Material and Rosler’s projects manifested a desire to meld art and activism, and to do so through a social process of direct engagement with the public, in a way that had no clear precedent at Dia.

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[4] See Brian Wallis, ed., *Democracy: A Project by Group Material* (New York and Seattle: DIA Art Foundation with Bay Press, 1990), and Wallis, ed., *If You Lived Here: The City in Art, Theory, and Social Activism / a Project by Martha Rosler* (New York and Seattle: DIA Art Foundation with Bay Press, 1991).

The critical reception and analysis of *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* have thus been, from the beginning, bound up with questions about the motivations of Dia as the projects’ institutional host. In Hess’s and Smith’s reviews, but also in more recent references to the projects by authors such as Gregory Sholette and Claire Bishop which I will discuss below, critics have focused not only on Group Material and Rosler’s authorship, but on their interaction with Dia. These accounts represent

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[5] Wallis, *Democracy: A Project by Group Material*, 1.
[6] Elizabeth Hess, “Safe Combat in the Erogenous Zone.” *The Village Voice* January 10, 1989: 79.
[7] Roberta Smith, “Gallery View; Working the Gap between Art and Politics.” *New York Times* September 25, 1988.

Dia not as a neutral backdrop supporting artistic work, but an agent with its own needs and investments.

In the mid-1980s, Dia underwent a major transition, in which it lost the single-patron support of Philippa de Menil, who had poured millions of dollars of her Schlumberger oil fortune into financing projects by a select group of artists.[8] Following the near exhaustion of Philippa's resources, her mother Dominique de Menil forcibly took over Dia, eventually appointing lawyer Charles Wright as director. *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* emerged from the early period of Wright's directorship, when Dia was still struggling financially and attempting to define a public profile for itself as an institution.

Group Material and Rosler were aware of this state of institutional transition at the time of their projects, as is evident from an anecdote Group Material member Julie Ault relates in the book *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material* (2010).[9] Ault describes how for their exhibition "Cultural Participation," the second of the four shows that made up *Democracy*, Group Material originally installed a cloth sign reading "Under New Management" over the doorway to Dia's gallery at 77 Wooster Street. The sign, with three words in white, each in a different font, on a black background, was a found object, the kind of ready-made announcement used to publicize a change in store management [Fig. 6]. Dia staff objected to the sign and requested its removal; Group Material complied with the request. Group member Doug Ashford states that this incident was the only time during *Democracy*, a project that ran for five months and that was in conception for over a year before that, when Dia refused a request made by Group Material.[10] Ault writes that the group wanted to display the sign to allude to change on three levels: to the recent federal elections, where there was a change in leader though not in governing party (George H. W. Bush having succeeded Ronald Reagan); to a shift towards multiculturalism and greater inclusion in the art world; and also to Dia's transition from being a private to a public institution.[11] It seems clear here that it was the third point, the *touché* reference to the institution's changing identity, that Dia staff found objectionable. Moreover, the sign might be read as implying that Dia was now under the new management of Group Material, as Hess suggested in her review with her characterization of their project as a "coup."

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[8] At its founding in 1974, the initial group of artists that Dia supported included Walter de Maria, Donald Judd, Dan Flavin, John Chamberlain, and collaborators LaMonte Young and Marian Zazeela. Dia supported these artists with regular stipends, in addition to purchasing the majority of their artistic output. The original collection amassed in the 1970s and early 1980s also included works by Joseph Beuys, Imi Knoebel, Blinky Palermo, Fred Sandback, Cy Twombly, Andy Warhol, and Robert Whitman.

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

Speculation about why Dia supported the projects, and why it did so specifically at this moment of institutional transition, has circulated in both the "official" venue of published statements, and in the less official venue of conversation and interpersonal exchange. Rosler, in a 1994 text entitled "Place, Position, Power, and Politics," averred that the topic of her project was attractive to Dia because of its "trendy" quality:

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[10] Interview with Doug Ashford, July 17, 2010. Throughout this dissertation, sll transcripts of audio material, both of the interviews I conducted and of the town-hall meetings, are my own, unless otherwise noted.

[11] Ault, *Show and Tell*, 149.

> [M]y topic was acceptable – though only marginally – primarily, I think, because it invoked (trendy) issues of 'the city' and because it smacked of charitable representations of social victims of color, despite the fair degree of ambivalence that occasioned. The art world virtually ignored it, and in a sense so did the sponsoring institution – refusing, for example, to share their mailing list with me.[12]

When I spoke with art critic Lucy Lippard, a founding member of Political Art Documentation/Distribution (PAD/D) who co-chaired the "Politics and Election" town hall meeting for *Democracy*, she echoed Rosler's suggestion that Dia had moved, with the projects, into an unfamiliar and trendy area. Lippard posed the question of what, within Dia, drove this new desire for social engagement: "Dia obviously had a moment of wanting to be into social politics. That would be interesting to know [about] from internal Dia politics."[13] Gary Garrels, director of programs at Dia during *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…*, concurred that the shift people perceived in the shows received a number of negative responses. These came not from those who wanted art to steer clear of social engagement *per se*, but from people who saw the projects as an attempt, on Dia's part, to attach itself to an existing trend. Garrels stated that at the time, Dia received some angry feedback about the Group Material and Rosler projects from people who felt “that Dia was trying to appropriate a part of the art world that it had never been involved with.”[14] Artist and historian Gregory Sholette, writing in 2011, locates the projects as part of a vogue of the late 1980s and early 1990s in which “displaying political commitment at an institutional level was suddenly hip in the New York art world.”[15] Sholette writes that following *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…*, which he describes as lastingly influential for political art, Dia “never again” ventured into the crossover of art and politics.

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[12] Martha Rosler, "Place, Position, Power, Politics," in *The Subversive Imagination: Artists, Society, and Social Responsibility*, edited by Carol Becker (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 69.

[13] Telephone interview with Lucy Lippard, August 15, 2011. Lippard states that at the time, the identity of Dia as an institutional host was not particularly important to her; more significant were the resources and space it provided to activist artists.

Through these various statements runs a consensus that in the late 1980s, the engagement of art with social concerns, as embodied in *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…*, constituted a form of cachet, or value, from which Dia as an institution stood to benefit. What exactly that value was, and how or if Dia sought to employ it instrumentally, is a messy question, which persistently adheres to the projects but is also very difficult to answer definitively. I believe that the messiness of this question has contributed greatly to the limited attention critics and historians have paid the projects. At the time, only the *New York Times* and a handful of art magazines reviewed *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…*. Michael Govan, director of Dia from 1994 to 2006, noted to me the striking lack of scholarship on these projects of what he calls Dia's "middle period," the time after its financial collapse and before its re-emergence in the mid-to-late 1990s and an institution with significant public visibility.[16] Rosler, in her statement above, attributes the lack of attention to the negligence of the institution, asserting that the art world and Dia "virtually ignored" her project. Rosler intones that this occurred because the work was too politically challenging.

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[14] Interview with Gary Garrels, October 14, 2010.

[15] Gregory Sholette, *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture* (New York: Pluto Press, 2011), 51-2. Sholette cites as other examples of this trend the exhibition of political posters, graphics, and artists’ books held at the Museum of Modern Art in 1988, and the 1993 Whitney Biennial, known for its political content and focus on issues of identity.

In recent years, the projects have received a few mentions as historical precedents to more recent socially engaged and participatory practices. In addition to Sholette, art critic Claire Bishop, a dominant voice in the field of participatory art, has cited the importance of the projects, calling them "groundbreaking" precedents to recent participatory practices that adopt a pedagogical stance.[17] Art critic Yates McKee also locates *Democracy* as a precedent to contemporary practice, placing it as part of the recent "legacy" of artists working with the concept of democracy.[18] *If You Lived Here…* has been the subject of a short article by art historian Nina Möntmann, in which Möntmann discusses Rosler's approach to urban activism.[19] To date, the books Dia itself published on the projects remain the only treatments of the projects that give voice to their complexity, in that these books juxtapose various texts in a way that expresses the polyvocality of the participatory projects.

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[16] Telephone interview with Michael Govan, February 13, 2012.

[17] Claire Bishop, "The New Masters of Liberal Arts: Artists Rewrite the Rules of Pedagogy." *Modern Painters* 19, no. 7 (September 2007): 86-9, 88-89.

[18] Yates McKee, "Contemporary Art and the Legacies of Democracy." In *A Guide to Democracy in America*, edited by Nato Thompson (New York: Creative Time Books, 2008).

[19] Apart from the book published by Dia for Rosler's project (Wallis, *If You Lived Here*), Nina Möntmann's article is the most sustained piece of published scholarship on Rosler's project to date. Nina Möntmann, "(under)Privileged Spaces: On Martha Rosler's "If You Lived Here..."." *e-flux journal* 10 (2009).

This difficult question, of how social engagement in *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* might have borne institutional value, has created ambivalence about how to locate the projects, and about the historical narrative into which they might fit. It is obviously impossible to locate *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* as illustrative instances of Dia's ongoing commitment to monumental Minimalism, and thus as typical of the institution's identity and trajectory. But it is equally unviable to label the projects as a type of activist art that originated outside the institution, and that either staunchly opposed the institution, or was appropriated by it. This idea, that activist art inside the institution must be either complicit or resistant, is a familiar dilemma of art historical narrative that has plagued, in particular, the broader criticism of Group Material's art.[20]

Instead of attempting to resolve this difficulty of placing *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…*, in order to secure for them a position of importance within contemporary art history, I seek to embrace the difficulty. It is precisely this difficulty of placement, which until now has obscured the visibility of the projects, that makes them a valuable case study for examining the question of how social engagement took on increased institutional value during the late 1980s and early 1990s. The speculation about Dia's motivations for hosting *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…*, and the structural and administrative changes Dia was undergoing at the time, make the projects a unique opportunity for studying how the increasing cachet of social engagement impacted relationships between institutions and leftist artists. *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* were not simply an instance either of the institutionalization of political art, or of the temporary appropriation of institutional resources by activist artists. The projects were rather a process in which institution and artists interacted and learned from each other, both emerging from that interaction subtly transformed.

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[20] See, for example, Kim Levin's review of Group Material's show *Americana* at the 1985 Whitney Biennial. Levin accuses Group Material of doing the museum's "dirty laundry," by creating a contribution that showcased political art by diverse artists, but left the overall converative politics of the institution unchanged. Kim Levin, "The Whitney Laundry." *Village Voice* April 9, 1985. In Chapter 4, I explore further Levin's vociferous and repeated critique of Group Material. Jan Avgikos' rich article on Group Material, one of the most substantial pieces of scholarship on the group to date, is also plagued by a need to categorize the group's activities as either politically complicit or progressive. See Jan Avgikos, "Group Material Timeline: Activism as a Work of Art." In *But Is It Art? The Spirit of Art as Activism*, edited by Nina Felshin, 85-116 (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995). Group Material member Doug Ashford, in an unpublished interview with Michel Oren from 2000, refers with frustration to the accusation that Group Material "sold out." "Doug Ashford, interviewed by telephone by Michel Oren, 12/16/00," Group Material Collection, series II, box 5, folder 23, Fales Library.

In this dissertation, I pursue an analysis of the institutional value of social engagement with the aim of shedding light on the present moment of art history and criticism. In particular, I seek to make visible the historical evolution of the ways in which art critics and historians currently make statements about how participatory art has positive political value, or conversely, how it can be politically detrimental.[21]

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[21] The ongoing differences of position between art historians Grant Kester and Claire Bishop provide one of the clearest illustrations of the opposite points in this debate. Broadly speaking, Kester values practices which attempt to exercise a degree of political and ethical responsibility to their social contexts, whereas Bishop maintains what is at the core a more typically avant-garde modernist position, asserting that any direct connection between art and social goals is problematically instrumentalizing and propagandistic. See Bishop's article "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics." *October*, no. 110 (Fall 2004): 51-79, followed by her later piece "The Social Turn." *Artforum* (February 2006), in which she addresses Kester's earlier writings, in particular his essay "Aesthetic Evangelists: Conversion and Empowerment in Contemporary Community Art." *Afterimage* (January 1995); Kester's direct response to Bishop's piece in "Another Turn" and Bishop's response, "Another Turn," both *Artforum* (May 2006); and their most recent respective treatment of each other's arguments in Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London and New York: Verso, 2012), and Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011). Artist Liam Gillick also made a sharply critical reply to Bishop's original *October* article in "Contingent Factors: A

Over the past twenty years, the question of how art can engage with the wider world has become increasingly associated with discussions of participation in art. Many of the biggest international art stars of the past decade – including Thomas Hirschhorn, Santiago Sierra, Marina Abramović, Ai Weiwei, Francis Alÿs, and Tino Sehgal – employ tactics that foreground participation, either in the artwork itself as a collective social process, or in the production of a work subsequently shown to an audience (as in Ai's *Sunflower Seeds* of 2010, the production of which in collaboration with Chinese workers was documented in a video available on the Tate Modern website).[22] Not only have these artists enjoyed major play in prominent international museums and biennials, but debates about the politics of their engagement – or according to some, exploitation – of their participants have proved to be one of the most enduring discussions in recent contemporary art history and criticism.[23]

I argue that the current importance of participation stems from the fact that participation is not only a tactic artists employ, but also a paradigm that pervades art institutions' relationships to audiences, beyond the purview of explicitly participatory artworks. Art museums and galleries today often seek to constitute the audience's

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Response to Claire Bishop's 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics'." *October*, no. 115 (Winter 2006): 95-106. Gillick accuses Bishop of creating an overly literal translation of theory into visual representation, and then categorizing the oeuvres of artists as "bad" or "good" depending on her own criteria.

[22] Tate Modern, "Video - Ai Wei Wei: Sunflower Seeds." http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/unilever-series-ai-weiwei/video, accessed February 20, 2013.

[23] This theme is particularly prevalent in the literature on Spanish artist Santiago Sierra. See, for example, Kelly Baum, "Santiago Sierra: How to Do Things With Words." *Art Journal* (Winter 2010): 6-12; Agnès Delage "Résister Dans L'extrême Conformité: L'oeuvre Du Plasticien Santiago Sierra." *Pandora*, no. 8 (2008): 277-96; Jeffries, Stuart. "Provocative? Me?" *The Guardian* October 11, 2002. See also Kester's treatment of Sierra in the third chapter of *The One and The Many*.

experience of the institution as participatory *as such*. They do so using a range of tactics including school programs, social media, and special events, many of which are administered by departments of education and public programming. Audience participation is central to contemporary art because it constitutes a point of convergence between the way that art institutions attempt to promote their relationship to viewers, and the tactics many artists choose for attempting to create socially engaged art.

Within this current paradigm, the question of how art can and should be political occupies a fundamentally different constellation of artist-institution relationships than it did in the 1960s and '70s. Art historian Alan Moore stresses the interconnection in that period between political art and anti-war counterculture, both of which revolved around collective organization and creation.[24] Art historian Julia Bryan-Wilson, in her book *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam Era* (2009), discusses a selection of well-known artists of the period in relation to broader leftist activism. That activism was often characterized by a highly confrontational opposition to institutions.[25] For example, on November 19, 1969, at the height of the Vietnam War, members of the Guerilla Art Action Group, in a work entitled *A Call for the Resignation of All the Rockefellers from the Board of Trustees of the Museum*

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[24] Alan Moore, "Artists' Collectives: Focus on New York, 1975-2000." In *Collectivism after Modernism: The Art of Social Imagination after 1945*, edited by Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 194-5. See also Moore's extensive exploration of the relationship between activism and contemporary art in New York in his book *Art Gangs: Protest and Counterculture in New York City* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2011).

[25] Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam Era* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009).

of Modern Art and known as *Blood Bath*, entered MoMA's main lobby at peak hours and began screaming and tearing off each other's clothes. In the process, the artists burst bags containing blood that they had affixed inside their clothing. During the performance, the group scattered leaflets explaining that the work was an indictment of the Rockefellers for their patronage of the museum, which functioned to disguise the family's involvement in the arms industry.[26] In addition to protesting the involvement of museums in the larger capitalist and imperialist systems that drove overseas military aggression, artists also came out in visible force again museums' censorship of critical art. In 1971, members of the Art Workers' Coalition (AWC) took highly visible action following the Guggenheim's cancellation of Hans Haacke's solo exhibition containing the work *Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real-Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971* (1971). AWC members protested by assembling in the museum lobby with "Free Art!" signs and forming a conga line, which was led up the Guggenheim's signature spiral ramp by dancer Yvonne Rainer.[27]

Like these activist artists of an earlier moment, Group Material and Rosler were strongly committed to anti-war and anti-imperialist struggles, both in their political affiliation and in their art production. In 1982, Group Material staged the show *Luchar! An Exhibition for the People of Central America* at the Taller Latinoamericano, in the context of organizations in political solidarity with Central and Latin American self-determination movements, including the Committee in

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[26] Ibid., 184-5.
[27] Ibid., 202-7.

Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES).[28] Group Material's 1984 show *Timeline: A Chronicle of U.S. Intervention in Central and Latin America* used art objects and consumer imports from South America to document the history of American military intervention in the region, as part of the national campaign Artists Call Against U.S. Intervention in Central America.[29] Rosler, for her part, was strongly involved in anti-war activism during the time that she spent in California in the late 1960s and early 1970s.[30] In the photo-collage series *Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful* (1967-72), which is among her best-known work, Rosler collaged together news images from Vietnam with clippings taken from home decorating magazines, in order to stress the role that consumerism played in mainstream American denial of the war.

Group Material and Rosler also worked, in the 1980s, in the context of a New York downtown art scene that included numerous artists and collectives dedicated to political activism. These ranged from Political Art Documentation/Distribution (PAD/D), a group with which Group Material had close ties, to the slightly later Guerrilla Girls and PESTS, who used street postering and art actions to critique the sexism and racism of major museums and galleries.[31] During this period, there was

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[28] Ault, *Show and Tell*, 74-5.

[29] Ibid., 83-5. See Claire Grace's discussion of this work in "Counter-Time: Group Material's Chronicle of Us Intervention in Central and South America." *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context, and Enquiry*, no. 26 (Spring 2011): 27-37.

[30] See Rosler's discussion with Hans-Ulrich Obrist in Martha Rosler, Inka Schube, Inka, Moly Nesbit, Hans-Ulrich Obrist, and Sprengel Museum Hannover. *Martha Rosler: Passionate Signals* (Ostfildern-Ruit and Portchester: Hatje Cantz with Art Books International, 2005).

[31] PAD/D was founded following a 1979 call by critic Lucy Lippard for an archive of political art, and continued its activities until 1986. In its mission statement, it stated that its

also extensive crossover between the downtown art scene and wider activism, particularly in relation to the activities of the AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power (ACT UP).[32] The open forums Group Material held for *Democracy* shared structural similarities with ACT UP meetings. During the town-hall meeting for the "AIDS & Democracy" segment of *Democracy*, ACT UP member and chair Maria Maggenti made this parallel in a quip to the apparently tired audience: "We're hitting the two-hour mark here. For those of you who aren't from ACT UP, I can see that you've hit your limit. I can see that most of the ACT UP people are still sitting *down*, still ready to *talk*, and line up at the microphone."[33]

In the context of Group Material and Rosler's respective dedication, throughout their careers, to political engagement, *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* marked a moment in which those commitments became visibly proximate to goals held by an art institution. In other words, their relationship to Dia during the

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goal was "to provide artists with an organized relationship to society, to demonstrate the political effectiveness of image making, and to provide a framework within which progressive artists can discuss and develop alternative to the mainstream art system." For a discussion of PAD/D, see member Gregory Sholette's text "A Collectography of PAD/D," available at http://gregorysholette.com/organizing/pad_d/pad_d.html. Accessed December 3, 2012. The PAD/D archive is now held in the archives of the Museum of Modern Art. The Guerrilla Girls began their art actions against institutional sexism in 1985 and continue in the present day. PESTS was founded in 1986 and modeled on the Guerilla Girls, but specifically addressed questions of racism. Julie Ault, in "A Chronology of Alternative Structures, Spaces, Artists' Groups, and Organizations in New York City, 1965-85." In *Alternative Art New York 1965-85*, edited by Julie Ault. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 72-4.

[32] The history of ACT UP has been documented extensively in the ACT UP Oral History Project, which consists of in-depth interviews with former members (see http://www.actuporalhistory.org/, accessed December 5, 2012). The group's history, and its relationship to the splinter organization Treatment Action Group, were also the subject of a 2012 documentary by director David France entitled *How To Survive A Plague* (USA).

[33] Audiocassette recording of "AIDS & Democracy: A Case Study" town-hall meeting, Dia Art Foundation archives. Accessed January 2011.

projects was characterized by establishing a ground for collaboration, instead of just critiquing the institution. In the following chapters, I demonstrate how in these projects, the ideal of fostering active audience involvement was an important goal for both the artists and for Dia, though the exact terms of that involvement were sometimes a point of friction between artists and institution. The moment in Dia's history at which these projects occurred was unique: an exceptional moment in which the institution was forced to recover from an almost-fatal financial crisis. However, I argue that the paradigm of collaboration between political artists and institution that *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* embodied was characteristic of a larger turn in the late 1980s and early 1990s that went beyond Dia's particular crisis. In fact, this broader shift established the terms of much contemporary art production, display, and reception in the present moment. It is not that there were no overt expressions of protest in the North American art world from the late 1980s onwards, but rather that a new, and more forceful, paradigm emerged in which imperatives of institutional survival and politically engaged leftist art came together.

In this dissertation, I approach this question through the case study of *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* at Dia. I believe that the format of the case study, instead of a wider historical view encompassing several artists and projects, is a particularly appropriate format for studying this historical problem. This is because only by gaining new information, through looking closely at the interactions between particular artists, audiences, and institutions, is it possible to go beyond disciplinary clichés about what those relationships are like. In order to understand these interactions, I begin in Chapter 1 by reconstructing a site-specific idea of audience as it pertained to the projects. I examine the concrete practices – such as asking the public to participate in open forums – as well as the conceptual motivations behind those practices, which combined to create the circumstances under which the artists, audience members, and Dia employees interacted during the projects. In Chapter 2, I take this analysis of the conceptual significance of techniques of audience engagement a step further, by zeroing in on one particular concept: the idea that art had a pedagogical value that could be transformative to the audience. I analyze the value of this idea for Group Material's broader practice, and for their attempts to make sense of the changing relationship between their own practice and art institutions. In Chapter 3, I approach the question of how artists' goals relate to those of their participant audiences by analyzing Rosler's collaboration with the self-organized homeless persons' group Homeward Bound. I argue that despite the different positions of privilege they occupied in relation to the project, Rosler and Homeward Bound were both invested in its pedagogical value. Finally, in Chapter 4, I examine the impact of the practice of collaboration on artists' own attitudes and positions, through a study of Group Material's interaction with audiences around the question of representing AIDS.

The site-specific conception of audience which I lay out in Chapter 1 therefore provides a basis for my analysis, in the later chapters, of the relationship between audience participation and specific aspects of the projects' content (the themes of education, homelessness, and AIDS). In Chapter 1, I argue that prior to *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…*, Dia had had a concept of art spectatorship, but not of audience. In contrast to the art viewer or spectator, the audience is generally understood to be a collective subject, associated with some kind of specific (although often ill-defined) public sphere. Though Dia's projects had always been available to some kind of audience – albeit often only a very small and privileged one – in *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* the audience became an object of discourse in the discussions between Dia and the artists.

Based on statements by Group Material and Rosler, a transcript of a discussion between the artists, Dia Director of Programs Gary Garrels, and Yvonne Rainer, and also audio recordings of the town-hall meetings, I argue that the conception of audience at work in the projects was two-fold: as specific political constituency and as a less coherent, more open-ended mass. On the one hand, *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* sought to serve the audience as a constituency. That is, Group Material and Rosler sought to draw people of diverse ethnic, sexual, and economic identities as participants, and also to represent that diversity within the projects. This representation took place through the inclusion of artworks in the exhibitions that addressed different identities, and also through the town-hall meetings, in which audience members were encouraged to speak out and represent their own beliefs and experiences. This framework for conceiving the audience emphasized the audience's status as something that pre-existed the artwork, and which the artwork strove to reflect and serve. In this respect, the audience was conceived as a finite entity, which could be known through representation in the artwork.

On the other hand, the participatory town-hall meetings materialized a form of audience that was fundamentally open-ended. Though Group Material pre-selected the topics for their open forums, and Rosler in addition chose speakers to serve on a panel at each meeting, the direction the discussion took each time was unpredictable. As I listened to the audio cassettes of the meetings held in Dia's archives, it became clear not only that the content of each group discussion varied in the extent to which it stayed on topic, but also that the collective emotional tone of the meetings differed, and even changed within a single meeting. The audio recordings impressed on me that what was at work here was not only the finite, innumerable audience-as-constituency, but also a more volatile, dynamic mass that produced unpredictable experiences for all involved. This aspect of the audience cannot be grasped only through examining specific, legible identity positions addressed by viewing the audience as a constituency.

We can only understand the historical significance of audience engagement in *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* if we keep these two different aspects of the audience in view: the conception of the audience-as-political-constituency, which drew on discourses of political representation, and the audience as a volatile mass which manifested itself in the live meetings. It appears, moreover, that this second aspect of audience, its dynamic, open-ended quality, confounded the logic of political representation at work in the projects. It becomes evident at some moments in the recordings that participants were not only representing their beliefs and their real experiences, but also *performing*. This often subtle, but impossible-to-ignore, theatricality shone through in different ways at different moments. For example, the poet Cenén, a panelist at Rosler's meeting "Homelessness: Conditions, Causes, Cures," exploded the audience's expectations by screaming in order to represent the terror of homelessness. Larry Locke, a leader of the self-organized homeless persons' group Homeward Bound and a speaker at the same meeting, gave a speech in which he repositioned the members of Homeward Bound as teachers, and the audience as the students of their pedagogy. AIDS activist Avram Finkelstein, speaking at Group Material's "AIDS & Democracy" meeting, stressed the singularity of the AIDS crisis by delivering a polemical performance of outraged rejection of the art world.

My analysis of these different moments of live participation in *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* has led me to conclude that the town-hall meetings were not only forums for the representation of the existing audience, but a place for participants to act out their desires about what they wanted the audience to become. In the performative moments I discuss, audience members used their voices and bodies – not only their words, but also their intonation and pitch – to intervene in the live meeting in ways that transformed the group dynamic. The meetings were spaces characterized by a fluidity of position. Participants delivered performances that repositioned not only themselves, but also others, as in Locke's casting of the audience as students of Homeward Bound. In these performances, audience members and panelists took up Group Material and Rosler's invitation to participate, but acted in ways that shifted, and perhaps even thwarted, the projects' aim to function as venues for the political representation of an existing public. As such, I understand the unpredictable quality of the audience-as-mass to be the condition that Group Material and Rosler's political conceptions of audience encountered when the rubber hit the road, as it were, in the process of moving from an abstract interest in audience participation to the actual unfolding of the live events.

This flexibility of the projects' conceptual frames was possible because of the great degree of agency that the artists allotted participants. The artists created projects that gave the audience an essential role in the important work of creating politically engaged art. Art historian Grant Kester points out that in much participatory art, and particularly in the practices curator Nicolas Bourriaud discusses in his landmark book *Relational Aesthetics*, social interaction exists only to the extent that it involves choreographed, largely insignificant gestures.[34] *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* could not be more different from those practices. The projects were characterized by a desire to engage the audience so great that it ultimately resulted in a willingness, on the part of the artists, to let the audience overturn the political and conceptual frameworks Group Material and Rosler themselves had set for the projects.

As such, the question of how the audience experienced *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…*, and how they interpreted that experience – whether with excitement, interest, anger, or philosophical dissatisfaction – must be central to my investigation here. This question of experience raises two distinct, yet interrelated, historical problems. First, it is important to understand how the artists, Dia staff members, and even audience members themselves valued certain *models* of audience experience. Group Material and Rosler wrote and spoke about the kind of audience they hoped to draw, and about the experiences they wanted their work to create for that audience. Audience members and critics spoke at the meetings, and also wrote in reviews, about their satisfaction or lack thereof with the way in which the projects addressed participants. Second, in addition to analyzing these conceptions of audience experience, we need to examine the experiences that real participants had with the projects. [35]

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[34] Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context*, 32-3. Kester gives the example of cutting one's hair as an instance of such an ultimately negligible gesture.

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[35] The project of recovering entirely participants' actions and experiences is of course impossible. So far, it has been scholars working not primarily on participation, but on performance art, who have grappled with the difficulty of recovering the past ephemeral art event and the experiences it generated. Among these scholars, Amelia Jones in particular insists that the power of the live art event lies in its resistance to being "saved" through documentation, and that this resistant power is connected to the way in which re-presentations of performance destabilize the dominant fantasy of the privileged, straight, white, male subject. See Amelia Jones, "'Presence' in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation." *Art Journal* 56 (Winter 1997): 11-18, 12. See also Jones, ""The Artist Is Present": Artistic Re-Enactments and the Impossibility of Presence." *TDR* 55, no. 1 (2011): 16-45, and Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998. For Jones, the connection between performance art and subjectivity is subversive to the extent that performance's ephemerality reveals the impossibility, within academic discourse and cultural production, to ever really know the subject. As such, Jones' positioning of performance is strategic, to the extent that she valorizes performance in terms that she explicitly positions in opposition to modernist constructions of subjectivity. Though I acknowledge the impossibility to ever totally recover subjective experience in participatory art, I pursue a different methodology here in relation to that act of recovery, but one that is no less strategic. Whereas Jones stresses the unknowability of subjectivity, this dissertation is characterized by a greed for historical details about what those involved with *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* felt, wanted, and thought. I believe a greater emphasis on historical intersubjective relationships in participatory art, and in the power dynamics that characterized those relationships, is essential to according participatory art a place as a historical, and not only a theoretical, object of study.

Recovering past participant experience can be a difficult and uneven task. Art institutions and criticism still typically revolve around the idea of individual artistic authorship. That conception controls what kinds of materials get preserved in archives, and whose experiences are recorded in critical texts. Dia's audio recordings of the town-hall meetings are an unusually rich resource for recovering participant experience: part of what makes these two case-studies especially compelling. The unedited tapes constitute a document of audience many hours in length, which provides extraordinary detail about information about the attitudes of individual audience members, and their collective dynamic during the live events.[36] In addition to the audio recordings, participant's subjectivities assert themselves in documentation photographs of the projects, which I discuss below, and also in scattered textual sources.

For example, Dia's archival binder for *Democracy* contains a small, rectangular piece of red paper. This is a ballot from the raffle that Group Material held for the "Cultural Participation" exhibition, which dealt with the relationship between "high" art and the "low" culture of mass consumption. During the exhibition, which included both artworks and cellophane potato and corn chip bags hung on the walls, gallery attendants approached visitors and asked if they wanted to buy a ticket for $1.[37] The raffle prizes included the La-Z-Boy chair that Group Material had included in “Politics and Election,” the previous exhibition in *Democracy*, a color television, and a 20-pound “self-basting” turkey (appropriate to the timing of Thanksgiving, which fell that year on November 24th, shortly after the beginning of “Cultural Participation”). On the ballot that I found in Dia’s archives, someone had written, “I only want the turkey.”

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[36] The cassettes constitute over 30 hours of recordings. They are archived in a drawer with other event recordings at Dia's office, and not with the rest of the records for the projects. When I did research with the tapes, it seemed that little or no use had been made of them since they were used to create the discussion transcripts for the project books.
[37] Ault, *Show and Tell*, 149.

Though on one level, the ballot provides very little information – not even the name of the participant who wrote on it – it grabbed my attention because its quirky assertiveness posed an open-ended question about the situation that generated it. Though it is easy to understand why someone might only want the turkey, not needing a TV or wanting to lug home the La-Z-Boy, less clear is how Group Material might have responded to this desire. Was this the winning ballot? If so, did the person get the turkey she or he wanted? What if another, more polite or timid winner, also only wanted the turkey? How would that conflict have been resolved? The ballot sketches one particular instance of audience involvement, but also unravels into a series of broader questions about the subjectivity of participants in the participatory artwork, and about the capacity of that artwork to accommodate their varied and unpredictable participation.

In scholarship on participatory art up to this point, there has been extensive consideration of the models of experience and political subjecthood that participation presupposes, but surprisingly little attention to the experiences that people have had, historically, with this kind of art. Claire Bishop, in her contribution to the 2011 volume *Thomas Hirschhorn: Establishing A Critical Corpus*, published interviews she conducted with participants in Hirschhorn's *Bijlmer Spinoza-Festival* (2009).[38] However, Bishop presents these interviews as unstructured field notes, which she admits she is unsure how to integrate into a coherent text or argument. Indeed, attempting to address the experiences of the audience in participatory art, in addition to requiring particular kinds of field or archival research, poses methodological problems. First, it raises issues that attend all disciplines in which scholars craft narratives based on the experiences of others, as reconstituted through historical or ethnographic research.[39] Second, attending to historical viewer experience in participatory art brings up questions of disciplinarity that are specific to art history. For example, though artist interviews are a permanent fixture of modern and contemporary art history due to their association with artistic intentionality, a plurality of voices of participants and institutional employees may give a text a somewhat journalistic, or anthropological, tone, which is less familiar in the field. Furthermore, the concept of artistic intentionality, as opposed to dissolving with the shift from the traditional artist interview to a broader network of perspectives, becomes newly complex. The voices of artists, institutional employees, audience members, and the historian her- or himself now all vie for stage time and interpretational authority in the text.

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[38] See Bishop, "And That Is What Happened There," in *Thomas Hirschhorn : Establishing a Critical Corpus* (Zurich and New York: JRP/Ringier; D.A.P., 2011), 6-51. In this essay, Bishop writes that the task of analyzing the participant interviews is "daunting," and that these interviews "provide a spoken resource, equal to the visual impact of photographic documentation, which will allow [Hirschhorn's project] *The Biljmer Spinoza-Festival* to be judged and understood by future audiences." (51) Bishop concludes that the fact that the participants had a "good" experience in the project does not necessarily make it a "good" artwork; instead, the work must be judged in relation to a commonly articulated set of aesthetic criteria. Note that Bishop makes the comparison between interviews and photographic images as resources for understanding participatory art, but that elsewhere she has written about the insufficiency of photographs as a way of understanding these artworks: "to grasp participatory art from images alone is almost impossible: casual photographs of people talking, eating, attending a workshop or screening or seminar tell us very little, almost nothing, about the concept and the context of a given project." Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 5. Between these texts, it remains somewhat unclear what, for Bishop, are the methodological potentials and drawbacks of using primary source material to understand a participatory project or the audience experiences it generated.

[39] Gayatri Spivak and Joan Scott, in two respective classic articles, raise arguments which are essential in this respect. Scott discusses the problems attendant to building arguments on the basis of accounts of experience. She argues that historians must proceed carefully when using experience as historical evidence, so as not to take individual perception as unproblematized evidence of a larger system, and thereby miss the dialectical relationship between experience and the larger structures of power that shape it. Joan Scott, "The Evidence of Experience." *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 4 (Summer 1991): 773-97. Spivak raises the equally important issue that it is impossible, within academic discourse, to recover the pure experience of the subaltern. Any claim to do so is an ideological power claim on behalf of the privileged scholar, which in fact further elides the experience of those with no access to power. Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by

Throughout the writing of this dissertation, I have felt these methodological issues impact my process, contributing to a narrative texture that shuttles perhaps somewhat awkwardly between visual analysis and a journalistic tone, or between foregrounding the perspectives of my interviewees and delivering my own interpretation. But I have decided to tolerate this awkwardness in the text, because I believe that its status as a legible trace of the difficulty of my research question may be useful to the reader in understanding the process of my research and writing. When art history and criticism focus only on the models of subjectivity inherent in the artist's or institution's conception of the work, or when critics assert their own theories for what participation should achieve above a contextual analysis of specific practices, the participant herself risks becoming just an empty cipher in discourse, her

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Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, 271-313 (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

individual subjectivity erased in favor of convenient generalizations about an artwork's social impact or aesthetic value. Ignoring participant experience negates the dialectic between lived experience and models of subjectivity, ultimately unmooring these art practices from their historically specific social contexts. I believe that the biggest and most interesting challenge that participatory art poses to art history and criticism is the question of how to understand the intervention of the participatory artwork in a pre-existing social field.

Participants do not have their subjectivities crafted anew in each participatory artwork, but rather come to the work – and leave it – with their own histories and experiences. A majority of scholars in the field, and particularly Bourriaud and Bishop, have asked how artworks can change participants, whether through pleasurable, connective experiences or unpleasant, shocking ones. In this study I invert the question, by examining how participants' existing subjectivities and investments inflect the work. In doing so, my goal is not to posit subjectivity as the un-moved mover and the artwork as the powerless elaboration of its structures, but rather to escape from a model of criticism that projects an unrealistically instantaneous moment of change in the subject as the ultimate ethical horizon of the work. Subjectivity is not the instrumental product of art, nor vice-versa. Rather, I am interested in what is created when different subjects interact within the space of the artwork.

How we understand the social and aesthetic power of the participatory artwork in relation to the enduring, unequal structures of subjectivity that shape the experiences of its participants, is a lasting problem that animates my research. The question of how the participatory artwork relates to existing structures of subjectivity is not one I can solve definitively. In this dissertation, I have chosen to respond to this problem by letting it push my work towards an analysis of the relationship, in the historical moment of my case studies, between participatory art and a cluster of ideas about subjecthood and social change that is specific to the particular historical site I examine. As such, my work counters the dominant trend in scholarly literature on participatory art, much of which focuses on presenting and refuting large-scale, over-arching theories about the social or aesthetic value of participation.[40] This dissertation is characterized by a desire to return to the time and place of *Democracy* and *If You*

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[40] My emphasis on historical specificity is driven by a dissatisfaction with current theories of participatory art, or perhaps, even with the idea of the possibility of an all-encompassing theory of participatory art as such. The major theorists in the field, including Nicolas Bourriaud, Claire Bishop, Grant Kester, and Shannon Jackson, make very different, compelling arguments for the aesthetic and social significance of participatory art practices. See Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*. Dijon: Les Presses du Réel, 2001 [1998]; Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics." *October*, no. 110 (Fall 2004): 51-79; Bishop, "The Social Turn"; Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*; Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces*; Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011); Shannon Jackson, *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (New York and London: Routledge, 2011). Despite the very substantial differences in position that these authors take up, their accounts all present overarching theories of participation's significance, which they then illustrate or expand through a series of case studies or examples. Instead of pursuing this line of analysis, I dive deep here into the particular dynamics of one set of projects, refocusing the scale of my analysis in order to explore how historical texture may problematize generalization. Bishop's recent book *Artificial Hells* is a valuable consolidation of research on global participatory practices, which provides a first step towards a more historical view of participatory art. But that book is fundamentally geared towards sketching an over-arching history in a way that makes various practices into clear examples of Bishop's arguments, instead of grappling with how individual projects may resist generalization. I believe that the close historical analysis of specific projects may provide a different perspective on the histories that we might seek to slot them into as buttressing examples. Through close reading, the case study can cease to be the building block of a bigger theory, and may become instead the occasion for that theory's reevaluation.

Lived Here… as a participant observer, in order to understand what these specific projects meant to the different people who took part in them.

In *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…*, audience participation was connected to one particular idea of art's power that was compelling to the artists, the audience, and Dia as the host institution. This was the idea that art carried pedagogical potency: specifically framed as the ability to transform the subject through active models of engagement and interaction. In this model, audience members were not passive recipients who soak up a message delivered by art, but participants whose active involvement in the projects – ranging from taking part in collective debates, to contributing their own art, to intellectual reflection on the social world they inhabited – made them partners in dialogue with the artists.

Throughout Chapters 2, 3, and 4, I analyze the concept of the pedagogical as an object of discourse in which various parties, including the artist, Dia employees, and other participants, held different, and sometimes conflicting, stakes. This analysis of the work that the concept of pedagogy performs in the sphere of contemporary art is possible because I have approached this dissertation as a case study, as opposed to a monographic study of either Group Material or Rosler, or as a history of the Dia Art Foundation.[41] My attraction to the structure of the case study is grounded methodologically in two distinct strands of late 20th- and early 21st-century philosophy. The first is the theory and practice of close reading in art history and literary studies, particularly as Mieke Bal has developed it in her work on meaning and disciplinarity. The second is sociologist Bruno Latour's presentation of Actor-Network Theory (ANT), which is part of a broad tradition of thought encompassing Baruch Spinoza and Gilles Deleuze. In relation to the question of close reading, I am drawn to the format of the case study because such an analysis can enable historical material to take on a detail of texture that complicates large-scale narratives. That act of complication has the power to contribute historical information that may fall through the cracks of studies taking a wider focus, while simultaneously revealing the stakes behind specific acts of historical generalization. In this respect, I approach *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* as "theoretical objects" in the sense Bal defines. For Bal, the theoretical object is an object of analysis that can become a trigger or "container" for theoretical ideas that are not easily expressible, because their level of complexity makes them difficult to articulate.[42] She argues that this difficulty of articulation is fundamentally related to the way that academic disciplines enable and disenable certain kinds of knowledge. However, Bal writes, close reading alone can remain flatly thematic or formalist, while its seeming opposite, an approach based on contextualization, risks generalization that loses sight of the specificity of particular texts. The trick is to hold these two in tension, to produce a "cultural analysis" capable of revealing art's specific power.[43]

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[41] Claire Grace, a graduate of Harvard University, has recently written a monographic dissertation on Group Material. Grace, "Red All Over: Collectivism and Social Critique in the Art of Group Material." Harvard University, 2012. Karen Ramspacher, a former employee of Dia who became a member of Group Material over the course of *Democracy*, suggested to me that a history of the Dia Art Foundation would be a fascinating study in itself. Interview with Karen Ramspacher, July 30, 2010.

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[42] Mieke Bal, "Meanwhile: Literature in an Expanded Field." In *A Mieke Bal Reader*, edited by Mieke Bal (Chicago and London: U Chicago Press, 2006), 452. Bal explores the power of contemporary art in particular to act as a theoretical object that recasts our understandings of history in her book *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

On a basic level, this is a dissertation that attempts to stay very close to its historical material. However, in doing so, it has raised for me the question of what constitutes a closeness to historical material, and whether such closeness is even possible. In my working through of the archival remains of *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…*, I have felt that historical details have helped me ground my arguments, but also that they have inserted something in the text that defies my ability to make arguments as such. The text thus bears a dialectical relationship to historical information, which is the text's foundation but also its downfall, the principle of overturning of its rationality and coherence. My attempt to embrace this double quality – productive but also disruptive – of the historical material draws on Latour's explanation of ANT. ANT is a form of sociological inquiry that instead of departing from stable conceptions of social systems or agents, and positing a single factor (e.g. "the social," or "political agency") as the unmoved mover of other components of the system, examines the constantly shifting relationships that bring a social sphere into being. The hyphen between Actor-Network gestures at this codependence: it is not simply that networks are made up of actors, or actors slotted into networks, but rather it is the relationship between them that makes it possible for anything to happen at all.

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[43] Bal writes of literature: "Together – again, in ongoing debate – the two conceptions can lead to what I like to call genuine cultural *analysis*: an analysis of literature in its agency as cultural force, but on its own terms, so that the cultural object can be emancipated from its historical burdens of being either a mirror of society or an instrument of manipulation, either an object of formalist aesthetics or a mere repository of ideas." Bal, *A Mieke Bal Reader*, 451.

Latour writes that in ANT, the job of the social scientist is to describe the process by which the social is assembled by paying close attention to the specifics of relationships between actors:

> [Y]ou have to 'follow the actors themselves', that is try to catch up with their often wild innovations in order to learn from them what the collective existence has become in their hands, which methods they have elaborated to make it fit together, which accounts could best define the new associations that they have been forced to establish.[44]

Throughout this project, I attempt to follow the actors, in order to produce an understanding of political engagement in art that gets beyond the clichés that dominate the discipline. These discussions often boil down either to assertions that art practice must engage politically, or predictable defenses of art's special role as something that cannot bring about social change, but still makes viewers think about that change in an important way.[45] What is missing, between these two poles, is an analysis of how artists, institutional employees, critics, and art historians act and interact in ways that *produce* particular, historically specific ideas about art's political engagement.[46] My analysis aims to fill that gap by refraining from evaluating the ultimate political success or failure of Group Material and Rosler's projects. Instead, I will attempt to follow the actors in order to understand how and why they produced an idea of engaged art in their own historical moment.

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[44] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor Network Theory*, Clarendon Lectures in Management Studies (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 11-12.

[45] For an example of typical rhetoric justifying art's special place as connected to yet separate from the realm of political action, see Irene Small, "Believing in Art: The Votive Structures of Conceptual Art." *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 55/56 (Spring/Fall 2009): 294-307.

In pursuing that goal, my study must take a double view on the question of agency. On the one hand, I agree with Latour that agency operates only in relation, and is fundamentally material. As such, scholarly analysis misses the operations of action and change if it views agency as connected to a notion of individualized, human subjectivity. Simultaneously, such a construction of individualized, human subjectivity was central to the discursive context of Group Material and Rosler's projects, and to the way in which the artists and many of their participants thought about processes of political empowerment and social change. While working on this dissertation, the further my archival research progressed, the more it became clear that I would need to engage with the conception of political agency at work in the projects historically, despite the fact that it is no longer academically current.[47]

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[46] Michel Foucault's concept of archaeology is also an important model for my work in this respect. Foucault lays out this method in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith (London: Tavistock, 1972). Throughout this dissertation, my goal is to understand how certain discursive terms – including "the audience" and "education" – operated in these projects, in their specific institutional context of Dia. In this sense, I perform what Paul Rabinow and Hubert Dreyfus refer to as a Foucauldian "bracketing" of the "serious" meaning of these terms. Dreyfus, Hubert L., Paul Rabinow, and Michel Foucault. *Michel Foucault, Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 49. In other words, I analyze these terms of discourse not in terms of whether the statement are true or false, good or bad, but in terms of the work that they perform in a certain discursive context.

[47] One particular strand of the recent "non-representational" or "speculative realist" theory places a very strong emphasis on the desire to escape from a human-centric conception of agency. Political scientist Jane Bennett and geographer Nigel Thrift are among the many

Democracy and *If You Lived Here…* were fundamentally about the political agency of human subjects, and the terms that they set out for engaging with their context revolved around issues of subjectivity and of representation.

Instead of trying to keep these concepts of agency discrete – using Latour's ideas instrumentally as a tool of analysis, and looking at identity-based conceptions of agency from the 1980s as a historical relic – I have allowed them to intermingle in my work. The result of this interpenetration is an analysis of how the affective dynamics of co-presence in *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…*, particularly in the town-hall meetings, gave rise to assertions of individual and collective agency. In other words, I analyze how the meeting participants, operating in a particular material context and

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scholars who draw on Latour, Bennett developing the concept of "vibrant matter" and Thrift advocating "non-representational theory." Bennett, in *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, states that she follows Latour in "elid[ing] what is commonly taken as distinctive or even unique about humans." Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), viii-ix. Bennett argues that the privileging of human agency over the agency of things fuels a destructive world-view, including the practices of over-consumption and ecological degradation. Politics, instead of being seen as a human-centric activity, should instead be conceived as the emergence of "human-nonhuman collectives" with shared experiences (Bennett, xix. See Bennett's discussion of this in chapter 7 of her book, "Political Ecologies," 94-109). Thrift, in *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect*, pursues a detailed analysis of the small-scale "geography of what happens," refusing to privilege human action and instead analyzing the constitution of world through the interaction of various human and nonhuman actors. Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 2. Bennett's and Thrift's writings are, themselves, grounded in the long tradition of philosophy that reaches from the work of Baruch Spinoza down through the 20th century in the writing of Gilles Deleuze. See Spinoza, *Ethics*. Translated by G.H.R. Parkinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), and Deleuze *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*. Translated by Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988); also Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books, 1990). Bennett's and Thrift's works represent one particular, not uncontroversial interpretation of this tradition, in which the bulk of their interest lies in what Spinoza refers to as the first type of knowledge. For my own interpretation of how Spinozist philosophy might be applied to an analysis of bodies and affects in participatory art, see Adair Rounthwaite, "'Cultural Participation' by Group Material: Between the Ontology and the History of the Participatory Art Event." *Performance Research* 16, no. 4 (2011): 92-96.

using tools including their voices and physical presence, produced and experienced certain ideas of agency.

This analysis is informed by my own academic moment, and seeks more deeply to understand both that present moment, *and* the past moment of *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here...*, by straddling their different theoretical paradigms. One of the most important outcomes of this approach will be a deeper understanding of how conceptions of identity politics, which enjoyed their greatest prominence in the art world in the late 1980s and early 1990s, have informed our current conceptions of art viewership, and particularly of participatory audience involvement. Recently, the late ’80s and early ’90s have been the subject of a wave of curatorial and scholarly interest, which treats this still relatively recent moment as the object of historical inquiry for the first time. Examples include the 2012-13 exhibition *This Will Have Been: Art, Love, and Politics in the 1980s*, curated by Helen Molesworth, and the show *NYC 1993: Experimental Jet Set, Trash and No Star* at the New Museum in 2013, curated by Massimiliano Gioni. One key stake in both exhibitions is a desire to understand the importance of identity politics for art production and reception.

The term “identity politics” designates a huge and varied body of scholarship and activism. Broadly defined, identity politics might be said to focus on the shared experiences of oppression of certain groups in society, and on the structures of power and meaning which produce differentiation and enable such oppression in the first place.[48] In the visual arts, identity politics came to be associated with practices in which the experience of an artwork was connected to knowledge of the artist's personal or political affiliation with groups experiencing oppression, whether in relation to gender, race, sexuality, class, or another axis of difference. The 1990 New York-wide exhibition *The Decade Show: Frameworks of Identity in the 1980s*, co-hosted by New Museum, the Studio Museum in Harlem, and the Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art, exemplified this approach, framing the entire decade of the 1980s as one in which the art of social concern became synonymous with meditations on identity.[49] Much art typically associated with this tendency examines how the visual intersects with other systems of meaning in order to construct difference. One of the clearest illustrations of this intersection is Adrian Piper's 1981 pencil drawing *Self-Portrait Exaggerating My Negroid Features*. This drawing depicts Piper, a woman of mixed racial heritage who often involuntarily passes for white, in a way that makes her signify more clearly as African-American. Though the drawing alone might not read as a conceptual treatment of the relationship between lived discrimination and the power of representation, Piper addresses this problem by using the title of her piece to cast doubt on the stability of race, and on the ability of representational systems to communicate truthfully about racial difference. In Piper's

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[48] The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy provides a useful overview of this concept, including a useful bibliography. "Identity Politics." In *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: Metaphysics Research Lab, CSLI, Stanford University, 2002.

[49] See Thelma Golden, David Deitcher and Guillermo Gomez-Peña, *The Decade Show: Frameworks of Identity in the 1980s* (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1990). An overview of the show can be found on the New Museum's website at http://archive.newmuseum.org/index.php/Detail/Occurrence/Show/occurrence_id/195, accessed November 14, 2012.

Self-Portrait, the artwork is the location of the artist's becoming visible as the bearer of a specific, marked social identity, but it simultaneously acts as the site of destabilization of systems of difference and social marking. An ongoing criticism of these artistic practices has been their supposed didacticism. For example, one of the essential points of departure for the recent New Museum show was the 1993 Whitney Biennial, which was famously informed by identity politics and multiculturalism. At the time, the biennial drew criticism from many critics, including several associated with the journal *October*, for the way in which its use of didactic text supposedly shut down the possibility for free aesthetic experience of the work.[50]

In recent interpretations of site-specific and participatory art that have gained authoritative currency within the field, there persists a reading of identity politics as a flatly didactic, and even objectifying, tendency, which forecloses the essential openness of aesthetic practice. Art historian Miwon Kwon, in her book *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*, argues that since the early 1990s, constructions of artistic identity have developed in art curation and criticism as a response to the disconcerting unmooring of art from specific sites. Today, Kwon argues, when artists fly all over the world to create "site-specific" projects, the idea that an artist possesses an inherent identity that somehow matches a certain community or site can act as a panacea for our anxiety about the real detachment of art from an organic idea of site. Kwon gives the example of the failed participation of artist Renée Green in "Culture in Action," the 1993 public art event organized by curator Mary Jane Jacobs. Jacobs invited Green, who is African-American, to participate in "Culture in Action," implicitly encouraging her to develop a project relating to Chicago's black communities, for example by sending Green on tours of largely African-American ghetto neighborhoods, and organizing meetings with leaders of those communities. Green ultimately withdrew from the project because she felt that this exercised a problematic constraint on her work.[51] Kwon clearly views this as a negative development, and depicts Jacobs as creating a commodification of artists, communities, and social issues by expediently packaging these together under the guise of site specificity. Claire Bishop takes Kwon's aversion to identity politics a step further, particularly in her recent book *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (2012). Here, Bishop repeatedly criticizes identity politics as connected to an outdated, individualist humanism that collaborates with a social instrumentalization of art. She sees that humanism as negating both the particular value of the aesthetic *and* the possibility of radical politics.[52]

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[50] See Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Silvia Kolbowski, Miwon Kwon, Benjamin Buchloh. "The Politics of the Signifier: A Conversation on the Whitney Biennial." *October* 66 (Fall 1993): 3-27.

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[51] Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 140-1.

[52] For example, Bishop describes Grant Kester's work in the following negative terms: "Kester's emphasis on compassionate identification with the other is typical of the discourse around participatory art, in which an ethics of interpersonal interaction comes to prevail over a politics of social justice. It represents a familiar summary of the intellectual trends inaugurated by identity politics and consolidated in 1990s theory: respect for the other, recognition of difference, protection of fundamental liberties, and a concern for human rights. … In insisting upon consensual dialogue, sensitivity to difference risks becoming a new kind of repressive norm – one in which artistic strategies of disruption, intervention or over-identification are immediately ruled out as 'unethical' because all forms of authorship are equated with authority and indicted as totalising. Such a denigration of authorship allows

It seems that implicit in Kwon's and Bishop's critiques is the conviction that if we identify the workings of identity politics, we may be able to root them out of art and critical reception, and thereby make room for a return to radical aesthetic practice in the avant-garde tradition. Both authors fail to recognize the possible implication of their own arguments with a Eurocentric conception of art history in which only Western art carries the privilege of being viewed as unmarked, whereas art from elsewhere is labeled with modifiers that limit its relevance to a specific region or identity (such as "Indian modernism," as Partha Mitter describes).[53] I believe, contrary to Kwon and Bishop, that in North America, identity politics created an irreversible change in terms of how we conceive not only artistic production but also viewer experience and agency. In her 1993 essay "Passionate Irreverence: The Cultural Politics of Identity," artist Coco Fusco underscores the extent to which issues of identity and culture fundamentally changed questions of audience address: "*Who are we? ... Whose values? ... Whose museums and whose aesthetics? ... Whose icons? ... Whose images*?"[54] This paradigm has created such wide-reaching changes in terms of how we understand art production, viewership, and the role of institutions that it cannot simply be excised from our practice and criticism. Instead, we must seek to understand its historical evolution, without straining to connect contemporary

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simplistic oppositions to remain in place: active versus passive viewer, egotistical versus collaborative artist, privileged versus needy community, aesthetic complexity versus simple expression, cold autonomy versus convivial community." Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 25.

[53] Partha Mitter and respondants. "Decentering Modernism." *The Art Bulletin* XC, no. 4 (December 2008): 521-74.

[54] Coco Fusco, "Passionate Irreverence: The Cultural Politics of Identity." In *Art Matters: How the Culture Wars Changed America*, edited by Philip Yenawine Brian Wallis, and Marianne Weems (New York: New York University Press, 1999 [1993]), 63.

art production to a limiting conception of the historical avant-garde. This historical understanding will help us see more clearly the experiences and relationships contemporary art creates, a project which I believe should lie at the centre of art historical inquiry.

In this dissertation, I shed light on the relationship between identity politics and participation by arguing that the former manifested itself in *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* in the way that audience members became both *audible* and *visible* within the artwork. Participants became audible and visible in the projects not as generalized members of the audience, but as diverse subjects with specific social identities. I will demonstrate throughout the following chapters that Group Material and Rosler's conception of the public sphere to which their art connected was based on this visible and audible participant diversity.

The participants' audibility was most important in the town-hall meetings, where Group Material and Rosler encouraged audience members to speak, and to share their own opinions and experiences. Audience members thus became generators of discourse, who spoke from certain positions within the social field. The Renée Green/"Culture in Action" incident that Kwon discusses is symptomatic of a condition in which speaking as an artist becomes inseparable from speaking from a social position tethered to a particular identity. I explore the historical emergence of this condition through my analysis in Chapter 2, where I argue that in Group Material's practice, the association between the speaker's identity and his or her authority was a consequence of Group Material's leveling of their own roles with those of their collaborating audience. Group Material member Doug Ashford has described this state as being "a part of the audience."[55] I argue that this process rendered a particular authority of experience connected to minority identity a necessary supplement to the artist's position when dealing with certain social issues. Despite Group Material's protestations against essentializing conceptions of racial and sexual identity, in *Democracy*, the discussion of social inequality and oppression became inseparable from a concept of the speaking subject grounded in identity politics.

I enter the question of participants' visibility within the projects primarily through photographic documentation. This documentation includes images created by Doug Ashford for *Democracy* and by photographer Oren Slor for *If You Lived Here…*. I approach these photographs not as transparent records of what unfolded during the projects, but as complex visual texts that communicate meaning about the – sometimes conflicting – desires of the different parties involved for what participation should achieve. Through their visible presence, participants contributed to the projects' vision of an inclusive and diverse social sphere. The documentation images help me understand how participants became visible in the projects, as that process unfolded within a network of relationships between the artists, participants, and institutional employees. By examining the triangulation of these relationships in the production of participation, I argue that participatory art must be studied not in terms of the vision of a single party, be that the artist, the sponsoring institution, or a participant community. Instead, this art invites us to study what happens when different conceptions of art and social engagement collide, in the process by which ideas give form to material reality. The phenomenon of audience participation thus provides a unique site for understanding the subtleties of the relationships between institutional power and contemporary artistic production. My own exploitation of the idea of participation, one more in a long chain of acts of use of this concept, is geared towards gleaning these insights, in order to understand what power, today, makes it possible for art to be.

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[55] Doug Ashford, "An Artwork is a Person," in Ault, *Show and Tell*, 221.

Chapter 1 – The Visible Audience in *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…*

The Dia Art Foundation released its first annual report in 1975. This occurred shortly after oil heiress Philippa de Menil and her future husband, German gallerist Heiner Friedrich, created the organization. The 1975 report states that Dia's mission is to "plan, realize and maintain public projects which cannot be easily produced, financed or owned by individual collectors because of their cost and magnitude."[56] The centrality of commitment to artists' vision was Dia's strongest defining characteristic, and the one that make it unique. In later iterations of Dia's mission statement, two things are striking. First, there is a strong constancy of the commitment to artists' vision. Second, in more recent statements of Dia's mission there is an articulation, not present in the 1975 version, of Dia's role in connecting these unique artworks to an audience. For example, a 2000 application made by Dia to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) for a public artwork along the Hudson River in Beacon, New York, repeats the founding commitment to supporting "those works of art which cannot obtain sponsorship or support from commercial and private sources because of their nature or scale." But it then goes on to place that commitment within the context of an audience: "Dia is committed to making the arts of our own time accessible to a wider and increasingly well-informed audience."[57]

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[56] Dia 1975 annual report, as quoted in Bob Colacello, "Remains of the Dia." *Vanity Fair* (September 1996), 186.

[57] Dia Center for the Arts, NEA Application number A-00-001975, dated March 27, 2000, archives of the National Endowment for the Arts.

Between these two moments, 1975 and 2000, a discourse emerged in Dia's public self-presentation that states the importance of the audience to Dia. More specifically, that discourse represents the audience as a pre-existing entity – out there in the world – to which Dia's projects reach out. The multi-faceted projects *Democracy* by Group Material and *If You Lived Here…* by Martha Rosler constituted the first clearly visible moment of emergence, at Dia, of an articulation of a concept of audience. This change poses the question of what else was going on at Dia that might have brought the shift about. Dia supported *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* at a moment when it was undergoing a transition from being a single-donor foundation, more or less invisible to the general public, to being a publicly-oriented not-for-profit organization, which drew on diverse sources of funding and was active in various forms of public programming. *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* differed significantly from Dia's previous programming in their overtly political content. The projects were a result of an openness, on the part of Dia's director Charles Wright, to new programming directions, in light of a desire of the Board of Directors to create greater public engagement within the organization. But simultaneously, Group Material and Rosler went over and above Dia's goals. The artists expressed an idea of audience that grew out of their own politically leftist practice, and that, moreover, they defined in opposition to the cultural privilege and elitism they saw Dia to represent. This early moment of artist-driven audience awareness aided Dia in establishing a more public, less solely artist-centered organizational identity.

Democracy and *If You Lived Here…* constitute a complex and in some respects uneasy encounter between Dia as an art institution, and politicized art practice. Because of the specific archival documentation available in relation to the projects, they provide a privileged case study for examining the larger phenomenon of how, during the 1980s, the changing relationships between institutions and politicized art transformed the concept of audience. I argue that the idea of audience at work in the projects was not simply the result of Group Material's and Rosler's activism, or just a consequence of Dia's changing institutional needs, but was shaped by both. As such, my telling of the story of *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* will demand an analysis of how these different agencies intertwined, changing each other in the process. The particular set of interactions I mark out here are specific to Group Material and Rosler's projects at Dia. But in analyzing them, I aim to demonstrate the existence of a paradigm present more widely in the late '80s and early '90s, in which mutually beneficial collaborations between activists artists and institutions transformed all parties involved. Moreover, my analysis here models a way of understanding the role of institutional employees in the creative process as active contributors who, like artists, act out of a particular set of convictions and investments.

This first chapter looks at the idea, materialized in the exhibitions for *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* and in Group Material and Rosler's statements surrounding the projects, of the audience as a diverse *constituency* that the projects sought both to reach out to and to represent. The artists and Dia conceived the audience as something real, existing in the world, to which the projects sought to respond. On the whole, Group Material and Rosler's statements about audience follow a representational logic, in which the artwork reflects faithfully an exterior reality. Dia's statement about audience outreach from the NEA application of 2000 quoted above also reflects this idea of a real, existing audience, which the organization's programs will modify, by connecting it with advanced art.

Simultaneously, I argue that the participatory town-hall meetings that were central to the projects were characterized not only by the representation of an existing population of viewers, but also the generation of affective performances that called a new imagined audience into being. In other words, the meetings not only reflected and represented the audience, but also created and imagined it. I demonstrate this through the analysis of an intervention by the poet Cenén in the meeting "Homelessness: Conditions, Causes, Cures," held for Rosler's project. Cenén's vocal performance, through imposing an abrupt and shocking affect on those present, opened up the possibility for participants to occupy different positions in relation to the question of homelessness. Her speech, though delivered at a public forum that focused on the discursive content of speakers' words, is highly performative and moving, disintegrating the boundary between the acted and the authentic.

Democracy and *If You Lived Here…* are thus characterized by two different, and in some respects contradictory, conceptions of audience. On the one hand, audience is something that can be identified, described and quantified. On the other hand, it is an open-ended, dynamic entity that continually overturns the conceptual frameworks that seek to contain it.

My thesis here, that the live quality of the participatory events problematized the idea of a "real" audience, breaks down the opposition common in writing on participatory art between active participation, and artificial, or spectacular, experience.[58] In critiques of *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* at the time of the projects, some writers criticized the projects for their political artificiality, and their failure to address an audience outside the art world. Through my analysis of the live events, however, I show that such an appeal to a real audience, outside fantasy or projection, is unsustainable. Instead, I demonstrate that participation as such in these projects was inseparable from a certain form of spectacle, because participation involved the activation of viewers' visible and audible contributions to the work. Therefore, viewed from the perspective of *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…*, the question we need to ask about participatory art is not whether this art is able to escape the spectacular relationships characteristic of commodity capitalism, a question which has been asked frequently in writing on these practices. [59] Instead, we need to examine how artists' turning to participation made the viewer visible and audible in a *different* way, and how that change impacted viewers' experiences of the work.

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[58] Claire Bishop has recently argued that participation and spectacle are not opposed, as many critics have represented them to be. Claire Bishop, "Participation and Spectacle: Where Are We Now?" In *Living as Form: Social Engaged Art from 1991-2011*, edited by Nato Thompson, 34-45 (Cambridge, MA: Creative Time Books and MIT Press, 2012). Bishop is right to criticize the easy equation of participation with activity and spectacle with passivity. However, Bishop's argument ultimately boils down to the assertion that participation is *no better* than spectacle. My aim here is not to assert that we participation should or should not be valued above spectacle, but rather to examine the historical evolution of participation in relation to concepts and tactics of spectacle.

[59] This idea, that participation in art should counter the ossified and superficial relationships characteristic of contemporary capitalism, is central to Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics*, a book which has served as a constant reference point in debates about

A core goal of my analysis in this chapter is to understand how the concept of audience, with its site-specific political and aesthetic baggage, shaped the possibilities for how viewers were able to act within *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…*. This goal is driven by an ethical investment on my part to move beyond speaking about viewer experience in a generalized way and towards understanding viewers' particular historical interventions in Group Material and Rosler's participatory artworks. This analysis of viewers' agency provides the ground for rethinking discourses of authorship as they circulate in relation to participatory art. In particular, my analysis provides a tool for interrogating the broader phenomenon of artists' claims to renounce sole authorship of their work in favor of collaboration with the audience. This gesture is often accompanied by a striking tenacity of the concept of authorship at the level of institutional functioning. Group Material and Rosler, as I will discuss, made various statements of their wish to renounce full authorship of the projects. But Gary Garrels, Director of Programs at Dia during the projects, states that for him there was no doubt they were the sole authors of the works.[60] In this chapter, I demonstrate that claims to give up artistic authorship are not *only* a renunciation of

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participation, primarily as a point of critique against which other others oppose their own positions. Bourriaud argues that "relational" practices create tactical, contingent communities, which enable forms of human relation different than capitalism's production of the subject as a "consumer of time and space" (9). Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon: Les Presses du Réel, 2001 [1998]).

[60] Telephone interview with Gary Garrels, October 14, 2010.

authority, but also constitute a way of fashioning authorship in relation to institutions and audiences.

Dia and its Audience, or Lack thereof

Democracy and *If You Lived Here…* received fairly limited attention in the art press. Michael Govan, Dia's director from 1994 to 2004, speculates that this may be attributed to Dia's still nascent status, in the late 1980s, as an institution open to the public.[61] In the reviews that did appear, a recurring theme is the difference between Group Material and Rosler's projects, on the one hand, and the art Dia had previously supported, on the other. Salem Alaton, a New York correspondent for Canada's *The Globe and Mail*, describes as "queer" the fact that Dia, which he casts as conservative, hosted the yearlong *Town Meeting* project, with its open forums for political discussion.[62] In the *Village Voice*, art critic Elizabeth Hess frames *Democracy* as a victory for Group Material: "Taking over Dia with a four-part series about 'Democracy' was a most unexpected coup."[63] And in a *New York Times* review of Group Material's "Education and Democracy," critic Roberta Smith writes that the show and the larger project *Democracy* "is something of a departure for Dia, which in the past had devoted a great deal of time and money to a substantially more self-contained, purely formal kind of installation art."[64]

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[61] Telephone interview with Michael Govan, February 13, 2012.

[62] Salem Alaton, "N.Y. Artists Get Vocal About Politics," *The Globe and Mail* October 20, 1988, C3.

[63] Elizabeth Hess, "Safe Combat in the Erogenous Zone." *The Village Voice* January 10, 1989: 79.

Alaton, Hess, and Smith are all positive about this development. All three frame it in terms of an opposition between conservative, formalist art and a more social, politicized practice represented by Rosler and Group Material. Similarly, Yvonne Rainer, who originally suggested that Dia host the projects, argues that Group Material and Rosler's interest in social context stood in opposition to Dia's "longstanding and continuous" commitment to separating out the "cream" of high culture, without questioning who is served by the distinction between high and low culture.[65] On the audio recordings for the town hall meetings, it becomes evident that members of the wider audience also perceived the projects to be different from Dia's previous undertakings. At Rosler's first forum held on Tuesday, February 28, 1989, entitled "Housing: Gentrification, Dislocation, and Fighting Back!" an audience member closes his comments on the dysfunction of the housing system with a clear compliment to Dia: "Thank you again for organizing these forums – I'm happy to see

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[64] Roberta Smith, "Gallery View; Working the Gap between Art and Politics." *New York Times* September 25, 1988.

[65] See Rainer's comments in the preface to the books published by Bay Press for the projects: "I am occasionally struck by the memory of a pronouncement made in the mid-fifties by a painter friend of mine (a woman no less!): 'The cream always rises to the top.' Like all such analogies to 'natural selection,' this one evades the issue of who recognizes and separates the cream, and whose interests are served by such distinctions. The Group Material and Rosler projects are a vivid demonstration of how art exhibition can constitute a radically different approach, one that can offer not only a diversity of objects but can contextualize a social field in and from which the objects are produced and derive their meaning. […] In light of Dia's longstanding and continuing commitment to cream separating, it behooves me to register my own lobbying effort on a five-person panel (convened by Dia, to its credit) as an initiating factor in the realization of these shows." Rainer, "Preface: The Work of Art in the (Imagined) Age of Unalienated Exhibition," in Wallis, *Democracy*, xviii. The same text appears in the book for Rosler's project.

Dia doing this."[66] And in her closing statement at the end of this meeting, moderator Lori-Jean Saigh reiterates the sentiment, going slightly beyond the formulaic thanking of the host institution: "I want to thank the Dia for *allowing this* to happen, and I want to thank Martha for organizing it, and I wanted to thank everybody on the panel tonight for coming and sharing their expertise. Fight back!"[67]

Group Material and Rosler themselves, in their statements for the project books, also note the differences between their own practices and previous Dia art, and also code this difference in terms of a split between self-enclosed, formalist practices and their own politically engaged attitude. Group Material, in their introduction to their book for *Democracy* (1990), describe their initial reaction to being asked to do a show at Dia as follows:

> One of the first questions we asked was: 'Why are they asking us?' To us, the Dia Art Foundation signified 'exclusive,' 'white,' 'esoteric,' and 'male,' whereas we had always attempted to redefine culture around an opposing set of terms: 'inclusive,' 'multicultural,' 'nonsexist,' and 'socially relevant.'[68]

In this quotation, Group Material lay out two sets of terms that stand in binary opposition. The first clearly signify negative practices, while the second signify positive, ethical ones. The terms coded as negative involve enclosure and separation, whereas those coded as positive evoke a movement of broadening that creates connection. Moreover, each set of terms evokes a certain kind of subject. The negative terms index a subject who is privileged, white, male, and implicitly singular, while the subject*s* evoked by the positive terms are diverse in terms of gender and ethnicity, meaning that they necessarily occur in the plural. This difference is thus presented as one between a monolithic privileged subject, and a different subject, represented by the group's own practices, which breaks out of that sameness. The members of Group Material were not the first politicized artists to associate Dia with a privileged subject that needed to be interrogated. In 1985, Dia's name appeared on one of the Guerilla Girls' earliest posters, under the heading "These Galleries Show No More Than 10% Women Artists Or None At All."[69] By 1990, when Group Material's text was published in *Democracy: A Project by Group Material*, the project book published by Dia and Bay Press, the association of Dia with racial, gender, and class privilege was a critique familiar within the alternative arts sector.

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[66] Dia Art Foundation audio archives. Consulted January 2011.

[67] Ibid. I have added the emphasis here, however, the original I am working from is an audio recording, which makes this somewhat different than italicizing a quoted text. Full transcripts of the meetings no longer exist in the archives I have examined.

[68] Wallis, *Democracy*, 1.

Rosler, in her text for the *If You Lived Here…* project book and in other writings and interviews, goes further than Group Material, not only underscoring the differences between her practice and Dia's, but also speculating that Dia undertook the "Town Meeting" projects in order to gain "a certain kind of street cred."[70] In a

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[69] Poster image included in Julie Ault, "A Chronology of Selected Alternative Structures, Spaces, Artists' Groups, and Organizations in New York City, 1965-85." In *Alternative Art New York 1965-85*, edited by Julie Ault (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 73.

[70] Interview with Martha Rosler, July 21, 2010.

1994 article entitled “Place, Position, Power, Politics,” Rosler writes that when she was invited to do a show at Dia and chose the issue of homelessness as its subject,

> My topic was acceptable – though only marginally – primarily, I think, because it invoked (trendy) issues of ‘the city’ and because it smacked of charitable representations of social victims of color, despite the fair degree of ambivalence that occasioned. The art world virtually ignored it, and in a sense so did the sponsoring institution – refusing, for example, to share their mailing list with me.[71]

Rosler’s account implies that Dia sought to capitalize on the “trendy” status of the creative city discourses with which *If You Lived Here…* engaged. Her comments must be seen within the context of the larger question, which circulated during the 1980s, of what institutions sought to gain from collaborations with the alternative arts sector. During this decade, alternative spaces were broadly associated in the art world imaginary not only with more politicized practices, but also with different, less specialized audiences than mainstream institutions. For example, in a 1981 article entitled “The New Collectives – Reaching for a Wider Audience,” Grace Glueck discusses an exhibition at the New Museum organized by South Bronx alternative space Fashion Moda. The show was part of a series of events that Glueck writes were intended to reach “a wider, less sophisticated audience than the upper-middle-class art patrons who frequent the established system of galleries, museums, and alternative spaces around the city.”[72]

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[71] Martha Rosler, “Place, Position, Power, Politics,” in *The Subversive Imagination: Artists, Society, and Social Responsibility*, edited by Carol Becker (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 69.

Glueck frames the access to a different audience as something valuable on which alternative spaces have a privileged purchase, and which institutions such as the New Museum seek to gain. Rosler makes a similar argument as a point of critique against Dia, suggesting that her practice provided a connection to a new set of social issues to which Dia wanted access, but that simultaneously occasioned institutional discomfort about her work. This feeling of anxiety about what Dia might stand to gain also resonates with a statement made by Gary Garrels, Dia’s Director of Programs. Garrels states that at the time, Dia received a number of angry responses about the Group Material and Rosler projects from people who felt “that Dia was trying to appropriate a part of the art world that it had never been involved with.”[73] According to Garrels, these people framed Dia as an opportunistic “interloper” that “had gone into this territory that was sort of staked out and claimed by other people.” Garrels’ recollection demonstrates a wider sensitivity among artists and audiences around how the concept of political engagement might generate value for institutions.

These assertions, by critics, the artists, and participants, of a difference between Group Material and Rosler’s practices and Dia’s earlier projects indeed pose the question of why Dia decided to support these more political practices, and why they did so specifically in the late 1980s. In the official history of Group Material, group member Julie Ault writes that during the time of *Democracy*, Dia was undergoing a transition from being a private to a public institution.[74] Journalist Bob Colacello, in a 1996 article in *Vanity Fair* that is both rich in detail and lasciviously gossipy in tone, notes something similar. Colacello writes that in the decade following the installation of Dia's second board in 1985, chairman Ashton Hawkins and vice-chairman Lois de Menil "stabilized the foundation's finances and transformed it into a much-admired, publicly oriented institution."[75] Colacello's characterization of "publicly oriented" is technically more correct than Ault's, as Dia's status was that of a non-profit organization, or 501(c)3.[76] Non-profit corporations, cultural theorist George Yúdice argues, occupy a space somewhere between private and public. Since the end of the Cold War, Yúdice states, non-profits have made irrelevant the public/private divide, by locating themselves in a triangulation of government, the corporate sector, and civil society. Key to this triangulation is the idea of culture as a public good.[77]

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[72] Grace Glueck, “The New Collectives - Reaching for a Wider Audience.” *New York Times* February 1, 1981. Glueck also quotes Stefan Eins, the founder of Fashion Moda, as saying that he started the gallery because he felt the art world lacked a broad enough audience.
[73] Interview with Gary Garrels, October 14, 2010.

The idea that art is capable of creating public good was just developing, at Dia, in the mid-'80s. The early history of the organization, from its establishment in 1974 through its financial crisis in 1983-4, was emphatically oriented towards the production and collection of art, without a strong focus on public accessibility. The early Dia Art Foundation was a private enterprise that relied solely on the single-patron support of Philippa de Menil, who had inherited part of the enormous Schlumberger oil fortune. A hallmark of the early Dia's methodology of support was the establishment of permanent contracts with artists, including Donald Judd, Dan Flavin, Robert Whitman, and Walter de Maria. In these contracts, Dia promised to provide the artists with monthly stipends, in addition to developing permanent exhibition spaces for their work. Following Heiner and Philippa's marriage and conversion to Sufism in 1979, Dia had a charter that also supported certain religious activities, including Islamic publication, performance, and translation projects. [78] The couple maintained a mosque at 155 Mercer Street, in the space that would eventually host Rosler and Group Material's town-hall meetings. Throughout the late '70s and early '80s, Dia's low-profile offices occupied various spaces, including on Wooster and Franklin Streets, with permanent installations including Walter de Maria's *Earthroom* and *Broken Kilometer* (both 1977) [Fig. 2, Fig. 7] and Le Monte Young and Marian Zazeela's *Dream House* (1979-85) in other locations.[79]

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[74] Ault, *Show and Tell*, 149.

[75] Bob Colacello. "Remains of the Dia." *Vanity Fair* September 1996. Accessible at http://www.vanityfair.com/magazine/archive/1996/09/colacello199609. Accessed May 2011.

[76] Interview with Lynne Cooke, April 1, 2011.

[77] George Yúdice, "The Privatization of Culture." Yenwaine, Wallis, and Weems, 293-4.

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[78] Phoebe Hoban, "Medicis for a Moment: The Collapse of the Dia Dream," *New York Magazine* November 25, 1985, 52-8, p. 56. Anna Chave has incisively analyzed the connection between the overly religious aspects of Dia's activities, and the more generally spiritual quality of the minimalist art it supported. Chave cites sculptor Robert Morris on the religious quality of 1960s minimalism, which according to Morris wanted to embody both "tough-minded empiricism" and "tender minded transcendence." Anna Chave, "Revaluing Minimalism: Patronage, Aura, and Place." *Art Bulletin* XC, no. 3 (September 2008): 466-86, p. 479.

[79] Hoban, "Medicis for a Moment," 54-5. Former Dia trustee Margaret Douglas-Hamilton states that in the mid-1980s, the maintenance of the *Dream House* alone cost approximately $500,000 a year. Interview with Hawkins, De Menil, Douglas-Hamilton, and Wolff, May 9, 2012.

Dia's lack of audience outreach was not simply a result of neglect, but was related to a consciously anti-institutional stance on the part of its founders. Dia's resolutely anti-institutional character was grounded in Heiner Friedrich's hatred of museums, which he associated with the presentation of artworks as isolated and commodified objects.[80] Despite the fact that by the early '80s Dia had as many as 80 employees, there was no regular exhibition schedule, few public opening hours, and no publicity.[81] It seems that publications associated with artists' projects were kept to an absolute minimum, if they existed at all.[82] Charles Wright, who became Dia's director in 1984, speculates that this lack of publicity was at least in part due to the Friedrichs' belief that the permanent installation of the art would, in and of itself, eventually establish the works' presence in the art world.[83] Furthermore, publicity and press releases formed part of a professional museum or gallery apparatus to which the Friedrichs were explicitly opposed.[84] Lynne Cooke, Curator at Dia from 1991 to 2009, states that though Heiner did not by any means want the artworks to be ignored, his primary commitment was to the artists, and their needs, desires and processes.[85]

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[80] Interview with Gary Garrels, October 14, 2010. This was one point on which Friedrich and Donald Judd, one of Dia's key artists in its early days, agreed. Dia aimed, in a sense, get away from the objectification of the object, and to give artworks a space in which they could gain a kind of subjective agency. Michael Fried has famously argued that minimalist art creates an experience for the viewer of being with the artwork as if with another person. See Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," In *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 148-72, p. 155. Dia's attitude towards the object seems to take this premise a step further, treating objects with a gentleness that is sensitive to the space they need to "breathe," in order that they may enter into a more equal, activated relationship with viewers. Michael Kimmelman, "The Dia Generation," *The New York Times Magazine* April 6, 2003. Furthermore, the Friedrichs' lack of interest in reaching an audience can also in part be attributed to the highly personal terms in which they conceived Dia. Heiner cited his own experience of living through World War II in Berlin as the impetus behind Dia's emphasis on permanence: "My early experience of total destruction made me want to create the permanence of indestructible properties, particularly the creative work of artists." Hoban, "Medicis for a Moment," 54.

[81] Telephone interview with Lynne Cooke, April 1, 2011. Grace Glueck, "Dia Foundation Cuts Art Funding," *New York Times* Feb. 12, 1985. Glueck notes that "the foundation has dismissed 30 persons from a staff of 80."

[82] Dia's commitment to a serious publication initiative began with the *Discussions in Contemporary Culture* series, the first volume of which was published in 1987, and edited by Hal Foster. Hal Foster, ed. *Discussions in Contemporary Culture*. Vol. 1 (Seattle: Bay Press, 1987).

All of this contributed to Dia's lack of visibility to those who did not already know of its existence. Many of the projects Dia sponsored, such as de Maria's *Lightning Field* [Fig. 1] in New Mexico and James Turrell's *Roden Crater* (1978) [Fig. 8] in Flagstaff, Arizona, are geographically isolated enough that only those committed to making the pilgrimage to a remote site are able to see the works in the first place. In a 1979 article in the *New York Times*, reporter Kay Larson refers to Dia as "the little-known foundation supported by the oil-drilling fortune of the de Menil family."[86] Attention in the popular press picked up with Dia's financial crisis, starting in 1983. This crisis was precipitated by a combination of factors, including the global oil glut that lowered the value of Philippa's Schlumberger stock, causing CitiBank to request more collateral on the loans she had taken out to buy buildings for Dia. Many of those buildings had been purchased with balloon mortgages, which created financial stress when they came due. Dia was legally bound, by contracts Heiner and Philippa had signed with artists, to maintain the buildings in perpetuity and to continue providing financial support to the artists.[87] Philippa's mother Dominique de Menil ultimately stepped in to deal with Dia's ruinous finances. She fired Heiner, put her daughter's money in trust with Philippa's older brother George, and installed a new board.[88] During the period from 1983 to 1987, in the transition away from Heiner and Philippa's directorship, opportunities for public access to artworks were even sparser than they had been before, with the temporary closure of de Maria's *Earthroom* and *Broken Kilometer*.[89]

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[83] Dia's aim was to step out of the commodification created by the museum and by commercial gallery cycles, and to let the object "speak over time," as Charles Wright described Heiner's stance. Wright's comments about Heiner's view as cited in Colacello, "Remains of the Dia."

[84] Interview with Charles Wright, May 3, 2011.

[85] Telephone interview with Lynne Cooke, May 1, 2011.

[86] Kay Larson, "New Landscapes in Art." *New York Times* May 13, 1979. In 1985, Grace Glueck published an article in the *New York Times* entitled "Dia Foundation Cuts Art Funding," in which she notes the idiosyncratic and non-public nature of Dia's operations: "A provocative presence in the field of contemporary art, it keeps a low profile, though its commitment of large sums to vast, often abstruse projects by artists of its own selection – mostly of Minimal or Conceptual schools – is highly unusual in the staid foundation world." Glueck, "Dia Foundation Cuts Art Funding."

This lack of audience outreach, which peaked during the foundation's financial crisis, began to change following Dia's reorganization. After Dominique wrested control from Heiner in 1983-84, de Menil family friend Ashton Hawkins, a lawyer and member of the board of the Metropolitan Museum, became the first chairman of the board. Philippa's sister-in-law, historian Lois de Menil, became vice-chairman.[90] The first core concern of the new board was to stabilize the foundation financially, which they achieved by selling real estate and artworks, and initiating the renegotiation of the artists' contracts.[91] During this period, Dia was under investigation by the office of New York State Attorney General Robert Abrams for alleged financial improprieties that took place under Heiner's directorship. Lois de Menil relates that at a meeting concerning the investigation, the Attorney General requested that the new board assist in the investigation of Heiner and Philippa's financial practices. Herb Brownell, a member of Dia's new board who had held various public offices including as US Attorney General under Dwight Eisenhower from 1953 to 1957, rejected the request to do the office's "dirty work." However, Brownell stated, the new board would make it a priority to open the organization to the people of New York, in light of the fact that Dia had already benefited from large amounts of public tax money in the form of deductions for gifts.[92] The most immediate form that this opening to the public took was the attempt to start exhibiting the art, much of which had never been shown. Many works in storage were even lacking basic records of titles and artist's names.[93]

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[87] Dia's change in directorship was precipitated by Philippa's mother, Dominique de Menil, who contacted her economist son George and his wife Lois in fall 1984 seeking urgent assistance with the situation at Dia that Philippa had described to her. Dominique's action was motivated by her concern that Philippa stood in danger to lose all of her assets. Part of the problem at this point was that Philippa's only remaining assets were in Slumberger, and as such when the value of those stocks fell, she had no other assets with which to guarantee the debts she and Heiner had incurred through real estate purchases. Interview with Ashton Hawkins, Lois de Menil, Margaret Douglas-Hamilton, and Peter Wolff, May 9, 2012.

[88] Colacello, "Remains of the Dia."

[89] Interview with Hawkins, de Menil, Douglas-Hamilton, and Wolfe, May 9, 2012.

[90] In addition to Hawkins and Lois, the new board consisted of John C. Evans of Morgan Stanley, the future US Supreme Court justice Stephen Breyer, Margaret Douglas-Hamilton of

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Schroders Inc., and Herbert Brownell, Eisenhower's first attorney general, who was outside counsel of the Metropolitan Museum.

[91] The new board undertook to sell the buildings quickly enough to restitute to Philippa the Schlumberger stocks that she had almost lost. The board appointed Sidney Lazard as an interim director, and put him in charge of the real estate sales. Part of selling the buildings was the fact that they had not been used or inhabited for some time, and as such many were lacking basic facilities such as plumping. Former board chair Ashton Hawkins states that with the exception of Donald Judd, the Dia artists mostly understood the severity of the situation and were open to renegotiation. Interview with Hawkins, de Menil, Douglas-Hamilton, and Wolfe, May 9, 2012.

[92] Interview with Hawkins, de Menil, Douglas-Hamilton, and Wolfe, May 9, 2012.

[93] Ibid.

Hawkins and Lois de Menil found a permanent director for Dia in Charles Wright, the lawyer son of a Seattle art collector, who took up the position in January 1986.[94] During his directorship, Wright would steer a course in which he attempted to keep something of the spirit of Dia alive, while operating on a radically reduced physical scale and budget, with a tiny staff.[95] After several months of conversation with Gary Garrels, Wright asked Garrels to join Dia as the Director of Programs, and they began work on the process of reconstituting the foundation.[96] By the end of 1987, Dia had raised $17 million through sales of art and real estate.[97] The offices were upstairs at 155 Mercer Street, in the Friedrichs' former mosque, with the ground floor rented out cheaply as dance rehearsal space.[98] In 1987, Dia began to host a series of events under the rubric of Discussions in Contemporary Culture, the first of which consisted of a series of six weekly discussions on "diverse cultural topics" organized by art historian Hal Foster.[99] The talks given by critics and historians at the Discussions events were subsequently published in a series of books by Bay Press.[100] Wright and board member Margaret Douglas-Hamilton were strongly interested in poetry, and in fall 1987 Dia also began a series of poetry readings with authors including John Ashberry, Amy Clampitt, Robert Creely, and Louise Glück.[101]

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[94] Hoban, "Medicis for a Moment," 58. Wright's mother knew Hawkins and the De Menils through collecting circles, and he had previously interned at Hawkins' law firm. Interview with Hawkins, de Menil, Douglas-Hamilton, and Wolfe, May 9, 2012.

[95] In the words of Karen Kelly, who came to work at Dia in 1989 and now serves as its Director of Publications and Special Programs: "Charlie recognized what was there. And so he took the assets that Dia had, and tried to re-envision what could be done with that to keep the institution moving – alive, actually." Interview with Karen Kelly, June 26, 2010. Though the new board was generally negative about Heiner, Wright went to see the former director regularly at the Friedrichs' new mosque at 245 West Broadway (address provided in Chave, "Revaluing Minimalism," 482). Ultimately, Wright retained a strong sense of Heiner's commitment to breaking the rote museum and gallery exhibition pattern in order to let art "speak" over a longer period of time, and also felt an affinity with the large-scale, site-specific works such as the *Earth Room* and the *Lightning Field* of which the new board members were less appreciative (Colacello).

[96] Telephone interview with Gary Garrels, October 14, 2010.

[97] Kimmelman, "The Dia generation."

[98] "Dia Art Foundation New York City Real Property," document showing addresses and uses of Dia's NYC properties. Rosler archives. Consulted December 2010.

Dia owned a space at 77 Wooster Street, in the back of de Maria's *Broken Kilometer*, which Wright decided to use as an exhibition space, beginning in fall 1986 with works by Warhol from the collection.[102] In June 1987, Wright convened an international group of arts professionals to provide Dia with advice about their new exhibition program. Curators Harald Szeeman and Kathy Halbreich, museum director Kaspar König, gallerist Richard Bellamy, and dancer and filmmaker Yvonne Rainer came together for two days of talks in New York.[103] The group was not by any means homogenous in terms of approach: Rainer recalls that her own commitment to politically engaged art met with hostility from Bellamy.[104] Wright also remembers the cool reception on the part of some other panel members of Rainer's ideas, and attributes this in part to the fact that Rainer represented a younger generation.[105] For the meeting, Garrels and Wright asked each of the participants to propose artists for Dia to support, and Rainer put forward Rosler and Group Material's names.[106] In September 1988, "Education and Democracy," the first installation for Group Material's *Democracy*, opened in the Wooster Street gallery that had displayed the Warhols for the preceding two years.

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[99] Charles Wright, "A Note on the Series." In *Vision and Visuality*, ed. Hal Foster and Dia Art Foundation. Discussions in Contemporary Culture; No. 2. Seattle: Dia Art Foundation with Bay Press, 1988, vii.

[100] Foster and Wright were childhood friends from Seattle. Garrels interview, October 14, 2010.

[101] See http://awp.diaart.org/poetry/, accessed May 12, 2012.

[102] Garrels interview, October 14, 2010; Wright interview, May 3, 2011; see exhibition dates in Gary Garrels and Dia Art Foundation, *The Work of Andy Warhol*, Discussions in Contemporary Culture, No. 3 (Seattle: Bay Press, 1989), ix-x.

[103] Wallis, ed., *Democracy*, xiii. At the time, their respective positions were as follows: Szeeman was a curator at the Kunsthaus in Zurich; König was director of Portikus and Chancellor of the Städelsches Kunstinstitut in Frankfurt; Halbreich was curator of contemporary art at the Museum of Fine Art, Boston; filmmaker and dancer Rainer was an instructor at the Whitney Independent Study Program; and Bellamy was director of the Oil & Steel Gallery.

[104] Telephone interview with Yvonne Rainer, April 1, 2010.

Given all this, it becomes even clearer that *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* occurred at a moment of self-conscious change in Dia's identity, during which the Board saw the necessity for greater public outreach. Wright and Garrels forwarded that goal by enabling new directions in programming that differed from Dia's previous projects. Rosler's barb about "trendiness," and the complaints Garrels relates about Dia's appropriation of political art, thus ring true to some extent. However, in casting the process as a one-way instrumentalization by Dia of Group Material and Rosler, these comments gloss over some essential aspects of this collaboration. The first is a philosophical common ground. *Both* the artists and Dia were opposed, in different ways, to the system of the art market. Moreover, the narrative that Dia co-opted Group Material and Rosler's activist art excludes the third, essential party in this relationship: the audience. In addition, the funding of the projects, and the way that they brought together a Minimalist activation of the body with discourses of social identity, also problematize the narrative of co-option in ways which were indicative of how participatory art would develop throughout the 1990s and 2000s.

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[105] Telephone interview with Charles Wright interview, May 3, 2011.

[106] According to Gary Garrels, Rainer also proposed the name of a New York filmmaker, who Dia did not go on to support because of their lack of a professional screening facility. Neither Garrels nor Rainer, nor Charles Wright, however, can remember who this third person was. Interviews with Garrels, Rainer and Wright.

Democracy and *If You Lived Here…* represented a very high budget form of activist art, which was necessarily dependent on its institutional context. Garrels and Wright both argue that between Dia's earlier work and Group Material and Rosler's projects, there was a fundamental continuity in terms of Dia's desire to provide artists with extraordinary support that would change the nature of the work they were able to produce.[107] This desire is borne out clearly in *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…*. The fact that Dia had two street-entry spaces so close together in Soho made it possible for the meetings and the exhibitions to be experienced as connected to each other and to the neighborhood without the logistical problems of trying to hold large, sometimes rowdy meetings inside an art-filled exhibition space. Also, though the cost of these projects was minor in comparison to the artworks funded in the Heiner and Philippa days, the budget for the shows, estimated before the projects at $186,088 including personnel, substantially outweighed the resources to which Group Material and Rosler typically had access.[108] In the collaboration with Dia, Group Material and

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[107] Telephone interview with Gary Garrels, October 14, 2010; telephone interview with Charles Wright, May 3, 2011. Garrels described this desire to support artists in the following terms: "How we saw it was that these were artists where institutional support could make a big difference for what they wanted to do." He also stresses that for him the projects were clearly authored by Group Material and Rosler.

[108] In addition to personnel costs, which included a $10,000 artist fee for Rosler and a $12,000 artist fee for Group Material collectively, as well as a $4,000 fee for Hal Foster who was projected in the early phases of the project as the eventual editor of the book, the budget

Rosler's practices were thus already in a process of being transformed by new institutional resources.

Furthermore, *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* picked up on an existing thread within Dia's Minimalism, to the extent that the projects were process-based and dealt with the question of space, particularly in the case of Rosler's project. Garrels stresses *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…*'s connection to Dia's mode of showing art, which was attentive to how viewers phenomenologically experienced space.[109] Michael Fried famously argues that Minimalism as such brings attention to the presence of the viewer's own body.[110] Amelia Jones has argued that in spite of Fried's understanding of this as a negative development, his work has, in spite of itself, fostered feminist and queer analyses of embodiment in contemporary art.[111] Considered in the context of *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…*, Jones' argument suggests that Minimalism, of which Dia may be taken to represent a particular apex, activates the viewer's body in a way that may eventually open onto discussions of bodily difference.

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included such items as $2,600 to record the discussions and $7,500 to transcribe them. Advertising in the *Village Voice* alone was allotted $3,420, and travel by invited discussion participants $12,575. 1988-89 NYSCA application made by Gary Garrels on behalf of Dia for the "Town Meeting" projects. Martha Rosler archives, consulted December 2010.

[109] Garrels interview, October 14, 2010.

[110] Fried, "Art and Objecthood." Fried refers to Minimalist art as "theatrical" because it is concerned with the actual circumstances in which the beholder encounters the literalist work, and the experience of the object in a situation that includes the beholder. The size of literalist pieces and their nonrelational, unitary character distances the viewer physically and psychically, hence the literalist artist's concern for control of the situation, which includes the viewer's body (154-5).

[111] Amelia Jones, "Art History/Art Criticism: Performing Meaning." In *Performing the Body/Performing the Text*, edited by Amelia and Andrew Stephenson Jones (London: Routledge, 1999).

Group Material's and Rosler's projects took that step by moving from Minimalism's attention to *the* body in space, toward bringing focus to different specific bod*ies* in space. The artists considered the body not as the universalized locus of phenomenological experience, as did Minimalism, but as an individual visible agent in a collective social setting integral to the artwork. The projects united the concept of the embodied viewer with discourses of identity that critically analyzed the different access subjects have, within mainstream culture, to representation – conceived especially, in the context of the shows, as the ability to speak. In Group Material and Rosler's projects, participation in the town hall meetings functioned as a way of integrating the presence of the embodied viewer into the artwork. Moreover, the projects integrated participants in a way that was still attentive to the social differences among those participants. Participants thereby became, within the projects, potential generators of discourse about their own social positionality. In the following section, I examine how the artists and Dia discursively elaborated this concept of the visible viewer, and in particular how they used it as a means for attributing value to art practice.

Discourses of Visibility

After Wright became director, Dia's offices were housed in the second floor of 155 Mercer Street. During Group Material's *Democracy*, roundtable discussions between small groups of invited participants were held in these office spaces, and recorded to become part of the project book. Dia's archive contains a number of photographs documenting these roundtables. The images show participants, including both Group Material members and others invited to take part in the discussions, sitting in the well-lit conference room, listening, and sometimes gesticulating as they speak.

One wall of this room, as it appears in the photographs, was decorated with two photos of lightning hitting the rods of Walter de Maria's *Lightning Field* (1977), one of the early Dia's landmark projects. The effect in some images is inescapably humorous: when someone appears sitting in front of one of the photographs, the forks of lightning seem to crown his or her head like vertical halos, or like a cartoon illustration of a now-inaccessible thought process. The photographs cannot communicate the content of that thought, but the lightning streaks foreground that loss. In an image of the "Politics and Election" roundtable, Julie Ault sits underneath one of the photos, between Judge Bruce Wright and her fellow Group Material member Felix Gonzalez-Torres (both of whom are now deceased) [Fig. 9]. Ault's dark-colored sweater matches the dark environment in the photograph, and the four lighter streaks – it's hard to tell where De Maria's rods stop and the lightning begins – seem to hint at something behind her ambiguous sideways glance. In another image of the "AIDS and Democracy" roundtable, the other *Lightning Field* photograph, its protective glass reflecting the room's windows, seems to drive its glowing fork of lightning directly into the head of Group Material member Doug Ashford, who is seated below it [Fig. 10].

Between the process of the meteorological phenomena attracted by de Maria's rods documented by the framed photographs, and Group Material's social process artwork documented by the snapshots in Dia's archives, there lies a major distance in terms of how art practice is conceived. Both the photographs of the *Lightning Field* and those of the roundtable document art as a temporally unique, ephemeral process: this particular discussion, those flashes of lightning. However, the photographs of the De Maria work show the piece and its surrounding landscape in a sort of ecstatic natural convulsion, in which the only sign of human presence is the indexicality of the photograph, the fact that we assume someone must have been there to take this image. The image comes to stand for the gaze of a generalized, universal viewing subject, who is excluded from the electrical spectacle on view.

The *Democracy* roundtable photo, by contrast, shows us the artists and other participants in the process of experiencing the social situation that is the artwork. The camera seems to occupy the place of a participant at the table. Each person's condition of visibility to her or his co-participants is continuous with her or his visibility to the camera, the instrument of documentation. When I look at this image, my desire for knowledge of the ontology of the artwork, what this particular meeting was like and how it unfolded, is inseparable from seeing the participants and wondering what their experience was. Visibility, to other participants and to me through the document, of each person at the table is thus coterminous with the materialization of the participatory art event. Participation, as it occurred in the *Democracy* roundtables, could not exist without this mutual visibility of the participants. The participants are not only physically present to each other, but reveal to the group their own experiences and perspectives on the issues at hand, in a forum that revolved conceptually around soliciting their input. These discussions are recorded, and then in turn relayed to a larger secondary audience via the transcripts published in the project book.

The strongest defining characteristic of Group Material and Rosler's approach to audience in *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* is this connection between participant visibility and discourse. Participants are themselves visibly present at the meetings, and simultaneously, through the various dialogues, generate a discourse about their own thought and experience. Laura Trippi and Gary Sangster, in the catalogue *The Decade Show: Frameworks of Identity in the 1980s*, write that Rosler and Group Material belonged to a stream of critical art practice that sought to interrogate who, within the art world, had the privilege to speak.[112] In *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…*, that critical stance became the incentive for creating a situation – through the meetings – that would enable new forms of speech. Audience members entered these situations not as anonymous but as named, specific participants. Indeed, the artists accorded so much importance to individual identity that they recorded the names of all speakers in the transcripts of the town hall meetings published in the project books (except when these could not be determined after the fact from the recordings).

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[112] Laura Trippi and Gary Sangster, "From Trivial Pursuit to the Art of the Deal: Art Making in the Eighties," in Louis Young, ed., *The Decade Show: Frameworks of Identity in the 1980s* (New York: Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art, The New Museum of Contemporary Art, and the Studio Museum in Harlem, with Fleetwood Litho Press, 1990), 68.

Group Material and Rosler positioned this new visibility of diverse subjects that they sought to foster against an idea of a privileged modernist subject, which was a product of 20th-century, and implicitly Greenbergian, modernism. That subject was, for them, characterized by invisibility.[113] For example, an early internal description of *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* states that in their project, Group Material aims to interrogate the "supposed neutrality" of art spaces and practices, in order to ask the questions, "How is culture made and who is it for?"[114] Group Material and Rosler sought not only to pose this question, but also to answer it. They did so first by pointing out the privilege of Dia, which they saw as both attached to a problematic idea of the modernist aesthetic subject, and connected to an idea of audience characterized by monolithic privilege (a characterization that is in itself an idealization, as privileged audiences can also be diverse in various respects). Second, Group Material and Rosler answered this question by creating projects designed to draw audiences characterized by class and ethnic difference. Those audiences were coded, in the conceptual framework expressed in the project proposal, as the people who culture is *not* typically for.

In Group Material and Rosler's projects, the equation of the unmarked subject of culture with privilege and exclusivity compelled the visible materialization of an alternative to that invisibility. As such, the desire for diversity became inseparable from a desire to describe, record and quantify the audience. For example, in her text "Fragments of a Metropolitan Viewpoint" in the *If You Lived Here…* project book, Rosler describes her project's audience as follows:

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[113] This equation of the privileged subject of art discourse with invisibility is common in the discourse of many artists and critics who seek to attend to issues of difference. For example, Amelia Jones argues that in Greenberg's modernism, the critic's desires are veiled in order to produce an idea of disinterested judgment. Amelia Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 3. In this formulation, the desire of the critic become invisible – veiled – in order to produce an idea of the universal, privileged viewing subject.

[114] "'Town Meeting': Group Material and Martha Rosler Project Description," Dia Art Foundation archives.

> [T]he diverse groups and people who made up these shows and forums brought a significant portion of the audience: church workers, elected representatives, New York City schoolchildren, college students, architects, urban planners, activists, advocates, homeless people, volunteers, filmmakers and videomakers, painters, poets, muralists, sculptors, photojournalists, and art photographers. […] Heterogeneity engendered heterogeneity, and people brought their friends.[115]

This list presents the identities of the audience as known and quantifiable. Rosler describes these groups that make up the audience like demographic segments of a population, characterized by different professions, interests, and economic situations. Rosler represents the audience as a *constituency*, an existing group that needs to be appealed to, addressed, and represented.

The practice of conscious inclusiveness was central to the way in which Rosler and Group Material conceived of themselves as creating art that strove to be ethical. One of the clearest effects of this effort on the artists' part was the creation of opportunities for other artists who would not otherwise have had the chance to show at Dia. Marilyn Nance, a Brooklyn-based, African-American photographer, relates that participating in Rosler's show and speaking on the panel on artists' housing was her first inclusion in the privileged, white-dominated milieu represented by Dia.[116] Betti-Sue Hertz, another contributor to one of Rosler's shows, was part of the city's alternative art scene, which was significantly distanced from the financial privilege and mainstream visibility represented by Dia. Hertz relates that before being invited to participate in Rosler's show, her most direct encounter with Dia had been a job cleaning the brass rods of de Maria's *Broken Kilometer*.[117] Rosler's statement above makes it clear that in *If You Lived Here…*, many of the artists who were invited to contribute artworks to the exhibitions were representative, in terms of their gender, race, economic status, or community of affiliation, of audiences to whom Rosler sought to grant greater access to art. The text attributes to these participants the power to "[bring] a significant portion of the audience," to draw to the project audiences with whom they have existing connections.

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[115] Wallis, *If You Lived Here…*, 41.

Democracy and *If You Lived Here…*, therefore, genuinely opened Dia to a wider community of artists. But what is less clear is whether the projects drew a different audience than the one that typically visited Dia, and whether they contributed to broadening the institution's audience in the longer term. Peter Wolff, a former trustee at Dia, points out that posing this question as such may be problematic, in that during the 1980s the art world itself was expanding.[118] However, it is apparent that this question of broadening the audience was a preoccupation not only of the artists but also, more broadly, of art critics. A number of different reviewers of the shows commented on the audience makeup, and their assessments varied widely. For example, David Trend argued that a "Soho crowd" dominated the discussion of education at the "Education and Democracy" town meeting.[119] Mary Anne Staniszewski stated the opposite of Trend, writing: "The attendance at [Group Material's] town meeting for education – almost entirely New York high school professionals – was evidence of the art world's resistance to dealing with the broader implication of visual culture." [120] Trend's and Staniszewski's statements are both anecdotal and not quantitative. Interestingly, though they each attribute a different makeup to the audience, both do so as a means of condemning the art world's failure to create genuine political engagement.

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[116] Interview with Marilyn Nance, April 10, 2011.
[117] Telephone interview with Betti-Sue Hertz, April 6, 2011.

The artists, for their part, asserted that the projects *did* branch out to an audience that was wider than the art world. This is evident in the transcript of a discussion that Dia intended to lay the basis for conceptualizing the projects and the book. At this meeting, at which Martha Rosler, Yvonne Rainer, Group Material members Julie Ault, Doug Ashford, and Felix Gonzalez-Torres, and Gary Garrels were present, there was extensive discussion of the audience that the projects would draw, and also of the different types of audiences that visited various museums in

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[118] Interview with Hawkins, De Menil, Douglas-Hamilton, and Wolff, May 9, 2012.
[119] David Trend, "Back to School," *Afterimage* December 1988.
[120] Mary Anne Staniszewski, "The New Activism," *Shift*, no. 5 (1988): 8-11, p. 11.

New York. Ashford and Gonzalez-Torres asserted that *Democracy* would create a modest broadening of Dia's typical audience because each part of the show would appeal to a different specific group, including teachers in the "Education and Democracy" segment of the project, and people concerned with AIDS in the "AIDS & Democracy" segment. Ashford states:

> There are people in the show who don't even know what Dia is, or Group Material, and they've just been in their classrooms, and I think that even if it's only a … couple of hundred people … this is a step.[121]

Rosler, though she takes a tone throughout the conversation that is somewhat critical of Group Material's claims to create audience accessibility, also states that so-called outsider and non-trained artists, including people creating work for their neighbors and for themselves, "are going to be in my show." Throughout the conversation, it appears almost impossible for the group to talk about the projects or about art as such without talking about the audience. The idea of the breadth of the audience serves as a register on which they make and contest claims about the social impact of art.

During the 1980s, this question of who made up the audience, and just how much audience there was, was, moreover, becoming increasingly important within the funding networks that supported art. In this decade, the question of audience took on a larger role not only in relationships between institutions and public funding bodies such as the NEA and the New York State Council for the Arts (NYSCA), which both placed a strong emphasis on the importance of public mission in government-funded projects, but also in relationships between institutions and corporate funders.[122] Art historian Chin Tao Wu has convincingly demonstrated that the 1980s saw an unprecedented blossoming of corporate funding for the arts. The central impetus for this uptick was that through arts funding, corporations, for comparatively modest sums, could purchase an image of simultaneous cultural cachet and public responsibility. Wu argues that the changing relationships between government and corporate funding were key to "the transformation of art museums in the 1980s from purveyors of a particular elite culture to fun palaces for an increasing number of middle-class arts consumers[.]"[123]

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[121] "Town Meeting Introduction Discussion" transcript, Fales Library, Group Material collection, Series I, Box 2, Folder 19, "Other Drafts for Book 1." Consulted July 2010. The original audio recording on which this transcript was based seems to have been lost.

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[122] The NEA's 1988 annual report, for example, foregrounds the importance of audience to the mission of the funding body's self-definition: "The National Endowment for the Arts, an independent agency of the federal government, was created in 1965 to encourage and support American art and artists. Its major goals are to foster artistic excellence by helping to develop the nation's finest creative talent, to preserve our cultural heritage in all its diversity, to make the arts available to wider, more informed audience, and to promote the overall financial stability of American arts organizations." (vi) The Culture Wars, which exploded as Rosler's project at Dia was coming to a close, implicitly revolved around images of the audiences art was and was not serving. Conservatives made the claim that contemporary art was failing to serve the taxpayers who funded it through the NEA, i.e. that it was failing to address this group as a constituency. See, for example, "Debate in Senate over the NEA, statements by Sen. Alfonse D'Amato and Sen. Jesse Helms, with letter of protest to NEA's Hugh Southern, May 18, 1989," in Richard Bolton, ed., *Culture Wars: Documents from the Recent Controversies in the Arts* (New York: New Press, 1992), 28-31.

[123] Chin-Tao Wu, *Privatising Culture: Corporate Art Intervention since the 1980s* (London and New York: Verso, 2002), 123. George Yudice points out that this increased prominence of corporations' role in arts funding was not simply a question of privatization, but of a new idea of "partnership," which blurred the boundaries between the private and the public as such. Yúdice, "The Privatization of Culture," 293.

This new funding paradigm, in which "audience" played an increasingly crucial role, cannot, however, be applied straightforwardly to Dia. Even as it developed into a more public organization, Dia never became particularly attractive to corporate funders, because of its comparatively low attendance figures.[124] It seems that even throughout its period of crisis, director Wright and the Dia board were interested in preserving the organization's core commitment to artistic vision, instead of trying to create the "fun palace" of corporate investment that Wu describes. After the restructuring in the mid-'80s, Wright, and then Govan after him, looked for support primarily from major private foundations such as the Lannan Foundation and from individual private donors, and much less from corporate sources.[125] As such, I do not believe that Dia's goal in hosting "cooler," more alternative practices with *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* was meant to be instrumental in terms of funding. Rather, this move was part of a larger development in which the institution crafted a public image for itself that interfaced easily with various forms of public and foundation funding, while preserving its overall commitment to art practices generally coded as "elite." I will return to this question in greater detail in Chapter 2.

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[124] Interview with Michael Govan. This was the case even after the initial period of Dia's recovery from financial crisis, and after the process of opening the institution to the public had begun. Govan states that the attendance totally a relatively now 17,500 annually in the early 1990s. Martha Rosler, in her 1982 text "Theses on Defunding," makes the point that an important caveat to corporate sponsorship was that institutions draw big enough audiences to promise sponsors a significant impact in terms of public relations. Rosler writes: "Throughout the past decade, art organizations of all sorts had already begun adapting their offerings to the ideal of entertainment for a broad audience (partly a funding ploy). The reduction in funding has spurred more and more of them to advertise for money and attendance in print media, on the radio, and on television. 'Arts management seminars' teach ways to 'target' audiences and get good returns for advertising dollars." Rosler, "Theses on Defunding." In *Art Matters*, ed. Yenawine, Wallis, and Weems, 284.

[125] Telephone interview with Charles Wright, May 3, 2011. Wright stresses the essential importance, for Dia's institutional development, of support from the Lannan Foundation. Wright speculates that Lannan was attracted to Dia because both shared a "maverick" status and a desire to support unusual projects. The Lannan Foundation did not respond to my requests for information about their relationship with Dia.

From the transcript of the discussion cited above, it becomes evident that Dia staff were conscious of the way that the projects might positively impact Dia's image, and thus its institutional health. The group discussed Dia's image extensively, both in terms of the foundation's mission and the audiences who visited Dia.[126] At one point in the discussion, Garrels raised the possibility of doing a poll in order to get a profile of the audience. Ault answered that the members of Group Material had had this idea themselves, and had intended to do a poll as part of the "Cultural Participation" segment of *Democracy*. Garrels responded that this record of audience participation would be useful for understanding the projects and what they had to offer to larger questions of institutional practice. He stated:

> There certainly should be some gauge of what has been accomplished or what hasn't … I hope the [*Town Meeting*] project can be seen as another way to proceed for other institutions. Certainly when I am going into the NEA looking for support, a lot of what we are being judged against [is] what other art organizations are doing, those like the ICA, the New Museum or MOCA. […] I hope that this project can be contextualized not only in its own terms but in terms of larger issues of practice not only for institutions but for artists

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[126] For example, Rosler comments at one point that the people who visit the Met "don't come to Dia … or to the New Museum. But they wish they did." "Town Meeting Introduction Discussion" transcript.

> and for the public about what they should expect when they walk through the doors.[127]

Garrels' core proposal for the transmission of this knowledge is that the project book should serve as a resource useful in directing other artistic and institutional practices. In this statement, it appears that Garrels is interested in considering how *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* can generate a resource that will position Dia as a leader in terms of innovative public practice. That leadership, which Garrels hopes will shape artists' and institutions' relationship to their audiences, may in turn have the potential to create a favorable position when Garrels goes to the NEA for support.[128]

It would be easy to attribute this framing on Garrels' part to a one-sided instrumentalization of political art for institutional goals. However, I believe that the relationship evident here between Dia, on the one hand, and Group Material and Rosler, on the other, is more two-sided. The terms of the discussion, which revolve heavily around audience and funding, are ones that the artists actively pursue in the conversation, and that they view as essential to understanding their own practices. Instead of the quantification and qualification of the audience being something imposed by Garrels, they are in fact interests shared here by artists and institution, as demonstrated by Ault's statement that Group Material had also considered doing a poll of the audience. What is legible in the transcript is proximity between the artists and the institution in terms of their interest in the profile of the existing audience, and also in broadening the audience. This alliance between institutional practice and politicized art is far distanced from the antagonistic relationships between institutions and artists' groups such as the Art Workers Coalition that were characteristic of the Vietnam War era.[129] I will explore those changing relationships further over the course of the following chapters.

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[127] Ibid.

[128] The public funding that Dia has received from the NEA and New York State Council for the Arts (NYSCA), both specifically for *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* and for all subsequent programming, has been minimal in relation to their overall budget. For Group Material and Rosler's projects, Dia received $10,000 from the NEA, which Garrels states in the discussion transcript seems low but is good compared to other grants in the Visual Arts Projects category under which they applied. Dia received only $500 for the projects from the NYSCA. When I spoke with Dia's former trustees Hawkins, De Menil, Douglas-Hamilton, and Wolff, they confirmed that NEA and NYSCA funding has been relatively minor in relation to Dia's overall budget. Interview May 9, 2012.

The stress that I place here on the two-sidedness of this relationship between Dia and the artists is not only a correction of the historical record surrounding the projects, but is important in terms of how we understand the stakes of audience participation as a tactic within contemporary art. This mutual drive towards increased audience visibility shaped the participatory events. The institutional location combined with the political engagement manifested in Group Material and Rosler's practices to influence how audience members experienced the projects. In some critical reviews of *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…*, writers saw this double drive towards visibility – on the part of the institution and the artists – as problematic, in that they viewed it as creating artificial politics. Critic David Trend found the issue of visibility in the projects to be troubling, because for him that visibility imputed a false quality to political discussions in the town hall meetings. Reviewing "Education and Democracy" for *Afterimage*, Trend writes:

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[129] These relationships are discussed by Francis Frascina and Julia Bryan-Wilson. See Francis Frascina, *Art, Politics and Dissent: Aspects of the Art Left in Sixties America* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1999), and Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam Era* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009). The antagonism between the AWC and major New York institutions included protests outside museums, the AWC's conflict with MoMA about the question of support for the AWC's poster about the My Lai attacks (Bryan-Wilson, "From Artists to Art Workers," 13-39), and stunts such as a 1971 event in which a number of AWC members entered a trustees' dinner at the Met and released cockroaches (Ibid., 139).

> [I]n some ways the recent education meeting had a slightly artificial tenor, not unlike the protected environment of living sod in De Maria's *New York Earth Room* (1977) maintained by the Dia Foundation for the past decade. How much of this complex issue could be addressed in a single night of discussion? How sincere was this Soho crowd in its newly found concern for schooling?[130]

Trend, here, foregrounds the "artificial tenor" of De Maria's *Earth Room* and also of Group Material's project. For him, the complex issues raised in the meetings could only be dealt with superficially, or symbolically, because what the meetings appeared to generate was more a representation of the act of dealing with social concerns than a substantial, productive discussion. Moreover, it was not only the short time span of the discussion, but also its basis in the art world – in the community that Trend refers to as the "Soho crowd," despite Group Material's claims to the contrary – that made the discussion ineffective. Implicitly, the Soho crowd is a group concerned with visibility in two respects: first, in terms of the art to which they are attracted, and second, in terms of being visible themselves, in the sense of appearing as part of a fashionable scene. Trend represents Dia not so much as supporting the meeting but as containing it both physically and discursively. He felt that it did so in the way that the space at 144 Wooster Street provided a physical sphere of protection for De Maria's *Earth Room*, and in so doing gave that pile of earth the status of art. A key difference between the objects of this comparison lies in the fact that the *Earth Room* revolves around the physical properties of its material, earth, which can be discursively framed and reframed *ad infinitum* and will still remain earth. The political process materialized in *Democracy*, on the other hand, changed its nature once subjected to an institutional context and to a community preoccupied with the visual. For Trend, in this context the town meeting withered, losing its status as real and becoming fake.

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[130] David Trend, "Back to School," *Afterimage* December 1988.

David Deitcher, in his essay "Social Aesthetics" for the *Democracy* project book, echoes Trend's concern about this artificiality of the political process of the meetings. Deitcher locates historically the format of the town meeting in American culture, citing Ralph Waldo Emerson's description of the town meeting as a forum in which social differences do not impede free and fair dialogue. Deitcher also notes that the late 1980s witnessed a fad of revivals of this meeting style, but often in the mediatized form of television shows that drew heavily on the code of the town meeting.[131] In these various contemporary manifestations, Deitcher argues, the town meeting carried a nostalgia for American vernacular culture, creating a feeling of aura through a generalized historicism that failed to connect to any specific historical analysis. This fetishizing desire for the town meeting, he notes, could hardly be seen as a coincidence given the narrowing of political dialogue in the United States in the late ‘80s, and the increasing reduction of political discourse to televised sloganeering.[132] Within Group Material’s project, Deitcher argues, the town meetings carried a disconcerting quality, due specifically to their status “as symbolic events: as manifestations of the vanguard world of art.” He describes his uncanny experience of the events as follows:

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[131] David Deitcher, "Social Aesthetics," in Wallis, *Democracy*, 13-43. Deitcher gives the examples of Ted Koppel's shows on ABC, and Fred Friendly's series about social issues on NET. He also notes that George V. Denny hosted a radio show called "America's Town Meeting of the Air," from 1935 to 1956 (40).

> Through it all, the wheels of the tape recorders kept turning, provoking the vague sensation that these not-quite-public proceedings were taking place inside an institutional bubble; that at any moment, as in the great dinner party scene that concludes Luis Buñuel’s *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, the massive garage door to the Dia space might suddenly and unceremoniously rise, revealing Mercer Street, the audience for whose benefit all of this was taking place, and the absurdity of our gesture.
>
> Given these circumstances it was hard not to think of Jean Baudrillard, whose theory of the simulacrum (as is all too widely known in the New York art community) implicitly argues against the logical viability of political activism today.[133]

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[132] Ibid., 40.
[133] Ibid., 42.

The problem front and center here is, in many respects, the age-old one of whether or not representation is inferior to reality. However, it is perhaps not the case that political action, for Deitcher, should be placed firmly outside of the staged or the theatrical. Rather, it was the confusing nature of the role of visibility and the representational frame in Group Material's project that he found problematic. Deitcher looks favorably, for example, on Buñuel's film for the way in which it foregrounds the relationship between staging, spectatorship, and certain forms of social discourse or classed interaction. Whereas *The Discrete Charm of the Bourgeoisie* makes clearer the roles of performers and audience, showing the relationships of spectatorship that position them relative to each other, *Democracy*, in his account, made these relationships less clear.

In Deitcher's description, within the space of the seemingly undivided group of people participating in the meeting, there was a specter of imminent division between those present and "the audience for whose benefit all of this was taking place." Were the garage door to rise, this other audience out on Mercer Street would have suddenly been revealed as watching us, those inside the meeting. There would have been two audiences, both watching each other, across the dividing line that separated the art institution from the street. The uncanny vision conjured up here is one in which the frame that labels the event "art" transforms participants into both audience *and* performers by generating their ghostly double. In Deitcher's text, this other audience on the street represents the "real" audience's awareness of its own visibility. In this doubling over of reality to produce both reality and representation, reality itself becomes for Deitcher a simulacrum, rendering the substantive content of the issues discussed in that reality "absurd."[134] For Deitcher, it was in particular the technologized documentation of the event ("the wheels of the tape recorders kept turning…") that created this feeling of absurd artificiality, and rendered the discussion impotent.

Implicitly, Trend and Deitcher both argue against the objectification of the audience by a system of representation that took the audience's actions and identities to be meaningful, and potentially productive for the institution. Indeed, it is hard to deny that on one level Group Material and Rosler's approach to the question of audience amounted to an objectification, in that it sought to identify and discursively fix the audience's characteristics. Simultaneously, in so far as Trend and Deitcher treated the town meetings generally, without considering specific moments or events that occurred during the meetings, they ignore the failure, by moments, of the fixity of audience within the meetings. Consequently, they also ignore the possibility of openness, on the part of Group Material and Rosler, towards these processes of unfixing the audience. In the following section, I will use one particular incident to examine how participant interventions in the meetings could confound attempts to quantify and know the audience. In this process, the distinction between real and artificial audience on which Trend and Deitcher rely itself becomes undone, problemizing their critique of the projects.

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[134] Deitcher unfavorably cites Baudrillard and his theory of simulacrum, which Deitcher argues implicitly undermines the viability of political action in the present. Group Material, in 1987, had held a show at White Columns entitled *Resistance (Anti-Baudrillard)*, which sought to interrogate and challenge the use of Baudrillard's writing within the art world to evoke the depletion of possibilities for politically activist art (Ault, *Show and Tell*, 188). Baudrillard specifies, in "Precession of Simulacra," that the current society he discusses is no longer the society of the spectacle which the Situationist described, with the specific kinds of alienation and repression that Debord diagnosed (30). Jean Beaudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*. Translated by Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995). However, there are very strong connections between Baudrillard's theory of the simulacra and Guy Debord's diagnosis of the society of the spectacle, though Baudrillard's critique is without the Situationists' attempt to counter the spectacle through radical activity that aimed to break down the boundary between "art" and "life." For both Group Material and Deitcher, what was objectionable about Baudrillard's theory was not the direness of late capitalism as he diagnosed it, but rather the way that that they felt his theory undermined the idea of real political resistance.

An Imagined Audience

Within the town hall meetings, Dia's and the artists' discourses I discussed above, in which the audience is fixed through description, existed in tension with an open-ended possibility for audience members to change their own positions. Moreover, the meetings were characterized by a possibility for the audience collectively to become something else. To this extent, the meetings were not representational of the audience as an existing constituency, but created a space of potential where fantasies of audience could be materialized, or quashed. Group Material and Rosler, in their choice to hold these meetings, thereby generated a situation in which their own desires for a particular audience – diverse, actively engaged in the work – might be fulfilled, but might equally be disappointed, or be only ambivalently achieved.

Group Material and Rosler's openness to the unpredictable nature of audience is connected to, but cannot be totally collapsed with, their own desire to renounce full authorial control in favor of collaboration with the audience. I will discuss these claims in relation to Group Material's project, and particularly in relation to their concept of art as pedagogical, in Chapter 2. Rosler, for her part, in a 2009 interview, stated the following about her desire to give up authorial control:

> Dia had invited me to do a solo project, and I chose homelessness as the subject. … I gradually realized that there were many artists already working on this, so it made little sense to produce a solo work, at a venue known for encouraging, even coddling, individual geniuses.[135]

The decision Rosler asserts here, of broadening *If You Lived Here…* to a wider pool of collaborators, created a genuine openness within the project that did not fit within a preconceived idea of the project held either by Rosler herself or by Dia. At the same time, Rosler wields this decision on her part as a point of reproach against Dia's conservatism. In doing so, she in fact reasserts her own authorship, according to a modernist model of the outspoken artist who stands outside the institution and critiques it, and ultimately whose original idea it was to open the institution to greater collaboration. Both Rosler and Group Material retained the decision making power in their own projects, and they remained the ones to receive, from Dia and from the wider art community, both credit and criticism for the projects. As I stated above, Dia was indeed centered, since its origins, on the idea of the individual artist, and this did not change with *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…*

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[135] Media Farzin, "Still Here: An Interview with Martha Rosler and Anton Vidokle." *Art in America* (Sept. 9, 2009).

I want to stress here, therefore, that within *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* the renunciation of authorship constituted two things simultaneously. It was both a genuine letting-go that created space for the interventions of collaborating artists and participants at the meetings, *and* an ideological assertion that shored up a certain idea of radical artistic authorship. I thus see the claim of authorial renunciation as a complex discursive structure that in itself tells us relatively little about how the artwork enabled participants to act, or how those possibilities for action differed from other artworks. In order better to understand possibilities for participant action within the *Town Meeting* projects, I will now examine closely one particular incident that took place in the meeting "Homelessness: Conditions, Causes, Cures," which was a part of Rosler's project.

In some respects, the open forums of *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* were very much like the many other politically oriented panels and discussions held by cultural practitioners in New York's downtown art scene in the 1980s.[136] Simultaneously, Betti-Sue Hertz, who contributed an artwork to Rosler's "City: Visions and Revisions" show and attended most of the open forums, says that these meetings were unique in that they were framed as art.[137] *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…*, in assigning the meetings the status of art, thus took an existing form used in political organizing, both within the art world and outside it, and changed the way that viewers experienced that form. In particular, this shift brought attention to the condition of the audience's visibility, and the institutional context in which that visibility existed, as I discussed in relation to Trend's and Deitcher's texts above.

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[136] In this respect, as Jerry Kearns, former member of Political Art Documentation and Distribution (PAD/D) and the co-chair of Group Material's "Politics and Election" meeting relates, these events had clear precedents in the city's existing art culture. Telephone interview with Jerry Kearns, March 30, 2011.

[137] Interview with Betti-Sue Hertz, April 6, 2011.

For some participants, this emphasis on visibility created an ambiguity about the status of the meetings. For example, activist Bill Batson, who chaired Rosler's "Homeless" meeting, told the audience at the beginning of the forum that "this is a participatory meeting, performance art." Batson's statement waffles between two different descriptions of the meeting, and in doing so inadvertently hints at the question of its authenticity. Are the people at the meeting participants, a term that denotes the context of political decision-making? Or are they performers, which would indicate that they are performing *for* some other audience? What appears to be up in the air here is the order of representation – political, or artistic? – in relation to which the authenticity of the meeting should be judged.

But in another intervention at the same meeting, a panelist crosswired the participatory and the performative in order to enact a reconfiguration of the audience present. This panelist was the artist Cenén, whom Batson introduces as "an African artist and poet."[138] Referring to a leaflet that audience members received, she begins to speak:

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[138] Cenén, in addition to speaking at the panel, also contributed a painting to Martha Rosler's *Homeless* installation. I have been able to find hardly any additional information about her, except that she contributed a short story to the 1983 volume *Cuentos: Stories by Latinas*, edited by Alma Gómez, Cherrié Moraga, and Mariana Romo-Carmona (New York: Kitchen Table Press, 1983).

> I got this when I walked in. I guess, most of you have seen it, and it says open forum, hopelessness, right – *homeless*ness [audience laughter], conditions, causes, and cures. And my first reaction in terms of conditions is –

Insert an earsplitting scream here, one directed into the microphone that makes the sound system crackle and screech, the machinery not quite able to mediate the force and high pitch of the sound. Listening to the cassette recording of this moment, I snatch the headphones away from my ears; I can only imagine what the physical reactions of the people in the room must have been. Cenén continues:

> Cause it's really very *hard* to be a human being in this world, and feel comfortable about not *having*, and constantly looking for ways of *getting*, and always having the door shut in your fucking face, okay? … Last night, I was on the train, and a man came in. An *African-American* man came in with two children…

She relates a long narration about this man falling asleep on the subway, his daughters not being able to wake him up, and their subsequent desperation and interaction with the other people on the train, including Cenén herself. Reading this narrative as it is transcribed and printed, in an abbreviated version, in the *If You Lived Here…* project book, I am taken in by its highly emotional quality. But listening to the audio recording, I am hanging on her every word, with the swoops and falls of her voice and its shifts as she imitates the intonation of the scared little girls, or as she relates her own inner monologue as the events on the train unfolded. Her speech then moves from this story to a general discussion of the causes of homelessness, and how the city is becoming a fortress for the wealthy. At one point, she imitates the sound of a bulldozer knocking down a woman's house.

When Cenén is finished, Batson asks a question: "You spoke about conditions and causes, but can I ask you a little bit about *your* work, and how you share it with people." To which she responds:

> *This* is how I share it with people. This is part of what I do. Because I talk individually, and I talk in a group situation. I need to talk not only because I feel like screaming, but because I think all of us have a scream inside of us that we haven't let out. … Hey, I'm not, I'm not here to *embarrass* you, because I am *part* of this, but we gotta speak to it. [A lone audience member applauds.]

After a pause, Batson in turn responds to her:

> Cenén, I originally thought that I was gonna be a *panelist* [a bit of audience tittering], and on my way down I was making notes about what I wanted to say. And I have felt on two sides of the issue, and almost divided, but – what you said, what you said brings together the *room*. I think a lot of the time

> when people talk about the homeless they say what can we *do* for them [she laughs, "um-hm"], and your comments make me think – what can we do for *us*, being everyone in the room. So I don't know, I wasn't embarrassed. I'm gonna introduce another human on the panel…

With his statement "I … thought I was gonna be a *panelist*," Batson stresses that he had a certain set of expectations for the panel and his role in it, expectations which Cenén altered. In this encounter, Cenén's scream was a moment of intense, abrupt affect that she most likely planned, but that took the audience by surprise. For a few seconds, because of being present in the space, they were subject to this sound that she created by screaming into the microphone. On the recording, what comes as a shock about the scream is the way it busted out of the genre of the panel discussion, in which people's speeches mostly follow a predictable rhetorical pattern. With her "And my first reaction in terms of conditions is –," Cenén lined the audience up to expect her to deliver a rationally constructed statement that matched the style of the beginning of the sentence. But what she gave was an embodied performance of terror about the condition of homelessness. That performance was representational, in that it stood in for feelings and experiences of a certain group of people – homeless people – whose experiences are usually excluded from mainstream cultural discourse. At the same time, the scream was non-representational, in that it aimed to transfer a perception of that feeling of fear directly to the bodies present in the space.[139] The scream presented itself as a limit of what could be represented at all.

Cenén's intense and varied vocal performance drew the audience in as witnesses to her witnessing. It seems not really to matter if the story she told was true: its function was to be an expression of a social problem to which the narrator sought to connect emotionally her audience. It was the establishment and elaboration of this connection in the present that was the important thing. In contrast to Trend's concern about artificiality rendering political dialogue ineffective, Cenén used a pre-planned performative tactic to create an experience for her listeners that was aggressively real. As Cenén's response to Batson illustrates ("*This* is how…"), she was less concerned about the status of the meeting as art or not, performative or not, than she was about how the affect she created could make the audience cohere. Batson, in asking about her work and how she shared it with people, cast that work and the act of sharing it as external to the present, as something that could be reported on or represented during the meeting, but that did not take place within its bounds. Cenén responded that her work is fully immanent to any situation in which she found herself, regardless of its institutional or discursive framing. In contrast to Deitcher's anxiety about the institutional apparatus rendering political dialogue spectacular, Cenén dismissed the power of the institution to either valorize or damage the power of her intervention. Moreover, she explicitly embraced a certain kind of spectacle, and the audience's momentary passivity before her action, as a tool with which to change their relationship to the event as a whole.

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[139] I am employing here a distinction between the representational and non-representational that draws on affect theory of the past decade. In general, in these theories, non-representational cultural forms are characterized by the transfer to one or more bodies of intensity. In this model, the experience of art is thus not based on the representation of an absent body to the viewer, but rather the way that the artwork as a material "body" itself interacts with other living and non-living bodies. For a discussion of representational and non-representational theories of art, see Simon O'Sullivan, "The Aesthetics of Affect: Thinking Art Beyond Representation." *Angelaki* 6, no. 3 (2001): 125-35. Elizabeth Grosz develops an affective theory of art in Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008). Nigel Thrift lays out the tenants of non-representational theory in Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007). Brian Massumi, in one of the foundational texts of the current field of affect theory, gives various readings of cultural objects that are useful for understanding the difference between a representational model of art and a model that emphasizes affective intensity. Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002). See in particular chapter 1, "The Autonomy of Affect," and chapter 3, "The Political Economy of Belonging and the Logic of Relation."

The result of Cenén's intervention was that Batson's own conception of the event and his role in it were shifted: "I originally thought that I was gonna be a *panelist*." In his response to her, he acknowledged that what she said, which could not be dissociated from the way she said it, "[brought] together the room." For Batson, something had happened. In that event, the people in the room were made into a whole in a way they weren't before, and the positions people occupied (in his case, the position of the panelist) were rearranged. What emerged was the generally "human" quality of all the participants, including those on the panel and those listening. Batson thereby represented Cenén's intervention as a moment in which those present were designated with a new status of dignity and equality, one which resonated with a universalist conception of human rights. Cenén's intervention made this fantasy visible for Batson, and impelled him to articulate it to the audience.

I have been unable to find any images of the town hall meetings in Dia's or the artists' archives. I doubt that any were ever made. For this reason, it is impossible for me to know anything of the visual aspect of Cenén's performance. But it appears from the audio recording that it was primarily an aural intervention: the affective force came from sound. The primacy of aural experience in this instance poses the question of how the event interacted with the larger framework of audience visibility in the projects. From Batson's comments, it seems that Cenén was of full or partial African descent.[140] As such, she would have been visible within the meeting as other to the dominant white milieu represented by Dia, and hence as an embodiment of the new, diverse subject that Rosler and Group Material sought to make visible in their projects. However, Cenén's use of her own voice, in which she sounded at times almost possessed not only by other subjects (the little girls) but also by objects (the bulldozer), contradicted the logic of representative visibility in which she might have been expected, on the basis of her gender and race, to occupy a certain position. With her voice, Cenén made herself sound plural, and thereby problematized the idea of positionality as such. This plurality, in which she seemed to occupy multiple positions in quick succession, invited Batson's vision of the generally human quality that made itself felt in her intervention. In her speech, he experienced an expressive voice that arose from a particular perspective but transcended it, creating a sense of possibility for identifying with a social problem beyond one's own particular role. Hence the transition, as he described it, from "what can we do for them" to "what can we do for us." Simultaneously, within the largely white context of Dia and of the meeting, Cenén's performance might be seen to fulfill the stereotyped role of the black person as a mystic or medium. In this sense, the performance seems to hover between a reinscription and an undoing of rolls.

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[140] Andrew Castrucci, the director of Bullet Space gallery and a participant in Rosler's project, told me in 2012 that he believed that Cenén had passed away a few years prior. I have been unable to find any other information that either supports or contests this claim. Interview with Andrew Castrucci, January 29, 2012.

Cenén's performance in the meeting did not permanently shift the institutional framing of the projects. Nor, most likely, did it even alter substantially the way that the artists represented the audience in written materials surrounding the projects, or the way in that Dia understood Group Material and Rosler's authorship in relation to the involvement of the audience. However, to judge Cenén's presentation in these terms would miss the point that such a lasting institutional intervention does not seem to have been her goal. Amidst a sea of artistic and critical practices of the late 1980s that analyzed and deconstructed the institutional frame *ad infinitum*, Cenén deployed a tactic of *ignoring* the institutional frame, and asserting the immanence of her work to her physical presence, regardless of context. She just took up space for the assertion of her own fantasy of audience, attempting to transfer that fantasy to those present through the evocative power of her voice.

Cenén's performance of ignoring the institution differed radically from Rosler's and Group Material's own attitudes towards Dia, and towards institutions in general. Group Material's choice, which Rosler emulated, to hold the participatory forums created an openness to this kind of diversity of approach, the manifestations of which were then recorded by Dia and made available to the public via the project books. My reading of Cenén's performance bears witness to a desire, on my part, to find an embodiment of audience that did not fit into the discourses of audience description put forward by Group Material and Rosler. But my ability to do so is fundamentally contingent on the importance the artists themselves accorded to making the audience visible, supported by Dia's documentation practices. As such, I understand Group Material and Rosler's interest in describing the audience and making it visible to be a stance that consciously encompassed the possibility of its own overturning. It did so insofar as the object of its desire and analysis – the audience – was alive and dynamic. In the town hall meetings, the audience was characterized by unforeseen positions, and by an ability to change form, to cohere or to disintegrate, to invigorate or to disappoint. I find this openness of *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* towards their audience to be the projects' biggest ethical strength. It is the element that makes the projects compelling as an object of analysis, because the engagement with the audience's indeterminacy cohabits, in the projects, with frameworks of identity and positionality that were typical of a certain stream of artistic and critical practice in the 1980s.

Through my reading of Cenén's intervention in the "Homelessness" meeting, I have demonstrated the power that Group Material and Rosler granted the audience in their projects at Dia. Cenén's performance, and the fantasy of audience that it materialized, was enabled by the projects' focus on the visibility and voice of the audience. That focus, as I have demonstrated, was created through the collaboration of Dia and the artists, and was informed by the investments of both of these parties at the moment the projects took place. The conditions under which the audience was able to act were not only a result of the consciously mapped out plans of Dia or of the artists, but flowed from a series of moments in which various parties *enabled* others to act. Dia's board was interested in greater audience engagement but left decisions about the institution's programming to Wright and Garrels; Wright and Garrels consulted Rainer, who suggested Group Material and Rosler; Group Material and Rosler chose a forum for their projects that allowed the audience to participate; Cenén spoke at the "Homelessness" meeting and used her voice to move the audience. *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* were thus the product of a network of agents who, based on their own agendas, were also invested in and supportive of others' actions. The idea that the audience's experiences and reactions were valuable and worthy of attention was the thread that connected all of these parties.

This chapter began my discussion of Group Material and Rosler's framing of their own relationship to Dia. I will explore this question in more detail in Chapter 2, which deals with the importance of education in Group Material's *Democracy*, and Chapter 3, which discusses representation in Rosler's *If You Lived Here…*. Though I have focused in this chapter on the similarities between Group Material and Rosler's attitudes towards Dia, there were also important differences, which were to some extent generational. Rosler, who came of age as an artist in the early 1970s, was a product of the modernist paradigm she critiques, to the extent that her attitude towards Dia was marked by a belief in her own ability to stand outside the institution and critique it productively. Group Material, on the other hand, were typical of the generation that emerged in the 1980s, in that they doubted the possibility of a position outside the institution, and as such were more self-reflective about their own implication with it. As I will demonstrate, these different attitudes greatly impacted the nature of the artists' respective interactions with Dia staff, and moreover, the way in which they understood the ability of their own projects to enact political engagement.

Chapter 2 – Politics as Education: Group Material's "Education and Democracy"

In North America, the beginning of September is generally when the new school year starts. In 1988, the beginning of September also marked the opening of Group Material's exhibition "Education and Democracy" at the Dia Art Foundation's gallery at 77 Wooster Street in Soho. This was not a coincidence. The starting date of the exhibition underscored the thematic coordination between the space of the primary or secondary school classroom, and the space of the Wooster Street gallery, which for this show looked like a classroom filled with art. Group Material member Doug Ashford documented "Education and Democracy" in a series of black and white photographs [Fig. 11]. In contrast to the color installation shots made by photographer Ken Schles for Dia, which contain no people [Fig. 12], Ashford's images focus magnetically on viewers as they look at the art, move around the space, and sit in the school desks arranged at the center of the installation. Ashford's images, with the strong importance they place on the presence and activity of viewers, demonstrate the phenomenon I discussed in Chapter 1: the audience, in their moment of viewing, becomes visible. In this chapter, I consider the visibility of the audience in the thematic context of education. I argue that the concept of education was key to Group Material's goal to frame the new focus on the audience as a politically productive development.

Education was essential to Group Material's understanding of the problems with contemporary American culture, and more importantly, of how those problems should be addressed. The group's connection to education was not only ideological but also professional: both Ashford, and Tim Rollins, a founding member of Group Material who had participated in the planning of *Democracy* but left the group shortly before its execution, worked as teachers in public schools.[141] Though group members Julie Ault and Felix Gonzalez-Torres did not work in the public school system, both taught in the late 1980s on a temporary basis in various higher education contexts.[142] In a letter Gonzalez-Torres wrote to Ault in the planning phase of *Democracy*, he stressed the centrality of education in the culture at large: "Every political/economic system of any particular country will reflect in their educational system."[143] Gonzalez-Torres' letter illustrates the group's belief that education was culture's most fundamental locus of the formation of human subjects. Group Material believed that intervening in educational systems and practices held the potential to change processes of subject formation from the ground up, and to equip citizens-in-the-making with the intellectual tools to democratically represent themselves.

"Education and Democracy" constituted a meditation on the intersection between education and contemporary art practice. The connection between advanced art and experimental pedagogy by no means started in the 1980s with Group Material.[144] Indeed, their attribution of political potential to the concept of education gained power from the presence of education as a theme in the work of older politically engaged artists, and most visibly Joseph Beuys, as I explore in this chapter. However, as I will demonstrate, Group Material's project at Dia dramatized a shift in which the relationship between education and politicized art practice gained new power and significance, because it became important not only to artists but also to institutions.

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[141] Interview with Doug Ashford, July 17, 2010. See also Ashford's statement in the transcript of the roundtable discussion for "Education and Democracy," in Wallis, *Democracy*, 64.

[142] Interviews with Ashford and with Julie Ault, May 22, 2011. The biography/CV of Felix Gonzalez-Torres provided by the Felix Gonzalez-Torres foundation states that the artist was an adjunct instructor at New York University from 1987-89.

[143] Letter of July 27, 1988 from Felix Gonzalez-Torres to Julie Ault. The letter was written while Gonzalez-Torres was in Toronto, with his partner Ross Laycock. Group Material Collection, box 2, folder "Democracy (Correspondance)," Fales Library, NYU.

Claire Bishop has identified a pedagogical turn in contemporary art of the 1980s onwards that employs audience participation and collaboration. [145] Bishop sees this tendency as essentially an anti-institutional one, in which artists use formats taken from traditional educational contexts, such as lectures and group discussions, to offer playful, open-ended alternatives to the disciplinary formation of subjects in educational institutions. Bishop's statement raises the question of how this present circumstance evolved historically. Bishop briefly mentions Group Material's *Democracy* and Martha Rosler's *If You Lived Here…* at Dia, stating that the artists' transformation of the gallery into a social space for critical thinking anticipated the pedagogical turn she identifies.[146] Whereas Bishop sees the pedagogical turn as providing an alternative to institutions – both educational and artistic – I argue that the pedagogical turn in Group Material's work in fact typified a growing proximity between art institutions and politically engaged art practice. Grant Kester, in his detailed intellectual history of the concept of criticality in contemporary art criticism, makes the broad statement that a certain idea of pedagogy is now central to the way that many artists and critics understand art to have a political impact.[147] I consider Kester's attempt to trace the roots of our current critical *habitus* to be a particularly urgent project. My analysis here seeks to compliment his work by analyzing the development of the connection between pedagogy and political progress in Group Material's conception of its art practice.

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[144] This connection was present both in the practice of specific artists, such as Joseph Beuys, and various centers and schools such as the Bauhaus and Black Mountain College, where the pedagogy of artistic training was linked to progressive social ideals.

[145] Claire Bishop, "The New Masters of Liberal Arts: Artists Rewrite the Rules of Pedagogy." *Modern Painters* 19, no. 7 (September 2007): 86-9.

[146] Bishop, "The New Masters of Liberal Arts," 89.

At the heart of the new set of relationships between political art and the institution that I posit here is a concept of subjectivity, and specifically of the audience member as a subject transformed by art. In this chapter, I argue that in "Education and Democracy," Group Material crafted the theme of education into a way of expressing the subject's ability to be transformed. Implicit in this conception of the subject as pedagogically transformed by art was an idea of art as a social good. I argue that this idea was important for Group Material in that it enabled them to maintain faith in political art while accepting their own fundamental implication within and vulnerability to being influenced by structures of power in the art world and in wider culture.

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[147] Kester points out in *The One and the Many* (2011) that many collaborative or participatory projects, and specifically ones that take an "antagonistic" stance toward viewers and institutions, are characterized by an underlying pedagogical stake. In this paradigm, Kester argues, the artwork is seen to make the audience aware of their own privilege, or their complicity with global oppression (63). Kester points out the degree to which this antagonistic pedagogy has become a formula in both art and criticism, leading to practices that reproduce the cliché of rupture, instead of inciting close examinations of the experiences created by these works. Experiences of these critical works, Kester argues, might include elements of pleasure or self-affirmation resulting from a feeling that one *gets it*, and is in the process of learning and changing in a positive way.

Following my analysis of how the concept of education operated in "Education and Democracy," I will pull back for a wider focus on the institutional context of Dia, in order to consider the institution's investment in art's educational ability to transform the subject. I argue that the idea of art's educational value was important in Dia's evolution from the late 1980s to the present. Artist and critic Gregory Sholette has written that after Group Material's *Democracy* and Martha Rosler's *If You Lived Here…*, Dia abandoned political practices. [148] But I argue instead that Dia recycled the ideas of audience outreach and participation manifested in these projects and channeled them into other areas of its functioning, including its educational programming and institutional self-presentation. Dia is typical of a number of other major art museums in the United States in that not only its educational programming, but also the importance of education in its public self-presentation, increased throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s.[149] However, throughout this evolution Dia, unlike other art institutions of comparable prominence such as the New Museum or the Walker Art Center, maintained a focus on primarily Minimalist, not explicitly social practices. As such, the case study of Dia allows me to throw into high relief the way that the concept of art as educational can operate to attribute social value to *any* art practice, and not only to the politicized art that promoted this concept in the 1980s.

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[148] Gregory Sholette, *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture* (New York: Pluto Press, 2011), 52.

[149] Dina Helal, an art educator at the Whitney Museum, describes the 1990s as a period of major growth in education departments and programming, both specifically at the Whitney and at a broader national level. Helal states that the Whitney's program gained in momentum and public outreach following the appointment of Constance Wolfe as Curator of Education in 1991, very close to the time that Brighde Mullins founded Dia's education program (which I will discuss further in this chapter). Telephone interview with Dina Helal, December 5, 2011. Artist and critic Gregory Sholette, who worked as Curator of Education at the New Museum of Contemporary art in 1997-98, told me that education has become an increasingly significant aspect of museums' public self-presentation and attempts to obtain funding. Telephone interview with Gregory Sholette, November 28, 2011.

The larger horizon of my analysis here is concerned with major art institutions' increasingly enthusiastic reception, during the 1980s and early 1990s, of art practices that arose from New York's alternative scene. Group Material's collective career dramatizes this change, as group member Julie Ault illustrates in her description of the two instances of Group Material's participation in the Whitney Biennial, in 1985 and 1991. Ault describes the group's 1985 Biennial contribution *Americana* as a "salon des refusés of what [had] been significantly absent, excluded by curatorial business-as-usual attitudes, including populist art, works by artists of color, feminist practices, overtly political art, and everyday artifacts."[150] Ault writes that whereas *Americana* did not contain any works by artists shown in the larger Biennial, when Group Material contributed to the Biennial a second time, in 1991, many of the artists participating in their *AIDS Timeline* were shown in the larger Biennial as well.[151] In this chapter, I ask what art museums have learned from political artists, not only in terms of the art they exhibit but also in terms of a larger set of tactics for public engagement that have come to support the survival of art institutions. Throughout this analysis, audience participation will emerge not as a tactic of protest positioned by artists against institutions, but as a paradigm that develops from the common interests and increasingly close coexistence of these parties.

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[150] Ault, *Show and Tell*, 91.
[151] Ibid., 182-3.

Education

"Education and Democracy" looked like a vibrant, cheerful, art-filled classroom. Group Material had painted the walls with blackboard paint, which contrasted with both the warm yellow of the wooden floor and the brightly colored artworks hung on the walls. The walls bore writings in chalk, most of which the group erased partially before they hung the artworks. It was as though the artworks had been placed directly on a working school blackboard. In the middle of the gallery space Group Material arranged a set of chairs with built-in desks taken from a real classroom, complete with scratches and graffiti. From looking at Schles's [Fig. 13] and Ashford's images [Fig. 14] of the installation, it seems immediately clear that this visually attractive transposition of the classroom into the gallery proposed an alliance between contemporary art practice and educational practice.

What is less obvious from looking at these images is the politically contested nature, in the late 1980s, of the concept of education, and specifically the concept of education as it circulated in relationships between art institutions, K-12 educators, and funders. In order to convey the power of the term "education" as it operated in "Education and Democracy," then, it is necessary to sketch some of the political valences of the concept during this period. These included both discourses that addressed education generally, and also discourses that addressed the educational mission of art in particular. All of these discourses were based on particular models of subjectivity, and envisioned education as a means toward the progressive development of certain kinds of subjects.

"Education and Democracy" dealt with questions of multiculturalism and inequality in education, which Group Material believed to be politically imperative. As such, the show may be located as part of wider debates in the 1980s that dealt with curriculum standards and canons in American schools, and with what many perceived to be the failure of existing curricula to deal appropriately with student diversity.[152] Various participants in the "Education and Democracy" roundtable Group Material held for their project raised this issue, including Ashford and Ira Shor, an education theorist and professor.[153] Questions dealing with these themes are included in the agenda flyer that Group Material passed out to participants at the public "Education and Democracy" town meeting. It read: "Education for whom? Who has the greatest access to organized forms of education? Who is denied access to these same institutions? How is democracy served by current educational policies? Is a Eurocentric curriculum suitable for the increasingly multicultural nature of contemporary American society?"[154] Questions of this sort, as they circulated not only within "Education and Democracy," but also within larger discourses of education studies and practice, did not only—or indeed even primarily—address education as it related to art.

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[152] See, for example, Gates, Henry Louis. *Loose Canons: Notes on the Culture Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992). Gates deals with the question of pluralism in high school and college curricula, and specifically with the role that nationalism and identity politics played in shaping American education in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Gates' text "Whose Canon Is It, Anyway?" was included in the project book for *Democracy*. For a historical overview, see Irene Taviss Thomson's discussion of the "canon wars" in Irene Taviss Thomson, *Culture Wars and Enduring American Dilemmas* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 125-34.
[153] See Wallis, *Democracy*, 58-65.

At the same time, the importance "Education and Democracy" gave to art's particular role in education placed the show within the context of another set of debates, those pertaining to the educational mission of the arts. In the 1980s, the question of the public role of art education had political significance, and were moreover connected to the bigger problem of funding cuts to K-12 education. In New York City, debates about the appropriate methodology and institutional context for K-12 art education were spurred by budget cuts that radically reduced the ability of public schools to offer art education. New York City's 1975-76 municipal fiscal crisis saw the firing of 14,000 public school teachers, many of whom were art teachers. In 1984, the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, the Mayor's office, Youth Services, and the Board of Education founded the program Arts Partners, in order to increase the role of private and non-profit arts organizations in art education for K-12 students.[155]

Some art teachers and theorists of art education viewed the increased prominence of art organizations to be a negative development for classroom-based art education. In particular, they were concerned that the NEA's promotion of the transformative potential of art education placed political ideology above effective classroom practice.[156] Underlying this conflict was what historian of art education John Howell White argues was a broader difference in perspective between arts educators in schools and arts professionals working in museums. White argues that the former sought in art ways to develop students' broader skill sets, whereas the latter sought primarily to promote art-related experiences for students.[157] The participation of school children whom Group Material solicited for "Education and Democracy" falls squarely into the latter category. "Education and Democracy" valorized children's participation in art as such, and operated according to political goals internal to the project, not according to a concern for curriculum. Within the project, children and teachers were conceived as a constituency underserved by contemporary art, which Group Material aimed to reach.

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[154] Agenda flyer for "Education and Democracy" town hall meeting, Dia Art Foundation archives.

[155] Susan Cahan and Zoya Kocur. "Contemporary Art and Multicultural Education." In *Rethinking Contemporary Art and Multicultural Education*, edited by Eungie Joo and Joseph Keehn II (New York: Routledge, 2011), 14.

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[156] See, for example, Samuel Hope, "Promotion: Past Failures, Present Urgencies." *Design For Arts in Education* 87, no. 2 (1985): 14-22. Constance Bumgarner Gee gives a historical overview of this trajectory including its more recent developments, and like Hope draws negative conclusions about its results for art education. Constance Bumgarner Gee "Spirit, Mind, and Body: Arts Education the Redeemer." In *Handbook of Research and Policy in Arts Education*, edited by Elliot Eisner and Michael Day, 115-34 (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004). On the other hand, Catherine Egenberger and Philip Yenawine, art educators working outside the K-12 system, highlight the positive potential of school-museum partnerships in art education. See Catherine Egenberger and Philip Yenawine, "As Theory Becomes Practice: The Happy Tale of a School/Museum Partnership." *Visual Understanding in Education* (1997).

[157] John Howell White, "20th-Century Art Education: A Historical Perspective." In Eisner and Day, *Handbook of Research and Policy in Art Education*, 67-70. These differences in methodological position are visible in debates surrounding the methodology of Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE), which stressed the importance of discrete disciplinary areas of instruction: art production, criticism, history and culture, and aesthetics. The DBAE paradigm was promoted by a number of symposia and publications produced by the Getty Center for the Arts in collaboration with educators and academics in the field of art education. See, for example, Elliot W. Eisner, *The Role of Discipline-Based Art Education in America's Schools* (Los Angeles: Getty Center for Education in the Arts, 1988), and The Getty Center for Education in the Arts. *Education in Art: Future Building / Proceedings of a National Invitational Conference* (Los Angeles, CA: The Getty Center for Education in the Arts, 1989). DBAE methodology received criticism from artists and educators who saw it to be culturally conservative and opposed to an idea of art as an active agent of change in contemporary culture, and also by others who saw it as eliminating the importance of experiencing art. Catherine Lord, for example, argues that DBAE "has nothing to do with the production of contemporary art, or culture, but with the acquisition, restoration, preservation, and promotion of (mostly) Western art and its history." Lord, Catherine. "Letter to Group Material." In Wallis, *Democracy*, 79. Dia's art education program, developed by Brighde Mullins, was not based on DBAE but was heavily experience-oriented, in dialogue with the ideas of Harvard-based education theorist Howard Gardener and his Project Zero. Gardner developed a theory of "multiple intelligences" that presented a model of different forms of

This question of the degree to which non-profit arts organizations should contribute to public art education was bound up with larger debates about arts funding and public responsibility. Those debates would explode in the Senate-led Culture Wars less than six months after the completion of Group Material's *Democracy*, and would go on to define cultural production of the 1990s more strongly than any other event.[158] Central to the Culture Wars was the question of responsibility, specifically, what it meant for institutions, artists, and public granting bodies such as the NEA to be publicly responsible to the American people. [159] As art historian Grant Kester

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intelligence (linguistic, logic-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily/kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic), instead of a generalized human measure of intelligence. See Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind : The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (New York: Basic Books, 1983) and *The Development and Education of the Mind: The Selected Works of Howard Gardner* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006).

[158] The events of the Culture Wars – a widespread debate in American culture and media about the appropriate role of public arts funding and freedom of speech – included the 1989 controversies surrounding Robert Mapplethorpe's exhibition *The Perfect Moment*, and the exhibition of Andres Serrano's "Piss Christ." For an overview of these events, see Phillip Brookman, "Preface," and Richard Bolton, "Introduction," in Richard Bolton ed., *Culture Wars: Documents from the Recent Controversies in the Arts* (New York: New Press, 1992). (Serrano and Julie Ault of Group Material were married at the time).

[159] The concept of responsibility took on radically different values for the various opponents. For conservative politicians such as Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) and Representative Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA), responsibility meant protecting the rights of taxpayers not to have to pay for art that conflicted with their moral values. For artists, responsibility was often

convincingly argues, both conservative and pro-arts positions in the Culture Wars constructed their own particular models of the civic subject. Conservatives imagined a majority of taxpayers held hostage by a depraved, elite minority, while arts advocates envisioned a tolerant, self-consciously diverse citizenry.[160] Renowned art educator Philip Yenawine argues that, unfortunately, the claims of elitism made against the art world in the 1980s did have some merit. Yenawine writes that both the news media and artists failed effectively to address the controversy by educating the American public about art.[161]

Leading up to and during the Culture Wars, education became a concept with which the embattled National Endowment for the Arts attempted to demonstrate its contribution to the public good. This is illustrated by a 1988 report authored by

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connected to attempts to render visible what they perceived to be urgent social and political problems, of which the AIDS crisis became a privileged example. A number of institutions underscored their responsibility to uphold freedom of speech. For examples of this institutional self-defense, see Dennis Barrie, "Freedom of Expression Is the Issue," in Bolton, *Culture Wars*, 295-300. See also the image included in Bolton of an advertisement on behalf of the trustees of the Whitney Museum, "Are you going to let politics kill Art?" 314.

[160] Grant Kester, "Rhetorical Questions: The Atlternative Arts Sector and the Imaginary Public." In *Art, Activism, and Oppositionality: Essays from Afterimage*, edited by Grant Kester, 103-35 (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1998), 103. Moreover, various authors have pointed out that the liberal, pro-arts position rested not only on an imaginary fantasy of the viewer of art, as Kester argues and as I will discuss later in this chapter, but also on a fantasy projection of the "others" who political art supposedly defended. Margaret Spillane, for example, has argued that in the work of Karen Finley, the defense of the underprivileged problematically slides into an accumulation of stereotypes. Spillane writes: "All the controversy [surrounding Finley's work] seemed to promise a bare-knuckled assault on those barriers separating the privileged from the powerless. But … the individual victims she promised to evoke – the battered child, the exploited female service worker, the person with AIDS – turned out to be carelessly assembled amalgams of bourgeois Americans' cultural shorthand for those they believe exist beneath them." Spillane in Bolton, *Culture Wars*, 302. Carole S. Vance wrote in 1989 of the conservative image of the outraged taxpayer that this fantasy "erased actual diversity and real taxpayers." Carole S. Vance, "The War on Culture." In *Art Matters*, ed. Yenawine, Wallis, and Weems, 221.

[161] Philip Yenawine, "Introduction: But What Has Changed," in *Art Matters*, 9-11.

Reagan-appointed NEA chairman Frank Hodsoll.[162] The report, *Toward Civilization: A Report on Arts Education*, called for a strengthening of the NEA's educational mandate over the next ten years.[163] The report proposed nationally standardized arts curricula intended to strengthen students' cognitive and communication skills. Hodsoll advocated an intensification of art study in primary and secondary schools, and a strong emphasis on familiarizing students with "the unchanging elements in the human condition," via masterpieces of Western art history.[164] A *New York Times* article about the report quotes an arts administrator as saying, "It's down with finger painting and up with Rembrandt."[165] Some saw the report as a response to the 1980 National Heritage Foundation study that accused the NEA of supporting projects that were not art, and doing so for political purposes.[166] Hodsoll's conservative stance stood in polar opposition to the practices of many people employed in NEA-funded art institutions, which were coming to play an increased role in the provision of art education to K-12 students. Many of these practitioners conceived of their work as employing contemporary art to promote values of multiculturalism and progressive, if not radical, political engagement: a stance very much in line with how Group Material and other politicized artists understood their own art practice.[167]

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[162] National Endowment for the Arts. *Toward Civilization : A Report on Arts Education* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. G.P.O., 1988). This report was commissioned by Congress in 1985.

[163] Frank Hodsoll, "Forward," in *Toward Civilization*, vii.

[164] Ibid., v.

[165] William Honan, "Education; American Teaching of the Arts Is Assailed." *New York Times* May 4, 1988. Hodsoll's suggestions drew on the thought of neoconservative intellectuals Secretary of Education William J. Bennett and author Samuel Lipman.

[166] Charles L. Heatherly and Heritage Foundation (Washington D.C.). *Mandate for Leadership : Policy Management in a Conservative Administration* (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 1981). Hodsoll's position differed strongly from that expressed in *Coming to Our Senses: The Significance of the Arts for American Education*, published in 1977 by the American Council for the Arts in Education. The ACAE report advocated the use of the arts in a project of liberal education that would aid students' emotional development and awareness of cultural diversity. Arts Education and Americans Panel. *Coming to Our Senses : The Significance of the Arts for American Education* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1977).

This historical context illustrates three important and closely related aspects of the meaning of "education" as it operated in "Education and Democracy." First, the theme of education that the show addressed was connected, in the wider cultural imagination, to the question of art's public mission. Second, in its connection to the concept of art's public mission, "education" was wrapped up with questions of the power relationships between artists, institutions, and external funding and governmental structures. Third, the concept of education served as a terrain in which accusations of art's elitism could be combatted, whether from the conservative standpoint of Hodsoll, who sought to demonstrate the role of the arts in preserving conservative values, or from the progressive position of Yenawine, meditating after the Culture Wars on how the media and artists might have turned the debates into an opportunity for collective enlightenment. The concept's power comes from its ability to activate layered themes of public mission and social improvement, together with its extreme malleability to fit different political programs and rhetorical standpoints.

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[167] Telephone interview with Dinah Helal, December 5, 2011. Helal, Manager of Interpretation and Interactive Media at the Whitney, who sat on an educational advisory board at Dia in the 1990s, states that particularly during the late '80s and early '90s, museum education programming in New York had a strongly activist bent. This approach is illustrated in the volume *Contemporary Art and Multicultural Education* published by the New Museum in 1996, which contains writings by artists and lesson plans on topics including diversity in American culture, and fighting stereotypes about people with AIDS.

Gallery/ Classroom

With “Education and Democracy,” Group Material sought to make contemporary art practice and educational practice intersect. A central goal of this intersection was to foster a political analysis of the inequalities within the education system, through both the exhibition, and the roundtable discussion and town hall meeting. Another, equally important goal was to increase the capacity of contemporary art to represent the experiences, and therefore to better solicit the viewership, of public school teachers and students. Throughout the show and the discussion forums ran a constant tension that seems inseparable from Group Material’s attempts to meet these goals. On the one hand, the project moved to dissolve the culturally privileged status allotted to art, which labels art as a sphere characterized by extraordinary insight and awards the artist the role of speaking with special truth about the problems facing society. But at the same time, Group Material held onto a belief in the special power of art, and as such was unwilling to discard art’s cultural privilege totally. Doing so would have meant renouncing the particular contribution of art to collective reflection and political consciousness, which would have been inimical to Group Material’s core values.

One artistic value in particular advanced Group Material’s desire to extend education through art. *Democracy* was characterized by a firm commitment to the political power of representation. This was so both in terms of the group’s valorization of the ability of a community to give voice to its concerns within the public sphere, and also in terms of the group’s understanding of the power of the artwork to promote that process. Group Material made this clear in their introduction to the project book for *Democracy*, where they describe their work as follows:

> Our exhibitions and projects are intended to be forums in which multiple points of view are represented in a variety of styles and methods. We believe, as feminist writer bell hooks has said, that 'we must focus on a policy of inclusion so as not to mirror oppressive structures.' As a result, each exhibition is a veritable model of democracy.[168]

This statement creates a link between the multiple points of view represented in the exhibition and the formally diverse ways in which they are represented. Moreover, it connects this representation in the exhibition to the political model of representative democracy. However, already evident in this statement is a tension between two irreconcilable tendencies. One tendency is to have the exhibition serve as a "model" of democracy, i.e. to be art that represents democracy. But the statement also expresses another, incompatible tendency, which is to have the project to *be* democracy, or in other words to dissolve the boundary between art and life in the service of a political project, thereby discarding the power of art to function as a model.

This tension between maintaining and dissolving art's privilege can also be seen at work in a letter Group Material sent to teachers in May 1988. In this letter,

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[168] Group Material, "On Democracy," in Wallis, *Democracy*, 2.

Group Material invited teachers to work with their students to produce artworks or other creative contributions for inclusion in the show. The letter was distributed through the mailing list of the New York State Teachers Association, through a connection between Group Material and Maria Asaro, their former intern who was associated with the group Artists/Teachers Concerned.[169] In this letter, the group clearly states their desire to have the exhibition create a different set of relationships than those typical of gallery shows. Group Material writes:

> We believe "Education and Democracy" will be an important event for art educators. Our aim with this exhibition is to expand the current dialogue concerning American schooling. We would like to involve the voices of you and your students.
>
> "Education" will not be an "art show" in the ordinary sense, but a month-long visual investigation of how our schools work and how they sometimes fail. It will contrast the artwork and writings of our students with the work of artists already addressing the theme of education. In short "Education" will be a place where our students' concerns about their learning can be made visually real, a place visible to other children, educators, artists, and the public.[170]

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[169] Ault, *Show and Tell*, 140.

[170] Letter sent by Group Material to teachers, dated May 6, 1988. Group Material Collection, Series I, box 2, folder #9: "Democracy (Correspondence)," Fales Library.

The concept of the exhibition plays a double role in this statement. In one respect, the exhibition is represented as something that needs to be abandoned: this will not be "an 'art show' in the ordinary sense." Instead, it will be a "month-long visual investigation." That descriptor retains the aspect of visuality associated with "art show," but places an emphasis both on research and on the duration of the process.[171] Simultaneously, the space of the art exhibition retains a privilege to make things visible in a different and more powerful way. The gallery serves here as "a place where our students' concerns about their learning can be made visually real," which implies that there is a need for this rendering visible that cannot be fulfilled within the spaces normally occupied by "children, educators, artists, and the public." The function of the statement is thus not to de-privilege the gallery space completely, or to assert a total equivalence between the spaces occupied by art and the spaces in which everyday activities, including classroom-based learning, unfold. Rather, the statement seeks to frame this privileged space of representation as something that must be intervened in, in order to be used in a new and productive manner, namely to let a certain community see its own concerns in a way it is not able to on a day-to-day basis. The "art show" does not need to be done away with completely, but must find a different audience and a different process of evolution in order to be socially relevant. The invitation of participation represented by the letter is one of the primary means by which Group Material sought to achieve this social relevance, in that students' and teachers' contributions would both generate new content for the show, and attract these contributors as a new audience to the exhibition.

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[171] The concept of art practice as research is one that has gained increasing currency within both contemporary art history and studies in art education. For art historians, this concept has become a way of discussing the changing nature of artistic practice, which increasingly often emphasizes archival exploration of a particular site or issue. See, for example, Florian Dombois, Ute Meta Bauer, Claudia Mareis, and Michael Schwab, ed. *Intellectual Birdhouse: Artistic Practice as Research* (London: Koenig Books, 2012). Within the field of scholarship on art education, the standard work in this area is Graeme Sullivan, *Art Practice as Research: Inquiry in the Visual Arts* (Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: SAGE, 2005). For Sullivan, making a claim that art practice is research is connected to a desire to legitimate art making within educational institutions.

On the whole, the contributions students and their teachers made in response to the invitation take a critical perspective on the social problems and inequalities inherent to the U.S. school system. This tendency can be seen clearly in *Question Marks* (1988), a work credited to art teacher Meryl Meisler and the "Drop Ins of Roland Hayes I.S. 291" in Brooklyn. The piece consisted of two large question marks, the one on the right hand side right side up, and the one on the left upside down [Fig. 15], like Spanish language punctuation. The question marks were made up of photographs of the children's decaying school building, with red paint highlighting some of the biggest physical deficiencies, such as a cockroach and holes in the walls containing exposed wires. A text included on one of the question marks, handwritten on lined paper in a child's or young teen's writing, outlined the problems with the school building, clearly laying the blame for these problems with those in power: "[T]he school was opened 13 years ago without a certificate of occupancy. The physical structure was never completed. It has been a battle against deterioration ever since."

Question Marks, in its title and physical form, thus initially appeared to pose a question, but delivered a bold political assertion. This double movement in turn raises a question mark about how Group Material expected the audience to receive the political content communicated by *Question Marks*, and by the installation at large. The key ambiguity here lies between whether the artists anticipated that audience members would have their political positions transformed by the artwork, or whether they assumed implicitly that the audience would agree with the work's position from the outset. Grant Kester raises this question in his 1993 essay "Rhetorical Questions: The Alternative Arts Sector and the Imaginary Public." Kester argues that many artworks produced in the alternative sector of the 1980s and early 1990s claimed a certain political position by seeming *not* to address viewers of like-minded political persuasion. In fact, Kester asserts, works by artists such as Andres Serrano and Robert Mapplethorpe actually took up a rhetorical position in which they addressed an imaginary conservative viewer, whose preconceptions would supposedly be transformed by the artwork. Kester argues that this rhetoric performed a "therapeutic" function for art world audiences, who left the work with a self-satisfied confirmation of the virtue of their own liberal positions.[172]

In Kester's analysis, viewers' – and crucially, artists' – failure to recognize that they are themselves the true addressees of political art blinds these people to the limitations of a certain kind of art to reach outside the art world. Kester writes that Group Material's *Democracy* epitomized the "moral-didactic installation," in which the artists' relationship to a certain social or political issue was held up as a model for the audience. "What is 'on display' in a Group Material installation," he writes, "is not simply information about a particular issue but also Group Material itself as an exemplary body of committed cultural activists."[173]

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[172] Kester, "Rhetorical Questions," 121. Bolton, in his introduction to *Culture Wars*, makes a similar point: "When critical art is tailored to a privileged, liberal audience, there is the risk that the art experience will become nothing more than a ritual release of guilt. When oppositional art becomes a part of the art-world status quo, certified by cultural institutions that manage the avant-garde, it may in this way assume a new role, perpetuating the very authority it seeks to challenge." (22)

The phenomenon Kester identifies, in which the artist is elevated as someone who engages in an "exemplary" way with the social issues at hand, was illustrated in a strikingly literal way in the chalk writing on the blackboard walls. Of the mostly erased chalk writings, a few snatches of text remained legible in the documentary photographs: mathematical formulas; the name PABLO written in capital letters; the almost erased phrase "You will be TESTED ON." The visual effect was one of a palimpsest. The walls appeared to bear traces of a process of learning. They also indexed the unequal power relationships inherent to the educational system, between, for example, the one who tests and the one who is tested. Moreover, the fact that the name written on the board was the distinctly Hispanic "Pablo" alluded to the intersection between various forms of power, in this case envisioning a subject of education's disciplinary power who is ethnically alien to the white culture that dominates the American school system. Group Material thus sought to make the walls negate the supposed neutrality of the white-cube gallery both by rendering visible these power relationships, and by using the visual trope of erased chalk writing to evoke education as a process in constant, dynamic evolution.

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[173] Kester, "Rhetorical Questions," 121-2.

Kester's point about the exemplarity of the artists' moral stance was encapsulated by the one instance of chalk writing not subject to erasure. This text stood out in crisp, loopy cursive writing [Fig. 13]:

> Education & Democracy
>
> by Group Material

At one level, this text was a witty spin on the practical information identifying the artist and artwork that is usually found in a gallery. But when read, as seems unavoidable, in the context of the larger function of the walls to index both power relationships and educational processes, the meaning of the inscription becomes more complex. The text provided basic information about the exhibition, but as chalk writing on the blackboard, it also seems to have held the status of a lesson or instructional aid. Moreover, it appeared as a signature, written by or on behalf of Group Material. Which position, within the network of student-teacher power relationships invoked by the chalk writings, did Group Material take up? The collective might be seen, via this inscription, to stand in the place of the teacher writing on the board, communicating to the audience a given political content. Alternately, Group Material might be read here as a particularly enthusiastic student, a teacher's pet, perhaps, whose act of writing on the board was allowed to remain for its correctness or insight.

The chalk inscription thus seems perfectly, though perhaps unconsciously on the part of the artists, to frame Group Material themselves as “exemplary” activists. But simultaneously, another essential aspect of “Education and Democracy,” namely the audience participation in the town hall meetings, created a more reciprocal relationship between the artists and their audience. In the context of that close relationship with the audience, the artists, I will demonstrate, in fact had trouble maintaining their special right to speak as authors. They mobilized the concept of education as a way of recuperating art’s privileged transformative power and thereby their own right to speak, but did so by framing *themselves* as the primary subjects (or patients) of art’s transformative pedagogical potential. In the next section, I will examine the dynamics of Group Material’s interaction with their audience through a close reading of an encounter from the “Education and Democracy” town meeting between group member Felix Gonzalez-Torres, and a member of the audience, Geno Rodriguez.

Artists Becoming the Audience

In his essay for the aptly named *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material* (2010), group member Doug Ashford heads the second section of his text with a quotation he attributes to Group Material: “We are also part of the audience.”[174] Ashford elaborates this statement somewhat obliquely in the text that follows, in which he discusses the capacity of art to make one see from someone else’s position.

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[174] Ashford, “An Artwork is a Person,” in Ault, *Show and Tell*, 221.

The quotation, as Ashford presents it, depicts this state of being part of the audience as a *fait accompli*. Through examining an exchange from the town hall meeting for "Education and Democracy," I want to deconstruct Ashford's assertion. My analysis will demonstrate that what was in fact at work in Group Material's practice was a strong *desire* to become part of the audience. This desire produced situations in which there was a lack of clarity about the authority associated with authorship. In Group Material's published and unpublished writings on "Education and Democracy," the concept of education responded to this lack of clarity by becoming a way of framing the social process involving the audience as something productive both for the community and for Group Material themselves.

I focus here on a point of conflict between a member of Group Material, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, and a member of the audience, Geno Rodriguez. This moment of tension demonstrates the extent to which becoming the audience was not only an ideal that Group Material pursued in their work, but a *process*, and one that produced ambivalence about how to represent their own goals. This moment is the only incidence of a current member of Group Material speaking at one of *Democracy*'s town hall meetings. Tim Rollins, who left the group in 1987, was invited by then members Ashford, Ault, and Gonzalez-Torres to chair the meeting for "Education and Democracy," and at the meeting Rollins gives an introductory speech and interacts with audience members in his role as chair. However, apart from the encounter between Gonzalez-Torres and Rodriguez, Group Material members are markedly absent from the audio recordings and transcriptions of the town hall meetings, though they attended all the events. This aural absence differs from the smaller round table discussions held in May and June 1988 in order to lay the conceptual groundwork for the project. In those meetings, members of the group talk extensively.

I speculate that in the town meetings, the group might have felt wary of participating too much, for fear that their privileged authorial positions would exert too much pressure on the course of the conversation. During the "AIDS & Democracy" meeting, to which I will return in Chapter 4, Dia curator Gary Garrels' introduction of the group at the beginning of the meeting makes it clear that they are seated toward the back of the room: "Doug Ashford – in the back, Julie Ault – Julie is that you that just sat down? Felix Gonzalez-Torres – where is Felix? Somewhere. I think they're all hiding in the back." Group Material seems to have consciously minimized their presence by remaining unheard and perhaps even somewhat unseen during the meetings. They indeed took up the position of audience members, watching and listening to the events unfold. But they did not actively participate, though active participation was exactly the type of involvement that they enthusiastically solicited from other audience members, for example via the flyers with discussion questions distributed to the audience, which bore the injunction "Please come prepared to speak on these issues."[175] Group Material's own silence indicates their awareness that to disappear completely into the audience was impossible. Any comments they would have made, in this context, would have been received by the rest of the audience as carrying the authoritative weight of an artist's opinion about her or his own work. As such, Group Material took on precisely the kind of circumscribed, spectatorial role from which they sought to liberate the audience.

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[175] The questions on these flyers arose from the earlier roundtable discussion held for each topic. Agenda flyer for "Education and Democracy" town hall meeting, Dia Art Foundation archives.

The one exception to this is an argument that unfolded early in the "Education and Democracy" town hall between Gonzalez-Torres and Geno Rodriguez, director of the Alternative Museum. This argument is sparked by Rodriguez's assertion that the meeting generates liberal dialogue about social issues, without building a bridge with constituencies outside the art world (precisely the critique that Kester and others have more pursued in their evaluations of the project). Rodriguez points out the fact that there are not many African-Americans or Hispanics in the room, and states that those who are present are members of the art world, who are often isolated from their "own" ethnic communities. I quote the dialogue here at length. Ault remembers that when Gonzalez-Torres got up to respond to Rodriguez, he was shaking.[176]

> Rodriguez: I think that it's very important to understand that what's going on here, this kind of dialogue that we're presuming to find solutions for people, has a farcical side to it. … You people […] have to find a way to do less of this kind of liberal thinking and to do some more getting your hands down into it and getting out there with people. I don't know how many of you have parties, and how often you have, you know, what I would call Americans of

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[176] Interview with Julie Ault, May 22, 2011.

all different backgrounds. But the reality is, if you don't have that, you're never going to get them to come here, you're never going to invite them to exhibitions, you're never going to do anything together, because it'll always be *them* and *us*, *us* and *them*. So you have to start really getting down and forcing yourself to invite people to your functions, to your homes, you force yourself, and you learn from them. Talking doesn't really do it.

[*Pause with silence in room, very little rustling. Quite quickly:*]

Gonzalez-Torres [talking fast]: Hi, my name is Felix Gonzalez-Torres, I'm a member of Group Material. Huh…. Uh… English is not my first language, so, sometimes I chop it up…

Rollins: Could you speak up Felix please?

Gonzalez-Torres: Sure… I said, English is not my first language, so I might just chop up some of my words… I'm also nervous, I *hate* speaking in *pub*lic… But I really feel like I should reply to the comments that were just made… I… somehow, I got a different agenda than you do, for a town meeting, cause mine is about education and not about museums and getting shows, and stuff like that, that really doesn't interest me that much. When Group Material tried to organize this town meeting, it was a real and very honest attempt of getting out of just an exhibition about the *other*, and all that stuff that you were talking about is so familiar to me. And, I really dislike the 'farcical' name you put – tag you put onto all this, I dislike that very much. I

> think our project a lot of…. It's about inclusion and not exclusion. And to start the town meeting with so much – *anger* it really puts me off, and…
>
> Rodriguez: Then speak about something! Stop complaining. Speak about something!
>
> Gonzalez-Torres: No! That's what I'm saying, start – you start complaining, that's what I wanted to say. And, I don't know, it's a good question why there's not many blacks or Hispanics here, but – I mean – I guess in term of the black it's easy to say well, he's white, he's not black, in terms of Hispanic, that's a little bit of racism. Uh, what I'm supposed to be wearing a flowered shirt or something to say I'm Hispanic, I'm here?

In this dialogue, Gonzalez-Torres confronts directly the issue of visible ethnic and racial difference that Rodriguez raises. Gonzalez-Torres identifies himself at the outset as a member of Group Material, but importantly, confront Rodriguez' critique by asserting his belonging to a racial minority. As such, the authority Gonzalez-Torres claims in his speech does not draw on the typical hierarchy between artist and audience. Instead, authority stems here from identity politics, and specifically from the connection that identity politics establishes between lived experience and the ability to speak on a certain issue. Or rather, Gonzalez-Torres' speech accumulates authority on the register of artist/audience relationships only in so far as those relationships, in the late 1980s, were also bound up with questions of identity. [177] The importance of identity here as the primary generator of authority becomes obvious if we consider the impossibility of Ault or Ashford, as white members of Group Material, responding to Rodriguez in this manner. In that case, their responses could easily be set aside as blindness to their own privilege.

Group Material's stance as authors was inseparable from their desire to deal with social and political issues, and to explore those issues in a fresh and penetrating way. This is evident in the group's statement on the first page of their text for the *Democracy* project book: "In general, we see ourselves as the outspoken distant relative at the annual reunion who can be counted on to bring up the one subject no one wants to talk about. The subject that no one in the art world wants to talk about is usually politics."[178] In this statement, Group Material expresses this social and political analysis, this act of "bringing up" the hidden or repressed, as the core function of their artistic practice. However, in the encounter between Gonzalez-

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[177] The paradigm that I identify here is a precursor to the situation that Miwon Kwon discusses, in which in the late 1990s and 2000s, the presumed identities of artists have come discursively to ground the site-specificity of artworks that in fact have no natural or obvious connection to the sites where they unfold. Kwon discusses the case of artist Renée Green's parting of ways with the Sculpture Chicago, and it curator Mary-Jane Jacob. This split followed a tour organized for Green that would take her to sites in Chicago specifically relevant to African-American communities and histories, which the artist felt over-determined her potential collaborative relationship with these communities by focusing exclusively on her identity as African-American. In this situation, a desire on the part of the Sculpture Chicago organizers to promote an identity "match" between Green and the community with which she would create a site-specific project resulted in a blatant objectification of Green as an artist whose defining characteristic was African-American identity. Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 140-1. This situation relies on a presupposition that the artist is a part of a larger segment of the population that is the potential audience, and that is characterized by specific identities that the artwork must strive to represent.

[178] Group Material, "On Democracy," 1.

Torres and Rodriguez, membership in Group Material is not a sufficient basis on which to “bring up” or assert a position on the question of racial and cultural segregation within the art world. Instead, through a performance of a certain ethnic identity, Gonzalez-Torres establishes for himself a position from which to speak. The assertion of identity comes to supplement the authority of artistic authorship, positing a fundamental connection between Rodriguez and Gonzalez-Torres that provides a basis for the latter’s critical stance.[179]

The necessity of identity as a supplement to artistic authority parallels the double movement in Group Material’s letter to the public school teachers, in which they simultaneously rejected and maintained art’s privilege. On the one hand, artistic privilege persevered in *Democracy*, in that Dia recognized Group Material as the sole authors of the project, and awarded them the position of making decisions about its content and form.[180] The importance of participation in *Democracy* did not erase the fact that it was the members of Group Material who decided the form the project would take. On the other hand, in the encounter between Rodriguez and Gonzalez-Torres, ethnic identity was the register on which claims to authority were made and dismissed, making it impossible to privilege Gonzalez-Torres' perspective simply because he was a member of Group Material.

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[179] This was not the only circumstance in which Gonzalez-Torres or Group Material as a whole invoked his ethnic identity when accused of privileged exclusivity and blindness. For example, in 1987 Group Material had a heated correspondence with Edward Heap of Birds, an artist with whom they had previously worked, who accused the group of “using” him, as a Native American artist, to forward their own superficial multicultural image. In their response of November 15, 1987, Group Material write: “When we first started out there were ten people in GM. After a year, six left to do other things, then another left. A year later when we met Doug a relationship of similar concerns developed and we began working together. A few months ago we met someone else whom a working relationship is developing with. This relationship developed naturally, as any relationship in such a small group would have to. He happens to be a Puerto Rican artist. But we didn’t sit down and say, ‘Let’s go get a person-of-color to work with.’ We do not feel that kind of thinking is necessarily constructive, nor is it workable for us.” Group Material Collection Series II, box 5, folder 22, “Correspondence,” Fales Library. These situations illustrate the extent to which Group Material, through their own insistence on the importance of diversity and accessibility within contemporary art, confronted situations in which it became unavoidable to invoke authority through ethnic identity when defending their practice. Note that though Gonzalez-Torres was Cuban, not Puerto Rican, the members of Group Material refer to him as such in the letter, perhaps because he immigrated to the U.S. via Puerto Rico.

The interaction between Rodriguez and Gonzalez-Torres, and also Group Material's letter to teachers I discussed above, manifest a tension between dissolving and maintaining the privilege of art and the artist. This tension, which was central to Group Material's practice, placed the group in a situation typical of institutionally critical art of the 1980s and 1990s, in which they were constantly taking up positions of institutional privilege in order to attempt to critique or disassemble that privilege. Gonzalez-Torres sketches this paradox in a page of handwritten notes from the conceptualization of the *Democracy* project book. The notes state that the group's text for the book should contain "Very important paragraph clearly stating why GM is concerned w/ sites for exhibiting – the implications of institutional support – the inherent paradoxical position of GM, i.e. pursuing exposure but questioning the dominant, conventional venues for support + exhibition."[181] In the following section, I argue that education was a powerful concept for Group Material because it offered them a way to sidestep this double bind while maintaining a commitment to art's power. That move came about through the materialization, in the group's writings about the project and also in Ashford's photographic documentation, of a subject transformed by art. Moreover, the group was able to use the idea of education to recuperate a progressive narrative for the participatory meetings, which critics perceived to be somewhat scattered and lacking in focus.

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[180] Telephone interview with Gary Garrels, October 14, 2010.

[181] Group Material Collection. Series I, box 3, folder #11: "Democracy – (Notes: Organization of Book and Process)," Fales Library.

Dialogue/ Pedagogy

In the few reviews written on *Democracy*, critics repeatedly note the correlation between Group Material's foregrounding of a diverse plurality of voices, and a certain lack of cohesiveness in terms of political position. For example, art critic David Trend describes the "Education and Democracy" town hall meeting as characterized by "an often rambling list of complaints about former Secretary of Education William Bennett and the conservative canon." Trend writes: "This occurred despite the best intentions of the meeting's organizers, who had structured the 90-minute event to follow a series of tightly scripted questions."[182] Salem Alaton, writing in *The Globe and Mail*, spends much of his article describing the disparate positions expressed at the meeting. Alaton states that "for all the references to 'real issues,' no one got around to detailing what they were."[183] Critic Joshua Decter, in his discussion of the exhibition for "Politics and Election," the third segment of

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[182] David Trend, "Back to School." *Afterimage* 16, no. 5 (December 1988).
[183] Salem Alaton, "N.Y. Artists Get Vocal About Politics." *The Globe and Mail* October 20, 1988, C3.

Democracy, echoes the lack of focus that Trend and Alaton perceived as a problem in the meetings. Decter writes:

> Group Material's statement regarding the agendas particular to 'Politics and Election' claims that the exhibition 'will not simply illustrate political crises and struggles, but will focus specifically on the nature of political power.' While this remains a noble aspiration, Group Material's egalitarian method of assembling an ensemble of purposefully distinct artistic/ideological voices may well be a suitable expression of a very general notion of cultural/political diversity, but it rarely brings things into 'focus.'[184]

Trend and Decter, in their reviews, juxtapose a lack of focus to the "best intentions" and "noble aspiration" of Group Material. Both authors thus represent Group Material as articulating political goals for their art practice, which become somewhat muddled or derailed by the "egalitarian" foregrounding of different perspectives in the exhibitions and the town meetings. The problem, for both Trend and Decter, is that the renunciation of singular authorship and centralized aesthetic control does not lead to deeper insight. In other words, opening up the meeting and exhibition to a diverse range of voices does not necessarily create a representation of the constituency from which those voices emerge that generates more effective political action, or that even helps the viewer to understand better that diverse constituency.

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[184] Joshua Decter, "Group Material - Dia Art Foundation." *FlashArt* (March/April 1989): 111.

Alaton, who shares Trend and Decter's dissatisfaction with the wandering and unfocused nature of the town hall meetings, concludes his article on a positive note by valorizing live discourse itself: "Nonetheless, the very fact of a flesh-and-blood gathering to talk politics was refreshing in what has become the wrap-around, electronic context of passivity in which U.S. leaders are now chosen."[185] Alaton emphasizes the importance of embodied discourse in the context of mediatized presidential debate, which he argues produces passive spectators.[186] Alaton's emphasis on the value of dialogue in itself resonates with Dia's own framing of Discussions in Contemporary Culture, a discussion series leading to a series of books, of which the book for Group Material's project was a part. Dia director Charles Wright described Discussions as an expression of Dia's "commitment to critical discussion and debate."[187] This valorization of dialogue returns in an early draft of Group Material's statement for the project book, in which the group discusses the importance of dialogue for its working method. This focus on dialogue and its pedagogical value constitutes one of the group's most important strategies for responding to the paradoxes surrounding art and authorship that I discussed above.

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[185] Alaton, "N.Y. Artists Get Vocal About Politics."

[186] Alaton's arguments in this regard constitute a generalized version of Guy Debord's 1967 argument that the society of the spectacle produces passive spectators. Group Material, "On Democracy," 1. See Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994). Alaton's statement is typical of rhetoric that was common in liberal criticism at the time as a diagnosis of the problems with the US political system. In Group Material's text for the *Democracy* book, they make a similar statement: "[I]n 1987, after almost two terms of the Reagan presidency and with another election year at hand, it was clear that the state of American democracy was in no way ideal. Access to political power was obstructed in complex ways, participation in politics had degenerated into passive and symbolic involvement, and the current of 'official' politics precluded a diversity of viewpoints."

[187] Charles Wright, "A Note on the Series," in *Vision and Visuality*, edited by Hal Foster and the Dia Art Foundation. Discussions in Contemporary Culture; No. 2 (Seattle: Bay Press, 1988), vii.

> *Democracy* … was not meant as a kind of instructional answer but as an elaborated question. A picture of a possibility. … Was it enough to depend on the knowledge, concentrated or casual, that we alone had gathered on each of our topics? As each exhibition would mandate the inclusion of a diverse array of social interpretations and responses – so too should our working method. In fact, we saw the deferral to the expert and the resulting hierarchy of specialization as a key agent in the erosion of democratic thought. …To this end, roundtable discussions were organized to further initiate ourselves with the efforts of others, whose voices spoke about democratic issues from the other side of dominant discourse. These were real educations for us, dialogues that spelled out the defunding of the public schools, the various incarnations of political power, the institutionalization of culture and the horror of our society's non-response to AIDS.[188]

In this statement, Group Material represents dialogue, specifically in the form of the roundtable discussions, as the cornerstone in a new working method that enables the group to subvert the "hierarchy of specialization." For the group, that overturning was necessary to create a space more democratic than that which existed in dominant culture. Notably, Group Material represents the decentering, through this dialogical and participatory working method, of its own authority as connected to the way that its members seek to decenter dominant authority. Dialogue, in its very movement to problematize Group Material's authority, achieves the group's authorial goals. The concept of dialogue is, moreover, mobilized by the artists within this statement of their intentions for the project as an idea that valorizes the project, and hence, their authorship.

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[188] Group Material, "Notes for our statement…," Group Material Collection. Series I, box 2, folder #18: "Democracy (Notes, Drafts, Statements for Book," Fales Library.

This double movement of the concept of dialogue occurs within a framing of the project as explicitly pedagogical. The statement that *Democracy* "was not meant as a kind of instructional answer but as an elaborated question" establishes this pedagogical frame for the project, but in the same gesture, rejects the hierarchies usually inherent to educational institutions. Group Material makes clear that this pedagogy is not one it directs at the audience, as that would reinforce the traditional hierarchies that the statement performatively disrupts. Group Material's members instead present themselves as the subjects of this pedagogy: "these were real educations for us." Gonzalez-Torres, in his letter to Ault, echoes this framing of the educational process as one that is addressed to Group Material itself. Here, he writes about his increasingly positive feeling about the project, in a way that creates a play on the ambiguity between "Education" as the title of the show and education as a process that the group itself undergoes: "I'm more confident and excited about the shape our education is taking."[189] This idea returns again in a page of typed notes about the book statement, labeled "Julie" and presumably written by Ault. These notes assert that in the group's text, "We should tie the reoccurring theme of Democracy together very clearly, summation so to speak of what we learned."[190] This statement suggests that the text for the book should frame the project in terms of the pedagogical process that the *group* has undergone. Ault thereby casts the theme of the project, democracy, as inseparable in retrospect from this educational process of which the artists are the main subjects.

On the whole, these statements about the pedagogical transformation of Group Material itself over the course of the project perform a sense of the project's larger transformative potential. The political change that Group Material desired to foster in *Democracy* was impossible to quantify, but it could be evoked, within the project's documentation, through the description of the projects as a pedagogical process that transformed the artists themselves. Moreover, this theme of the pedagogical transformation of Group Material, narratively developed in self-reflexive "we" statements, serves to re-center the artists as the subjects of their work. In this respect, it revivifies the figure of the artist as speaking subject, an idea which I have demonstrated was put in doubt within the project.

In their notes and draft writings about the pedagogical value of the projects, Group Material, whose power to speak as artists was decentered by the participatory forums, reasserts its voice and also reconfirms the transformative nature of the projects. This reappearance of the subject as someone transformed by art occurs again in Ashford's photographic documentation of the "Education and Democracy" exhibition. These black-and-white photos show visitors in the exhibition space, looking at the artwork hung on the walls [Fig. 16], or sitting in the school desks, watching a video or lost in contemplation. One image shows a man signing the guest register near the entrance to the gallery [Fig. 17], and another shows someone, who appears to be a gallery attendant, reading at the desk near the entrance. The recurrence of the same people in different images indicates that all the photos were taken in a single session. These images are as much photographs of the audience as they are of the exhibition, or rather, they are photographs of the encounter between audience and exhibition. It appears that Ashford was most interested in the way that the exhibition spatially choreographed the movement of bodies.

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[189] Letter of July 27, 1988 from Felix Gonzalez-Torres to Julie Ault. Group Material Collection. Series I, box 2, folder #9: "Democracy (Correspondence)," Fales Library.
[190] Page of typed notes labeled "Julie," Group Material Collection. Series I, box 2, folder #18: "Democracy (Notes, Drafts, Statements for Book," Fales Library.

Ashford's young daughter flits through a number of the images, often reduced to an energetic blur among the more static, crisply defined adult figures that surround her. The two images where we can see her clearly show her on the floor among the school desks. In the first [Fig. 18], she sits on her knees, her little hands hidden by the long sleeves of her puffy ski jacket. In the second [Fig. 19], she lunges on her side in the direction of the photographer, her father. The formation of school desks, which evokes the disciplinary structure of the classroom in the image, becomes a playground for the undisciplined frolicking of the little girl. As a child, she most closely approximates the targeted disciplinary subject of the "real" classroom that

Group Material mimics. Ashford's images constitute the art gallery as the location of the inversion of that disciplinarity. The gallery, in these images, furnishes the child with the opportunity freely to follow her own desire for playful, unregulated action. The fact that it is a child who is pictured creates an association with political futurity, posing the question of to what new types of subjectivity this meeting of the gallery and the classroom will give rise.[191] Furthermore, as Ashford's offspring, she stands as a sort of avatar for her father, creating a connection between his artistic subjectivity – realized in the moment of taking the photograph – and her own developing subjectivity. The image thereby reinforces the connection between the artist as a subject with the power to show, and art as something that transforms subjectivity.

To conclude the preceding argument: I have discussed here two forms of documentation of "Education and Democracy." Group Material's writings about the project after the fact, and Ashford's photographs of the installation, may indeed be the only places where the subject that Group Material desired – the participating subject (artist and/as audience) changed by the pedagogical potential of art – came into being. Both of these sets of documentation thematize education, as it occurs through contemporary art, as an open-ended process that generates transformative potential. Both the writings and the images materialize a certainty about art's pedagogical value. That certainty was less easy to establish in the town hall meetings, with the clashing views and sometimes unfocused discussions that seem to have been inseparable from the participatory format, and that moreover destabilized the artists' ability to speak as authorities on the issues they had chosen to engage.

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[191] Lee Edelman discusses the strong associations in Western culture between the figure of the child and the political imaginary of futurity. For Edelman, this centrality of the image of the child is fundamentally conservative, and specifically heteronormative: "For politics, however radical the means by which specific constituencies attempt to produce a more desirable social order, remains, a its core, conservative insofar as it works to *affirm* a structure, to *authenticate* social order, which it then intends to transmit to the future in the form of its inner Child." Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 2-3.

The Institution and the Pedagogical Subject

For Group Material, the concept of education was a powerful tool that enabled its members to frame their art as a progressive practice with a transformative impact on subjectivity. As I will demonstrate in the remainder of this chapter, Group Material's triangulation of education, art, and subjectivity also resonated with Dia's institutional development from the mid-1980s to the present.

Conceptually, Group Material's approach to pedagogy shared common ground with the practice of Joseph Beuys, an artist who was important for Dia. A juxtaposition of Group Material's idea of education with Beuys' will help me to explore the subject position at stake in Group Material's work, and its relationship to Dia's larger conception of subjectivity and aesthetic experience from its founding to the present day.[192] Group Material included Beuys' piece *F.I.U. Blackboards* (1980) in the "Education and Democracy" exhibition. [193] The inclusion of the Beuys piece in the show appears to be a nod to Beuys' importance for Dia. Dia provided major financial support for the completion of Beuys' *7000 Oaks* in Kassel in the 1980s, and in 1988 installed a continuation of Beuys' *7000 Oaks* project along West 22nd Street.[194] Beuys was also, along with Imi Knoebel and Blinky Palermo, one of the artists shown in Dia's opening exhibition for its Chelsea gallery on West 22nd Street, from October 1987 to June 1988.[195] The inclusion of the blackboard in the show poses the question of the larger relationship between Group Material and Beuys, and specifically between the treatment of education in "Education and Democracy" and Beuys' engagement with pedagogy.[196]

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[192] For a discussion of education as a political concept in Beuys' practice, see Caroline Tisdall, Joseph Beuys, and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. *Joseph Beuys* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1979), 265-82. Gregory Ulmer also notes that in Beuys' practice, teaching was a profession but simultaneously extended beyond the boundaries of his discipline and institutional position, not only to interdisciplinary theory and practice, but also into other organizations designed to intervene politically education more broadly (228). Gregory L/ Ulmer, *Applied Grammatology: Post(E)-Pedagogy from Jacques Derrida to Joseph Beuys* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985).

Group Material's blackboard walls looked like one of Beuys' blackboards blown up to become an entire installation. But whereas in Beuys' practice, the blackboard stood as traces of a performance and in that sense represented the artist's auratic present, Group Material used their blackboard walls to address the question of social context, and specifically differences in identity and power. The foregrounding of these differences marks a clear break from the universalist attitude expressed by Beuys, who invoked creativity as a universal human capacity, as epitomized in his famous statement "Everyone is an artist." Group Material also had a strong faith in human agency, but was equally interested in the factors, including economic privilege and racial discrimination, which created conditions under which not everyone could be an artist in the same way.

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[193] Ault, *Show and Tell*, 141.
[194] http://www.diaart.org/sites/page/51/1364, accessed June 10, 2012. Dia's continuation of *7000 Oaks* consisted of five basalt stone columns, each accompanied by a different kind of tree. This work by Beuys was begun at Documenta 7 in Kassel in 1982, and consisted in the planting of 7,000 trees, each accompanied by a columnular stone.
[195] http://www.diaart.org/exhibitions/main/75, accessed June 10, 2012.
[196] The exhibition checklist for "Education and Democracy" lists *F.I.U. Blackboards* as the work included in the show. Dia Art Foundation archives.

Moreover, Group Material sought to extend this analysis of differential privilege into an organized program of outreach, which would alter the way that the institution connected with audiences. That approach was new to Dia in 1988, as the link between the concept of education and audience outreach was not evident in Dia's exhibition programming or institutional practice preceding Group Material's *Democracy.* However, to some extent, a concept of education as a public outreach mission was present in Dia's legal self-definition from early on, simply by virtue of the Foundation being a non-profit organization, or 501(c)3. The 2010 Aspen Center report on artists' philanthropy points out that in the philanthropy field, activities designated to merit tax exemption include "literary and educational purposes." Because artistic, scholarly, and cultural purposes are not covered in this designation, these activities are typically understood as a subset of "educational purposes," which can cover "a wide variety of noninstructional activities" including research, exhibition, and documentation.[197] Dia gestures toward educational value in its 1980 certificate of incorporation as a non-profit organization. The document states that one of the Foundation's goals shall be to "generally seek to enlighten the public as to the nature of art, and the creative process[.]"[198] However, until after Dia's reorganization in 1983-86, public access to the collection and site-specific works was extremely limited due to lack of regular organizational structure.[199] The sentiment of public enlightenment thus went unsupported by institutional structures and programming that would make the ideal a reality.

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[197] Christine J. Vincent, "The Artist as Philanthropist: Strengthening the Next Generation of Artist-Endowed Foundations." The Aspen Institute, 2010, 15.

In its certificate of incorporation, Dia presents its mission in a manner appropriate to a non-profit organization, to which the government grants tax exemption theoretically in exchange for substantial public benefit. However, Dia's founders, Heiner Friedrich and Philipa de Menil, did not allow this compulsory framing to detract attention from their fundamental commitment, which lay with the artists and the idea of artistic intention. The latitude for Friedrich and de Menil to operate in this way was created by the malleability of the concept of education, even at a legal level, as is evident in a 1982 tax ruling on the New Mexico land belonging to Dia on which Walter de Maria's *Lightning Field* was constructed. Dia's property totaled approximately 9,000 acres, 3,880 of which held the 400 poles that made up de Maria's artwork, and 5,120 of which were purchased to "protect and enhance the integrity of [the] artwork."[200] The ruling deals with the question of whether part or all of the property is used for educational purposes, and is therefore tax-exempt.[201] The ruling grants tax exemption to the land holding the poles of the de Maria work, and the land at the site and in nearby Quemado on which Dia had buildings. But it does not grant exemption to the surrounding 5,120 acres purchased by Dia "to preserve the vista of the field and keep the viewer's experience from miscellaneous structures." The ruling states that this land cannot be tax-exempt because it "is not used substantially, directly and primarily for educational purposes." In attempting to establish a legal basis for determining the taxability of the land, the ruling imposes a definition of educational value on *The Lightning Field* that was contrary to Dia's own conception of the artwork, in which the clutter of other buildings would fundamentally mar the viewer's experience. This did not, however, prevent Dia from holding on to the taxable land, illustrating that the Foundation took advantage (here, in terms of the partial tax exemption) of the compulsory framing of its activities as educational, but did not allow that framing to circumscribe its commitment to the artist's vision.

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[198] Dia Art Foundation certificate of incorporation, August 27, 1980. Dia Art Foundation archives. Curator Yasmil Raymond provided me with this certificate.

[199] Telephone interviews with Michael Govan, February 13, 2012; Charles Wright, May 3, 2011; and Lynne Cooke, April 1, 2011. I discuss this lack of public accessibility in greater detail in Chapter 1.

[200] New Mexico tax ruling 714-82-10 (formerly 82-12), issued October 18, 1982.

[201] The ruling states: "the theory behind a grant of exemption is that the public gain a substantial benefit in lieu of a tax base. Use rather than ownership is the test in determining

Only following the Foundation's reorganization of 1983-86 did the board and staff connect the concept of education Dia deployed more clearly to programs designed to serve the public. The shift toward a bigger emphasis on public programming, including educational programming, was signaled by the board's decision to change Dia's name from Dia Art Foundation to Dia Center for the Arts in 1990. The press release announcing this change states that the new name "more

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tax exempt status. … From this directives is derived the rule requiring a showing of direct, immediate, primary, and substantial use for educational purposes in establishing the right to an exemption."

adequately represent[s] the diverse range of cultural and educational activities currently undertaken by Dia … The name change also serves to correct the misperception that Dia is a private family foundation and grant-making organization."[202] In the same move, the new name thus framed Dia as an interdisciplinary provider of diverse public activities, and as a beneficiary, instead of a source, of charitable giving.

Dia's formal art education program was founded two years following the name change, in 1992-93, by Brighde Mullins. Mullins is a writer and poet who was hired as a coordinator for Dia's poetry series. She created the program based largely on her own initiative, with the support of Director Charles Wright and Wright's successor Michael Govan.[203] Mullins developed a program that placed a heavy emphasis on training teachers, through creating year-long paid fellowships for teachers in the surrounding school district that would bring them to Dia and connect them with visiting artists and poets. She describes the process of establishing the program as one of "educating Dia about what education is."[204] Mullins relates that initially, the educational programming encountered resistance as it "brought in a different level of energy" to Dia's "elite" context. The program involved holding workshops in the exhibition spaces, which was particularly challenging to the curatorial staff. But ultimately, Mullins says, the whole staff was able to see the benefit of the program.

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[202] Dia Art Foundation press release, "Dia Art Foundation Changes Name to Dia Center for the Arts," September 21, 1990, http://www.diacenter.org/press_releases/main/188, accessed June 12, 2012.

[203] Mullins did extensive research in order to discover what kind of program would be "right" for Dia. Though there were models for strong programs at other New York institutions, such as Philip Yenawine's program at MoMA, Mullins believes that Dia needed a program with a more experiential approach: "Rather than having something like, the kind of program that MOMA had, where they had a sort of built-in audience of people who were coming, I felt that our mission was as much to help describe what the art meant to young people as much as it was to provide the experience. I guess that's the difference; Dia is *so* experiential, all art is, but standing in front of a canvas is different than standing in a room full of horse hair. And the total somatic engagement that it takes to experience that is very freeing. And I think it requires a kind of attentiveness that is just very different from what they were doing at the Met, or MOMA." Telephone interview with Brighde Mullins, April 28, 2011.

Throughout the mid-to-late 1990s and early 2000s, not only the art education program itself grew, but also its prominence in Dia's public self-presentation through press releases and in the applications it made for public funding. Starting in approximately 1997, Dia began to generate multiple press releases on activities related to the education program, such as student exhibitions in the galleries.[205] Also, a passing mention of the education program became a standard presence in all of Dia's press releases, regardless of topic.[206] Similarly, in the grant applications Dia made to the NEA from the mid-1990s onward, the art education programs are always cited as a cornerstone of Dia's attempts at public outreach. The NEA grant applications cite Dia's outreach as both a demonstration of the organization's deservedness of funding, and as a reason for which more funding must be awarded. For example, a 1997 application for a grant for publications on Beuys and Blinky Palermo states that the publication of monographs is "the culmination of Dia's growth as an institution" and is part of its commitment "to making its collections more accessible by putting them on view and [generating] documentation."[207] In this statement, the production of single-artist monographs – an activity that might easily have been framed solely in terms of a commitment to artistic vision – is presented using a vocabulary of public accessibility and educational value.

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[204] Telephone interview with Brighde Mullins, April 28, 2011.

[205] See for example the May 24, 1999 press release "The 1998-99 Arts Education Student Exhibition at Dia Center for the Arts," which describes Dia's art education program as follows: "Dia's Arts Education Program is unique among museum education programs in that it works most directly with teachers. There are currently eight teachers from five junior high schools participating in the Dia's Art Education Program. The teachers specialize in diverse subjects such as Latin, Spanish, English, Earth Science, and Art. After having integrated material from the Arts Education Program into their classes, the teachers may reach 100 students in the course of a day. The participating schools, most from the Chelsea neighborhood, are Booker T. Washington, New York City Lab School, Manhattan Country School, Clinton School, and the O. Henry Learning Center." http://www.diacenter.org/press_releases/main/131, accessed June 19, 2012.

[206] For example, the September 8, 1997 press release entitled "Tim Rollins and K.O.S.: *Prometheus Bound* for Artists' Web Projects" contains the following description of Dia: "Dia Center for the Arts is a tax-exempt charitable organization. Established in 1974, the organization has become one of the largest in the United States dedicated to contemporary art and contemporary culture. In fulfilling this commitment, Dia sustains diverse programming in

Mullins' model, in which connections with teachers were the basis for developing programming and curriculum, was transplanted to Beacon, New York when Dia opened its museum Dia:Beacon there.[208] Dia:Beacon inhabits the building of a former Nabisco box factory, following a global trend of the revitalization of disused industrial structures as centers of cultural capital.[209] The building, which had stood empty since 1991, was initially for sale by a subsidiary of International Paper

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poetry, visual arts, education, and critical discourse and debate." http://www.diacenter.org/press_releases/main/153, accessed June 19, 2012.

[207] NEA grant application 97-4172-6005, dated March 22, 1996, made by the Dia Art Foundation. Archives of the National Endowment for the Arts.

[208] Telephone interview with Brighde Mullins, April 28, 2011.

[209] Other examples include London's Tate Modern, which opened in 2000, and The Power Plant in Toronto, which opened in 1987.

for $2 million when Director Michael Govan viewed it in 1998.[210] However, Governor of New York George E. Pataki was able to negotiate the gift of the building to Dia. The Governor's intervention illustrates the high hopes for Dia's arrival to revitalize the former manufacturing town.[211] Dia:Beacon's education program, initially under the direction of Jose Luis Blondet, played an essential role in that project of revitalization, through fostering connection and goodwill between Dia and the people of Beacon.[212] The Beacon program is ambitious in its scope, aiming to serve not only the people of the town but also schools in the region more broadly. For example, the Kids Day program Dia ran in fall 2006 served over 1,000 students from the wider region.[213] In addition to programs working directly with school children, Dia:Beacon offers public outreach programs intended to keep students and their families returning to the museum, such as family tours on community free days.[214]

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[210] Erica Stewart, "PreservationNation Blog - Thinking Outside the Box: An Artful Adaptive Use Project in Hudson Valley." http://blog.preservationnation.org/2010/10/15/thinking-outside-the-box-an-artful-adaptive-use-project-in-hudson-valley/#.USfYPOhTvjg.

[211] Carol Vogel writes: "Beacon is an economically depressed town about an hour north of Manhattan, and its location offered the opportunity to combine culture and urban renewal. So eager is the state to transform this corner of the Hudson Valley into a thriving tourist destination that state and local governments have contributed a total of $2.7 million toward the museum's construction. The project is expected to created about 20 jobs and to attract about 100,000 visitors a year, and Mr. Govan said it would generate about $7.4 million annually in tourist revenue." Carol Vogel, "An Old Box Factory Is a Haven for New Art." *New York Times* April 23, 2003.

[212] Jose Luis Blondet stresses the importance of the education program in creating a connection between Beacon and its host community. Telephone interview with Jose Luis Blondet, January 17, 2012.

[213] NEA grant application 05-5100-8031, dated June 3, 2005, made by the Dia Art Foundation. National Endowment for the Arts archive.

[214] "Dia Beacon Education Outline September 2009," Dia Art Foundation. This document also discusses Dia:Beacon's partnerships with various institutions, including Bard College, to create internships for graduate students. The community free days are mentioned in various Dia press releases, including the October 3, 2005 press release "Dia art Foundation Opens

The current importance of education to Dia revolves around two distinct pivots. The first is its commitment to spreading awareness of the importance of artistic vision and transcendent artistic experience. The second is the cultivation of a public image that facilitates obtaining diverse forms of financial support, a project greatly aided by ideas of outreach akin to those espoused by Group Material. In the 2000s, Dia began to obtain funding for the art education program not only from the NEA, but also from foundations not associated solely with giving to the arts.[215] For example, between 2004 and 2011 Dia received $560,000 for its public outreach and educational programs at Beacon from the Dyson Foundation. Dyson makes grants to organizations in New York's Hudson Valley for projects that impact "the lives of the region's residents, most importantly those who are economically disadvantaged."[216] Also, in 2010, Dia received a $10,000 grant from the Keith Haring Foundation, for program support toward the school partnership program with the museum of the Hispanic Society of America in New York. Fawn Wilder, a grant officer at the Haring Foundation, explained that the art educational programming "is the thread of what [Dia does] that's most compatible with our funding mission," which focuses on

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New Education Learning Lab at Dia:Beacon Riggio Galleries," http://www.diacenter.org/press_releases/main/55, accessed June 19, 2012.

[215] For example, in 2005, the year in which they applied for support for the Kids Day program, Dia received a grant of $20,000 from the NEA to support the Beacon education programs. http://www.nea.gov/grants/recent/disciplines/Artsed/05artsed.html, accessed June 13, 2012.

[216] http://www.dysonfoundation.org/grantmaking, accessed June 12, 2012. Dia has received four grants from the Dyson Foundation: in 2004 ($75,000), 2005 ($150,000), in 2008 ($195,000), and in 2011 ($140,000). The first two grants were awarded for Dia:Beacon's public outreach programs in local communities, including programs involving youth. The 2008 and 2011 grants are designated as "multi-year support for Dia's public education and outreach programs." See the grant-finding aid on http://www.dysonfoundation.org.

HIV/AIDS service organizations, and services to youth.[217] In both of these instances Dia, based on its intensified art education and public outreach programming, was able to obtain funding from sources to which it would not previously have had access.

These forms of outreach undertaken by Dia share common ground with Group Material's commitment to broadening the audience. The public outreach activities in turn become expedient to Dia in its ongoing search for funding, but that expediency is not Dia's only investment in education. Equally important to Dia is the desire to disseminate knowledge about its commitment to sovereign artistic vision and transcendent aesthetic experience. In other words, though Dia now mobilizes an apparatus of educational outreach that shares core values with Group Material's *Democracy*, the model of aesthetic subjectivity that Dia values remains highly individualist and transcendent, in stark opposition to Group Material's interest in differences and social context. This constancy of commitment to the autonomy of art is expressed by Dia's current institutional representatives, including Curator Yasmil Raymond, who stressed to me the continuity of Dia's mission since its earliest founding.[218] Dia's constancy of commitment to a transcendent model of aesthetic experience is also reflected in the fact that the highly political quality of Group Material and Rosler's projects seems to be an anomaly in the history of Dia's exhibition programming.[219]

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[217] Telephone interview with Fawn Wilder, December 9, 2011.

[218] Telephone interview with Yasmil Raymond, December 1, 2011.

[219] A recent exception to this is Dia's collaboration with Swiss artist Thomas Hirschhorn. In 2012, Dia showed Hirschhorn's work *Timeline: Work in Public Space*, which documents Hirschhorn's various public, and often participatory, interventions. In 2013, Dia will present

Ultimately, it is Dia's commitment to transcendent aesthetic experience, undisturbed by political and social content, that has been its biggest draw for private funders, namely the Lannan Foundation and Leonard Riggio of Barnes and Noble. The concept of education therefore functions in the current Dia as a hinge between two constituencies of funders. It does so by connecting to both the investments of these donors, who support an idea of artistic autonomy and transcendent experience that they seek to promote in the world, and the demands of public and private funders such as the NEA, the Haring Foundation, and Dyson, which value art activities involving an aspect of outreach to underprivileged populations.

The financial support Dia has received from the Lannan Foundation and from Riggio appears to revolve strongly around Dia's founding goal of supporting extraordinary artistic vision, and much less around an idea of public outreach. Though the funding Dia has received from the NEA constitutes a steady trickle, the support of Lannan and Riggio form the big waves that have kept it moving forward. Patrick Lannan Jr., with whom Director Charles Wright originally cultivated a relationship, has given or loaned Dia art totaling over $15 million, and has made numerous grants for operating costs and site-specific projects.[220] Riggio donated over $30 million, making possible the construction of Dia:Beacon. In 2001, Lannan provided $1.6

Hirschhorn's *Gramsci Monument*, the last of Hirschhorn's participatory monuments, at an off-site venue in NYC. I believe that this recent collaboration with Hirschhorn, whose practice has come to signify the epitome of political engagement in the global contemporary art scene, stresses the relevance of my analysis here of the important of social engagement for Dia. See Dia Art Foundation, "Thomas Hirschhorn, *Timeline: Work in Public Space*." http://www.diaart.org/exhibitions/main/121. Accessed February 21, 2013.

[220] Vogel cites this $15 million figure in "An Old Box Factory Is a Haven for New Art."

million for work on Michael Heizer's *City* project in the Nevada desert, a work that was begun in 1972, and $650,000 for James Turrell's *Roden Crater*, begun in 1979, neither of which have yet been completed or made accessible to the public.[221] In other words, had Lannan's central goal been public outreach, it could have donated much more effectively elsewhere. Riggio, for his part, describes his attraction to Dia in highly personalized terms that echo the emphasis Dia's founders placed on the mystical quality of aesthetic experience. Riggio was first drawn to Dia when he visited a 1997 exhibition of Richard Serra's *Torqued Elipses* at the Chelsea gallery. Riggio states that he "had an epiphany when [he] saw the Serras," which brought up in him a feeling impossible to express in words: "You try to articulate a feeling. But then you say, 'I love this piece.' And that is enough."[222]

There is a night-and-day contrast between Riggio's model of aesthetic experience and the idea of social subjectivity espoused by Group Material and Martha Rosler. Choreographer Yvonne Rainer dramatizes this contrast in her preface to Group Material and Rosler's project books, in which she critiques exactly the kind of attitude Riggio asserts. Rainer writes:

> Art that edifies and makes your spirit soar; art that gives you a taste of inspired madness; art that enhances and validates your superior taste; art that

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[221] These grants are listed in the Lannan Foundation's 2001 990-PF. The staff of the Lannan Foundation and Patrick Lannan Jr. did not return my requests for information about the foundation's interest in Dia.

[222] Joe Nocera, "Money in New York; The Patron Gets a Divorce." *New York Times* October 14, 2007.

> contains discomfiting messages in beautiful wrappings; art that testifies to the universality of the lone, suffering, melancholic artistic impulse. You didn't find such art in the shows curated by Group Material and Martha Rosler … The artist's melancholy was here transformed into grief, rage, and social activism by and for those fallen to AIDS, civic neglect, homelessness, political mendacity.[223]

Group Material and Rosler's projects indeed marked a departure from this romantic discourse. But it appears, from Riggio's statement and from the projects Lannan has supported, that it is precisely that romantic approach to art that has kept Dia alive and growing since *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…*. Dia never made a broad shift toward the type of overtly political art represented by Group Material and Rosler's practice. Instead, *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* constituted a moment of experimental exhibition programming for Dia, which generated new discourses about audience diversity and outreach. The idea of outreach to a diverse audience inhered in Dia as an institution. In the process, that idea became detached from Group Material and Rosler's desire for collective politicization, coming instead to support Dia's more conservative, individualizing model of subjectivity. In that model, aesthetic experience is imagined as something outside social context, or even language (witness Riggio's representation of the inadequacy of language to convey aesthetic experience: "You try to articulate a feeling. But then you say, 'I love this piece.'").

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[223] Yvonne Rainer, "Preface: The Work of Art in the (Imagined) Age of Unalienated Exhibition," in Wallis, *Democracy*, xvii.

This difference in position between Dia, on the one hand, and Group Material and Rosler, on the other, can also be understood in terms of how each envisioned the goal of education through art. Dia's education programs reconcile its commitment to the sovereign value of art with an institutional image devoted to the public good. Dia Curator Yasmil Raymond underscores that Dia's education programs are an extension of its core commitment to the experience of art.[224] Simultaneously, Dia's framing of its educational activities in grant applications resonates with 1980s NEA chair Frank Hodsoll's claims that art should promote the public good by building students' individual skills in critical thinking and analysis. For example, a 2002 application Dia made to the NEA under the category of school-based art education states: "By exposing students to innovative art and involving them in its creation, the [art education] program aims to engender self-confidence and curiosity about new forms of creative expression. The students' hand-on projects strengthen skills in critical thinking, questioning, and evaluation."[225]

This statement displays a tangible connection with Group Material's desire to have children participate in creating works for their show, and as such to make the gallery a place where their concerns could be made "visually real."[226] But though these skills described in Dia's NEA application are described as "critical," the goal here is very different than Group Material's invitation to children and teachers to critique politically the systems in which they lived and learned. Whereas the progress that Group Material sought to generate through mobilizing the concept of education was envisioned by the artists as a collective political process, in the 2002 grant application, concepts of outreach and diversity convey an idea of progress in the individual subject, the child her- or himself. Instead of reaching a collective analysis of the conditions that produce their difference, as did the children who created *Question Marks* for the "Education and Democracy" exhibition, the subjects of the art education program are being reached out to in order to be trained in uniform, transferrable skills. This training occurs across an exposure to "innovative art," which delivers a transformative experience that speaks across divides of privilege in order to foster skills in the students.

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[224] Telephone interview with Yasmil Raymond, December 1, 2011.

[225] NEA grant application 03-5100-8067, dated August 12, 2002, submitted by the Dia Art Foundation. National Endowment for the Arts archives.

[226] Group Material letter to teachers, May 6, 1988. Group Material Collection, Series I, box 2, folder #9: "Democracy (Correspondence)," Fales Library.

The idea of art's outreach to a diverse audience was one which Group Material originally framed as something different from the practices of major art institutions. However, the relationship between Group Material and Dia dramatizes the process by which, during the 1980s, institutions adapted the ideal of active audience engagement that arose from the alternative scene, in order to facilitate their own goals and survival. As such, this ideal of audience engagement was no longer necessarily connected to the leftist political contingent of the arts community that promoted it through the earlier part of the decade.

Artistic Labor

At stake in this narrative of the encounter between Group Material and Dia is the larger question of how to understand the evolution, at the end of the twentieth century, of relationships between art institutions and politicized art practices. The fast changing nature of these relationships is especially evident in the trajectory of Group Material's career from a small alternative space to a major contributor to high-profile exhibitions, as illustrated by Ault's comparison of the two Whitney Biennials, which I discussed in the introduction to this chapter. This theme of institutions' increased attraction to Group Material's practice returns in an unpublished interview conducted by Michel Oren with Doug Ashford in 2000. In this interview, Oren and Ashford discuss the absorption of Group Material's curatorial practice, of combining art with non-art objects, into mainstream institutions. Ashford argues that this was a way to solve the "museum crisis" of the late 1970s to the late '80s, "and what museums were going to do to figure out how to relate to larger audiences."[227]

Ault's and Ashford's comments track a change in the most visible form of institutional practice, that is, the kind of art that institutions chose to show. My analysis of the relationship between Group Material and Dia demonstrates that what institutions learned from the alternative art scene was not limited to exhibition content. Instead, this exchange concerned a larger shift in the transformation of institutional practices. That transformation has shaped how Dia and other institutions manage the relationship between their own survival and the aesthetic practices of subject formation in which they engage. Both Group Material's mobilization of the concept of education and Dia's development of an education program or changing public image form part of a larger discourse dealing with the social impact of art, which grew in size and force during the 1980s.[228]

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[227] "Doug Ashford, interviewed by telephone by Michel Oren, 12/16/00," Group Material Collection, series II, box 5, folder 23, Fales Library.

This examination of the institutional work performed by a vocabulary of art's power, to which not only Dia staff but also Group Material as artists contributed, demands that we consider the question of artists' labor in institutions more broadly. Unlike the many artists who worked at Dia, as gallery attendants, as visiting artists in the education program, and in many other functions besides, Group Material was clearly engaged by Dia in order to produce art. But the discursive work that the group's art performed contributed to a larger institutional evolution of Dia that was not limited to its exhibition program. As such, the question that needs to be posed is not only that of whether or not artists were working for institutions, but rather, what kinds of work they were performing, and how those forms of labor were changing. This is a question with which other artists in the 1980s engaged in practices of institutional critique were concerned, such as Andrea Fraser.[229]

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[228] I understand a discourse, following Michel Foucault, to be a group of "serious" speech acts that produce a certain object of knowledge. For Foucault, a discourse is not a coherent set of statements that produce a coherent object, but is instead full of breaks, gaps, and fissures. These limits are a part of the discourse, and shape the way it organizes statements and positions from which to speak. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith (London: Tavistock, 1972). Dreyfus and Rabinow provide a clear analysis of Foucault's description of the elements of the discursive formation in *Michel Foucault*, 58-78.

[229] Fraser posed as a museum tour guide in *Museum Highlights* (1989), thereby examining the relationship between the forms of labor performed by artists and those performed by other laborers in the institution. See Jackson, *Social Works*, 118-20, for a discussion of Fraser's act of inhabiting the institution in this performance, including her manipulation of concepts of class and taste.

Art administrator John Kreidler convincingly argues that between 1957 and 1990, in the era of arts funding inaugurated by the Ford Foundation arts grants, the US non-profit arts sector blossomed. It did so based on the availability of a large population of young, enthusiastic, well-educated cultural workers, who were willing to forego monetary compensation in favor of non-monetary rewards connected to involvement with art.[230] Simultaneously, Julia Bryan-Wilson argues that at the end of the 1960s, the demands made on museums by the Art Workers Coalition (AWC) – that museums should provide benefits for artists such as regular stipends and health insurance – implicated museums as "management" to artists-as-workers.[231] Ironically, it seems that the AWC's demands on the part of artists came in the midst of a period characterized by artists' mass willingness to work without the kinds of benefits and wages enjoyed by their peers in other sectors. The demand that Bryan-Wilson identifies, in which artists ask institutions to act like their employers, marked a new closeness between artists and institutions, specifically at the moment when the AWC's vocal protests at MoMA and other institutions made these parties seem most strongly opposed.[232] Despite that increased closeness, the AWC was able to maintain an image of staunch opposition to institutional power. But the institutional embrace of political artistic practices in the 1980s created circumstances in which the lines between artists' political resistance and museums' institutional power were much harder to draw. This has become increasingly evident since the mid-1990s, as Dia and other institutions have used concepts developed in an alternative milieu, including accessibility and diversity, in order to ensure institutional survival.

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[230] John Kreidler, "Leverage Lost: Nonprofit Arts in the Post-Ford Era." *Motion Magazine* February 16, 1996. http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/lost.html, accessed June 16, 2012.

[231] Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers*, 178-9.

[232] For example, in 1970 members of GAAG (Guerilla Art Action Group), a radical offshoot of the AWC, demonstrated at MoMA in front of Picasso's *Guernica*. They held up posters that showed a picture of women and children slaughtered the My Lai massacre with the phrase "Q: And babies? A: And babies" superimposed on the image. The protest not only drew attention to the war as such, but also to MoMA's own lack of explicit anti-war protest. In addition, AWC conducted various actions aimed at highlighting the involvement of the Rockefellers in the Vietnam War. Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers,* 20-3.

Group Material's practice of the 1980s and early 1990s was characterized by the attempt to formulate political resistance in the midst of these radical changes in their relationships with institutions. Their attempts in this regard created, in their practice, a strong ambivalence about the definition of art itself. Group Material's practice appears suspended between a faith in the power of representation and a perception of the necessity of dissolving art into life, through their exhibitions and through audience participation. In relation to these concerns, the concept of education served, in *Democracy*, as a discursive tool with which the group was able to make a claim for progress and change.

Again, a comparison with Beuys is useful in highlighting the specificity of Group Material's practice in this regard. Starting in 1961, Beuys held a professorship at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. The Ministry for Science and Research of North Rhine Westphalia dismissed him from this position in 1972, in the wake of ongoing disputes between Beuys and the academy administration about his political activities and refusal to cap the size of his classes. Beuys resisted the dismissal in court, and following a series of hearings between 1972 and 1978, won the case. He thereby gained the privilege to keep his title of professor in Düsseldorf and his room in the academy, which he used for the activities of the Free International University.[233] Images of Beuys teaching show him seated at the center of tens or even hundreds of students, a charismatic leader holding the group in rapt attention.[234] Reading this history, the figure of Beuys appears as a one of radical resistance to the institutional system of West German state-run education. He was a civil servant working within the bureaucratic system but fighting it publicly in order to carve out a space for democratic dialogue. For Group Material, on the other hand, teaching work as temporary adjuncts and as high school teachers represented a reality that was far from Beuys' secure position as a permanent professor at a state-run institution.[235] Group Material was part of the phenomenon that Kreidler describes, the generation willing to take on low-paid, temporary, and part-time work in order to pursue the non-monetary reward of producing art. In *Democracy*, a concept of political pedagogy was not the battleground of the artists' opposition to their host institution or to institutionality in general, as it was with Beuys. Rather, it was a means of negotiating the dissolution of the visible polarity between resistance and capitulation.

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[233] Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys*, 265-76. The Free International University was an organization Beuys founded in 1973 together with Klaus Staeck and Georg Meistermann. The FIU was intended as a center for research and dialogue that would supplement the existing educational system, while also campaigning for greater democratic quality within that system.

[234] On the question of Beuys and charisma, see the insightful essay by Canadian artist Vera Frenkel including in *Joseph Beuys: The Reader.* Vera Frenkel, "Discontinuous Notes on and After a Meeting of Critics, by One of the Artists Present" in Mesch and Michely, *Joseph Beuys: The Reader*, 127-33. Barbara Lange, in her essay included in the same anthology, argues that in his *Fat Transformation Piece/Four Blackboards* (1972) at the Guggenheim, Beuys sought to establish a pedagogical relationship with reviews, but not to renounce his positions of authority. Lange writes: "The enquiry he repeated – 'Questions? You have questions?' – reveals that Beuys did not aspire to change roles, where he then would have had to give up his position of transmission, or his role as a teacher." Barbara Lange, "Questions? You Have Questions?: Joseph Beuys' Artistic Self-Presentation in *Fat Transformation Piece/Four Blackboards* (1972), in Mesch and Micheley, *Joseph Beuys: The Reader*, 181-2.

[235] Ashford, in the interview with Oren, states that once the group members started working full-time at jobs other than art production, it greatly increased their ability to do projects by providing more financial stability.

Within this space of instability, Group Material attempted to come to terms with two opposing drives in its relationship to the audience. On the one hand, the group desired to be the audience, a situation materialized in the participatory forums of *Democracy*. On the other hand, it believed that as engaged artists it was their role to facilitate the materialization of representations that would bring new collective insight into social and political processes. For Documenta 5 in 1972, Beuys created a work entitled *Dürer, ich führe persönlich Baader + Meinhoff durch die Dokumenta* (*Dürer: I will personally conduct Baader and Meinhoff through Documenta*), consisting of two signs mounted on sticks like protest placards, bearing the words of the work's title. Insofar as the work proposes the militant Red Army Faction activists Andreas Baader and Ulrike Meinhoff as the audience, Beuys' piece imagines a political radicalization of audience subjectivity.[236] At the same time, it is Beuys who will lead them and not *vice versa*; he will maintain his role of teacher, of leader, of enlightener. In Group Material's case, we might sooner imagine an invitation to Baader and Meinhoff, and anyone else interested, to come and talk, not to be led but to explore the exhibition with the artists. Depending on how many people showed up, this situation might become quite chaotic, with everyone attempting to lead each other in different directions, with conversations or the occasional argument started, broken off, and taken up again. The concept of education was powerful, for Group Material, because at least, at the end of the tour, it would be possible to establish a narrative that would give this event purpose, if only in its transformation of the group themselves: a "summation so to speak of what we learned."[237]

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[236] In 1972, at the time of Beuys' work for Documenta, tensions were running high in Germany surrounding the Baader-Meinhoff Group, or Red Army Faction. Following an intense manhunt, in the wake of a series of attacks that killed 34 people in total in the late 1960s and early '70s, Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, Ulrike Meinhoff, Holger Meins, and Jan-Carl Raspe were arrested in June 1972.

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[237] Page of typed notes labeled "Julie," Group Material Collection, series I, box 2, folder #18: "Democracy (Notes, Drafts, Statements for Book," Fales Library.

Chapter 3 - Pedagogy from Participation to Documentation: Martha Rosler's Collaboration with Homeward Bound

In August 2009, an exhibition opened at the art gallery e-flux in New York City entitled *If You Lived Here Still*. Curated by Anton Vidoke, this show exhibited documentation of artist Martha Rosler's project *If You Lived Here…*, held at the Dia Art Foundation in New York in 1989. *If You Lived Here…* at Dia was a project explicitly concerned with the question of visibility, in that it revolved around Rosler's attempt to make homelessness and anti-gentrification activism visible within the space of the gallery. That act of making activism visible was always connected, for Rosler, to the issue of the project's documentation. During the project, Rosler was strongly invested in how Dia photodocumented participation in the work. After it was over, she proved a fastidious archivist of her own project, collecting boxes of correspondence, press clippings, guest books, exhibition checklists, and grant applications made by Dia. For the e-flux archive show, a selection of this material was displayed on the walls and beneath glass on a series of wooden tables. Most of the files were presented in eight boxes, presumably the boxes in which they had resided in Rosler's home and in that of Dan Wiley, her assistant for *If You Lived Here…*. These boxes were placed on a shelf, from which the viewer could take them in order to view the contents [Fig. 20]. The material displayed on the walls combined documents from the 1980s with contemporary posters and print material dealing with anti-gentrification and housing activism.[238]

Rosler and Vidokle did an interview with Media Farzin for *Art in America*, in which Rosler primarily discussed the original *If You Lived Here…*, and Vidokle the genesis of the archive project. Vidokle, who organized the *Martha Rosler Library* at e-flux in 2005-06, states that he became interested in *If You Lived Here…* through a lecture by art historian Nina Möntmann.[239] He then encouraged Rosler to include material about the project in talks she was giving, which led to the discovery that she had archival material pertaining to it in storage.[240] When they opened the boxes, "one of the first documents I saw," relates Vidokle, "was a letter from Charles Wright, Dia's director, which was absolutely fascinating – and so I asked Martha if she would like to present the archive to the public at e-flux."

Though Vidokle presents the value and interest of Wright's letter as self-evident, the somewhat unusual structure of the e-flux show – an exhibition of documentation of an exhibition – demands that we look more closely at the status and import of the document of participation. What counts as a "document" of participation in the first place, and what kinds of information do different documents communicate? Papers, photographs, audio recordings, and other ephemera all fall into this category, but provide us with fundamentally different imaginaries of a past project. Moreover, documents, like Wright's letter, may shed light on the perspective of one participant, or on a small part of the process of the work, but can never make the past project known in its entirety. Second, there is the question of the forms of institutional and artistic authority that are exercised in the process by which artifacts become accepted as documents in the first place. Performance historian Mechtild Widrich argues convincingly that for any artifact to be accepted as a document, authority must be exercised.[241] Because of the inseparability of institutional authority from the question of documentation, Rosler's *If You Lived Here…* at Dia, which attempted to use participation in order to counter dominant institutional and artistic authority, seems to demand a particularly close attention to the ways in which historians and curators make use of its documentation.[242]

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[238] The show was exhibited at e-flux August 28 to November 14, 2009, at Casco in Utrecht from January 17 to March 14, 2010 and at La Virreina Centre de la Imatge from October 29, 2010 to January 30, 2011.
[239] For the online version of the *Martha Rosler Library*, see http://www.e-flux.com/projects/library/ (accessed February 11, 2012). See Möntmann's dissertation, *Kunst Als Sozialer Raum: Andrea Fraser, Martha Rosler, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Renee Green*. Cologne: König, 2002.
[240] Media Farzin, "Still Here: An Interview with Martha Rosler and Anton Vidokle." *Art in America* (Sept. 9, 2009). http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-opinion/conversations/2009-09-09/interview-with-martha-rosler-and-anton-vidokle/

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[241] Mechtild Widrich, "Process and Authority: Marina Abramović's *Freeing the Horizon* and Documentarity." *Grey Room* 47 (Spring 2012): 80-97.

[242] The broader question of how the archives of political art are used has been raised by artist and critic Gregory Sholette. In *Dark Matter*, Sholette points to the way in which archives of political art do not have stable, obvious meanings, but are vulnerable to shift depending on changes in their institutional context. He specifically discusses the recent incorporation of the Political Art Documentation/Distribution (PAD/D) archive into the archives of the Museum of Modern Art. Sholette argues that in this instance, the archive becomes a sort of heart of darkness at the centre of the institution, "an internally exiled exclusion, like a crypt or tomb that harbors meaning through a kind of negation (deathly remains) for the jurisdiction of the household above it." Gregory Sholette, *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture*. New York: Pluto Press, 2011, 9. In recent years, the problem of how archives change once they enter an institution has become a serious point of concern for artists active in New York's alternative art scene during the 1980s. Some, such as the members of Group Material, accept the risks and benefits of transferring their collections to archives such as the Downtown Collection at NYU's Fales Library. Such a transfer requires the negotiation of complex logistics, down to ensuring that the physical arrangement of artifacts will not erode meanings present in the archive. Interview with Julie Ault, May 22, 2011. Other artists, such

E-flux's *If You Lived Here Still* constitutes one attempt to reconstruct *If You Lived Here…*, and this chapter constitutes another. My own attempt has a double relationship to *If You Lived Here Still*. First, my account is dependent on the archive presented in *If You Lived Here Still*, as I did the bulk of the primary research for this chapter in the exhibition itself.[243] Simultaneously, the archive I materialize here centers explicitly around a set of methodological questions about participation documentation that are not the focus of that show. In this chapter, my navigation of the material remains of *If You Lived Here…* analyzes how documents of participation are produced, on the one hand, and how they are interpreted, on the other. I argue that the document of participation is a contested entity formed in the push and pull between the different agencies of the artist, institutional employees, and project participants. Rosler's project was explicitly preoccupied with the question of homeless people's cultural visibility or lack thereof. Viewing *If You Lived Here…* historically, we cannot engage with Rosler's own questions about the relationship between visibility, power, and subject position without also interrogating the status of the documents that make the past project visible to us in the present. To ignore the problematic status of the document, as did the e-flux documentation show, obfuscates instead of elucidates the power relationships between the various parties who interact in the participatory artwork.

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as the photographer Clayton Patterson who contributed a video to Rosler's show, resist the incorporation of their personal archives into these institutions because they see that tendency as politically damaging. Interview with Clayton Patterson, January 28, 2012.

[243] I visited the Barcelona installation of the show in December 2010.

Rosler's *If You Lived Here…* revolved conceptually around an attempt to make visible art and activism that had previously fallen outside the purview of mainstream art institutions in general, and of the historically privileged Dia in particular. Within the exhibition "Homeless," the participation of the homeless persons' activist group Homeward Bound, which had a temporary office in the gallery, was central to that attempt. On the basis of archival material, this chapter examines the terms under which Rosler was able to make Homeward Bound and their work visible: both within the visual and discursive space of Dia in 1989 and, now, in the show's documentation which served as the basis for both the book Dia published for *If You Lived Here…*, and for the e-flux show. I ask how the group was able to exercise agency in the project, given the specific possibilities and constraints inherent to the project's institutional location at Dia.

During the course of my research, I have been unable to locate any of the members of Homeward Bound in order to ask them about their experiences of participating in "Homeless." The last written reference I have found to Larry Locke, the most prominent member of the group, is a newspaper article of May 1990, in which he is cited as saying that he can make up to $200 on a good day selling the *Street News* on the Upper West Side.[244] Following that, he seems to disappear from written news records. Some of my interviewees speculated that Locke and other members of the group might be dead, given the extremely high mortality rate of urban homeless people.[245] Because of the unavailability of members of the group themselves, the archival materials held by Dia and by Rosler, and the interviews I conducted with Rosler, Dia staff, and various other participants in the project, are the only media through which I can attempt to access the question of how Homeward Bound exercised agency within "Homeless."

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[244] Kathleen Teltsch, "Tabloid Sold by the Homeless Is in Trouble." *New York Times* May 24, 1990.

This creates a fundamental methodological problem, in that my project is to a degree complicit with institutional systems, and scholarly and media discourses, in which homeless people are represented instead of representing themselves. Homeward Bound were already in a position of otherness, in terms of class and race, to the privileged, largely white, art world milieu that Dia represented. They did not have control over the institutional spaces in which their participation in "Homeless" unfolded, nor the academic and critical discourses that sought to make sense of that participation (including Rosler's, at the time, and my own, in the present). Homeward Bound were subaltern: a term that Gayatri Spivak has developed extensively, and which she defines in a 2005 essay as those removed from lines of social mobility.[246] Spivak demonstrates how because of this position, the making-visible of the subaltern is always bound up with layers of investment on the part of those who control culture's dominant organs of meaning and representation, including academics.[247] In one of the few substantive reviews of "Homeless," art critic Elizabeth Hess writes that the show arose "from an alliance between homeless people and activist artists in an effort not to create valuable objects but to investigate the value of art as a social force."[248] I agree with this assessment of the show, but simultaneously find it important to interrogate what went into that alliance: its challenges, paradoxes, and power inequalities that emerged in its forging. This is particularly necessary in order to grasp the significance of Homeward Bound's participation, and in particular to understand the relationship at stake, in that participation, between visibility and political empowerment.

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[245] Interviews with Andrew Castrucci (January 29, 2012), Bill Batson (February 7, 2012), and Alan Moore (December 22, 2011).

[246] Gayatri Spivak, "Use and Abuse of Human Rights." *boundary 2* 32, no. 1 (2005): 147.

[247] This is the central point of Spivak's landmark essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" See Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, 271-313. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988.

Here I examine the historical co-emergence, in Rosler's "Homeless," of a form of spectacle in the display of Homeward Bound, and the process by which viewers themselves became visible within the artwork. My analysis here therefore extends my discussion in Chapter 1 of how Rosler and Group Material framed the audience's participation, but introduces a level of complication to that analysis because of the starkly different levels of social privilege between different groups of participants that characterized "Homeless." For the purposes of this chapter, I define spectacle as a set of relationships that occur within the visual field, and that are defined by an unequal or non-reciprocal relationship between viewer and viewed.[249] Within the project, the members of Homeward Bound were in a sense *subjected* to visibility, in the sense that they did not control either stereotypes of homeless people within the broad culture, or the specific institutional and discursive apparatus that enabled their representation at Dia. Simultaneously, the group's members were active agents in shaping the experience of visitors to the exhibition. In the gallery show, Homeward Bound members created a set of circumstances under which not only they themselves, but also the more privileged gallery-goers, were visible participants in the project. Homeward Bound understood their interaction with gallery visitors to be a pedagogical process. That pedagogy operated through the affectively, and sometimes even invasively, poignant visibility of Homeward Bound to the public. This visibility, which was Homeward Bound's most powerful political tool, could not be definitively separated from a process of objectification.

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[248] Elizabeth Hess, "No Place Like Home." *The Village Voice* May 2, 1989.

[249] This broad definition is loosely based on Guy Debord's classic articulation of the concept. See Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994 [1967].

My analysis focuses in particular on how this dynamic of positive representation and problematic objectification operated within the photographic documentation of the group's participation in "Homeless." The photographic documentation of Homeward Bound complicates Rosler's landmark analysis of photographic objectification in her essay "In, Around, and Afterthoughts (On Documentary Photography)," (1981) in so far as the images of Homeward Bound introduce the possibility of a photography of the poor that not only objectifies but also empowers them.[250] Though Rosler has never theorized this category of empowering images explicitly, I will demonstrate that it was an implicit stake in a conflict she had with Dia staff about the terms of Homeward Bound's photographic representation.

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[250] Martha Rosler, "In, around and Afterthoughts (on Documentary Photography)." In *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*, edited by Richard Bolton, 302-40. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990 [1981].

Ultimately, Homeward Bound's investment in their participation, and Rosler's investment in the photographic documentation of that participation, both revolved a belief that the project carried a pedagogical value that could transform viewers' political positions on homelessness.

Homeward Bound's Visibility Inside and Outside the Gallery

The first thing that is obvious about Homeward Bound's participation in "Homeless" is the fact that this participation took place in spaces where it was visible to audiences, namely the gallery at 77 Wooster Street, and the "Homelessness" town hall meeting. It is important to flag from the outset the complexity, for homeless people such as the members of Homeward Bound, of the phenomenon of visibility. Rosler's "Homeless" exemplifies the larger tendency of the 1980s to cast political activism in terms of a quest for visibility. Her project's attempt to empower Homeward Bound was inseparable from its drive to generate positive representations of homeless people in a cultural context in which such representations were virtually absent. But simultaneously, for homeless people, being publicly visible is a fraught, and most often not totally voluntary, condition. For these people, success is often conceived as the ability to retreat from visibility, either by attaining the normative goals of having a home and a job, or at least by passing as someone who is housed. In his review of the show, art critic Richard Woodward describes a video included in the exhibition, in which a man named Carl described his techniques for dressing so that people could not tell he was homeless.[251] By contrast to homeless people, those with economic privilege – such as many of the visitors to the "Homeless" show – are inversely both *less* visible, in that they enjoy the protection of their own private domestic sphere, and *more* visible, in that representations of their lives abound in dominant culture. Moreover, those representations of their lives are often deployed by others in the sphere of electoral politics, a process to which homeless people have historically has less access because of their lack of mailing addresses. In the area of representational politics, homeless people are thus often objects of representation, instead of voting subjects.

When I interviewed Rosler, she spoke about Homeward Bound's participation very much in terms of the practical resources that the exhibit provided to them. She stated that the group wanted to be able to make phone calls and send faxes, and to have a place to hold meetings.[252] This is a form of support they had previously received from other organizations, such as the Food and Hunger Hotline, which in late 1988 was allowing the group to use a desk and telephone in their offices.[253] However, at Dia, Rosler and the Foundation's staff did not allot Homeward Bound a private or semi-private space out of which to work, such as, for example, the front conference room in Dia's offices at 155 Mercer Street that had been used for Group Material's closed-door roundtable discussions in early- to mid-1988. Instead, the group had a temporary office located in the gallery, surrounded by artworks on the theme of homelessness. The location of the office not only in a public space but in the gallery, a space explicitly associated with display, makes it clear that Homeward Bound's visibility itself was an important stake in this arrangement.

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[251] The video is described in Richard Woodward, "Serving up the Poor as Exotic Fare for Voyeurs?" *New York Times* June 18, 1989. Unfortunately I was not able to locate this video.
[252] Inteview with Martha Rosler, July 21, 2010.
[253] Michael Marriott, "Homeless in Park Sticking to a Cause." *New York Times* November 28, 1988.

In the gallery, the members of Homeward Bound were clearly on display to visitors to the exhibition, which some of these visitors noted with discomfort. When I interviewed artist and critic Gregory Sholette, who contributed a work to the "Homeless" exhibition, he had forgotten the name of the group but did remember their presence in the gallery. Sholette said that Homeward Bound's presence raised a number of questions at the time about "representations of homeless people in the flesh, so to speak, as being somewhat problematic."[254] Sholette's comments were echoed by Camilla Fallon, an artist who worked at Dia in the 77 Wooster Street gallery guarding the art, doing some administrative work, and fielding questions from visitors. Fallon remembered that the situation was generally an uncomfortable one for everyone involved, including Homeward Bound, as "they were kind of *on display*."[255] Andrew Castrucci of the Bullet Space art squat (a urban artists' collective and informal community center in a squatted building in the Lower East Side) also remembered feeling discomfited by the situation, and ambivalent about whether it was simply objectifying the group, or productively creating a challenging form of representation.[256] Fallon's comments in particular, that the situation was uncomfortable for *everyone*, indicate that perhaps what was disconcerting was how a feeling of display circulated among all those present, including not only Homeward Bound members but also gallery visitors and institutional employees. It seems that visitors and employees may have been, in their act of viewing Homeward Bound's "in the flesh" representation, uncomfortably aware of their own visibility, and of the crossover between the positions of viewer and viewed. I will return below to this question of the visibility of the audience, and how that visibility interacted with the power Homeward Bound exercised within the show.

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[254] Interview with Gregory Sholette, November 28, 2011.
[255] Interview with Camilla Fallon, December 6, 2011.
[256] Interview with Andrew Castrucci, January 29, 2012.

Sholette, Fallon, and Castrucci raise the question of Homeward Bound's objectification in ways that are also self-reflexive. Their comments take into account their own affective implication, in the form of the feeling of discomfort. Two art writers responding to the show were less reflective in their critique, targeting Rosler personally for what they perceived as the problematic aspect of the exhibition. Peg Tyre and Jeannette Walls wrote the following in *New York* magazine: "Artist Martha Rosler apparently believes that New Yorkers don't fully appreciate homeless people. Maybe that's why she's including some in her current show." Tyre and Walls quote a "spokesman" for Dia as stating that "Homeless" represents an unorthodox approach to a gallery show that works to transform the gallery from a passive to an "active, participatory situation," thereby empowering unsheltered people who are not "just sitting there" but can use the space to go about their work. The authors then quote "a source" with the following, contradictory opinion: "The whole thing is in very questionable taste, and some Dia staffers are upset about the situation. Some homeless people were invited to the opening of the show and were disgusted when these radical-chic downtown types in Lagerfeld clothes gawked at them."[257] The authors depict Rosler here as destructively blind to the real effects of her own act of making Homeward Bound visible. In this analysis, the authors' self-righteous caricature of Rosler comes to supplant a more nuanced reflection on the uneasy collective dynamics of visibility in the show.

The paradox of Homeward Bound's visibility with "Homeless" was not something simply imposed on them by Rosler, as Tyre and Walls imply, but was a role the group accepted with awareness of its complexity. Minutes from a meeting of Homeward Bound, entitled "Meeting Wed. Apr. 5th," show the group attempting to think through the ways in which this situation which both posed problems and offered advantages for their work. A list in these minutes under the headings "HB problems" and "justifications" contains the following items:

H B problems 1) cant sleep there
2) we not only fundraisers
3) we are on display (see below)
justifications 1) we'd take 6 people off streets
serving guys in trains + streets + drop in centers
= direct service those brainwashed
further justifications 2) Education

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[257] Peg Tyre and Jeannette Walls, "Down But Not Out in Soho." *New York* April 24, 1989.

3) Self help Madhousers from Atlanta

public demonstration temp [illegible]

4) Employment opp referrals

In these minutes, the group cites problems with their participation, including the fact that they cannot sleep in the space (an issue I will return to below). The third listed drawback, the one registered by the discomfort of visitors discussed above and which is essential for my analysis in this chapter, is the fact that they are “on display.” In the list of problems, “we are on display” is followed by the qualification “(see below),” but the rest of the notes fail to elucidate this issue, or at least to do so in a way that is legible to me in the present. Homeward Bound were willing to put up with these listed problems in favor of the “justifications,” which include at least temporarily taking people off the streets, “education,” contacts with the Atlanta-based Mad Housers activist housing collective (another group whose members also participated in the show), and referrals for employment opportunities. I will argue below that upon closer examination of Homeward Bound’s wider activities and their participation in “Homeless,” education, presented in this list underlined and with no further explanation, was the most important stake for them: their best justification for participation in Rosler’s project.

Rosler states that the specific form of Homeward Bound’s participation was determined by the group itself. She says that she had approached them with an open-ended offer of participation in the project, and that this was the format they had chosen.[258] Dan Wiley, Rosler's assistant on *If You Lived Here…* with whom she had come into contact through the Whitney Independent Study Program, had connections with Homeward Bound because he had at one point slept with them in their encampment in City Hall Park (an event to which I will return below).[259] Rosler, in "Fragments of a Metropolitan Viewpoint," her essay for the project book for *If You Lived Here…*, stresses the self-determination of Homeward Bound's participation in the project. She emphasizes positive representation as the key stake in their participation.

> [In an] instance of the self-production of meaning, the group Homeward Bound maintained an office in the gallery (and participated in the forums), as advocates for themselves and other homeless people. … Homeward Bound's organizing efforts include both substantive movements toward bettering their lives and advocacy with municipal agencies, along with attempts to reposition themselves in relation to the reigning images of homeless people. Most homeless people aren't in a position to take on these roles.[260]

Rosler here describes Homeward Bound's participation in the show not only as a self-determined act of production of meaning, but specifically as an extension of their broader activism. That activism was twofold. It included both political action geared at creating material change in their lives, and an attempt to intervene in dominant representations of homeless people, in order to create new images. Importantly, Rosler also stresses the privilege and power of Homeward Bound relative to other homeless people, many of whom are unable to carry out such activism.

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[258] Interview with Rosler, July 21, 2010.

[259] Interview with Dan Wiley, May 26, 2011.

[260] Martha Rosler, "Fragments of a Metropolitan Viewpoint." In *If You Lived Here: The City in Art, Theory, and Social Activism / A Project by Martha Rosler*, edited by Brian Wallis, 38. New York and Seattle: DIA Art Foundation with Bay Press, 1991.

Read together, Rosler's statements and the page of notes from Homeward Bound's meeting raise a number of questions. The notes are dated April 5, five days into the "Homeless" exhibition, which ran from April 1 to 29, 1989. At that point, Homeward Bound's office would already have been installed in the gallery, and as such, I read the notes as recording an attempt, within the space of the group's meeting, to think through the situation in the gallery as they had experienced it up to that point. Though Rosler states that Homeward Bound chose the form of their participation, the notes, with the lists of "problems" and "justifications," seem more to indicate an attempt to negotiate the paradoxes of a pre-existing situation.

I speculate that the terms under which Rosler was able to offer Homeward Bound a space and resources were not completely open-ended. Most likely, she was not able to simply give them *carte blanche* in terms of using Dia's spaces to work in, but was limited to offering the space that she, as an artist, controlled under the terms of her relationship with Dia, namely the space of the gallery. As I will elaborate below, the act of visibly occupying a given space was an important investment for Homeward Bound, and was central to their attempt to create politically efficacious representations of homelessness. As such, it appears that they were invested in using the condition of their visibility in the gallery to make their participation in "Homeless" have an impact on viewers. Simultaneously, though, the notes indicate that they also perceived this visibility as a constraint, as something to be cautious about, as a kind of captivity in the space of display. This does not mean that their gallery office was not an instance of the self-production of meaning, as Rosler maintains, but rather that it was not only self-determined. Rather, it was subject to institutional constraints, and involved a series of negotiations between Homeward Bound, Rosler, and Dia staff.

The clearest example of the limitations placed on Homeward Bound's use of the gallery space arose in relation to the question of whether or not they would be able to sleep there. Rosler had originally intended for Homeward Bound to be able to sleep in the gallery, and had included beds as part of the installation, for that purpose [Fig. 21].[261] After Dia made it clear that Homeward Bound would not be allowed to sleep in the space, the six beds remained in the installation, neat and somewhat minimally made up, each with a sheet and a thin blanket. The heads of the beds were arranged along a wooden wall that had been installed along a row of pillars in the gallery. On the other side of this wall was Homeward Bound's gallery office [Fig. 22]. Set in that wall were a blue-painted door and window, the window adorned with curtains on the side of the space with beds. This arrangement made it seem both as if the office and the bed space were two different rooms in one building, but also as if the office space played the outside to the inside space with the beds, as curtained

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[261] Interviews with Rosler, July 21, 2010, and Wiley, May 26, 2011.

glass windows usually denote partitions between inside and outside. Through their orderly arrangement, and also through their neatness, the beds called to mind less a personal, domestic sleeping space than an institutional one, thus evoking a homeless shelter and the regimented order with which a shelter aims to accommodate a segment of the homeless population. Richard Woodward, in a review of Rosler's show, fails to note the fact that the beds were not actually used, stating simply that the installation "included shelter for the homeless (sofa, chairs, a TV and a corridor lined with beds)."[262]

Rosler's plan to let Homeward Bound sleep in the gallery ran aground when Dia announced that the terms of its co-op share for the Wooster Street gallery space prohibited residential occupancy. In a letter dated April 7, 1989, Dia director Charles Wright explained this state of affairs to the members of the group. This letter, which was displayed under glass on one of the tables in *If You Lived Here Still*, is quite likely the "absolutely fascinating" letter that Vidokle refers to in his comments cited above. Wright's letter reads as follows:

> To the People of Homeward Bound,
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> We are sorry for the misunderstanding about our ability to open up our space at 77 Wooster Street for you to stay in. We do not actually own the space but own the shares in the building coop which gives us the right to use that space

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[262] Woodward, "Serving up the Poor as Exotic Fare for Voyeurs?"

> for our program. We are not allowed to use the space for people to live in but only to be open to the public for exhibitions and related activities. We, unfortunately, know from past dealing with the Board of Directors of the coop that we will not be allowed to consider any further use of the space.
>
> We were very pleased when Martha Rosler told us you would be participating in this project, using the space to work from. We hope it will bring you into contact with many people who would not otherwise know about your concerns and your work and who will be interested in knowing more about you and supporting you. We expect that any press coverage received about the project would discuss your organization and its work. …[263]

At the level of legality, this letter functioned to clarify the permissible use of the space, which Wright presents not as Dia's prerogative but as an external limit imposed on it by the co-op board. In addition, the letter elucidates the relationships between Dia, Rosler, and Homeward Bound. Wright points to Rosler's mediating role in the relationship between Dia and Homeward Bound, and stresses Dia's openness towards Homeward Bound's participation within a clearly defined set of parameters. Moreover, Wright emphasizes what Homeward Bound can gain from the situation: visibility in the media and the wider community.

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[263] Letter from Charles Wright, Martha Rosler personal archives.

The question of whether Homeward Bound would be able to sleep in the gallery had direct material significance for them in terms of the first justification listed in the meeting notes: "we'd take 6 people off streets." However, the question of sleeping in visible and unusual locations was also important for the group's political work, as is illustrated by their long-term encampment in front of City Hall that started in June 1988, and lasted for approximately 200 days.[264] The most detailed documentation of this occupation is found in *Sleeping With the Mayor: A True Story* (1997), a novel by former *Village Voice* journalist John Jiler. Jiler's book, which chronicles the rise and fall of Homeward Bound, provides significant insight into the importance of the group, but is simultaneously problematic as a historical source due to the degree to which the narrative is fictionalized. *Sleeping With the Mayor: A True Story* asserts the truth of its narrative even in its title. But it then opens with a disclaimer, in which Jiler states that because of the continuing stigma of homelessness, the names of some participants have been changed, and information that might identify them has been altered. In addition, Jiler states, some minor characters have been fused into composites, and dialogue is not transcribed verbatim.[265] Some figures in the narrative, though, are identified by their real names, including Homeward Bound leaders Larry Locke and Duke York, the politician Abe

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[264] Michael Marriott, "Homeless in Park Sticking to a Cause." *New York Times* November 28, 1988. Marriot, in this article, quotes a Homeward Bound member who says that at that point the encampment had been running for 178 days.

[265] John Jiler, *Sleeping with the Mayor: A True Story*. St. Paul, MN: Hungry Mind Press, 1997.

Gerges, and Marc Greenberg of the Interfaith Assembly on Housing and Homelessness, an organization which sponsored the group.

Homeward Bound's existence was bound up from the very beginning both with the question of the political power of visibility, and with complex power dynamics between the group and various institutions. As Jiler relates it, Homeward Bound was galvanized, if not initiated, by Greenberg and the Interfaith Assembly. Greenberg co-ordinated the overnight vigil on June 1st, 1988, at which Homeward Bound was originally formed.[266] It was this vigil in front of City Hall that eventually turned into the semi-permanent encampment that resulted in Homeward Bound's media visibility. According to Jiler, Greenberg set up early meetings between a not-yet-organized group of homeless people and politicians, including city council members Abe Gerges and Ruth Messinger. Greenberg also helped the group negotiate the constant threats from City Hall to clear out their encampment in the park.

In a colorful, melodramatic style with a heavy emphasis on internal dialogue, Jiler relates the development of Homeward Bound. He dramatizes the motivations and experiences of its diverse members, but also of others who come in contact with them, including the embattled mayor Ed Koch. The novel focuses in particular on Duke York and Larry Locke. York is depicted as a gifted but tragic man whose affinity for the group takes him by surprise, and Locke as charismatic yet plagued by depression and addiction. In the novel, Locke meets with a series of disillusionments about Homeward Bound's ability to create permanent change for its homeless members. He also becomes disillusioned about the propensity of public figures, including Reverend Jesse Jackson, to exploit the group for publicity purposes while failing to make any lasting personal commitment to it.

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[266] This date is given in the Homeward Bound letter sent to members, Martha Rosler personal archive, consulted December 2010.

Sleeping With the Mayor foregrounds Homeward Bound's amateur yet successful manipulation of the City Hall media. Jiler emphasizes the importance of public and media visibility, and not simply housing or resources, as a central concern for the group. As he casts it, their initial overnight vigil and then their continued inhabitation of City Hall Park were publicity stunts, intended to draw attention to the problem of homelessness leading up to the city's budget meetings. These stunts were quite successful, resulting in media coverage and in the attention of passers-by who moved through the park.[267] For example, the artist Bill Batson, who chaired the "Homelessness" town hall meeting held during the exhibition, states that he encountered Homeward Bound when walking through City Hall Park to go to work. The group impressed him with their organization and activism, and became instrumental in his own radicalization.[268]

Jiler's narrative and Batson's memory give context to the importance to Homeward Bound of whether they were allowed to sleep in Dia's gallery. During the City Hall Park encampment, sleeping in the park was central to the media attention they received. That media attention was their central means of exercising political agency. In a *New York Times* article of November 28, 1988, journalist Michael

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[267] See, for example, Marriott, "Homeless In Park Sticking to a Cause," and "City Hall Notes; 35 Homeless Protesters Stay Put in 'Kochville'." *New York Times* June 19, 1988.
[268] Interview with Bill Batson, February 7, 2012.

Marriott describes the group as “organized, stubborn and well spoken […] a study of social and political evolution, [according to] some of its most ardent supporters […] also an eyesore and a political rotten egg for the Koch administration.”[269] With this vocabulary, Marriot stresses both the literal visibility of the group (“eyesore”) and the political potency of that visibility (“rotten egg”). The term “political rotten egg” casts the group’s political power as effective is so far as it is affective, something that brings about bodily discomfort.

The participants in *If You Lived Here…* cited above – Sholette, Fallon, and Castrucci – as well as Tyre and Wall in their article, cast viewer discomfort as an unintentional or unfortunate aspect of Homeward Bound’s participation. Marriott, however, depicts it as a political tool. Jiler also depicts this affectively potent visibility as Homeward Bound’s key political asset, the biggest thing they had to offer to Interfaith and a whole network of supportive organizations that had a political investment in advocacy to end homelessness. In a letter to their members shortly following their participation in “Homeless,” the group thanks forty-two organizational sponsors, including “Dia foundation” and also Channel 41, the American Civil Liberties Union, ACT UP, the Manhattan Borough President’s Office, the Pratt Institute, the Village Voice, and multiple churches. They also thank almost seventy individual sponsors, thirteen of whom are clearly indicated as politicians, including City Council members, a senator, a congressman, and the president of the City Council.[270] These individual and organizational agents not only had something to give to Homeward Bound in terms of resources, media coverage, or political advocacy, but also something to gain in terms of how Homeward Bound made homelessness visible.

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[269] Marriott, “Homeless in Park Sticking to a Cause.”

For example, through Interfaith was well organized and was able to bring in financial resources, Homeward Bound, as a vocal, media-oriented group of homeless people, held a potential for impacting public opinion in a way that Interfaith alone did not. Twenty years after the dissolution of Homeward Bound, a history of the group is still featured on the Interfaith website, which states that Homeward Bound "became a center of public attention and altered the way the public viewed homeless people."[271] The fact that the relatively short-lived history of Homeward Bound features prominently in the self-representation of the much longer-running Interfaith Assembly testifies to the significance that Interfaith attributed to the group's ability to attract attention and thereby to change public opinions about homelessness. In the letter to their members, Homeward Bound themselves underscore their ability to appeal to the public, and specifically to do so in a way that is emotionally powerful: "No one dreamed that [a year after the Interfaith vigil on June 1, 1988] a group of homeless people from that vigil would be firmly entrenched not only in the minds of the City but in their hearts as well."[272]

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[270] Homeward Bound, letter to members, Martha Rosler personal archive, consulted December 2010.

[271] See Interfaith Assembly, "Our History." http://www.iahh.org/about/our-history (accessed January 22, 2012).

Following the successful creation of media visibility and modest political influence that resulted from Homeward Bound's act of sleeping in City Hall Park, it seems likely that the group may have wanted to entrench itself in the minds and hearts of audiences at Dia by repeating the same tactic in the gallery. In the City Hall encampment, the state of being on display was exactly what enabled the group to reach the public. During the encampment, viewers became the subjects of a politically motivated pedagogy, a process which Homeward Bound sought to repeat at Dia. There is a fundamental connection between being on display, listed as a problem in the meeting notes, and "education," which is listed as a justification.

The Audience as Pedagogical Subjects

It appears that one of the central reasons Homeward Bound decided to submit to visibility at all was their investment in propagating a specific model of audience viewership. That model of viewership was one that took the audience member as a pedagogical subject, who through Homeward Bound's own activities would come both to see homeless people in a more positive light, and to gain a new understanding of her- or himself as a site of visibility. Within "Homeless," this interpellation by Homeward Bound of the audience member as a learning subject spanned both the gallery show and the town hall meeting “Homelessness: Conditions, Causes, Cures,” at which Homeward Bound leader Larry Locke was a speaker.

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[272] Homeward Bound, letter to members, Martha Rosler personal archives, consulted December 2010.

Within the gallery, this interpellation of the viewer as a learner revolved around a casting of that viewer in the role of a homeless person. As discussed above, the beds which Rosler had originally placed in the gallery to accommodate Homeward Bound members overnight remained a part of the installation after Dia made it clear that the group was not allowed to sleep in the space. Stripped of their intended purpose, the beds retained a symbolic function of casting the gallery as if it were a homeless shelter. This impression, that the gallery was to be understood as mimicking the institutional spaces that homeless people frequent, was reinforced by the presence of Homeward Bound’s office. The office evoked a friendly, grassroots version of the type of bureaucratic government office where homeless people in New York might go to obtain the social services available to them. Despite the fact that the members of Homeward Bound were present in the gallery only on a limited basis, as I will discuss further below, having their office space there established a sense that they had a right to the space. At least within the context of the exhibition, they had a degree of control of the space that gallery visitors, who might see the show only once for a few minutes, did not.

Invited into this makeshift shelter not as collaborators in Homeward Bound’s work, but as temporary visitors, audience members were themselves cast by the installation in the role of homeless people – of transients. This was strongly underscored by the fact that soup and bread were served at the opening to the exhibition.[273] The exhibition also featured a musical performance by singers from the transitional shelter Emmaus House. The serving of soup might on one level seem to be a crass parody of a real soup kitchen, with privileged gallery-goers invited to "play homeless". But viewed in another light, it can also be read as interpellating the viewer as someone who is in need of support.[274] This support is delivered in the form of the educational content of the exhibition, which aims to create a shift in the viewer's position, placing her temporarily in the position of the recipient of charity. This change in position of the viewer to being supported visibly by the information and art in the show is allegorical for a shift in political attitude towards homelessness. The food and the beds, which are archetypal forms of support essential to survival, thus come to figure the educational support the viewer needs in learning about homelessness.

Once inside the exhibition, this support was provided to the viewer not only by Homeward Bound's office, but by the many artworks by both homeless and housed artists that provided information about homeless life, and about diverse political and emotional responses to it. Whereas it is most often homeless people who are represented in dominant culture as in need of education and improvement efforts by others (volunteers, aid organizations, the government, etc.), in "Homeless" it is the viewer who is framed as needing this assistance. The role of the viewer here is simultaneously that of the audience member and the movie extra. They observe the spectacle of the exhibition and Homeward Bound's presence in it, but are also cast by the situation as a part of that spectacle, for example as they receive and eat their soup, in front of both homeless and housed people also present in the gallery. Tyre and Wall's article inadvertently highlights the reciprocity of this gaze, though framed in a negative light, when they write that "Some homeless people were invited to the opening of the show and were disgusted when these radical-chic downtown types in Lagerfeld clothes gawked at them."[275] This framing records an overt act of observation – "gawking" – of an underprivileged group by a more privileged one, a situation which indeed sounds uncomfortable. But this mutual observation was also, I argue, inseparable from the project's activation of viewers as participants. In this relationship, Homeward Bound are the objects of observation within the gallery, but their presence and use of the space make the viewer a possible object of visibility, as well. This spectacle is asymmetrical but not totally one-sided, as neither the homeless people nor the privileged viewers are able to retreat into the safety and comfort of invisibility.

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[273] Interview with Dan Wiley, May 26, 2011. In "Fragments of a Metropolitan Viewpoint," Rosler thanks Dee Dee Halleck (of Paper Tiger Television), Molly Kovel, and Nadja Millner Larsen for providing "soup, bread, and good cheer at the 'Homeless' opening, while Emmaus House singers nourished us as well." (43)

[274] Shannon Jackson argues that performance both supports and is supported by networks of agents and institutional infrastructures. For Jackson, performance can make visible relationships of support that might otherwise remain implicit, and lead to positive "infrastructural avowal" (8). Shannon Jackson, *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics*. New York and London: Routledge, 2011.

Homeward Bound's desire to provide education to viewers, and thereby to create a new pedagogical situation that reversed typical power dynamics between the homeless and the housed, is evident in a speech given by Larry Locke at the town hall meeting "Homelessness: Conditions, Causes, Cures." The meeting, held during the

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[275] Tyre and Walls, "Down but Not out in Soho."

"Homeless" exhibition, was chaired by Bill Batson. Batson, as mentioned above, was inspired by Homeward Bound's City Hall encampment, and subsequently worked with the group on various efforts to increase service provision for those who are homeless.[276] On the panel, Locke delivers his speech in a voice that is slow and deliberate, almost to the point of sounding suspenseful.

> Thank God for all the things that he's blessed us with, in the park and out of the park. You know – we – have emerged, as a group of homeless people, to the extent that we now, some of us, are *working* – in the capacity of – educating people like yourself. And I feel very good about that. [pause] Instead of – *you* – just educating *me*, I have the opportunity now to educate you to some extent. [pause] And that's the idea that's going around the homeless community. Hey, *we*, in fact, have something to offer. We can educate people too! So wonderful.[277]

In this speech, Locke locates the group's very emergence in the degree to which they are able to function as educators, and not only the recipients of education and charity. Working, often a politically contentious issue surrounding homelessness (Batson states that Mayor Koch used to yell "Get a job!" at the members of Homeward Bound as he walked through the park), is linked in Locke's speech to the practice of education.[278] Locke addresses the audience as other, “people like yourself,” implicitly interpellating its members as privileged. In doing so, he highlights their status as visible members of a generalized category. Locke uses the concept of education rhetorically to generate a reciprocal relationship, one which comes to replace middle class viewing of homeless people as objectified others, or as Rosler puts it elsewhere, in her well-known essay on documentary photography, as specimens of “a physically coded social reality.”[279] In the process, education becomes a figure for reciprocity as such. Significantly, Locke does not posit a relationship of sameness or even of equality between homeless people and the privileged audience of the open forum, but rather proposes an inversion of roles. At an affective level, Locke’s heavy Southern drawl, and his act of thanking God, assert difference from the mainly white, urban, relatively liberal milieu of Dia. Locke’s voice and his mention of God call up a specifically African-American, gospel-influenced form of aural address, which differs significantly from the oratory of the other members of the panel.

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[276] Interview with Batson, February 7, 2012.
[277] Audiocassette recordings, Dia Art Foundation archives, consulted January 2011.

Locke closes his remarks with another role reversal, when instead of thanking Dia as a host institution, he states that Homeward Bound is “helping sponsor the project at Dia.” He thus casts the group in a position of power to support Dia and Rosler’s project, instead of as the recipients of charity or support through the project. In this way, Locke points to the institutional frame within which Homeward Bound’s participation takes place, but depicts that frame less as something that places limitations or qualifications on Homeward Bound's work, than as something that they themselves have the power to reinforce.

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[278] Interview with Batson, February 7, 2012.

[279] Rosler, “In, Around, and Afterthoughts,” 191.

The question of the relationship between the institutional frame and the participation possible within the project is raised again later in the meeting by filmmaker Liza Bear, a member of the artists' collective Collaborative Projects (Colab). In contrast to Locke's affirmative tone, Bear's intervention is angry, and even physically disruptive of the space of the town meeting. For her, it is specifically this question of space that is at issue, and how she feels the format of the meeting forms a barrier to productive dialogue. Bear's intervention follows a short speech by City Council member Abe Gerges, who according to Jiler was introduced to Homeward Bound by Marc Greenberg of the Interfaith Assembly. Gerges is not a speaker on the panel for "Homelessness," but comes in part way through the meeting, at which point he is introduced by Batson, who says: "There's somebody who's just come into the gallery who's a friend of Homeward Bound." Gerges then gives a brief speech about what he has learned from chairing the homeless committee on the City Council. He discusses his efforts to close welfare hotels, and to create more Single Room Occupancy (SRO) permanent housing in order to alleviate homelessness. What becomes obvious throughout Gerges' speech is the extent to which his participation in the meeting is intended to win votes. Following his speech, Bear explodes in anger, which Locke attempts to calm:

Bear: Why is this person being allowed to speak? We know all this stuff! We know everything that's being said here. Except for maybe one or two of the things that the homeless people said. We need to know how to act!
[The panelists talk softly behind the microphones, one says "She's okay."]
There's no one way to do it, you need to meet them, talk to them, find out what can be done. But it can*not* be done with a panel with all this formality, we've got to mingle, we've got to put some of these fucking chairs [crashing sounds and audience laughter], we've got to get together, there should be some lights over there, there should be something to drink, people should *min*gle, they're *sit*ting here, you know I feel in*sul*ted for these people, they're being talked at by – you know, someone – by, by a lawyer who likes to show off that's he's not mundane, that he's *passionate*, well, everyone else here is passionate too, they're keeping their feelings inside themselves…. There has been no flow of energy. There's been no sort of ability for people to mingle, to share their feelings. … This is *not* working.

Locke: Liza, Liza, very good. [some audience clapping] Liza – may I say something? I appreciate what you said. You know, finding solutions to the *vast* problem of all the people that *need* help, we need to work with *everyone*.

Bear: I know, but, no one can really talk to anyone else. … We need to put back the chairs…. [someone in the audience says, "I agree"] We can't move around at all… you know, no one can really talk to anyone else –

> Locke: I understand what you're saying, what you're saying is *very* well taken. I think that everybody'd agree, we need to – to really get to each other. We need to talk *to* each other, and not *at* each other – [Bear: "That's right"] I – I agree. I just wanted to say that *everyone here*, everyone here needs to put forth an effort to try to find a solution to this problem, including [pause] the councilmember here. Cause we have to work with him and his legislators to get bills passed, Liza.
>
> Bear: Who are we trying to reach?[280]

Following this exchange, Bear and Batson, the chair, get into a further argument, before she stops speaking. Bear's wrath is directed not only at Gerges in particular, or at lawyer Doug Lasdon who spoke on the panel, but at the format of the panel as such, and at what she experiences as its stiff formality. For her, that format inherently puts a limit on what can be learnt through the collective dialogue.

I speculate that Bear, as a filmmaker and member of Colab, would have been sensitive to the format of the meeting not only from a social and political perspective, but also from a sensory one. By speaking loudly and moving the chairs, she rebels aurally and spatially against the way the meeting reproduces the authority of lawyers and politicians, on the one hand, and the passivity of the audience, on the other. She objects to the installation of the space, and to the model of the passive, individual audience member that it fosters, in which people talk *at* each other instead of talking

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[280] Audiocassette recording, Dia Art Foundation archives, consulted January 2011.

with each other. At the point when Bear says that she “feel[s] insulted for these people,” it is unclear whether she means the audience at large, or specifically any homeless people who may be present. In either case, the insult comes from the fact that they are being talked at, and that there is no “mingling” or “flow of energy,” implicitly equated with reciprocal exchange. The “formal” visual and spatial arrangement of the room, in which, presumably, the chairs are arranged in rows and the main speakers are seated behind a table at the front of the room, with microphones in the audience for comments, creates an asymmetrical, spectacular relationship between speakers and audience. For Bear, though the participants are speaking, the visual and spatial condition of spectacle makes it impossible for new or meaningful information to be shared. While Bear codes this visual spectacle as stiff and formal, and therefore as something that negates knowledge, she describes reciprocity as fostering knowledge through its qualities of flow and movement.

In the exchange between Bear and Locke, she is sympathetic to him more than to any of the other speakers, including Batson. However, it quickly becomes obvious that Bear’s and Locke’s approaches to spectacle, and its relationship to power, are fundamentally different. Locke occupies a speaking position within the conventional setup of the panel, and seeks to use that position to put forward a new model of the audience as pedagogical subjects of the homeless participants in the exhibition, but also to exploit existing avenues of power through collaboration with those, like Gerges, who are already in positions of authority (“we have to work with him and his legislators to get bills passed”). Bear, on the other hand, attempts physically to disrupt the space of spectacle. Through her conduct, she forcibly demands a different choreography to the space. Both Locke and Bear seek to create new types of knowledge, but they pursue it in fundamentally different, and seemingly incompatible ways. Both value the idea of a reciprocal encounter that generates new knowledge, but their pedagogical models for achieving that reciprocity are totally different. Homeward Bound's pedagogy is one that engages tactically with spectacle, in order affectively to move the audience and hopefully shift the political position of its members. In Chapter 1, I discussed how art critic David Deitcher experienced Dia's institutional support as creating a frame around Group Material's and Rosler's projects, which degraded substantive political dialogue into superficial spectacle. Bear, in a different way, expresses a discomfort with the spectacular quality of the meeting, and the impact of that quality on what can be learned. This is an irresolvable tension that circulates throughout *If You Lived Here…* and *Democracy*, inflecting the behavior and responses of many participants.

Though the tactical spectacle Homeward Bound deployed in "Homeless" had a relationship to their City Hall encampment, a key difference between the two lies in the fact that the Dia show occurred in the space of the gallery, a space designed for aesthetic display. Though Wright's letter to Homeward Bound states that "we expect that any press coverage received about the project would discuss your organization and its work," it is important to note that this was not the municipal political press that Homeward Bound were used to dealing with, but the art press, attuned to a different set of concerns. That is evident in the articles about the show that I have cited so far: Hess raises questions of authorship and the social relevance of art, and Tyre and Wall about objectification and display. In the following section, I will discuss one aspect of Homeward Bound's aesthetic framing in "Homeless." This is the photographic documentation of the group's participation, which for Rosler was a sensitive point in terms of how the political and aesthetic aspects of the show's representation of homelessness intersected each other.

Homeward Bound, Photography, and Documentation

For Rosler, the photographic documentation of Homeward Bound's participation in the show held a pedagogical importance that paralleled Homeward Bound's own investment in educating the audience. The two existing images of Homeward Bound in the exhibition [Fig. 23, 24] were taken by photographer Oren Slor, who was contracted by Dia to document all of the installations for *If You Lived Here…*.[281] Following the completion of *If You Lived Here…*, the two images of Homeward Bound became bound up in a tense negotiation between Rosler and Dia about how Homeward Bound should be represented in the project book for *If You Lived Here…*. In this section, I will look closely at these images, in order to understand how they represented Homeward Bound's agency and why they were significant to Rosler in relation to the American documentary photographic tradition of which she was critical.

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[281] Slor also made other documentation photographs for Dia, including of a poetry reading in the early 1990s, and of some works by Dan Flavin installed in Dia's Chelsea gallery. His images of *If You Lived Here…* are the earliest of all the photos he made for Dia that I have been able to find.

Slor’s two photographs of Homeward Bound images appear to have been taken in quick succession. Click, wind, click. In one image – I don’t know if this one was taken first, or second – a group of thirteen people are posed behind a wooden desk, and in front of a temporary wooden wall, behind which we can see the gallery wall with three paintings on it. The temporary wall bears a number of black-and-white photographic portraits; various typed informational sheets; at least three children’s drawings; and a small banner hand-written on brown paper headed with the words “Housing” and “Homelessness.” The desk, in the foreground of the photograph, holds a piece of wood, with the words “Homeward Bound Community Services” written by hand in black marker. There is also a guestbook with a pen beside it, a vase of yellow, white, and purple flowers, a bag in the center of the desk, a typewriter, and the chunky white handset of a 1980s portable phone.

The group of people stands relatively close together, right in the center of the image. There are four women, seven men, one baby and one small girl. One of the women, who has strawberry blonde hair, a bright blue sweater, and bright pink nail polish, sits at the desk. One of her hands is posed on the typewriter, and her eyes look off to the side. A man leans over the back of her chair, his shoulders rounded, with a smile on his face and a bandage on his left eyebrow. From Jiler’s description, I suspect that this is Larry Locke. The little girl leans on the desk, with her hands in front of her mouth. One woman holds the baby on her hip. Her face, in the image, is ever so slightly blurred. Three men look directly into the camera, but most of the group cast their gazes to the right side, or down. The baby also stares off to the right side. What is happening there? On the whole, the group seems friendly, and connected to each other. They smile, but not in a strained way.

It may seem obvious to state that this image represents Homeward Bound as present within their office space in the gallery. But as becomes evident through Wright's letter and through oral accounts of the project, that physical presence was actually neither obvious nor uncontentious.

The actual amount of time that Homeward bound spent in the gallery, and the extent to which the space functionally operated for them as an office, remains unclear. Rosler, in my conversation with her, focused on her desire to support Homeward Bound's work through offering them the gallery space as an office, but was less specific about the ways in and extent to which that space was actually used.[282] Gary Garrels, Dia's Director of Programs at the time, states that he was never clear about how the office was actually functioning. He attributes this to the fact that he did not have his office in the same building, and hence was not at the exhibition all the time.[283] Group Material members Julie Ault and Doug Ashford also have no memory of the extent to which Homeward Bound were actually present in the space.[284] Dia employee Camilla Fallon recalls that the time Homeward Bound actually spent in the gallery was quite limited: "Martha brought people in, but maybe only for one day."[285] Fallon told me that she believed Garrels and Rosler had not gotten along on a personal level, and that that had contributed to poor communication between Rosler and Dia's administration about the terms of Homeward Bound's participation in the show. Dan Wiley, Rosler's assistant during the show who initially established the contact with Homeward Bound and who spent a night with them in City Hall Park, states that the gallery office was set up as a space the group could use, and that the goal of the project was more to make the space available than to ensure that they would be there the whole time. "It was a space they could use and be," Wiley states, "and a space for interaction. [The goal] was opening it up."[286] For Wiley, the goal was more to create a space of possibility, than to fix a regular commitment to presence. The image, though, with its crowded and friendly group composition, and the woman's hand posed on the keyboard in order to signify the work that takes place there, gives the impression of the group's energy, labor, and collective presence filling up the space. Slor's photographs fix the group's use of the gallery, which was occasional and somewhat controversial, into solid images of uncontested collective presence.

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[282] Interview with Rosler, July 21, 2010.
[283] Interview with Gary Garrels, October 14, 2010.
[284] Interview with Julie Ault, May 22, 2011; interview with Doug Ashford, July 17, 2010.
[285] Interview with Camilla Fallon, December 6, 2011.

Douglas Crimp has discussed the role that photography plays in enabling institutions to capture and make use of ephemeral art practices. Crimp describes how starting in the 1970s, photography became the means by which ephemeral, site-specific artworks could be experienced by broader secondary audiences, in addition to those who had seen the pieces in their original sites. Photography thereby became the means by which these works might enter into institutional discourse. Through the photograph, Crimp writes, site-specific works "are transferred back into the institutional discourses of art through reproduction, one of the most powerful means through which art has been abstracted from its contexts throughout the modern era."[287] For Crimp, this function of photography to recapture practices that otherwise might have left the institution is clearly a negative tendency, which shores up the museum's constitution of art as the privilege of an elite few.[288] The photograph makes the site-specific work, which may be temporary or located in a site distant from the institution, into something stable and lasting that can be viewed and interpreted inside the institution.

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[286] Interview with Wiley, May 26, 2011.

The relationship between the ephemeral artwork and the documentation photograph has evolved historically since the 1970s, moving towards a blurring of their identities in the spheres of sale, display, and critical discussion. Unlike the documentation of later participatory art practices, which as Claire Doherty discusses is now often sold as art itself, the images Slor made of *If You Lived Here…* were not intended to be financially profitable to anyone, neither the artist nor the institution.[289]

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[287] Dougals Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995, 167.

[288] For a discussion of the privileging of art for the benefit of an elite minority, see Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins*, 153.

[289] Claire Doherty, writing almost 20 years after Crimp, identifies the increasing complexity of the movement by which a live action generates different forms of documentation that circulate in various institutional contexts. Doherty points this out in relation to Belgian artist Francis Alÿs's 2002 art action *When Faith Moves Mountains*, in which 500 volunteers with shovels moved a large sand dune in Ventanilla, Peru about four inches from its original location. The action was recorded on digital video and subsequently became a 34-minute, three-channel video installation, which was eventually purchased by the Guggenheim Collection in New York. Doherty argues that the process by which such an action, and its documentation, come to be seen as art raises a string of questions that revolve around the problematic nature of context. Central among these is the question of the relationship between the work's "originating" context and audience in Ventanilla, and its "displaced" context and audience in New York. Claire Doherty, *Contemporary Art from Studio to Situation*. London: Black Dog, 2004, 8-12.

It is clear, however, that Dia approached the documentation of the project in a way that was designed to be useful for the production of the project book, which was to become part of Dia's extant Discussion in Contemporary Culture series. Dia documented both Group Material's *Democracy* and Rosler's *If You Lived Here…* in two different ways. The public town hall meetings and the roundtable discussions, as well as a conversation held between Rosler, Group Material members, and Gary Garrels about plans for the project book, were cassette recorded. The recordings were then transcribed, many of them by Dia employee Karen Ramspacher.[290] The project exhibitions were photographically documented by Ken Schles for the Group Material shows, and by Slor for Rosler's. Slor and Schles made over 200 installation shots for the various exhibitions in *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…*. Edited transcripts of the meetings and discussions, and a selection of installation shots, appeared in Group Material's and Rosler's project books.

Dia's archives hold no photos of the town hall meetings themselves, and as far as I know, none were ever made. This lack points to the ambiguous status of the town hall meetings from Dia's perspective, and specifically the fact that the institution was unsure about whether or not to characterize the participatory forums as art that should be visually recorded. Furthermore, though images of participatory art today often feature audience members engaged in the participatory situation or project, thereby valorizing their participation as an essential element of the artwork, in the late 1980s the genre of participatory practice was not far enough developed to have generated conventions for its photographic representation. In Slor's installation shots for the exhibitions in *If You Lived Here…*, human figures are absent in all but a few images. The photographs of Rosler's project include only a small handful of images containing people: the two photos of Homeward Bound, a single shot of the Mad Housers activists building a hut in the gallery [Fig. 25], and one more image in which a young woman sits on a couch in the gallery with a sheet of paper in her hand, tucking her hair behind her ear [Fig 26].

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[290] Interview with Karen Ramspacher, July 30, 2010.

Among this group of photos, the images of Homeward Bound are different from the others because of the images' posed quality. The photographs show Homeward Bound members standing posed in the gallery in order to have their photograph taken. Or rather, of the photographs, one shows a more or less complete pose: the group arranged, standing and sitting, behind their desk. Despite some blurriness – in the face of the little girl, who looks off to the side, and in the face of a short man standing at the back – everyone's face is visible, everyone looks more or less in the same direction (to their right), and on the whole they form a pleasing, stable composition in the middle of the image.

Then there is a second image, which could have been taken either right before or right after the clearly posed one. In this photo, a woman and a man on the right-hand side of the image stand further away from the group, their faces blurred as if caught in the act of turning to look at the central group. Behind the man, a woman who smiles demurely in the posed image cracks a wider smile, seeming possibly amused or engaged by something he has said. One bearded man present in the fully posed image does not appear in this one at all. The woman in the blue sweater with the reddish hair who sits behind the desk, and who in the first image has her hand posed on the keyboard of a typewriter as if to invoke the role of a secretary, in the second image appears in profile looking off to the side, her hands lowered. The woman with the baby hoists her child higher on her hip in the second image; her face look less composed and more harried. The man who stands behind her with his hand on her shoulder smiles more broadly in the second image. As in the posed image, the little girl still has her hands in front of her mouth. In the second image, she looks like she might be sucking her thumb. On the whole, in the second image, the group appears more dynamic, and less united. The interactions between the people pictured are slightly more visible. We get less of a clear presentation of them as a unit, but more hints at how they might have interacted.

What is the representational significance of the pose is in these two images? In order to consider this question, I turn briefly to the writing on photography of Roland Barthes and bell hooks, before returning to consider the pose's importance for Rosler in particular. In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes describes the process of posing for a photograph as a moment in which one makes oneself visible, in order to enable the production of an image.

> [O]nce I feel myself observed by the lens, everything changes: I constitute myself in the process of 'posing,' I instantaneously make another body for myself, I transform myself in advance into an image. This transformation is an

> active one: I feel that the Photograph creates my body or mortifies it, according to its caprice[.][291]

In this description, the pose not only prepares the body for the making of an image, but transforms the body "in advance into an image" that is then captured by the camera. Though the difference here is subtle, Barthes' theory of the pose has implications for how we consider Homeward Bound's agency in the production of Slor's documentation photograph. Barthes' text encourages us to read the pose as the difference between tolerating or submitting to the production of photograph, and actively participating in it through using the body to generate an image-before-the-image that becomes the photograph's condition of possibility. Bell hooks, writing about a snapshot of her father as a young man, also underscores the agency inherent in the pose: "There is such boldness, such fierce openness in the way he faces the camera."[292] Hooks underscores the importance of such personal snapshots in documenting African American life, through creating a collective historical record that could be shared outside white-dominated institutional spaces such as galleries and museums.[293]

Barthes and hooks both discuss the pose as moment in which an individual makes her- or himself visible. In the two photographs of Homeward Bound, though, the pose is explicitly collective. It unites the group visually into a compositional unit, and thereby implicitly into a common project. The pose claims for Homeward Bound the visual vocabulary of the team, the unit, the club, thereby stressing their collective organization to meet specific, clearly legible goals. It is not only that the space of the gallery is being occupied, but that it is being occupied by a group of people who in their mode of posing identify themselves as a collective.

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[291] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Translated by Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 1982, 92, 10-11.

[292] bell hooks, "In Our Glory: Photography and Black Life." In *Picturing Us: African American Identity in Photography*, edited by Deborah Willis. New York: The New Press, 1994, 43.

[293] Ibid., 48.

Rosler has not theorized the importance of the pose explicitly, either in photography in general or in relation to Slor's images of Homeward Bound in particular. However, I will argue here that Rosler's implicit understanding of the pose, and of its opposite term, spontaneity, informed a conflict that arose between her and Dia. This conflict centered around how Homeward Bound should be photographically represented in the project book for *If You Lived Here…*. Rosler's conception of the opposition between posed and spontaneous images was connected, in turn, to her concern about racial and class-based stereotyping of the members of Homeward Bound. The conflict between Rosler and Dia revolved around two sets of images: Slor's, on the one hand, and on the other, a series of black-and-white photographs of Homeward Bound in their City Hall encampment, taken by photographer Alcina Horstman. The latter images were hung in Homeward Bound's gallery office in the "Homeless" exhibition. Rosler mentions these images in her discussion of Homeward Bound's participation in the book for *If You Lived Here…*:

> [Homeward Bound's] portraits, taken the preceding summer by photographer Alcina Horstman during their hundred-day encampment in front of City Hall – during which they registered passersby to vote – hung in their office area. These images, using an artified documentary approach, meant something very different in that office space.[294]

Three of these same images are reproduced in the book, accompanying the text from Homeward Bound's letter to their members, which I cited above. I argue that Rosler's statement about Horstman's images "mean[ing] something very different in [Homeward Bound's] office space" expresses a reserve about these images, an unwillingness to fully endorse them without qualification. It does so, namely, by leaving unelaborated *what* exactly the images meant something very different from, an absence that comes to hang over the statement like a criticism diplomatically left unspoken.

I understand this seeming wariness on Rosler's part in relation to her critique of documentary photography's representation of homelessness. This critique is articulated in "In, Around and Afterthoughts (On Documentary Photography)" (1981), the most famous of all Rosler's writings. The essay was originally published in the book *Martha Rosler: 3 Works*, which also contained the iconic photo/text artwork *The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems* (1974-5) [Fig. 27].[295]

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[294] Rosler, "Fragments of a Metropolitan Viewpoint," 38.

[295] Martha Rosler, *Martha Rosler: 3 Works: 1. The Restoration of High Culture in Chile; 2. The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems; 3. In, around, and Afterthoughts (on*

For that piece, which Rosler has referred to as "a work of refusal," she took black-and-white photographs of New York's down-and-out Bowery district that strongly evoked the visual conventions of the American documentary tradition.[296] She then juxtaposed these images with poem-like collections of words used colloquially to describe drunkenness, for example "boozehound / juicehound / rumhound / gas hound / jakehound / boiled owl / whale." The artwork therefore juxtaposes the "inadequate descriptive systems" of image and text, but also, as art historian Steve Edwards points out, foregrounds the relationship between other "systems" of opposition such as literal/metaphorical, and concrete/abstract.[297] The work throws these systems into relief against each other in order to show their inadequacy for conveying social reality. In this respect, the work maintains documentary photography's goal of trying to convey reality, but does so specifically through a rejection of the visual and discursive conventions on which documentary depends.

Documentary Photography). Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1981. Rosler's artwork *The Bowery* has also recently been the subject of a book in Afterall's "One Work" series. See Steve Edwards, *The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems*, One Work. London: Afterall, 2012. Edwards makes the convincing argument that *The Bowery* is a "Marxist pastoral" that meditates on the dialectical nature of oppositions such as nature/culture.

[296] Martha Rosler, "In, Around, and Afterthoughts (On Documentary Photography)," *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Writings, 1975-2001*, October Books. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006, 191. The essay was originally published in 1981, and also anthologized in *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*, edited by Richard Bolton, 302-40. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990 [1981]. Rosler states in an interview with Molly Nesbit and Hans-Ulrich Obrist that Buchloh encouraged her to write the text in order to clarify the stakes of the work for viewers. Martha Rosler, Inka Schube, Molly Nesbit, Hans-Ulrich Obrist, and Sprengel Museum Hannover, *Martha Rosler: Passionate Signals*. Ostfildern-Ruit and Portchester: Hatje Cantz with Art Books International, 2005, 38.

[297] Edwards, *The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems*, 104.

In “In, Around, and Afterthoughts (On Documentary Photography),” Rosler argues that American documentary photography, as practiced by photographers such as Jacob Riis, Lewis Hine, Walker Evans, Diane Arbus, David Burnett, and Dorothea Lange, consistently frames and objectifies an underprivileged subject for a privileged, middle-class viewer. “Documentary, as we know it,” she writes, “carries (old) information about a group of powerless people to another group addressed as socially powerful.”[298] The privileged viewer is interpellated as morally superior through viewing the image, and reassured about his or her own status and social power. The consumption of documentary images thus mirrors the wider Western consumption of products, food, and imagery that evokes an exoticized colonial Other.[299]

Rosler focuses in particular on photographs of homeless, alcoholic men in New York’s Bowery district. In typical images of the Bowery, she argues, the figure of the drunken homeless man becomes a focus of the viewer’s simultaneous pity and disgust. This mode of viewing blocks the viewer from engaging in any systematic class analysis of the social and economic factors that lead to homelessness. The photographed “drunken bum” is stripped both of personal identity and of wider social context. Rosler writes:

> Drunken bums retain a look of threat to the person. … They are a drastic instance of a male society, the lumberjacks or prospectors of the cities, the men who (seem to) choose not to stay within the polite bourgeois world *of*

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[298] Rosler, “In, Around, and Afterthoughts (On Documentary Photography),” 179.
[299] Ibid., 183.

> (does ‘of’ mean ‘made up of’ or ‘run by’ or ‘shaped by’ or ‘fit for’?) *women and children*. They are each and every one an unmistakably identifiable instance of a physically coded social reality. … Bums are an ‘end game’ in a ‘personal tragedy’ sort of chance.[300]

In essence, for Rosler, documentary photography of homeless people is *anti-pedagogical*, in that it stirs up a satisfying emotion – “tragedy” – that blocks knowledge of reality and therefore also social analysis. Rosler connects this anti-pedagogical blocking to the pleasure the viewer gains from the image. She identifies the first “moment” of documentary photography as “the ‘immediate,’ instrumental one, in which an image is caught or created out of the stream of the present and held up as testimony, as evidence in the most legalistic of senses, arguing for or against a social practice and its ideological-theoretical supports.”[301] This is followed by a second, aesthetic moment, in which the viewer takes pleasure from the formal qualities of the image as such. In the spontaneously captured moment that furnishes “evidence,” and the subsequent aesthetic pleasure that the viewer draws from looking at the image, proof and pleasure are united to create a powerful discourse in which aesthetic appeal cloaks the photograph’s ideological position.

In another essay on the photography of Lee Friedlander, Rosler again mentions this idea that the supposedly spontaneous image has an ideological function. She writes that Friedlander’s body of work productively dislodges the idea that the photograph shows a singular moment of truth. It does so by repeatedly foregrounding Friedlander's own interests and concerns across images that when seen in isolation look accidental and spontaneous.[302] In this essay, and also in "In, Around, and Afterthoughts," Rosler posits a connection between the spontaneous creation of an image, and an ideological assertion that photography is able to show what is objective and real. For her, Friedlander's work productively disrupts this truth effect. Discourses of documentary photography, on the other hand, are dangerous in that they keep the truth effect in place, thereby obscuring the extent to which documentary itself is grounded in particular subjective viewpoints that entrench class inequalities. In Rosler's approach to photography on the whole, it therefore seems important that the image withhold the emotional and visual pleasure of spontaneity. Hence the stasis of the images in *The Bowery*, and the obviously canned quality of the collage images Rosler used in the anti-war series *Bringing the War Home* (1967-72) [Fig. 28].

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[300] Ibid., 191.
[301] Rosler, “In, Around, and Afterthoughts,” 186.

Unlike the documentary photographs about which Rosler generalizes in "In, Around, and Afterthoughts," Alcina Horstman's images of Homeward Bound do not represent homeless people as threatening. However, a tinge of the "tragic" attitude Rosler identifies can be detected in the images' depiction of Homeward Bound members as friendly, cheerful, and brave in the setting of park's squalor. In addition, on a stylistic level, Horstman's black-and-white photographs resonate with the American documentary tradition that Rosler critiques, particularly in the fact that their compositions often center on single subjects. Moreover, they display an attempt to capture their subjects spontaneously in a way that evokes that tradition.

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[302] Martha Rosler, "Lee Friedlander, an Exemplary Modern Photographer." In *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Writings, 1975-2003*, edited by Martha Rosler, 113-31. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006 [1975], 115.

The wariness Rosler expresses in her essays and artworks about the visual pleasure of spontaneity elucidates her cautiousness about Horstman's photographs. I read Rosler's statement that the images meant something very different in the context of the exhibition to be a justification of their use in the project book. This justification came after the fact of the decision to include the photographs in the book, as Rosler did not want these images to appear in the book at all, but was ultimately unable to have final say over which images would be used.[303] This is evident from a 1990 chain of correspondence between Wright and Rosler, conducted by fax while Rosler was in residence at the University of Cape Town, while the book was in production by Dia and the Seattle-based Bay Press.[304] It becomes clear from this exchange that Rosler is contesting the planned inclusion in the book of Horstman's photographs. Ultimately included in the book were three of these images, at least two of which are the same as ones that had hung in Homeward Bound's gallery office. In a fax to Wright about the book publication, Rosler writes the following:

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[303] In general, the publication process for the project book was rife with difficulties between Rosler and Dia. Initially, Dia had planned for *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* to be combined together into a single book that would represent both projects, but this plan was changed when it became evident that Rosler, Group Material, and editor Brian Wallis would not be able to reach a satisfactory agreement about the contents and organization of the book (interview with Doug Ashford). An initial plan for projects envisioning a single book edited by Hal Foster is held in the Dia Art Foundation archives. Group Material member Douglas Ashford and Karen Kelly, who worked in publications at Dia, both confirmed to me that a single book was initially the plan. Philomena Mariani, who worked on the book, declined to be interviewed for this project. Brian Wallis did not respond to my multiple attempts to contact him. Rosler objected to Wallis's status as the editor of the books and the first billing that he therefore received in reviews and discussion of the book; she experienced this as an eclipse of her labor and authorship that exacerbated the already "painful experiences" she had had with Dia. See correspondence of May 1991 between Christopher Stearns and Thatcher Bailey of Bay Press, and Rosler. Martha Rosler personal archive, consulted December 2010.

[304] Dia was connected to Bay Press because Dia director Charles Wright and Thatcher Bailey, the editor at Bay, had grown up together in Seattle (interview with Charles Wright, May 3, 2011). Hal Foster was also part of this group of friends. Bay published all of the books in the Discussion in Contemporary Culture series.

> I said *long* before I left that it was crucial to have a picture of Homeward Bound sitting or standing behind their desk at the exhibition, because there would be a significant betrayal involved in representing them in the book as though they were 'just' more homeless individuals camped out in the park. The whole thrust of their participation in the show was that this was not the image either I or they wished to present. What an irony, then, if that were all they were *pictured* as by Dia. This cannot be wished away; it is, in effect, 'nonnegotiable.'[305]

In this letter, Rosler seems to be referring specifically to the two photographs taken by Slor. Central to Rosler's concern here is the question of the group's agency both within the exhibition and more broadly, and how that agency is represented. In his reply of August 29, 1990, Wright makes it clear that Slor's images can no longer be included in the book, but also expresses disagreement with the idea that the photo of Homeward Bound in the exhibition is essential to depicting the group as exercising political agency. Wright writes:

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[305] Two-page fax from Rosler to Wright, Martha Rosler personal archives.

> While we cannot now substitute in the other Homeward Bound photo, it looks to one, as another, less involved viewer, that the pictures we have do not merely depict a dispossessed group, homeless in the park. They are more dynamic than that. There is clearly political organization and action taking place, checkers game notwithstanding. I had understood this as a 'would be nice' part of your list of changes. To save money and time, the change wasn't made.[306]

In this exchange, Rosler and Wright approach the question of the images from two strongly differing positions, which appear almost unintelligible to each other. For Rosler, the central question is that of an ethics of representation. Her goal is to present a form of representation that intervenes positively in the field of stereotyped images of homelessness. She wants images in the book that will highlight the specific political agency of Homeward Bound members, instead of reducing them to stereotypical generalization. Wright, on the other hand, approaches the issue on the basis of an idea of average audience viewership. As the director of a small, financially struggling organization, he is working to use the resources available to create a publication that effectively presents *If You Lived Here…* to an audience. From Wright's perspective as expressed in the fax, it appears that though Rosler may be extremely sensitive to the specificities of Homeward Bound's representation, these details will be largely unintelligible to readers who are not involved with a very particular set of debates (“one, as another, less involved viewer”). The difference between Rosler’s and Wright’s positions lies in their different opinions about the pedagogical value of the images in communicating about homelessness. For Rosler, the central question is that of an ethics of representation. For her, the ethical image, the one that refuses the reduction of homeless people to stereotyped generalization, provides the jumping-off point for a viewer experience with the potential to create political change. For Wright, it seems that the question of the images’ pedagogical value is connected not to an ethics of artistic practice that might transform viewers’ politics, but rather to the existing conditions of what the audience will and will not notice. These different positions shape Rosler’s and Wright’s diverging approaches to the question of how limited institutional resources should be used, with Rosler pushing for a commitment to produce what she sees as the ethically *right* kind of image, while Wright takes a more pragmatic, less idealized, approach to the challenges of the publication process.

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[306] Fax from Wright to Rosler of August 29, 1990, Martha Rosler personal archive, consulted December 2010.

Though Wright claims that the differences between Slor’s and Horstman’s images would fly under the radar of most viewers, I agree with Rosler that the experiences of viewership elicited by the two sets of images in fact vary radically. A clear difference between Slor’s and Horstman’s images lies in the fact that Slor’s photos, in picturing Homeward Bound posed in the obviously staged and artificial context of their gallery office, show the group consciously engaged in a process of representation, instead of presenting a “slice” of the group’s everyday life. This difference is connected to the opposition between the spontaneous and the posed. In

Horstman's images, two of the members of Homeward Bound – the man on the bench in the individual portrait, and another who leans back, laughing, in the group image – look directly at the camera and smile. As such, they are clearly posing for Horstman to some degree. However, their setting in the park, amid debris, blankets, folding tables, and hand-made signs, combined with the daily activities shown in the images, make it clear that the photographs aim to capture something of the group's daily life as it unfolds outside the frame of representation, i.e., to the degree that it is *not* posed.

In the differences between Slor's two images – the one, more completely posed, and the other, slightly less so – we can see both what the rejection of spontaneity achieves in terms of viewer experience, and also what it forecloses from visibility. In the more formally posed of the two images, the viewer sees less animation, and gets fewer hints at how the people shown might have interacted. We are less able to project ourselves into the posed image as an imagined situation, to think that we know something about these people and what their relationships were like. The pose, to this extent, blocks the acquisition of knowledge, decreasing the image's capacity to act as a space for the imaginary exploration of a past situation. This block is frustrating for the viewer, in that it closes down the pleasure of imaginary projection. But when I read it from the perspective of Rosler's approach to photography, it appears productive for precisely this reason. The "tragic" quality that Rosler identifies in photography of the homeless rests in images that invite the viewer's sympathy through creating a sense that the homeless person's history can be rendered knowable through the image. Slor's posed photograph, on the other hand, withholds not only the everyday context of its subjects, but also, to a large extent, their emotions, even as it is deeply familiar to viewers (most of us having posed for many photographs during our lives). I argue that it is specifically the withholding of visual tropes indexing individual emotion and history, whether in facial expressions or contextual setting, that reverse the generalizing movement Rosler identifies, by which individual homeless people become cast as examples of a stereotyped category. In Slor's photographs, the Homeward Bound members do not appear as types who fit into well-worn narratives of personal tragedy, but rather as people who have consented to pose in this image. In refusing to make visible their personal struggles or histories, the image prevents a colonization of their subjectivities by the curious viewer, who is no longer confidently able to think she or he holds authoritative knowledge of the people pictured.

As such, the pedagogy Slor's images enact is a pedagogy in which the viewer's emotional response is blocked in order to be redirected to a more distanced form of knowledge, which in its distance acknowledges the individuality of the others pictured. I believe that Rosler's desire to have these photographs included in the project book stemmed from a pedagogical impulse on her part to help viewers unlearn the emotional cues of the American documentary photography tradition, and in doing so to create a space for viewers to understand better how homeless people make choices, and are not only the victims of chance.

It was not only through the photographic documentation of Homeward Bound, however, that Rosler sought to perform this pedagogical work, but also through the installation itself. In particular, the live, open-ended quality of the "Homeless" gallery installation created a challenge to cultural perceptions of homelessness that I argue photography alone could not achieve.

Unlike some of the participants in and visitors to her show, for Rosler, the live presence of homeless people in the gallery had a totally different status from their photographic representation. Rosler has pointed out, on multiple occasions, that none of the exhibitions for *If You Lived Here…* contained "typical" documentary images of the homeless: "I had one rule: no images of people lying on the ground."[307] This stated rule poses the question of where the line of differentiation lay between photographic representation and the performance of Homeward Bound's office and occasional presence. Both, after all, are different forms of representation. I argue that for Rosler, the difference between the two lay in the type of viewer relationships they created. Homeward Bound's live presence in the gallery unfolded over a period of time, instead of presenting an image that was temporally, and therefore also semantically, fixed. As such, Rosler's statement that Horstman's photos of Homeward Bound "meant something very different" in their gallery office should be read not only in terms of the obvious fact that the photographs, in this context, signified as the group's self-chosen representations. More importantly, the photographs were in proximity to the live, temporally open-ended process of the group's potential presence in the space. In the gallery office, viewers' experiences of Horstman's images would have been inseparable from their experience of a social process, which for Rosler contradicted the logic of documentary photography.

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[307] See Media Farzin, "Still Here: An Interview with Martha Rosler and Anton Vidokle." Rosler also made an almost identical comment in my interview with her. The one exception was an activist poster critiquing the city of Los Angeles for its lack of a policy to fight homelessness. Rosler included that poster as an example of the public visual culture surrounding homelessness.

In Rosler's critique of how documentary renders homeless people as fixed social types, it seems that a key element of this social stereotyping lies in the way that documentary photographs present *temporally fixed* images of bodies.[308] In "In, Around, and Afterthoughts," Rosler argues that photographer Diane Arbus substituted "her satisfyingly immobilized imagery as a surrogate for *the real thing*, the real freak show," thereby enabling a kind of curious, penetrating looking that would be socially unacceptable in a live situation.[309] Rosler thus implicitly makes a connection between the fixity of the photographic image – highlighted in Arbus' photography, through the static poses of her subjects – and a semantic fixity that allows the viewer to "satisfyingly" grasp the pictured subject.

In a sense, the images in Rosler's artwork *The Bowery In Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems* perform a re-temporalization of the documentary image. The blank street scenes, with their discarded bottles and traces of debris, capture moments after, and possibly before, homeless people are present. But in the moment the images are taken, homeless people are elsewhere, re-introducing a sense of dynamic movement and process, and also implicitly posing questions of agency and context about where they have gone, and why. The images in *The Bowery* thus refuse the way in which the American documentary tradition presents the bodies of the homeless as visually fixed and *therefore also* isolated from flows of social and political process that function to create, but also to change, the phenomenon of homelessness.

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[308] Rosler, "In, Around, and Afterthoughts," 191.
[309] Ibid., 180.

When hung in Homeward Bound's office in the "Homeless" installation, Horstman's images were re-connected with the living process that many documentary photos flatten into stasis. In this context, then, the photos could not have functioned as missives that framed homelessness for a bourgeois audience, who would view the images from the safety of another space and moment. A single, frozen image of a homeless "bum" can be the object of liberal pity in a way that a multi-layered live process cannot, specifically because the single image can be quickly and easily consumed as a commodity. Unlike the frozen image, the installation requires a longer engagement from the viewer in order to be intelligible in the first place.

Simultaneously, the effect created by the placement of Horstman's photos in the installation was not one in which the image was simply replaced by life, or representation by reality. The very location of Homeward Bound's activities within the art gallery placed those activities in an aesthetic context, and gave them a theatrical dimension. Moreover, the office was physically a part of the larger art show that filled the space. The office was not constructed as an enclosed space, but was spatially opened out along one wall [Fig. 22]. This arrangement, which let the viewer see all parts of the office space while standing on the other side of the gallery, gave the office less the appearance of a "real" office, than that of a theatre set of an office. This set-like arrangement foregrounded the viewer's act of viewing, and also the theatrical quality of any activities that might take place within the office.

Located within this office-set, Horstman's images created a juxtaposition of two different orders of representation: the temporally fixed, frozen photographic images, on the one hand, and on the other, the live, theatrically-framed activity of the group members, or the possibility for activity that the office implied were viewers to encounter it empty. If we understand the setting of the gallery to cast Homeward Bound's presence in a theatrical light, what emerges here is not just a challenging of the objectifying image by Homeward Bound's live presence, coded as real. We also have a structure akin to Rosler's juxtaposition of photographs and text in *The Bowery*, in which two orders of representation show up each others' inability capture reality. Specifically, Horstman's images made visible the impossibility for the gallery set-up to represent the conditions of the daily lives of Homeward Bound members. The installation, with its potential for live process, in turn showed the limits of the photographs, with their typical documentary style, to convey the political process of the group's organizing efforts. From this perspective, the use of Horstman's images in the project book presents only one side of the dialectic, collapsing the ability of the images and the group's gallery presence to productively problematize each other. Slor's images form a better representation of this dialectical tension, in that they show the members of the group present next to Horstman's framed photographs, which are clearly visible above their heads. Particularly in the more spontaneous of Slor's two images, the stasis of Horstman's portraits is juxtaposed with the blurry rendering of the group members, making visible the photograph's own inability to capture them fully in their moment of liveness.

In this chapter, I have taken up a series of different documents in order to examine the levels of authority and frames of representation that shaped the conditions under which Homeward Bound became visible within "Homeless." Some of the documents I have unearthed, such as Wright's letter, or Homeward Bound's meeting notes, give voice to the agency of one particular group or individual. Rosler's letter to Wright also expresses her own perspective, because though it concerns Homeward Bound, it was most likely not written with their consultation. That letter expresses Rosler's own concerns about the ethics of representing Homeward Bound, rather than their own wishes about how to be represented.

Unlike these other documents, Slor's photographs cannot be clearly traced back to one actor's individual agency. Whose idea was this particular pose? Slor's, Homeward Bound's, Rosler's, or a member of the Dia staff's? Was it discussed before the photo was taken, or did it just fall into place organically? It is impossible for me to recover a hard kernel of self-determination on the part of the members of Homeward Bound, something that could be separated definitively from the layered little networks of power that enabled their visibility within "Homeless." The question of agency thus needs to be posed here not in terms of a desire to recover a pure, authentic subaltern statement, which would in any case be impossible.[310] Instead, Slor's images pose the question of how different types of agency – those of the institution, of the artist, of participants, and of viewers – come together to make visible something that was not visible before. In this case, what is made newly visible is the organized political activism of homeless people, within a culture that systematically represents them as lacking the ability to organize. The pose is the primary vehicle of this becoming-visible. I read the pose in Slor's images as an assertion of Homeward Bound's collective activism, and simultaneously as one of the various instances of their participation in a system of representation that exceeded their own power. These two documentation images thus stand for me as allegories of Homeward Bound's participation in Rosler's project as such. The images express something of the power conditions under which that participation took place, not just because of their status as documentation images, but also because of their particular visual qualities.

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[310] My understanding of the impossibility of such an authentic subaltern statement is, again, drawn from Spivak's analysis in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" As Spivak makes clear in her critique of a conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze (66-75), any attempt, within academic discourse, to claim to present a pure subaltern voice amount to a denial of one's own investment in the process of that representation.

As such, it indeed seems to me, writing the history of the encounter between Rosler, Dia, and Homeward Bound, that the failure to include Slor's images in the *If You Lived Here…* project book was a missed pedagogical opportunity. It is in this respect that Horstman's images, as published in the book, inadequately reflect the stakes of the project. Rosler and Homeward Bound shared an investment in the idea of pedagogy, and in particular in the idea that the act of making homeless people visible within the "Homeless" installation and its accompanying open forum could permanently change viewers' understandings of homelessness. Rosler and Homeward Bound were united in this despite their division across lines of privilege. Homeward Bound lacked access to social mobility, even as they became increasingly visible, whereas Rosler, as an artist, stood to increase her social and professional cachet through *If You Lived Here…*. The importance Rosler accorded to pedagogy also spanned her investment in both the “Homeless” installation and its documentation, encouraging the historiographic approach I have put in practice here, which looks equally carefully at the visual quality of the participatory art event and of its documents. Through this careful looking at “Homeless” and at Slor’s photographs of it, I have attempted to restore the lost pedagogical moment of the omission of the photographs from the book, an omission which was the product of numerous small strategic decisions and miscommunications between the artist and Dia’s employees. Though the exclusion of Slor’s images from the book cannot, as Rosler angrily wrote to Wright, “be wished away,” the archive of “Homeless” has enough loose ends and tantalizing leads to invite the curious investigator to return and search for the traces of Homeward Bound’s agency. My text is plagued by a structural inability to make that agency definitively visible, but tries to chase it as it flits between a page of notes, a tape recording, a few letters, some patchy memories, and a couple of photographs.

Chapter 4 – How to Collaborate in a Crisis: Group Material Representing AIDS

The exhibition for "AIDS & Democracy: A Case Study," the last segment of Group Material's project *Democracy* at the Dia Art Foundation, opened at Dia's Wooster Street gallery on Saturday, December 17, 1988. The art on the walls included both works that addressed AIDS directly, and others that shed light more obliquely on the loss and anger that accompanied the epidemic. For this exhibition, the walls of the gallery were painted white. Compared to the other exhibitions in *Democracy*, Group Material hung the artworks for this show more sparsely on the walls [Fig. 29]. Moreover, whereas the other exhibitions were hung in the group's typical salon style, with some artworks high on the walls stressing the feeling of each installation as a whole environment, in "AIDS & Democracy" the works were located closer to eye-level, at a height more typical for contemporary art galleries. On the whole, compared to the other exhibitions – "Education and Democracy" with its striking blackboard walls [Fig. 12], "Cultural Participation" with its chip bags and beige-pink walls [Fig. 30], and "Politics and Election" with its ceiling-high American flag [Fig. 4] – "AIDS & Democracy" came across as cooler and more spacious. Within the context of *Democracy*, this show's visually quieter quality lent it an explicitly contemplative feeling, and an air of somberness.

On a small strip of wall between the gallery's front windows hung the 1988 painting *RIOT* by the activist collective Gran Fury [Fig. 31], a group that grew out of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP).[311] Gran Fury's painting activated a layered art historical theme. Its block letters cited not only Robert Indiana's iconic *LOVE* image (1958 ongoing), but also Canadian art collective General Idea's *Imagevirus* series (1989-91) [Fig. 32], which itself reworked Indiana's image to spell AIDS. With their own appropriation, Gran Fury asserted clearly that in 1988, love was inseparable not only from AIDS, but from the political necessity to riot against the government's callous neglect of the epidemic.

Group Material member Julie Ault recalls that the installation of *RIOT* occasioned conflict between Gran Fury and Group Material. Ault remembers that Gran Fury delivered the work to the gallery relatively late, when installation of the exhibition had already begun. They then expressed discontent at the work's placement on the small strip of wall by itself, because they saw this location as marginalizing the piece from the rest of the show.[312] Ault acknowledges that Group Material did not hang the work in what is usually considered "prime" gallery space, but also stresses that Group Material tried, in its shows, to escape from the visual hierarchy implicit in that concept. She underscores that moreover, Group Material had simply never considered that the work's placement might cause displeasure to Gran Fury. Ault is fuzzy on the details about whether or how Gran Fury threatened to withdraw *RIOT* from the show. When she speaks about the incident, exact historical details melt away in the wake of the general impressions left by unpleasant emotion. Both the episode itself and Ault's way of remembering it testify to the much heightened emotions that the act of representing AIDS raised.

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[311] Gran Fury began as an ad hoc subcommitte of ACT UP, and then broke away into its own organization. Its membership shifted as it formed into a cohesive collective, including at different moments Donald Moffett, Michael Nesline, Marlene McCathy, Robert Vazquez, Loring McAlpin, Avram Finkelstein, Mark Simpson, Don Ruddy, Tom Kalin, Steve Baker, John Lindell, Anthony Viti, Todd Haynes, and Mark Harrington. See Douglas Crimp's interview with Gran Fury, "Gran Fury Talks to Douglas Crimp." *Artforum* (April 2003), accessible online at http://artforum.com/inprint/id=4466. Accessed April 5, 2013.

[312] Interview with Julie Ault, May 22, 2011.

This small conflict would not be the only one that "AIDS & Democracy: A Case Study," one of the earliest thematic shows on the topic of AIDS in the United States, would set in motion.[313] In *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material*, Ault stresses the ambivalent audience reaction to "AIDS & Democracy," writing that the evening of the opening was "tinged by a measure of antagonism to the memorializing orientation of some art in the show by a number of visitors wanting a more militant exposition."[314] Following the opening, arguments about what constituted a politically appropriate representation of AIDS continued to unfold in the town-hall meeting held for the project, and in the show's critical reception. This debate about representing AIDS was characterized by a double relationship to emotion, in that it both took emotion – specifically, in its relationship to political action – as a topic of analysis, and raised passionate emotions for those involved.

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[313] Interview with Julie Ault. Though there was art made about AIDS before Group Material's show in 1988, "AIDS & Democracy" was one of the first, if not the first, widely visible thematic show held on the subject in New York City. Another important early thematic show, though not held in New York City, was *AIDS: The Artists' Response* at the Hoyt L. Sherman Gallery at Ohio State University, from February to April 1989. See Jan Zita Grover et. al., *AIDS: The Artists' Response*. Columbus: Ohio State University, 1989. Also, in 1987, Daniel Fox and Diane Karp curated a show at New York's American Museum of Natural History entitled "In Time of Plague: Five Centuries of Infectious Disease in the Visual Arts," which included some images that dealt with AIDS, and was meant to spur reflection on broader historical representation of infectious disease and public health. See Fox and Karp, "Images if Plague: Infectious Disease in the Visual Arts," in Elizabeth Fee, and Daniel M. Fox. *AIDS: The Burdens of History*. Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1988, pp. 172-89.

[314] Ault, *Show and Tell*, 153.

Artists, art historians, and critics largely remember Group Material's practice, in retrospect, as one associated with AIDS activism. This is due primarily to the success of *AIDS Timeline* (1989-90), their best-known work. *AIDS Timeline* was shown in the form of exhibitions at the Berkeley University Art Museum (1989-90), at the Wadsworth Atheneum Matrix Gallery in Hartford, Connecticut (1990), and in the 1991 Whitney Biennial, as well as in a publication project spanning eleven art magazines for Visual AIDS' 1990 Day Without Art.[315] The success of *AIDS Timeline* in creating a representation of AIDS around which diverse factions of the art world could rally has supplanted, in this historical narrative of Group Material, the contestation around the politics of representing the epidemic that unfolded in "AIDS & Democracy."

In this final chapter, I analyze the debate surrounding "AIDS & Democracy" in order to understand the praxis of audience collaboration in Group Material's work, and how that praxis impacted the art the collective produced. In Chapter 1 of this dissertation, I examined the mechanisms and meaning of audience engagement in *Democracy* and in Rosler's project. In Chapter 2, I looked at the way in which the members of Group Material understood art to be pedagogical, both for their audiences and for themselves. I argued that they assigned a political value to that pedagogical quality that helped them come to terms with the increasingly institutional context of their work. In Chapter 3, in my examination of Rosler's work, I analyzed the ability of the artwork and it host institution to accommodate participation by a subaltern group, and to represent the agency involved in that participation. Here, I turn to a more confrontational form of participation: participation in which the audience rejects actively the conceptual framework of a project. This is not just participation which disrupts the expectations of the artists and other audience members, as did Cenén's performance at the "Homelessness" meeting, but participation in which the audience vocally are critical of the project's conceptual terms.

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[315] Claire Grace, "Counter-Time: Group Material's Chronicle of Us Intervention in Central and South America." *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context, and Enquiry*, no. 26 (Spring 2011): 27-37, 28, and Ault, *Show and Tell*, 229.

I am interested in how the artists in Group Material chose to respond to that critique. Through a comparative examination of "AIDS & Democracy" and *AIDS Timeline*, I argue that Group Material used the criticism they received during "AIDS & Democracy" to make a change in their practice in which they turned away from dealing with the tension between art and non-art, a tension that I have argued was characteristic of *Democracy*. Though Group Material defended "AIDS & Democracy" at the time of the show, ultimately they took the criticism they received very much to heart. Ault calls the audience response to "AIDS & Democracy" "food for thought," which played a major role in shaping how their next representation of AIDS in *AIDS Timeline* unfolded.[316]

I argue here that at stake in the debate raised by "AIDS & Democracy" was a conception of the public sphere, and specifically the relationship between that sphere and different kinds of individual and collective experience. Specific issues connected to the public sphere and to questions of experience that came up in audience members' contributions to this debate included the role of emotions in collective action, the connection between information and emotion, and the role of aesthetic experience in political action. Group Material posed these questions with a degree of ambivalence in "AIDS & Democracy," a show that dealt thematically with AIDS but was in fact preoccupied more deeply with the relationship between art, on the one hand, and social life and political action, on the other. In "AIDS & Democracy," this concern with the relationship between art and non-art characteristic of *Democracy* combined with the somber and spare visual appearance of the show to create a cool, intellectualized affect, despite the show's treatment of mourning and political activism. In *AIDS Timeline*, Group Material used the questions about collective experience raised by the audience of the Dia show to create a work that represented visually the way in which different forms of experience converge to create a public sphere, and specifically the role of education in facilitating that convergence. I will finish the chapter by demonstrating that the effect of this move, to cast aside the question of the relationship between art and non-art, was to create a work which was much more affecting emotionally for viewers.

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[316] Interview with Julie Ault, May 22, 2011.

Responding to AIDS: Models of Political Action and Aesthetic Experience

By the time Group Material created "AIDS & Democracy" in 1988, an increasing number of individuals and groups within the art world were recognizing publicly the urgency of AIDS. In September 1988, Frank Hodsoll, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, sent out a letter to artists about National AIDS

Awareness and Prevention Month in October. Hodsoll asked artists to disseminate information about AIDS, to help counteract discrimination against people with HIV, and to recruit volunteers for various tasks, including helping patients with transportation and grocery shopping.[317] Hodsoll's letter went accompanied by an enclosure from Robert Windom, Assistant Secretary for Health at the Department of Health and Human Services, with various concrete suggestions about ways that artists might help address the crisis. The letter urged, for example, that at the end of theatre performances, actors step forward to speak directly to the audience about AIDS. It suggested that artists inform the audience about the extent to which "AIDS is a problem we all have to be concerned about," about the fact that it cannot be communicated by "ordinary, nonsexual contact," and that "people who have already been infected and made ill by the AIDS virus are in need of love and support."[318]

Hodsoll's and Windom's letters illustrate the extent to which AIDS was gaining broad recognition, but also the ways in which the forms that recognition took were shaped by existing cultural and political stances. Hodsoll's cultural conservatism, which I discussed in Chapter 2, is reflected in the way that he sees artists as advocates, but says nothing about art itself as a possible way of responding to the crisis. Windom's letter similarly envisions the call to action as an epilogue to artistic practice, which leaves that practice itself relatively untouched. Moreover, the idea that artists should solicit volunteerism is a fundamentally conservative position, in that it casts service provision as the province of private charity, instead of as the government's responsibility to its citizens.[319]

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[317] Frank Hodsoll, "Letter About National Aids Awareness and Prevention Month." Fales Library, Group Material Collection, series II, box 5, folder 22: "Correspondence", September 16, 1988.

[318] Robert Windom, "Letter About National Aids Awareness and Prevention Month." Fales Library, Group Material Collection, series II, box 5, folder 22: "Correspondence", 1988.

In contrast to the official stance of the NEA, Group Material belonged to a growing contingent of artists who believed that art practice itself had to manifest a response to AIDS. Among this group, some artists made work with a direct thematic connection to AIDS, such as Robert Mapplethorpe and David Wojnarowicz, while others combined engaged aesthetic practice with more direct activist involvement, such as filmmaker and prominent ACT UP member Gregg Bordowitz. Art historian and critic Douglas Crimp was a particularly strong advocate for the direct and instrumental connection between art and AIDS activism. In his 1988 edited volume *AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism*, Crimp writes that AIDS *is* its representations, by which he meant that there was no core or essence to the disease outside of its visual and textual representations in venues including the news media, government policies, popular culture, and contemporary art.[320] I understand this refusal of the split between reality and representation as a tactical response to what historian Gabriele Griffin describes as the mainstream cultural response to AIDS.

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[319] Group Material's archive also contains a letter from AmFAR about its Art Against AIDS campaign, which frames itself in terms whose elitism was starkly opposed to the wider fight for class equality that many activists saw as key to AIDS struggles. The letter explicitly mobilizes a heavily classed vocabulary of cultural cachet in order to attract attention to AmFAR's fundraising activities: "Art Against AIDS/New York was launched in June 1987 at Sotheby's by AmFAR's National Chairman Elizabeth Taylor, AmFAR's founding Co-Chair Dr. Mathilde Krim and the doyen of the New York art world, Leo Castelli, at the 'artworld party of the year.'" Letter from AmFAR, 'The Art Against AIDS Campaign". Fales Library, Group Material collection, Series II, Box 5, folder 24: "General Correspondence 1989".

[320] Douglas Crimp, ed. *Aids: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988. See Crimp's comment in his introduction on page 4.

Griffin writes that AIDS was originally a visually underdetermined disease, in the sense that it does not have a single visual manifestation in the body, but precisely because of this invisibility, became overdetermined in the American media. This overdetermination occured through the sensationalization of the disease's communication via homosexual sex and drug use, and the consequent depiction of people with the disease as amoral, and therefore responsible for the epidemic.[321]

Crimp responded to this stereotyping in the mainstream media and politics by creating a strategic chain of collapse between AIDS as a disease, representations of AIDS, and political action against the epidemic.[322] His negation of the existence of an objective reality of the disease was a tactical move, aimed at stressing the political nature of any and all positions that one might take up in relation to the epidemic. This position aligned closely with what sociologist Deborah Gould describes as the "emotional habitus" of ACT UP, in which grief was converted into anger, in turn fueling militant, confrontational activism.[323] Gould points out that like many social movements, ACT UP sought to cultivate its own particular emotional way of functioning *at the expense* of other modes, including peaceful protest. It did so through a process of developing community consensus. In that process of consensus-building, Gould argues, speakers and writers often "acknowledge[d] the pull of the older constellation of feelings and its attendant political horizon but nevertheless encouraged lesbians and gay men to embrace the turn to angry militancy."[324]

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[321] Gabriele Griffin, *Representations of HIV and AIDS: Visibility Blue/S*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000, 5-6. Nancy Stoller recounts how the invisibility of AIDS played a role in some education campaigns: for example, a 1987 San Francisco AIDS Foundation campaign stated "You can't see AIDS, use condoms." Nancy Stoller, *Lessons from the Damned : Queers, Whores, and Junkies Respond to Aids*. New York: Routledge, 1998, 47.

[322] Another prominent critic who took up a position similar to Crimp's was medical historian Paula Treichler. Treichler, in her contribution to Crimp's *AIDS* volume, writes that AIDS is a linguistic construction that is only "true" or "real" to the extent that that construction facilitates clinical control over the illness. See Paula A. Treichler, "Aids, Homophobia, and Biomedical Discourse: An Epidemic of Signification." In *AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism*, edited by Douglas Crimp. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988, 31. Treichler, in her book *How to Have Theory in an Epidemic: Cultural Chronicles of AIDS* points out that the historical emergence of AIDS in the particular moment of the 1980s, at the point in which a discourse of critical cultural theory was becoming fully developed in the US academy, meant that historians and critics had the theoretical tools available to analyze the signification of the crisis. Simultaneously, the crisis posed a challenge to theory, testing theory's ability to contribute usefully to social life. See Treichler, *How to Have Theory in an Epidemic: Cultural Chronicles of Aids*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1999, 2.

The idea that AIDS was inseparable from its visual and textual representations naturally raised the question of artists' personal responsibility for creating representations that would foster social change. That particular philosophy, combined with a strong sense of urgency on the part of those who witnessed many friends and partners dying, pushed the issue of artists' responsibility in the face of social injustice towards an interrogation of whether art that did not cultivate activism might be actively detrimental to AIDS activism. Art and cultural critic David Deitcher, reflecting on the AIDS crisis in the late 1990s, writes that for gay artists, continuing independent art practices during the crisis felt "comparable to Nero fiddling while Rome burned."[325] Deitcher writes that these artists were compelled either to turn their art into an "angry, articulate, and political response to AIDS," or to divide their time between art making and activism. The organization by the Visual AIDS foundation, in 1989, of "Day Without Art" underscored this idea that art without activism was not only useless to the AIDS crisis, but detrimental.[326] Day Without Art is organized conceptually around the idea that art could make the most powerful political statement by withdrawing, and thereby withholding from audiences the pleasure they usually get from viewing it.

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[323] Deborah Gould, *Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT UP's Fight against AIDS*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009, 255.

[324] Ibid., 214.

[325] David Deitcher, David. "AIDS, Art, and Reaction: What Does Silence Equal Now?" In *Art Matters: How the Culture Wars Changed America*, edited by Philip Yenawine, Brian Wallis, Julie Ault and Marianne Weems. New York: New York University Press, 1999, 99-100.

Simultaneously, Deitcher's text hints at the way in which this paradigm of "engage or else" was not immediately self-evident, but arose over the course of the crisis through a process of collective consensus building. He points out that there were practices that resisted explicitly the conflation of art and activism, for example the 1988 exhibition "Against Nature," curated by Richard Hawkins and Dennis Cooper at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE). In this show of art and writing by gay men, the curators positioned their show clearly against what they perceived as the forced collapse of art and activism:

> Ingrained in *Against Nature* was a reaction against contemporary art-hating activism, the kind heralded by such critics as Douglas Crimp and entrenched in a kind of 'put down your paintbrushes; this is war' production. A practice we perceived as growing progressively more pervasive, more conservative, more essentialist, more predictably acrid and photo-text-based, more dependent on the conveyance of supposed hard fact and indisputable truth, and

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[326] Deitcher writes that Dia curator Gary Garrels, together with curators William Olander and Thomas Sokolowski, and art writer Robert Atkins, was at the winter 1988 meeting that led to the founding of Visual AIDS. Ibid., 109.

> more and more accusatory to the point that all work outside of such prescribed practices was condemned as phobic, unengaged and removed from social significance or import.[327]

The “acrid” photo-text-based practice to which Hawkins and Cooper refer is embodied most clearly in Gran Fury’s *ART IS NOT ENOUGH*, a work of which the collective produced multiple versions, including a poster [Fig. 33] and an entry in the 1989 catalogue for the exhibition *AIDS: The Artists’ Response*. Written in capitals in white, sans-serif font on a black ground, the version of this text included in the exhibition catalogue read as follows:

> WITH 47,524 DEAD, ART IS NOT ENOUGH. OUR CULTURE GIVES ARTISTS PERMISSION TO NAME OPPRESSION, A PERMISSION DENIED THOSE OPPRESSED./ OUTSIDE THE PAGES OF THIS CATALOGUE, PERMISSION IS BEING SEIZED BY MANY COMMUNITIES TO SAVE THEIR OWN LIVES./ WE URGE YOU TO TAKE COLLECTIVE DIRECT ACTION TO END THE AIDS CRISIS.[328]

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[327] Richard Hawkins and Dennis Cooper. “Against Nature.” In *In a Different Light: Visual Culture, Sexual Identity, Queer Practice*, edited by Nayland Blake et. al. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1995, 57.

[328] Gran Fury, text in catalogue *AIDS: Artists’ Response*, XXX. As quoted in Deitcher, “AIDS, Art, and Reaction,” 100.

This text, with its stark design and aggressive block letters, intervenes in the realm of the visual in order to make visual art admit its insufficiency in the face of the crisis. Hawkins and Cooper did not, of course, object to activism as such, but to the terms of this equation, in which the visual must be only a means of communicating a politically message. They expressed their rejection of activism which compelled art to behave in one particular way, and that in doing so limited the range of subjective expression.

Group Material, in “AIDS & Democracy,” were unwilling fully to accept Crimp’s and Gran Fury’s attitudes about art’s political role. But unlike Hawkins and Cooper, neither did they reject those positions explicitly, instead expressing a more ambivalent perspective on the relationship between art and activism. I argue that this ambivalence was connected to the still strong presence in “AIDS & Democracy” of the theme that they had dealt with throughout *Democracy*, of the relationship between art, on the one hand, and social life and political action, on the other. In Chapter 2, I argued that a conflict about whether to abolish or maintain art’s privileged role was central to Group Material’s practice, and to “Education and Democracy” in particular. With “AIDS & Democracy,” this question about whether to dissolve art into social action, or preserve it special status, was compounded by the issue of how to conceptualize AIDS historically: whether as a uniquely grave crisis, or as parallel to other instances of historical oppression. The press release Dia put out for the show on December 8, 1988 reflected these tensions. In it, Group Material stated the following about its intentions for the show:

> “AIDS & Democracy: A Case Study” will confront our most pressing crisis as a society. This installation will create a juncture in which sorrow, rage, and fear can be used to reinforce our decision to act, to empower ourselves in the struggle for a society in which all individuals will have their most basic needs fulfilled by a responsible, egalitarian, and truly democratic government. … This installation is the last of a series of four installations on crises in “Democracy.” … “AIDS & Democracy: A Case Study” focuses on the most specific, most immediate, and most tragic of the crises we face.[329]

This statement makes two distinct points about the AIDS crisis, and thus also about the function of the art installation in relation to that crisis. First, Group Material presents the installation as a juncture for the expression of difficult emotions: sorrow, rage, and fear. The installation will serve to make these emotions felt in order to “reinforce” and “empower” political struggle.

The statement also makes the point that the crisis should be understood within a larger critique of culture. The exhibition’s subtitle, “A Case Study,” underscores the pedagogical goal of the project, but also frames “AIDS” as a testing ground for the larger concept “Democracy.” The press releases discusses the relationship between this installation and the other segments of *Democracy*, which analyzed various aspects of cultural power and inequality, emphasizing the idea that the AIDS crisis was not unique but rather exemplary of those wider cultural problems. This, in and of itself, was an uncontroversial idea among AIDS activists. For example, at a 1988 ACT UP rally in Albany, New York, activist Vito Russo linked his own impending death directly to wider systems of social oppression:

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[329] Press release, “Group Material Installation ‘AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study,’” December 8, 1988, Dia Art Foundation archives.

> If I'm dying from anything it's from homophobia. If I'm dying from anything it's from racism. If I'm dying from anything it's from indifference and red tape. If I'm dying from anything it's from Jesse Helms. If I'm dying from anything I'm dying from Ronald Reagan. … If I'm dying from anything I'm dying from the fact that not enough rich, white, heterosexual men have gotten AIDS for anybody to give a shit.[330]

Group Material's framing in the press release of the AIDS crisis as the most acute of a series of cultural crises parallels Russo's passionate speech. But a difference lies in the imagined locus of action that results from that analysis. Whereas much of ACT UP's activism posited "the street" as the proverbial local in which emotions would be converted into action, Group Material's statement frames that conversion as taking place within the gallery, as they did in their letter to teachers for "Education and Democracy."[331] Furthermore, while "AIDS & Democracy" reflected and represented activist efforts, the generation of further activism was not its only, or even its central, goal. Through its spatial installation, "AIDS & Democracy" presented art as a locus of cultural analysis and expression that occurred parallel to activist information dissemination. However, the show ultimately rejected a convergence of these two activities. Instead, it depicted art and activism as distinct, complimentary responses to the crisis.

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[330] Vito Russo, "Viewpoints: It Isn't Happening to Them," *Windy City Times*, July 28, 1988, 10-11. As quoted in Gould, *Moving Politics*, 239-41.

[331] The imaginary of "the street" as the locus of production of militant activism can be seen, for example, in a 1988 article that Gould quotes from *Advocate* magazine, entitled "The New Gay Activism: Adding Bite to the Movement." In this article, Peter Freiberg, Rick Harding,

The "AIDS & Democracy" installation included both art, as I described above, and an information table in the center of the space, which functioned to disseminate activist material. The group set up a long table in the middle of the gallery bearing photocopies of AIDS activist pamphlets, including many by ACT UP [Fig. 34]. Dia employee and ACT UP member Karen Ramspacher renewed the photocopies regularly so that visitors could take the information.[332] Two televisions bookended the table, both of them showing videos about AIDS activism. These tapes included documentation of direct action activism, such as Ellen Spiro's video of a 1988 ACT UP action at the Food and Drug Administration in Rockville, Maryland; educational videos, such as a tape by Alexandra Juhasz and Jean Carlomusto produced by Gay Men's Health Crisis about sex workers and limiting HIV risk; and other tapes which performed a cultural critique or deconstruction of some aspect of the crisis, such as one produced by Paper Tiger Television in which author Simon

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and Mark Vandervelden write: "They're picketing, protesting, chanting, and rallying. They're holding sit-ins, 'kiss-ins' and 'die-ins.' … All across the United States, gays and lesbians – fed up with the ineffectiveness of traditional lobbying tactics – are taking their case to the streets." *Advocate*, June 7, 1888, 10-11. As quoted in Gould, *Moving Politics*, 219-20.

[332] Interview with Karen Ramspacher, July 30, 2010.

Watney criticized the response to AIDS by British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.[333] Group Material member Doug Ashford's photographs of the opening of the exhibition show visitors in the folding chairs placed in front of the television monitors. Many seem to be watching the videos attentively [Fig. 35, Fig. 36]. From these images, it appears that visitors received the videos as a central aspect of the show, worth the investment of their time, even at a busy and social exhibition opening.

Some of the work included on the gallery walls reflected the focus on documenting and inciting direct action embodied in the videos and table of activist literature. Gran Fury's *RIOT* painting was not the group's only work included in the show, which also featured their 1988 offset poster bearing the words "All People With AIDS Are Innocent" [Fig. 37]. The installation also included a number of photographs by British photojournalist Ben Thornberry documenting various actions of ACT UP. These images were accompanied by captions explaining the events pictured, for example: "10/11/88: Rockville, MD – ACT UP-NY uses non-violence techniques to protect a woman who had been hit by a police officer at an entrance to the FDA building."[334] The Gran Fury poster and Thornberry's images represented two temporal moments in the trajectory of direct-action activism: the first, inciting action, and the second, recording it. Simultaneous to this documentary function, Group Material, in presenting these images alongside contemporary artworks, stressed their visual qualities and framed them as creative, not only instrumental, responses to the crisis.

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[333] List of half-inch and three-quarter inch videos for "AIDS & Democracy: A Case Study," Dia Art Foundation archives.

[334] Exhibition checklist for "AIDS & Democracy: A Case Study," Dia Art Foundation archives.

Both the poster and Thornberry's photographs occupy a middle ground between art and non-art. They appear to have been transported, by Group Material, into a gallery context that was not their original target milieu. As such, they formed points of transition between the explicitly activist print and video material in the center of the gallery, and the rest of the artworks on the walls. Of those other works, some were direct responses to the AIDS crisis, and others were not. Three of the pieces that addressed the crisis most directly were located on the gallery's west wall, near the "All People With AIDS Are Innocent" poster. Above Gran Fury's poster hung Robert Mapplethorpe's 1988 self-portrait photograph that shows the artist, emaciated, against a black background, holding a skull-topped cane. To the right of Mapplethorpe's work was *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1988) by former Group Material member Tim Rollins in collaboration with Kids of Survival (K.O.S.) [Fig. 38]. In this work, an inverted triangle made of the word "ABRACADABRA" is superimposed over the pages of Daniel Defoe's 1722 novel, which gives the work its title.[335] On the same wall hung Mike Glier's charcoal drawing *Sketch From the Epidemic* (1987). The left-hand side of the composition of Glier's drawing is occupied with three partially-shaded heads, while the right-hand side is taken up by a hanging arm, reminiscent of the arm of Marat in Jean-Louis David's painting *The Death of Marat* (1793). David's painting was itself reproduced in another artwork included in the show, an untitled piece from 1975 by Jannis Kounellis, in which a dead, dark-winged butterfly is placed over a small copy of *Death of Marat*.

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[335] Defoe's book is a fictionalized account of the London plague of 1665.

Kounellis's work, like the majority of pieces in the show, did not respond to AIDS directly, but came to signify in relation to the crisis through its placement in the exhibition. This mode of recontextualizing artworks was consistent with the method of installation production Group Material had developed not only within *Democracy* at Dia, but in their larger practice since its beginning. In "AIDS & Democracy: A Case Study," the artworks on display worked together to build a number of sub-themes that shed light on the social and political significance of the crisis. On one wall, Gran Fury member John Lindell's work *Big Dicked Doctor* (1988) was hung below Nancy Burson's *Leukemia Visualization Image* (1988), establishing a theme of medical knowledge of the body [Fig. 39]. Nearby on the wall was Barbara Kruger's *Your Fact Is Stranger Than Fiction* (1983), in which the title text was placed on a diagonal over a blue-and-white image of a person wearing a sanitary face mask, looking through a microscope. Within the context of the show, Kruger's overt questioning of the means by which scientific truth is produced connected to Lindell's debasement of the figure of medical authority into the kitschy realm of porn – "big dicked doctor" – to make the point that scientific truth about AIDS is produced within networks of power and desire.

A second major theme running throughout the installation was that of historical genocide. In the late 1980s, not only Group Material, but various AIDS activists, including Gran Fury, performed gestures of linking the government's inaction on the AIDS crisis to historical acts of genocide, and particularly to Nazism. The 1988 video *Testing the Limits*, produced by the collective of the same name, which Group Material included as one of the videos in the installation, shows Larry Kramer, co-founder of Gay Men's Health Crisis and ACT UP member, publicly leveling an accusation of genocide at NYC Health Commissioner Dr. Stephen Joseph: "We are being picked off one, by one, by one. I think it is conscious genocide." Michael Callen, a co-founder of the People With AIDS Coalition and a participant in the closed roundtable discussion Group Material held for the project in June 1988, referred in 1989 to the AIDS crisis as "passive genocide."[336] One of ACT UP's chants following the election of George Bush in 1988 was "George Bush, you can't hide, we charge you with genocide!"[337]

In the visual realm, Gran Fury drew a clear parallel between the AIDS crisis and Nazi genocide in the group's 1988 installation in the window of the New Museum, *Let The Record Show*. This work consisted of a mural-sized photograph of the Nuremberg Trials, in front of which stood a "rogue's gallery" of cardboard cutouts of six American public figures, including President Ronald Reagan. These figures, who were lit up one by one in sequence, each held a placard with a statement they had made about AIDS. Jerry Falwell's placard, for example, read: "AIDS is

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[336] Vanessa Merton, a board member of the Community Research Initiative, cites this comment on Callen's part in "Community-Based Aids Research." *Evaluation Review* 14 (1990): 502-37, 532n2. Merton in Lune, 107.

[337] ACT UP New York, "Act up Chants." http://www.actupny.org/documents/newmem5.html, accessed October 26, 2012.

God's judgment of a society that does not live by His rules."[338] The installation was topped by a neon sign with the SILENCE = DEATH pink triangle logo, itself a graphic appropriated by the gay community from the Nazi labeling of homosexuals in concentration camps.[339] Gran Fury's installation, in its use of the Nuremberg image and in its title, mobilized the mainstream understanding of the Holocaust as a crime against humanity in order to generate public reprobation against Reagan, Falwell, and the others pictured.

Group Material, in the "AIDS & Democracy" show, established a connection between the AIDS crisis and Nazism through the inclusion of Steven Evans' artwork *Dark Quadrilateral* (1987-88) [Fig. 39]. This piece consisted of a small image of men in a Nazi concentration camp wearing striped uniforms with the inverted triangle. The image was placed high up in a corner between two gallery walls, and lit so that it cast a dark shadow. On the opposite side of the gallery hung Dorothea Lange's famous photograph *Middle Aged Man with Tag*, showing a man at a Japanese internment camp in the United States on April 6, 1942. Near Lange's photograph was Michael Jenkins' *June 30, 1986*, a worked titled after the day that the US Supreme Court voted 5-4 to uphold Georgia's anti-sodomy law in its infamous Bowers v. Hardwick decision. Jenkins' piece resembles an American flag hanging downwards with only nine stripes and with the blue rectangle removed, signifying the court's negation of the equal human rights foundational to democracy. The exhibition also contained five small pieces by Andrea Evans, consisting of light bluish-gray paper bearing silver lettering near the bottom of the works' respective titles: *The Moon When the Green Grass Is Up*, *The Moon When the Wolves Run Together*, *The Moon of Strong Cold*, *The Ice Moon*, and *The Moon of the Changing Season* (all 1987). These phrases are Native American terms from different tribes.[340] Within the context of the installation, Evans' work alluded to the genocide of Native Americans by European settlers, and in particular to the role of disease in genocide, because of the large numbers of Native Americans who died of small pox and other contagious diseases during the period of mass colonization.

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[338] Robert Sember and David Gere, "'Let the Record Show...': Art Activism and the Aids Epidemic." *American Journal of Public Health* 96, no. 6 (June 2006): 967-69. http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1470625/, accessed October 26, 2012.

[339] The reappropriation of the Nazi pink triangle by the gay community occurred during the 1960s. In its reclaimed form, the triangle was typically placed right-side up, as opposed to upside-down, as it was used by the Nazis. In 1987, six artists formed the SILENCE = DEATH Collective, adding these words to the pink triangle, and thereby creating the most recognizable and enduring logo of AIDS activism. Sember and Gere, "'Let the Record Show.'"

Though Gran Fury's *Let the Record Show* and Group Material's "AIDS & Democracy" both used the motif of genocide in order to protest how the government and the private sector dealt with AIDS, the ways in which they did so, and the experiences that they created for viewers, were fundamentally different. The Gran Fury installation used the image of the Nuremberg Trials in order to indict Reagan and the others pictured for their violation of human rights, and for their statements reducing People With AIDS to a sub-human status. Historian Cora Sol Goldstein points out that the public conception of the Nazi atrocities as crimes against humanity did not develop organically or in a politically neutral environment, but was promoted actively by the American army through the use of graphic visual imagery after the war.[341] The image of the Nuremberg trials Gran Fury used embodied consensus on two levels, because the trials themselves asserted an international consensus on what constituted a crime against humanity, and because the image itself was highly recognizable, circulating within culture as a widely accepted representation of human rights violation brought to judgment. The goal of Gran Fury's installation was not to unpack this complex signification of the Nuremberg image, but to wield the layered power that the image carried, in order to create a moral connection for viewers between Hitler and Reagan that would operate at a deep emotional level. It was not the image's particular qualities that mattered here as much as the ethical message it communicated to viewers, and the way in which their attitudes might change as a result. The work's title, in its reference to the objective "record," underscored the idea of universal truth at stake in the installation.

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[340] Personal e-mail correspondence with Julie Ault, October 18, 2012.

In comparison to *Let the Record Show*, Group Material's "AIDS & Democracy" unfolded for the viewer in a way that was more open-ended, both temporally and semantically. Whereas Gran Fury's installation essentially consisted of a single composite image designed to hit viewers with a powerful affective whallop, the viewing experience of "AIDS & Democracy" consisted in walking from one art object to another, many of which were small and often revealed their relation to the show's theme only upon close individual examination. In some cases, the connections to the theme might not have become clear to viewers at all: for example, the reference in Andrea Evans' works to Native American culture. Viewers might not have caught this reference and connected Evans' art to the theme of genocide running throughout the exhibition. Ault states that some of the semantic connections in the show may have been legible only to Group Material themselves.[342] Moreover, the works in the show, many of which were highly evocative not only of issues related to AIDS but of many diverse themes, would have called up associations for viewers that were not limited to the show's stated topic.

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[341] Cora Sol Goldstein, *Capturing the German Eye: American Visual Propaganda in Occupied Germany*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009, 3-5.

This movement in Group Material's show outwards, towards other forms of life experience not directly connected to AIDS, is embodied in particular in the inclusion of Nancy Spero's small work *The Second Hour of the Night* (1974), in which the title words are collaged onto a simple white ground, and Martha Townsend's *Mummy & Metronome* (1985), a metronome mounted on a vaguely mummy-shaped piece of wood. These two works hung close together on the wall, below Mapplethorpe's self-portrait [Fig. 40]. Both Spero's and Townsend's pieces evoke the elapsing of time in relation to a death that may either be impending or already passed. The text in Spero's work calls up an image of waiting up at night for the event to happen, while Townsend's piece juxtaposes an image of the mummy, the body already dead, with the measuring of time, something only relevant to the living. Both of these artworks express a highly personal, emotional experience of death in general, beyond the specific historical circumstances of the AIDS crisis. Gran Fury's invocation of the objective "record," on the other hand, is largely unconcerned with the question of experience, apart from the degree to which the viewer's experience of the artwork can become a turning point towards political activism. Furthermore, Group Material's heavy emphasis on subjective experience, together with the show's questioning of the idea of truth in relation to medicine and science, as I discussed above, deconstructed the appeal to objective truth, whereas an idea of universal truth was the cornerstone of Gran Fury's approach.

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[342] Interview with Julie Ault.

Moreover, because "AIDS & Democracy" treated art and activism as two separate components of a sort of montage, instead of integrating them spatially or conceptually, it located the viewer's subjective experience as the locus where that integration was to take place. Because of the show's semantic open-endedness, and the extent to which it was conductive to creating many different chains of association, it made room for a huge amount of variation in terms of whether and how viewers made the connections between art and activism. It seems that it was precisely this leaving open of the connection to individual viewers, which Group Material interpreted as reflective and empowering, that caused some members of their audience to see the show as politically inefficacious. In the following section, I analyze the feedback Group Material received during "AIDS & Democracy," and consider the ways in which it took up questions of individual and collective experience.

"Codified" Representations? The Debate Around "AIDS & Democracy"

As "AIDS & Democracy" unfolded, the public town-hall meeting, and also an exchange about the show in *The Village Voice*, became the grounds for airing criticism of Group Material's approach. In an incomplete draft of a review of the exhibition, Jack Ben-Levi and Sydney Pokorny write that some members of ACT UP had criticized the show "for its ambivalent stance on immediate political utility."[343] At the town-hall meeting, which was chaired by filmmaker and ACT UP member Maria Maggenti, this criticism was voiced mainly by Avram Finkelstein, a member of both Gran Fury and ACT UP. Finkelstein delivered a long monologue in which he criticized the "codified" nature of the show, and also its institutional location at Dia.

> Finkelstein: We're here tonight in an art-funded space talking about AIDS, and I have to say that it makes me very sad that there are very few places where I *can* talk about AIDS, except for in the street screaming with ACT UP – or – in some sort of a cloistered environment like this. … Where *art – falls – short* to its cultural responsibility in a crisis, is far as I'm concerned, is that frequently, the information that it's dealing with is *highly codified*. It's personalized. … I feel very disoriented when I walk into an art space and look at highly personalized, elitist, self-referential images[.] … I have questions about why this [meeting] is being documented. I think that any information is important for people to have access to, and in that respect I think that it's a great idea, but, in other respects – the implication, or, I'm inferring, that by discussing these issues in codified ways, in very elitist circles, which has to do

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[343] Jack Ben-Levi and Sydney Pokorny, "Review of Aids Art Activities [Incomplete Draft of a Review of Group Material's 'Aids & Democracy']." Fales Library, Group Material Collection, series I, subseries B, box 2, folder 26: "Letters to the Editor – AIDS + Democracy: A Case Study", 1988.

with the people who are funding this evening, and funding the show that is accompanying this, and funding a lot of other cultural events, the implication is that those people in some way will contribute to culture in a way that we as individuals aren't able to, or that people who are *not* artists are not able to. … [Ordinary people become] *distanced* from the issue. … I say this because I'm in the awkward position as someone who identifies themselves as an activist who *happens* to have created what I would have referred to as guerilla information, which is the postering we've been doing – I'm frequently approached by people in the media, in the art world, in the gallery circuit and lecture circuits to discuss art and activism. And – I have a lot of trouble with thinking about it in those terms. …

Maggenti: Avram, um, before you go away, I have a question. What would *be* then, a strategy for anybody who – who *makes* images, whether they call themselves an artist or not. … What are the ways in which you think artists – or *anyone* – you don't even have to be an artist, you can put a pen to a piece of paper, and plaster it up on a wall, which is kind of how *I'd* like to see things happen – are those some of the things you're talking about, is that a *strategy*?

Finkelstein: Yeah, that is one strategy, is exiting the art spaces. … I personally feel that guerilla information is *essential*. … There *is* no access to any of that information, and that's why I feel when I walk into a gallery and I see some very cryptic reference to personal *loss* or some – sort of – you know – codified, aestheticized, or *distanced vis-ion* of the way the culture is

> responding to the crisis, I feel angry and con*fused*, because I think that there's not enough concrete information, and I think, I mean, I think *facts* – crimes – are in order. I think postering is in order. … I really do feel that *clarity* is the strategy.

In his speech, Finkelstein underscored repeatedly the connection between the space of the art institution, a certain idea of privileged artistic subjectivity, and a lack of political action. In Chapter 1, I discussed David Deitcher's feeling of anxiety about the fact that Dia audio recorded the town-hall meetings held for Group Material's project. Deitcher felt that this recording effectively served as an act of capture by the institution, in which real politics became unreal representation. This idea returned in Finkelstein's critique: he viewed the recording of the meeting as suspect because he felt it was geared not at public information dissemination, but at enshrining the event as a "contribution" to culture. For Finkelstein, that idea of culture was an elitist one, which killed activism once it drew activism into culture's own designated spaces. Activism could only take place outside of the gallery, and Finkelstein was even hesitant to use terminology relating to the visual in order to designate Gran Fury's activity, which he instead called the production of "guerilla information." That information, in order to communicate to a large group of people in a way that is politically productive, must be clear, instead of being "codified," and thus remaining chained to an elitist, "aestheticized" idea of individual expression.

Finkelstein, when I interviewed him, said that he knew full well that *ART IS NOT ENOUGH*, and the other "guerilla information" that he produced with Gran Fury, were art. He also stated that he found Felix Gonzalez-Torres' individual art practice to be one of the most lastingly moving artistic responses to AIDS.[344] Particularly in light of these comments, I read Finkelstein's speech in the town-hall meeting not as indicating an absolute opposition to Group Material's work, but rather as an attempt to manifest within the meeting a combatitive affect that characterized Gran Fury's work, and that he experienced to be missing from the "AIDS & Democracy" exhibition. The speech disrupted what Finkelstein saw as the distancing effect of gallery space, by injecting confrontational anger into that space, and making it felt by everyone at the meeting. In effect, Finkelstein deployed his own strong emotion – anger – in order to win adherents to a model of approaching the crisis that transcended person experience in favor of collective action. In his speech, the idea of clear information comes to stand for the principle of democratic collectivity over individualist elitism, which he associates with aesthetic practice. His angry speech is like a spoken equivalent of the intervention performed in the visual realm by *ART IS NOT ENOUGH*, in which art is made to admit its insufficiency in the face of a political crisis, but simultaneously marshaled to contribute to addressing that crisis.

As the meeting progressed, other participants took up Finkelstein's call of insufficiency. Near the end of the meeting, a participant member of ACT UP remarked on her disappointment that she did not encounter more new faces, outside of those known to her from ACT UP meetings: “I thought like, *scads* of people I’d never seen before in my life would be *hogging* the microphones, but instead it’s the same people I see every Monday night.” Though unlike Finkelstein’s comments, this was not a critique directed at Group Material’s practice, it underscored the feeling that “AIDS & Democracy” was not enough: not enough meaningfully to address the crisis by generating new collective experience and dialogue.

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[344] Interview with Avram Finkelstein, May 26, 2011.

The confrontational anger that characterized Finkelstein’s speech returned again in a review written by art critic Kim Levin, published in *The Village Voice* on January 17, 1989. Levin’s article followed critic Elizabeth Hess’ much more positive review of the week before, “Safe Combat in the Erogenous Zone.”[345] Hess’ initial article located the strength of Group Material’s show in its conceptual approach. Hess wrote that, as opposed to other recent shows, which used photographic documentation to reveal the physical reality of AIDS, the strength of “AIDS & Democracy” lay in the way it raised the question of the epidemic’s impact on art. This included works created before the crisis: “nothing in the gallery is immune to AIDS.”[346] Hess thus emphasized the power of Group Material’s show to bring about a new way of reading art, and to do so in a way that reflected how AIDS as a social phenomenon was creating a permanent change in cultural meaning. She noted that “all major life and death disruptions” change ways of reading art, citing the parallel shift enacted by the Vietnam War, which, for example, imputed an ironic meaning to Jasper Johns’ flag paintings. With this emphasis on modes of reading, Hess thereby stressed the importance of individual viewer experience, writing that the "contrast between 'cool 'art' and hot 'propaganda,' initially jarring, becomes less and less so as the information gleaned from the software and hard copy begins to color our general vision."

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[345] See Elizabeth Hess, “Safe Combat in the Erogenous Zone.” *The Village Voice* January 10, 1989, and Kim Levin, “It’s Called Denial.” *The Village Voice* January 17, 1989.
[346] Hess, “Safe Combat in the Erogenous Zone.”

Hess' article aligned closely with Group Material's own stance, both in the text's emphasis on viewer experience, and also in the connections Hess drew between the AIDS epidemic and other historical crises. Levin's article, on the other hand, read in "AIDS & Democracy" the same tendency toward distanced reflection as did Hess, but used that reading as the basis for condemning the show as "nonconfrontational." The exchange between Levin and Group Material occurred in the context of an already tense critical relationship: in another article in *The Village Voice* in 1985, Levin had been strongly critical of *Americana*, Group Material's contribution to the 1985 Whitney Biennial. In that article, Levin wrote that Group Material's "titillating, weakly rebellious installation" constituted a "tongue-in-cheek" inclusion of popular cultural artifacts in the prestigious Biennial, serving to produce a "hideous thrill" for viewers that failed to disrupt the Whitney's privilege or commodification of art.[347] Levin had thus already expressed her dislike for Group Material's practice, and her suspicion for the ways in which the group stood to benefit from their collaboration with major art institutions.

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[347] Kim Levin, "The Whitney Laundry." *Village Voice* April 9, 1985.

Levin began her review of "AIDS & Democracy" by praising Gran Fury and their "ART IS NOT ENOUGH" poster, distributed by The Kitchen in December 1988. She then went on to argue that Group Material's show does not include graphic enough images of the disease to move viewers to action:

> [T]he voice of [artist Ross Bleckner's striped] shield emblemized the show: a formal blocking device, a shield against sorrow, rage, and fear. If Group Material aims to provoke action through art, it should know that Conceptual strategies of distancing and mediation act as psychic shields. Robert Mapplethorpe's self-portrait with a death's-heading walking stick and Kenneth Cole's ad ("This year, because of AIDS, thousands of Americans won't live long enough to fill these shoes") are the show's most directly confrontational visual images. The more conceptualized choices avoid, as metaphors do, directly confronting the horror of reality.
>
> The art world tends to be insular and anesthetized and denial is endemic in our society, but the anesthetized slant of the cool art in this show leaves something to be desired. … [It] simply doesn't evoke emotion leading to compassionate action.[348]

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[348] Levin, "It's Called Denial."

Levin went on to state that without the activist print information at the center of the gallery – which she attributed to ACT UP – the exhibition would have been largely unreadable in relation to AIDS.

Levin thus built a connection not between art and AIDS activism in general, but between one kind of art and activism. Though she did not mention any specific artists or artworks, apart from Gran Fury's didactic poster, it appears that the representations she favored were ones that depicted the physical aspects of AIDS in a graphic and unambiguous way. The fact that Levin favored graphic representations is supported by a story Ault relates about an incident leading up to the show.[349] When Dia announced that it would host a project by Group Material about AIDS, Levin contacted Dia and sent material by artist Dewey Seed, whose work she recommended for inclusion in the exhibition. Ault recalls few details about the work, but remembers that it involved real blood, and that the group was not interested in showing it. She states that in particular, Gonzalez-Torres, who was HIV-positive and whose partner Ross Laycock had AIDS-related illness at the time, was adamant that the show not include works that reaffirmed the physical reality of the disease. Seed spoke at the town-hall meetings for "AIDS & Democracy," stating his agreement with Finkelstein's position: "I agree with Ave about the exhibition at Dia in that it was – *coded*. And I think that it falls into *perfectly*, whether consciously or unconsciously, into the mind frame that the commercial galleries and the commercial system would like us to have."[350]

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[349] Interview with Julie Ault.

In light of Ault's recollection of Levin's contact with Dia, it is difficult not to read Levin's text as motivated, at least in part, by Group Material's rejection of her input on the show. However, though the text may be somewhat vindictive, it is clear from Group Material's response that its members felt unable simply to dismiss Levin. Instead they were bothered, hurt even, by her words. On February 7th, three responses to Levin were published in the *Village Voice*, including letters by Martha Rosler and by artist Rudolph Baranik, both of whom defended Group Material's show and argued against the idea that art should be collapsed into activism.[351] The third letter in the *Voice* was from the members of Group Material, who struck a much more defensive tone than either Rosler or Baranik:

> Kim Levin's article about our AIDS exhibition at the Dia Art Foundation was factually manipulative and inappropriate. Worst of all, it was politically simplistic. … Our decision to exclude work that illustrates the disease in a horrific and arguably confrontational manner was a considered one. This

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[350] "AIDS & Democracy: A Case Study" town hall meeting audiocassette recording, Dia Art Foundation archives.

[351] "Art is not direct action. The powerful poster by Gran Fury is not direct action – it merely calls for it. Direct action locates itself in life: in the fight for AIDS patients' rights and dignity, in the fight for an all-out governmental effort to fight the disease, and, let's not forget, in the hospital rooms where some nurses and doctors do what they can – and argue with their more frightened colleagues." In addition, Rosler also pointed out the information table and videos included in the installation, which she argues provided exactly the kind of information about activism that Levin said was missing. Letters to the editor, *The Village Voice*, January 24, 1989.

> exhibition was in part planned for people with AIDS and people living with the disease. Personalizing AIDS is not an intellectual choice. When you live with the 'horror,' you don't need or want to see pictures of it. What Levin interprets as handsome and palatable was intended to be evocative and reflective, encouraging critical distance.[352]

Below this letter was published a short response by Levin, which ended with yet another stinging missive: "Are the curators of 'AIDS and Democracy' really sure that they know what all PWAs and people living with the disease 'need or want to see'?"

A number of different problems were at issue in Group Material's letter and in Levin's answer to it, foremost among them the question of address. Specifically, in play here was the figure of the AIDS patient-as-viewer, which in this dialogue goes hand-in-hand with the question of who has the right to speak for the experiences of the Person With AIDS (known in activist discourses of the time as the "PWA"). *Both* Group Material and Levin asserted the authority of knowing what PWAs wanted to see. Rhetorically, Levin's text performed a gesture of aggressive debunking, which comes across as a claim to rescue PWAs from the assertions Group Material made about their viewership. Her critique drew on a form of discourse that has become familiar in academic discourse since the rise, throughout the 1980s, of discussions of differential privilege. In this mode, a critic counters a claim about the experience of a subaltern group with a different claim about that group's experience, not only in order to set right the scholarly record, but also to undermine the authority her opponent occupied in making the original assertion.

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[352] Group Material, letter to the editor, *The Village Voice*, February 7, 1989, p. 5.

The universal claim about viewership that Group Material made in their letter – those living with the disease don't want to see graphic representations of it – in fact stemmed from the experience of one specific PWA: group member Gonzalez-Torres.[353] Ault stresses that Gonzalez-Torres' position, and in particular his adamant opposition to showing graphic images of the disease, shaped strongly Group Material's approach to the show.[354] This resistance on Gonzalez-Torres' part was consistent with his slightly later individual art practice, which I have argued elsewhere approached AIDS with a high degree of visual and textual abstraction, in order to create a very broad address that stressed the universal impact of the epidemic.[355] In addition, it appears that in publishing Group Material's response to Levin, the editors of *The Village Voice* clipped a sentence that offers some more insight into Group Material's conceptualization of viewer address in the show. The full version of the sentence I quoted above read originally as follows:

> What Levin interprets as handsome and palatable, we intended to be somber, evocative and reflective, in keeping with Brecht's theory of the Epic that

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[353] In addition, a wall text in the exhibition dedicated the entire *Democracy* project to the group's friend Bill Olander, Senior Curator at the New Museum, who was living with AIDS and attended the opening in an advanced state of illness. Ault, Show and Tell, 152.

[354] Interview with Julie Ault; interview with Doug Ashford, July 17, 2010.

[355] See my exploration of this aspect of Gonzalez-Torres' work in Adair Rounthwaite, "Split Witness: Metaphorical Extensions of Life in the Art of Felix Gonzalez-Torres." *Representations*, no. 109 (Winter 2010): 35-56.

> allows for a critical distance in order to consider one's own emotional responses.[356]

In opposition to Levin's demand for graphic images that would create a strong affective pull, Group Material brought in Brecht in order to explain their creation of a more removed, less strongly identification-based viewing experience.

To read the selection of art in "AIDS & Democracy" as encouraging a Brechtian viewing experience seems like an over-justification of Group Material's aesthetic choices. But the appeal to Brecht gains more traction when we consider the installation as a whole, and particularly the important role of the information table at the center of the gallery. The installation appears, above all, performatively to have staged the process of disseminating information. The show not only distributed information, but also asked that viewers participate in a visible, collective process of receiving that information. In this respect, "AIDS & Democracy" was similar to Rosler's "Homeless: The Street and Other Venues" exhibition held a few months later. As I argued in Chapter 3, Rosler's show staged the audience as the pedagogical subjects of Homeward Bound's outreach work, in an office whose similarity to a theatrical set highlighted the visibility of both the art audience and the homeless people involved with the project.

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[356] Group Material, "Letter Sent to the Village Voice." Fales Library, Group Material Collection, Series I, Subseries B, Box 2, Folder 26, "Letters to the Editor – AIDS + Democracy: A Case Study", 1989. This full text of the letter also includes a reference to Levin calling to recommend work for inclusion in the show.

The "AIDS & Democracy" installation can be understood as Brechtian in that it set against each other two different apparatuses of experience and information – the institutional space of the gallery, and the grassroots tactics of activist practice – in order to make visible their historical specificity, and the way that they positioned the audience.[357] By exposing the information table to the gallery's focus on visibility, the exhibition showed viewers their own experience of absorbing that information. Moreover, in doing so, the show meditated on the collective nature of the experience of receiving the information. This reflection is expressed in Doug Ashford's photos of the opening of the show, which manifest a strong interest in the way in which viewers come together in the space to absorb the information available. As I stated above, a number of these images show visitors grouped together around the televisions at either end of the information tables [Fig. 35, 36, 41]. These small groups are drawn together by their physical proximity and shared concentration, their unity set off against the large, empty-looking space of the gallery. In one image [Fig. 42], we view a group from the opposite end of the information table. They appear here as the visual culmination of the table/TV apparatus, and conceptually as the end-point of its function, the receivers of its didactic message.

The goal of the "AIDS & Democracy" exhibition was thus to provide visitors with new and useful information, while giving them the opportunity to reflect on the different forms of experience – including aesthetic and informational, and individual and collective – that living through the AIDS crisis entailed. Group Material's strong investment in giving the show real informational value becomes clear in a comment by Gonzalez-Torres at the end of the round-table discussion at Dia in June 1988, a discussion which Group Material intended to lay the conceptual framework for the "AIDS & Democracy" town-meeting and exhibition. In addition to the members of Group Material, the meeting included a small selection of people involved in AIDS activism and also in various fields of cultural production: filmmaker Maggenti, art critic Jan Zita Grover, actor/director Richard Hopkins, and prominent ACT UP member Michael Callen. At the end of the meeting, Gonzalez-Torres extolled participants to send Group Material information about AIDS that could be used for the show:

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[357] Shannon Jackson discusses various "post-Brechtian" practices in her book *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics*. New York and London: Routledge, 2011. Jackson reads the work of Andrea Fraser, one of the foremost practitioners of institutional critique since the 1980s, as Brechtian in the sense that it performs an act of historical "showing" that reveals a certain set of historically contingent relationships between audience, performer, and institution (121-28).

> One thing I wanna say before you leave, please – do – send us all information, or any information you want us to have in that show – in December, send it here to – to Dia Art Foundation care of Group Material. We'll try to reimburse it for whatever the cost of the mailing – you can send it COD or whatever. But send *any* flyers, *any* information, because the main focus of this project is to hand out that information to another, different audience.[358]

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[358] Dia audiocassette recordings.

Ironically, Group Material's emphasis on the importance of critical distance in their response to Levin obscured this essential and urgent stake of their own project, which they expressed freely in the more casual, intimate setting of the roundtable discussion. I believe that this failure to articulate the project's simultaneous informational goals and engagement with questions of viewership and experience may have been partially a result of Group Material's own lack of clarity about their aims. Specifically, that lack of clarity seems to have stemmed from unsureness about how "AIDS & Democracy" fit in with the interrogation of the relationship between art and non-art that was key to the bigger conceptual framework of *Democracy*. But it was also a result of Group Material's defensiveness following Levin's hostile attack. At stake in that exchange was, ultimately, a question of tolerance. Though Levin did not explicitly demand that activists and artists reach a universal consensus about AIDS representation without permitting outliers, her text communicated an unforgiving attitude that came across as an attempt to punish Group Material for holding a perspective other than her own. That tone shut down the possibility for a dialogue in which the participants might exchange ideas while respecting each other's differences. Group Material, as I have argued throughout this dissertation, self-consciously strove to foster a diverse public sphere that would enable participation. But in the dialogue with Levin, that imaginary of a public sphere collapsed into a reductive back-and-forth, which made it impossible to see the common investments between the interlocutors.

Following that exchange, it was two members of Gran Fury, John Lindell and Donald Moffett, who made a move to restore the space for a diversity of opinion in the debate, in another letter to the *The Village Voice*. Unfortunately, this gesture of re-opening failed, because the *Voice* did not publish their letter. A draft of the text, entitled "It's Called Divisive," still exists in Group Material's archive, with a hand-written note from Moffett to Ashford scrawled across the top: "Doug – I know it's a different century now but John + I wanted you guys to know what went to the Voice." In their letter, Lindell and Moffett wrote:

> With the 1,000 bullshit idiotic exhibits going on in this town at any one moment, [Kim Levin] chooses to blast the Group Material show about their method of responding to the AIDS crisis. By writing an antagonistic either/or comparison between Gran Fury's method of working … and Group Material's installation at the Dia Foundation, she ignored the possibility of different approaches and intentions which are not exclusive of one another. To write that one collective's approach to the epidemic is superior to the other's only belittles the effort of all people working against the same enemy – that is, the political and social genocide of people with AIDS.
>
> We encourage all people to do whatever they can to attack this monster of a crisis. We support a diversity of activities as long as the work reinforces the dignity of people with AIDS and refuses to use "pity puppy" images which degrade a group of people who are not helpless or pathetic. …

> Certainly one thing is hard to deny, with 48,000 dead from AIDS, art criticism is not enough. In this case, misdirected art criticism is simply part of the problem.[359]

Though on one level, Lindell and Moffett chastised Levin as she did Group Material, on another, the letter aimed to break down divisive oppositions as such in order to see the possibility for collaboration. The letter was less a defense of the specific representation of AIDS in "AIDS & Democracy" than it was a defense of the space for different approaches, provided that they had a common ethical horizon: the representation of PWAs with respect and agency.

Ultimately, I see "AIDS & Democracy" as an ambivalent representation of AIDS, or rather, as a process of growth in Group Material's approach to the topic that did not cohere into an easily legible stance. Ault states that this show, more than some of Group Material's other exhibitions, was one in which the group themselves was very much "working through something."[360] "AIDS & Democracy" aimed both to communicate useful information about AIDS, and to enable viewer reflection on the different forms of experience the crisis created. But it fell short of making these investments clear to its audience. As I have discussed here, that lack of clarity occasioned a wide diversity of responses, from Finkelstein's attempt to inject a confrontational affect into the show through his speech at the meeting, to Levin's vindictive riposte, to Moffett and Lindell's attempt to restore space for difference in dialogue. I find Moffett and Lindell's letter moving, in that it generously made room for a diversity of perspectives, without demanding that these be universal, or be articulated perfectly. In doing so, the letter envisioned the process of community consensus-building around AIDS as a process of collective thought, and not compulsory conformity.

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[359] Donald Moffett and John Lindell, "Unpublished Letter to the Editor of the Village Voice." Fales Library, Group Material Collection, Series I, Subseries B, Box 2, Folder 26, "Letters to the Editor – AIDS + Democracy: A Case Study", 1989.

[360] Interview with Julie Ault.

In the final section of this chapter, I will argue that Group Material responded to the debate "AIDS & Democracy" raised by moving, in *AIDS Timeline*, to create a visual representation of collective experience. *AIDS Timeline* used the device of the timeline visually to produce a work which was clearly pedagogical for viewers, but also to visualize the relationship between different forms of experience. In this sense, it built on the interest in different forms of experience that "AIDS & Democracy" explored. But instead of creating those different kinds of experience for viewers, who in "AIDS & Democracy" could read information, look at the art, absorb the videos, and reflect on these different forms of meaning creation, *AIDS Timeline* presented a diagram of their intersection.

***AIDS Timeline* and Collective Experience**

Group Material first mounted *AIDS Timeline* at the MATRIX Gallery in the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum, in 1989. Gallery director Larry Rinder had seen "AIDS & Democracy" at Dia, and invited the group to address AIDS again in an exhibition at MATRIX.[361] In fact, Ault states, Rinder asked them to do another version of "AIDS & Democracy," but Group Material opted to create a different show. This was largely because they were still in the process of "developing a relationship" to the topic of AIDS.[362] Instead of redoing "AIDS & Democracy," they created *AIDS Timeline*, for which they subsequently produced versions at the MATRIX gallery at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut in 1990, and at the 1991 Whitney Biennial. But the most widely visible form of the project was its publication in December 1990 for Visual AIDS Day Without Art. For this large-scale project, one year of the timeline was published in the US and Canada in each of eleven different major art magazines, spanning varied political and scholarly approaches [Fig. 43].[363]

In creating *AIDS Timeline*, Group Material repurposed the timeline format that they had used previously in their 1984 work *Timeline: A Chronicle of U.S. Intervention in Central and Latin America* at P.S.1 in New York.[364] In contrast to the earlier *Timeline*, which consisted primarily of artworks and consumer products placed along a red timeline on the wall, *AIDS Timeline* was heavily textual. It interspersed artworks by professional and non-professional artists with media images, sexual education material, and small informational panels, all arranged in clusters along a black timeline moving from right to left [Fig. 44, 45]. At the Berkeley Museum, the gallery show went accompanied by a *da zi baos* or "democracy wall" on the exterior of the museum. Group Material had worked previously with this format for *DA ZI BAOS* in Union Square (1982) and *Democracy Wall* in Cardiff, Wales (1985) [Fig. 46]. For *AIDS Timeline*, they surveyed people in the Berkeley community about their feelings about AIDS, and then created large yellow and blue placards displaying these texts.

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[361] Douglas Ashford and Julie Ault. *Documenta 13, 100 Notes - 100 Thoughts No. 32: Doug Ashford, Julie Ault, Group Material 'AIDS Timeline'*. Kassel and Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2012, 2.

[362] Interview with Julie Ault.

[363] These magazines included *Afterimage, Art in America*, *Art & Auction*, *Art New England*, *Arts Magazine*, *Artforum*, *Contemporanea*, *High Performance*, *October*, *Parkett*, and *Shift*. For each magazine, Group Material created a layout specially tailored to the particular publication format. See Sabrina Locks, "Tracking AIDS Timeline," in Ault*, Show and Tell*, 229. Tom Finkelpearl writes: "For a moment, all of these magazines put aside their differences to produce a collective project." Tom Finkelpearl, *Dialogues in Public Art*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000, 419-20.

[364] See New York Times art reporter Grace Glueck's original review of this earlier timeline: Glueck, "Art: 'Interventions,' on U.S. Latin Role." *New York Times* February 3, 1984. This work is also the subject of a short article by art historian Claire Grace. See Grace, "Counter-Time: Group Material's Chronicle of Us Intervention in Central and South America." *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context, and Enquiry*, no. 26 (Spring 2011): 27-37.

Historian of public art Tom Finkelpearl calls *AIDS Timeline* one of the most influential works created in response to the AIDS crisis.[365] Finkelpearl, like many critics responding to *AIDS Timeline*, stresses its highly informational quality.[366] News of *AIDS Timeline* was announced in many different art and non-art print venues. This coverage often described *AIDS Timeline* as an informational project that was only tangentially artistic. For example, a newsletter from the Documentation of AIDS Issues and Research Foundation (DAIR), which helped Group Material assemble the information in *AIDS Timeline*, stated: "The 'AIDS Timeline' tracks the epidemic from 1979 to the present. Informative captions detail historical events. These captions provide a the historical setting and a political context for the epidemic."[367] For the exhibition of the work at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, the gallery put out a press release for the show in which it stated: "A timeline tracking the AIDS phenomenon will be the center piece of an exhibition in the MATRIX gallery at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford."[368] This framing presented the timeline as an informational device featured in the exhibition, downplaying the status of the timeline *itself* as art. Various articles in the Hartford press took over this sentence directly from the press release, disseminating the framing of *AIDS Timeline* as a primarily informational project hosted by an art institution.[369]

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[365] Finkelpearl, *Dialogues in Public Art*, 419.

[366] Finkelpearl writes: "In the gallery context, the timeline took the form of a number of other Group Material projects: information and quotations interspersed with contemporary art that address the issue of AIDS in one way or another." Ibid., 419.

This reception of the work as highly informational coincided, both in written reviews of the show and in viewers' responses, with acclamation of *AIDS Timeline*'s educational value. The visitor guest book from the Berkeley Museum exhibition abounds with positive comments that commend the show for its educational quality:

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[367] Documentation of AIDS Issues and Research Foundation (DAIR), "Newsletter." Fales Library, Group Material Collection, Series I subseries B Box 3 folder 3: "AIDS Timeline Berkeley (Corresp., checklists, show, process)", 1990.
[368] Wadsworth Atheneum, "Press Release for Group Material's "Aids Timeline"." Fales Library, Group Material Collection, Series II, Box 6, folder 23, "AIDS Timeline Hartford, AT NY, Cash Prize, Democracy Book, 1990-91, 2 of 2", September 6, 1990.
[369] See "New Wadsworth Exhibit Set." *Metroline* September 21, 1990, 57; State of Connecticut Department of Health, "Health Update - Aids Awareness Month." Fales Library, Group Material Collection, series II, box 6, folder 22: "AIDS Timeline Hartford, AT NY, Cash Prize, Democracy Book, 1990-91, 1 of 2", September 26, 1990; and Jude Schwendenwien, "'Aids Timeline' Mixes, Matches Ideas." *The Hartford Courant* November 4, 1990, G6.

> I was extremely impressed with the AIDS Timeline. It was a moving & educational creative process. It was inspiration and disturbing. My eyes and heart are more open. Thank you.
>
> The AIDS Timeline Exhibit was very informative and well done. Having it in a gallery where it hopefully will reach people who may not read the scientific facts in other media [is a positive choice.]
>
> I found the AIDS Timeline exhibit very informative. It takes a great deal of time to read & absorb so much. It seemed to me most people skimmed [the show] – chuckling at an item here or there; but not really wanting to possess the facts that once absorbed cannot help but make you very angry. I have come out shaking with wrath; furious at the degree of governmental genocide, backsliding & intentional ignorance of the men & companies which represent us. What does one do with all this anger?[370]

These visitors' comments not only testify to the educational value of the show, but illustrate that its informational quality did not invoke a dry or emotionless experience for visitors. On the contrary, the viewers state their experience of being moved precisely by the timeline's informational nature. The written press on *AIDS Timeline* continued this framing of the show as educational but also emotionally engaging and open-ended.[371] *Hartford Courant* reporter Jude Schwendenwien, for example, wrote that though the show was heavy on information, it provided an "open-ended perspective that even a lay audience can get into."[372]

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[370] Berkeley Art Museum. "Museum Guest Book." Fales Library, Group Material Collection, series I, subseries B, box 3, folder 3: "AIDS Timeline Berkeley (Corresp., checklists, show, process)", 1989.

Whereas with "AIDS & Democracy: A Case Study," critics emphasized, and often took issue with, the art-oriented nature of the exhibition, reviews of *AIDS Timeline* repeatedly equated that show with activism as such. A 1990 review in *Metropolis* magazine of the print version of *AIDS Timeline* emphasized the status of the project as an instance of political action: "This month, the New York-based artists' collective called Group Material is *doing something* about America's number one medical crisis" (italics mine).[373] Reporter Frank Rizzo reviewed *AIDS Timeline* and also *AIDS/SIDA*, another exhibition about AIDS shown in Hartford at the same time, in an article entitled "Art as activist: An education about AIDS." Rizzo, in addition to stressing the success of *AIDS Timeline* in giving viewers a broad picture of the crisis, discusses Group Material's efforts to adapt the work directly to Hartford, which included meeting "with area artists, AIDS activists and museum staffers."[374] Rizzo represents Group Material in a very positive light as networking in the peripheral-to-the-art-world location of Hartford, in order to address that community's particular concerns.

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[371] Of all the reviews I have found of *AIDS Timeline*, only Arthur Danto's objects to the informational emphasis of the show. Danto experienced the work to be lacking in beauty, and therefore in emotive appeal. Danto, "Art for Activism's Sake: The 1991 Whitney Biennial." *The Nation* June 3, 1991, 743-48.

[372] Schwendenwien, "'Aids Timeline' Mixes, Matches Ideas."

[373] "All Together Now: Aids." *Metropolis: The Urban Magazine of Architecture and Design* December 1990.

[374] Frank Rizzo, "Art as Activist: An Education About Aids." *Hartford Courant* September 7, 1990, C1, C3.

Various reviewers who wrote about the presentation of *AIDS Timeline* at the 1991 Whitney Biennial echoed Rizzo's emphasis on the activist success of the project. Elizabeth Hess, whose review of "AIDS & Democracy" I discussed above, wrote that Group Material's contribution to the Biennial was crucial in giving viewers some idea of what was actually going on in the early '90s.[375] Michael Kimmelman cited the inclusion of Group Material's "activism" in the Biennial as an example of the curators' success in trying to address political topics absent in the previous Biennial.[376] And Ann-Sargent Wooster wrote in *Afterimage* that the area of Group Material's Whitney installation with chairs and video monitors [Fig. 47] created an alliance between the gallery and the spaces of AIDS treatment and activism, "creating an ambience somewhere between a museum, a classroom, and a clinic waiting room."[377]

Two different texts by art historian Richard Meyer dramatize the difference in reception between "AIDS & Democracy" and *AIDS Timeline*. At the time of the exhibitions, Meyer was a PhD candidate in Art History at the University of California, Berkeley, who worked on the Berkeley Museum show and wrote a short text for the exhibition brochure. Meyer wrote a review of "AIDS & Democracy" that was never published, but exists in Group Material's archive. His description of that exhibition, though lacking the negative tone of Levin's critique, resonates with her comment that the show did not incite strong emotion. Meyer writes:

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[375] Elizabeth Hess, "Upstairs, Downstairs: 1991 Whitney Biennial." *The Village Voice* April 30, 1991, 93-94.
[376] Michael Kimmelman, "At the Whitney, a Biennial That's Eager to Please." *New York Times* April 19, 1991.
[377] Ann-Sargent Wooster, "Cube with a View [Review of Whitney Biennial Film and Video Programs]." *Afterimage* October 1991, 16.

> The installation seeks not to document AIDS itself, to offer instructional or memorial imagery, but to confront the means through which AIDS has been (mis)represented by culture and government and to posit artistic alternatives to them. Many of the objects in the installation therefore strike a cooler, more conceptual address than one would anticipate in an 'AIDS exhibition.'[378]

In contrast, Meyer's brochure text about *AIDS Timeline*, though it does not directly acclaim the emotional quality of the piece, is characterized by an urgent, almost reportorial style that gives the reader an impression of the installation as a highly affecting work. Meyer opens by underscoring the belatedness of President Ronald Reagan's first speech on AIDS in 1987, considering that at that time there were already 20,849 Americans dead from AIDS. He writes that Group Material's timeline reconstructs the history of the disease "within a web of cultural and political relations," including the federal government's response to the crisis. He goes on to call Group Material's practice of collective authorship, and their choice to display others' work, "a radical critique of the art-making and exhibition process."[379] Throughout the text, diverse information flies rapidly at the reader, driving home the urgency not only of AIDS, but of *AIDS Timeline* as a response to it.

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[378] Richard Meyer, "Unpublished Review of Group Material's 'Aids & Democracy: A Case Study'." Fales Library, Group Material Collection, series I, subseries B, box 3, folder 3: "AIDS Timeline Berkeley (Corresp., checklists, show, process)", 1989.

In "AIDS & Democracy," Group Material created an exhibition designed to enable critical reflection, and thereby to let viewers think about the various forms of experience and emotion the crisis created. In its juxtaposition of artworks and information table, "AIDS & Democracy" aimed to disseminate information, but also to create a space for art to generate experiences not reduced to that dissemination. In *AIDS Timeline*, Group Material shed that attachment to a non-instrumentalized space for art, and to the special experiences enabled by art in contrast to didactic activism. Perhaps unexpectedly, the result of that shedding was what viewers perceived to be a much more emotional exhibition.

I believe that the cathartic quality of *AIDS Timeline*, which shines through clearly in the Berkeley guest book entries, was a major contributor to the positive reception of the show. Moreover, the work's educational quality provided a collective vocabulary for discussing its value, spanning contexts as diverse as the *Hartford Courant*, the DAIR newsletter, and *Afterimage*. As I argued in Chapter 2, the concept of art as educational functioned as an important consensus-builder in the late '80s and early '90s between different factions in the art world. One of the rare negative comments in the Berkeley Museum guestbook illustrates the importance of this paradigm in relation to *AIDS Timeline*. For the Berkeley show, the installation included some explicit imagery, such as the San Francisco AIDS Foundation poster "Dress for the Occasion" [Fig. 48], and also a video by Robert Beck in the video-viewing booth, which contained hardcore pornographic images.[380] A viewer, upset by the video images, wrote: "'Educational?' 'Informative?' Who are you kidding. Those videos belong in a museum about as much as a stripper belongs in a children's sex education class."[381] Unconvinced as this viewer was by the value of the show, he or she clearly realized that its educational quality was the discursive grounds on which that value stood to be confirmed or contested.

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[379] Richard Meyer, "Exhibition Pamphlet for Group Material's 'Aids Timeline' at the Matrix Gallery." University Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley, 1989.

That educational value, however, was not only an objective attribute of the show, but also an *effect* that it cultivated. In terms of the information Group Material made available, "AIDS & Democracy," with its videos and take-away activist literature, may well have offered viewers as much information as did *AIDS Timeline*. But *AIDS Timeline* thematized the relationship between pedagogy and collective experience visually in a way that "AIDS & Democracy" did not. The stem of the timeline guided viewers physically through the exhibition, connecting as it went diverse objects and pieces of information. These resonated with various levels of collective and individual experience. Certain objects, such as the images from mainstream magazines, and the public sex educational posters, signified broad, collective forms of address and cultural experience, whereas other objects, including the highly personalized masks created by PWAs participating in the art program at

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[380] Interview with Larry Rinder in Sabrina Locks, "Behind the Timeline: Collected Histories." In *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material*, edited by Julie Ault. London: City Lights Books, 2010, 246.

[381] Berkeley Art Museum, "Museum Guest Book," Fales Library.

San Francisco's Rest Stop Support Center, bore witness to subjective experiences of the disease.[382] Moreover, *AIDS Timeline* combined news items, factual placards, and art objects characterized by a serious address with light and funny objects often taken from pop culture, such as a Batman logo. In doing so, it played on viewers' familiarity with different forms and scales of audience address. Throughout this heterogeneous collection ran the black line of the timeline, uniting the different objects into a visualization of the way in which different forms of experience converge in the public sphere. *AIDS Timeline* educated, but in its act of doing so, also visualized the act of sharing information as something that bound the public sphere together.

One of the strengths of this visualization of collective experience lay in the way that it enabled Group Material to render moot the "art is not enough" debate. The group's ongoing struggle with this question is visible in a set of notes for a statement about *AIDS Timeline*, written by Ault with handwritten editorial comments by Gonzalez-Torres. At one point, Gonzalez-Torres crossed out Ault's typed text, inserting a scrawled note:

> As the AIDS crisis continued, so did the responses to it. The text of Group Material's AIDS Time Line, ~~for example, will understandably never be enough as long as the AIDS crisis continues. But the Time Line~~ *I think the not enough theme becomes problematic after its introduction and description at*

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[382] Interview with artist Sharon Siskin in Locks, "Behind the Timeline," 247.

> *beginning. It becomes a gratuitous writing device & sets up a problematic argument.*[383]

Though Gonzalez-Torres' note fails to elucidate the reasons for his editorial change, the revision demonstrates the fact that during the development of *AIDS Timeline*, the group was still in the process of trying to come to terms with framing AIDS in relation to an idea of art. In one sense, in the original version of the typed statement, Ault (and whoever may have collaborated with her on the text) seems to be adopting an element of Gran Fury and Crimp's rhetoric to which Group Material seemed resistant in "AIDS & Democracy." But on the other hand, the "art is not enough" argument itself is predicated on the same kind of divide between art and its other – life, politics, activism – that characterized the "AIDS & Democracy" installation. As the group continued to develop *AIDS Timeline* and its members' thinking around the exhibition, they ultimately dropped this discourse altogether. Instead, they stressed the work's documentary quality. In a letter of June 1989 to Chriss Holderness at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, Ault referred to the work simply as "a visual chronology" of AIDS. [384] Group Material stated this documentary function plainly at the beginning of the final document containing all of the historical information included in the Berkeley installation: "The following chronology is an attempt to trace the development of the AIDS crisis in the United States and contextualize its development socially and politically."[385]

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[383] Julie Ault, "Notes for Statement About 'Aids Timeline'." Fales Library, Group Material Collection, series II, box 5, folder 24: "General Correspondence 1989", 1989.

[384] Julie Ault, "Letter to Chriss Holderness at Ica Boston." Fales Library, Group Material Collection, series II, box 5, folder 24: "General Correspondence 1989", June 13, 1989.

The reception of *AIDS Timeline* testifies to its success in coming across to viewers as didactic and activist, with a power that displaced the debate about art's political role that dominated reactions to "AIDS & Democracy." The earlier show at Dia marked the beginning, in Group Material's practice, of an attempt to deal with the multiple layers of experience AIDS created. Whereas "AIDS & Democracy" attempted to activate these different registers of experience for viewers, *AIDS Timeline* condensed them into a representation. In doing so, it foregrounded the ability of art to render legible, to decode complex conditions of power. This act of rendering legible is a tendency similar to the work of Gran Fury that I discussed above. But I believe that the distinctive quality of *AIDS Timeline* lies in the way that it locates itself in relation to the question of didacticism less as an act of teaching than as an act of learning. *AIDS Timeline* looks like a concept map of the kind used often in contemporary higher-education pedagogy. It appears as an attempt to bring together the fruits of a personal and idiosyncratic journey into the cultural archive created by the crisis. [386] It communicates a rich amount of information to viewers, but in doing so positions them as readers *alongside* Group Material.

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[385] Ashford and Ault, *Documenta 13, 100 Notes - 100 Thoughts*, 6.

[386] In this respect, Group Material's practice was one of the many forerunners of the "art practice as research" paradigm that now dominates contemporary art production. For a discussion of this tendency, see, for example, Florian Dombois, Ute Meta Bauer, Claudia Mareis, and Michael Schwab, ed. *Intellectual Birdhouse: Artistic Practice as Research*. London: Koenig Books, 2012.

Though it was less successful in its audience address, I consider "AIDS & Democracy" to be a particularly important ethical moment in Group Material's practice. Even though *AIDS Timeline* signified more clearly to its audience as pedagogical, the way Group Material absorbed viewer feedback from "AIDS & Democracy" and went on to change their approach to AIDS in *AIDS Timeline* illustrates the sincerity of their commitment to making their encounter with the audience into a learning experience. I discussed this idea extensively in Chapter 2, where I argued that the idea of art as pedagogically transformative – and Group Material's framing of themselves as the subjects of that pedagogy – was key to maintaining a concept, in their practice, of the political value of art. The progression from "AIDS & Democracy" to *AIDS Timeline* illustrates the extent to which that commitment was not just a rhetorical device, or a creative way to reframe art's activism in light of the increasing proximity between activist artists and mainstream art institutions. It was central to Group Material's working method, not only in the forums or exhibitions of *Democracy*, but also in the long game of the evolution of their approach to representing social and political problems.

As such, I would like to posit here that we understand *AIDS Timeline* as a document of the participation that took place in "AIDS & Democracy." In Chapter 3, I asked what constitutes a document of participatory art. I argued that for Martha Rosler, her project's documentation was as important as the project itself, because that documentation became the medium of a pedagogical message about homelessness. At this point, I want to extend this blurring of the lines between documentation and artwork even further, by arguing that *another artwork*, even one not explicitly centered around documentation texts of images of a participatory process, can function like a document. Read in the context of the debate around "AIDS & Democracy," *AIDS Timeline* appears as an attempt to record differential, sometimes conflicting responses to the crisis, responses with which Group Material were confronted directly during the project at Dia. *AIDS Timeline* seems like an attempt to diagram those different responses in order to understand them, to process the sometimes difficult experience of participation as praxis. In its act of diagramming, it restores a space akin to the one Lindell and Moffett tried to give back to "AIDS & Democracy." That imagined space is one in which different opinions can exist in the same public arena, and their differences conceived not simply as futile or frustrating, but as essential to the process of collective experience and action.

Conclusion

In the introduction to this dissertation, I discussed the need for an engagement with historical audience experience, as well as with historically specific theories of experience, in writing about participatory art. This first problem, the desire to look in a closer and more nuanced way at audiences' experiences with participation, was central to my motivation beginning work on this dissertation. I first came across mention of *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* in a short article about contemporary art and pedagogy by Claire Bishop, in which she sums up the project and connects them to ideas of activism, democracy, and pedagogical art practice, all in a couple of sentences.[387] It was precisely the swiftness of this gesture of generalization that was striking to me, and that made me curious to find out more about these projects. The question I asked myself was, how might it ever be possible to understand this expansive generalization as a true or untrue statement? If participatory art is an art that eliminates the boundaries between viewer experience and "the work itself," where is the point at which a scholarly assertion about the meaning of a given project comes to terms with that experience? What, within contemporary art history, are our common standards or vocabulary for parsing the various levels of condensation and abstraction of experience that take place on the way from a live project to its summation as one small building block in a sweeping art historical narrative?

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[387] Bishop, "The New Masters of Liberal Arts," 88-89.

As such, my first encounter with *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* was through a scholarly statement ostensibly based in historical fact, but fact condensed and abstracted to such a degree that not much remained of it beyond a figure of gesturing to its realness. At this point, at the end of my study, I still feel that the question of how we deal historically with audience experience to be its biggest potential contribution. On one level, contemporary art history is obsessed with the activation of the viewers by artworks: bodily, intellectually, socially, and politically. But this interest has less often been accompanied by a drive to investigate how these forms of activation turn out for actual viewers. Part of my study here has focused on advocating a historically specific understanding of participation; this is the part of my work that finds the greatest number of precedents in the field. Bishop, in *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (2012), examines artists' contextually and historically shifting uses of participation in art throughout the 20th- and 21st-centuries. Grant Kester, in *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (2011), one of the most theoretically rigorous recent books in the field, analyzes how we assign political value to certain art practices. Kester makes us see the often invisible philosophical foundations on which our own positions are built. Both authors, however, work ultimately on the question of artists and their ideas, as opposed to on the question of the audience.

Though this thought is speculative at this point, I wonder if this focus on artists is a remaining trace of the representational paradigm away from which the broader humanities seem to be transitioning. Discussions of authorship, intention, and responsibility are familiar ground within the representational paradigm. That paradigm is less engaged with questions about what happens when an authorial blueprint initiates a network of relationships that come to exceed it. Studying those relationships, as Bruno Latour writes, is an "agonizingly slow" process.[388] Maybe, then, it is the extremely small and close historical focus of my study that allows me to historicize the representational paradigm, instead of continuing it. I hope that the result of that historicization will be a greater archival commitment to following *all* of the actors in participatory art – including audience members, institutional employees, and funders – as well as a more experimental range of descriptive approaches and conceptual tools for analyzing their affective connections to the work. Understanding audience experience is necessary to social art history, and particularly to social art history after the affective turn, because the audience is the key thing that stands between us historians and the illusion that artworks enter the world completely on their own terms.

To advocate an attention to audience experience is not to say that we can recover that experience totally, or conjure that it transparently in our texts. I believe in the need to create a text which moves, through archives, towards an idea of experience as something historically real. But simultaneously, I recognize the performativity of the gesture by which my own text makes that movement. Every time I wrote a historical participant into this narrative, whether that be Cenén, Gary Garrels, Martha Rosler, or the members of Group Material, it felt as if my text was conjuring an avatar. These textual avatars stand in for the fact that at one point, in the past, someone had experiences, thoughts, and interests, which I am curious to know, but can't. The text attempts to create a sense of these real peoples' agency and voice. But the comment David Deitcher made in relation to *Democracy* holds here as well: it becomes hard to distinguish between reality and representation, participating and performing, historical work and narrative invention.

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[388] Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 25.

Perhaps, in this sense, this text comes into being like the ghostly other audience that Deitcher imagined sitting on Mercer Street during the town-hall meetings. The dependence of the meetings on their institutional setting gave him the feeling that "the massive garage door to the Dia space might suddenly and unceremoniously rise, revealing Mercer Street, the audience for whose benefit all of this was taking place, and the absurdity of our gesture."[389] In particular, Deitcher cites the presence of the tape decks audio-recording the meeting – "the wheels of the tape recorders kept turning" – as a sort of creepy reminder that the institution was capturing the meeting, and thus making it available to secondary observation by someone not attending the event itself. Interestingly, what Deitcher presents as a spatial divide between actors and observers, with his image of the audience physically outside the meeting space, is in reality more probably a temporal divide: the tapes make the meetings available to *future* observers. Therefore, maybe my own act of historicizing the projects, which is fully dependent on the documentation produced by the institution, is the historical equivalent to the garage door rising. My writing makes the original audience visible, and in doing so renders their actions a significant part of the artwork. It refuses to let those actions alone, but wants to interpret them, to read them not only as past action but as meaningful activity, regardless of the in-the-moment intentions of the participants.

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[389] Deitcher, "Social Aesthetics," 42.

But I hope that this act of exposing the participants in *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here…* to the gaze of this other audience, the audience of myself and of future readers, has not revealed the projects as absurd, but rather as resourceful and politically committed attempts to come to terms with their own reality. Hopefully, my avatars have felt real enough to give us, the audience out on Mercer Street, the feeling that they are also watching us back, reminding us that an idea of what they experienced should guide our present interpretation, irrecoverable though that experience may be. Conceived of in this way, as an act of mutual participant observation across a historical chasm, the text may have the possibility to act as a meeting of many different forms and moments of experience, instead of just an attempt to establish authority by saying what happened, and what that means. But the act of judgment of whether the text reaches that goal is of course yours, not mine, to make.

Figures

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

Fig. 5

UNDER
NEW
Management

Fig. 6

Fig. 7

Fig. 8

Fig. 9

Fig. 10

Fig. 11

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Fig. 27

Fig. 28

Fig. 29

Fig. 30

Fig. 31

Fig. 32

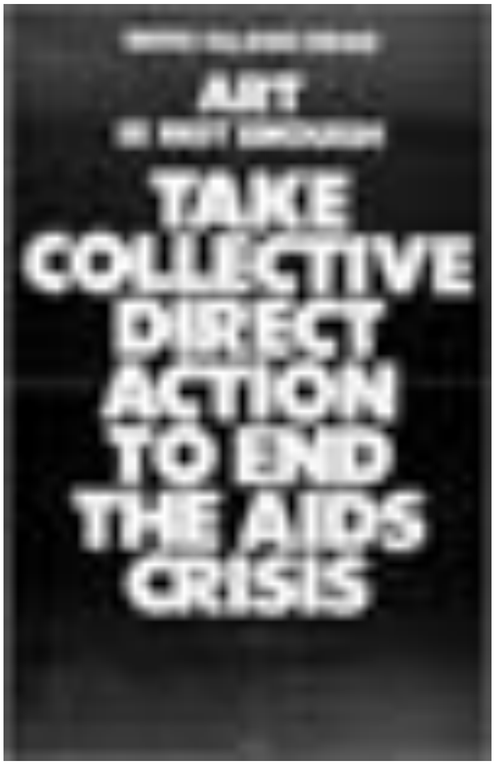
ART
TAKE COLLECTIVE DIRECT ACTION TO END THE AIDS CRISIS

Fig. 33

Fig. 34

Fig. 35

Fig. 36

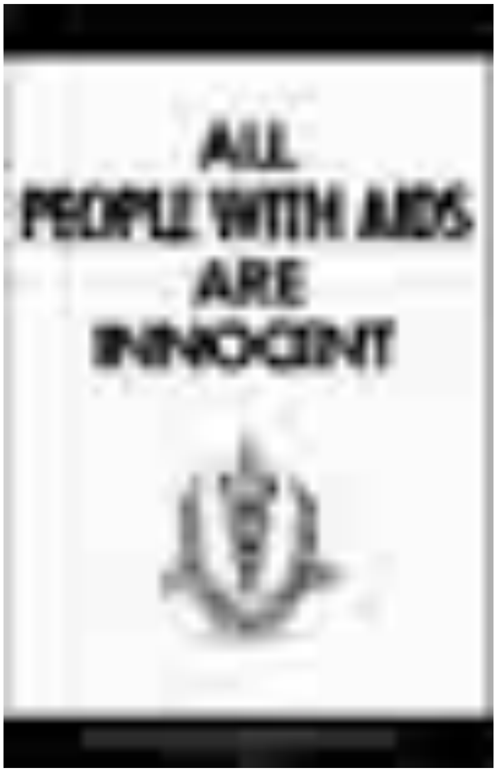
ALL
PEOPLE WITH AIDS
ARE
INNOCENT

Fig. 37

Fig. 38

Fig. 39

Fig. 40

Fig. 41

Fig. 42

Fig. 43

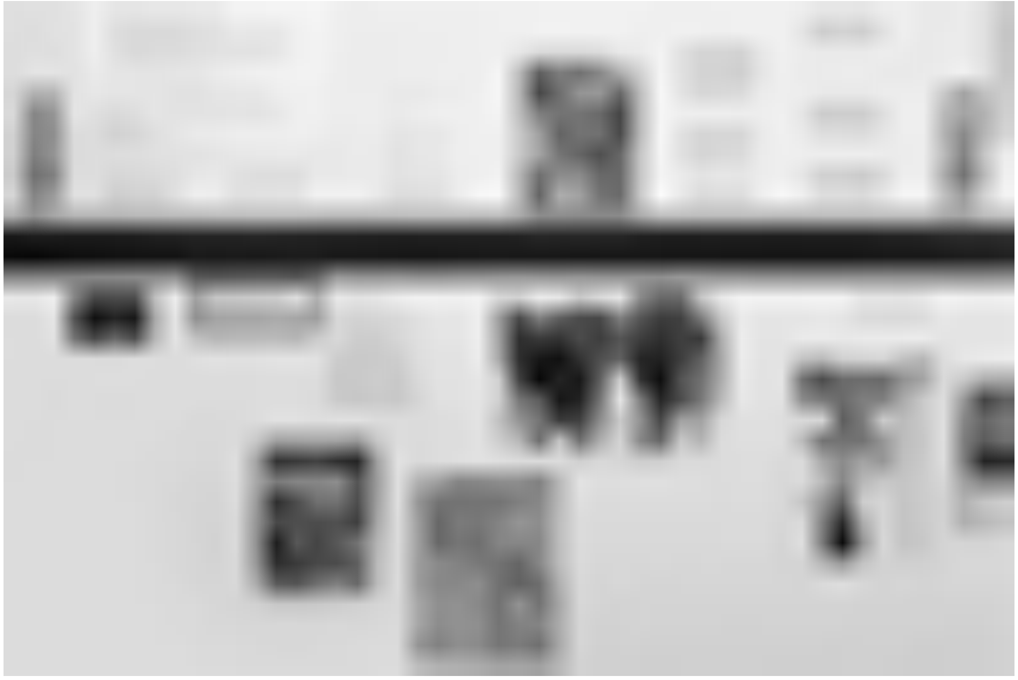
Fig. 44

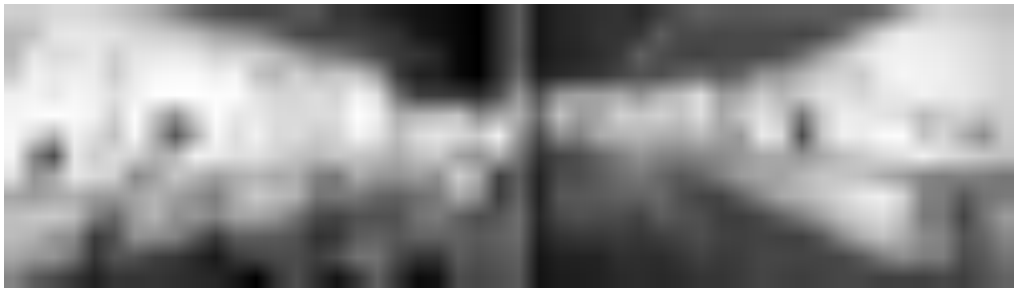
Fig. 45

Fig. 46

Fig. 47

Dress for the occasion.

Fig. 48

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