

Wadsworth Atheneum
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

*Group Material/MATRIX 111
AIDS Timeline (Hartford, 1990)
September 30 - November 18, 1990*



ACTUP, NY and AIDS activists at Fifth International Conference
on AIDS, Montreal, Canada, 1989
Photo: c. T. L. Litt

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*Group Material / MATRIX 111
AIDS Timeline (Hartford, 1990)*



*Can I now plant imagination, honesty,
And love, where violence and terror were unbound--
The images of hope,
the dream's responsibility?*

May Sarton
Who Wakes, 1943

Group Material is the collaborative effort of four young New York artists--Doug Ashford, Julie Ault, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, and Karen Ramspacher--who, as their medium of artistic expression, organize exhibitions on socially relevant topics. They have explored such critical subjects as *Democracy and Education*, the *United States Constitution, Liberty and Justice*, and, in recent years, *Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS)*.

Important to each of their presentations is the inclusion of works of art by well known and less familiar artists, together representing a broad cultural spectrum, including young and old, many ethnic identities and differing points of view. They also include objects from daily life, both directly and obliquely related to the topic, along with printed materials, historical artifacts, and images from popular culture. All of this they orchestrate into visually impressive installations which are thoughtful, assertive, and energetic. The visual strength of their presentations leads casual visitors into their serious subject matter.

Describing their intentions, they have written: "Group Material was founded in 1979 as a constructive response to the inadequate means for artistic representation and cultural dialogue in New York City...All of our exhibitions and projects are intended to question perceived notions of what art is and where it should be seen. We began activities by opening one of the first storefront art spaces in the Lower East Side of Manhattan (1980-81)...By using a strategy of precise and innovative exhibition design, Group Material creates a context which reveals the multiplicity of meanings that surround the theme or issue."

In *AIDS Timeline (Hartford, 1990)*, using their usual collaborative approach and working with various sources of information, the four members of Group Material consider some of the political, social, medical, and artistic issues related to AIDS. Along the *Timeline*, which travels

chronologically around the exhibition space, are more than four dozen works of art by a geographically and ethnically diverse selection of artists. The installation includes works by Keith Haring, Dorothea Lange, Louise Lawler, Duane Michals, Tim Rollins + K.O.S., Andres Serrano, Lorna Simpson, Nancy Spero, Andy Warhol, and Hartford artists Mary Kenealy and Alynne Martelle.

AIDS Timeline (Hartford, 1990) begins in 1979, the year that American doctors first noticed a marked increase in "immunologically unusual patients" and tallied twelve new cases and eleven deaths. Including artifacts of both high and popular culture, along with governmental and grass roots publications, Group Material invites the museum visitor to review the history of AIDS over the past decade. Says one member of Group Material, "There is a kind of dialogue we set up in the installation between the art and the archival material. No one thing tells the story, but, as a total, a story starts to get told." Along the *Timeline*, Group Material also includes annual statistics for the numbers of new cases, total cases, and deaths attributed to AIDS.

Group Material's *AIDS Timeline* includes a stronger presentation of the organizers' own points of view than most of their earlier installations. This reflects their collective sense of urgency about the need for better care and support for People With AIDS (PWAs), including early intervention with available drug therapies and accelerated research efforts. The *Timeline* consciously intends to document the harmful impact that homophobia and racism have had on the formulation of effective public policy.

Selected statements indicate that response to the crisis was slow as long as it was known as "the gay cancer." An ironic turning point came in 1985 when, to quote the *Timeline*: *In late July, Rock Hudson discloses that he is ill as a result of AIDS. President Reagan, who has never said the word AIDS in public, calls to wish Hudson well. The American print media quadruples its coverage of the syndrome.*

For Group Material, the issues are even larger than the current crisis. They feel the AIDS epidemic only highlights the urgent need to improve the structure of this country's healthcare system. Indeed, Group Material sees virtually all the major societal inequities that compromise democracy in the United States reflected in the decade-long history of AIDS.

Group Material bypasses most aspects of the art market. It does not produce work which can be sold, and its viewpoint remains avowedly populist. They often present

their work in public spaces, including outdoor billboards, on subways and buses, as "advertising supplements" in *The New York Times*, and, most recently, as bus ads in Hartford, sponsored by Real Art Ways.

Art has frequently intersected with politics. Artists who glorify a ruling monarch or valorize a military leader contribute to the political history of their own time. Group Material joins a long list of distinguished artists, including Jacques Louis David, Pablo Picasso, Kaethe Kollwitz, Diego Rivera, John Heartfield, Ben Shahn, and Hans Haacke, whose work engages controversial, highly charged contemporary topics.

The inclusionary nature of Group Material's exhibitions, their collaborative work style, and their interest in the ethics of exhibitions have made them an important if unlikely influence on the world of contemporary art. At their best, the work of Group Material--what they do and how they do it--reflects widely held, popular aspirations for what this country might be at its best. *AIDS Timeline* (Hartford, 1990) resonates with concern for the well-being and gentle treatment of fellow citizens. Group Material expresses this concern with intelligence, compassion, integrity, and sensitivity.

It is difficult for museum visitors to escape the irony of a timeline in relation to the AIDS crisis. While time runs out for a growing number of Persons With AIDS worldwide, the exhibition quietly challenges the observer to place him or herself in the chronological context and ask, "How can I relate constructively to this moment in history?"

Andrea Miller-Keller

Curator of Contemporary Art



LATEX IS A
LOVERS

PLEASE NOTE: The members of Group Material--**Douglas Ashford, Julie Ault, Felix Gonzalez-Torres** and **Karen Ramspacher**--will visit the Atheneum on Sunday, September 30, 1990. They will give an informal MATRIX lecture about their work at 2 p.m. in the Hartford Courant Room. A reception in their honor will follow the talk. **Andrea Miller-Keller**, Curator of Contemporary Art, will give a gallery talk in MATRIX on *Group Material: The Intersection of Art and Politics*, on Thursday, October 4, at noon. *Common Threads*, the Academy Award-winning documentary on the NAMES quilt, and *DHPG Mon Amour* by Carl Michael George, will be shown on Thursday, October 11, at noon and on Saturday, October 13, at noon. **Ann Ellsworth Northrup**, educator, AIDS activist and former producer for *CBS Morning News* will speak on *Art, Education, the Media and Social Action* on Sunday, November 11, at 2 p.m..

Works of art in MATRIX:

All works are lent courtesy of the artist unless otherwise noted.

Nayland Blake, *Future Shock*, 1989, books and plexiglass, 7 1/2" x 6" x 5". Private Collection/ Terese Bramlette, *No Trace: Wishbone*, 1989, mixed media, 12" x 9". Courtesy of Althea Viafora Gallery, Collection of Dan Lufkin, NYC/ Lei Chou, *Untitled*, 1990, ink on paper, three pieces, 12" x 12" each/ Philip-Lorca diCorcia, *Mitzio*, 1985, 1985, color photograph, 20" x 24"/ Steven Evans, *Selections from the Disco, Various BPM, 1979-1990*, 1989, mixed media, dimensions variable/ Robert Flack, *Portal*, 1990, color photograph, 40" x 30". Lent by Robert Flack and Feature, NYC/ Peg Forauer, *AIDS Baby Crib Quilt (ABC Quilt)*, 1990, cotton and polyester, 50" x 42"/ Mike Glier, *Key CIA*



Official, from *White Male Power* series, 1981, offset print, 11" x 16 1/2"/ Mike Glier, *Advertising Executive*, from *White Male Power* series, 1981, offset print, 11" x 16 1/2"/ Michael Jenkins, *June 30, 1986*, 1988, acrylic on paper, 9' x 6'. Lent by Michael Jenkins and Jay Gorney Modern Art, NYC/ Michael Jenkins, *Yellow Fence*, 1990, painted wood, 60 1/4" x 14" x 8". Lent by The Arthur and Carol Goldberg Collection, NYC/ Mary Kenealy, *Configuration X*, *Configuration/Religion*, *Configuration/Political*, 1990, watercolor on paper, three parts, 7" x 10" each/ Dorothea Lange, *Untitled*, from the *Internment Camp* series, 1942, black and white photograph, 8" x 10". Courtesy National Archives Neg. #210-GC-160/ Louise Lawler, *Beautiful*, 1989, black and white photograph with letter press mat, 14" x 11", edition of 10. Lent by Louise Lawler and Metro Pictures, NYC/ Rudy Lemke, *The Ruby Slippers*, 1989, acrylic on canvas, 36" x 24". Courtesy of Modernism, San Francisco/ Hillary Leone, *Capital I*, 1989, braille embossed sandpaper on wood, 33" x 18"/ Robert Mapplethorpe, *Surgeon General C. Everett Koop*, 1989, black and white gelatin silver print, 24" x 20". Courtesy of The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, NYC/ Alynne Martelle, *Gotcha*, 1988, photo collage, 24" x 20"/ Alynne Martelle, *Crucifixion*, 1981, color photograph, 12" x 8"/ Chris Martin, *I-54*, 1988-89, oil and foil on masonite, 18" x 15". Courtesy of John Good Gallery, NYC/ Brad Melamed, *Black/White*, 1988, oil crayon on vellum, 20" x 17"/ Ann Meredith, *Anonymous and 5 Year Old Son*, 1988, black and white photograph, 20" x 16"/ Duane Michals, *All Things Mellow in the Mind*, 1986, black and white photograph, 14" x 11". Courtesy of Sidney Janis Gallery, NYC/ Donald Moffet, *Check Out Your Violence of Opinion*, 1988, backlit Cibatransparency, 25" x 26" x 4". Courtesy of Wessel O' Connor Gallery, NYC/ Diane Neumaier, *Norman Rockwell from Street Graphic Interventions*, 1988, black and white photograph, 20" x 16"/ Diane Neumaier, *Find A Cure from Street Graphic Interventions*, 1989, black and white photograph, 16" x 20"/ Daniel Nicoletta, *White Night Riots*, 1979, black and white photograph, 8" x 10"/ Members of The Rest Stop and The Center Workshops, San Francisco, *Masks*, 1989, mixed media, dimensions variable/ Maria Reyes, *Shark Fin*, 1988, oil on wood, 10" x 12"/ Hunter Reynolds, *Untitled (Word Arrangements)*, 1990, pastel on paper, four parts, 22" x 22" each/ Tim Rollins + K.O.S., *Scarlet Letter: The Procession*, 1987-88, 24" x 36". Lent by The Arthur and Carol Goldberg Collection, NYC/ Kay Rosen, *Synching Feeling*, 1984,



King's County Hospital Demonstration, Brooklyn, NY, 1989
 Photo: c. T. L. Litt

enamel paint on museum board, 2 panels, 17 1/2" x 11 1/4" each. Lent by Kay Rosen and Feature, New York City/ Erika Rothenberg, *Make the World Perfect Miracle Spray*, 1988, acrylic on canvas, 60 3/4" x 79". Courtesy of P.P.O.W, NYC/ Andres Serrano, *Untitled X (Ejaculate in Trajectory)*, 1989, 30" x 40". Courtesy of Stux Gallery, NYC/ Lorna Simpson, *Untitled*, 1989, black and white photograph, 20" x 16". Courtesy of Josh Baer Gallery, NYC/ Kiki Smith, *Untitled IV*, 1990, plaster, 18" x 19". Courtesy of Fawbush, NYC/ Nancy Spero, *This Womb Does Not Belong to Lawyers...*, 1988, handprinting and collage on paper, 24" x 19". Courtesy of Josh Baer Gallery, NYC/ Mitchell Syrop, *Insider Trading*, 1986, black and white photomural on board, 40" x 26 1/2". Courtesy of Lieberman & Saul Gallery, NYC/ Michael Tidmus, *AIDS Stack*, 1989, *Health + Morality: A Desultory Discourse*, 1989, and *Next*, 1989, computer programs for Macintosh Plus, hardware courtesy of Computer Resources, Inc., Wethersfield, CT/ Andy Warhol, *\$4*, 1982, screenprint on museum board, 40" x 32". Lent by The Estate of Andy Warhol, NYC/ David Wojnarowicz, *Sex Series*, 1989, silver print, 18 1/4" x 21 3/4". Courtesy of P.P.O.W, NYC/ Martin Wong, *Big Heat*, 1985, acrylic on canvas, 72" x 48".

AIDS Timeline Video Program:

AIDS is About Secrets, Media Group Inc., color, 1990, 37 min./ *Bleach, Teach, Outreach*, Ray Navaro and Catherine Saalfield, 1988, produced by GMHC, from the *Living with AIDS* series, color, 28 min./ *DiAne's Hair Ego*, AIDS Info Up Front, Ellen Spiro, 1989, color, 26 min./ *Keep Your Laws Off Our Bodies*, Catherine Saalfield and Zoe Leonard, 1989, black and white, 14 min./ *Life/Information/Protection*, Yannick Durand, Brooklyn AIDS Taskforce, 1988-89, 2 min./ *Like a Prayer*, DIVA-TV, 1990, color, 28 min./ *Mildred Pearson*, April Productions, 1989, color, 11 min./ *Oj Os Que No Ven (Eyes That Fail To See)*, Latino AIDS Project, 1986, 50 min./ *Se Met Ko*, Patricia Benoit, produced by Haitian Women's Health Group, 1989, color, 28 min./ *They Are Lost to Vision Altogether*, Tom Kalin, 1989, 13 min./ *We Are Not Republicans*, Bob Huff, 1988, color, 14 min./ and selected other tapes.

Selected other material in MATRIX:

Michael Flanagan, material from *Documentation of AIDS Issues and Research Archives*, San Francisco, CA/ *Empire Strikes Back* movie poster, 1989/ *Reagan-Bush* campaign button, 1979/ *SILENCE=DEATH* T-shirt by *SILENCE=DEATH* project for ACT-UP/ *Understanding AIDS*, brochure, U. S. Surgeon General's Office/ *Stealth bomber* poster/ *Surviving & Thriving with AIDS*, Vol. II, 1988, PWA Coalition/ *It's Big Business*, 1989, ACT UP Outreach Committee, subway advertising poster/ *The AIDS Crisis Is Not Over*, 1988, Little Elvis, crack and peel sticker/ *Read My Lips*, 1988, Gran Fury poster/ *AIDS Profiteer*, 1989, ACT UP Outreach Committee/ *AIDS Profiteer*, 1989, ACT UP Outreach Committee stick-on/ *Safer Sex Comix*, Gay Men's Health Crisis, 1986/ *Pocket Pal Condom Case*, Keith Haring's Pop Shop/ and other objects.

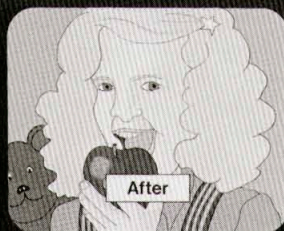
Exhibitions by Group Material:

Group Material storefront, East 13th Street, NYC: *The Inaugural Exhibition '80*, *The Salon of Election '80*, *Alienation '80*, *The People's Choice '81*, *The Gender Show '81*, *Consumption: Metaphor, Pastime, Necessity '81*, *Facere/Facis '81*, *Atlanta: An Emergency Exhibition '81*;

Group Material headquarters, NYC: *Enthusiasm!* '81, *Works on Newspaper* '82, *Revolutionary Fine Arts* '83; Public buses of NYC *M-5* '81; Public installation on Union Square, NYC *DA ZI BAOS* '82; Artists Space, NYC *Primer (For Raymond Williams)* '82; The Taller Latinoamericano, NYC *Luchar, An Exhibition for the People of Central America* '82; IRT subway trains of NYC *Subculture* '83; P. S.1, NYC *Timeline: A Chronicle of U. S. Intervention in Central and Latin America* '84; Work Gallery, NYC *A. D. Christian Influence in Contemporary Culture* '85; Whitney Museum of American Art, NYC *1985 Biennial Exhibition (Americana)*, Chapter Arts Center, Cardiff, Wales *Democracy Wall* '85; Hallwalls, Buffalo, NY, Cleveland, OH, The New Museum, NYC and others, *MASS*, a travelling exhibition; Washington Project for the Arts, Washington, DC *Messages to Washington* '85; Festival Hall, London, England *Alarm Clock* '85; The Alternative Museum, NYC *Liberty and Justice* '86; The Kitchen, NYC *Arts and Leisure* '86; White Columns, NYC *Resistance--Anti-Baudrillard* '87; documenta 8, Kassel, Germany *The Castle* '87; Temple University Gallery, Philadelphia, PA *Constitution* '87; Advertising supplement to *The New York Times*, NYC *Inserts* '88; The Dia Art Foundation, NYC *Democracy (Education and Democracy, Politics and Election, Cultural Participation, AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study)* '88-'89; Neuen Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst, West Berlin, Germany *AIDS and Democracy* '89; The Lesbian and Gay Center, NYC *Unisex* '89; Kunstverein, Hamburg, Germany *Shopping Bag* '89; University Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley *AIDS Timeline* '89; Neuen Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst, West Berlin, Germany, *Democracy Poll: Group Material* '90.



Announcer: DID YOU EVER
WISH YOU COULD PUSH
A BUTTON...



AND GIVE EVERYONE
IN THE WORLD A BETTER
LIFE?



WELL, NOW THERE'S
"MAKE THE WORLD PERFECT
MIRACLE SPRAY"

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