

# ASKING THE AUDIENCE



PARTICIPATORY  
ART IN 1980s  
NEW YORK

ADAIR ROUNTHWAITE

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For Erik

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**FIGURE I.1.** A ready-made sign declaring “Under New Management” hung briefly outside the Dia Art Foundation’s gallery at 77 Wooster Street, New York City, during Group Material’s *Democracy*, “Cultural Participation” installation, November 19–December 10, 1988. Courtesy of Group Material and Four Corners Books.

## INTRODUCTION

# RECOVERING AUDIENCE

It seems appropriate to begin a discussion of “audience” by taking note of the fact that there is anything to discuss.

Martha Rosler, “Lookers, Buyers, Dealers, and Makers: Thoughts on Audience,” 1979

In November 1988, members of the artists’ collective Group Material hung a sign declaring “Under New Management” above the street entrance to the Dia Art Foundation’s gallery at 77 Wooster Street in Soho. The cloth sign (Figure 1.1), with three white words in different fonts on a black background, was a found object, the kind of ready-made announcement used to publicize a change in store management. Shortly after the sign was hung, conversations between Group Material members and Dia staff ensued. Curator Gary Garrels informed the artists that Dia staff were disturbed by the sign and by what it might imply about Dia. Group Material member Julie Ault recalls that after discussion, the group decided to remove it, in part because it seemed it might be functioning in a more heavy-handed way than they had originally intended.<sup>1</sup> Group member Doug Ashford remembers this as the only time during *Democracy*, a project that lasted for five months and that was in preparation for over a year before that, when Dia, an organization that placed a high value on the wishes of artists, refused a request made by Group Material.<sup>2</sup> Clearly, the sign had struck a nerve.

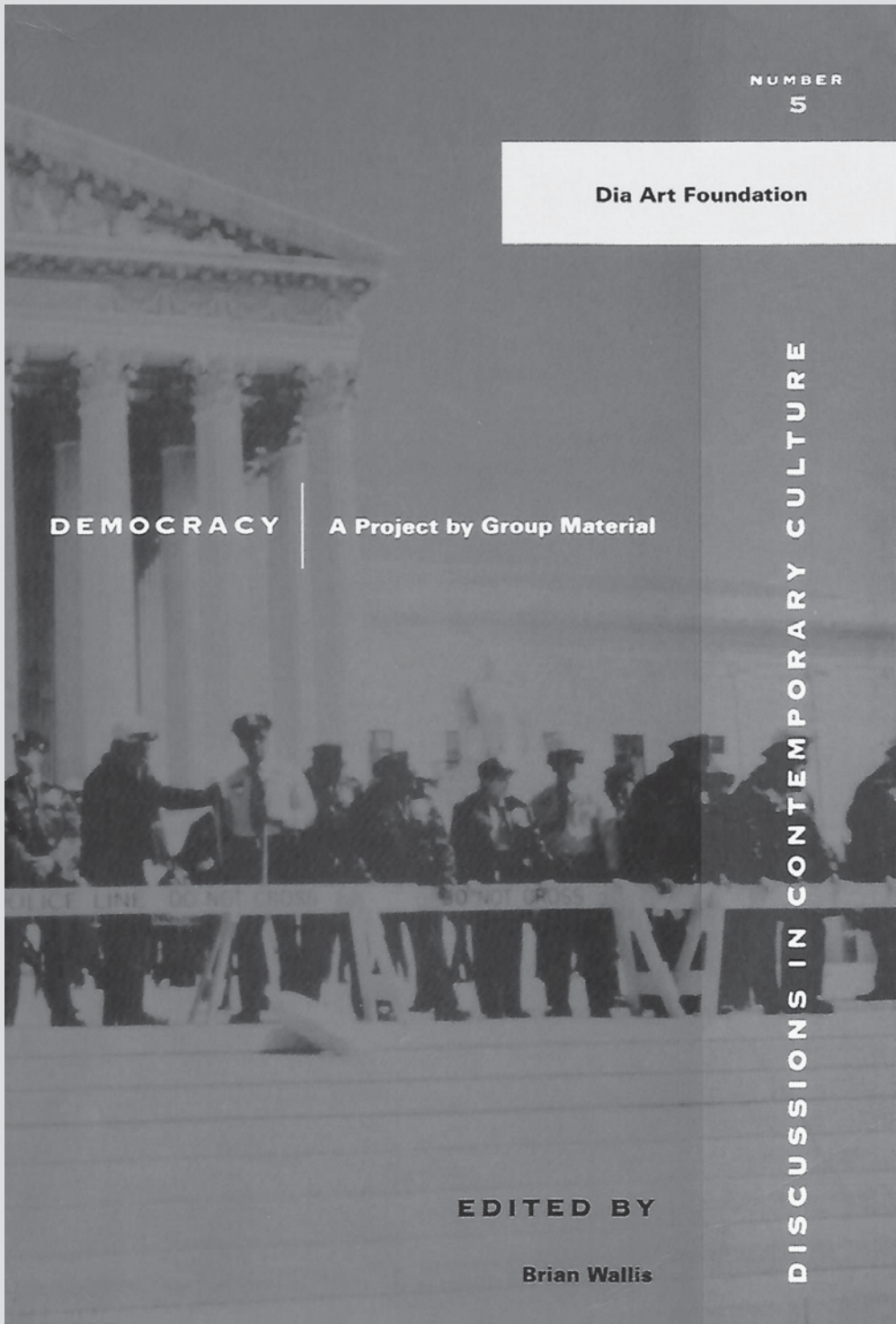
Group Material’s *Democracy* ran from September 1988 to January 1989 and was followed by Martha Rosler’s *If You Lived Here . . .* from January to April 1989, running to the end of Dia’s programming year.<sup>3</sup> Like *Democracy*, *If You Lived Here . . .* consisted of a series of changing exhibitions on social and political topics. Group Material’s project comprised the segments “Education and Democracy,” “Politics and Election” (Plate 1) (coinciding with the lead-up to the presidential election), “Cultural Participation,” and “AIDS

and Democracy: A Case Study.” Rosler’s was made up of “Home Front,” “Homeless: The Street and Other Venues,” and “City: Visions and Revisions” (Plate 2).<sup>4</sup> Group Material’s shows bore the colorful walls that were the signature of their practice, with themed selections of artworks and found objects—chip bags, advertisements, American flags—hung salon-style, at different heights on the walls. Rosler’s installations had an overflowing, free-form quality, combining artworks by professional and nonprofessional artists with videos, posters, and print materials pertaining to the topic of each show.

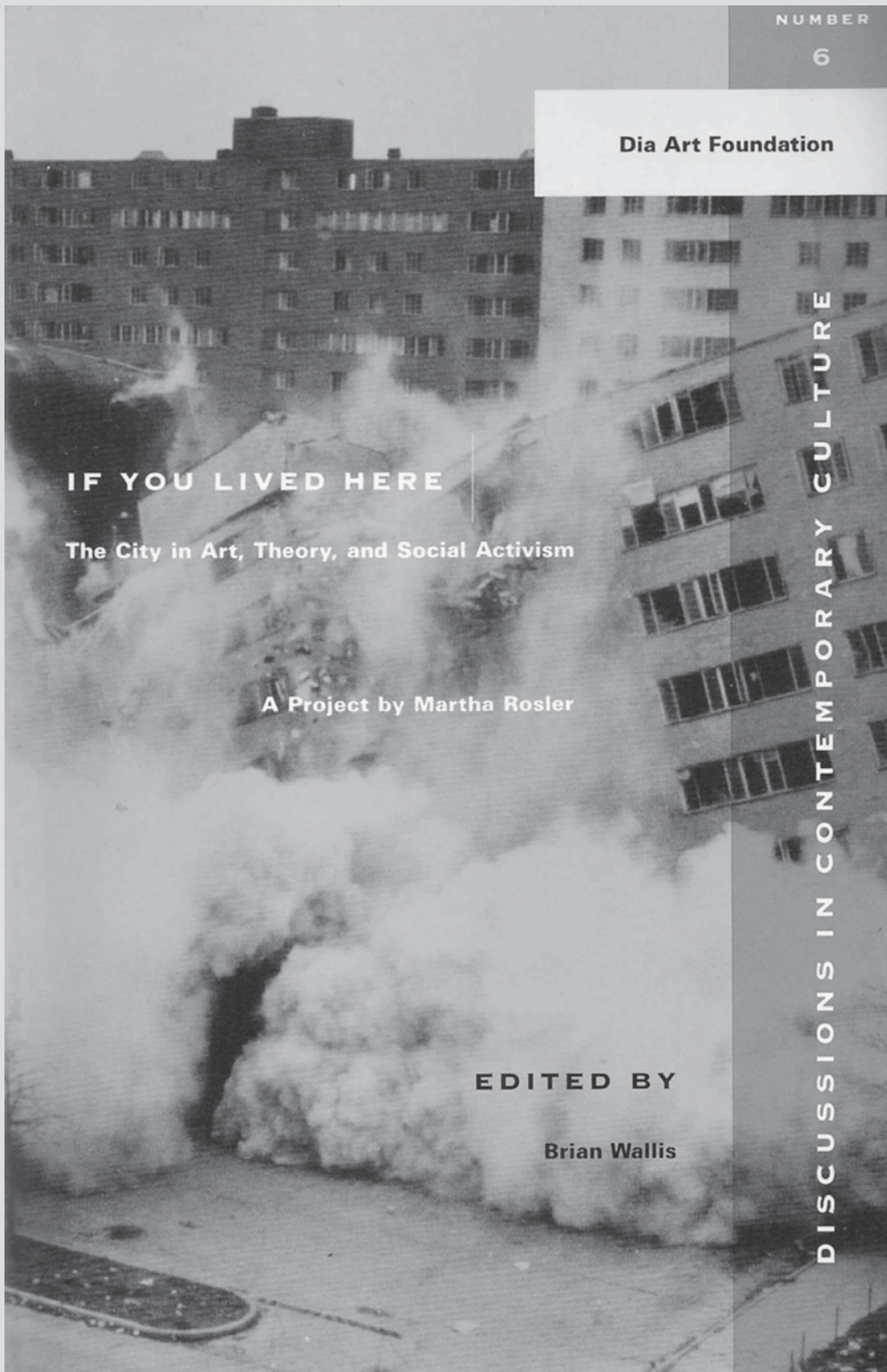
The installations were accompanied by “town-hall meetings” where artists invited the public to participate in discussions on topics connected to the shows. These meetings ranged in tone from boring to boisterous and from humorous to outspokenly angry. Artist Tim Rollins, a former member of Group Material who chaired their “Education and Democracy” meeting, comments that as chair he had to keep people laughing because “left-wingers, they just want to tear each other apart.”<sup>5</sup> “Town Meeting” was the name that Dia gave the projects collectively in early internal descriptions and in grant applications to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA). The name indicates the centrality of audience participation to the philosophy of the projects. Moreover, it highlights the conceptual connection between involvement in the projects and grassroots political democracy, broadly conceived. In addition to this conceptual importance, participation functioned as an essential generator of content. The discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed for publication in the books *Democracy: A Project by Group Material* (1990) (Figure I.2) and *If You Lived Here: The City in Art, Theory, and Social Activism / A Project by Martha Rosler* (1991) (Figure I.3), both edited in collaboration with Brian Wallis, which Dia put out with Bay Press in lieu of exhibition catalogs.<sup>6</sup>

So what was Dia’s problem with “Under New Management”? Ault writes that the group’s display of the sign outside the gallery alluded 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 toward multiculturalism and greater inclusion in the art world; and to Dia’s transition from a private to a public institution.<sup>7</sup> Dia staff knew that Group Material’s work was intensely concerned with American political life and with multiculturalism before inviting them to do a project. As such, it seems that it was the third possible interpretation, the *touché* reference to changes within Dia itself, which the staff found objectionable and that prompted their request to remove the sign. The sign might have been read to suggest not only that Dia had new management but that it was now under the management of Group Material specifically. Critic Elizabeth Hess implied as much when she wrote in the *Village Voice* that “taking over Dia with a four-part series about ‘Democracy’ was a most unexpected coup [for Group Material].”<sup>8</sup>

From the beginning, the story of *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here* . . . has revolved around questions about the different agents involved in participatory art—including artists, audiences, art institutions, funders, and critics—and their surprising collaborations. In fact, in choosing topics such as homelessness, gentrification, the AIDS crisis, and the electoral system as the focus of their projects at Dia, Group Material and Rosler



**FIGURE I.2.** The cover of the book published by Dia for Group Material's project, *Democracy: A Project by Group Material*, ed. Brian Wallis, *Discussions in Contemporary Culture* (New York and Seattle: Bay Press, 1990).



**FIGURE I.3.** The cover of the book published by Dia for Martha Rosler's project, *If You Lived Here: The City in Art, Theory, and Social Activism / A Project by Martha Rosler*, ed. Brian Wallis, *Discussions in Contemporary Culture* (New York and Seattle: Bay Press, 1991).

in effect demanded that any close historical analysis of the projects would pose the question of participation relative to both political engagement and institutionalization. Central to the reception of the projects were the questions of what different political and cultural investments the parties involved brought to participatory art, and how the projects might have served those diverse goals. But far from being anomalous in this respect, Group Material's and Rosler's projects touch at the heart of debates surrounding participatory art, debates that have developed since the mainstreaming of these practices from the mid-1990s to the first decade of the twenty-first century.

The format of *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here . . .* strongly foreshadowed the development of museum- and biennial-based participatory art practices from the early 1990s up to the present day. Art historian Claire Bishop cites *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here . . .* as "groundbreaking" precedents for practices falling under the rubric of new institutionalism because they reconfigured the solo exhibition into a forum for collaboration and critical thinking. That reconfiguration, Bishop argues, anticipated the current desire to broaden the gallery into a center for producing publications, symposia, residencies, and archives.<sup>9</sup> The first decade of the twenty-first century saw a boom in new institutional practices and forums, such as Okwui Enwezor's Documenta 11 (2002), which consisted not only of exhibitions and performances held in Kassel during the summer months but of what the curator termed "platforms" for critical discussion in various locations throughout the year.<sup>10</sup> A decade later, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev's Documenta 13 (2012) again included symposia, this time in Kabul, Banff, and Cairo. It involved a roster of participants encompassing not only artists but also nonartists engaged in various forms of activism and critical thought.<sup>11</sup> Even beyond the scope of new institutionalism as such, practices in this vein have had a fundamental, wide-reaching impact on the appearance and tactics of contemporary art, both in institutional spaces and beyond.<sup>12</sup>

But while recognizing the prescient quality of *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here . . .*, it is important not to overlook the fact that they occasioned a fair degree of ambivalence at the time of their creation. This was due in large part to the perception that Group Material's and Rosler's politically engaged practices represented an anomaly within the context of the minimalist, often monumentally scaled work that Dia had supported up to that point. Created in 1974 by Schlumberger oil heiress Philippa de Menil and Heiner Friedrich, her intensely ambitious German art dealer husband, Dia had a reputation for being lavish, artist centered, and eccentric. From its founding until a financial collapse in the early 1980s, Friedrich and de Menil spent over \$40 million on long-term support to a coterie of artists, including Dan Flavin and Donald Judd, and on funding land art such as Walter De Maria's *The Lightning Field* (1977) and *The Broken Kilometer* (1979).<sup>13</sup>

In contrast to Hess, with her celebratory comment about the "unexpected coup," others expressed concern that Group Material's and Rosler's collaborations with Dia produced a double bind for their socially engaged practices. Curator William Olander raises this question in his 1989 article "Material World" for *Art in America*. Olander situates Group Material as a group of young artists aware of conceptual forebears such as Rosler, Hans Haacke, Joseph Kosuth, Daniel Buren, Marcel Broodthaers, Michael Asher, and Adrian Piper, who desired to move beyond more "rarified" strains

of conceptualism to create a more democratic, genuinely political art, tailored for specific audiences.<sup>14</sup> But with *Democracy*, Olander reflects, Group Material “seems to be moving somewhat more precariously into the comforting arms of the well-endowed art institution, and some have suggested that the group’s shows have lost their edge.”<sup>15</sup> Olander’s worry is typical of concerns voiced among leftist critics and artists throughout the 1980s about the fate of activist and socially engaged art practices once they begin to gain substantial visibility in major institutions. Critics suggested that Dia’s institutional setting lent a false or superficial quality to the discussions in the town-hall meetings. David Deitcher, in his essay for the *Democracy* book, writes that the meetings carried a disconcerting quality due to their status “as symbolic events: as manifestations of the vanguard world of art.”<sup>16</sup> Dia curator Gary Garrels reports getting angry feedback from people who saw Dia as an “interloper” in a realm of politically engaged art practice with which it had never been involved.<sup>17</sup>

Artist and writer Gregory Sholette, writing in 2011, explains *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here . . .* 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.”<sup>18</sup> Sholette’s framing gives context to Garrels’s experience. At stake in the push-back against Dia’s status as an interloper was not just its late arrival to leftist alternative art practices, which had already been thriving in New York since the 1970s, but specifically the suspicion that it might have something to gain through its involvement with socially engaged art. Art critic Lucy Lippard, a collaborator with Sholette in *Political Art Documentation/Distribution (PAD/D)*, who cochaired Group Material’s “Politics and Election” town-hall meeting, echoes the sentiment that the projects constituted a move for Dia into an unfamiliar, and perhaps trendy, area. Lippard wonders what 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.”<sup>19</sup>

The question that surfaces in these reflections, of whom or what participatory art serves, has been integral to debates about “participatory,” “relational,” “dialogic,” or “social practice” art over the past two decades. This conversation divides roughly into two camps. On the one hand, art historians such as Claire Bishop and Miwon Kwon read this art in relation to the historical avant-garde. They seek to promote practices they see as fostering critical thinking by using such catalysts as shock, provocation, and rupture, while taking to task other works they see as instrumentally in the service of social or political goals.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, scholars including Grant Kester and Shannon Jackson are interested in participatory art’s potential for explicit social engagement and in its capacity to intervene in various contexts to create more thoughtful and egalitarian human relationships.<sup>21</sup> I will engage more carefully with these authors’ arguments throughout the book. But for now, I want to indicate that the strength of these debates so far lies in their careful delineation of the cultural politics of participation and in their broad contextualization of these practices within twentieth- and twenty-first-century art, politics, and philosophy.

That existing debate provides a framework, a set of broad lines along which we have begun to think about the importance of participation. Characteristic of these

studies is that they follow a format where an author lays out a theoretical framework and then presents a series of diverse case studies. Those cases then serve as the ground for testing or demonstrating the core proposition. A book structured that way, simply because of the constraint of page length, will be limited in the extent to which it can delve deeply into the networks and relationships that constitute a particular project and its context. These accounts leave me tantalized, wanting to know more about how specific projects acted in and with the worlds around them. In particular, I feel curious about the places where mentions of “the audience” remain at a level of generalization. I want more details: Who showed up? How did they feel about the project? Did it all go according to the artists’ plans? Of course, even an entire book devoted to examining just one case could never get to the bottom of the process through which a work generates meaning and feeling. Trust me, I know, because *Asking the Audience* is exactly that. This book is devoted to the bounded but still endless task of excavating *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here . . .* and their audiences. It works to build a description of participation tailored to this specific context, but in doing so it also tests methodological tools that might be applied elsewhere, in different sites, to understand different participatory practices. Those other extant and future studies are the other stars in a constellation of which I imagine the present work as a single point.

The approach I develop here is centrally focused on better understanding the audience. The participant interactions and experiences to which a project gives rise are the place where the rubber meets the road in participatory art. Those experiences stand in a dynamic and at times tense relationship to the interpretive frameworks that artists, critics, institutions, and audience members themselves bring to bear on the work. The audience is both an object of discourse—discourse in which various parties, including funders, are invested—and an unpredictable generator of meaning and feeling. The consequences of this double status for how to evaluate the art is complex, especially because in participatory artwork, there is no object or performance proper that can definitively be separated from the interactions and the experiences to which a project gives rise. Audience experience is an essential part of the work itself. In order to understand these works as such, we need to study how audience experience has unfolded in specific projects and, moreover, to analyze its relationship to the conditions of the particular times and places where those projects took place. Without an archivally substantiated understanding of audience experience, we are left with a lopsided model of participatory art, one in which the art-critical frameworks that interpret it can be debated ad infinitum without achieving much insight into what is created in the process of its encounter with the world. In other words, attention to the dynamics of audience is intimately connected to our ability to understand these practices as historical phenomena.

### **The Audience in the Archive**

*Democracy* and *If You Lived Here . . .* provide the opportunity for an in-depth archival study of audience engagement while simultaneously representing a historical moment that will allow us to consider how current ideas about the value of that engagement



evolved. The projects' archives reflect the attention that Group Material, Rosler, and Dia brought at this moment to the question of audience. Earlier precedents for audience participation in twentieth-century art encompassed forms as diverse as the haptic engagement central to the practice of Brazilian artist Lygia Clark; the spatial and phenomenological activation operative in Bruce Nauman's installations; and Fluxus's quirky and cerebral solicitation of audience members. Particularly important precedents for Group Material's and Rosler's projects were the language-based forms of engagement at play in conceptual works such as Haacke's *MoMA Poll*, shown for the first time as part of the museum's *Information* show in 1970. In Haacke's piece, an understanding of the artwork as an informational entity converges with a concept of democratic participation to locate the audience as a generator of information. Group Material's and Rosler's projects also engaged participants as information generators but did so in a way that gave much freer rein to audience action than the specific, circumscribed act that characterized *MoMA Poll*. *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here . . .* did not just plug the audience into a piece and ask them to carry it out; rather, they enabled the audience to create meaning and feeling in a way that sent waves through the projects and their archives. Rosler described in a 2009 interview the centrality of audience agency to her project: "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."<sup>22</sup> As this collaboration unfolded, Rosler and Group Material not only thought and wrote about the audience but spoke with Dia staff about it at various points. The archive reflects their historically situated understandings of what was important about audience engagement and interaction, but it also bears traces of contingencies that materialized and struggles that unfolded concerning the process of audience involvement.

In addition to critical reviews, discussion transcripts, working notes, and over thirty hours of audio recordings of the town-hall meetings, left over from the projects are a handful of artifacts produced through the process of audience involvement. For example, in Dia's files for *Democracy* is a small, rectangular piece of red paper. This is a ticket from the raffle that Group Material held for "Cultural Participation," which addressed themes dear to the group's work: the relationship between high culture and mass consumption, and the possibilities each provided for exercising cultural participation. During the exhibition, which included picnic tables for visitors to sit at, gallery attendants approached visitors and asked if they wanted to buy a ticket for a dollar (Plate 3).<sup>23</sup> The raffle prizes included the La-Z-Boy chair that Group Material had included in the previous installation, "Politics and Election"; a color television; and a twenty-pound "self-basting" turkey (appropriate to the show's timing around Thanksgiving). The archived ticket bears the scrawled declaration, "I only want the turkey." It not only indicates the raffle participant's desire but also evokes a network of possible negotiations among the audience, Dia staff, and the artists about the distribution of prizes.

But despite such evocative objects, recovering audience experience is a difficult

and uneven task. The twentieth century has seen extensive theorization about audience reception by scholars ranging from Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno on aesthetics, to Christian Metz and André Bazin on film, to Richard Schechner and Susan Bennett on theater and performance.<sup>24</sup> More recently in art history, Frazer Ward and Judith Rodenbeck have worked to conceptualize the roles that artists allotted the audience in performance art and happenings.<sup>25</sup> However, trying to recover audience experience and process remains a distinct project from theorizing how reception functions at a general level or understanding the role that artists desire the audience to fill. Not only does the former remain more marginal—as Kester points out, Adorno was notably pessimistic about attempts to study actual audience reactions—but it is beset by archival and methodological challenges.<sup>26</sup> For one thing, art institutions and art criticism still revolve firmly around individual artistic authorship (with the caveat that an art collective such as Group Material can now uncontroversially be taken to constitute an author). That orientation controls what kind of materials get generated and archivally preserved and whose perspectives are reflected in published interviews, critical texts, and catalog entries. Even when the researcher is in possession of materials that shed light on participant experience, her own present-situated ideas about participation's value will form a messy clump with the historical material, one that is definitively impossible to tease apart. Both Kester and Bishop have called for the use of “social science” methodologies such as interviews and questionnaires as ways of learning about participatory art's audience reception, but such methods remain largely unintegrated into histories of these practices.<sup>27</sup>

As the research for this project unfolded, it became clear to me that the “archive” of the projects was both material and social in nature. Typically we equate the archive with *things*: preserved material objects, images, and documents. Those things, however, are vulnerable, not only to material decay but also to the field of human activities, decisions, and relationships to which they are connected. Jacques Derrida has famously described the archive as a “domiciliation” of documents, a place of dwelling, which enacts authority by restoring it retroactively.<sup>28</sup> This seems to me to be somewhat of an idealization, a best-case scenario: just as frequently as I have encountered archives authoritatively domiciled, I have found them inaccessible, uncared for, misplaced, or in various states of material disintegration. As I will discuss in the conclusion to the book, these contingencies are in part related to institutional and authorial ambivalence about the proper role of participation's archives. For now, I want to indicate that I understand the archive of participation neither as a place where ephemeral art can have its history unproblematically made permanent, nor as an insufficient locus structurally unable to capture an always-disappearing live art.<sup>29</sup> Instead, the archive is an ongoing, material process, one that remains live in the sense that it is always in contact with a social field of power relations, which may be closely contiguous to or far away from the context of the original art project. As such, the archival path this book lays out does not claim permanent verifiability. Rather, it is like the story of a walk in the intertidal zone, where I can look back and see, as I move forward, the wet sand already rushing in to fill up my footsteps behind me.<sup>30</sup>

Central to the constitution of this living archive were interviews. I conducted these interviews with everyone I could find who had some experience of the projects and was willing to speak to me about it. In studios, cafés, and apartments, at an exclusive private club and on park benches, through Skype calls and e-mail exchanges, I asked the artists and other participants what they remembered about the projects and how they felt about them both at the time and in retrospect. With Dia staff and former board members, I discussed the foundation's history, the changes it underwent during the 1980s, and the decisions that led to its support of Group Material's and Rosler's work. If I had entered the research with any remaining illusion about the possibility of an objective account, it was definitively shattered during the interview process. Twenty years after the projects, some people possessed razor-sharp memories, recalling specific moments and anecdotes clearly; others denied having participated at all, until I offered the discussion transcripts bearing their names as proof they had actually been present. Many accounts failed to match up with each other factually, especially concerning Dia's history and involvement. Moreover, the emotional and affective cast of interview subjects' memories ranged widely, from positive enthusiasm about past collaboration to hesitant ambivalence to markedly negative feelings. When I write "she recalled" or "remembered" or "described" as I quote the interviews, it is not just for the sake of verbal variation from "stated" or "said." Rather, it is an intentional emphasis on the subjective and time-based nature of the narratives. Though it might be tempting to privilege the interviews as authoritative accounts, their collective inconsistency and highly subjective nature make that move problematic. Moreover, historians of performance art, including Amelia Jones, Jane Blocker, Philip Auslander, and Rebecca Schneider, have demonstrated that privileging the live witness account over the document maintains a metaphysical illusion of pure presence.<sup>31</sup> That illusion not only fails to account for live art's ephemeral nature but also holds onto a privileged historical subject, one that many late-twentieth-century artists and art historians have worked to deconstruct. In participatory art, interviews are one of several kinds of archive that circulate around the live event, producing meaning and authority that can be mobilized to various personal, historical, or institutional ends.

In stepping away from the still-dominant interpretive authority of the highly authored artist interview, this study moves toward an approach to interview material in contemporary art history more geared toward understanding networks of relationships. That is, the interviews function here as a means of understanding human relationships and practices of meaning making in a particular context. This approach parallels what Chris Thompson, in his book *Felt: Fluxus, Joseph Beuys, and the Dalai Lama*, describes as an art history in proximity to experimental ethnography, which he calls a "mapping of a constellation" among agents, ideas, activities, and ambitions realized and unrealized.<sup>32</sup> Shifting the function of the interview to emphasize interaction among agents is appropriate to participatory practice. Participatory art, while it does not eliminate the privileged status of the artist, constitutes art as a sphere of activity where the people involved can best *all* be thought of as participants, with different kinds of investment and agency depending on their specific position (as artists, as audience members, as institutional

employees, and so on). In this context, my interviews provide me with material for what sociologist Bruno Latour refers to as “following the actors”:

. . . 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.<sup>33</sup>

Consistent with the method Latour describes, this book is centrally invested in a descriptive method. Simultaneously, like any description, it bears a representational, that is, fictive, quality. In writing the agency of these actors into being, my account unfolds a historical drama with its own logic, which admittedly may seem alien to some of the people cast here as characters.

### **Institutions and Political Engagement in the 1980s**

Description, however, is not just a Sisyphean task, always to be undone by the gap between writing and life. It carries importance here as a historiographic intervention, in the sense that it provides a way of taking space from the ethically normative quality of most accounts of participatory art. Contemporary art history is dominated by accounts in which scholars and critics align themselves with the radical goals of the artists under study without paying equally careful attention to how those goals turn out in practice. On the flip side of this dynamic, the identification and critique of practices seen as problematically complicit commands much airtime in contemporary art-historical discussion. As Shannon Jackson argues in her study of social-practice art, the drive to pronounce either the success or the failure of engaged art often depends on a construction of the institution as necessarily associated with political failure.<sup>34</sup>

The move that Jackson makes, of historicizing the institution/complicity nexus, has special relevance for the study of American art in the 1980s and moreover for understanding the traces that the decade left on current art discourses and practices. The conviction grounding this book is that the 1980s played a pivotal role in establishing the conditions of current art production, specifically concerning the museum- and biennial-based participatory and social-process artworks that dominate today’s global, yet discursively still quite Western-centric, art world. The modality of these practices in North America arose from a hybridization of high-culture institutions and alternative-culture artistic practice that was forged over the course of the 1980s. They are in themselves diverse, ranging from art as overt entertainment (such as the giant slides of Carston Höller’s 2006 *Test Site* in Tate Modern’s Turbine Hall) to the practices that artist Pablo Helguera terms “SEA,” or “socially engaged art.” Helguera describes these works as ones that have a symbolic dimension that locates itself within the history of art and that also perform some kind of service to a community or public, bringing about complex collaborations among institutions, artists, viewers, and communities of interest.<sup>35</sup> In the 1980s and 1990s, the concept of an activated viewer, able

to both contribute to the artwork and learn from involvement in it, was essential to establishing the basis for collaboration between art institutions and socially engaged artists. If we misrecognize current politically engaged art as heir only to a 1960s activist impulse that became compromised in the 1980s, we are doomed not only to permanent disenchantment but also to a failure to understand the actual politics of contemporary art and art history today.

Group Material's work, in particular, has been a magnet for discourses that polarize social change from institutionality. We can see this polarization at work in the example of Jan Avgikos's essay "Group Material Timeline: Activism as a Work of Art" (1995), which was long the most nuanced and richest published account of Group Material's work, until the resurgence of interest in their practice in the last few years.<sup>36</sup> Avgikos narrates Group Material's collaboration with Dia in the following terms:

[Group Material's] proven track record garnered Dia's attention and fiscal support. Dia didn't suddenly develop a political conscience: internal organizational changes and the shift from private to public funding necessitated that it broaden its programming to be "publicly responsible." . . . Did it matter whether or not social relations changed as a direct result of *Democracy*? In the eyes of Dia, probably not. Dia got exactly what it bargained for: a highly original and innovative contemporary art, and in a market that places utmost value on originality and innovation, the Group Material product was a very hot commodity indeed.<sup>37</sup>

In this description, the political success of Group Material's practice hinges on its ability to change social relations, a rather abstract goal that stands to be compromised by the work's commodity value for Dia. Despite Avgikos's detailed reflection on the political implications of Group Material's practice, ultimately the text's question is where exactly to locate the work on a sliding scale between genuine transformation and institutional co-optation.

This kind of critique is arguably a natural response to the rapid changes in the institutional status of socially engaged art that occurred in the United States during the 1980s. These changes were dramatically visible within the local context of New York. Artists such as Group Material who started out in the city's alternative scene in the mid-to-late 1970s and early 1980s had, by the close of the decade, gained substantial access to the city's highest-profile museums. The 1985 Whitney Biennial was indicative of this trend. In addition to Group Material's installation *Americana*, the show featured work by artists from the East Village scene, including Keith Haring, David Wojnarowicz, and Kenny Scharf; members of the group Colab (Collaborative Projects), including Jenny Holzer and Tom Otterness; as well as others associated with critical postmodernism, including Cindy Sherman, Barbara Kruger, and Richard Prince.<sup>38</sup> Art critic Kim Levin, in her review of the biennial, accused Group Material in particular of doing the museum's "dirty laundry" by creating a contribution that showcased political art by diverse artists but that left the overall conservative politics of the institution unchanged.<sup>39</sup> Another milestone in terms of the mainstream visibility of politicized

art was the 1988 exhibition *Committed to Print* at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Billing itself as “the first museum exhibition to explore social and political themes in American printed art from the sixties to the present,” the show included work by Leon Golub, Nancy Spero, Mike Glier, David Hammons, Alfredo Jaar, and Adrian Piper.<sup>40</sup> In 1990, Jenny Holzer represented the United States at the Venice Biennale, signaling the arrival of a critical, politicized practice with downtown New York roots in the highest position of contemporary artistic national prestige.

The unprecedented mainstream visibility of work by artists concerned with power, identity, and political engagement contributed to the sense that the art world was undergoing a shift toward multiculturalism. In 1990, *The Decade Show: Frameworks of Identity in the 1980s*, a collaboration among the New Museum, the Studio Museum in Harlem, and the Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art, summed up the decade as one fundamentally revolving around questions of identity. Through works by “94 American artists of Asian, Hispanic, African, European, and Native American heritage,” the project approached identity as “a hybrid and fluid notion,” intersecting with “questions of sexuality, the environment, race, religion, history, myth, and politics.”<sup>41</sup> The New Museum also pioneered reflection on the role of the museum in educating a multicultural populace. This work was reflected in the 1996 book *Contemporary Art and Multicultural Education*, which offered lesson plans and support materials for museum-based art education that would connect creativity, social critique, and students’ everyday experiences.<sup>42</sup> The multicultural groundswell was not limited to the art world. It penetrated mainstream popular culture: by the time *Democracy* opened in 1988, *The Cosby Show*, with its nonthreatening blend of family humor, upper-middle-class privilege, and mild Afrocentrism, had been number one on American broadcast television for four years running.

But at the same time, the 1980s was a decade of social conservatism and fiscal privatization, reflected starkly in changes to the funding of art. Frank Hodson, appointed chair of the NEA in 1980, took it in a markedly conservative direction. Hodson focused his primary energies on the creation of major prizes to individual artists such as the Jazz Masters Fellowship and the National Medal of Arts, established in 1982 and 1984, respectively, and on setting a national program for art education as the study of masterpieces of Western art history.<sup>43</sup> Complaints from right-wing politicians about the NEA had been simmering since early in the decade, targeting both the controversial nature of the art funded and suspected cronyism within the granting process.<sup>44</sup> These criticisms reached a fever pitch in mid-1989 with the full-blown culture wars, sparked by outrage against art by Andres Serrano and Robert Mapplethorpe, whose work had been supported through NEA grants to the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art (funded 1987) and the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C. (funded 1988), respectively.<sup>45</sup> Amid a mediatized firestorm, which included spectacular performances such as Senator Alfonse D’Amato’s tearing up a reproduction of Serrano’s *Piss Christ* and throwing it on the Senate floor, right-wing pundits did lasting damage to the NEA’s reputation.<sup>46</sup> These events set in motion a review of the NEA that would ultimately lead to wide-ranging changes to its funding programs, including the elimination of

grants to individual artists in 1996.<sup>47</sup> Ed Cardoni, director of Hallwalls Contemporary Art in Buffalo, New York, argues that this particular change reflected the fact that artists, once they had their grant money in hand, were relatively unpredictable, whereas arts organizations were bound to execute the specific project for which they had applied for a grant.<sup>48</sup>

Simultaneous to these changes in the American political climate, corporations entered the scene as major players in arts funding. In 1981, the *Washington Post* published a story reporting that President Reagan's budget director David Stockman felt that policies of government arts support had "resulted in a reduction in the historical role of private individual and corporate philanthropic support."<sup>49</sup> Encouraging public-private "partnership" in arts funding was, indeed, a central policy goal for Hodsoll.<sup>50</sup> As cultural anthropologist George Yúdice points out, these forms of "partnership" blurred the boundaries between the private and the public as such.<sup>51</sup>

Hodsoll's and Stockman's politically motivated advocacy took place in a context where corporate interest in the arts was on the upswing globally, as art historian Chin-Tao Wu has shown. Wu attributes the unprecedented blossoming of corporate funding during the 1980s to the fact that through the arts, corporations could purchase an image of simultaneous cultural cachet and public responsibility for comparatively modest sums. She argues that the changing relationships between government and corporate funders created nothing less than a radical reorientation of the function of art museums, transforming them "from purveyors of a particular elite culture to fun palaces for an increasing number of middle-class arts consumers."<sup>52</sup> 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.<sup>53</sup> Both changes in funding—the right-wing NEA backlash and the corporate model of viewers as consumers—revolve around an idea of the audience as constituting a kind of value, either in their spending power or in their electoral power in the possibility of being moved, through outrage, to a certain kind of vote. Between the changes in public funding and the rise in private funding, the question of art's survival became intimately tied to that of its audience.

All of this created a fundamentally different arrangement of relationships between American art museums and politically conscious artists than had prevailed from the late 1960s to the mid-1970s. Accounts of those relationships during the Vietnam War era paint a picture of division between artists and institutions, falling largely along the leftist versus conservative fault lines polarizing American culture. Socially conscious artists, Alan Moore argues, were closely allied with the antiwar counterculture and the collective organization that it involved.<sup>54</sup> Much of this organizing was shaped by feminist and antiracist politics. It was also informed by a broadly Marxist conception of class politics, as embodied in the name of the Art Workers' Coalition (AWC, founded 1969). The AWC claimed an alliance with the working class against ruling interests, which many artists saw to be represented by art museums.

Julia Bryan-Wilson demonstrates how artists' activism of the Vietnam War period was characterized by highly confrontational opposition to institutions.<sup>55</sup> Artists'

protests often employed spectacular performative tactics, such as during the Guerilla Art Action Group's action *A Call for the Resignation of All the Rockefellers from the Board of Trustees of the Museum of Modern Art* (also known as *Blood Bath*). On November 19, 1969, members of the collective entered MoMA's main lobby at peak hours and began screaming and tearing each other's clothes off. In the process, the artists burst bags containing cow blood that they had taped inside their clothing. They scattered leaflets explaining that the work was an indictment of the Rockefellers for their patronage of the museum, which the family used to disguise their involvement in the arms industry.<sup>56</sup> Artists also protested against museums' censorship of political art. A classic example is the 1971 protest 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), which detailed the exploitative business ventures of a New York real estate group. Members of the AWC protested by assembling in the museum lobby with "Free Art!" signs and forming a conga line, which was led up the Guggenheim's spiral ramp by dancer and choreographer Yvonne Rainer.<sup>57</sup>

The art activism of the Vietnam era laid a foundational precedent for socially engaged American art of the 1970s through the 1980s. The political commitments of that time segued into artists' involvement with questions of global solidarity, in particular with colonized peoples in Latin America, through organizations such as the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES, founded 1980). Other efforts focused on activism addressing the AIDS crisis and urban gentrification, of the type that stood front and center in *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here . . .*. Artists' groups such as PAD/D (1980–86) held meetings and produced publications with the goals of demonstrating the political nature of image making and of brainstorming alternatives to the existing art system. In the streets, the Guerrilla Girls (founded 1985) and PESTS (1986) put up posters critiquing the sexism and racism of major museums and galleries.<sup>58</sup>

Simultaneously, the 1960s and early 1970s as historical precedent and point of political identification posed challenges to artists in the 1980s in terms of how to conceive of the cultural politics of their own practices. Though the activism of the earlier era was strongly characterized by an association between institutionality and damaging political conformity, by the 1980s, many artists who had been involved in those struggles held prominent positions within the art world. For example, Yvonne Rainer sat on an invited committee at Dia convened to come up with new programming directions, and it was her suggestion of Group Material and Rosler that led to Dia's support of their projects. Doug Ashford cites Group Material's trust of Rainer, their "filter" into Dia, as a key factor in establishing their relationship with the foundation.<sup>59</sup> But while Rainer, with her background in the 1960s radical era, gave Group Material a reason to trust Dia, associations of institutionality with complicity stemming from that same era also played a major role in the ambivalence that greeted *Democracy*. Group Material's position typified that of many political artists who found themselves attempting to navigate their own and their critics' lasting attachment to ideas about political engagement, ideas that represented the intellectual heritage of an earlier moment. They had



to do so while negotiating collaborative relationships with institutions and funders that were not at all clearly defined in terms of their politics.

The location of Group Material's and Rosler's projects at Dia dramatizes the process of hybridization between alternative art practice and high-art institutions that took place during the 1980s, both because of Dia's long-standing association with privilege and hermeticism and also because of its financial collapse and reorganization early in the decade. Whereas it is easy to make the argument that Rosler's and Group Material's work is exemplary of socially engaged American art of the late twentieth century, Dia cannot be said to be typical of institutions in New York or elsewhere. It was a highly idiosyncratic organization at the time of its founding, and it remained so into the 1990s, when Michael Govan's directorship (1994–2006) saw the establishment of a more permanent and mainstream institutional identity. As such, Dia cannot be lumped together with major New York City institutions such as the Whitney Museum of American Art or MoMA, which had much more robust social circles of patrons and agreed-upon institutional practices dating from the early to mid-twentieth century. Instead of standing as representational of institutions writ large, Dia is better seen as a bellwether, whose lack in the 1970s and 1980s of a stable staff or any long-established institutional practice is precisely what enabled it to turn on a dime to profit from current trends, all the while retaining its core commitment to high art. Dia's interest in audience engagement as a form of contemporaneity was not an isolated incident of the late 1980s; it is evidenced more recently by its summer 2013 staging of a participatory project by Thomas Hirschhorn, themed around the Marxist philosophy of Antonio Gramsci. I will return to that event in the conclusion to this book.

To say that my approach to political engagement in contemporary art is "descriptive" is not to claim that it is "disinterested." Rather, it is to read these practices as creating networks of relationships, of which I as the researcher am also a part. A network, Lane Reylea argues, has a performative quality, in which pathways and relations do not preexist their articulation by specific agents.<sup>60</sup> My desire to trace participatory art's networks is driven by a strong interest in moments of human relation—both fleeting and longer in duration—and the impact they have on cultural and intellectual production. At the same time as I bring attention to the networked quality of these practices, I analyze the production and circulation of verbal, textual, and visual representations of participation within them. Representation, far from being eclipsed by the networked quality of participation, remains an essential component of these practices, particularly in terms of how they articulate political agency and accrue economic value. In addition to drawing on Latour, I take inspiration here from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, who advocates a turn away from critique as "unveiling" and toward readings as "reparative." The latter are characterized, above all, by an effort on the part of the scholar to understand the performative nature of her own work, instead of taking for granted the value of revealing hidden violence or oppression.<sup>61</sup> In a descriptive—or perhaps, reparative—account, the questions that participatory art solicits are, Who exercises agency here? How are they able to do it? How do various acts of agency feed into each other? And what kinds of relationships between the actors do they materialize?

## Images, Voices, and Affective Agency

In addition to written documents and interviews, photographs are also an essential source for learning about the relationships of participation's agents. This is so not only because of what they show, but also because institutional processes shape the images that get produced in the first place. Dia's archives contain images by the outside professional photographers Oren Slor and Ken Schles, whom Dia hired to document *If You Lived Here . . .* and *Democracy*, respectively.<sup>62</sup> Slor's and Schles's crisp color images show the gallery installations. In contrast to the still, pristine quality of those installation shots, empty of human figures, other photos in the artists' archives show people in the galleries; these photos are characterized by a focus on visitors' inhabitation of the space. Group Material member Doug Ashford's black-and-white photos of "Education and Democracy" and "AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study" show people interacting with the installed seating (Figure I.4), watching videos, and gathering in small groups to talk. In the photographs of "Education and Democracy," a child—Ashford's daughter—runs in a blur across the gallery. Color images in Rosler's personal archive include one showing a woman sitting on the couch in her "Homeless" show (Figure I.5), and another that captures volunteers for the Atlanta Mad Housers collective constructing an emergency housing hut in the gallery (Figure I.6). Also in Rosler's possession are a set of images to which I will devote close attention in chapter 3, of members of the homeless persons' activist group Homeward Bound Community Services posed in the office they established as part of the installation.

Notably missing from this selection are any images of the town-hall meetings. This seems paradoxical, given the audio recordings of all the meetings and the smaller roundtables that Group Material held before their project, which together constitute an outstandingly rich and detailed record of audience interaction.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, photographs were taken of Group Material's small roundtable discussions (Figure I.7). Ault thinks the decision not to take photographs was made in part to avoid having a photographer around, or video cameras running, whereas making audio documentation of such discussion-based events was common.<sup>64</sup> Rosler says she believes it would have been too intrusive to take pictures, and if she took them herself, it would have suggested that she wasn't fully engaged in the discussions.<sup>65</sup> Both these comments suggest a sensitivity to how participants might have experienced the process of being photographed. Indeed, the photographic documentation of live art is broadly associated with the institutional apparatus. Douglas Crimp, in *On the Museum's Ruins*, argues that starting in the 1970s, photography played a key role in enabling institutions to capture and historicize ephemeral, site-specific practices. 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."<sup>66</sup> Seen in this context, Ault's and Rosler's reasons for the meetings not being photographed make sense. But what is striking is the historical transformation the lack of photographic documentation dramatizes. Such a lack would be inconceivable for a project of this scale created today, when participatory



**FIGURE I.4.** Visitors to Group Material's *Democracy*, "Education and Democracy" installation, September 15–October 8, 1988. Photograph by Doug Ashford. Courtesy of Doug Ashford Studio.



**FIGURE I.5.** Installation view of Martha Rosler's *If You Lived Here . . .*, "Homeless: The Street and Other Venues," April 1–29, 1989. Photograph by Martha Rosler. Courtesy of Martha Rosler.



**FIGURE I.6.** Members of the Atlanta Mad Housers collective building a shelter in the gallery for Martha Rosler's *If You Lived Here . . .*, "Homeless: The Street and Other Venues" installation. Photograph by Martha Rosler. Courtesy of Martha Rosler.



**FIGURE I.7.** Michael Callen, Maria Maggenti, and Julie Ault (*left to right*) at the roundtable discussion held June 18, 1988, in the Dia Art Foundation's Mercer Street offices in preparation for Group Material's *Democracy*, "AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study" installation. Courtesy of Group Material.

art gives rise to documentation photos generated by institutions *and* by audiences, both parties keenly attuned to an experience economy based in social media.

Though today's audiences are thoroughly used to being photographed, Ault's and Rosler's sensitivity to the fact that it might cause their audiences discomfort appears to be quite justified in their historical moment. As I will discuss, particularly in chapters 1 and 4, project participants sensed that audio documentation of the meetings created an uncomfortable triangulation among the institution, politically engaged art, and their own experiences. Documentation, in this context, raised the question of the teleology of the participatory event, in that it created a material possibility of the document being used for some purpose outside the immediate audience's control. It thereby also threw into relief possibly competing goals for the event that were not reducible to the institution's aims, namely, goals specific to activism. As Mechtild Widrich observes, documents of live art clearly address later audiences, but they do so in a way that posits the presence of the original audience as essential for understanding a work's transgressive gesture.<sup>67</sup> Indeed, institutionally situated participatory art might be recognized as such by an experience located between documentation and the social field. The goal of social change was an essential motivator toward involvement for many participants in the meetings. For some of those people, that goal felt threatened by anxiety about being seen and heard in some future time and place, by unknown agents of questionable motivation, whose act of viewing would render activism merely symbolic, splitting it away from the social field.

But while the documentation process enables institutional capture, its idiosyncrasies can also reveal an unsureness on the part of the institution about exactly how or what to capture and can show the ways the dynamics of the live event may give rise to documents that fail to communicate the event's animating logic. Beyond Ault's and Rosler's specific reasons for not photographing the meetings, the lack of images is also symptomatic of the way Dia conceived the events as valuable insofar as they generated discourse, or information. That framework was also reflected in the transcription and editing of the discussions and their publication, in redacted form, in the project books. The posters advertising Group Material's and Rosler's town-hall meetings entreated the public to "please come speak out on the issues!"<sup>68</sup> Indeed, during the meetings, the voice constituted the essential vehicle of participant involvement. The meetings, as well as Group Material's smaller roundtable discussions, were recorded on cassettes, creating over thirty hours of audio that were an essential source in my research.<sup>69</sup> On the recordings, voices quiver with anger, bounce with amusement, and pause with hesitation. They imitate one another in tone, creating chains of similar vocal affect, but they also interrupt and break into one another, abruptly changing the tenor of a discussion. Psychoanalytic theorist Mladen Dolar argues that central to modern democracy is the political fiction that democracy is a matter of immediacy, that is, of the voice.<sup>70</sup> An ideal democracy would thus be one where everyone could hear everyone else's voice. This fantasy was foundational to *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here . . .*. Group Material and Rosler brought people together, in a room, to speak and listen to one another, as a way of making the space of contemporary art into a venue for political empowerment.

Simultaneously, vocally generated affect not only defied the institution's approach to the meetings as events that were important primarily insofar as they generated textual content, but also created an instability at the heart of the projects' representational undertaking. Dolar writes that the voice, as the material support of speech, persists at speech's core, enabling but also troubling logos with its inability to be symbolized.<sup>71</sup> Philosopher Adriana Cavarero argues that the splitting of these two aspects of speech has been central to Western philosophy, dating back to the ancient Greek division of the animality of the voice from the semantic import of human language.<sup>72</sup> Indeed, this separation is what the recording and transcription process of the town-hall meetings performed. The transcript stands as an objectified form of content, discourse, and logos, with the white noise of vocal affect strained out.<sup>73</sup> Reading the transcripts published in the books, I feel they have a strange, disjointed quality, their redacted form floating at a distance from the affective logic and cohesion of the meetings as they unfolded. Affect was inseparable from participants' acts of carving out a clearly identified place from which to speak, a state that the transcripts, with their identification of participants and condensed summaries of their comments, reflect as a self-evident and static. Speech remains, but the voices are gone. It is impossible to understand participants' agency without restoring the affective component to the record of their interaction.

Affect not only is key to understanding the agency of the audience in *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here . . .* but is also essential to understanding participatory art qua art. As I stated above, in the participatory artwork there is no object or event that can be clearly delineated from the embodied experiences of participants. Art historian Susan Best has argued that in addition to art's materials and methods, its affective dimension is part of the artistic means of production and as such is open to innovation.<sup>74</sup> Kirsi Peltomaki, in her analysis of Michael Asher's art, also posits affect as a central element of the work, a process both sensory and social that can bring attention to the relationship between individual and collective experience and to the ways that both are formed relative to the institution.<sup>75</sup> Insofar as participatory art can be said to have a formal level, affect is part of it. In this book, an essential part of my "formal" analysis of Group Material's and Rosler's projects consists of attention to exchanges among participants in the context of the town-hall meetings, which I consider to constitute an important part of the materiality of these projects. From this definition of the participatory artwork as based in an affective materiality generated by the audience, it follows that the aesthetic of these works is defined as a process inseparable from the social field, but a process that is perpetually susceptible to bracketing off in documentation, in discourse, and even in experience, though in ways that will always be provisional and incomplete.

How did the audiences of *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here . . .* exercise agency through affect? At the meetings, affect connected those present, making it possible for participants to influence others in ways that served their own political and personal goals. In order to make this argument, I will draw on two distinct threads of affect theory, the first of which has mainstream purchase across the humanities, but the other, less so. Affect theory can be defined as encompassing scholarship that works



to conceptualize the nature of the event and the kinds of knowledge produced in relation to it. That focus on the event played an important role in terms of my gravitation toward affect theory in this project because what I needed was a way to understand the nature of live participatory events. Under the umbrella of affect theory, scholarly approaches fall across a wide spectrum in terms of the centrality they award to the human subject. Approaches range from work by authors such as Sara Ahmed or Kathleen Stewart, which is closely concerned with human life and experience, to Eugenie Brinkema's polemic advocating a model of affect as depersonalized formalism that operates through filmic texts.<sup>76</sup> We can also generalize that for most theorists, affect operates across both the conscious and the unconscious (though the way of understanding each varies greatly) and concerns the ways something—thought, feeling, movement—can be shared.<sup>77</sup>

The first strand of affect theory on which I draw is the tradition of which Brian Massumi is a widely cited current proponent, which takes affect as a nonrepresentational, nonsignifying, apersonal movement among bodies.<sup>78</sup> This line has its roots in the seventeenth-century philosophy of Baruch Spinoza, for whom affect constituted a change in the power of a body (which includes a human body, but also any other material entity) to act: "By affect I understand affections of the body by which the body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained."<sup>79</sup> In the twentieth century, Gilles Deleuze was instrumental in interpreting Spinoza's thought and exploring its political implications. An important aspect of this politicization concerns affect's potential to unseat the individual, logocentric subject. Deleuzian affects are not tethered to subjects but travel across multiple bodies. As Deleuze and Félix Guattari put it, affects "are no longer feelings or affections; they go beyond the strength of those who undergo them."<sup>80</sup> Feminist philosophers Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd expand further on the political significance of the movement of affects, theorizing a field of collective bodily being that they call the "transpersonal," which gives rise to individual human subjectivity.<sup>81</sup> It is thus not individual subjectivity that enables the flow of affects but the opposite, indicating a fundamental implication of political subjects with one another.

For my purposes, this model is useful in terms of how it theorizes the ability of affects to travel across bodies and, by implication, to act as a medium in which interrelation between various agents might occur. To these thinkers, affect *is* movement, a position that substantiates the materiality of interactions and processes that might otherwise seem nebulous. This provides a way of understanding participatory art not as a dematerialized practice but, rather, as one characterized by a dynamic materiality that consists in the production of affects. The transpersonal affective field of the participatory artwork is a fabric on which audience members can tug, in attempts to move each other to laughter, to anger, or to action. They bring their agency into being through the act of exercising it, by producing affects in a way that can reinforce or radically shift other participants' experiences of the artwork.

Simultaneously, there are elements of the Spinozist/Deleuzian model that feel unsatisfactory when I consider the archives of participatory art. The first is its emphasis

on affect's apersonal nature, both at the ontological level of affect-as-movement and in terms of its stress on the value of troubling, exceeding, or turning away from the human subject.<sup>82</sup> I would suggest that when studying participatory art, the study of how affects travel across bodies must be balanced by an equally careful attention to how they address the individual subject. Participatory artworks are predicated on the involvement of human audience *subjects*. In studying these works, it is impossible to dispense with the centrality of the subject without rendering them illegible. Group Material's and Rosler's projects not only revolved around a political investment in subjectivity but also emerged in a historical context where that concept was strongly informed by identity politics in particular. In the town-hall meetings, acts of claiming or contesting specific identities, through various affective interventions, were central to the assertion of political agency. Affect amplified and redirected processes of identification and disidentification, producing different moments of connection or rupture among participants.

Additionally concerning the question of the subject: an awkward, but for that reason fruitful, aspect of participatory art is that it will not allow us to dispense with the *cognitive* subject in considering affect. The affects in participatory art are created by real people, whose once-present-absence pushes against the archival material after the event's moment of liveness is past. Whereas a lot of scholarship using affect stays in the arguably safer territory of analyzing literature, film, painting, or other cultural objects, participatory art confronts the scholar with living people. Their histories, subjectivities, and motivations can be guessed at and in some cases can be discussed with the subjects themselves, but they will always stand in a structural relationship of fundamental unknowability to the theoretical tools at hand. Recognizing this does not mean taking for granted some "core" self on the part of those involved; rather, it means attempting to reckon with the definitively unsolvable question of how subject cognition relates to the travel of affects across bodies. In this sense, the participatory event poses what Lauren Berlant refers to as "the becoming historical of the affective event" as a direct methodological problem for the historian.<sup>83</sup>

The second problem with the Spinozist/Deleuzian model in studying participatory art is its tendency to de-emphasize the specificity of particular affects. This habit can leave affect theory at a counterintuitive distance from what we actually *feel*, which is rarely just "affected" but instead is joyful, angry, fearful, excited, and so on. Various thinkers, including Deborah Gould and Derek McCormack, deal with the disparity between lived experience and affect-as-apersonal-movement by developing taxonomies where they supplement affect with other categories, such as emotion or feeling, that address the subject more individually or introspectively.<sup>84</sup> Another very useful model in this regard can be found in the work of psychologist Silvan Tomkins, recovered for late-twentieth-century critical theory largely by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank.<sup>85</sup> Tomkins, whose work in psychology was influenced by psychoanalysis, cybernetics, and systems theory, developed a system based on a set of distinct affects: joy, anger, interest, surprise, fear, disgust, and distress, with contempt added in his later work.<sup>86</sup> For Tomkins, affect is first and foremost "facial behavior" and secondarily "body behavior,

outer skeletal and inner visceral behavior.”<sup>87</sup> Each affect has its own associated bodily states and facial expressions, but they can also easily tip over into each other, with minor changes in phenomena such as heart rate or muscle tension.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, the quality of our experience is rarely made up by transitions among clearly distinct affects; rather, it results from a complex texture of their intermingling. “Such experiences,” writes Tomkins charmingly, “are like salad dressings made up of numerous independent components, the kind, order and amount of which is lost to memory.”<sup>89</sup>

Essential to my interest in Tomkins is his understanding of affects as self-validating. He defines affects as distinct from the Freudian drives in that they are not means to an end but are satisfactions in and of themselves: “It is enjoyable to enjoy. It is exciting to be excited. It is terrorizing to be terrorized and angering to be angered. Affect is self-validating with or without any further referent.”<sup>90</sup> The ultimate stake of Tomkins’s theory is nothing less than understanding human freedom. Instead of seeing human behavior as either causally determined or totally free, Tomkins emphasizes that we must consider *degrees* of freedom. These are, in turn, linked to complexity, with more complex beings able to be more free, in that they can respond more adaptively to their environments.<sup>91</sup> Complexity comes from making mistakes and learning from them, a process for which affects, with their nonteleological nature, are essential. Affects *can* operate in the service of goals, but unlike the drives, they do not have to. Tomkins notes that affects have “essentially aesthetic characteristics,” in that they are inherently either acceptable or unacceptable and cannot be further reduced without reference to the affected state itself (joyful, fearful, and the like).<sup>92</sup>

The face, for Tomkins, is the primary vehicle for the expression of affect, but speech also has a special role in this respect. He traces its function back to the infant’s development, describing earliest speech as an attempt to commune, as opposed to an effort to communicate any particular message.<sup>93</sup> Speech never loses this function, he argues, and in adulthood it acts as “an instrument for the evocation or reduction of every kind of affect, in the self or in others.”<sup>94</sup> Speech has a cognitive function, conveying information, but it also materializes forms of affective togetherness that cannot be reduced to that function. Interestingly, Tomkins cites the activity of people explicitly concerned with language, including linguists, poets, novelists, playwrights, actors, orators, and educators, as that of people strongly committed, through speech and language, to the *preverbal* mode of communion.<sup>95</sup> Reading the function of speech in *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here . . .* through this lens, I would argue that the projects address the feelings created by togetherness not in spite of their focus on spoken discourse but precisely through it.

The first two volumes of Tomkins’s magnum opus *Affect Imagery Consciousness* were published in the 1960s, a decade that has served as an essential reference point for discussions of contemporary art’s engagement with its audiences. The pictures of this engagement that art historians extract from looking at the 1960s vary widely, from Blake Stimson’s framing of conceptual art as an antiauthoritarian practice on a parallel with black nationalism and anti-Vietnam War activism, to Janet Kraynak’s argument

that the decade witnessed the rise of a technocratic society that has fundamentally implicated participation with the negotiation of control.<sup>96</sup> Nicolas Bourriaud, in defining relational aesthetics, framed his account as an attempt to define the relationship between form and process in art of the 1990s against the art-historical dominance of the 1960s, which he sees as characterized by an overly simplistic notion of participation.<sup>97</sup> In drawing on Tomkins, I too return to the 1960s in order to establish a notion of agency that centers on negotiation and on degrees of freedom and constraint but that is not by definition compromised or problematic for that reason. Specifically, Tomkins gives me a way of considering how the affect of the town-hall meetings connects to the question of the relationship between the aesthetic and the political, a question that has been at the heart of debates on participatory art.<sup>98</sup> The town-hall meetings bore witness to acts that were clearly politically motivated on the part of certain participants. But they had, on the whole, no overarching political teleology. They unfolded a process of experimentation and learning—play, even—that worked to chart the parameters of freedom and constraint in relation to a historically novel hybridization of high and alternative culture. There are times in the meetings when participants clearly want to make each other feel a certain way for a particular reason—to ignite AIDS activism, for example—but there are also many moments when the “self-satisfying” affects in circulation take on their own dynamics, ebbing and flowing in ways that sit obliquely to activist or argumentative teleologies. Teleological motivation and the open-ended play of feeling are intertwined, both shaping the dynamics of the event. The town-hall meetings can be seen as an adaptive process on the part of the audience, whose members use the opportunity to test and learn in order to feel out the contours of a particular reality. The aesthetic components of the live meetings and the political possibilities they make available are not separate registers according to which the events can be judged. Rather, both operate through the dynamics of affect. Furthermore, Tomkins’s conception of each affect as being associated with specific facial expressions and bodily postures, but also with less observable processes, helps substantiate a way of approaching the documentation of these practices. Documentation can communicate specific, historical affects, but it also forces us to acknowledge the fundamental unknowability of participants’ subjectivities, which I discussed above. The sensible aspect of a particular affect in its moment of manifestation might be seen as the tip of an always-processual iceberg. It is an incomplete picture, but a tip nonetheless, part of a real material process that the subject undergoes.

The discussion of “real” processes here may be uncomfortable for some readers. As I discuss further in chapter 4, my understanding of presence in this respect follows the “minimal,” nonmetaphysical sense articulated recently by Mechtild Widrich, who defines it to indicate a live event’s unfolding in a certain historical place and time.<sup>99</sup> Widrich’s approach acknowledges the important work I mentioned above that Jones, Schneider, and others have done to trouble the Western metaphysics of presence and its attendant privileged subject. Specifically, it benefits from that lineage of thought to be able to return differently to the question of the live and analyze its specific dynamics,

relying on the fact that earlier feminist theorists have laid the basis for a critical understanding of the subject of live art. Here, in a similar spirit, I acknowledge that legacy, while also using every means possible to learn about the contours of a particular past present and about the possibilities for interaction it afforded.

Each chapter in this book analyzes a different cluster of relationships created by participatory art, as well as a distinct issue in terms of the archival or discursive forms to which this art gives rise. Chapter 1 analyzes how the process of collaboration between Group Material, Rosler, and Dia developed, keeping an eye on the prior histories and commitments that each brought to the table. The chapter develops the concept of affective agency outlined above by creating a context to analyze a spectacular instance of audience intervention at one of Rosler's meetings. I consider the impact of that act on the people present, as well as its implications for critics' responses to the projects.

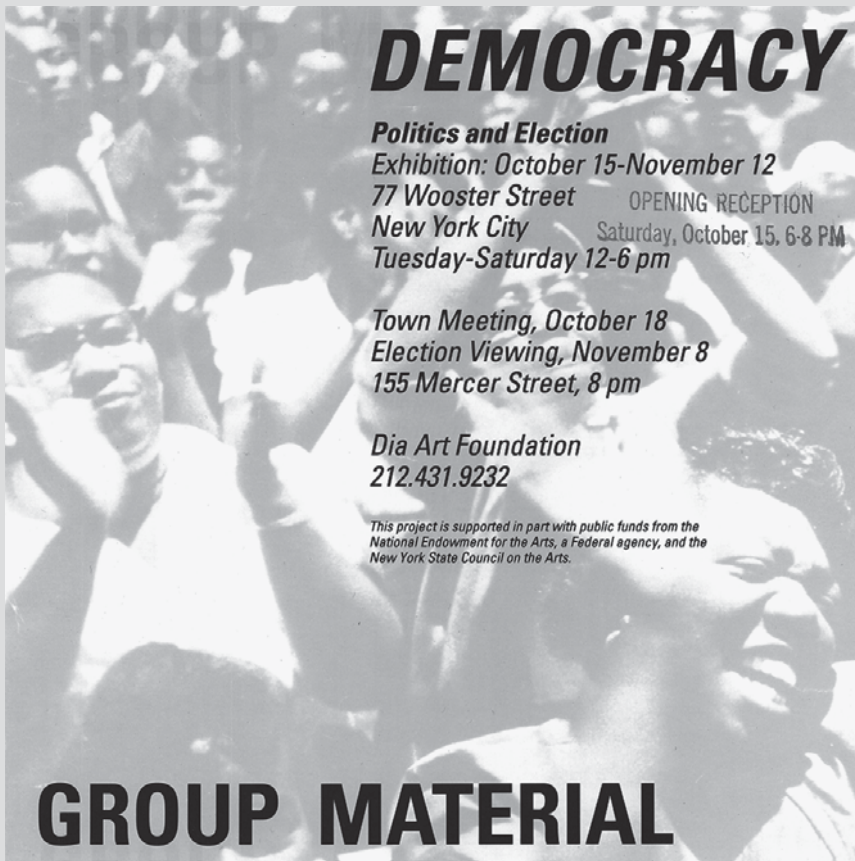
The second chapter digs deeper into the role that participation plays in artist-institution relationships in terms of the commonalities and differences between Dia's and the artists' vocabularies for articulating the value of art. It joins the discussion on the pedagogical nature of participatory practices by zooming in on the "Education and Democracy" segment of Group Material's project. Here, I analyze representations of audience engagement as pedagogically transformative, spanning Group Material's writings and documentation surrounding *Democracy* but also covering Dia's institutional self-presentation from the early 1990s up to the present day. In Group Material's treatment of pedagogy, it turns out not to be the participant audience but in fact the artists themselves who stand as the pedagogical subjects, through whose learning the transformative value of art can survive engaged artists' close implication with the institution.

In chapter 3 I turn to the photograph as a document of participatory art. Leveraging Rosler's career-long engagement with the politics of documentary photography, I analyze the stakes of the production and circulation of images of members of Homeward Bound, a homeless persons' activist group that had an office in the gallery during Rosler's installation "Homeless: The Street and Other Venues." Rosler's concern with disseminating politically productive images of the group's participation and her conflict with Dia on that point illustrate the stakes of documentation images in producing authority and agency in relation to participatory practice. Simultaneously, the case demonstrates how ideas about the pedagogical value of a project can form the basis for collaboration among artists and underprivileged participants who enter the project and leave it with fundamentally different levels of privilege.

The concern with Homeward Bound's political investment in participation that informs chapter 3 then segues into the final chapter, where I analyze audience investment in the form of participants' responses to "AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study," Group Material's last installation for *Democracy*. The chapter asks how the audience's extant affects—in this case, difficult ones bound up with the trauma of the AIDS crisis—might influence the course of a participatory artwork. Whereas chapter 2 analyzes a

pedagogical model of art practice relative to artists' authorship and to art's institutional location, chapter 4 investigates the possibility for art pedagogically to remap the audience's emotions, loosening intense identifications with a specific affective position. This chapter proposes a concept of the live event as characterized by a presence that is social and that can give rise to the collective creation of meaning, but in a way explicitly cut free from voluntaristic intentionality, and that takes into account the opacity of relations among participants.

In the Conclusion, I will return to the present and to the implications of this history for the current politics of museum- and biennial-based participatory art. But for now, let us step into Dia's gallery in fall 1988, pausing on our way in to glance up at the "Under New Management" sign hanging, temporarily, above the door.



**FIGURE 1.1.** Invitation card for Group Material's *Democracy*, "Politics and Election" installation, October 15–November 12, 1988. Courtesy of Group Material and Four Corners Books.

# CHAPTER 1

## THE POLITICS OF PARTICIPATION

In recent years, art historians and critics have canonized Group Material's *Democracy* and Martha Rosler's *If You Lived Here . . .* at the Dia Art Foundation as important precursors to participatory and social-practice art from the 1990s to the present.<sup>1</sup> Central to the projects' participatory format were their open "town-hall meeting" discussion forums, which offered the public an opportunity to come discuss the social and political issues addressed in a series of changing gallery installations (Figure 1.1). But despite the positive evaluations of these projects that circulate today, in their own historical moment, in 1988–89, critics expressed marked ambivalence about their political and aesthetic success. David Trend, for example, found that the discussion of political issues in the public open forums bore a false quality. In his *Afterimage* review of the "Education and Democracy" segment of Group Material's project, Trend writes:

In 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?<sup>2</sup>

Trend diagnoses artificiality on a number of levels. For him, the complex issues raised in the meetings could only be dealt with superficially because what the forums generated was more a representation of the act of dealing with social concerns than a substantial discussion. Moreover, it was not only the short time span of the meeting but its basis in the art world that made the dialogue ineffective. Trend's description evokes an image of the "Soho crowd" as fickle, sunglasses-clad dilettantes, more concerned with appearing



part of a trendy scene than with engaging the urgent political concerns that *Democracy* aimed to address. His description also notably casts them as privileged, implicitly undermining any claim *Democracy* might make to address a broad and diverse constituency.

This chapter will give context to Trend's critique by analyzing the coming together of two forms of culture in *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here . . .*: alternative, socially engaged art practice, on the one hand, and an art institution devoted to high culture, on the other. The complexities of this meeting of alternative and high cultures shaped the projects at multiple levels, from Dia's interest in acting as sponsor, to ethical and philosophical concerns that Group Material and Rosler negotiated, to audiences' and critics' responses. Within the network of relationships among these agents, the meaning and value of audience participation were the subject of repeated negotiation and renegotiation. The particular kind of alternative culture–high culture hybridization at work in *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here . . .* augured the conditions that have shaped the production and reception of social-practice art in high-profile contemporary art venues such as biennials and major museums from the period of these projects to the present. "Participation" functions in this context as a powerful vehicle for the production of value.

With his dismissal of the "Soho crowd," Trend implicitly posits the character and behavior of *Democracy's* audience as key to evaluating the project's political success or failure. Working across archival sources including critical texts, audio recordings, and oral histories, this chapter analyzes some of the hopes and anxieties that *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here . . .* generated in relation to the question of audience agency. In particular, I focus on the intersection between ideas about, and experiences of, the visibility and audibility of the audience, and the political valences that each took on in the context of the projects. My goal is not so much to use audience behavior as the measuring stick by which to judge the projects but, rather, to analyze the relationships, and at times the discrepancies, between discursive constructions of participation and the live experience of participation as it unfolded. Ideas about what participation is and why it is valuable are not just handed down from the artists or the institutions to audiences. Instead, their circulation is multidirectional. Indeed, as I will show here in relation to a particularly spectacular act of participation at one of the meetings by the poet Cenén,<sup>3</sup> and the reaction by the meeting's chair, Bill Batson, participants may come to a project with preformed ideas about their role, which influences their experience of the project. Analyzing how the participatory project positions and repositions those involved will enable me to distinguish between the "audience member" (in the sense this term is often employed, that is, to indicate a member of the public who witnesses but does not create a work) and the "participant." The latter, more expansive category can include not only the participant audience but also the artists, institutional employees, and anyone else who engages in the *performative network* of the participatory artwork.

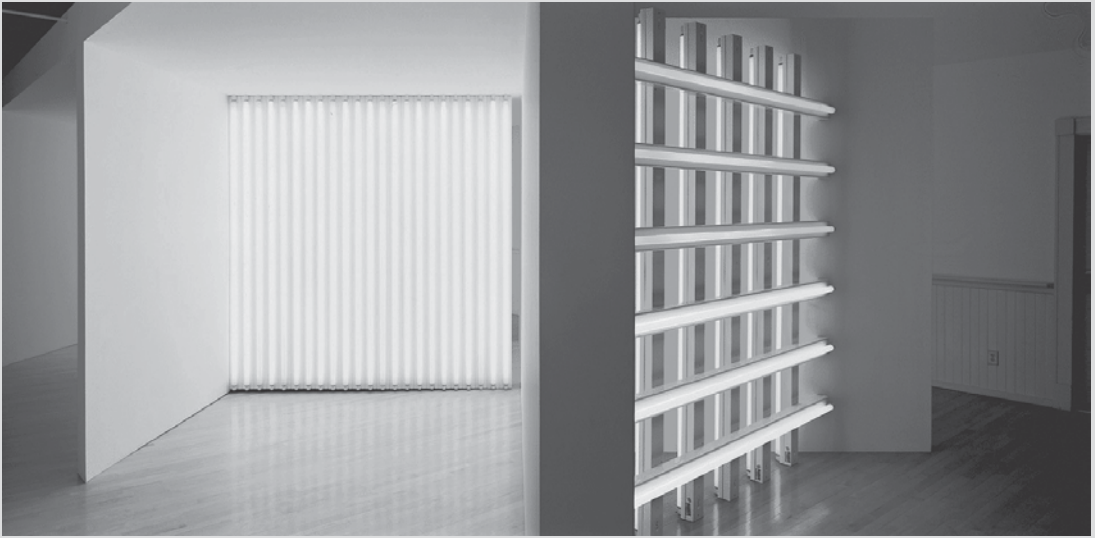
### **Dia and Its Audience, or Lack Thereof**

The concept of "audience" was largely absent from the philosophy of the early Dia Art Foundation. This is clear from the foundation's first annual report, released in 1975,

shortly after oil heiress Philippa de Menil and her future husband, German gallerist Heiner Friedrich, created the organization. The report describes Dia's mission as both highly ambitious and clearly artist centered: "to plan, realize and maintain public projects which cannot be easily produced, financed or owned by individual collectors because of their cost and magnitude."<sup>4</sup> The report presents the simple existence of these exceptional artworks, not their accessibility to a public, as the good that it seeks to foster.

Later iterations of this statement throughout the 1990s and into the first decade of the twenty-first century maintain the commitment to artists' vision but add to it an articulation of Dia's role in connecting these unique artworks to an audience. For example, a 2000 application made by Dia to the 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."<sup>5</sup> Between these two moments, 1975 and 2000, a discourse emerged in Dia's public self-presentation that states the importance of the audience to the organization. The foundation had begun to host public discussion events, in the form of the Discussions in Contemporary Culture series and poetry readings, in 1987, shortly before *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here . . . .* The talks at the Discussions events reflected the absorption of continental theory that gained momentum in North America starting in the 1970s and included consideration of the sociopolitical dimensions of art and cultural production.<sup>6</sup> But Group Material's and Rosler's projects mark the first public emergence at Dia of an explicit articulation of the importance of audience conceived as a broad, nonspecialist public. Nancy Spector, in a 1988 interview with Group Material about *Democracy*, writes that the group's planned publication of the town-hall meeting transcripts in their book would "actively [seek] to disrupt what the 'Discussions in Contemporary Culture' published by Dia have, in their opinion, become: a rarefied dialogue between experts."<sup>7</sup>

Why did the Dia staff and board choose to support Group Material's and Rosler's work, which was a great deal more political than the art the organization had funded up to that point? And why did they choose to do so in the specific moment of the late 1980s? Speculation abounded at the time of *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here . . . .* Particularly compelling among the theories in circulation is the idea that the move reflected organizational changes taking place at Dia. In *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material*, group member Julie Ault writes that during the time of *Democracy*, Dia was undergoing a transition from a private to a public institution.<sup>8</sup> 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 (Philippa's sister-in-law) "stabilized the foundation's finances and transformed it into a much-admired, publicly oriented institution."<sup>9</sup> Colacello's characterization of



**FIGURE 1.2.** Installation view showing Dan Flavin's *Untitled (to Jan and Ron Greenberg)*, 1972–73, and *Untitled (in Honor of Harold Joachim) 3*, 1977. Long-term exhibition, Dan Flavin Institute, Bridgehampton, New York. Copyright 2015 Stephen Flavin / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photograph by Florian Holzherr. Courtesy of the Dia Art Foundation, New York.

“publicly oriented” is technically more correct than Ault’s, as Dia’s status was that of a nonprofit organization, or 501(c)3.<sup>10</sup> Nonprofit corporations, as George Yúdice explains, occupy a space somewhere between private and public. Since the end of the Cold War, Yúdice argues, nonprofits 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.<sup>11</sup>

At Dia, the idea that art is capable of creating public good was just developing in the mid-1980s. As noted in the foundation’s 1975 mission statement, in its earliest history, from its establishment in 1974 through its financial crisis in 1983–84, the organization was emphatically oriented toward the production and collection of art and was disengaged completely from any idea of 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 Dia’s early approach to support was the establishment of permanent contracts with artists, including Donald Judd, Dan Flavin, and Walter De Maria (Figure 1.2). 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.<sup>12</sup> The couple maintained a mosque at 155 Mercer Street, in the space that would eventually host Rosler’s and Group Material’s town-hall meetings. Throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, Dia’s low-profile offices occupied various spaces, including on Wooster and Franklin Streets, with permanent installations including Walter De Maria’s *New York Earth Room* (1977) and *Broken Kilometer* (1979) (Figures 1.3 and 1.4) and La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela’s *Dream House* (1979–85) in other locations in the city.<sup>13</sup>

Art historian Anna Chave has demonstrated a connection between Dia’s overtly religious Islamic activities and the more generally spiritual quality of the minimalist art it supported.<sup>14</sup> This multidimensional religiosity seems to have had more the feeling of a secret sect than of an organized faith, indifferent as Friedrich and de Menil were toward attracting a wide group of followers.<sup>15</sup> Dia’s anti-institutional vibe was grounded in Friedrich’s hatred of museums, which he associated with the presentation of artworks as isolated and commodified objects.<sup>16</sup> Despite the fact that by the early 1980s Dia had as many as eighty employees, there was no regular exhibition schedule, few public opening hours, and no publicity.<sup>17</sup> It appears that publications associated with artists’ projects were kept to an absolute minimum, if they existed at all.<sup>18</sup> Charles Wright, who became Dia’s director in 1984, speculates that this lack of publicity was due at least in part to Heiner and Philippa’s belief that the permanent installation of the art would, in and of itself, eventually establish the works’ presence in the art world.<sup>19</sup> Publicity and press releases formed part of a professional museum or gallery apparatus to which they were explicitly opposed.<sup>20</sup> 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.<sup>21</sup>



**FIGURE 1.3.** Walter De Maria, *The New York Earth Room*, 1977. Long-term installation, 141 Wooster Street, New York City. Copyright 2015 The Estate of Walter De Maria. Photograph by John Cliett. Courtesy of the Dia Art Foundation, New York.



**FIGURE 1.4.** Walter De Maria, *The Broken Kilometer*, 1979. Long-term installation, 393 West Broadway, New York City. Copyright 2015 The Estate of Walter De Maria. Photograph by Jon Abbott. Courtesy of the Dia Art Foundation, New York.

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* in New Mexico (Figure 1.5) and James Turrell's *Roden Crater* (begun in 1977) in Flagstaff, Arizona, are geographically isolated enough that only those able to make the pilgrimage to a remote site can 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."<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup> 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 de Menil, and installed a new board.<sup>24</sup> 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 *New York Earth Room* and *Broken Kilometer*.<sup>25</sup>

The 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. Lois de Menil became vice-chairman.<sup>26</sup> The first concern of the new board was to stabilize the foundation financially, which it did by selling real estate and artworks and initiating the renegotiation of the artists' contracts.<sup>27</sup> 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 scrutiny of Heiner and Philippa's financial practices. Herb Brownell, a member of Dia's new board who had held various public offices, including the position of U.S. 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.<sup>28</sup> 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 lacking even basic records of titles and artists' names.<sup>29</sup>

Hawkins and Lois de Menil found a permanent director for Dia in Charles Wright, the lawyer son of Seattle art collectors Virginia and Charles Bagley Wright. He took up the position in January 1986.<sup>30</sup> During his directorship, he would steer a course in



**FIGURE 1.5.** Walter De Maria, *The Lightning Field*, 1977. Long-term installation, western New Mexico. Copyright 2015 The Estate of Walter De Maria. Photograph by John Cliett. Courtesy of the Dia Art Foundation, New York.



which he attempted to keep something of the spirit of Dia alive while operating on a radically reduced physical scale and budget and with a tiny staff.<sup>31</sup> After several months of conversations with Gary Garrels, Wright asked Garrels to join Dia as the director of programs, and they began work on what Karen Kelly, who served for many years as the director of publications, calls the process of “reconstituting” the foundation.<sup>32</sup> By the end of 1987, Dia had raised \$17 million through sales of art and real estate.<sup>33</sup> The offices were upstairs at 155 Mercer Street, in the Friedrichs’ former mosque, with the ground floor rented out cheaply as dance rehearsal space.<sup>34</sup> 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.<sup>35</sup> The talks given by critics and historians at the Discussions events were subsequently published in a series of books by Bay Press, the same series within which the project books for *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here . . .* were eventually published. 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 Ashbery, Amy Clampitt, Robert Creeley, and Louise Glück.<sup>36</sup> 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 Andy Warhol from the collection.<sup>37</sup>

In June 1987, Wright convened an international group of arts professionals to provide Dia with advice about its 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.<sup>38</sup> The group was not by any means homogeneous in terms of approach: Rainer recalls that her own commitment to politically engaged art met with hostility from Bellamy.<sup>39</sup> Wright also remembers the cool reception some other panel members gave to Rainer’s ideas, and he attributes this in part to the fact that Rainer represented a younger generation.<sup>40</sup> For the meeting, Garrels and Wright asked each of the participants to propose artists for Dia to support, and Rainer put forward Rosler’s and Group Material’s names.<sup>41</sup> 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.

## A Collaborative Process

The mid-1970s, the moment of Dia’s founding, also saw the flourishing of a movement with a completely different set of stakes for contemporary art: New York’s alternative art scene. This “scene” combined several threads of interrelated artistic and political practice, all of which connected back to the question of the relationship between political and visual—specifically, artistic—representation. An essential precedent was laid in the late 1960s by collaborative groups founded to address urgent issues, such as Artists and Writers Protest against the War in Vietnam (1965), the Black Emergency Cultural Coalition (1968–69), or the Artists Poster Committee (1969).<sup>42</sup> Key in this context was

the Art Workers' Coalition (AWC, 1969), which worked to repair art's disconnection from society by advocating such measures as a living wage for artists and changes to institutions to ensure greater political transparency and public access. The AWC engaged in a series of confrontations with the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) specifically. In 1969, it responded to MoMA's refusal to host an open forum on the relationship among museums, artists, and society by holding its own meeting, Open Public Hearing on the Subject: What Should Be the Program of the Art Workers Regarding Museum Reform, and to Establish the Program of an Open Art Worker's Coalition, an event that drew over three hundred people. Lucy Lippard points out that AWC members and other art activists of the late 1960s and early 1970s focused their attention on museums dealing with contemporary art. The artists perceived these to be public institutions and therefore potentially broadly accountable. Art museums were also, on a practical level, more likely to give serious consideration to artists' concerns than were other major social institutions.<sup>43</sup>

Group Material member Julie Ault is an important historian of New York's alternative scene, as reflected in her 2002 volume *Alternative Art New York, 1965–1985*. Ault writes that though short-lived, the AWC left a legacy that fostered the politicization of many artists, museum professionals, and critics. It established a precedent for dialogue, which could at times be intensely confrontational, between artists and museums. It also gave rise to various offshoots addressing more-specific constituencies or political projects, such as Women Artists in Revolution (WAR, 1969) and the aforementioned Artists Poster Committee, and provided crucial momentum for the establishment of neighborhood art spaces such as the Studio Museum in Harlem (1968) and El Museo del Bario (1969). Over the course of the 1970s, several waves of alternative spaces and organizations emerged, including the Kitchen (1971), A.I.R. Gallery (1972), Creative Time (1974), Artists Meeting for Cultural Change (1975), the Alternative Museum (1975), Franklin Furnace Archive (1976), and PAD/D (1980), addressing themselves to a range of artistic concerns and political or community constituencies.

The question of space was a deeply politicized one for these organizations at a number of levels. First, as Martin Beck argues, alternative spaces were often characterized by a rough interior aesthetic that was taken to signal a political and philosophical rejection of the hermetic white-cube gallery. This notion of space was itself heir to the work done in the 1960s by artists, architects, and theorists who theorized the idea of space to include social and political dynamics.<sup>44</sup> Beck discusses how accounts of the early days of 112 Workshop (founded in 1970) frequently invoked the term "raw," both in terms of "raw space" and "raw experience." By creating a connection between 112's physical space and its aim to foster a more social, less conventional aesthetic experience, this terminology established an opposition between 112 and the mainstream gallery system, coded as antiseptic, manufactured, elitist, and superficial.<sup>45</sup> Space also became a highly politicized question for alternative art in terms of the role these organizations themselves played in the transformation of New York City's neighborhoods from the late 1970s onward. During the 1960s, artists had played a key role in the rapid transformation of Soho from abandoned manufacturing district to cultural center, which by

the mid-to-late 1970s had in turn given rise to a real estate boom, capitalizing on the bohemian vibe of the neighborhood.<sup>46</sup> In their 1984 article in *October*, “The Fine Art of Gentrification,” Rosalyn Deutsche and Cara Gendel Ryan took aim at the East Village art scene for its complicit role in “a strategic urban arena where the city, financed by big capital, wages its war of position against an impoverished and increasingly isolated local population.”<sup>47</sup>

Deutsche and Ryan’s critique came at a moment when many socially engaged artists and critics were already aware of the complex status of alternative art centers, not only in terms of the politics of urban space but also concerning their increasingly institutional quality. Brian Wallis attributes this institutionalization in large part to funding from the NEA, which started supplying significant support for artist-run centers in 1972 and which in 1978 created a special grant category for alternative spaces (called “Visual Artists’ Organizations” from 1982 until its termination in 1995).<sup>48</sup> This was during a period of sharply increasing corporate arts funding in the United States: corporate donations to the arts in 1978 equaled \$211 million, already outweighing the NEA’s appropriations that year of \$123.85 million, and they would more than double by 1985.<sup>49</sup> But artists’ organizations received a proportionately much larger part of their funding from the NEA and from public state agencies, making the NEA’s policies particularly influential for their operation. Wallis argues that through its support, the NEA encouraged artists’ organizations to seek increasingly greater amounts of funding, to create a professional class of administrators to run the now more heavily institutionalized organizations, and to exercise more careful control over the types of art being made and shown.<sup>50</sup> Artist Jacki Apple noted this at the time, in the catalog for the 1981 New Museum exhibition *Alternatives in Retrospect: An Historical Overview, 1969–1975*. Apple argues that spaces such as the Kitchen, Franklin Furnace, and Artists Space could no longer be referred to as “alternative spaces” in the spirit of the early 1970s but had evolved into “non-profit arts institutions,” making it logical that “the guidelines and procedures for procuring funds should subsequently be reflected in the way in which programs are conceived and carried out.”<sup>51</sup>

The early 1980s’ perception of alternative spaces as an institutionalized extension of the gallery system manifests itself boldly in Group Material’s flyer “Caution! Alternative Space!,” which the group released in September 1981 in order to explain the voluntary closure of their East Village gallery:

We hated the association with “alternative spaces” because it was clear to us that most prominent alternative spaces are, in appearance, policy and social function, the children of the dominant commercial galleries in New York. To distinguish ourselves and to raise art exhibitions as a political issue, we refused to show artists as singular entities. Instead, we organized artists, non-artists, a very broad range of people, to exhibit around a special social issue.<sup>52</sup>

Group Material goes on to describe how in pouring all their energy into maintaining the gallery, they had fallen into the same trap as the alternative spaces they critiqued,

“waiting for everyone to rush down and see our shows instead of taking the initiative ourselves of mobilizing into more public areas.” In the next phase of its activity, the group would thus maintain a headquarters to serve as the base for exhibitions in other venues, including “streets, city squares, newspapers, mass transit, even churches.” Over the next few years, Group Material’s activities took diverse formats, including *Luchar! An Exhibition for the People of Central America* (1982), held at the Taller Latinoamericano near the offices of social justice organizations such as the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), and *Subculture* (1983) (Figure 1.6), a series of posters for the New York City subway.<sup>53</sup> The membership of the group, in flux since its founding in 1979, continued to change: in November 1982, Julie Ault, Tim Rollins, and Mundy McLaughlin were joined by Doug Ashford, fresh out of the Cooper Union BFA program. As the decade wore on, Group Material received an invitation to contribute to what was for them the unprecedentedly prestigious venue of the 1985 Whitney Biennial. For that show, they created the installation *Americana*, combining artworks, washing machines, and Wonderbread, as a way of interrogating how the Whitney defined American art and culture.

As “Caution! Alternative Space!” indicates, Group Material’s self-definition from the outset was closely in dialogue with an idea of the alternative scene in New York. Rosler, by contrast, had spent a key decade in her early artistic development living in San Diego, where she had moved in 1968, and had obtained an MFA from the University of California, San Diego, in 1974. During her time on the West Coast, she collaborated with a group of other young photographers in articulating the terms of a politically leftist conceptual photography, which I will discuss further in chapter 3.<sup>54</sup> Though Rosler would return to New York in 1980 and ultimately spend most of her career there, the downtown scene as such was less central to her practice than were the discussions about urban space, city planning, and gentrification led by intellectuals such as Rosalyn Deutsche, geographer Neil Smith, and urban planning professor Peter Marcuse in the city over the course of the 1980s. These issues formed the conceptual heart of *If You Lived Here . . .*, which involved contributions from Deutsch, Smith, and Marcuse, as well as numerous other activists.<sup>55</sup> Generationally, Rosler was senior to the members of Group Material, and when they were in art school, she was already gaining significant recognition as an important contributor to the politicized conceptualism that informed their practice. Those contributions included not only art but also critical essays, which paid particular attention to the status of photography relative to class-differentiated forms of viewership. One such was the 1979 “Lookers, Buyers, Dealers, and Makers: Thoughts on Audience.” In that piece, Rosler argues that class is the most essential determinant of one’s relationship to culture, and she analyzes how high and low cultural forms operate to parcel out audience roles that both reflect and maintain economic hierarchy. In particular, she addresses photography’s migration into high art in the late 1960s and early 1970s and the market dynamics and institutional and discursive shifts that accompanied that change.<sup>56</sup> Rosler was Ashford’s teacher, in the Cooper Union Advanced Sculpture seminar held in spring 1981, and she contributed work to Group Material shows including *Luchar!* (1982), *Timeline: A Chronicle of U.S. Intervention*



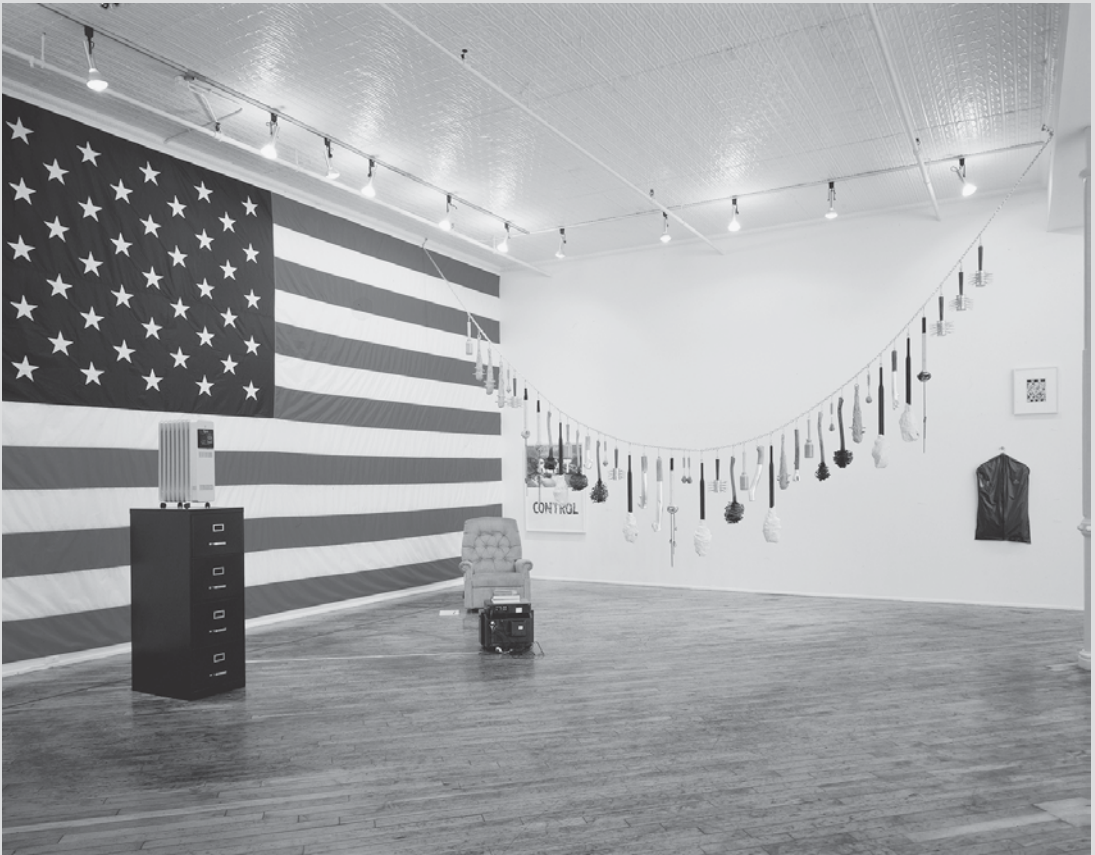
**FIGURE 1.6.** Work from Group Material's *Subculture* installed in advertising space in the New York City subway, 1983. Courtesy of Group Material and Four Corners Books.

in *Central and Latin America* (1984), and *MASS* (1985).<sup>57</sup> Her art was a natural choice for Group Material's installations because of the analysis of the dynamics of high and low culture that was central to her practice and that also constituted an essential recurring theme in their installations.

In *Show and Tell*, Ault reports that in the initial-conception phase of *Democracy*, Group Material members were originally interested in having an exhibition that would change constantly over Dia's four-month fall season to reflect the polyvalent nature of the project's theme. But in conversations with Dia curator Garrels, numerous practical problems emerged with that approach, and group members decided instead to break the period down into four subthemes (education, electoral politics [Figure 1.7], cultural participation [Figure 1.8], and the AIDS crisis), each of which would have a separate month-long exhibition and its own town-hall meeting.<sup>58</sup> Ault states that the decision to have the four sequential shows was made not only to highlight the shows' topicality but also in part to impose the pace of commercial gallery shows on Dia, which was known for its permanent projects.<sup>59</sup> In May and June, prior to the start of the project, Group Material also held closed-door roundtable discussions among activists, intellectuals, and artists with expertise in each area in order to educate the group in preparation for the shows and to help set the agenda for the public meetings.

Rosler adopted Group Material's format for *If You Lived Here . . .*, with the modification that her season included three instead of four shows (addressing gentrification [Plate 4], homelessness, and city planning [Figure 1.9]) and had no preparatory roundtables.<sup>60</sup> She also gave her public meetings additional structure by having them begin with panels of speakers. *Democracy's* town halls, by contrast, were entirely open-ended discussions, with no specially appointed speakers except for the chair. Rosler relates that when Dia invited her, they were initially interested in having her do an installation on the model of the antiwar work *Fascination with the (Game of the)(Exploding)(Historical) Hollow Leg*, which she had created for the gallery of the University of Colorado, Boulder, in 1983. But as the project developed, she discovered how many people in the city were engaged with antigentrification and homelessness issues.<sup>61</sup> Group Material's format for *Democracy* provided a way of making her project a collaborative venture with those people, in a way that a static installation similar to *Fascination* would not have. Based on the common format of the two projects, Dia named the entire programming year "Town Meeting" and applied for grants for both projects together under that title.<sup>62</sup>

At the time of their creation, *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here . . .* received very limited attention in the art press. It seems that this may have been due, at least in part, to the lack of an obvious fit between the artists and Dia's reputation. Michael Govan, Dia's director from 1994 to 2004, speculates that the lack of press in Dia's "middle period" of the 1980s might be attributed to the foundation's still-nascent status as an institution open to the public.<sup>63</sup> In the reviews that did appear, a recurring theme is the difference between Group Material's 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 *Globe and Mail*, describes as "queer" the fact that conservative Dia hosted the year-long "Town Meeting," with its open forums for political discussion.<sup>64</sup>



**FIGURE 1.7.** Installation view of Group Material's *Democracy, "Politics and Election,"* October 15–November 12, 1988. Photograph by Noel Allum. Courtesy of the Dia Art Foundation, New York.



**FIGURE 1.8** Installation view of Group Material's *Democracy, "Cultural Participation,"* November 19–December 10, 1988. Photograph by Ken Schles. Courtesy of the Dia Art Foundation, New York.





**FIGURE 1.9.** Installation view of Martha Rosler's *If You Lived Here . . . , "City: Visions and Revisions,"* May 13–June 17, 1989. Photograph by Oren Slor. Courtesy of the Dia Art Foundation, New York.

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.”<sup>65</sup> 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* are “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.”<sup>66</sup> Ernest Larsen, in a discussion of Rosler’s show, notes that because of the activist nature of the works included, “a good percentage of the art enlivening Dia’s white walls did not look at home there,” creating an ensemble that contested “the usual social and spatial identity of the gallery.”<sup>67</sup>

Alaton, Hess, Smith, and Larsen are all positive about this development. All four frame it in terms of an opposition between hermetic, formalist art and a more social, politicized practice represented by Rosler and Group Material. Similarly, Yvonne Rainer writes in her preface to the *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here . . .* project books that Group Material’s and Rosler’s interest in social context stood in opposition to Dia’s “long-standing and continuous” commitment to separating out the cultural “cream” without questioning who is served by the distinction between high and low culture.<sup>68</sup> 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, titled “Housing: Gentrification, Dislocation, and Fighting Back!,” an audience member closes his comments on the dysfunctionality of the housing system with a clear compliment to Dia: “Thank you again for organizing these forums—I’m happy to see Dia doing this.”<sup>69</sup> And in her closing statement at the end of the meeting, moderator Lori-Jean Saigh reiterates the sentiment. Saigh goes slightly beyond the formulaic thanking of the host institution to put special stress on the political latitude Dia is providing for the discussion: “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!”<sup>70</sup>

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 code this difference in terms of a split between self-enclosed, formalist practices and their own politically engaged attitude. Group Material, in the introduction to their book *Democracy: A Project by Group Material* (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.”<sup>71</sup>

The binary terms laid out here evoke a clash not only between kinds of art but also between viewing subjects: Dia indexes a singular modernist subject who is

privileged, white, and male, whereas Group Material members seek to make work for pluralistic, diverse subjects. The artists 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 Guerrilla Girls' earliest posters under the heading "These Galleries Show No More Than 10% Women Artists or None At All."<sup>72</sup> Despite their critical attitude toward Dia, Group Material members were compelled by the fact that the Wooster Street gallery got more than three hundred passerby visitors a day. Their interest in having access to that audience was a major factor in their decision to accept Dia's invitation.<sup>73</sup>

What was produced when these fundamentally different approaches converged was, at the most basic level, a very high-budget form of activist art. Though the cost of the projects was minor in comparison to the artworks funded in the Heiner and Philippa days, the grant proposal Garrels wrote for the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) still estimates the budget at \$186,088, including personnel. This included a \$10,000 artist fee for Rosler and \$12,000 for Group Material collectively, as well as \$12,575 to cover travel and discussion by invited participants, \$3,420 worth of advertising in the *Village Voice*, and \$10,100 for the recording and transcription of the town-hall meetings.<sup>74</sup> During this period, the members of Group Material were all working other jobs in order to support their practice, while also devoting the equivalent of a full-time workweek to making art.<sup>75</sup> Rosler was on the faculty of Rutgers University as an associate professor in the Art Department. The funds available for the projects substantially exceeded the resources to which they typically had access. The projects were, moreover, long running and were supported by Dia's infrastructural resources. The most important in this respect were its two street-level spaces, located close together in Soho, which 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 events inside an art-filled exhibition space.

Garrels and Wright see this kind of unprecedented support as the essence of Dia's mission. Both argue that between Dia's earlier work and *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here . . .*, there was a fundamental continuity in terms of the desire to provide artists with extraordinary support that would change the nature of the work they were able to produce.<sup>76</sup> This commitment grew out of an essentially modernist conception of authorship that Group Material's and Rosler's practices sought to problematize. However, it arguably positioned Dia well for a fruitful collaboration with artists whose political commitments drew on the AWC and other art organizing, which from the 1960s onward had aimed to wrest power from institutions and put it in the hands of artists. Ault reflects in retrospect that Dia, "for all its reputation for elitism, is probably one of the most artist-centric institutions I've experienced working with."<sup>77</sup> She relates that instead of dictating in any way what form a project should take, Dia encouraged Group Material to dream big: "You should just envision whatever you want—what's your dream project?—and then we see if we can make it happen."

Ault and Ashford describe how this artist-centered quality gave rise to close

collaboration with Dia staff. Ault states that Garrels functioned as a partner in dialogue throughout the development of *Democracy* (Figure 1.10).<sup>78</sup> For example, he encouraged the group to include a consideration of local politics in the “Politics and Election” segment of the *Democracy* project. Ashford describes how the Dia office at 155 Mercer Street became the base for all of Group Material’s activities during the period of developing and executing the project:

We lived in that office, for two years. The staff were in the office. I ran the copy machine there. We got all our mail and paid our bills there. Everything was going on that had to do with us functioning, because all of our creative work, collectively, at least for me, Julie, and Felix, was invested. . . . [A] tremendous amount of our creative life was in direct relationship to these people.<sup>79</sup>

The closeness of this relationship was illustrated most dramatically by the fact that in March 1989, after the close of the project, Ault, Ashford, and Felix Gonzalez-Torres invited Karen Rampsbacher, an AIDS activist and curatorial assistant at Dia, to join Group Material.<sup>80</sup> During *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here . . .*, Rampsbacher drafted press releases, transcribed the audio recordings of the town-hall meetings, and supported the artists in general.<sup>81</sup> She relates that she had more of a hands-on role in the Group Material show than in Rosler’s: “Martha sort of did her own thing and had her own team.” From 1989 until she left Group Material in 1992, Rampsbacher’s central investment remained with activism in AIDS and women’s health and with the question of how art could support social-justice struggles, a difference in orientation that at times caused tension in the group.<sup>82</sup>

Rosler’s experience working with Dia was less characterized by collaborative intimacy than was Group Material’s, and it was also more strongly marked by feelings of ambivalence on her part about Dia’s motivations. Rosler argues that Dia supported *If You Lived Here . . .* in order to gain “a certain kind of street cred,” but she also thinks that the foundation was somewhat uneasy with the project: “They weren’t sure what it was going to look like because it was so far from their comfort zone.”<sup>83</sup> In a 1994 article titled “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.<sup>84</sup>

Rosler’s comments must be seen within the context of the larger question circulating during this period of what institutions sought to gain from collaborations with politicized artists from the alternative arts scene. From the first wave of founding of alternative spaces in the early 1970s, these organizations and the artists who showed



**FIGURE 1.10.** Dia curator Gary Garrels (*left*) and Group Material member Doug Ashford (*center*) at the opening for Group Material's *Democracy*, "Cultural Participation" installation. Courtesy of Group Material.

in them were associated with different, less elite audiences than were major institutions. Despite critiques of the institutionalization of alternative spaces and their collusion with commercial galleries, penned by Rosler and others, that association persisted into the 1980s.<sup>85</sup> For example, in a 1981 *New York Times* article titled “The New Collectives—Reaching for a Wider Audience,” critic 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, she 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.”<sup>86</sup> Glueck frames the access to a different audience as something valuable on which alternative spaces have a privileged purchase. Rosler’s concern about what Dia might stand to gain in this respect resonates with a statement made by Garrels. 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.”<sup>87</sup> 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’s recollection demonstrates a broad sensitivity among artists and audiences to the way the concept of political engagement might prove valuable for institutions.

*Democracy and If You Lived Here . . .* did indeed occur at a moment of self-conscious change in Dia’s identity, during which its board saw the necessity for greater public outreach. Wright and Garrels pursued that goal by enabling new directions in programming that differed from Dia’s previous projects. Ashford argues that Dia’s investment in changing its identity was clear to Group Material from the beginning:

We understood what it was about, we understood that it was a big change for [Dia], and it was clear they came to us for that, and people had been doing that for a while. Saying, well, Group Material does this thing, and what this thing is is timely, it’s multicultural. . . . They knew that we were young. And [to] institutions who were also interested in a sense in poststructuralist moments of inclusion and deconstruction, which went together, we offered them the capacity to have that.<sup>88</sup>

Given Ashford’s comments and the complaints Garrels received, Rosler’s barb about “trendiness” seems to me to be justified to some extent. However, there are significant differences between *Democracy and If You Lived Here . . .*, on the one hand, and the work Group Material and Rosler had produced before that point, on the other, differences that cannot be accommodated by a narrative in which political art is simply appropriated by a self-interested institution. Rather, the projects were a partnership that generated something new.

Namely, in *Democracy and If You Lived Here . . .* the dramatic infusion of institutional support into socially engaged art practice coincided with a new attention to the viewer, located within a social situation that constituted the artwork. Whereas earlier



**FIGURE 1.11.** Installation view of Group Material, *The People's Choice (Arroz con Mango)*, January 10–February 1, 1981. Courtesy of Group Material and Four Corners Books.



**FIGURE 1.12.** Installation view, showing the artist and participants, of Martha Rosler's *Monumental Garage Sale*, University of California, San Diego, 1973. Courtesy of Martha Rosler.



practices of institutional critique by artists such as Adrian Piper, Michael Asher, and Daniel Buren tended to emphasize the way institutional power structures inhere in the viewer's perception, *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here . . .* instead approached participants as people who have a visible and dialogical presence in the institutional space but whose life experiences, insights, and expertise represent a field of resistant, anti-institutional potential. Both Group Material and Rosler had engaged previously in collaborative or participatory processes with audiences, such as in Group Material's work with their Lower East Side neighbors to create the show *The People's Choice (Arroz con Mango)* of 1981 (Figure 1.11), or Rosler's early garage-sale works with interactive elements, *Monumental Garage Sale* (1973, San Diego) and *Traveling Garage Sale* (1977, San Francisco) (Figure 1.12)<sup>89</sup> However, those projects were essentially installations with an interactive component either leading up to or during the show, whereas participant-generated dialogue was the formal and conceptual keystone of *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here . . .* In a 1988 interview with Steve Kurtz of Critical Art Ensemble, a member of Group Material described this aspect of the upcoming *Democracy* as an opportunity to move beyond the exhibition as a model of new social relationships to have it function as a lab for generating "actual organizing tools." Instead of acting as a "spectacle of relations between different communities," *Democracy* was "a dream of taking the spectacle of the exhibition and turning it into a series of social elevations. Turning it into a situation."<sup>90</sup> In this description, the project as a "situation"—a term that resonates with the work of the Situationist International—becomes the occasion for participants to create new discourse and social relationships, which themselves function as "actual organizing tools." Through participant dialogue, this description imagines, the work would cross over from "spectacle" into genuine intervention in the social field. As I will discuss below, some participants in fact experienced the events as tinged with a spectacular quality, which they connected to the presence of the institution, making the development of "actual organizing tools" more of an idealized horizon for the projects than a goal they were able to realize. But before getting to those audience responses, I want to listen more closely to the artists' descriptions of the audience, in order better to understand their investment in public engagement.

### The Artists on the Audience

In 1988, Dia's offices were housed on the second floor of 155 Mercer Street. Group Material used the office boardroom to hold its roundtable discussions for *Democracy*. These events enabled Group Material to solicit feedback from activists and professionals as the project proper was taking shape; they were a way of democratizing the work starting from its initial conception. The project's archive contains a number of photographs documenting the roundtables. The images show participants, including 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, it appears in the images, was decorated with two photos of lightning hitting the rods of Walter De Maria's *Lightning Field* (1977), one of Dia's early

landmark projects. The effect in some images is 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 the thought, but the lightning streaks foreground the loss. In an image of the “Politics and Election” roundtable, 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) (Figure 1.13). 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 light from the room’s windows, drives its glowing fork of lightning into the head of Group Material member Ashford, who is seated below it (Figure 1.14).

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 of the roundtables, there lies a lengthy distance in how the subject of contemporary art is conceived. The photographs of *The Lightning Field* and those of the roundtable both document art as a unique, ephemeral process, unfolding in time and space: 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. 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 picture. The image comes to stand for the gaze of a generalized, universal viewing subject, witness to but not included in 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. We see the participants engaged in dialogue: in the artwork-as-social-situation, they become simultaneously visible and audible, both to their coparticipants and to the camera and tape recorder, the instruments of documentation. Participation, as it materialized in *Democracy*, depended on this mutual visibility and audibility. The participants are not only physically present to each other; they also speak, revealing to the group their own experiences and perspectives on the issues at hand. 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 experiences were and what exactly they were saying.

By speaking at the roundtables and town-hall meetings, participants generated textual content, saved by the recording of the meetings and their subsequent transcription and publication in the project books. This labor was not undertaken anonymously but, rather, was attributed to specific, named interlocutors. The transcripts published in the project books include the names of all speakers, except when these could not be determined after the fact from the recordings. Group Material’s and Rosler’s decisions



**FIGURE 1.13.** Eva Cockroft, Judge Bruce Wright, Julie Ault, and Felix Gonzalez-Torres (*left to right*) at the roundtable discussion held June 4, 1988, in the Dia Art Foundation's Mercer Street offices in preparation for Group Material's *Democracy*, "Politics and Election" installation. Courtesy of Group Material and Four Corners Books.



**FIGURE 1.14.** Maria Maggenti, Julie Ault, Doug Ashford, and Felix Gonzalez-Torres (*left to right*) at the roundtable discussion held June 18, 1988, in the Dia Art Foundation's Mercer Street offices in preparation for Group Material's *Democracy*, "AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study" installation. Courtesy of Group Material.

to create forums for content production by the audience reflects not only the long-standing Western cultural associations of the voice with democratic empowerment, as I discussed in the introduction, but also the context of leftist political engagement in the United States in the late 1980s and early 1990s, where the voice functioned as a recurring trope in discourses on multiculturalism. For example, in her 1990 book *Mixed Blessings: New Art in a Multicultural America*, Lucy Lippard described the becoming-multicultural of the art world as follows:

[The art world] is not known for awareness of or flexibility in relation to the world outside its white-walled rooms. African American and Latino American artists have been waiting in the wings since the '60s, when political movements nurtured a new cultural consciousness. Only in the '80s have they been invited again, provisionally, to say their pieces on a national stage.<sup>91</sup>

Lippard's description of minority political empowerment as a process of speaking on a stage—a locus explicitly associated with visual display, but also with textual discourse—resonates with the simultaneous visibility and audibility of participants around which *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here . . .* revolved. For Group Material and Rosler, this visibility and audibility provided an essential political counterpoint to the unmarked, and hence privileged, subject of twentieth-century Greenbergian modernism.<sup>92</sup> In "Lookers, Buyers, Dealers, and Makers," Rosler linked that unmarked Greenbergian subject, and the fantasy of the genius artist to which it was connected, to a "proscription against a clear-eyed interest in the audience" that severs art and context, in a way that reflects the alienation of an industrial capitalism consolidated during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>93</sup> A concern with the characteristics of a *specific* audience and a concern with context, Rosler argues, are indissolubly related, and artists who want to do something beyond reproducing hierarchal class relations cannot dispense with either. The interrogation of high art's invisible subject was also reflected in an early internal project description for *Democracy* created by Dia, which states that 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?"<sup>94</sup>

*Democracy* and *If You Lived Here . . .* not only posed these questions about audience in a spirit of rhetorical deconstruction but also worked to materialize a concrete alternative to the dominant model by opening the projects into forums for activism, creative work, and critical discussion. That process of audience involvement went hand in hand with a tendency to describe, record, and quantify the audience. For example, in her text "Fragments of a Metropolitan Viewpoint" in the *If You Lived Here* book, Rosler describes her project's audience as follows:

The 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.<sup>95</sup>

Rosler paints these groups as demographic segments of a population, characterized by different professions, interests, and levels of economic privilege. Notably, the way she names them divides them up not by gender, ethnicity, or race but, rather, according to their different roles as creative and productive people who interact in the terrain that is the city. Rosler represents the audience as a *constituency*, an existing group that needs to be appealed to, addressed, and represented. But they are, specifically, a constituency made up of intellectual, political, and creative workers (“homeless people,” which might be seen as the exception, were also addressed within Rosler’s project as creative/political workers, as I discuss in chapter 3). That interpellation of the audience member as worker reflects Rosler’s interest in Brechtian theater, which Alexander Alberro argues was foundational for her concern with the makeup of the audience and the role its members played.<sup>96</sup> Rosler’s description also makes it clear that *If You Lived Here . . .* took the people who made up the shows and forums as representative, in terms of their communities of affiliation, of audiences to whom she sought to grant greater access to art. The text attributes to these participants the power to draw to the project audiences with whom they have existing connections.

Rosler’s and Group Material’s explicit inclusiveness created real opportunities for artists who would not otherwise have had the chance to show at Dia. Marilyn Nance, a Brooklyn-based African American photographer, says that participating in Rosler’s show and speaking on the panel on artists’ housing was her first inclusion in the privileged, white-dominated art milieu represented by Dia.<sup>97</sup> Betti-Sue Hertz, another contributor to one of Rosler’s shows who was active within the alternative scene, remembers that before being invited to participate in *If You Lived Here . . .*, her most direct encounter with Dia had been a job cleaning the brass rods of De Maria’s *Broken Kilometer*.<sup>98</sup> *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here . . .* thus genuinely engaged a wider community of artists than that to which Dia was accustomed. But the aim of the projects was not to provide a temporary hiatus from what Rosler refers to as Dia’s “coddling” of individual (male) geniuses.<sup>99</sup> They sought, rather, to contribute, however modestly, to a more permanent democratization and diversification of the art world and its institutions. Marcia Tucker, in her 1977 *Villager* article laying out the founding principles of the New Museum, expressed a vision of the contemporary art museum as an institution founded on critical dialogue: “To me, a museum of contemporary art should be a place where dialogue and controversy are synonymous.”<sup>100</sup> Tucker’s position, arising as it did from the context of the alternative art scene, is illustrative of the political commitments that Group Material and Rosler brought to their relationship with Dia. In this respect, the forums for public dialogue might be seen as a bid for a refounding of the institution, a hopeful attempt to make postcrisis Dia into the kind of venue that artists working for cultural change could call their own.

Dia, in its grant application to the NEA under the category of “Artists’ Forums,” is ambitious but also somewhat circumspect in describing the audience for Group

Material's and Rosler's projects. In response to the directive to "provide a brief profile of the audience which the proposed program will serve," the application states:

A goal will be to bridge the disparate communities within the art world and between the art world and other communities and publics. Thus, while the primary audience must necessarily be the New York art communities in all their diversity, artists and the art world as they are represented across the country will be involved as much as possible, as well as communities based on other social, cultural, educational, political, and economic activities.<sup>101</sup>

This statement has an evocative, open-ended sweep, but it shies away from being too specific about how to measure its own success. It enacts a strategic chain of slippage between the projects' contact with plural, diverse New York *art* communities and the ambition to address wider constituencies. In essence, this slippage reduces the potentially huge economic, cultural, ethnic, and political differences among communities in New York to more voluntary differences in position among the city's art communities.

Peter Wolff, a Dia trustee of the period, points out that attempting to evaluate whether the projects expanded Dia's audience may itself be problematic, because during the 1980s the art world as such was expanding.<sup>102</sup> However, it is apparent that this question of broadening the audience preoccupied not only the artists but also art critics. A number of different reviewers of the shows commented on the audience makeup, and their assessments varied widely. For example, as noted above, David Trend argued that a "Soho crowd" dominated the discussion of education at the "Education and Democracy" town meeting, rendering the conversation superficial. Mary Anne Staniszewski gave an opposite description of the audience: "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."<sup>103</sup> Trend's and Staniszewski's statements are both anecdotal, not quantitative. But interestingly, though they attribute different makeups to the audience, both see that makeup as indicating the art world's failure to create genuine political engagement.

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 not only in the quotation from Rosler's essay above but also in the transcript of a discussion that Dia intended to lay the basis for conceptualizing the projects and the book (originally conceived as a single volume, to be edited by Hal Foster). In this meeting, at which were present Rosler, Rainer, Garrels, and Group Material members Ault, Ashford, and Gonzalez-Torres, 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 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, such as teachers in the "Education and Democracy" segment of the project and people concerned with AIDS in the "AIDS and Democracy" portion. 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.”<sup>104</sup> Rosler, though she takes a tone throughout the conversation that is somewhat critical of Group Material’s claims to foster audience accessibility, also states that outsider and nontrained artists, including people creating work for their neighbors and for themselves, are going to be in her show. Throughout the conversation, it appears almost impossible for those assembled to talk about the projects or about art as such without talking about the audience. Speculation on the breadth of the audience serves as the register on which they make and contest claims about the social impact of art.

This discussion raises the questions not only of whether the audience really was broadened but of what the consequences for Dia of such a broadening might have been. Did that broadening pose a challenge to Dia, or instrumentally enable its survival, or both? Dia progressively expanded its audience throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s. During this period, as I will explore further in chapter 2, it maintained its overall commitment to art that was unquestionably “high,” while developing an institutional self-presentation that stressed accessibility and outreach. As is the case for many arts organizations, the ability to draw on a range of different types of funding was essential to Dia’s endurance, and it was that capacity that began to develop in the 1980s under Wright’s directorship. Former director Govan argues that Dia never reached the attendance figures that would have made it seriously attractive to corporate donors, with annual attendance totaling about 17,500, a relatively low number, in the early 1990s.<sup>105</sup> But it was able to draw on public grants from the NEA and NYSCA, though these remained a relatively small portion of the overall budget, and also on private funds, including donations from individuals as well as from foundations like the Lannan Foundation, with whom Wright carefully built a close relationship.<sup>106</sup> Group Material’s and Rosler’s “cooler,” more accessible practices came at a moment when Dia was beginning to craft a public image for itself that interfaced with various forms of public and private funding.

From the transcript of the discussion cited above, it becomes evident that Dia staff were conscious of the way *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here* . . . might positively impact Dia’s image and thus its institutional health. The people present discuss Dia’s profile extensively, in terms of both the foundation’s mission and the audiences who visited it.<sup>107</sup> At one point in the discussion, Garrels raises the possibility of doing a poll in order to get a profile of the audience. Ault answers 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 responds 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 states:

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 and for the public about what they should expect when they walk through the doors.<sup>108</sup>

Garrels's core proposal for the transmission of this knowledge is that the project book should serve as a resource useful in directing broader artistic and institutional practice, implicitly positioning Dia as innovative in that respect. That innovation, which Garrels says he hopes would shape other artists' and institutions' relationship to their audiences, might in turn have the potential to create a favorable position when he went to the NEA for support.

Garrels's description of the NEA process was not idle speculation. In 1988, the same granting year for which Dia applied for the "Artists' Forums" grant to fund "Town Meeting," Garrels sat on the advisory panel for the "Visual Artists' Organizations" category, which awarded grants to organizations including the Alternative Museum, Franklin Furnace, and Creative Time.<sup>109</sup> Dia's own "Artists' Forums" application was awarded a \$10,000 grant, among the largest in the category, and moreover received mention in the report's introductory verbiage as an example of an outstanding grantee in the category.<sup>110</sup> Barbara Kruger and Hal Foster were among the members of the advisory panel that made the award.<sup>111</sup> The discussion transcript documents the process in which the artists and the administrator bounce ideas back and forth, sharing thoughts about the audience and how to expand it. In this exchange, the visible, actively engaged audience stands as a principle of accessibility and democratization. But for some critics and other participants, as I will show next, it was precisely this visibility that created ambiguity about the projects' political functions. Moreover, the discussion tells us almost nothing about the live dynamics of the audience once they got through the door of a town-hall meeting. Group Material and Rosler, in choosing the participatory format of the meetings, created a situation in which their own desires for a particular audience—diverse, politicized, engaged with the artwork—might be fulfilled, but might equally be disappointed or only ambivalently achieved. To find out what happened, we must turn to the process of audience participation itself.

### **Audience Dynamics**

As discussed above, the town-hall meeting structure in Rosler's project took its format from Group Material's. This model, premised on the visibility and audibility of participants, was new to Group Material, but it emerged organically out of a quality that from early on had distinguished their work. Since its inception, Group Material stood apart both from artists' activist groups such as the AWC and from alternative spaces like Fashion Moda and ABC No Rio, in that the curation of exhibitions constituted an artistic practice for the group members, placing them among the earliest pioneers of the now widely popular artist-as-curator practice. This practice situates



the artist explicitly as what Boris Groys describes as a “selector,” a practitioner in the Duchampian tradition, whose art consists in choosing among objects they may or may not have made themselves.<sup>112</sup> In the presentation of these practices, Groys argues, it is no longer the object that embodies capital-A Art but, rather, documentation that alludes to art.<sup>113</sup> “Documentation” can be conceived here in an enlarged sense, as anything that points toward a process not confined to the limited time and space of the gallery and that might include found or made objects as well as the types of photographic and audio documents we usually consider under that rubric. Group Material’s installations alluded to a process that was social and specifically concerned with the effort to create new, more egalitarian human relationships. The group’s practice awarded a special status to human interaction and connection, both among group members and between group members and their wider community, as integral to art. These relationships were indexed not only by the artworks and found objects on display but also by the colorful walls that were the visual signature of the group’s installations. The walls set themselves, in many different specific hues, off against the neutrality of the white cube gallery, giving a sense of the gallery as the repository of dynamic social meaning making.

*Democracy* represents a moment in the group’s practice where social relationships go from being an aspect of producing art, indexed in the presentational form by objects and images on display, to being one more component selected for inclusion in the work itself. That change has two essential consequences. Interactions in proximity to art take on a subtly performative value, from which it follows that anyone *near* the projects, including artists, institutional employees, critics, and audience members, are folded into the fabric of the work as participants. Documentation of the audience (this time in its narrower sense) is an essential instrument through which that folding occurs. At the level of documentation in the roundtable photo showing Ault, Gonzalez-Torres, and Judge Wright, it is less essential that the first two are artists who initiated the project and Wright an invited participant than that they all come together in the situation that is the work, though certainly with varying investments and agencies that reflect their specific positions relative to it.

The artwork, rearranged to include live human interaction, might be thought of as a *performative network* in that participants’ engagement with each other is taken as meaningful, with their moments of interface—in this case, speech and listening—holding a particular value for the project. Writing about social-practice art, Shannon Jackson defines performance as “a site of group coordination in space and over time,” which effaces strict divisions between art and the rest of life.<sup>114</sup> The degree of systematic coordination that performance involves, what Jackson calls its “brand of stage management,” can bring special attention to the materials, processes, and systems necessary to sustain human collaboration in the world at large.<sup>115</sup> Jackson takes up this potential for structural “avowal” as an ethical position in response to the post-2008 financial crisis, where the types of institutions that cultural practitioners have long critiqued—namely, museums and universities—are in danger of disappearing altogether. However, seen from the perspective of the earlier historical moment I discuss,

the palpable role of an institution in supporting forms of art where the line between reality and representation recedes irretrievably could very easily press the question of to what extent human behavior (interaction, attention, even thought) served to produce value and meaning for that institutional entity.

This was the case for some critics of *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here . . .*, who experienced Dia's role in the stage management of the projects to be politically disconcerting. Art critic David Deitcher, in his essay "Social Aesthetics" for the *Democracy* project book, echoes Trend's concern, quoted at the beginning of the chapter, about the artificiality of the meetings. Deitcher notes that the late 1980s witnessed a fad of revivals of the town meeting, often in the mediatized form of television shows.<sup>116</sup> In these contemporary manifestations, Deitcher argues, the town meeting carried nostalgia for American vernacular culture, creating the aura of 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 1980s and the increasing reduction of political discourse to televised sloganeering.<sup>117</sup> The meetings in Group Material's project, he argues, carried an unsettling quality due to their status "as symbolic events: as manifestations of the vanguard world of art." He describes his uncanny experience of the events as follows:

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.<sup>118</sup>

The problem front and center here is the age-old one of whether or not representation is inferior to reality. However, the essay does not necessarily argue that political action should be placed firmly outside the staged or the theatrical. Rather, it is the confusing nature of the role of visibility and the representational frame in Group Material's project that Deitcher finds troubling. Deitcher commends Buñuel's film for the way it foregrounds the relationship among staging, spectatorship, and certain forms of social discourse or classed interaction. Whereas *The Discreet 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 this passage, it is particularly the technologized documentation of the event

(“the wheels of the tape recorders kept turning”) that lends the meeting a feeling of artificiality and renders the discussion impotent. This suspicion of documentation is akin to Douglas Crimp’s identification of the role of photography in capturing ephemeral, site-specific works for the institutional discourses those practices sought originally to escape, which I discussed in the book’s introduction.<sup>119</sup> But discomfort in Deitcher’s account goes deeper as he addresses the way the interactions among the audience members are not only captured but fundamentally denatured by the recording apparatus. Ultimately, the question Deitcher poses here is what kind of work audience members are being made to perform, versus the kind of activity in which they think they are engaging.

The issue of the audience’s labor has gained ground recently in contemporary art history, in particular through discussions of how performance bridges art practice, work, and the social presentation of self.<sup>120</sup> Sociologist Dallas Smythe, however, posed the question of how the audience is put to work as early as 1981, in the context of conditions of media viewership that inform Deitcher’s essay. Smythe diagnoses the way broadcast media constitute the audience as a commodity, sold to advertisers based on predictable patterns of spending behavior.<sup>121</sup> Audience members make themselves a commodity through their own labor, which consists in both time spent consuming television and radio and money spent on the hardware required to watch and listen. Smythe underscores that in order to grasp how audience members perform labor when they think they are simply enjoying leisure time, we need a definition of labor not just as something unpleasant or linked with a specific professional context but as a broader generative capacity: “At its base, work is doing something creative, something distinctly human.”<sup>122</sup> Essentially, what Smythe articulates here is a concept of affective labor. Affective labor, or “immaterial labor” as Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt call it, creates not only material goods but also relationships and the social fabric itself. Affective labor is characterized by the effacement of the divide between work and rest and the concomitant expansion of labor to fill the entire time of life.<sup>123</sup>

Deitcher and Smythe are both concerned with the triangulation among the audience’s affective labor, technology, and the production of value. Whereas Smythe traces clearly how corporations benefit from the commodification of the audience, Deitcher addresses the question of profit somewhat more obliquely. Appropriately for an art critic, he focuses primarily on how the connections between value, labor, and technology influence experience. The essay describes how the presence of the institution’s technological apparatus results in an experience of splitting. In Deitcher’s description, there is a specter of imminent division between the people present at the meeting 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 suddenly be revealed as watching us, those inside the meeting. There would be 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 spectral double. The imagined audience on the street represents the “real” audience’s awareness of its

own visibility. The doubling over of reality to produce mediated spectacle, Deitcher argues, renders the content of the meeting absurd.

It is clear from Deitcher's essay that the question of where the frame of representation sits in a given project, if indeed it can be identified at all, has consequences for how participants conceive of their own agency. Some participants in the town-hall meetings, such as PAD/D member Jerry Kearns, who chaired Group Material's "Politics and Election" forum, saw the events as little different from the many politically oriented panels and discussions held by cultural practitioners in New York's downtown art scene in the 1980s.<sup>124</sup> But others saw them as fundamentally distinct: Betti-Sue Hertz, for example, points out that these meetings were unique in that they were framed as art.<sup>125</sup> The participants' sense of an ambiguity in the meetings' political and/or performance status is audible, moreover, in the discussion recordings.

At the town-hall meeting "Homelessness: Conditions, Causes, Cures" held during Rosler's project, chair Bill Batson begins by telling the audience, "This is a participatory meeting, performance art." Batson's statement waffles between two different descriptions of the meeting, and in doing so it inadvertently poses the question of how the act of involvement in the meeting should be understood. Are the people at the meeting participants? That term denotes grassroots political decision making and might assign them roles as representatives of certain communities or factions. Or are they performers? For Batson, this indeterminacy seems to create a moment of awkwardness, given that he is responsible for presenting the goals of the meeting to the public. Chairing the meetings was, in any case, not an easy task. Artist David Avalos, a member of the Border Art Workshop / Taller de Arte Fronterizo (BAW/TAF) and chair of Group Material's "Cultural Participation" meeting, recalls the experience as highly stressful: "With Geno [Rodriguez of the Alternative Museum] declaring the premise of 'Cultural Participation' to be bogus, and Martha [Rosler] decrying the lack of a theoretical framework . . . I was happy to get out of there without encountering any major public ridicule."<sup>126</sup>

Whereas for Batson the lack of clarity about whether or not to understand the meeting as performance seems to have created a moment of awkwardness or embarrassment, a panelist at the same event overtly blurred the boundaries between performance and political participation. This panelist was the artist Cenén, whom Batson introduces as "an African artist and poet."<sup>127</sup> And she begins to speak, holding up a flyer distributed at the entrance:

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

Insert an earsplitting scream here, directed into the microphone, making 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 narrates a long story 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 captured 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 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 of the way 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.

As she concludes, a lone audience member applauds. Cenén's scream is a moment of intense, abrupt affect that takes the audience by surprise. For a few seconds, by virtue of being present in the space, the other attendees are subject to this sound she creates. On a basic level, the scream embodies the affect of despair. But though Cenén seeks to touch the "scream inside" the audience, the function of her performance is not simply to make the others present feel desperate. Rather, it aims to press the reset button on the genre of the meeting, and more fundamentally on the relationships among the people present, in order to make way for a narration in which she binds them, affectively, to the problem of homelessness. Silvan Tomkins attributes to startlement an essential role in focusing attention, in that it clears away whatever feelings or perceptions dominate an individual's perceptual apparatus at a given moment, allowing her to focus directly on the startling phenomenon.<sup>128</sup> Cenén dramatizes her intervention in the genre of the panel with her "And my first reaction in terms of conditions is . . ." She lines the audience up to expect her to deliver a rationally constructed statement

that matches the style of the beginning of the sentence, hitting them with extra impact when what they get instead is a shocking scream.

The panel format carries not only behavioral but also representational expectations for participants. Sitting on a panel implies that one has a degree of expertise that is in some sense representative, either of a particular stance on the topic at hand or of a particular constituency it influences. Cenén was not the only African American on the panel. But as a black woman speaking in the context of a largely white art-world institution, at a project created by a white artist, centrally premised on the participation of diverse communities, it seems clear that she bore a certain burden of representation. She was, moreover, the only artist on the panel, alongside activists and directors of programs addressing homelessness. It might, therefore, have been a tacit expectation on the part of those present not only that she would represent the experiences of black women, but also that she would deliver a more emotive address than her copanelists. Such a performance might position her implicitly in the well-worn, highly circumscribed role of the black woman as healer/mystic, across whom the wholeness of the community is performed.

Indeed, it is possible to read the performance in that way. But simultaneously, Cenén's play with genre, as well as her strategic use of aurality, invite further scrutiny. Her interruption of the generic conventions of the panel discussion has a free-form quality to it but follows in turn the contours of another genre that emerged in the late 1980s: slam poetry. As Susan Somers-Willett describes, slam poetry positions itself against the formality and hierarchy of academic poetry conventions, seeking to counter "polite" relationships between poets and audiences to create performer-audience interactions that are interactive, bodily, and theatrical.<sup>129</sup> Those newly interactive relationships, Somers-Willett argues, in turn become the ground for a performance of authentic identity, most often associated in slam with a marginalized racial and/or gender position.<sup>130</sup> Cenén's performance makes a strong claim to authenticity, based in an idea of presence to the audience. She stresses the latter in her response to Batson: "This is how I share it with people." But the idea of authenticity at work here is one explicitly distanced from personal identity. Cenén uses her voice with virtuosic variation, screaming, narrating, and sounding at times possessed, not only by other subjects (the little girls) but also by objects (the bulldozer). The way she makes herself sound plural, moving her voice across subject and object positions, contradicts any logic of representative visibility that might assign her a fixed position. In this respect, her performance can be read in light of what philosopher and poet Fred Moten describes as the black radical tradition's exercise of "strain" on the equation between subjectivity and personhood.<sup>131</sup> Moten reads the archive of this tradition in particular for moments where the scene of "necessarily visual" objectification is troubled by an inseparability of the visual from the auditory, which decenters both viewing and viewed subjects into a much more relational network of connections.

The feeling of a new, more relational connection evoked by Cenén's performance finds confirmation in Batson's next comment. After her "I'm not here to *embarrass* you, because I am *part* of this, but we gotta speak to it," he pauses, and then responds:

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 . . .

The result of Cenén’s intervention is that Batson’s own conception of the event and his role in it shift: “I originally thought that I was gonna be a *panelist*.” In his response to her, he acknowledges that what she said, which cannot be dissociated from the way she said it, “brings together the *room*.” For Batson, something has happened. In that event, the positions occupied by people in the room are rearranged. What emerges is the generally “human” quality of all the participants, including those on the panel and those listening, making tangible a sense of possibility for identifying with a social problem beyond one’s own particular role. She makes this quality sensible for him, impelling him to articulate it to the audience. Hence the transition, as he describes it, from “what can we do for them” to “what can we do for us.”

In aiming to mobilize a different kind of relationality, Cenén’s performance takes up a pedagogical function for the audience. Its pedagogical status is underscored by her vocal virtuosity. Daphne Brooks argues that historically, virtuosity has played an important role in African American performers’, and particularly women performers’, acts of imagining cultural identity through performance in “grand and polyvalent” terms, allowing these agents to move beyond the narrow categories prescribed to them.<sup>132</sup> These performances, Brooks argues, might be considered as dense and spectacular acts of “shrouding,” “as opaque, as dark points of possibility that create figurative sites for the reconfiguration of black and female bodies on display.”<sup>133</sup> With her opaque and virtuosic performance, Cenén stresses her own sovereignty, above and beyond the determination of the locus where her performance unfolds: “I talk individually, and I talk in a group situation.” What Batson performs, in turn, is the success of her pedagogical intervention, thereby facilitating the process by which others might make meaning out of the affective shock of the scream. He returns her serve, as it were, bringing it round into an explanation, for the audience’s benefit, of how she has changed their collective dynamic.

### **Affects That Disorganize**

In the exchange between Cenén and Batson, affects emerge as forces that *reorganize* the audience, specifically in a way that creates a greater sense of interconnection. Batson offers an impromptu theorization of audience experience in response, which sums it up clearly and elegantly. But the archive of *Democracy* and *If You Lived Here . . .* also shows how affect can *disorganize* critical interpretation of the participatory artwork, producing theorizations of audience experience that suture indigestible experience, which the

text then renders invisible. This is the case with Deitcher's essay that I discussed above. When I spoke with him about the piece in 2013, his explanation of the context within which he wrote it dramatically shifted my perception of it.

When we talked, Deitcher underscored his strong ambivalence about the essay on *Democracy*, and specifically about its negative tone. The circumstances under which he wrote it, he explained, had been difficult in several respects. The text was supposed to have been written by New Museum curator Bill Olander. Olander was a close friend of Group Material and also of Deitcher, who had been in graduate school with him at New York University. Olander was a strong advocate of politically engaged art and especially of work that engaged with AIDS activism. It was on his invitation to the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) to use the New Museum's window on Broadway that collaborative Gran Fury created *Let the Record Show* (1987–88), a scathing condemnation of government and corporate exacerbation of the AIDS crisis (which I will discuss further in chapter 4). Olander died on March 18, 1989, at thirty-eight years old, before he could write the essay on *Democracy*.<sup>134</sup> Ault had asked Deitcher to write the piece once it became clear that Olander would be too ill to do so, and Deitcher agreed, choosing to name his text "Social Aesthetics" after Olander's catalog essay in *Art and Social Change, USA*.<sup>135</sup> In his essay, Deitcher informs readers that Olander was supposed to have written the text.<sup>136</sup> Group Material chose to dedicate *Democracy* to Olander. They mounted vinyl lettering on the wall of the "AIDS and Democracy" exhibition stating the dedication and installed a small ramp in front of the door so that he would be able to access the gallery in a wheelchair. Deitcher relates that Ault asked him to go to Olander's apartment and bring Olander to the exhibition, which he did. Olander was at that point in extremely bad shape physically and was barely able to speak. Deitcher and the members of Group Material took him around the gallery, "and we looked at the show," says Deitcher, "to the extent that we could." Olander was very moved by the experience, as were Deitcher and the artists.<sup>137</sup>

Deitcher attributes his discomfort with his text on *Democracy* to the "surplus of affect" caused by these traumatic events.<sup>138</sup> The essay includes a lengthy introduction detailing a recent action by ACT UP protesting against Burroughs Wellcome, the producer of the antiretroviral drug AZT. The description comes off on one level as a condemnation of the distance between Group Material's practice and direct-action activism. But read in light of the personal history above, this part of the text seems like a screen that signifies, without elucidating, the affective surplus of despair. The text is unable to work through the relationship between the AIDS crisis and Group Material's project, though the kernel that cannot be digested is a deeply personal one, not just a difference in critical position. This is a place, as Jennifer Doyle describes in her analysis of difficult affect in contemporary art, where the critic hits a wall: "Our faculties break down when an artwork reminds us of something so painful, or makes us so mad, or is something we like so much we struggle to write about it."<sup>139</sup>

Deitcher's statement in the text that it was supposed to have been written by Olander is essentially a declaration of self-displacement. He is uncomfortably aware of his own position in relation to the unfolding of events around the exhibition. Seen in



this light, his comparison to the Buñuel film, in which he describes the feeling of participating while also performing for the benefit of another audience, reads as an eerie reflection of his own trauma in relation to Olander's illness and death. The phantom audience out on Mercer Street becomes a ghost audience, whose quasi presence makes the living awkwardly aware of their own visibility, sapping the power from their words and actions and rendering them absurd. Writing a text in the place of a dear, dead friend seems to have produced, for Deitcher, an upsetting sense of self-observation. That unsettling sensation is not spoken directly in his text but, rather, is refracted in the language of critique. Affect overflows the critical framework that tries to make sense of the event, shaping the writing in a way that is uncontrollable, even for the writer. Though it is impossible to translate the experience of any live art fully into writing, Deitcher's text points toward something that may be especially characteristic of writing on participatory art. His essay is suffused by a strong desire for collective political action and by a disappointed utopianism. Participatory art, in its staging of the act of coming together, draws particularly strongly on our imaginary of what collective assembly and action should be. It has an experientially privileged relationship to the question of social change. Simultaneously, this art foregrounds the question of that transformation within the social fabric actually unfolding in the experience of the work, eliciting comparison between fantasy and present experience.

José Esteban Muñoz, in his elaboration of the concept of queer utopia, stresses the importance of imagining queerness as something that is not yet realized but that sits on the horizon of the future, generating a warm illumination of the present. "Queerness," Muñoz writes, "is a structuring and educated mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present. The here and now is a prison house."<sup>140</sup> Utopian queerness can propel subjects beyond the unsatisfactory experience of the present and toward something better, but there are moments at which the gap between the longed-for future and the here and now feels too big. The fabric of our experience of the present frays, failing to support the weight of the future vision. As in the case of Deitcher's text, that fraying may take place because the relationships that give context to a vision of utopia become too affectively fraught and painful. In "Social Aesthetics," Olander's death is the affective weight that rips the social fabric of the participatory art event. Hope runs aground on the jagged shore of the here and now. In response, the text becomes a block, a defense.

In the model this chapter lays out, audience participation is determined, by plans, anxieties, and fantasies relevant to its specific context, but it is also open-ended, capable of generating feeling and meaning not reducible to those frameworks. In my reading of Cenén's scream, I resisted speculation about whether the intervention "ultimately" disturbed the institution, or whether it fell into its logic, acting as a release valve for political feeling that would serve to reinforce the reigning order. What I have tried to do with this approach is neither to overestimate nor to underestimate the agency the audience can exercise, by either making small acts insignificant relative to more lasting power structures or by overplaying their symbolic significance. Instead, I want to

leave Cenén's act a bit more immanent to the context where it erupted. It just was what it was, which is an action that was part of a larger relay between moments of newness and moments of reinscription, which entwined in this context to generate an innovative artistic practice and, moreover, to help the actors involved make sense of that practice, on the fly. Through the relationships that I have mapped here, the participatory art project emerges not as something that carries a univalent meaning or social value but, rather, as a series of uneven and dynamic opportunities in which different agents can exercise power.

In this specific historical context of *Democracy and If You Lived Here . . .*, artists, institutional employees, participants, and critics all participated in scrutiny of the relationship between audience engagement and broader processes of transformation, whether in the institution itself or in society at large. An inescapable element of that analysis involved the question of how participatory practice intersected with the "stage management" undertaken by the institutions. My case studies demonstrate how audience involvement can embody, in both discourse and experience, art's social impact, but also how that process of embodiment can make us anxious that if the work *feels* superficial or staged, its social impact must be deleterious. In the next chapter, I consider in closer detail claims for art's transformative effects, tracking the emergence of a pedagogical subject through which artists and the art institution stake out that transformation.



**FIGURE 2.1.** Installation view of Group Material's *Democracy, "Education and Democracy,"* September 15–October 8, 1988. Photograph by Ken Schles. Courtesy of the Dia Art Foundation, New York.

## CHAPTER 2

# THE PEDAGOGICAL SUBJECT OF PARTICIPATION

In North America, the beginning of September is 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.<sup>1</sup> The starting date of the exhibition underscored the fact that it focused on the idea of education. For this first of the four installations composing the *Democracy* project, the gallery was installed to look like a classroom filled with art (Figure 2.1). The walls were painted with blackboard paint and bore traces of writing in chalk. A set of real school desks, complete with graffiti, occupied the center of the gallery. On the walls hung diverse artworks addressing education, including pieces by professional artists and also pieces by schoolchildren, who had worked with their teachers to create art for Group Material's show.

"Education and Democracy" constituted a meditation on the intersection between education and contemporary art practice. The show resonated with theories and developments concerning education at the time, including leftist art educators' responses to the conservative political climate of the 1980s, discussions among museum-studies scholars and museum professionals about the museum's role relative to its visitors, and, most profoundly, American theories of critical pedagogy, which drew on Marxist and poststructuralist theory to critique the role of education in reproducing unequal, dominant power relationships. Throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, the interest between contemporary artists and critical pedagogy was mutual. Theorists such as bell hooks turned to the critical analysis of visual culture, while artists reflected on the socially transformative function of art in pedagogical terms.<sup>2</sup> "Education and Democracy" called up associations with earlier twentieth-century precedents for the engagement of art with education, such as Progressive Era interdisciplinary arts

initiatives at Hull House; Joseph Beuys's pedagogical performances; the activities of Black Mountain College; and *Womanhouse* (1972) created by Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro, in collaboration with their students at the California Institute of the Arts.<sup>3</sup> Like these earlier artists, Group Material members were invested in education because it aimed to democratize culture and increase political participation. That investment informed both the gallery show and the town-hall meeting, which invited open public discussion on problems facing the education system, with a particular focus on New York. It reflected a broader desire to make art a democratizing process, a desire that structured *Democracy*. Group members Doug Ashford and Julie Ault, in a 1988 interview on the project, describe that democratizing impulse as reflecting "our hope for and belief in change," a hope that is "ever-present [and] inherent in the democratic system."<sup>4</sup>

In addition to embodying a democratizing impulse, education functioned conceptually in *Democracy* to articulate the artists' own position as authors of a socially engaged art practice. That duality is my focus in this chapter. Reading the archive of Group Material's project at Dia, it became clear to me that the group's thematic treatment of education addressed the highest goal of their practice, that of fostering a communicative, democratic aesthetic that was socially transformative yet experientially open-ended.<sup>5</sup> Simultaneously, the way they addressed education seemed to operate at another level, as a discourse of recuperation or recovery from challenges encountered in their attempt to meet that goal. *Democracy* consisted of four thematic installations, accompanied by town-hall meetings for public discussion. As I discussed in the introduction and chapter 1, those meetings were key to Group Material's effort to democratize their work. At the same time, as I will demonstrate, they generated conflict, anger, and other difficult feelings. Moreover, they provided a venue in which a few vocal audience members expressed harsh critique of Group Material's privileged position relative to Dia as an institution. The questions these participants raised about the impact of institutionalization on Group Material's politics resonated with critical written responses to the project, such as David Trend's review and David Deitcher's essay, which I discussed in chapter 1. Indeed, Group Material members themselves were constantly reflecting on the impact that collaborations with established art institutions had on their work. Within the scope of *Democracy*, "education" functioned in this space of conceptual negotiation between the group's hopes and ambitions for the project, on the one hand, and on the other, the hard questions about art's politics raised by the project's institutional location and by the process of audience participation itself.

My interest in Group Material's pedagogical discourse is driven by an identification with how natural it feels to cast a difficult experience as a "learning process." Simultaneously, I am curious about the work that such statements perform relative to particular practices or institutional contexts. The concept of education is a logical place to go in order to articulate the way art can be both progressive and institutionalized. Education is something we associate broadly with institutions, understood not only as physical places like schools and museums but also, in the sense that artist Andrea Fraser discusses, as a social world of discursive practices.<sup>6</sup> In addition, it carries strong

associations with the progressive and the forward-moving. With the ascent in American leftist thought of critical pedagogy between the 1960s and 1980s, education came to be associated with a concrete praxis that could create new kinds of cultural–political subjects. These associations provide context for the important role that pedagogy has occupied in accounts of participatory and social-process art of the past decade.<sup>7</sup> Since the late 1980s, when museum- and biennial-based participatory and performance practices began their rise in popularity, education has come to function rhetorically as the performative instantiation of aesthetic experience. I use “performative” here in the Austinian sense, as a speech act that brings into being what it names.<sup>8</sup> Many different agents can make use of this discourse, including artists and institutions. Moreover, it can be made compatible with many different definitions of the aesthetic. But it tends across the board to address a process of reconciliation between a model of aesthetic experience and the institutional, social, and financial factors that shape the less-than-ideal conditions of its unfolding in the world. After discussing Group Material, I will turn later in the chapter to Dia itself, to analyze the education program that it started in the same institutionally transitional period that gave rise to Group Material’s project. That program is based on an idealized, minimalist–sublime aesthetic that is at odds with Group Material’s social practice. But despite its difference in content, Dia’s program has a parallel structure, in that it generates a discourse that squares the organization’s commitment to an antisocial sublime aesthetic with a publicly responsible institutional image. Dia’s ability to reconcile these two incompatible discourses has been key to its institutional survival since its financial crisis of 1983–85.

The chapter pays close attention to the social space that arose from Group Material’s engagement with education, in the gallery installation for the “Education and Democracy” segment of *Democracy*, in the small roundtable discussion held prior to the project, and in the big public meeting that accompanied that installation. The exhibition, roundtable, and town-hall meeting all raised questions about identity, understood as a classed, gendered, or racial position that shapes an individual’s existence in the social world. In the United States in the late 1980s, identity was an essential element of debates in critical pedagogy and discussions about the need for curriculum diversification, which emerged in the “Education and Democracy” roundtable and town-hall meetings. The “Education and Democracy” exhibition manifested the student-subject of public education visually as diverse, multiethnic, and politically conscious. On another register, claims for identity and the power of speech that accompanied it played out in a complex way among participants in the town-hall meeting. I consider these interactions to be part of the material of Group Material’s artwork itself, insofar as the participatory events were a central conceptual and structural component of *Democracy*. As such, I read them with the care that one might expect to see granted to an art object or performance. Across the scope of the project, identity was important in terms of both the way Group Material and their audiences represented the nonartworld public to whom the project reached out, and also the way that it informed relations among people firmly a part of that artworld, who worked in different ways in and with institutions and who held widely varied positions on the politics of culture.

In analyzing the dynamics of identity and participation relative to Group Material's democratizing goals, this chapter constitutes my book's most detailed analysis of the issue of authorship relative to participatory practice. When artists work with audience participation, they rarely just renounce their authorship; rather, they engage in a process of its affective and rhetorical negotiation, which helps them narrate the audience's dynamics relative to their own creative agency.

### Education and the Political Subject

Like many artists of their generation, Group Material members taught professionally. Doug Ashford was a teacher in a Bedford-Stuyvesant public school, and Julie Ault and Felix Gonzalez-Torres worked occasionally as adjunct instructors at the college level. Tim Rollins, who like Ault was one of Group Material's founding members, was deeply engaged with politically conscious pedagogy. At the time of Group Material's founding in 1979, Rollins was pursuing a master of education at New York University.<sup>9</sup> In 1982, in addition to participating in Group Material, he began a collaborative pedagogical practice with a group of inner-city junior-high and high-school students who took the name KOS (Kids of Survival), working through the after-school program Art and Knowledge Workshop. KOS members read books together and then collaborated on paintings that drew on their own lived experiences and on themes they encountered in the literature.<sup>10</sup> Rollins left Group Material in the planning phase of *Democracy* to devote his time exclusively to KOS. But his work to create a cultural practice that fused art production and pedagogy had been integral to Group Material throughout the development of *Democracy* and influenced "Education and Democracy" in particular.<sup>11</sup>

Embedded in Group Material's practice was a notion of pedagogy indebted to Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, first published in English in 1970, was central to the articulation of critical pedagogy in an American context, exercising strong influence on the work of education theorists such as Peter McLaren, Henry Giroux, and Ira Shor.<sup>12</sup> Shor was among the participants in the roundtable discussion Group Material held in Dia's office on May 21, 1988, which was designed to set the agenda for the public "Education and Democracy" town-hall meeting and, more broadly, to give the artists insight into issues facing educators and education activists. An excerpt from a conversation between Shor and Freire was included in the "Education and Democracy" project book.<sup>13</sup> *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* argues that traditional education aims to "fill" students with preformulated knowledge that reflects a static and unchangeable world, instilling in oppressed people the oppressor's mentality and making them fear freedom.<sup>14</sup> In a letter that Gonzalez-Torres wrote to Ault in 1988, about plans for the upcoming *Democracy*, he voices a critique of institutionalized education as a hatching ground for dominant culture that falls along these lines: "Every political/economic system of any particular country will reflect in their educational system."<sup>15</sup> Central to Freirian pedagogy is dialogue, which, instead of treating the student like an empty receptacle for knowledge, aims to spark critical consciousness. Freire recommends the use of "generative themes" to encourage students to make con-

nections between the learning process and the conditions of their own lives. Those connections aim to root out the oppressors' consciousness and to help students understand their own ability to act in the world.<sup>16</sup>

Freire's appeal for American radical educators was grounded in the potential global applicability of his theories and also in the proven success of his literacy programs in a third-world context. Moreover, his dissident stance against Brazil's repressive military government associated him with Latin American political resistance. The expression of solidarity with that resistance was in itself an important point of identification for American leftist artists and intellectuals in the 1980s, including for Group Material, as reflected in their 1984 work *Timeline: A Chronicle of U.S. Intervention in Central and Latin America*. As McLaren put it in 1986, Freire's work offered a "reprieve" to those frustrated with poststructuralism's refusal to theorize a social subject and social change, or in McLaren's words, "to take seriously the urgency of translating theoretical insights into a mode of collectively constituted thought and action that seeks to transform the asymmetrical relations of power and privilege that inform and regulate daily life."<sup>17</sup> By contrast to these poststructuralists, McLaren argues, Freire conceived culture as always ideological, and he engaged in his writing with processes of transformation in specific sites where subjects are materially grounded.<sup>18</sup> In an article published in 1988, the same year as he participated in Group Material's roundtable, Shor detailed the importance of Freire's theories for his own practice teaching writing to open-enrollment students at the College of Staten Island, a context in which he strove to foster an egalitarian relationship, as "creating a kind of vacuum into which students pour their own meaning."<sup>19</sup>

The influence of critical pedagogy was baked into Group Material's practice from early on, emerging particularly in the places where the group members talk about their mode of address to the audience. In a handout distributed to visitors at their *Inaugural Exhibition* in October 1980, the group stresses their orientation toward audiences "not well acquainted with the specialized languages of fine arts." They also list several potential exhibition topics that mirror the everydayness of Freire's generative themes, including gender, the cultural significance of food, the 1980 presidential election, and the somewhat more idiosyncratic "political art by children of N.Y." "Our project is clear," the group concludes. "We invite everyone to question the entire culture we have taken for granted."<sup>20</sup> In the period that followed, many of the thematic shows proposed in the *Inaugural Exhibition* flyer came to fruition, including *The Salon of Election '80* (1980), *It's a Gender Show* (1981), and *Consumption: Metaphor, Pastime, Necessity* (1981), which included the display of packaged food items. Consistent with their aim of fostering public reflection, Group Material produced announcements and press releases for these exhibitions in a lucid, accessible style. In addition to structuring the group's address to audiences, an investment in socially conscious education also emerged as a way of talking about a process the group members themselves underwent. In an impassioned letter to fellow members written July 22, 1980, Rollins urged the group to overcome "the old pedagogy of the bourgeoisie" that might convince them it would be impossible to make effective political art. "We must DO things, MAKE things," Rollins proclaims. "It is through this



practice that we will *earn* a real ability and education instead of merely consuming information we can puff out at someone else's gallery openings."<sup>21</sup> Rollins depicts "real education" as something that group members might aspire to gain through true commitment to a socially engaged art practice. This framing is consistent with the genesis of the group, which was started by a group of recent graduates from the School of Visual Arts who were interested in extending the critical dialogue and sense of community they had gained in art school.<sup>22</sup> More than thirty years after Rollins wrote his letter, Ashford and Ault, writing retrospectively about *AIDS Timeline*, repeat the framing of artistic endeavor as a self-directed pedagogy, describing how their construction of a history of the AIDS crisis was undertaken "for our own edification and for public purpose."<sup>23</sup>

Whether in formulating their address to audiences or in talking about their own intellectual and creative growth, Group Material's interest in education addressed their desire for an art practice that would generate new social relationships in closer contact with the wider world than was afforded by mainstream contemporary art. Their emphasis on ephemeral social relationships as central to art practice marks a difference between their approach and that of other artists and critics in the 1980s who were interested in the nexus between art and pedagogy as it concerned the critical power of media. Scholars of critical pedagogy turned with particular interest to new media because of the organic connection it provided to students' lives and also because of the potential it created for students to generate new representations of their lifeworlds. For example, in a 1980 article titled "TV Is Here to Stay: Use It," education scholar Joe Kincheloe encourages teachers to see TV as a sophisticated learning tool that can be used creatively to help students exercise critical consciousness.<sup>24</sup> Among politically engaged artists and critics, key in fostering a dialogue about media's pedagogical potential was *Afterimage* magazine under the directorship of David Trend. Trend, the magazine's editor from 1985 to 1990, obtained a PhD in curriculum in 1993 from Miami University in Ohio, where he worked with Henry Giroux. During his tenure, *Afterimage* gave extensive attention to the pedagogical power of photographic media, both in actual classroom education and in political address to an art-viewing public.<sup>25</sup>

The discussions that took place under the rubric of Group Material's "Education and Democracy" were notable for the fact that they largely ignored questions about aesthetics and media in favor of talk about funding, curriculum, and the systemic disadvantages suffered by poor students and students of color. At the "Education and Democracy" roundtable in May 1988, conversation focused primarily on public school funding and politics in New York City, with Shor, Rollins, Ashford, social worker John Deveaux, and teacher Rodney Harris trading thoughts about classroom dynamics, social change, and what makes a good school principal. Perhaps the absence of discussion of art was due in part to the silence of Catherine Lord, then dean of the art department at the California Institute of the Arts and thus implicitly a representative of contemporary art among a group of teachers and education experts. Ault recalls that Lord stayed quiet and ate cherries for the duration of the meeting.<sup>26</sup> In January 1990, Lord followed up with a letter to Group Material in which she too focused not on aesthetic strategies

but on questions of funding and curricula, though specifically in the context of art and art education. The letter was subsequently published in the *Democracy* project book.<sup>27</sup> The issues Lord raises there, of the politics of arts funding under Ronald Reagan and its impact on museum- and classroom-based arts curricula, provide important political context for understanding Group Material's engagement with education.

In her letter, Lord traces the connections between the culturally conservative nature of the NEA's approach to education under Reagan-appointed chairman Frank Hodsoll and the J. Paul Getty Trust's development of Discipline-Based Arts Education (DBAE), a standardized national K–12 curriculum combining art production, art history, art criticism, and aesthetics.<sup>28</sup> Margaret Moorman, in a 1989 *ARTnews* article, describes Hodsoll as “something of a hero among art educators for turning the NEA's attention toward arts education,” but many contemporary artists saw the turn as part of a wider program hostile to experimental and socially engaged art.<sup>29</sup> Lord points out that Hodsoll sought to consolidate a white, male cultural canon while being “obligated to demonstrate that art education is no mere frill.”<sup>30</sup> Central to these efforts was the NEA report *Toward Civilization: A Report on Arts Education*, which proposed strengthening the NEA's educational mandate through a nationally standardized arts curriculum intended to strengthen students' job-applicable cognitive and communication skills.<sup>31</sup> In the report, 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.<sup>32</sup> A *New York Times* article about the report quotes an arts administrator as saying, “It's down with finger painting and up with Rembrandt.”<sup>33</sup>

*Toward Civilization* addressed not only the NEA's educational mandate but, implicitly, its mission and political orientation writ large. In 1980, the National Heritage Foundation had published a report accusing the NEA of supporting projects that were not art and of doing so for political purposes, an accusation to which *Toward Civilization* might be seen as a response.<sup>34</sup> The report sent a clear signal not only about the NEA's disinterest in minoritarian experience of any kind but also about a fundamental shift in focus from art making, an activity that occurs in the present, to the management of past artworks as ideological monuments firmly removed from the now (in which timelessness, Freire would argue, functions as a key component of the oppressor's mentality). Lord saw the Getty's promotion of DBAE as abetting this divorce of art from the present by putting art education in the hands of professionalized teacher-administrators, “‘art specialists,’ who may teach *about* artists, but are scarcely required, or even encouraged, to *be* artists themselves.”<sup>35</sup> As education specialist Karen Hamblen argued in 1988, the Getty's curriculum was centrally premised on its standardized nature and the universally testable result it delivered, and it was precisely this lack of responsiveness to specific context that posed a problem for teachers.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, Hamblen points out, DBAE discouraged students' critical thinking about the assumptions structuring the program itself. Other teachers saw the increase in funding that DBAE represented to be inherently positive. Moorman, in her DBAE article, cites Doug Ashford as saying that regardless of the program's own guidelines, teachers would still be able to adapt

the urgently needed new resources for lesson plans in closer dialogue with students' social and political realities.<sup>37</sup>

Ashford's comment about much-needed resources points to the way the Getty's promotion of DBAE took place within a context where arts organizations were taking on an ever-greater role in art education, relative to defunded and demoralized art programs in public schools. In New York City since the 1970s, budget cuts had been progressively reducing public schools' ability to offer K–12 art education. The city's 1975–76 municipal fiscal crisis saw the firing of fourteen thousand 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 nonprofit arts organizations in art education for K–12 students.<sup>38</sup> These organizations themselves embodied a range of ideological approaches, from the conservative Getty; to the studio-oriented ARTS PROPEL program of Harvard's Project Zero, supported by the Rockefeller Foundation; to the leftist, social, multiculturally oriented programs of the New Museum (Susan Cahan, then education coordinator at the New Museum, attended the "Education and Democracy" town-hall meeting and made a comment about the phallogentrism of the public curriculum).<sup>39</sup> Despite the fact that these organizations provided teachers with resources and expertise, their ascent was not universally welcomed by teachers or by theorists of art education. Some saw their increased prominence as promoting art-related experiences at the expense of concrete skills. They argued that this further compromised a focus on classroom practice, which was already threatened by the NEA's ideological approach toward art education.<sup>40</sup>

Indeed, Group Material's interest in the intersection between education and art as a process of social interaction and critical questioning was exactly the type of approach that privileged art-related experience over the development of concrete skills. In the context of a broad national shift toward the quantification of art education's outcomes, group members' adherence to an open-ended Freirian pedagogy seems like an overt act of swimming against the cultural tide. As I will discuss further below, the participatory format to which this model gave rise in *Democracy* had results that were messy and affectively uncomfortable, difficult to square with any idea of a successful "outcome." But despite the challenges inherent in Group Material's processes of public engagement, looking back from the other side of the culture wars, their interest in fostering accessible dialogue about art had a deep timeliness to it in that it identified and attempted to bridge a gap between the art world and nonspecialists' everyday experience. Reflecting in the late 1990s, Philip Yenawine, director of education at the Museum of Modern Art from 1983 to 1993, opined that the leftist art professionals' failure to educate the American public about art was central to its loss of public faith during the culture wars.<sup>41</sup> Better educational efforts, Yenawine argues, could have bypassed the accusations of elitism with which right-wing politicians succeeded in making art seem far removed from mainstream Americans' everyday lives. Education was wedded, in the public imagination, to the social relevance of art, an association on which the NEA's leadership capitalized in order to stake out an argument for conserva-

tive cultural politics. The currently widespread framing of social practice as an open-ended pedagogical process that *Democracy* anticipated should be understood relative to this historical moment, in that social practice rejects as ideological any attempt to quantify a project's outcome while also seeking to demonstrate a genuine connection to the public, now visibly present *in* the work.

In their "Education and Democracy" installation, Group Material approached the intersection between education and contemporary art as the opportunity to imagine a diverse, multiethnic subject who was politically empowered to create and critically analyze culture. The show sought to foster a political analysis of inequalities within the education system and to increase the investment of public school teachers and students in contemporary art by inviting them to be not only viewers but also creators of works to be included in the show (think of the "political art by children of N.Y." listed as a potential show topic in the *Inaugural Exhibition* flyer). In May 1988, Group Material sent a letter to teachers inviting them to work with their students to produce artworks or other creative contributions for inclusion. The letter was distributed through the mailing list of the New York State Teachers Association, through a connection between Group Material and Mario Asaro, their former intern who was associated with the advocacy group Artists/Teachers Concerned. In the letter, Group Material members state their desire to have the exhibition create a different set of relationships than those typical of gallery shows:

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.<sup>42</sup>

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."<sup>43</sup> Simultaneously, the space of the art exhibition retains a privilege to make things visible in a different and more powerful way, letting students' concerns about learning "be made visually real." The letter frames the gallery, the privileged space of representation, as something that must be intervened in, in order 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 it must find a different audience and a different process of evolution in order to be socially relevant.

The works created by students and teachers included *Stick Puppet*, a multicolored

figure made in the New Muse Summer Program under the leadership of Onnie Millar (Plate 5, lower right). A label accompanying this piece informed viewers that in the workshop, children ages seven to sixteen from the Louis Armstrong Housing Project in Brooklyn worked with Millar to create pieces using African art techniques, with an emphasis on found materials.<sup>44</sup> Other works included one that addressed the legacy of Malcolm X, created by Ashford himself in collaboration with students from Boys and Girls High School in Brooklyn. There were also pieces with such indicative titles as *Power*, by Sam Blinkley with students from Small World Day Care; *Why We Do and Don't Learn*, by students of Enrico Fermi Junior High School in Brooklyn and Mario Asaro; and *Question Mark(s)*, by “Meryl Meisler and the Drop Ins” from Roland Hayes Junior High in Brooklyn. *Question Mark(s)* consisted of two large question marks, the one on the left right side up, and the one on the right upside down, like Spanish-language punctuation (Figure 2.2a). The question marks were made up of photographs of the child artists’ decaying school building, with red paint highlighting some of the biggest physical deficiencies, such as a cockroach, and holes in the walls exposing the wiring (Figure 2.2b). 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, laying the blame for these problems with those in power: “The 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.” The exhibition mixed the students’ works with pieces by professional artists. These pieces spanned various generations of artists, as well as different groups of affiliated practitioners in New York. Included were works by Group Material’s contemporaries—in themselves as diverse as neoconceptual abstract painter Peter Halley and photographer Lorna Simpson—as well as *F.I.U. Blackboards* (1980), a piece by Joseph Beuys consisting of two chalkboards with ephemeral performance traces.<sup>45</sup> (Beuys also, coincidentally, held major importance for Dia, and his work had been shown in Dia’s Chelsea gallery just preceding *Democracy*.)<sup>46</sup>

The resulting ensemble looked like a vibrant, cheerful, art-filled classroom. Group Material had painted the walls with blackboard paint, which contrasted with the warm yellow of the hardwood floor and with the brightly colored artworks on the walls. The walls bore writings in chalk, which the group partially erased before hanging the artworks. Of the mostly erased chalk writings, a few snatches of text remain legible in the photographs of the installation: mathematical formulas, the name PABLO written in capital letters; the almost erased phrase “You will be TESTED ON . . .” The visual effect was of a palimpsest, where the traces on the wall alluded to acts of disciplinary power that Group Material wiped away in order to make room for art that could write the possibility of a new, more politically empowered set of subject positions. Near the front windows of the gallery, “by Group Material” stood out in crisp, loopy chalk cursive on the blackboard wall, like a teacher’s exemplary handwriting (Plate 6).

In this context, the artworks on the walls seemed a bit like examples brought into class and hung up on the blackboard, didactic objects, or perhaps relics of a particularly rich show-and-tell day.<sup>47</sup> But the heavy preponderance of figurative works, to



A



B

**FIGURE 2.2.** Installation view of Group Material's *Democracy*, "Education and Democracy." Photographs by Ken Schles. Courtesy of the Dia Art Foundation, New York.

a degree quite unusual for Group Material's installations both within *Democracy* and beyond it, made the pieces also feel like students. In one corner of the gallery hung Simpson's *You're Fine* (1988; Plate 5), featuring a life-sized photograph of a woman lying on her side, seen from the back. Kitty-corner on the intersecting wall was *Stick Puppet*. High up, about a foot and a half above Simpson's piece, hung John Ahearn's *Thomas* (1986), a life-sized sculpture of a running African American boy, literally springing off the wall. *Tiger* (1983; Plate 6), another work by Ahearn, the bust of a child, hung near the front windows. Further over on the same wall was *My Best Friend* (1987), a collaborative work by Faith Ringgold and Lisa Yi consisting of two quilts that looked like little girls tucked in bed. Also included were Lewis Hine's *Newsboys* (1910) and *Three Tobacco Boys* (1909), classic documentary photographs of turn-of-the-century American working-class youth. Across this ensemble, the artworks materialized a diverse, multi-ethnic learning community. The individual styles, subject matter, and political projects manifest in the works themselves gave a sense of a pedagogical space along the lines of Shor's "vacuum into which students pour their own meaning."<sup>48</sup> Critic Roberta Smith underscores the idea of the show as a democratic forum when she describes it as "a handsome, cacophonous collage in which many disparate voices are heard."<sup>49</sup>

Viewers entering the gallery found, at its physical center, yet another aspect of the installation that staged the classroom-as-vacuum-for-participant-meaning: a set of well-worn chairs with built-in desks taken from a real classroom. Visitors could sit at the desks to watch a video on the nearby TV monitor, to contemplate the works on the walls from a bit of a distance, or simply to take a break. By juxtaposing the artworks on the walls with the formation of desks, "Education and Democracy" thus evoked two different collective groups: first, the creators, collaborators, and artists who made the artworks, and second, the viewers of the exhibition, placed here in the role of students. Though both were afforded areas of free play within the scope of the show, for viewers the potential to make meaning essentially consisted in ephemeral activities—motion, stasis, seeing, thinking, possibly conversing—placing them in a much more determined role than that of the creator-collaborators, whose work gave tangible content to the exhibition. Moreover, the show as a whole, and numerous individual works within it, were unambiguous in their leftist political stance, essentially implying viewer identification with that position. Grant Kester, in his 1993 essay "Rhetorical Questions," is very critical of the politics of this implied identification, labeling the shows in *Democracy* "moral-didactic installations" that ultimately served to recenter the artists as ethical subjects at the expense of genuine public engagement. What's on display, he writes, "is not simply information about a particular issue but also Group Material itself as an exemplary body of committed culture activists."<sup>50</sup> The work *Question Mark(s)*, which was visually central to the show and which seems to be posing a question while actually delivering sharp critique, seems an almost uncanny materialization of the mode of address that Kester criticizes.

I agree with Kester that the "Education and Democracy" installation situated Group Material in a teacherly way relative to its viewer-students (complete with the group's signed name, in perfect teacherly handwriting, on the blackboard wall). But

in considering viewer address in “Education and Democracy,” it is essential also to take into account that the exhibition was only one component of this segment of the *Democracy* project. Equally important was the open town-hall meeting held on the evening of Tuesday, September 27, where the public was invited to come discuss problems facing education. Relative to the “Education and Democracy” gallery show, the town-hall meeting might be seen as an act of lifting out the school desks at the center of the installation, filling them with people, and bringing a focus to those participants’ speech and interaction. As it turns out, when participants stepped out of the proscribed role of viewer and into a situation that invited their live input, they posed stiff challenges to Group Material’s politics and to its relevance to a broad audience. Whereas the installation envisions a subject who embodies the political and creative optimism of critical pedagogy, the political subject as it materialized in the meeting points to some of the affective challenges inherent to attempts to make social-process art into a democratizing process.

### The Meeting

The “Education and Democracy” town-hall meeting was chaired by departing Group Material member Rollins, whose childhood interest in the town meetings in Pittsfield, Maine, where he grew up, was an important source of inspiration for the format of *Democracy*.<sup>51</sup> Rollins sees chairing the meeting as his last official act of participation in a Group Material project. His attitude toward the meeting participants in retrospect is cheerful yet cynical: he remembers a preponderance of “egos,” with no one willing to sublimate his or her own investments in favor of group momentum.<sup>52</sup> Based on the discussion in the preparatory roundtable meeting, Group Material posed five broad questions on the flyer for the town-hall meeting: “What are some aspects of the present crisis in education in the U.S.? . . . Education for whom? . . . Education beyond schooling? . . . Education for what? . . . What is to be done?” (Figure 2.3). The discussion crisscrossed through these topics, with a particular focus on concerns about how educational institutions and Eurocentric curricula were failing to meet the needs of minority students and poor students, including those living in welfare hotels. A number of participants spoke from personal experience as teachers in local schools and colleges.

Not long after the beginning of the forum, a participant got up to make an angry statement, which ended up leading to an outright confrontation with Group Material member Felix Gonzalez-Torres. The participant was Geno Rodriguez, director of the Alternative Museum (previously the Alternative Center for International Arts), who had worked with Group Material as commissioning curator of the exhibition *Liberty and Justice*, in which the group had participated in 1986.<sup>53</sup> The Alternative Museum had a consistently politicized exhibition program, attempting to offer itself as an alternative, as Rodriguez describes it, to alternative spaces and to what he perceived as their treatment of minority groups according to a “separate but equal” status.<sup>54</sup> The clash between Rodriguez and Gonzalez-Torres revolved around the question of minority participation in *Democracy*. It kicks off with Rodriguez veering away from the stated



# TOWN MEETING!

## EDUCATION & DEMOCRACY

### ORGANIZED BY GROUP MATERIAL

Tuesday, September 27, 8 PM  
DIA ART FOUNDATION • 155 Mercer St.

## AGENDA

Meeting Chairperson: Tim Rollins, Director, Art and Knowledge Workshop, Bronx

- I. Welcome and introductory remarks by Tim Rollins for Group Material
- II. Brief summary of issues raised during a panel on Education & Democracy organized by Group Material\*
- III. Open to the floor: Discussion on the following questions --
  - A. What are some aspects of the present crisis in education in the U.S.?
  - B. 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?
  - C. Education beyond schooling? -- What is the state of forms of education beyond public and private institutions? What are community-based, alternative, adult, ethnic and religious programs currently doing? What are the problems and solutions presented by these grassroots organizations?
  - D. Education for what? -- Is Jefferson's conviction that education is the most important project of a democratic society still binding or has it degenerated into a myth? What is the role of education for democracy in the current cultural, political and economic climate of the U.S.?
  - E. What is to be done? -- Could this Town Meeting and its participants be organized to build education for democracy coalitions in New York City and beyond?

Please come prepared to speak on these issues. The Town Meeting on Education & Democracy will be recorded, transcribed and incorporated into a publication organized by Group Material for the Dia Art Foundation.

\*Education & Democracy panel held in May 1988: John Deveaux, Bronx Educational Services; Rodney Harris, Boys & Girls High School, Brooklyn; Catherine Lord, California Institute of the Arts; Tim Rollins; Ira Schor, City University of New York.

This project is supported in part by public funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency, and the New York State Council on the Arts. Admission is free. For more information call (212)431-9232.

**FIGURE 2.3.** Flyer for Group Material's *Democracy*, "Education and Democracy" town-hall meeting, September 27, 1988. Courtesy of Group Material and Four Corners Books.

topic of the meeting to offer direct criticism of Group Material, which he accuses of generating liberal discourse about social issues without building a bridge with constituencies outside the art world. Rodriguez makes it clear that the question of the relationship between minority identity and mainstream institutions is personal for him: “I still have a problem with being relegated to a subculture as soon as my last name comes up. If it’s Geno everybody presumes I’m Italian; as soon as they get Rodriguez then I’m a member of a subculture. It’s very difficult dealing with major museums on a top level.” He goes on to point 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.

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 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.<sup>55</sup>

Listening to the audio recording of this moment, it is clear that Rodriguez’s speech is a game changer for the affective dynamic of the meeting, which until that point was still riding on the peppy, nostalgic dynamism of Rollins’s opening statement about his youthful aspiration to participate in the Pittsfield town-hall meetings. Rodriguez’s tone is rushed, angry, accusatory. At the most literal level, what he demands is multicultural difference visible on the bodies of those in the room, a demand that forces each attendee to reflect on whether he or she can fulfill it. Though he voices a desire for spaces that are not racially and culturally divided, that goal feels thwarted by the affective impact of his speech, which puts everyone present on the spot by demanding that they reflect on their own relationship to visible difference.

Rodriguez diagnoses a certain *image* of difference that circulates in the “liberal” intellectual and political context of the meeting. That image, he argues, is detached from the creation of genuine social and collegial relationships, the latter figured in his speech as parties at white people’s homes and functions, attended by “Americans of all different backgrounds.” Group Material’s democratizing project, he asserts, is a failure. The particular bent of this critique was specific to the context of the New York art world in the late 1980s. The Vietnam War era had seen vocal protests about the exclusion of artists of color from major New York museums. Particularly important in this respect were the efforts of the Black Emergency Cultural Coalition, which in

1968–69 led protests against the Whitney and MoMA for the blatant exclusion of African American artists from major exhibitions.<sup>56</sup> By the late 1980s, the identity-based critique of representation developed in that era had given rise to a landscape of institutionally situated projects and jobs in dialogue with multicultural diversity in different ways. Rodriguez speaks as the representative of the Alternative Museum, a small institution centrally premised on diversity, to critique another institutionally situated project that also took diversity as a central commitment. The disagreement about the politics of their respective approaches is not just ideological; rather, it must be understood within the context of concerns about institutional funding and survival. Organizations such as the Alternative Museum competed with established and high-art-oriented institutions for a finite pool of funding. Those funds came from the NEA and the NYSCA, and also from foundations such as the MacArthur, which in the late 1980s briefly invested substantial resources in media arts centers.<sup>57</sup> In the NEA's 1988 granting year, the Alternative Museum received \$30,000, representing the bulk of its NEA grants, from an Interdisciplinary Arts Organizations grant under the category "Expansion Arts." The "Expansion Arts" organizations category was specifically devoted to those organizations "deeply rooted in and reflective of the culture of a minority, inner city, rural, or tribal community."<sup>58</sup> Dia would not have been a competitor with the Alternative Museum in grant pools addressed specifically to minority representation. But Rodriguez's comments reflect a context where diversity promised a certain benefit for organizations in terms of funding, in a world where those resources were limited and becoming more so. Simultaneously, as he emphasized to me in retrospect, he felt keenly aware of how art and organizations that delivered strong political criticism remained marginalized. (In the town-hall meeting speech, he refers to the Alternative Museum as staging "some of the very few shows with any hair on 'em.")<sup>59</sup>

After a brief pause, Rodriguez's speech was met with an angry rejoinder from Group Material member Felix Gonzalez-Torres, who clearly felt both personally and professionally attacked. Julie Ault, remembering the encounter, marks this as a particularly stressful moment. She recalls that when Gonzalez-Torres got up to respond to Rodriguez, he was shaking.<sup>60</sup>

GONZALEZ-TORRES [*talking fast*]: Hi, my name is Felix Gonzalez-Torres, I'm a member of Group Material. 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 public. . . . But I really feel like I should reply to the comments that were just made. I somehow 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” tag you put onto all this, I dislike that very much. I think our project is about inclusion and not exclusion. And to start the town meeting with so much *anger*, really puts me off, and . . .

RODRIGUEZ: Then speak about something! Stop complaining. Speak about something!

GONZALEZ-TORRES: No! That’s what I’m saying, you started 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 terms 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 anger-flooded dialogue, Gonzalez-Torres responds to Rodriguez quite obliquely by executing a complex performance of identity. On the one hand, with the “flowered shirt” comment, Gonzalez-Torres deflects Rodriguez’s demand for minority visibility, casting it as an objectivizing drive to pin people down to constrictive identity positions. In the introduction I discussed the political fantasy of the voice described by Mladen Dolar, which imagines ideal democracy as a situation in which everyone can hear everyone else’s voices.<sup>61</sup> Within that fantasy, audible presence implicitly carries privilege over visual presence, standing as a true representation of an individual’s self. There is something of that fantasy at work here, as Gonzalez-Torres mobilizes his voice as a vector that skirts nimbly around static visual types, asserting a freer, more gestural play of identity and expression than the demand for visual identification allows. Gonzalez-Torres rejects the insistence on visual markers of identity at the same time as he claims Latino identity aurally, by marking his presence as a Latino man *not* wearing a flowered shirt and by stressing his discomfort with English. He presents that discomfort at the outset as a framework that conditions his speech, and he also cites his hatred of speaking in public, overcome by his need to respond to Rodriguez, as testimony to the urgency of his convictions. Rodriguez’s comments are not just objectifying in general, he stresses, but personally objectifying to him as a Latino. The result is that sensible difference is both avowed and disavowed for other attendees at the meeting, who are asked simultaneously to bring their attention to Gonzalez-Torres’s identity and to resist any equation between visible markers of race and the Latino speaking position he asserts. Arun Saldanha, in his Deleuzian model of race, argues that racial difference emerges when phenotypically different bodies align and comport themselves in different ways in different places.<sup>62</sup> At the meeting, Rodriguez makes a phenotypical assessment of the group of people present, verbally marking a distinction between himself and the majority of the meeting’s attendees and from there going on to draw conclusions about the failure of Group Material’s political project. Gonzalez-Torres responds by asserting an ethnic commonality with Rodriguez, but only in order to make the point that they have little else in common. He claims Latino identity in

order to assert his right to speak on this particular issue, but he does so in a combative way that staunchly rejects the idea that that shared identity might dictate shared aesthetic or political values.

Reading this interaction, I see a clash between two different imperatives. Rodriguez demands that institutionalized art practice be accountable to the communities it claims to serve and takes visible difference as an indexical marker of the extent to which the project bridges divisions of *class*. Gonzalez-Torres, on the other hand, expresses a desire for a flexible, antiessentialist identity that resonates with the performative work of other queer artists in this decade, such as Tseng Kwong Chi.<sup>63</sup> In making his own experience the grounds on which to contest Rodriguez's equation between *Democracy's* political success and the visible identities of its participants, Gonzalez-Torres moreover anticipates Miwon Kwon's critique of identity in site-specific art, a decade *avant la lettre*.<sup>64</sup>

Kwon takes up the question of how the artist's creative or intellectual position becomes fixed in relation to identity through a discussion of artist Renée Green's aborted participation in the 1992 Sculpture Chicago. The conflict revolved around the organization of a preparticipation visit to Chicago, in which the itinerary set by curator Mary Jane Jacob and her staff heavily overdetermined Green's participation as an African American artist by introducing her to people and sites specifically associated with African American histories and race relations and even going as far as to make suggestions about the types of project she might undertake concerning them. The organizers' desire to promote an identity "match" between Green and the community with which she would create a site-specific project thus effectively curtailed the type of work Green felt she would be able to produce. The result of such a conflation, Kwon writes, is the objectification not only of the artist but also of her potential community collaborators: "The engagement of 'real' people in community-based art can install new forms of urban primitivism over socially neglected minority groups. The 'other' of the dominant culture becomes objectified once again to satisfy the contemporary lust for authentic histories and identities."<sup>65</sup> This process, she argues, is promoted actively by institutional forces.<sup>66</sup>

In Kwon's analysis, the conflation of identity, site, and political efficacy is imposed from the top down by institutions that seek to produce an image of social engagement at the expense of sensitivity to the specificity both of artists' work, and of audiences' lived realities. The argument between Rodriguez and Gonzalez-Torres, however, suggests that the move to draw connections among identity, an artwork's site, and its politics was more multidirectional and complex and that the push to do so could serve imperatives other than just the consolidation of institutional power. Rodriguez calls up a concept of authentic, visible identity in order to pin down the floating relationship between the political subject the town-hall meeting projected and the people actually present in the room, a looseness that he argued produced a "liberal" discourse in service of the institution. I would argue that the effect of Gonzalez-Torres's response was to displace a critique that operates along the axes of identity and class onto the axes of identity and authorship. I think it is important to draw insights from both sides of this

encounter, that is, to be critical of “positivist” attempts to quantify the identity of the audience, and to understand that the audience’s character and experience will always differ from its description within a given framework, without making the individual artist’s subjectivity into the figure for that difference. In doing so, we collapse collective, social dynamics and audience demographics into questions of individual authorial subjectivity and, ironically, we recenter identity as a privileged interpretive category distinct from class at the same time as we purport to reject the positions delineated by certain types of institutionalized identity politics.

I speculate, moreover, that the defensive force of Gonzalez-Torres’s reaction stemmed in part from an existing sensitivity within Group Material about their position relative to Dia and about the questions that that position might raise about the politics of their practice. In chapter 1, I discussed the group’s narrative of their own surprise at being asked to do a show at Dia, which signified to them as exclusive, white, esoteric, and male, in stark contrast to their own socially engaged, multicultural inclusivity.<sup>67</sup> A page of notes written during the conceptualization of the *Democracy* book, in the months following the project, draws attention to the difficulty of taking up a position of institutional privilege in order to disassemble it. The notes state that the group’s text for the book should contain a “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.”<sup>68</sup> This concern returns again in more notes for the book, titled “On Describing Past GM,” which outline the importance of discussing the implications of institutional support and Group Material’s paradoxical position relative to it.<sup>69</sup> Within Dia’s institutional context, participation was central to Group Material’s attempts to democratize contemporary art. But as Rodriguez’s angry intervention demonstrates, the results of that opening up could be disruptive. Rodriguez’s speech is a moment when the figure of the actively engaged audience member, which was central to Group Material’s conception of the politics of *Democracy*, materializes as a vocally pissed-off peer. He participates willingly, but he does so in order to assert the failure of the project.

Let me zoom out briefly to note that since the beginning of their collaborative practice, Group Material members had addressed the erasure of divisions between themselves as artists and the audience. This was evident in the centrality of everyday life to the subject matter of their shows, in their interest in installing work in public spaces, such as *M5* (1981–82), and in their collaboration with the public to create work such as in *DA ZI BAOS* (1982), where statements from community members were printed on large-scale posters pasted up in Union Square, or *The People’s Choice (Arroz con Mango)* (1981; Figure 1.11). *DA ZI BAOS* reflected an interest in finding out what the audience felt and thought by asking them directly, whereas *The People’s Choice* canvassed their positions another way, by inviting them to contribute objects they found beautiful for inclusion in a group show. “People’s opinions fascinate us,” the group wrote in the press release for the 1985 project *Messages to Washington*, where they used print ads in local newspapers to solicit the contribution of visual, videotaped, or textual messages to the

government for an exhibition at the Washington Project for the Arts in D.C.<sup>70</sup> In a 1989 group interview by Jim Drobnick, Ashford went a step further, asserting an erasure of boundaries between Group Material and their public: “We are also part of the audience.”<sup>71</sup> In his essay for *Show and Tell*, Ashford quotes the statement as a subheading, attributing it to Group Material as a whole, before going on to talk about the capacity of art to make one see from someone else’s position.<sup>72</sup> Group Material members in fact made this assertion at a number of different points, if not always to the same ends. It appeared on a poster for *DA ZI BAOS* in Union Square, where the one statement attributed to Group Material reads as follows: “Even though it’s easy and fun, we’re sick of being the audience. We want to do something. We want to create our culture instead of just buying it.”<sup>73</sup> Ashford’s evocation of being part of the audience is empathetic, whereas the poster associates it with a negative, consumerist passivity. But both instances represent the group’s practice as grounded in a quotidian, populist experience that connects them with the public they seek to address. More book notes for *Democracy* posit participation as the hinge between the group’s own active creation and the attitude they sought to foster in their audience: “We started GM in order to participate—a social situation.”<sup>74</sup> In this framework, the work’s social quality, activated by participation, constitutes the basis of connection between the artists and their audience.

Arguably, the Rodriguez/Gonzales-Torres clash marks a limit case in terms of Group Material’s ability to create positive constellations among their own positions as artists, their audience, and the democratizing goals of their work. Namely, the group’s own statements of interest in and identification with the audience contribute to carving out a positive position of socially engaged authorship. The live participatory process in *Democracy* made Group Material’s position as authors more complex than those statements tend to convey. On the one hand, Group Material members were the authors of the overall project; they had created the exhibitions and decided the meeting agendas. Their relationship with Dia was premised on that authorship.<sup>75</sup> On another level, in the town-hall meetings, they were just more people attending the events, where others might get up and just as freely express their opinions and even enter into arguments with the artists. Simultaneously, their status on that social plane remained distinct, in that any comments group members might have made would inevitably carry the weight of authorial statements about the project. Notably, the “Education and Democracy” meeting, the first in the series of four, was the only one where Group Material members contributed significantly to the discussion, in the form of Rollins’s chairing and Gonzalez-Torres’s argument with Rodriguez. At the following meetings, group members minimized their presence. At the “AIDS and Democracy” meeting, to which I will return in chapter 4, Dia curator Gary Garrels’s initial introduction of the group 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.”<sup>76</sup> The meeting recordings indicate that in addition to literally taking a back seat to other participants, Group Material members rarely spoke. In this aural absence, the town-hall meetings differ from the more intimate roundtables, where members of the group contributed substantially to

the discussions. I speculate that at the subsequent three meetings after “Education and Democracy,” the group may have intentionally minimized their presence in order to avoid overdetermining the discussions or engaging in further clashes with audience members.

However, the artists’ explicit backgrounding of their own opinions within the meetings raised questions about the point and directionality of these events. This doubt about direction is borne out in reviews of *Democracy*, where critics repeatedly correlate Group Material’s foregrounding of a diverse plurality of voices with a certain lack of cohesiveness. In the review he published in *Afterimage*, 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 continues: “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.”<sup>77</sup> Salem Alaton, writing in the *Globe and Mail*, spends much of his article describing the disparate positions expressed at the meeting. Alaton states: “For all the references to ‘real issues,’ no one got around to detailing what they were.”<sup>78</sup> Critic Joshua Decker, in his discussion of the exhibition for “Politics and Election,” the third segment of *Democracy*, echoes these complaints about lack of focus, which he sees also at the level of the gallery show:

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.”<sup>79</sup>

Trend and Decker both juxtapose the lack of focus to the “best intentions” and “noble aspiration” of Group Material. Indeed, listening to the audio recordings of the meetings, one is left with the feeling that the discussions had a wandering quality. At some times they feel exciting and insightful; at others, random and slow. Group Material’s decision to turn toward a participatory format created democratic opportunities for participants to express themselves, but in doing so it also threw into doubt the goals of the project itself. A comparison with Joseph Beuys’s charismatic pedagogical performance is instructive here, as it highlights the double bind of Group Material’s authorial position in this context. For Documenta 5 in 1972, Beuys created a work titled *Dürer, ich führe persönlich Baader + Meinhoff durch die Documenta* (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 Meinhof as the audience, Beuys’s piece imagines a political radicalization of audience subjectivity.<sup>80</sup> At the same time, it is Beuys who will lead them and not vice versa; he will



maintain his role of teacher, leader, enlightener. The work thus asserts a radical position that depends on the privileged identity of both the artist and the artist's fantasy audience. In Group Material's case, we might sooner imagine an invitation, not just to Baader and Meinhof but to 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. This inertia, compounded by the critique of institutional location, forms the essential context for Group Material's articulation, after the fact, of a recuperative narrative that centered on the idea of education.

### Student-Subjects

The material I have been discussing here, the "Education and Democracy" installation, roundtable, and town-hall meeting, constitute an initial *democratizing impulse* in Group Material's engagement with education. That democratizing impulse gave rise to these three distinct social spaces, which created venues for interaction among participants. The democratizing impulse was followed by a *reflexive moment*, in which the artists engaged with education at a conceptual level in order to make sense of what occurred during the live project. This moment played out in the artists' writings and also in photographic documentation of audience visitors to the exhibition, photographs created by group member Ashford.

The messiness and difficult affect of the town-hall meetings was connected to the specific nature of Group Material's *Democracy* and its institutional location, but also to a more structural limit in the attempt to make participatory art a democratizing process. On the one hand, the collaboration between Group Material and elite Dia, which I discussed in chapter 1, raised legitimate questions about how the project's socially engaged address related to its institutional frame. Group Material members, with their own investments and positions, also retained a privileged role relative to audiences. On the other hand, Group Material's choice to set in motion a democratizing process by bringing attention to the audience's input and live experience staged the impossibility of ever achieving experiential satisfaction relative to that goal. What exactly does a democratizing process *feel like*? In the social world, it might feel like any one of a number of things, from exciting to irritating to terrifying. This holds for the social-process artwork, as well, with the difference that the scale, and often the finite duration, of these artworks make it much harder to evaluate a concrete outcome, as distinct from the way we might experience them. Not only does pedagogical-art-practice-as-open-ended-communication resist measurement in terms of concrete outcomes, but the participatory artwork explicitly collapses any distinction between the work itself and how it feels to participants. The participatory artwork, conceived as a democratizing venture, thus faces the paradoxical task of having to delineate a sense of political and social trajectory that the unpredictability of experience can constantly undermine. In *Democracy*, Rodriguez's critique was connected to the project's specific qualities and

context. But regardless of the specifics, in a project structured on these terms, it was inevitable that the artists and participants would have to reckon with some kind of gap between the project's stated goals and the experiences that materialized under its aegis.

In the group's documentation of *Democracy* and in their writings about it after the fact, that reckoning is figured through a participant-as-student who undergoes transformation by virtue of engagement with the project. This subject is positioned rhetorically at the crossroads between personal experience and positive progress. We can see it materialize in an early draft of Group Material's statement for the project book, where the group weaves the dialogue of the meetings—plagued at points by interpersonal frictions and by a certain lack of focus—into an idea of pedagogy.

*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.<sup>81</sup>

The statement that *Democracy* “was not meant as a kind of instructional answer but as an elaborated question” establishes a pedagogical frame for the project, but in the same gesture, it rejects any hierarchy associated with educational institutions or traditional teacher–student relationships. Group Material makes it clear that they are not condescendingly or instrumentally directing this pedagogy at the audience. Rollins's framing, discussed above, of creative engagement as a learning process for the artist returns here. The group's members themselves are the subjects of *Democracy*'s pedagogy: “These were real educations for *us*.” Gonzalez-Torres, in the letter to Ault cited earlier, echoes this framing of the educational process as one that is addressed to Group Material members themselves. He writes of his growing excitement 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 undergoes: “I'm more confident and excited about the shape our education is taking.”<sup>82</sup> This idea returns again in a page of typed notes about the group's statement in the book, labeled “Julie” and presumably written by Ault. These notes assert: “We should tie the reoccurring theme of *Democracy* together very clearly, summation so to speak of what we learned.”<sup>83</sup> Ault casts the theme of the project, democracy, as inseparable in retrospect from this educational process of which the artists are the main subjects. In the text that finally made it into the *Democracy* project book, the group redacted the statement that the meetings

were “real educations” for them, instead framing “shared learning” as an essential result of their “painfully democratic” group deliberation process.<sup>84</sup>

These statements mirror a fairly typical move in which the critical pedagogue inverts the student–teacher relationship as one that teaches the teacher, as a way of making a claim about his or her own interpersonal or political positioning vis-à-vis the students. Ira Shor closes his 1988 article cited above with one such inversion: “Most often in my classrooms, I am the adult that learns the most; if I’m successful, my students learn as much from me as I do from them.”<sup>85</sup> A classic in this regard is Jacques Rancière’s *Ignorant Schoolmaster*, first published in 1987, in which Rancière advances a model of education where the teacher, instead of communicating knowledge to students, helps bring out their own natural intelligence, seen from the beginning as on par with his own.<sup>86</sup> In Group Material’s deployment, the inverted pedagogical relationship concerns the status of the aesthetic as a socially communicative process and its ability to generate positive change. Here, “education” organizes participation’s unpleasant or obtuse affects into something meaningful. Kester points out this function in *The One and the Many*, where he identifies a pedagogical stake structuring the experience of much social-process art, particularly in practices that create social discomfort for the privileged viewer.<sup>87</sup> These practices, Kester argues, reflect a twentieth-century avant-garde interest in “pedagogical shock,” which positions the viewer as someone who through the difficult or uncomfortable experience with the work *learns* something, usually about their own privilege. Kester at this point is discussing Santiago Sierra, of whose work he is critical because of the way it mobilizes the discourse of pedagogical shock in order to justify its own reproduction of conditions of inequality instead of attempting to create new relationships. In that context, Kester is justified in seeing the pedagogical function as a cynical one, which solves the difficulty of materializing an experience of lofty goals by stressing the disjunct between a work’s affective quality and its structuring ethics (so that no one is tempted to measure the weird feelings a project creates against the ethical goals that we presume to it to embody). Group Material’s work differs from Sierra’s in both tone and political investment, in that it revolves around the attempt to create new, more egalitarian social relationships. In the context of Group Material’s practice, I see the conceptual power of pedagogy to organize participation’s messy affects as an important tool through which the group members were able to acknowledge that *Democracy*’s participatory process was beyond their control, while simultaneously finding a way to make it a step, not a stumbling block, in the development of their own practice. The sense of change to which the group aspired in *Democracy* was impossible to quantify, but it could be evoked, within their writing and documentation, through the description of the project as a pedagogical process that transformed the artists themselves.

The experience of the project as pedagogically transformative for the artist-participant is staged most dynamically in a set of black-and-white photographs Group Material member Ashford made of visitors to the “Education and Democracy” installation. In the introduction, I cited Douglas Crimp’s argument that photography enables the institution to recapture ephemeral and site-specific practices that escape it.<sup>88</sup>



A



B



C

**FIGURE 2.4.** Visitors to Group Material's *Democracy*, "Education and Democracy" installation. Photographs by Doug Ashford. Courtesy of Doug Ashford Studio.

In Ashford's images, photography becomes instead the occasion for the *mise-en-scène* of an idea of subjectivity that animates the artists' practice. The photographs show audience members looking at the artwork hung on the walls (Figures 2.4a and 2.4b) and sitting in the school desks (Figure 2.4c), watching a video or just lost in contemplation. One image shows a man signing the guest register near the entrance to the gallery, and another shows someone who appears to be a gallery attendant reading at the desk near the entrance (Figure 2.5a). The recurrence of the same people in different images indicates that all the photographs were taken in a single session.

The kind of audience experience the photographs communicate is sharply at odds with Rodriguez's impassioned monologue at the town-hall meeting. Though perhaps there is a certain inevitability to gallerygoers' looking passive—the activity of viewing art is not very physically dynamic—the “Education and Democracy” viewers appear markedly static, whether sitting or standing. They seem, moreover, isolated. When they sit in the school desks at the center of the installation, they are physically spaced out, the distance making them seem also mentally and emotionally separate from one another, each lost in his or her own thought. In one image, a young man stands with his mouth open, but it is unclear whether he is making a comment to his friend or simply yawning. The gallery attendant reads a booklet, head down, in a way that exudes the boredom of low-paid shift work (Figure 2.5a). When we do see viewers standing close together, they are lined up obediently behind the tape on the gallery floor that demarcates the permissible approach to the artwork on the wall (Figure 2.5b). Their disciplined bodies obey the spatial and social rules of the art institution.<sup>89</sup> Any hope for the gallery to act as a locus for conviviality or community formation is dampened by these photographs, where audience experience appears to register on a spectrum from indifferent to somewhat tepidly contemplative.

But the lack of excitement is interrupted by a handful of images radically different in tone, photographs that in their exception to the rule recast the meaning of the whole set. In a few images, Ashford's young daughter flits through the scene, often reduced to an energetic blur among the more static, crisply defined adult figures that surround her (Figure 2.6a). The two images where we can see her clearly show her on the floor among the school desks. In the first (Figure 2.6b), she sits on her knees, her little hands hidden by the long sleeves of her puffy ski jacket. In the second (Figure 2.6c), 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, becomes a playground for the undisciplined frolicking of the little girl. As a child, she most closely approximates the targeted disciplinary subject of the classroom the installation mimics. Ashford's images constitute the art gallery as the locus of the inversion of that disciplinarity. Here, the gallery furnishes the child with the opportunity freely to follow her own desire for playful, unregulated action. The fact that it is a child 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.<sup>90</sup> The stasis of the adult viewers thereby comes to provide a foil for her dynamism, ultimately reinforcing the futurity she represents. Here and now, the images



A



B

**FIGURE 2.5.** Visitors to Group Material's *Democracy*, "Education and Democracy" installation. Photographs by Doug Ashford. Courtesy of Doug Ashford Studio.



A



B



C

**FIGURE 2.6.** Molly Ashford playing in Group Material's *Democracy, "Education and Democracy"* installation. Photographs by Doug Ashford. Courtesy of Doug Ashford Studio.

say, we may be bound to passive viewership. But in the future, when this child who plays rambunctiously in a gallery grows up, who knows what kinds of spirited participation art will be able to generate?

Ashford's images of his daughter also make visible how the model of pedagogical transformation can function to recenter the artist's subjectivity. As his offspring, the little girl stands as an avatar for her father, creating a connection between his artistic subjectivity—realized in the moment of taking the photograph—and her own developing personhood. The images thereby reinforce the connection between the artist as a subject with the power to show and art as something that transforms subjectivity. The artist steps into the role of documenter of the audience's activity. But instead of subsuming his intentions to the audience dynamic, as Group Material members did at the town-hall meetings, in the role of documentarian Ashford crafts images that are fundamentally meaningful, shot through with a strong investment in the special status of the project's social space as one of open-ended transformation. In these images, education has a performative quality to it relative to art. J. L. Austin, in his classic definition, frames the performative as a speech act in which "to utter the sentence (in, of course, the appropriate circumstances) is not to *describe* my doing of what I should be said in so uttering to be doing: it is to do it."<sup>91</sup> The performative makes, concretizes, produces. The social-process artwork serves here as a special "appropriate circumstance" for education's performative unfolding. In their notes for the project book, Group Material reflect on how education came up not just in the "Education and Democracy" meeting but also in the other forums on electoral politics, cultural participation, and AIDS:

Education was brought up in "Politics and Election" as the base upon which social change has grown; in "Cultural Participation" as an antidote to the universe of consumption and in "AIDS: A case study" as the front in the war against governmental inaction.<sup>92</sup>

In all of these instances, education appears as that which materializes activist goals within the art project. It does not describe; it *does*. The images Ashford took in the gallery visualize education as a doing that demonstrates, at a number of levels. In the exhibition pictured, the artworks—in particular, the students' artworks—embody a process of critical thinking, showing visually how learning has taken place. The images show adult visitors absorbing that evidence, in turn demonstrating to us their engagement with the pedagogical terms of the gallery-classroom in which they are pictured. Finally, Ashford's daughter tangibly acts out the exuberant subject the show aims to create. Her energy and dynamism leave us no need to guess about her aesthetic experience of the show; rather, her physicality performs a sense of her empowerment in this context. In these representations, education as it occurs through art is a social process that opens onto the new, materializing a certainty about art's political value. That certainty was hard to establish in the town-hall meetings, with their clashing viewpoints and sometimes unfocused discussions.



## The Institution and the Pedagogical Subject

Group Material's turn to education as a way of narrating both the goals and challenges inherent in their practice reflected a conception of the aesthetic as a democratic process of social communication. But education's conceptual utility for navigating the relationship between aesthetic experience and its structural or social conditions is not limited to practices with that political orientation. I will illustrate this by turning now to focus on the Dia Art Foundation, *Democracy's* institutional host. Dia today has an extensive education program, which it began developing in 1992–93, in the same institutionally transitional phase that gave rise to Group Material's project. As I discussed in chapter 1, this period, under the directorship of Charles Wright from 1985 to 1994, was one of rebuilding following Dia's financial crisis of 1983–85, during which the new board was explicitly interested in creating a responsible public profile for the organization. In a contribution to a 1989 volume on the relationship between artists and museums, Wright cited the development of programs in poetry, dance, and critical discussion and debate as examples of activities that "helped to integrate Dia into a larger arts community," a shift informed by its new dependence on direct public support.<sup>93</sup> Group Material's and Martha Rosler's projects, as well as the education programming, were experimental initiatives that contributed to helping Dia pinpoint the type of identity it wanted to define as it underwent the transition from a millionaire's whimsical personal foundation to a responsible, grant-receiving public institution.

On one level, Dia had always operated under the aegis of a certain definition of education, to the extent that such a definition is inherent to the status of a nonprofit organization. In the field of philanthropy, 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 typically are understood as a subset of "educational purposes," which can cover a wide range of noninstructional activities, including research, exhibition, and documentation.<sup>94</sup> Dia gestures toward educational value in its 1980 certificate of incorporation as a nonprofit organization, where it states that it shall "generally seek to enlighten the public as to the nature of art, and the creative process."<sup>95</sup> However, until after its crisis and subsequent reorganization in 1983–86, that commitment remained very much at the level of generality, as Dia lacked even the basic organizational structure necessary to provide dependable public viewing access to its works.

A 1982 tax ruling demonstrates how the early Dia instrumentalized its "educational" nonprofit status to support projects that were public in principle but that in practice addressed only a tiny, self-selecting audience. The tax ruling concerns the New Mexico land belonging to Dia on which Walter De Maria's *Lightning Field* was constructed (Figure 1.5). In 1982 Dia's property totaled approximately 9,000 acres, 3,880 of which held the four hundred stainless steel poles that made up De Maria's artwork and 5,120 of which were purchased to "protect and enhance the integrity of [the] artwork."<sup>96</sup> The ruling addresses whether part or all of the property is used for educational purposes and is therefore tax exempt.<sup>97</sup> It ultimately grants tax exemption to the land

holding the poles and to the land at the site and in nearby Quemado, New Mexico, 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 logic is that this land cannot be tax exempt because there is no “direct, immediate, primary, and substantial use for educational purposes.” In establishing a legal determination of 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, which held that the clutter of other buildings would fundamentally mar the viewer’s communion with the work. Dia of course held onto the taxable land, in effect engaging strategically with the compulsory framing of its activities as educational in order to obtain the partial tax exemption, without letting that compromise its commitment to the purity of aesthetic experience and the primacy of artistic vision.

Only following Dia’s reorganization did it begin to develop any concrete public programming. Key among its early efforts was the Discussions in Contemporary Culture series started in 1987, organized by director Wright and his childhood friend, the art critic Hal Foster. Discussions resulted in a series of books published by Bay Press, a small, critical theory-oriented press started by Thatcher Bailey, who had also been at prep school with Charlie and Hal in Seattle.<sup>98</sup> In 1990, the board signaled a more fundamental shift toward public and educational programming by changing the name of the organization from Dia Art Foundation to Dia Center for the Arts. The press release announcing the change states that the new name “more 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.”<sup>99</sup> 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, now on the faculty at the University of Southern California, who was originally hired as a coordinator for Dia’s poetry series. She created the education program based largely on her own initiative, with the support of Wright and his successor Michael Govan, who took over the directorship in 1994.<sup>100</sup> Of the various models of art education current at the time, Mullins states that her approach found the most affinity with the artist-centered program of Howard Gardner’s Project Zero at Harvard. For Dia, she developed a program that placed a heavy emphasis on training teachers, 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.”<sup>101</sup> 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.

The mid-to-late 1990s through the first decade of the twenty-first century saw growth not only in the art education program itself but also in 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.<sup>102</sup> Also, a passing mention of the education program became a standard presence in all of Dia's press releases, regardless of topic.<sup>103</sup> 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 public outreach activity, helping in turn to build a case for its deservedness of funding. For example, the 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."<sup>104</sup> 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.

Mullins's core 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.<sup>105</sup> Dia:Beacon inhabits the building of a former Nabisco box factory, following the global trend of revitalizing disused industrial structures as centers of cultural capital.<sup>106</sup> The building, which had stood empty since 1991, was initially for sale by a subsidiary of International Paper for \$2 million when Michael Govan viewed it in 1998.<sup>107</sup> 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 that Dia's arrival would revitalize the former manufacturing town.<sup>108</sup> Dia:Beacon's education program, developed under the direction of José Luis Blondet, played an essential role in that project of revitalization, fostering connection and goodwill between Dia and the people of Beacon.<sup>109</sup> Artist Kirsten Mosher, who has worked in the program and is also a resident of Beacon, recalls that upon Dia's arrival there was excitement in the town about the new development, but also an element of "What's it going to do for me?"<sup>110</sup> The education program was Dia's strongest answer to that question. The development of the program involved extensive liaising with mayor Clara Gould, with the Beacon school board and with teachers, including an initial brainstorming session with art teachers and Dia staff in March 2001 and a tour of the museum for Deputy Superintendent Lloyd Jaeger and the city's elementary school principals in 2002.<sup>111</sup> Jaeger in turn assisted Dia in its efforts to secure funding, supporting a grant application to the NYSCA to underwrite the regional "development work" it was undertaking in Beacon.<sup>112</sup> Jaeger was not the only one to understand the education program as "development work." Between 2004 and 2011 Dia received \$560,000 for its public outreach and educational programs at Beacon from the Dyson Foundation, which funds projects in New York's Hudson Valley that impact "the lives of the region's residents, most importantly those who are economically disadvantaged."<sup>113</sup>

Dia:Beacon's resulting program is ambitious in scope, including not only longer-

term programs for second-graders, seventh-graders, and high-schoolers but also occasional programs that address the wider region, such as the Kids Day program in fall 2006 which served over a thousand students.<sup>114</sup> Dia:Beacon also offers public-outreach programs intended to keep students and their families returning to the museum, such as family tours on Community Free Days.<sup>115</sup> Mosher describes the program's impact on Beacon in expansive terms: "Now there's a generation of kids who've pretty much all been to Dia if they've been in public school." Blondet recalls that in creating the Beacon education program, a central challenge lay in art teachers' persistent gravitation toward *meaning* in a way that he saw as inappropriate to Dia's collection of minimalist art. He describes the process of working with both teachers and their students as one of getting people to stop free-associating and to confront the art object itself: "This is just a fluorescent lamp." Once participants had become comfortable with looking closely at the object without attaching explanatory narratives, the discussion could branch out into questions including how the artwork engaged the space, the architecture, and the viewer's presence in the gallery.<sup>116</sup> Mosher says that in practice, this approach gave rise to activities like tying strings to children's wrists and having them make grids, evoking the forms in a piece by Sol LeWitt or Agnes Martin; having the children put pieces of tape on their shirts and arrange themselves as lines in the space of the gallery; or finding ways to enact elements from Richard Serra's formal vocabulary, such as "to twirl" and "to drop."<sup>117</sup> In grant applications to fund the education program, Dia draws clear connections between these activities and the concrete skills they help students build. 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' hands-on projects strengthen skills in critical thinking, questioning, and evaluation."<sup>118</sup> Dia's Web site reiterates this, describing the program's teaching methods as "progressive and wide-ranging while covering many of the standards of the New York State learning system."<sup>119</sup> These articulations of how the program meets state standards and builds concrete skills make a case for its compatibility with the outcome-based education that became national policy in 1994 with the GOALS 2000: Educate America Act signed by President Bill Clinton, which was consolidated under President George W. Bush with the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001.

Intuitively, this quantification of art experience as skill building seems at odds with the kind of aesthetic experience that inspired Dia's founding. That idea of the aesthetic revolved around three poles, the first of which was the genius of the author. Dia cofounder Heiner Friedrich compared his coterie of artists to the Renaissance masters and went to great lengths to enable their vision.<sup>120</sup> Central to that accommodation was the creation of spaces tailored to each artist's work, such as Walter De Maria's *Broken Kilometer* and *New York Earth Room* in New York (in 1979 and 1977, respectively) and *Lightning Field* in New Mexico (in 1977) and Donald Judd's complex in Marfa, Texas (begun in 1979). Wright describes how the early Dia's innovative focus on tailored sites led to an organization with a dispersed physical plan, instead of one based on a fixed

architecture and the constant community that would accompany it.<sup>121</sup> Besides authorship and site, the third pole rounding out the trio was an idea of aesthetic experience as an act of sensory communion with the artist's vision in these particular spaces. Friedrich once noted that despite having visited De Maria's *Lightening Field* "80 or 100 times," he continually experienced it anew: "Each day I woke up there, I saw it completely new and virgin."<sup>122</sup> In this narrative, aesthetic experience is a moment in time that renews, stripping away quotidian experience and personal history to reveal an always-fresh sensory perception. Anna Chave has described this as a "spiritualized" minimalism, and we might also think of it as a minimalist sublime.<sup>123</sup> The appeal of the minimalist sublime was the key draw for donor Leonard Riggio of Barnes & Noble, whose donation of over \$30 million made possible the construction of Dia:Beacon. Riggio was first drawn to Dia when he visited a 1997 exhibition of Richard Serra's *Torqued Ellipses* at the Chelsea gallery. He 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."<sup>124</sup>

Public presence has been central to Dia's mandate since it began rebuilding in 1985, and the opening of Dia:Beacon made a major advance in its accessibility to audiences. But simultaneous to maintaining that public identity, Dia must manage the fact that the minimalist sublime that forms its aesthetic heart is conceptually and practically antonymous to publicness as such. The kind of aesthetic to which it is devoted is deeply individualist. This is so in terms of both the centrality of artistic vision and the contemplative, private nature of the experiences the works create, which Riggio figures as extralinguistic, resistant to communication. Moreover, the focus on specially developed sites in creating that chemistry has motivated Dia and its donors to invest substantially in sites that are geographically remote from audiences. This preference is evident in the patronage of Patrick Lannan Jr., with whom Wright originally cultivated a relationship. The Lannan Foundation has given or loaned Dia art totaling over \$15 million and has made numerous grants for operating costs and site-specific projects.<sup>125</sup> In 2001, the Lannan Foundation provided \$1.6 million for work on Michael Heizer's *City* project in the Nevada desert, an artwork begun in 1972, and \$650,000 for James Turrell's *Roden Crater*, started in 1977, neither of which have yet been completed or made accessible to the general public.<sup>126</sup> The focus on these still-inaccessible projects makes it clear that Lannan's goal is to promote artistic vision and the production of unique sites that support it, regardless of whether those works connect with a substantial audience.

In order to maximize its institutional health, Dia has to balance the commitment to the minimalist sublime, the inspiration for its founding mission and major donors, with its image as a nonprofit organization in active pursuit of the public good. This space of contradiction is precisely where education serves Dia, acting like a pivot that allows the organization to be different things to different people. This function helps ensure institutional survival by creating multiple potential points of interface with various funding organizations. To cite another example: in 2010 Dia received a \$10,000 grant from the Keith Haring Foundation for program support toward the school part-

nership program with the museum of the Hispanic Society of America in New York. Fawn Wilder, a grant officer at the Haring Foundation, explained to me that the art educational programming “is the thread of what [Dia does] that’s most compatible with our funding mission,” which focuses on HIV/AIDS service organizations and services to youth.<sup>127</sup> Wilder’s comments about the Haring Foundation’s issue-specific convergence with Dia around education for urban youth make explicit the strategic value of Dia’s program and the way it enables a reconciliation between a responsible public image and a commitment to the sovereign value of art. When I spoke with Yasmil Raymond, Dia’s curator from 2009 to 2015, she stressed the extent to which Dia’s education programs are an extension of its core commitment to the experience of art, which she sees as continuous since the organization’s earliest founding.<sup>128</sup> Raymond is right, with the caveat that an essential function of that extension is the way it toggles between the inexpressible aesthetic and the concrete quantification of learning outcomes. Bridging that gap are the children’s performing bodies. Enacting a twirl or a drop, assembling with tape on their shirts to make lines, or creating grids with string, the children perform the possibility for esoteric, nonrepresentational art to be broadly accessible. They do so by materializing a visible, bodily figure of the forms present in a work. They make it live in a way that takes pressure off the question of exactly what kind of aesthetic experience anyone present might be having because we can *see* the works’ forms taking root in the bodies of a community.<sup>129</sup>

Dia’s education program is the tool that enables the organization to turn toward concrete outcome and unquantifiable aesthetic at the same time, in order to ensure its institutional survival, while protecting the rarified type of experience that formed its founding mission. In plowing these two parallel routes, what it notably avoids is the messiness that characterized Group Material’s engagement with education in *Democracy*. When I spoke to Doug Ashford during the research for this project, he indicated to me that the investment in education central to Group Material’s practice was something that Dia and other institutions borrowed, or learned, from Group Material and other politically engaged artists.<sup>130</sup> Ashford’s statement intrigued me. It implies that the relationships between politically engaged American artists and the institutions into which their art was absorbed over the course of the 1980s would have to be examined not just in terms of which artists were shown in which museums or of the political content of a given Whitney Biennial.<sup>131</sup> Instead, it would need to be considered more broadly, in terms of how institutions might have borrowed artists’ tactics for public engagement, repurposing them for their own survival not just in exhibition programming but also in marketing, education, or fund-raising. Indeed, Lane Reylea has argued that museums have come increasingly to incorporate contestation and feedback, shifting their focus from canons to open-ended, user-friendly presentations that mimic the temporary projects and orientation toward process characteristic of art’s pedagogical contexts.<sup>132</sup>

I would be interested to see future research analyze specific instances of such feedback loops and their implications for particular artists and institutions. In the case of *Democracy*, though, it seems rather that Group Material’s participatory approach was

a ball that Dia ultimately dropped over the course of its experimentation with how to define its institutional identity. For Group Material, outreach and dialogue *were* the artwork, as opposed to a program organized alongside it. Pursuing that route would have put in danger the special kind of experience Dia values, which is based on communion with a particular artwork, by a particular author, in a particular site. Moreover, as the town-hall meetings demonstrate, Group Material's act of empowering the audience led to unpredictable results. In the meeting discussed here, one of the outcomes of that openness was critical, negative attention brought to the institution's politics. That heat brought Dia itself into the spotlight, away from its preferred minimal role as an almost-invisible enabler of what Wright describes as "a direct experience with the artist's intent."<sup>133</sup> Unlike Dia's current education program, which produces a benevolent public identity, the participation at Group Material's forums ended up calling that public identity into question.

I feel divided about the politics of Dia's program. On the one hand, I value the way it uses the language of outcome-based learning to get funding to provide thousands of children with special access to contemporary art of rich quality and unusual scale. Few children have the opportunity for this kind of intensive engagement, which might give rise to an endless range of exciting and enriching experiences. On the other hand, I feel frustrated with the way Dia's neat reconciliation of the instrumental and the sublime seems to compel a certain normative enactment on the part of members of the public. Jessica Santone has defined the "performative audience" as one that comes into being when spectators repeatedly enact themselves as an audience, as per normative rules of engagement.<sup>134</sup> Whatever experiences Dia's education programs provide their participants, they also coordinate this type of normative engagement at a large scale and make its documentation and promotion into a cornerstone of institutional self-presentation. I read into this a certain desire to control the terms in which the experiences generated by the artwork on display intersect with social meaning and public life. Hal Foster and Terry Smith have both been critical of the way Dia:Beacon pursues a type of intense aesthetic presence that it proffers as universal but that is in fact a *desire* for presence that is deeply historical, its precedents including both minimalism and romanticism (Foster cites the regionally appropriate American sublime of the Hudson River school).<sup>135</sup> In order to persist, Foster argues, this kind of aesthetic must either counter social experience or sublimate it, risking the transformation of the absolute present into a "period piece." Moreover, Smith argues, it must involve an erasure of the museum's structuring agency. Various scholars have interpreted minimalism as raising questions about the socially differentiated nature of experience.<sup>136</sup> However, that kind of interpretation involves seeing the experiences these works create as necessarily historical and dependent on context. Dia, instead, works to consolidate the timeless minimalist sublime by spotlighting spatially spectacular artworks while also generating a regulated field of social activity that functions to control the terms on which they interface with various constituencies, from the children of Beacon to diverse funders.

In Group Material's *Democracy*, by contrast, the work itself was a social field, and one that was much less amenable to this type of normative organization. The artists

determined the guiding parameters of the field prior to the project. But once it was in motion, they entered into it as interlocutors, with all the difficult implication in the audience's affective dynamics that that entry brought with it. In this chapter, I have discussed how the group's representation of the project as pedagogical helped give meaning to its messy process after the fact and helped narrate a forward-moving trajectory in terms of how it influenced the artists themselves. Moreover, because of education's default resonance with an institutional context, taking it as a model for progressive art practice implicitly situated that positive agency as being compatible with an institutionally embedded location.

Over the course of this chapter, I have located the pedagogical impulse as it concerns participatory art at a crossroads between the unfolding of one's experience of a particular event and the larger shifts or tendencies to which we might connect that event. The relationship between these two strands is arguably the most important factor structuring experiences of participatory art. These artworks, in which social interaction and dialogue constitute the materiality of the work as such, put pressure on the desire to *feel* the true nature of the social or political values that animate a given project and thus to have a work's impact on the world be sensible in our own temporally unfolding experience. In everyday life, however, there is no necessary match between social or political transformation, on the one hand, and the feelings it might create for those who live through it, on the other. These artworks are thus inherently structured by a double bind: participants are asked both to bring attention to their own experience, with all its ambiguities and imperfections, and to keep in mind larger goals that transcend the here and now. Projects like *Democracy*, where the political commitments at stake in participation are so ambitious, may in fact be the most plagued by audience frustration at the gap between sensory experience and tangible outcome. Relative to Group Material's work, education helped address that double bind by the way it thematized the positive, progressive nature of the gap between where we are and how we feel right now, on the one hand, and where we want to be headed, on the other. Education not only lets us imagine a socially engaged practice that is institutional yet not compromised but also provides a vocabulary for narrating an artistic subjectivity that emerges from the participatory process transformed and energized by its own decentering.



# HOMELESS:

The Street and Other Venues  
April 1-April 29

**IF YOU LIVED HERE . . .**

**Exhibitions**

1 **HOME FRONT** February 11 - March 18

2 **HOMELESS: The Street and Other Venues** April 1-29

3 **CITY: Images and Representations of Home**  
Video screenings during museum hours  
Film screenings: February 27 - May 23 at 6:30 pm

**Dia Art Foundation** 27 Wabash Street, New York City,  
Sunday through Saturday, 12 to 6 pm  
February 11 through June 25, 1989

**Discussions**

1 **HOUSING: Contributions, Debates, and Fighting Back** Tuesday, February 28

2 **AVOIDING LIFE WORK: Organizational Elements for Artists in the Market**

3 **HOMELESSNESS: Conditions, Causes, Cures** Wednesday, April 12

4 **PLANNING: Power, Politics, and People** March 16, 1989

Open discussions preceded by brief programmed presentations  
**Dia Art Foundation** 155 Mercer Street, New York City,  
6:30 pm  
Admission is free for all events

**martha rosler**

A number of Exhibitions and Discussions are being presented in conjunction with the opening of the exhibition "If You Lived Here . . ." at the Dia Art Foundation. The exhibition is a series of works by Martha Rosler, including "Homeless: The Street and Other Venues" and "City: Images and Representations of Home". The exhibition is a critical examination of the social and political conditions of homelessness in New York City. The exhibition is a critical examination of the social and political conditions of homelessness in New York City. The exhibition is a critical examination of the social and political conditions of homelessness in New York City.

**FIGURE 3.1.** Gallery wall label for Martha Rosler's *If You Lived Here . . .*, "Homeless: The Street and Other Venues" installation, April 1-29, 1989. Photograph by Martha Rosler. Courtesy of Martha Rosler.

## CHAPTER 3

# PHOTOGRAPHY, AGENCY, AND PARTICIPATION

In chapter 2, I argued that photographic documentation is a site for the production of meaning surrounding participatory art. Now I will dissect that claim more carefully by analyzing the relationship between photographic documentation images and the social relationships that make up the material of participatory art. Photographs of participatory artworks generated by institutions, artists, and audiences are proliferating rapidly in art-related publications and social media. Moreover, as Claire Doherty points out, still and moving photographic documentation of participatory events is now often sold as art itself.<sup>1</sup> Despite this, art historians have largely bracketed the role of photographs as an important issue concerning how we conceive of the politics and aesthetics of participation.<sup>2</sup> Claire Bishop has described photographs of participation as somewhat impoverished, decidedly peripheral to the work itself: “Casual photographs of people talking, eating, attending a workshop or screening or seminar tell us very little, almost nothing, about the concept and context of a given project.”<sup>3</sup> Bishop’s formulation reflects a desire to parse the reality of a project—whether understood as located in its live process, in its social context, in the critic’s own act of evaluation, or elsewhere—from images, the latter consigned to the realm of inadequate representation. This position stands in marked contrast to the almost-obsessive interest in the photographic document within performance studies. Scholars including Amelia Jones, Philip Auslander, Rebecca Schneider, Jane Blocker, and Mechtild Widrich have theorized extensively about the performance document, awarding it a crucial, even paradigmatic, role in the ontology of performance.<sup>4</sup> By contrast to the way we use photos of performance artworks, we tend to circulate and reproduce images of participation in a way that downplays the work they do in producing meaning. Perhaps this is because of the way that photographs of participatory artworks most often *represent* participation by *showing*

participants. In doing so, they typically position participant agency as something anterior to a given project, as something that the project simply facilitates and that the photograph then transparently reflects.

This chapter argues that documentation photographs partake in the production of ideas about the agency of the participant audiences pictured, ideas that are important for the conceptualization of participation as such. My specific concern here is with the representation of the agency of participants who engage in a project from an under-privileged social position. I look at “Homeless: The Street and Other Venues,” the second segment of Martha Rosler’s *If You Lived Here . . .* “Homeless” consisted of an installation in the Dia Art Foundation’s Wooster Street gallery (Figure 3.1), accompanied by an open public town-hall meeting on April 26, 1989, on the topic “Homelessness: Conditions, Causes, Cures.” Participants in this segment of Rosler’s four-month *If You Lived Here . . .* project included members of Homeward Bound Community Services, a self-organized group of homeless people who had coalesced in 1988 to create an encampment in front of City Hall, protesting Mayor Ed Koch’s lack of concern with homelessness. For “Homeless: The Street and Other Venues,” the group maintained an office within the installation in Dia’s gallery (Plate 7) and participated in the forum on homelessness held concurrently with the show. The majority of Homeward Bound members were African American, and most were male. They were in a position of otherness, in terms of class and race, not only to the privileged, largely white, art world milieu that Dia represented but even to the city’s more diverse alternative art scene. The project made no structural change in their lack of privilege because of their position outside lines of social mobility.<sup>5</sup>

Until late in this writing, I had been unable to contact any members of Homeward Bound to ask them about the project. During the archival phase of my research, the last written reference I had found to Larry Locke, its most prominent member, was a newspaper article of May 24, 1990, where he is cited as saying that on a good day, he can make up to \$200 selling the *Street News* on the Upper West Side.<sup>6</sup> Following that, he seemed to disappear from written news records, and I wondered if he was long dead. Some of my interviewees for this research speculated that Locke and other members of the group might indeed be deceased, given the extremely high mortality rate of urban homeless people.<sup>7</sup> Finally, however, I made contact with writer Nelson Prime, who had held a prominent organizational role in the group and who was willing to speak to me about their participation from his perspective.<sup>8</sup> The account of their involvement as I present it here was based originally on my analysis of archival records and conversations with other people who experienced the project, now supplemented and reinforced by Prime’s comments about Homeward Bound’s experiences and motivations. Prime informed me that Locke actually died quite recently, in around 2011, illustrating the fact that the written record and the observations I have been able to draw from it are necessarily partial and fragmented.<sup>9</sup>

The terms of Homeward Bound’s involvement in “Homeless” make it clear that the social terrain of the participatory artwork, which is continuous with the wider social world, is not a space that all participants navigate in an equal or uniform way. The

creation of documentation images of participation takes part in that social field, from which it follows that participants occupy unequal positions relative to these images based on factors including their race, gender, and class. By bringing close attention to these images, we can observe how they are shaped by the context of a project and by the different power negotiations among artists, institutional employees, and participants that occur within it. Moreover, considering the relationship between the images and the live processes they “document” can show how the social interactions generated in participation are already bound up with the representation of the social field and the types of agency it makes possible. This chapter demonstrates how Homeward Bound’s political agency—prior to their encounter with Rosler—was in itself already the result of group members’ tactical engagement with the objectifying visibility to which homeless people are subjected. Rosler’s “Homeless” installation and the meeting that accompanied it were continuous with that operation, in the sense that they reproduced Homeward Bound’s necessarily problematic visibility. My own account is also complicit with that reproduction of visibility, as I go about parsing the group’s agency, creating yet another representation of them that speaks from within dominant discourse, in the service of an attempt to make the terms of that discourse visible. Simultaneous to this problematic reproduction, the “Homeless” exhibition and its accompanying meeting staged Homeward Bound’s presence in an explicitly theatrical way, thus opening space for reflection on the always-already representational quality of that presence as it unfolded relative to the dominant terms of the visual field.

Rosler’s installation, the photographs of Homeward Bound, and the group members’ own political work all functioned in different ways to enact acts of visual staging in order to create a pedagogical intervention in audiences’ perceptions of homelessness.<sup>10</sup> Central to my discussion here will be two sets of photographs representing Homeward Bound’s participation in “Homeless.” The first are a set of black-and-white portraits of group members in their City Hall Park encampment, taken by photographer Alcina Horstman in summer 1988. Two of these images were reproduced, along with Homeward Bound’s mission statement, in *If You Lived Here: The City in Art, Theory, and Social Activism / A Project by Martha Rosler* (1991), the book edited in collaboration with Brian Wallis that Dia published with Bay Press following the project. Horstman’s images resonate visually with the American documentary photographic tradition of which Rosler is critical. Rosler famously expressed that critique in her 1981 article “In, Around, and Afterthoughts (on Documentary Photography)” and in the photo-text work *The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems* (1974–75), which the essay was written to elucidate.<sup>11</sup> “Documentary, as we know it,” she writes, “carries (old) information about a group of powerless people to another group addressed as socially powerful.”<sup>12</sup> As I will show, Rosler had originally advocated for the inclusion of another set of images in the *If You Lived Here* book, images of Homeward Bound members posed in their temporary office in the gallery installation. But these were omitted, resulting in a confrontation with Dia director Charles Wright about how the group should be represented. The posed images Rosler favored interest me because whereas her “In, Around, and Afterthoughts” and *The Bowery* are critical works that define the politics

of photographic representation negatively by stressing what documentary photography should not be, Rosler's commitment to these other images shows her attempt to facilitate the positive representation of an oppressed group. It moreover demonstrates how institutional processes can thwart such representations. I argue that central to Rosler's interest in those images was their posed nature, and specifically the sense of collective agency the pose communicated. On a broad scale, this case study helps flesh out the art historical evolution, over the 1980s and 1990s, from institutional critique to institutionalized social practice by showing how the latter arises from the former but also sets in motion complex processes involving audiences and other constituencies that cannot be reduced to the modality of critique.

### Homeward Bound's Visibility Inside and Outside the Gallery

Homeward Bound's visibility was a central stake in their participation in "Homeless." Art critic Elizabeth Hess wrote in the *Village Voice* that the project 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."<sup>13</sup> I agree with Hess's assessment but also want to stress the role that the group's visibility played in the forging of that alliance. Rosler initially came into contact with Homeward Bound through her assistant, urban activist Dan Wiley, who had at one point slept along with the group in their encampment in City Hall Park.<sup>14</sup> Homeward Bound's participation in *If You Lived Here . . .* took place in spaces that were highly visible to art audiences, namely, the "Homeless" installation and the concurrent town-hall meeting "Homelessness: Conditions, Causes, Cures" (the same one that saw Cenén's spectacular performance, which I discussed in chapter 1). When I interviewed Rosler, she spoke about Homeward Bound's participation in terms of the practical resources with which the project provided 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.<sup>15</sup> This was a form of support they had 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.<sup>16</sup> However, at Dia, Homeward Bound members were not allotted a private or semiprivate space out of which to work. For example, the front conference room in Dia's offices at 155 Mercer Street had been used for roundtable discussions during art collective Group Material's *Democracy*, the project that preceded Rosler's and to which it was connected conceptually in terms of Dia's exhibition planning. Homeward Bound's temporary office, however, was located in a gallery, surrounded by artworks by various artists, including homeless artists, on the theme of homelessness (Figure 3.2). That Homeward Bound's office was located not only in a public space but in the gallery, a space explicitly associated with display, made it clear that their visibility itself was an important element of their participation.

Rosler developed the "Homeless" installation with an acute awareness of the overdetermined relationship between homelessness and visibility. In particular, she was cautious to avoid the inclusion of images of people lying on the ground, the most stereotypical representation of American homelessness (the one exception to this being



**FIGURE 3.2.** Martha Rosler, *If You Lived Here . . .*, "Homeless: The Street and Other Venues" installation. Photograph by Oren Slor. Courtesy of the Dia Art Foundation, New York.

a public service announcement that used such an image to critique the lack of policy in Los Angeles for addressing homelessness).<sup>17</sup> The fraught relationship between homeless people and visibility operates at a number of levels, in that they tend to be both structurally invisible and physically overvisible. Analysts of poverty in the United States have identified invisibility as a characteristic of American poverty as such. Michael Harrington, in his landmark 1962 book *The Other America: Poverty in the United States*, describes the millions of poor Americans as “internal exiles” inhabiting an “invisible land.” “Here is a great mass of people,” Harrington writes, “yet it takes an effort of the intellect and will even to see them.”<sup>18</sup> Forty years later, David Shipler made a similar point about low-income workers, whose lives and labor, he argues, are “shrouded in an invisibility cloak,” overlooked by analysts and politicians.<sup>19</sup> At the same time that the poor suffer this structural and social invisibility, those without homes contend daily with the threat of personal, physical visibility as part of being homeless, a visibility that puts them at risk for violence, displacement, and discrimination. Art critic Richard Woodward, in his review of Rosler’s show, describes a video in which a man named Carl detailed his techniques for dressing so that people could not tell he was homeless, an attempt to contravene the annihilating force of that visibility.<sup>20</sup> By contrast to homeless people, those with economic privilege—including many who were visitors to the “Homeless” show—are both more visible, in terms of how dominant culture represents a legitimate life, and less visible, in that they enjoy the protection of a private domestic sphere.

Rosalyn Deutsche, in a 1986 essay, demonstrates how this uneven distribution of visibility is the result of discourses that sever or “cosmeticize” relationships among gentrification, urban design, architecture, and the profit-driven reshaping of New York’s urban landscape. Deutsche is critical of the way the fetishization of architectural heritage, coupled with an unproblematized acceptance of gentrification, produces a perception of homeless people as the cause of urban problems, when in fact homelessness is the result of the destruction of low-income housing, a process allied with “revitalization” and development.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, as Randall Cohen has recently pointed out, the term “homeless” is used colloquially to label poor people visible in urban space, often without any knowledge of whether a person so labeled is actually without housing, is living in a transitional facility, or is in fact housed.<sup>22</sup> This definition of homelessness from the phenomenological perspective of the privileged is exactly what Rosler pinpoints in her description of the figure of the “drunken bum” as it operates in the work of American documentary photographers such as Jacob Riis, Lewis Hine, Walker Evans, Diane Arbus, David Burnett, and Dorothea Lange:

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* (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.<sup>23</sup>

Rosler's own photo-text artwork *The Bowery* constituted one attempt to intervene in the process of "physical coding" that keeps the structural perpetuation of income inequality invisible by localizing that coding's result to the body of the "drunken bum." Bodies are nowhere to be seen in *The Bowery*, which instead juxtaposes empty street scenes, in a style that quotes Walker Evans (Figure 3.3), with clusters of words describing drunken stupor—for example, "comatose / unconscious / passed out / knocked out / laid out / out of the picture / out like a light" using these two "inadequate descriptive systems" to evoke the subject of homelessness while refusing to materialize it. I will discuss that work further below.

New York in the 1980s saw various interventions by politically engaged artists who attempted to make homelessness visible differently in order to combat the "cosmeticizing" effect of gentrification. Krzysztof Wodiczko's *Homeless Projection: A Proposal for the City of New York* (1986) was an important contribution this regard. Wodiczko's work consisted of a proposal to project images of begging, disheveled, or visibly disabled people onto grand sculptural monuments in Union Square Park. This work, Deutsche argues, proposed to interfere with the aesthetic imperative of revitalization, thereby restoring the viewer's ability to perceive the connections between the phenomenon of homelessness and the forces of capital reshaping the city.<sup>24</sup> Subsequently, in 1988–89, Wodiczko created his *Homeless Vehicle*, an expandable metal pod that could be wheeled around the city and used for a single-person sleeping space, as well as for storage of personal belongings. Beyond its practical function, the vehicle's unusual appearance, which the artist described as resembling a weapon, with a crowning flag and hazard stripes, rendered it a conspicuously visible intervention in city space. Its conspicuous visibility posed the question of the need that gave rise to it and the possibility for resistance against those conditions.<sup>25</sup> Rosler's gallery installation included photos of the vehicle, as well as a design plan for it.

In addition to showcasing projects such as Wodiczko's, Rosler used her access to Dia's gallery as an opportunity to invite Homeward Bound to make use of the space. That invitation not only addressed the gallery's representational function but also enacted a politicized appropriation of high-end real estate space for the work of people displaced by the luxury development of areas such as Soho. Simultaneously, the overdetermined visibility of homeless people, coupled with the association between art galleries and display, gave rise to questions about whether the situation might have had the effect of objectifying Homeward Bound. Artist and writer Gregory Sholette, who contributed work to the exhibition based on a critique of Jacob Riis's photography, does not remember seeing the group in the gallery himself. But he recalls that questions circulated about the potentially problematic nature of representations of homeless people "in the flesh."<sup>26</sup> Andrew Castrucci of the Bullet Space art squat remembers feeling discomfited by the situation and ambivalent about whether it simply objectified the group or productively created a challenging representation.<sup>27</sup> Camilla Fallon, an artist who worked at Dia in the Wooster Street gallery, remembers that the situation was generally an uncomfortable one for everyone involved, including Homeward Bound, as "they were kind of *on display*."<sup>28</sup>





**FIGURE 3.3.** Detail of Martha Rosler's *The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems*, 1974–75. Forty-five gelatin silver prints of text and image mounted on twenty-four backing boards. Courtesy of Martha Rosler.

These comments evoke a disconcerting feeling of display circulating among all those present, including not only Homeward Bound members but also gallery visitors and employees. Simultaneously, Rosler points out that it was not necessarily visually clear within the scope of the project who was homeless and who was not.<sup>29</sup> This point leads me to speculate that the question of who might be homeless may have been affectively palpable within interpersonal interactions as they occurred among various participants, visitors, and Dia employees, without necessarily giving rise to clear-cut divisions between homeless and housed. Castrucci's and Fallon's comments take into account their own affective and political implication in the situation, in the form of the feeling of discomfort. Two journalists responding to the show were less self-reflexive in their critique, targeting Rosler personally and harshly for what they perceived as the problematic aspect of the exhibition. Peg Tyre and Jeannette Walls wrote in a clearly scandal-seeking article for *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." The authors then quote an unnamed "source," stating: "The whole thing is in very questionable taste. . . . 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."<sup>30</sup>

Contrary to Tyre and Walls's accusations, the paradox of Homeward Bound's visibility within "Homeless" was not simply imposed on them by Rosler but was a role the group accepted with awareness of its complexity. Former group member Nelson Prime relates that Dia had originally contacted Homeward Bound through the Food and Hunger Hotline about the possibility of participating in a project in which they wanted to involve the live presence of homeless people. He states that the project "gave us something to do, and also gave us some exposure," thereby fitting into the group's central goal of making homelessness visible, on which I will elaborate below. He describes the exhibition as a space set up to show how homeless people lived, with the goal of letting visitors also see it from "our eyes." There was ambivalence in the group about participation in the project, considering that Homeward Bound members were in a position to speak for themselves and were wary about organizations that might seek to "exploit" them. The project also came along at a time when Homeward Bound had a lot on its plate, as the group was dealing with the key priority of organizing its finances. Prime played a central role in that financial organization process, as group leader Larry Locke was largely occupied with speaking engagements. Prime recalls that he smoothed over other group members' ambivalence about the Dia project by stressing that they could do it temporarily and see how it went, either proving or disproving that it was in fact exploitative. He says that despite the ambivalence, the group had positive relations with Dia (by which I take him to mean not only actual Dia employees but also Rosler and her team), who he feels had good intentions with the project.<sup>31</sup>

Minutes from a meeting of Homeward Bound, titled "Meeting Wed. Apr. 5th [1989]," show the group attempting to think through the ways this situation 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:

## HB 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*
- 3) *Self help* Madhousers from Atlanta  
public demonstration temp [illegible]
- 4) Employment opp referrals<sup>32</sup>

In the list of problems, “we are on display” is followed by the qualification “(see below),” but the rest of the extant notes fail to elucidate this. Among the justifications, which include employment and contacts with the Atlanta-based Mad Housers, an activist housing collective who also participated (Figure 3.4), I argue that “education” was the most important conceptual stake for Homeward Bound. This investment in education was closely connected to the condition of being on display.

Rosler stresses the self-determination of Homeward Bound’s involvement in the project: she had approached them with an open-ended offer of participation, and this was the format they chose.<sup>33</sup> In “Fragments of a Metropolitan Viewpoint,” her essay for the *If You Lived Here* project book, she describes their agency as follows:

[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.<sup>34</sup>

Rosler here describes Homeward Bound’s participation in the show not only as a self-determined act of creating meaning but as an extension of their activism. That activism included political organization and advocacy, such as registering people to vote in City Hall Park, speaking at events, and organizing workshops, which was one of the activities they wanted to undertake in the gallery space.<sup>35</sup> But Homeward Bound’s self-production of meaning within “Homeless” was not totally free of constraints. The clearest example of the limitations placed on the group’s use of the gallery space arose



**FIGURE 3.4.** Hut built by members of the Mad Housers collective (Atlanta, Georgia) in the gallery during Martha Rosler's *If You Lived Here . . .*, "Homeless: The Street and Other Venues" installation. Photograph by Oren Slor. Courtesy of Martha Rosler.

in relation to the question of whether or not members 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 (Figure 3.5).<sup>36</sup> After Dia made it clear that Homeward Bound members would not be allowed to sleep in the space, the six beds remained there, 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. Through their orderly arrangement, and also through their neatness, the beds called to mind less a personal, domestic sleeping space than the institutional one of a homeless shelter. It may in fact have been unclear to visitors whether or not the gallery was actually operating as a shelter during the show. Rosler states that the act of sleeping in the gallery would never have been announced in the first place; as such, whether people were actually sleeping there or not, other visitors were left to draw their own conclusions, based on the setup of the installation, about the use of the space.<sup>37</sup> Woodward, in his review, fails to note the fact that the beds were not in use, stating simply that the installation “included shelter for the homeless (sofa, chairs, a TV and a corridor lined with beds).”<sup>38</sup>

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:

To the People of Homeward Bound,

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 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 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.<sup>39</sup>

At the level of legality, the 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, it elucidates the relationships among 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 toward 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. The letter thus explicitly articulates such visibility as a shared goal in the collaboration among group members, institution, and artist.



**FIGURE 3.5.** Gallery beds in Martha Rosler's *If You Lived Here . . .*, "Homeless: The Street and Other Venues" installation. Photograph by Oren Slor. Courtesy of the Dia Art Foundation, New York.

The question of whether Homeward Bound would be able to sleep in the gallery had material significance for them in terms of the first justification listed in the meeting notes: “we’d take 6 people off streets.” But it was also important for the group’s political work, as illustrated by their long-term encampment in front of City Hall that started in June 1988 and lasted for approximately two hundred days.<sup>40</sup> 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.<sup>41</sup> Jiler’s book, which chronicles the rise and fall of Homeward Bound, provides significant insight into the importance of the group but is also problematic as a historical source because of its degree of fictionalization. The book asserts the truth of its narrative even in its title. But then it opens with a disclaimer, in which Jiler states that because of the stigma of homelessness, he has changed the names of some characters and altered identifying information. Some figures, though, are identified by their real names, including Homeward Bound leaders Larry Locke and Duke York, the politician Abe Gerges, and Rabbi Marc Greenberg of the Interfaith Assembly on Housing and Homelessness, an organization that sponsored the group.

Jiler stresses that Homeward Bound’s existence was bound up from the very beginning both with the political power of visibility and with complex power dynamics between the group and various institutions. As he relates it, Homeward Bound was galvanized, if not initiated, by Greenberg and the Interfaith Assembly. Greenberg coordinated the overnight vigil against homelessness on June 1, 1988, at which Homeward Bound originally formed. That vigil segued into their semipermanent encampment.<sup>42</sup> 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, Jiler narrates the experiences not only of diverse members of the group but also of others who come in contact with them, including the embattled mayor Ed Koch. The novel focuses in particular on Larry Locke and Duke York, another publicly prominent member of the group, who contributed an artwork consisting of a collaged door to the “Homeless” exhibition.<sup>43</sup> In the novel, Locke’s character meets with a series of disillusionments about Homeward Bound’s inability to create permanent change for their 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 commitment to it.

*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 passersby who moved through the park.<sup>44</sup> 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.<sup>45</sup>

Jiler's narrative and Batson's memory give context to the importance to Homeward Bound of sleeping in Dia's gallery. During the City Hall Park encampment, sleeping in the park was central to attracting media attention, their strongest means of exercising political agency. In a *New York Times* article of November 28, 1988, journalist Michael Marriott describes the group as "organized, stubborn and well spoken . . . also an eyesore and a political rotten egg for the Koch administration."<sup>46</sup> With this vocabulary, Marriott 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 insofar as it is affective, something that brings about emotional and bodily discomfort for members of the Koch administration. The participants in *If You Lived Here* . . . cited above, as well as Tyre and Walls 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 represents Homeward Bound's affectively potent visibility as their 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 supporters sent in 1989, shortly following their participation in "Homeless," the group thanks forty-two organizational sponsors, including "Dia foundation," as well as Channel 41, the American Civil Liberties Union, ACT UP, the Manhattan Borough President's Office, the Pratt Institute, and multiple churches. They also thank almost seventy individual sponsors, including City Council members, a senator, and a congressman.<sup>47</sup> Not only did these individual and organizational agents have something to give Homeward Bound in terms of resources, media coverage, or political advocacy, but they also had something to gain from the way Homeward Bound made homelessness visible. For example, though Interfaith was well organized and was able to bring in financial resources, Homeward Bound, as a vocal, media-oriented group of homeless people, held the potential to influence 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 Web site, which states that Homeward Bound "became a center of public attention and altered the way the public viewed homeless people."<sup>48</sup> In the 1989 letter to supporters, 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."

Jiler's and Marriott's emphases on the centrality of visibility to Homeward Bound's work resonate with Prime's account of the group's political goals. He pointed out to me that Homeward Bound formed just one of numerous homeless activist organizations operating at the time, and that all had different aims. In contrast, for example, to the United Homeless Organization (UHO), an organization primarily geared toward



fund-raising, Homeward Bound's project was to increase the positive public visibility of homeless people, a goal that found enthusiastic reception in a number of contexts. "Everybody had a kind of profile we stuck to," Prime states, "and Homeward Bound's was putting [the] homeless on the map. . . . We were highly visible, and people thought highly of us." In addition to being geared not just generally toward homeless people's empowerment but also particularly toward the issue of making homelessness visible in the public arena, Homeward Bound's intervention was a site-specific response to a particular historical constellation of New York City politics. The group disbanded around 1991, when the "passion shifted" as Mayor Koch got out of office, and it was clear that they had already made their point.<sup>49</sup>

In the City Hall encampment, the state of being on display was exactly what enabled Homeward Bound to reach the public. Had group members been allowed to sleep in Dia's gallery, they would have had a temporary reprieve from imposed public visibility but would still have had to come to terms with the relationship between that space and the connotation of display carried by the art gallery. Homeward Bound's participation in the "Homeless" installation and their City Hall encampment, each with its own unique form of visibility, might both be understood as forms of tactical spectacle, designed to change public attitudes toward homelessness. The two contexts, though, were attached to different sets of discourses, with questions of occupation and civil disobedience more pressing at City Hall and issues of representation and viewership more relevant at Dia. An essential focus of the problem of how they should be represented in the gallery space, particularly from Rosler's perspective, was the photographic documentation of their participation, to which I turn next.

### The Pose

Rosler was strongly invested in the photographic documentation of Homeward Bound's participation, which for her cut to the heart of the politics of the group's representation within the project. Her personal archive for *If You Lived Here . . .* contains several images of Homeward Bound members in the gallery. In one, members are seated in a circle holding a meeting (Figure 3.6); another is a blurry photo of people at the closing party that took place the same day (Figure 3.7); one shows group members goofing around inside the hut built by the Mad Housers (Figure 3.8). Also present in Rosler's archive are eight images of group members posed behind the desk in the gallery office to have their photo taken. One woman is wearing the same outfit in the image of the closing party as in these posed images, appearing to indicate that the latter photos were also taken on the day of the closing. For more than twenty years following *If You Lived Here . . .*, Dia's archive contained two images from this set, filed with the installation shots from Rosler's project. The authorship of these posed images is unclear: Dia's archive gives no clear attribution, and neither Rosler nor others involved remember who took them. They might have been taken by Rosler herself, or by the photographer Oren Slor, who was contracted by Dia to document all the installations for *If You Lived Here . . .*, or by someone else.<sup>50</sup> Following the completion of *If You Lived Here . . .*, these images of



**FIGURE 3.6.** Members and supporters of Homeward Bound Community Services holding a meeting in the gallery of Martha Rosler's *If You Lived Here . . .*, "Homeless: The Street and Other Venues" installation. Photograph by Martha Rosler. Courtesy of Martha Rosler.



**FIGURE 3.7.** Closing party of Martha Rosler's *If You Lived Here . . .*, "Homeless: The Street and Other Venues" installation. Photograph by Martha Rosler. Courtesy of Martha Rosler.

Homeward Bound became bound up in a terse negotiation between Rosler and Dia about how the group should be represented in the project book.

The behind-the-desk photographs appear to have all been taken in quick succession. Click, wind, click. In one image (Plate 8), a group of thirteen people is posed behind a wooden desk and in front of a temporary wooden divider, behind which we can see the gallery wall. The wooden divider bears a number of photographic portraits, various typed information sheets, at least three children's drawings, and a small banner handwritten on brown paper headed with the words "Housing" and "Homelessness." In the foreground of the photograph, a piece of wood stands on the desk, with the words "Homeward Bound Community Services" written in black marker. The people in the group stand close together, right in the center of the image. There are four women, seven men, a baby, and a small girl. A woman with strawberry blonde hair and a bright blue sweater sits at the desk (she is the one who also appears behind the desk, wearing this same sweater, in the closing party photo). One of her hands is poised on the typewriter. 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. A woman holding the baby smiles broadly. Except for a bearded man blinking in the background, all group members look directly into the camera. On the whole, they seem friendly and connected to each other. They smile, but not in a strained way.

It might seem obvious to state that this image represents Homeward Bound as present within their office space in the gallery. But in fact, the actual amount of time they spent in the gallery and the extent to which the space operated functionally for them as an office remain unclear. 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.<sup>51</sup> Dia employee Camilla Fallon recalls that the time Homeward Bound actually spent in the gallery was quite limited: "Martha may have brought people in for a day, and that would probably have been it."<sup>52</sup> Project assistant Dan Wiley states that the gallery office was set up as a space the group could use and that the goal 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."<sup>53</sup> For Wiley, the aim 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 work taking place gives the impression of the group's energy, labor, and collective presence filling up the space. The photograph fixes the group's use of the gallery, which was occasional and somewhat controversial, into a solid image of uncontested collective presence.

One of the strongest visual characteristics of the behind-the-desk images is their posed quality. This comes into relief when we compare them to the other images in Rosler's files: in the picture of the group seated conducting their meeting, the photographer looks over people's shoulders, acknowledged only by a young woman who glances back toward the camera. In the shot of the closing party, people seem oblivious to her



**FIGURE 3.8.** Homeward Bound members in the hut built by the Mad Housers at Martha Rosler's *If You Lived Here . . .*, "Homeless: The Street and Other Venues" installation. Photograph by Martha Rosler. Courtesy of Martha Rosler.

capture of the ambient social scene. In the image of group members joking around in the Mad Housers hut, none of the subjects looks directly at the camera, though one man in particular, standing in the foreground in front of the hut, seems aware of the photographer's gaze, grinning and making a comic gesture with his hands that is compositionally central to the image. By contrast, the behind-the-desk images show Homeward Bound members specifically posed for the photographs. Or rather, of the photographs, the one I described above shows a more or less complete pose: the members arranged, standing and sitting, behind the desk. Rosler's archive contains another image taken directly before or after the clearly posed one, which shows the pose either coalescing or coming undone (Plate 9). A tall man in a tracksuit on the right-hand side is speaking, standing with his palms outspread, facing up. He seems to be telling a joke, evoking a laugh from the bearded man in the gray suit, now a blur on the right side of the frame. The woman in blue glances over at him, and the one holding the baby gives him a marked look, potentially indicating irritation or offense. Behind the man making the joke, a woman who smiles demurely in the posed image cracks a wider grin. The little girl looks shyly off to the side. Only the smiling woman and the man second from the left are still looking into the camera. On the whole, the group appears here more dynamic and less united. The interactions among the people pictured are more visible. We get less of a clear presentation of them as a unit but more hints at how they might have related to each other.

What is the representational significance of the pose in these images? Various writers on photography have reflected on the agency encapsulated in poses. Roland Barthes, in *Camera Lucida*, describes the act of posing as a moment in which one makes oneself visible in order to enable the production of an image:

Once 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.<sup>54</sup>

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. The pose is the difference between tolerating or submitting to the "caprice" of the photograph and actively participating in it by using the body to generate an image-before-the-image that becomes the photograph's condition of possibility. In writing about a snapshot of her father as a young man, bell hooks also underscores the agency inherent in the pose: "There is such boldness, such fierce openness in the way he faces the camera."<sup>55</sup>

We can also see an interest in the political agency of the pose at work in *29 Arrests: Headquarters of the 11th Naval District, May 4, 1972, San Diego* (1972; Figure 3.9) by Fred Lonidier, one of Rosler's compatriots in the group of young, politicized conceptual photographers that coalesced around the University of California, San Diego, master



**FIGURE 3.9.** Detail from Fred Lonidier's *29 Arrests: Headquarters of the 11th Naval District, May 4, 1972, San Diego, 1972*. Courtesy of Fred Lonidier.

of fine arts program in the early 1970s.<sup>56</sup> To shoot the images in this work, Lonidier stood behind a police photographer taking pictures of demonstrators arrested during an anti-Vietnam War protest of the type that was then widespread on campus and off in San Diego, a major U.S. Navy port and headquarters of numerous defense contractors. The photograph *29 Arrests* encapsulates the intimacy between a critical distancing from photography and its politicized reappropriation, which characterized the work of members of the San Diego group, including Rosler, Allan Sekula, and others.<sup>57</sup> Lonidier's act of photographing the protestors is a reenactment of the police photographer's disciplinary act, which sidles up as close as possible to that original action, both spatially and temporally.<sup>58</sup> But Lonidier's proximate counterrecord also contests the fixing of the protestor as lawbreaker by giving rise to a document of protestors' cheerful resilience. Seriality, which plays a disciplinary function of systematic cataloging in the police photos, becomes resignified in Lonidier's to highlight the broad base of antiwar sentiment: one after another, the protestors just keep coming. By capturing the grins on protestors' faces as the police hold them to be photographed, *29 Arrests* pivots between the disciplinary function that Sekula describes as the "arrest" of the subject and the possibility that posing for the photograph can constitute a form of agency.<sup>59</sup> The pose visually acknowledges the constraint of the disciplinary apparatus in the formation of the image while simultaneously asserting a resistance against that very disciplinarity.

In the behind-the-desk photos, the pose unites Homeward Bound members visually into a compositional unit, and thereby implicitly into a common project. It claims for them the visual vocabulary of the team, the collaborative, the club, thereby stressing their collective organization to meet specific, clearly legible goals. Moreover, the fact of their posing articulates a relation with the viewer of the image. Craig Owens, in his 1984 essay "Posing," argues that in the photograph, the posed subject's look figures the gaze of the photographer who captures the scene.<sup>60</sup> The act of posing thus becomes the visual manifestation, in the image, of someone else's future act of looking at the photograph. Rosler has not theorized the importance of the pose explicitly, either in relation to photography in general or in relation to the images of Homeward Bound in particular. But in her writings on photography, what does emerge at various points is a critique of spontaneity, which might be considered the opposite of the pose. In general, Rosler associates spontaneous-seeming photographs with an ideological function, in which the photograph is assumed to capture a single moment of truth, unsullied by the investments of the photographer. In "In, Around, and Afterthoughts," Rosler identifies two "moments" of documentary photography. The first is an "immediate" one in which an image is captured "as evidence in the most legalistic of senses, arguing for or against a social practice and its ideological-theoretical supports."<sup>61</sup> This is followed by a second, aesthetic moment, where the viewer takes pleasure from the formal qualities of the image. In these two moments, proof and pleasure unite to create a powerful discourse in which aesthetic appeal cloaks the photograph's ideological function. The ideological function of the supposedly spontaneous image emerges again in Rosler's essay on the photography of Lee Friedlander, where she writes that his 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.<sup>62</sup> In essence, for Rosler, the appearance of spontaneity has an antipedagogical effect in that it keeps viewers from becoming aware of the ideological structures that shape the production and experience of the photograph. The withholding of the visual pleasure and emotional catharsis associated with spontaneity thereby takes on a strong ethical valence.

Correspondence in Rosler's personal archive indicates that she wanted one of the posed photos included in the project book, *If You Lived Here: The City in Art, Theory, and Social Activism / A Project by Martha Rosler* (1991). Instead, published in the book is a selection of black-and-white images by photographer Alcina Horstman of Homeward Bound members in their City Hall park encampment (Figures 3.10a and 3.10b). Of the images included in the book, the largest is an individual portrait, and all depict the members of Homeward Bound as friendly and cheerful amid the obvious squalor of the park. On a stylistic level, Horstman's photographs resonate with the American documentary tradition that Rosler has critiqued. In particular, they display an attempt to capture their subjects spontaneously in a way that evokes that tradition. From the correspondence records, it seems that the inclusion of Horstman's images instead of those taken in the gallery was the result of a series of miscommunications, exacerbated by the fact that Rosler was geographically distant, teaching in South Africa during a crucial phase of manuscript preparation. In a 1990 fax to Dia director Wright, Rosler expressed her displeasure at the photographic representation of Homeward Bound in the book:

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.<sup>63</sup>

Rosler depicts the choice of photographs for the book as cutting to the heart of her and Homeward Bound's collective goals for the project. Wright, in his reply, makes it clear that the posed images can no longer be included in the book, but he also expresses disagreement with the idea that the photo of Homeward Bound in the exhibition is essential to depicting the group as exercising agency:

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. . . . To save money and time, the change wasn't made.<sup>64</sup>





A



B

**FIGURE 3.10.** Alcina Horstman, *Members of Homeward Bound Community Services at the City Hall Vigil, Summer 1988, 1988*. Black and white silver gelatin prints. Courtesy of Alcina Horstman.

In this exchange, Rosler and Wright approach the images from two strongly differing positions, which appear almost unintelligible to one another. 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. Wright, on the other hand, approached the issue on the basis of an idea of average audience viewership. As the director of a small, financially struggling organization, he was working to use the resources available to create a publication that effectively presented *If You Lived Here . . .* to the public. From his perspective as expressed in the fax, the specificities of Homeward Bound's representation would be largely unnoticeable to readers not involved with a specific set of debates.

Though Wright claims that the differences between the two sets of images would fly under the radar for most viewers, I agree with Rosler that the experiences of viewership elicited by the two sets of images differ radically. In the behind-the-desk photos, the collective pose acts as a vehicle by which photography operates self-reflexively, giving Homeward Bound members the opportunity to engage with the process of their representation. Furthermore, the differences between the posed and the slightly less posed images highlight what the rejection of spontaneity in favor of pose both makes visible and forecloses from visibility. In the more formally posed, less animated of the two images, we are less able to project ourselves into the image as an imagined situation, to think that we know something about the people pictured and what their relationships were like. The pose, to this extent, blocks a certain kind 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 read from the perspective of Rosler's approach to photography, it appears productive for precisely this reason: the posed images discourage an imaginary possession of homeless people by the mind of the curious viewer, who is no longer confidently able to think she or he holds authoritative knowledge of the people pictured.

Concerning Horstman's photos, it is important to note that the way they communicate in the book, or fail to, is not an inherent quality of the images themselves; rather, it is dependent on their contextual deployment. The portraits were also hung, matted and framed, in Homeward Bound's office in the gallery during the installation. Rosler herself points out that the context was essential in terms of the way these images signified. In her text for the project book, she writes that Horstman's images, "using an artificial documentary approach, meant something very different in [Homeward Bound's] office space."<sup>65</sup> Below I will explore in greater detail the significance of that statement relative to Rosler's oeuvre. For now, I want to convey that Horstman in fact had an ongoing dialogue with Homeward Bound members on the topic of their photographic representation, a dialogue that spanned both the period in which she created their images and the display of the portraits in the gallery office. Of everyone I interviewed for this research, Horstman was able to provide some of the most detailed information about the group and their interpersonal dynamics. In 1988, as a twenty-five-year-old

student at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, she came to New York for the summer with the goal of photographing homelessness. She started volunteering with the Coalition for Homelessness, distributing food, handing out cigarettes, and getting to know people. She became friends with Bill Batson, with whom she would deliver sandwiches to City Hall Park, and she eventually started going over to people in the Homeward Bound encampment and asking if she could spend time with them. Horstman camped out with the group several times and had discussions with them about the role of photography relative to homelessness. She relates that some members of the group were suspicious of documentary photography, asking whether “we needed more pictures of black men with their hands out,” and had also become disillusioned with journalists who took pictures and promised to return with copies for the subjects but never did. Horstman, in these discussions, defended the capacity of photography to create dignity and ultimately ended up working with those subjects who consented to be photographed, creating a series of black-and-white portraits. Horstman recalls that when the group members saw the portraits hung in the gallery office in the “Homeless” installation, they “absolutely loved them.”<sup>66</sup>

Horstman remembers Homeward Bound as characterized by a hopeful, positive momentum, which she states had a lot of impact on the feeling of dignity concerning homelessness in the city. The City Hall encampment also created a safe space, which was particularly important for the few women involved. The group, Horstman stresses, was far from homogeneous: some members were grappling with mental health or addiction problems; others were working full-time jobs, such as one woman who was working at Mrs. Field’s Cookies and her partner who was also working full time, but who were still unable to get together enough money for a rent deposit. She recalls that Nelson Prime, whose portrait is among the two included in the *If You Lived Here* book, was attending college and typing his papers on a typewriter in the park. Opinions also differed within the group on topics ranging from inclusivity to political representation. Horstman remembers that a transgender person, whose portrait is also included in the book, was treated badly by some members, whereas others advocated tolerance and openness. Some members were also more sensitive than others to the political and representational dynamics involved with participation in events and projects and desired to take a more active role in visibly representing the group. Horstman’s memories about Homeward Bound members’ attitudes toward her images demonstrate an important point about their approach toward photographic representation. Her narrative of the progression from suspicion to enthusiastic embrace of the images as displayed in the gallery office shows group members’ critical discernment of the conditions of their representation, as established above in Prime’s comments about the project and in the meeting notes where they reflect on the pros and cons of being “on display.” Moreover, it demonstrates their sensitivity to context in terms of how those representations were deployed. Group members, despite their critique of documentary photography in general, were willing to receive images in that tradition as humanizing and respectful when they were displayed within a certain context, namely, a space devoted to the group and to their work.

For Rosler, the posed images of Homeward Bound held the power to function pedagogically, by pointing to the ideological nature of photographic representation while simultaneously asserting a sense of the group's collective agency. Horstman's images, by contrast, focused on articulating a sense of personal dignity. Both goals, fostering dignity and undertaking education, were central to Homeward Bound's work. As I stated above relative to the meeting notes, which mention "education" as a primary goal of their participation, the group conceived that work in a pedagogical way, as an attempt to change public opinion about homelessness and homeless people. I will now look more carefully at Homeward Bound's and Rosler's shared investment in audience pedagogy, in order to understand how it operated in the gallery installation and in the public town-hall meeting.

### The Audience as Pedagogical Subjects

Homeward Bound members' commitment to educating the public was central to how they navigated the necessarily problematic issue of visibility. In fact, it appears that one of the central reasons they decided to submit to visibility at all was their investment in propagating a specific model of audience viewership. That model was one that took the audience member as a pedagogical subject, who through Homeward Bound's activities would come to see homeless people in a more positive light but who would also come to gain a new understanding of her- or himself as a site of reciprocal visibility. Within "Homeless," this interpellation by Homeward Bound of the audience member as a learning subject spanned both the gallery show, where the group's office was located, and the town-hall meeting, "Homelessness: Conditions, Causes, Cures," at which group leader Larry Locke was a speaker. Locke's speech at the "Homelessness" meeting revolved around an idea of reciprocity, but specifically a sort of asymmetrical reciprocity. The meeting was chaired by Bill Batson, who, 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 were homeless.<sup>67</sup> On the audio recording of the meeting, Locke's voice is slow and deliberate as he delivers his speech:

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. . . . 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.<sup>68</sup>

Locke locates the group's very emergence in the degree to which its members are able to function as educators. He connects working, a politically contentious issue surrounding homelessness (reportedly, Mayor Koch used to yell "Get a job!" at the members

of Homeward Bound as he walked through the park), to the practice of education.<sup>69</sup> The audience at the “Homelessness” forum was made up of people from various art communities in New York as well as others interested in the problem of homelessness. Locke addresses the audience as other, as “people like yourself,” implicitly interpellating them as privileged. In doing so, he highlights their status as visible members of a generalized category. This equation posits reciprocity, but without sameness, in that Locke marks the difference between the homeless community and the town-hall meeting’s privileged attendees. He assigns that privileged audience a place in relation to the homeless community, but without positing a relationship of sameness between them. Within that framework of unequal reciprocity, he uses the concept of education rhetorically to generate a new relationship. That different relation comes to replace middle-class viewing of the homeless as objectified others, or as Rosler put it in “In, Around, and Afterthoughts,” as specimens of “a physically coded social reality.”<sup>70</sup> In the process, education becomes a figure for reciprocity as such.

Locke closes his remarks with another role reversal: 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 as being in a position of power to support Dia and Rosler’s project, instead of as being 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 he 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. Shortly after his speech, however, another participant intervened to express intense distrust of the institutional framework and of the limits it placed on audience interaction. This is filmmaker and Colab member Liza Béar, who in contrast to Locke’s affirmative tone speaks from the floor in a way that is angrily disruptive of the space of the town-hall meeting.

Béar’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 partway 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 over the course of Gerges’s speech is the extent to which his participation in the meeting is intended to win votes. Following his speech, Béar explodes in anger, which Locke attempts to calm:

BÉAR: 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 *cannot* be done with a panel with all this formality; we've got to mingle; we've got to put back 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 *mingle*; they're *sitting* here; you know I feel *insulted* for these people; they're being talked at. . . . 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*.

BÉAR: 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—

BÉAR: That's right.

LOCKE: 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 the council member here. 'Cause we have to work with him and his legislators to get bills passed, Liza.

BÉAR: Who are we trying to reach?<sup>71</sup>

Following this exchange, Béar and Batson, the chair, get into a further argument, before she stops speaking. Béar's wrath is directed not only at Gerges but at the format of the panel as such. She is sensitive to its aesthetic component and to the way the setup of the room prevents dialogical "mingling." By yelling and moving the chairs, she rebels aurally and spatially against the reproduction of speaker authority, juxtaposed against an audience experience that she casts as passive and constraining. Béar codes the panel setup—with speakers at the front of the room, chairs facing them, and microphones for audience comments—as a spectacle, which negates the production of new and useful knowledge. She advocates instead for physical flow and movement as a way to create politically productive reciprocity, which she pursues by attempting physically to disrupt the space of spectacle.

In the exchange between Béar and Locke, she is sympathetic to him more than to any of the other speakers, including Batson. But it is clear that their approaches to generating reciprocity, specifically as concerns their attitude to spectacle and to power, are totally different. Locke occupies a speaking position within the conventional setup of the panel, and he seeks to use that position to put forward a model of the audience as learners about homelessness, but also to exploit existing avenues of power through collaboration with those, like Gerges, who are already in positions of authority. Above, I characterized *Homeward Bound's* approach as one of tactical spectacle. I speculate

that this approach is connected to an attitude in the group expressed in Locke's speech, in which he acknowledges a fundamental divide between the community he represents and the audience he addresses. Because that divide exists, the process of seeing each other, literally and metaphorically, will necessarily be bound up with some element of a spectacle of difference. Simultaneously, that spectacular quality does not, in Locke's representation, preclude a genuine ethical encounter. That encounter can take place when underprivileged people intentionally take up a pedagogical role and when the privileged in turn recognize that people without privilege indeed have something to teach. This pedagogical spectacle is "tactical" in the sense that it is provisional, presented not as a permanent model for a fairer society but, rather, as a way to address a specific site of inequality. It moreover has a situation-dependent quality, in which group members seek to pursue their work by taking advantage of specific opportunities that arise, such as Gerges's entrance to the meeting or the participation in Rosler's project more broadly (recall Prime's comment that it gave the group some exposure and also gave them something to do).

The interpellation of the viewer as a learner extended to Rosler's gallery installation, where Homeward Bound had their office. But in contrast to Locke's unequal reciprocity, the installation proposed a model of relation based on an inversion of roles between homeless people and the housed. It revolved around a metaphorical casting of that viewer in the role of a homeless person. As stated above, the beds that Rosler originally placed in the gallery remained a part of the installation after Dia made it clear that Homeward Bound members were not allowed to sleep in the space. Stripped of their intended purpose, the beds retained a representational function of presenting 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 New Yorkers might go to obtain the social services available to them. Despite the fact that members of Homeward Bound were present in the gallery only on a limited basis, having their office there established a sense that they had a right to the space. 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.

In the installation, the forms of material support that service organizations provide to homeless people functioned symbolically to position the viewer as a learner about the problem of homelessness. This was underscored by the fact that a meal was served at the exhibition's opening.<sup>72</sup> The meal, provided by Dee Dee Halleck of Paper Tiger Television, Molly Kovel, and Nadja Millner Larsen, was referred to specifically as "soup" within the framework of the show because, Rosler remembers, one of the things that Homeward Bound wanted to do was serve soup in the gallery.<sup>73</sup> Rosler states that the meal drew inspiration from Gordon Matta-Clark's *FOOD* (1971–74) and also that serving food in art spaces was something associated at that time with the work of women artists.<sup>74</sup> On one level, the serving of food in "Homeless" might be read as a parody of a real soup kitchen, with privileged gallerygoers, most of them not

in need of the food for bodily sustenance, invited to play the homeless. But viewed in another light, it interpellates the viewer as someone who needs a certain pedagogical intervention, a repositioning in relation to the problem of homelessness. That pedagogical intervention was supported by Homeward Bound's office and 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.

Pedagogy is thus an investment that spanned Homeward Bound's participation in the project, the gallery installation Rosler created, and her attitude toward the documentation images of their presence. These three instances should neither be conflated nor definitively separated, as part of the way they operated was to create relays of meaning among one another.<sup>75</sup> I will now seek to understand more carefully how these three relate, starting from an analysis of the dynamics of liveness and representation at work in the installation. That analysis, in turn, will help me be more specific about the dynamics of the pedagogical subject position the installation put into play.

### Between Orders of Representation

Above, I discussed the fact that the posed photographs of Homeward Bound members behind the desk materialize an image of their uncontested presence in the gallery, even though that presence was in fact occasional and debated. Should we think about this disparity as something aesthetically or politically problematic, in which the image in effect "covers" for the inconstancy of live presence? Or do the images and the installation relate to one another in a different way? In order to think further about these questions, we need to think more carefully about what kind of relationship to the live body the installation proposed, or more specifically, about what kind of relationship between images and liveness it proposed. That question is connected in turn to the relationship between the image and the live as these coexist in Rosler's practice. When I first spoke with Rosler about *If You Lived Here . . .* and about the "Homeless" segment in particular, I asked her how she thought about the representational relationship between Homeward Bound's presence in the gallery and the images that were created of their participation. She was perplexed by the question, responding simply that *of course* they were completely different: one concerned the presence of live people, and the other, a photographic image.<sup>76</sup> This exchange bothered me for some time, particularly in terms of my own timidity about pressing beyond her initial resistance to try and fumble toward a clearer formulation of the question I wanted to ask. What I have come to realize since then is that Rosler's response came out of the strong difference, for her, between photography, as a static, disciplinary representational apparatus, and the live experience that exceeds it.

In Rosler's work, the body materializes always and only at its points of contact with representational systems. The body never appears on its own terms, envisioned as a corporeal or expressive entity. Instead, it emerges through a structure typical of Rosler's oeuvre, which the artist, in a 1981 interview by Jane Weinstock, described simply as "join[ing] two things that do not go together."<sup>77</sup> When we see this tactic at



work in Rosler's art, it usually operates at several different levels simultaneously, creating a blurring between what might be considered the "formal" and "semantic" layers of a work. In *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home*, calm, static home interiors and violent, urgent war photos converge to propose a form of audience address that rewires the relationship between the two forms of media by placing them on the same experiential plane (Figure 3.11). In the video *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975), the structuralist premise of the work—a naming of kitchen implements from A to Z—clashes with the deadpan humor of Rosler's hammy demonstration of each device. Later, in the 1988 video *Born to Be Sold: Martha Rosler Reads the Strange Case of Baby S/M*, a critique of how the fertility industry functions biopolitically to reproduce class structures, a chillingly serious topic is presented in a mode of campy amateur television, with Rosler dressed as various characters involved in the case, including as a giant baby. In other works, we see less a clear juxtaposition between orders of representation than a particular representational mode that implodes over the course of a work. For example, in the 1977 video *Losing: A Conversation with the Parents*, two parents' narrative of their daughter's death of anorexia deconstructs into social commentary. Rosler pulls at the threads of the talk-show genre not only by scripting bizarre statements within the narrative itself but also through the camerawork and the actors' voices, which disrupt the naturalism of the television talk-show format. (Rosler, in a Brechtian move, used stage actors because she thought their lack of habituation to TV would make it more obvious they were acting.)<sup>78</sup> Or in *Monumental Garage Sale*, a performance staged in the UCSD art gallery in 1973, the more appealing objects displayed at the front of the performance-cum-sale gave way, as the visitor moved toward the back of the gallery, to things like used diaphragms and porn magazines, abject objects that troubled the middle-class social relations embodied by the Southern California garage sale.<sup>79</sup>

Across these artworks, Rosler labors to create friction, caused by the rubbing of an order of representation against another order of representation that is other to it, whether the difference consists in form, genre, or tone. The friction gestures toward a third term, which consists in a particular cluster of relationships in the social field. The term "social field" carries two distinct yet interlocking meanings here. On the one hand, it acts as a way of diagramming relationships among cultural practices of meaning making that ideologically maintain their own separateness from one another—for example, the differences between low-brow porn and fancy underwear ads, which reproduce structures of differentiated class identification in a way that conceals women's structural subordination. Simultaneously, "social field" here indicates the locus where experience unfolds, a process that is itself embedded within larger material relations. Rosler asserts the importance of experience as that which lies beyond representation in a 1998 interview with Benjamin Buchloh, who asks her about her characterization of the descriptive systems of *The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems* as inadequate: "'Inadequate' to what?" "Descriptive systems are inadequate to experience," Rosler responds. "But then the question is, what is experience?"<sup>80</sup> What, indeed? Steve Edwards points out that experience for Rosler is "common," which I take to mean both collective, or relational, but also ordinary, everyday.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, I would argue that



**FIGURE 3.11.** Martha Rosler, *Red Stripe Kitchen*, from the series *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home*, 1967–72. Courtesy of Martha Rosler.

experience in Rosler's work is connected to that which is not a species of image and which also physically moves.

Counterintuitively, we can see this connection between experience and movement by looking closely at *The Bowery* (Figure 3.3). Sekula, in his discussion of the work in "Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary," observes that the sequence of street numbers displayed in the photographs suggests a walk downtown, from Houston toward Canal Street on the west side of the Bowery.<sup>82</sup> The photographer is in motion, and so are her subjects. The evacuated, static images show us sites where people once were, leaving behind the empty bottles scattered across the streetscape, and where they also may well be again, their poverty circumscribing their routes within the city and sending them back, repeatedly, to a handful of familiar sites. Amid this motion of the photographer and her potential subjects, the moment of taking the photograph, which Sekula describes as one of power-laden negotiation between photographer and subject, becomes a missed encounter, or, rather, a *refused* encounter.<sup>83</sup> The only images that we get are ones that show us the spaces where such an encounter might, at another moment, take place. Rosler has argued at various points that photography's essential quality lies in the way it freezes life into still icons.<sup>84</sup> That act of petrifying movement has ideological implications because different groups of people—women, the working class, homeless people—become both visually and semantically captured within its disciplinary frame.

In *The Bowery*, what we might imagine as the field of common experience-in-motion recedes from the artwork, pushed out by the inadequate images and texts and by the chasm that separates them. "Homeless," by contrast, raised different questions about the status of lived experience, because the installation incorporated both a politicized engagement with "descriptive systems" that represent homelessness *and* the potential live presence of real people who were targets of such representations. On one level, we might see Homeward Bound's potential live presence as something that rubbed up against the various representations the installation presented, which were themselves diverse at the levels of both form or media and political position. Recall Rosler's comment discussed above, that Horstman's images "meant something very different" displayed in the gallery office. In the context of the gallery office, Horstman's images would have potentially been juxtaposed with the live presence of group members, and specifically with the presence of those group members going about their educational and organizing work. The static icons in the images would have met the reality-in-motion of the people whose likenesses they presented, potentially opening up viewer reflection on the relationship between the photograph and the lived social reality it never completely captures. That reading is unsatisfactory, however, in that it depends on viewers' encountering the office only when Homeward Bound members were present. From the interviews discussed above, I feel fairly confident that that would not have been the experience of most visitors to the exhibition space. Instead, most visitors would have encountered the gallery office empty, quiet, with only Fallon or another gallery attendant monitoring the exhibition space. Moreover, there is a conceptual problem with hinging the installation on the encounter between the live and

various representational systems, in that Rosler's production is concerned with different representational systems rubbing against each other, and for her liveness is not a representational category.

Today there exists a large body of performance-studies scholarship that draws on theater, dance, anthropology, and sociology to provide ways of thinking about liveness as bound up with contextually specific acts of representation. At the time of *If You Lived Here . . .*, however, that discourse had yet to materialize. Some key texts in the (inter)disciplinary formation of performance studies were published in the late 1950s and early 1960s, including J. L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* (1962) and Erving Goffman's *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959).<sup>85</sup> However, the major texts that defined the discipline as such, and specifically those that provided tools for talking about artistic practice, were emerging right around the time of Rosler's project. Richard Schechner and Victor Turner's influential work *Between Theatre and Anthropology* had been published only in 1985; Schechner's subsequent *Performance Theory* appeared in 1988, just the year prior to this project; Judith Butler's theory of performative gender identity in *Gender Trouble* would come out shortly, in 1990; and *Unmarked*, Peggy Phelan's landmark theorization of performance as a practice of disappearance, would not appear until 1993.<sup>86</sup> Within the scope of "Homeless," Homeward Bound's involvement was not "performance" in the sense the term would have been understood at that time, which might have resonated with sources ranging from the narrative solo performance popular in the 1980s, to body art of the 1970s, or even to happenings of the 1950s and early 1960s. Simultaneously, Homeward Bound's presence in the gallery was not just their everyday life lived but a form of political and aesthetic representation. As I have demonstrated, display was an issue that both group members and other viewers felt was relevant to the group's participation. Moreover, the installation itself, even if viewers encountered it when empty, had a representational quality in that it strongly implied certain types of human activity, such as sleeping in the beds or working at the desk. By extension, it posed the question of if and when such activity would take or had taken place. The installation itself thus implied human activity unfolding in time, but it also carried the connotation of display. It implied, in other words, something a lot like theater.

Strikingly, when I spoke with Homeward Bound member Prime, he initially remembered the project at Dia not as an art exhibit but as a theatrical production.<sup>87</sup> Indeed, looking at Oren Slor's shots of "Homeless" (Plate 7 and Figure 3.5), the installation appears strongly to evoke a theatrical set. The office had a marked longitudinal quality to it. The temporary wooden panel walls that materialized it were not grouped to create the sensation of a contained room within the larger space of the gallery; rather, they were all lined up end-to-end against the gallery pillars. This created the impression of an interior space that had been folded open to let the audience see every part. Moreover, though some furniture items in the office had a clear functional role, like the desks and chairs, others were only present in order to add to the visual illusion of the office space. For example, at one end of the office there was a cheerful blue door in the wooden wall that was functionally superfluous, in that anyone wanting to get to

the other side of the wall could easily just walk around the end of the wall, a few feet to the left (Figure 3.12a). The wall also had a window, with curtains on the back side, where the beds were located, giving the illusion that the gallery office had a window opening onto the outside (Figure 3.12b). The way the beds were made up also had a certain minimalism reminiscent of theater. From Slor's photo, the blankets look more colorful than practical, and only one bed of the six bears a pillow, giving the impression more of a place where someone might act out sleep than of an actual place to rest. For the majority of visitors who came to the gallery space when *Homeward Bound* members were not present, it would have been these stagelike elements and the way they worked to evoke the idea of certain actions that structured the encounter with the space.

To see the installation as a theatrical set gives extra texture to the way we imagine its interpellation of the visitor as someone who needs education about homelessness. A theater stage is a place where live action unfolds, but not all the time, and where viewers know to expect that they will have to sit and wait for the action to start, and where they might remain in their seats after the performance is already past. The period of anticipation is structured by viewing habits and expectations that are learned, but it is also open-ended. We never know exactly when the event will take place or what will transpire, whether those surprises will be as major as a surprise ending or an opening-night disaster, or as minor as the vocal intonation in a widely familiar line. Instead of presenting *Homeward Bound*'s presence as some "real thing" beyond representation, I argue that the "Homeless" installation staged the possibility of the group's appearance as a theatrical event. If we understand the installation this way, we might view Horstman's images, installed in the office gallery, as akin to actors' head shots. A head shot identifies a real person, the performer, but that person will appear to the audience in a representational role. A wall of head shots gives a sense of the performers as real people, with lives and careers beyond the scope of a certain play. But in their performance in the theater, it is the locus of staged representation that gives rise to potential new configurations of experience and politics. The installation's staging of *Homeward Bound*'s potential presence retained a sense of open-endedness while also finding a certain parallel with the group's own mobilization of tactical spectacle as a way of making homelessness visible. Both the installation and *Homeward Bound*'s tactics played, in different ways, on existing regimes of visibility. They used the acts of audience attention those forms solicited to envision new, more reciprocal types of relationship.

The "Homeless" installation's subtle theatricality leads me to conclude that it reflects a tactic that runs throughout Rosler's body of work, which she and others have called the "decoy." Rosler describes the decoy as something in a work that "briefly masquerades as one thing, following a given form, until you soon realize that something is amiss."<sup>88</sup> Alexander Alberro presents the decoy in an Adornian mode, as a quotidian fragment that functions as the first term in a dialectic. The fragment opens the door to a social totality that lies beyond it, while also holding something of that totality within itself.<sup>89</sup> The new term the decoy makes visible has a kind of "flickering" quality,



A



B

**FIGURE 3.12.** Detail of gallery office and door into office in Martha Rosler's *If You Lived Here . . .*, "Homeless: The Street and Other Venues" installation. Photographs by Martha Rosler. Courtesy of Martha Rosler.

a word Rosler has also used to describe the type of representation she pursues.<sup>90</sup> The flicker is the opposite of the static or the iconic. It makes visible, in a momentary and contingent way, something other, which exceeds the frame of representation in which it materializes. In “Homeless,” the flicker is Homeward Bound’s potential presence, which materializes briefly or hardly at all but the illumination of which is a structuring term in the installation. The show is a decoy in the sense that it promises the live but then unwinds into a staging of that liveness.

The behind-the-desk photos, by contrast, are not quite decoys. Rosler may or may not have created these photos, but her investment in them motivates me to read them as a part of her practice, a set of images that she saw as a meaningful part of her collaboration with Homeward Bound. The posed images have a certain opacity and lack a false first term that the viewer must push beyond to get to something else. Without context, it is not at all clear from looking at them why the people in the images are assembled. Even when we have context, we cannot discern how each person pictured approaches the group effort, whether as someone with experience of being homeless or as a supportive friend or collaborator. Simultaneously, the images carry over something of the moment of negotiation between photographer and subjects, in the form of the pose. The pose asks open-ended questions about agency and representation: Whose idea was it to pose in this particular way—Rosler’s, Homeward Bound members’, or someone else’s? What kind of interaction or discussion went into its formation? The pose makes these questions inseparable from the act of showing that it performs. In doing so, it brings the live moment of intersubjective relation a little closer to the surface than does the decoy, letting that moment peek through the framework of representation for a bit longer than a flicker.

The visibility of Homeward Bound members was an essential element in the three interrelated acts of staging I have analyzed here, from the tactical spectacle of the group’s own activism, to the set-like installation, to the posed documentation photos. All three worked in different ways to define the terms of the social field that was “Homeless,” by generating representations of participant agency but also by emphasizing agency’s representational quality. Bruno Latour, in his introduction to actor-network theory (ANT), has argued against approaches that take “society” for granted as a causal monolith to explain specific instances of social relation.<sup>91</sup> The idea that such a monolith, a “society” or a “social field,” exists outside specific relations and interactions is a mystification. In the spirit of this line of thinking, I have been interested here less in the way that participatory art and its photographic documents reflect a given social field than in the way they perform acts of representation that bring the idea of that field into being. With this field-defining function in mind, I want to return to the question of how to deal with the increasingly widespread circulation of participation’s documentation photos. The two key aspects of these images I have emphasized here are (1) their status as photographs, which is connected to the history of photography’s disciplinary function as well as to critiques of that function, and (2) the way they materialize specific types of agency relative to an idea of the social field. These images

consolidate the “fact” of participation out of the messy and often unclear network of relationships that materialize within the framework of a given project. They articulate participant experience relative to the goals and concepts that animate a project, but they can also themselves be the object of negotiation among participants, artists, and institutional representatives.

The chains of meaning making in which these images are involved and the power relationships with which they intersect have intensified in the past ten to fifteen years, as documentation images of “dematerialized art” have become increasingly important commodities in and of themselves. As I mentioned in the chapter introduction, Claire Doherty points to this commodity status and identifies the increasing complexity through which documentation of social-practice art circulates as an art object in various institutional contexts. Doherty cites the example of Belgian artist Francis Alÿs’s 2002 art action *When Faith Moves Mountains*, in which five hundred 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 thirty-four-minute, three-channel video installation, which was eventually purchased by the Guggenheim Collection in New York. Here, the document-as-art-object functions to bridge the work’s “originating” context and audience in Ventanilla and its “displaced” context and audience in New York.<sup>92</sup> There is a steady market for photographs of Santiago Sierra’s performances, which regularly sell at auction for \$10,000, and in some cases for much more, constituting an essential component of the artist’s income. These documentation images generate value both as actual commodities and through their “free” circulation in social media, where they can work to build an institutional or personal artistic brand.

Certainly, some images are more conducive than others to helping the viewer pose questions about the interlocking relationships among photograph, participant agency, and the wider social field. Simultaneously, as Lane Reylea has demonstrated in his analysis of images of artists socializing, careful attention to even seemingly banal or insignificant documentation images can yield insight about the specific subject positions a given form of social practice proposes.<sup>93</sup> The images Reylea addresses, of artists socializing, are significant specifically *because* they look like any snapshots you might see on social media, which through their circulation work to materialize the shift from single author to networked milieu.<sup>94</sup> For us as art historians and critics, what is important in dealing with these images is that we give attention to the way they make meaning and that we are careful not to approach the image–social field–process art relay in a way that takes the visible presence of certain participants for granted as avatars for how we image the social field. This problem came into focus for me reading Hal Foster’s article “An Archival Impulse,” in which Foster discusses Thomas Hirschhorn’s *Deleuze Monument* (2000) in Avignon, France. The largely Turkish neighborhood hosting the project, Foster writes, created a “fitting” displacement in which “the radical status of the guest philosopher is matched by the minor status of the host community.”<sup>95</sup> Right above this statement is included a photograph taken at the site of the monument,



showing a shelf of books by Deleuze labeled in French and English. A young man, with black hair and dark-brown skin, stands in the right of the frame. The image, nowhere addressed explicitly, melts into an illustration of the text: this man, now standing for the reader as a representative of the “host community,” is caught in the frame next to the works of the philosopher whose “displacement” here is supposed to “match” this participant’s own “minor status.” In this equation, any specificity of this participant’s identity, experience, or role in the network of power relationships materialized in the *Deleuze Monument* is rinsed away in favor of a tableau sketched in an abstract space of theoretical discourse. That scene serves only to mystify the stakes involved in representing the experience of people who do not enjoy the art historian’s privileged access to dominant discourse.

Reading Foster’s article, I am reminded of the conversation between Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault that is the target of Gayatri Spivak’s critique in “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Initially published in 1984 and anthologized in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* in 1988, just before *If You Lived Here . . .*, Spivak’s essay set the gold standard for discussions of speaking for the other throughout the late 1980s and into the 1990s. In Spivak’s early definition of the subaltern, the answer to whether they can speak is no.<sup>96</sup> There, she defines the subaltern deconstructively, as a realm of life from which one might try to speak but cannot because of the implication of philosophical and historical meaning making with structures of violence and oppression (colonial, classed, and gendered). The essay emphasizes that self-reflexively unpacking the layers of representational violence through which the subaltern are spoken for is central to ethical academic practice, but it is also a process that never reaches its goal, the recovery of a hard kernel of self-determination on the part of the subaltern being structurally impossible.<sup>97</sup> In later revisions of her essay, Spivak has cleaved to the importance of recognizing that structural double bind while also shifting her emphasis to “the excavation, retrieval, and celebration” of the historical subaltern individual that can still take place within it.<sup>98</sup> Spivak’s definition of the subaltern in a postcolonial context cannot be applied directly to the situation of homeless people living in a big North American city, especially those in a position, as Homeward Bound members were, to engage in a tactical and nuanced way with news media and mainstream political forums. There are some points, however, on which Spivak’s theory speaks usefully to the question of underprivileged people’s agency in this different context. The first I see in her later, more pragmatic definition of subaltern people as those removed from lines of social mobility, a definition that stresses the fact that representation, in itself, does not necessarily equal empowerment when one is more systematically barred from social mobility. Second, I see Homeward Bound’s own goals reflected in Spivak’s emphasis on the centrality of education, specifically in terms of the privileged—who in this context include Rosler, myself, panel attendees, and other project participants—attempting to let themselves be educated by those who are not and trying to let that pedagogy open a process of rearranging desire.<sup>99</sup> Finally, there is a parallel between, on the one hand, the two moments of Spivak’s thought, from the impossibility of agency in “Can the

Subaltern Speak?,” to the possibility for subaltern speech to rearrange desire, and, on the other hand, the shift in Rosler’s practice from *The Bowery*’s stress on the impossibility of ethical documentary photographic representation of homeless people, to the engagement, in *If You Lived Here . . .*, with homeless people’s acts of political and visual self-representation. The many layers of staging that surrounded Homeward Bound’s participation in the project make it clear that their visibility can never definitively be separated from institutional and representational processes of violent reinscription. But I still feel some kind of light coming from the behind-the-desk photos, where the opacity of the pose opens onto questions about the work of collaboration and about its context. Those are questions that we may not be able fully to answer but that, thanks to the images, we at least cannot help but ask.

To view this image  
please see the  
print edition

**FIGURE 4.1.** Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *"Untitled" (Perfect Lovers)*, 1991. Wall clocks and paint on wall, overall dimensions vary with installation; clocks, 14 x 28 x 2¾ inches overall; two parts, 14 inches diameter each. Copyright The Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation. Courtesy of Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York.

## CHAPTER 4

# ART, AFFECT, CRISIS

What role can art take up relative to a crisis? The height of the American AIDS crisis, from the mid-1980s through the early 1990s, saw the expression of very strong opinions on this issue. Literary scholar Jean-Paul Rocchi argues that the fraught position of representation in that context stemmed from the simultaneous acknowledgment of its insufficiency and its necessity: “While it was generally agreed that linguistic representation could mask the horrors of reality, it was also widely assumed that only a new rhetoric could spur a return to the real.”<sup>1</sup> Art critic Douglas Crimp, in his *October* article “AIDS: Cultural Analysis / Cultural Activism” (1987), argues that the crisis compelled a political instrumentalization of representation, geared at disseminating information widely and clearly to the public. “Until a cure for AIDS is developed,” Crimp writes, “only information and mobilization can save lives.”<sup>2</sup> The work of Gran Fury, a collective associated with ACT UP, epitomized this approach, creating bold, urgent works such as the 1988 poster that declared, “WITH 42,000 DEAD, ART IS NOT ENOUGH.”<sup>3</sup> Video was also an essential tool, providing artists, activists, and intellectuals with a way to document activism and spread information about HIV transmission, as in the 1987 videos by the Testing the Limits collective, as well as to articulate critical analyses of the representation of AIDS, as in British critic Simon Watney’s *Simon Watney Says No to Section 28* (1988) for Paper Tiger Television. Other artists in the same period created work that threaded back and forth between the critique of AIDS as a social crisis and deeply personal treatments of sex, fear, death, mourning, and anger, such as David Wojnarowicz’s *Untitled (One Day This Kid . . .)* (1990). Among the best known of these bodies of work is that of Group Material member Felix Gonzalez-Torres. Gonzalez-Torres’s artwork “*Untitled*” (*Perfect Lovers*) embodies the visual economy and emotional poignancy that characterize his work (Figure 4.1). Gonzalez-Torres made two similar

artworks with this title, the first between 1987 and 1990 and the second in 1991, the year his partner Ross Laycock died of AIDS-related causes. Both pieces consist of two identical wall clocks, placed side by side, which are initially set to the same time but that, as time passes, may minutely fall out of sync. The form the clocks create together, an infinity symbol, strains movingly against the finite time they measure.

In this chapter, I am interested in the way that art about AIDS interfaced with audiences' emotions and, moreover, in the ways that art worked to transform existing feelings. The Names Project Foundation's AIDS Memorial Quilt, begun in 1987, aimed to help people understand the impact of the disease and to process their feelings about it by inviting the public to produce panels dedicated to lost loved ones.<sup>4</sup> The activist practices that Crimp supported explicitly rejected that kind of memorializing approach, aiming instead to convert sadness, mourning, and fear into angry, politically productive militancy.<sup>5</sup> I am curious about what other trajectories artists chose to pursue, about the detailed mechanics of how those works interfaced with their audiences, and about the ways that the audience's extant emotions concerning AIDS might have shaped the reception of art, as well as the dynamics of social-process artworks themselves. My case studies are two projects by Group Material. The first is the group's first major project on AIDS, "AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study," the fourth and final segment of *Democracy* at the Dia Art Foundation, with an installation up between December 19, 1988, and January 14, 1989, and a public town-hall meeting on January 10. A small roundtable discussion was also held earlier in the year to acquaint Group Material with the opinions and activism of specialists in the field in order to prepare the artists for the project. The second project I analyze is *AIDS Timeline*, the only project Group Material ever repeated, which was created initially for the Berkeley University Art Museum (1989–90) and then reworked for the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut (1990) and the Whitney Biennial (1991).<sup>6</sup> Historian of public art Tom Finkelppearl has called *AIDS Timeline* one of the most influential artworks created in response to the AIDS crisis.<sup>7</sup> In December 1990, in collaboration with Visual AIDS, fragments of it were published in eleven key artworld publications of diverse aesthetic and political orientations: *Afterimage*, *Art and Auction*, *Art in America*, *Art New England*, *Artforum*, *Arts*, *Contemporanea*, *High Performance*, *October*, *Parkett*, and *Shift*.<sup>8</sup>

Group Material's address of AIDS-related experience was connected to the way the group dealt with audience experience more broadly. The group's practice had a dual relationship to the audience. On the one hand, the audience had a conceptual importance in the artists' work that went beyond the experience of any particular audience member(s), constituting an open-ended utopian notion of the infinite possibilities for experience to which a project might give rise. On the other hand, they employed tactics that generated concrete feedback from real audience members, such as the public town-hall meetings held for *Democracy*, which made the audience's live discussions into part of the artwork itself. The utopian and the concrete audiences intertwined in Group Material's art, alongside their twin commitments to the autonomy of aesthetic practice and simultaneously to the necessity of art's connection to social life, the central animating tension in their work. In "AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study,"

the artists aimed to create “a juncture in which sorrow, rage, and fear can be used to reinforce our decision to act.”<sup>9</sup> They did so using an approach informed by Brecht, which presented art and activism as two poles of an experiential dialectic relative to the crisis. Though difficult affects appear here relative to political action, Group Material’s aim was not just instrumentally to spark activism but, rather, to open a pluralistic space that might give rise to multiple forms of feeling, thought, and political organization. By analyzing the installation and its reception, as well as audience participation that occurred at the town-hall meeting, I consider how this segment of *Democracy* operated relative to the live unfolding of the audience’s difficult emotions and how it situated art relative to those feelings. I argue that the dialectical approach structuring “AIDS and Democracy,” in its specific deployment in that show, constituted a limitation relative to acute affects born of AIDS. This contributed, in the show’s reception, to a disproportionate focus on the limitations of art in confronting crises.

*AIDS Timeline*, which opened ten months after “AIDS and Democracy” closed, took a very different approach to the relationship among art, activism, and collective affect. *AIDS Timeline* consisted of a timeline on the gallery wall running from 1979 to 1989, the first decade of the AIDS crisis, around which were arranged didactic texts, artworks, activist materials, and pop culture objects. By constellating information, images, and artifacts, *AIDS Timeline* performed a mapping of experience, which helped viewers better understand the causes of their own experiences of the crisis. The reception of this project was dominated by discussion of its didactic nature. My analysis aims to demonstrate that this didactic quality consisted not solely in the extensive amount of carefully researched information the work contained but also in the way it addressed viewers’ emotions. By soliciting affective engagement while also providing a larger explanatory framework for how the crisis came about, the work proposed a position of being both inside and outside one’s experience, at the same time. My interest in that dual position is connected to an investment in the possibility for artworks to help people better understand their own emotions, particularly in the wake of disorientation caused by trauma. I read in *AIDS Timeline* both therapeutic and politically radical dimensions, and I want to understand how these stakes function together in its mode of audience address.

Writing about her research on ACT UP, sociologist Deborah Gould, herself an active member of the organization, describes the difficult affective process of making her way into the archive, confronting “data [that] makes [her] cry.”<sup>10</sup> Ann Cvetkovich has described her own experience of friends dying of AIDS as part of an archive of queer trauma not limited to official “archives” as such but bound up intimately with the texture of everyday life.<sup>11</sup> I have no direct experience with the North American AIDS crisis of the 1980s and 1990s. Rather, I was part of the generation that came of sexual age in its wake, with every step of our sex education revolving centrally around HIV precaution and risk. To reenact Amelia Jones’s reflection about her own historical location relative to live art: I was three in 1987 when seventeen members of ACT UP were arrested at a Wall Street demonstration for greater access to experimental AIDS drugs. I was five in 1989 when General Idea’s *Imagevirus* adorned the side of New York

City buses. I was eight, far away from New York City, in 1992 when Wojnarowicz performed his “I’m carrying this rage like a blood filled egg” reading at the Drawing Center.<sup>12</sup> Jones argues that despite never having been present at the performances she discusses, she is able to access them through documentation in a way that productively decenters the metaphysical subject of pure presence (an issue to which I will return below).<sup>13</sup> The archives of Group Material’s projects on AIDS have a constitutive relationship to trauma, in terms of the artworks included in the installations, the artists’ own personal experiences with the epidemic, and the experiences that audiences and critics brought to the works, which shaped their reception. Jonathan Katz has argued recently that understanding these forms of collective trauma is central to comprehending the far-reaching impact of the AIDS crisis in contemporary art broadly writ.<sup>14</sup> In my experience of this research, that traumatic quality of the archive has resulted not in the acute emotions Gould describes but, rather, in a heightened identification with the position of audience members, because I am particularly conscious of my distance, as an observer, from the events and artworks I discuss. That stronger identification is thus something I must negotiate in trying to understand both Group Material’s investments and the feelings to which these projects gave rise.

### The “AIDS and Democracy” Installation

The fourth and final segment of Group Material’s *Democracy* at Dia was titled differently than were its forerunners “Education and Democracy,” “Politics and Election,” and “Cultural Participation.” “AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study” specified, in its subtitle, that this part of the project placed an emphasis on AIDS as a testing ground for the concept of democracy as such. The idea that the AIDS crisis reflected existing fractures within the democratic system was essential to the critical approach taken by direct-action AIDS activists at the time. ACT UP member Vito Russo, in a speech given in 1988 that Group Material reproduced in the *Democracy* book, delivered a memorable formulation of this critique: “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.”<sup>15</sup> On the flyer Group Material made for the “AIDS and Democracy” town-hall meeting, the first question posed directed participants toward this line of analysis: “How does the AIDS crisis reveal the iniquities of democratic access to power in the United States?”<sup>16</sup> At the outset of the meeting, Maria Maggenti, a filmmaker and ACT UP member whom Group Material had invited to chair, reiterated this idea as an essential framing premise: “Perhaps the AIDS crisis simply reflects a crisis in democracy which existed long before the entrance of HIV into the bloodstream of the nation.”<sup>17</sup> In the small roundtable discussion that Group Material held in June 1988, with Maggenti, art critic Jan Zita Grover, activist Michael Callen, and curator Richard Hawkins, Gonzalez-Torres linked the democratic crisis as it manifested concerning AIDS specifically to the lack of public health care in the United States.<sup>18</sup>

In their press release for “AIDS and Democracy,” Group Material connected

their approach to AIDS as a case study in democracy specifically to the issue of feeling. Of the four parts of *Democracy*, they write:

“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.<sup>19</sup>

This statement establishes two key sets of connections. First, it marks the crisis and the feelings that accompany it as specific to the present moment, as pressing right now. Second, it draws a link between the expression of those emotions and the ability to struggle for *true* democracy, beyond the present democracy that AIDS has shown to be lacking. The emphasis on the specificity of a certain configuration of experience relative to particular historical events reflects the fact that the group’s work on the whole addressed forms of experience that were strongly time specific. In New York of the late 1970s, the original context of Group Material’s formation, art making was influenced by an interdisciplinary do-it-yourself culture and by the emerging music genres of punk and rap, with their attendant urban cultures.<sup>20</sup> This context suggested possibilities for artistic creation that went beyond the object, or even the performance, as an artwork defined in itself to embrace the particular dimensions of ephemeral experience possible in a given place and time. Julie Ault and Doug Ashford, in a 2012 reflection on *AIDS Timeline*, stress the topical and temporal nature of Group Material’s practice, in which the members’ “horizon was the present tense.”<sup>21</sup> This comment most obviously addresses the work’s political investment, but it can also be read in terms of its phenomenological orientation toward a certain form of experience unfolding in the historical present.<sup>22</sup> Ault also emphasizes the importance of certain historical forms of experience in *Show and Tell*, where she explains her decision not to enable the recreation of Group Material installations. Were an installation to be redone, she argues, what would be created would be something between artwork and artifact, which would miss the social context of both the creation and the experience of the work. The installations might be able to be reproduced, but “the climate of circumstances and perception and understanding for events” could not.<sup>23</sup> Numerous Group Material installations contained packaged food products, from baby formula in *Consumption* (1981; Figure 4.2), to Wonderbread in *Americana* (1985), to the ironically multicultural chip bags in the “Cultural Participation” installation for *Democracy* (1988), to the plethora of food products arranged on the floor in *Market* (1995). The installations themselves were like food items with an expiration date, in the sense that they were intended as interventions in forms of experience that were ephemeral and no longer exist. I take Ault’s comments to suggest that experience was the true fabric of Group Material’s installations, which the artists shaped with the help of objects, images, and texts.<sup>24</sup>

The installation for “AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study” addressed the group’s goal of creating a juncture for difficult feelings by presenting clusters of artworks that





**FIGURE 4.2.** Detail from Group Material's *Consumption: Metaphor, Pastime, Necessity*, March 21–April 20, 1981. Group Material storefront gallery, New York. Courtesy of Group Material and Four Corners Books.

connected to a critique of democratic failure, but in a subtle, open-ended way. The walls of the gallery were painted a very light grayish purple, which contributed to giving the installation a less exuberant appearance than the other three that made up *Democracy*. The color of the walls was the same one used in the poster for the whole *Democracy* project, which was glued to the wall at the entrance, emphasizing the importance of this installation as a culmination of the entire project. One idea at play for the group in developing the installation was to begin with a more spacious hanging than in *Democracy*'s previous three installations, which would place greater emphasis on the autonomy of the individual works, and then to increasingly build relationships by installing further works around the room.<sup>25</sup> The selection of objects and artworks hung on the walls included items that addressed AIDS directly as well as items that, typical of Group Material's style, gained context through the exhibition in order to speak to the theme.

The installation addressed the question of democracy's downfall relative to AIDS most critically through its development of the theme of violent discrimination and genocide, which created connections between the government's systematic neglect of AIDS and other historical instances where citizens' rights had been lethally circumscribed. Genocide was also a recurring theme in direct-action AIDS activism. The video *Testing the Limits*, a landmark document of AIDS activism, shows Larry Kramer, cofounder of Gay Men's Health Crisis and ACT UP member, publicly leveling an accusation of genocide at New York City health commissioner Dr. Stephen Joseph: "We are being picked off one, by one, by one. I think it is conscious genocide." One of ACT UP's chants following the election of George H. W. Bush in 1988 was "George Bush, you can't hide, we charge you with genocide!"<sup>26</sup> Hung high up in one corner of "AIDS and Democracy" was Steven Evans's work *The Dark Quadrilateral* (1987–88). The piece consisted of an image of men in a Nazi concentration camp wearing striped uniforms bearing the inverted triangle. The photo was placed across a corner of the room and lit so that it cast a dark shadow (Plate 10). Below Evans's work, hung close in to the same corner, was ACT UP member Don Moffett's 1988 *Goodbye*, a blurry photo of Ronald Reagan waving with the words "So Long, Farewell, Auf Wiedersehen, Goodbye," drily bidding good riddance to the departing president whose lack of action had directly contributed to AIDS deaths.

On the opposite side of the gallery hung Dorothea Lange's photograph *Middle Aged Man with Tag*, showing a man at a Japanese internment camp in the United States in 1942. Near Lange's photograph was Michael Jenkins's *June 30, 1986*, a work titled after the day that the U.S. Supreme Court voted 5–4 to uphold Georgia's antisodomy law in its infamous *Bowers v. Hardwick* decision (Figure 4.3). Each segment of *Democracy* contained a version of the American flag, from the classroom-style wall-mounted flagpole in "Education and Democracy," to the wall-sized flag setting the tone for "Politics and Election," to a biker flag showing a rider embraced by a skeleton printed over the stars and stripes in "Cultural Participation." Jenkins's piece struck a much more somber and disillusioned tone. It resembled an American flag hanging downwards with only nine stripes—the number of judges on the court—and with the blue rectangle removed,



**FIGURE 4.3.** Installation view of Group Material's *Democracy*, "AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study," December 18, 1988–January 14, 1989. Courtesy of Julie Ault and the Dia Art Foundation, New York.

evoking the negation both of human rights and also of states' rights. 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; Figure 4.4). These phrases are Native American terms from different groups.<sup>27</sup> Within the context of the installation, Evans's work alluded to the role of disease in genocide, referencing the great numbers of Native Americans who died of smallpox and other contagious diseases during the period of European colonization.

Across this selection of works, the installation made a sharply critical point about the government's inaction, but it simultaneously opened up a plurality of potential meanings and feelings surrounding that critical stance. Similarly, the installation treated the theme of scientific and medical authority over AIDS discourse—an important theme in the roundtable discussion—by clustering artworks that resonated with that problem at a scientific and an ideological level, but also at an erotic level. On one wall hung Nancy Burson's *Leukemia Visualization Image* (1988), two small photographs showing cells as abstract-looking clusters of dark dots on a green-gray ground (Plate 10). Nearby to the right 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 facemask, looking through a microscope. Down to the left of Burson's work was John Lindell's peephole box labeled *Big Dicked Doctor* (1988), looping the theme of medicalization into the campy realm of porn.

The works in the installation that addressed AIDS explicitly also did so from a range of political and formal orientations. On a small strip of wall between the gallery's front windows hung the 1988 painting *RIOT* by Gran Fury (Figure 4.5).<sup>28</sup> *RIOT* activated a layered art historical theme: it visually cited not only Robert Indiana's iconic *LOVE* image (1958) but also Canadian art collective General Idea's *Imagevirus* series (1989–91), which itself reworked Indiana's piece to spell "AIDS" (and which was also present in the exhibition, in the form of a sheet of postage stamps). *RIOT* asserted clearly that in 1988, love was inseparable not only from AIDS but from the political necessity to riot against the government's and private sector's neglect of the epidemic. *RIOT* was not Gran Fury's only work included in the show, which also featured their 1988 offset poster bearing the words "All People with AIDS Are Innocent." Continuing the theme of direct-action AIDS activism evoked by the poster, also exhibited were photojournalist Ben Thornberry's images of ACT UP actions, accompanied by explanatory captions.

Above Gran Fury's poster hung Robert Mapplethorpe's now-iconic 1988 self-portrait photograph showing the artist, emaciated, against a black background, holding a skull-topped cane (Plate 11). To the right of the Mapplethorpe was *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1988) by former Group Material member Tim Rollins in collaboration with KOS, and to its left hung a striped shield painting by Ross Bleckner (1987). The KOS piece consisted of a grid of pages from Daniel Defoe's 1665 historical novel of the same name, over which was superimposed an inverted triangle constituted by the repeated text "ABRACADABRA." Whereas *Journal* used text to treat issues of the epidemic's historical



**FIGURE 4.4.** Installation view, with works by Andrea Evans (*center right*), of Group Material's *Democracy*, "AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study." Courtesy of Julie Ault and the Dia Art Foundation, New York.



**FIGURE 4.5.** Installation view, showing *RIOT* (1988) by Gran Fury, of Group Material's *Democracy*, "AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study." Courtesy of Julie Ault and the Dia Art Foundation, New York.

precedents and the practices of meaning making surrounding it, Mapplethorpe's self-portrait confronted the viewer with an expressive individual subject who displayed his own diminished body as proof of what the disease had wrought. 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 by three partially shaded heads, while the right-hand side is taken up by a hanging arm, reminiscent of the arm of Marat in Jacques-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 *The Death of Marat*. Between them, these works materialized another constellation between contemporary death and its historical precedents, implicitly posing the question of how to consider the homophobic, sensationalist media representation of AIDS-related deaths relative to David's heroic depiction of Marat.

In addition to displaying overtly activist works such as Thornberry's and Gran Fury's contributions, the installation made its most direct address to political activism in the form of two tables placed end-to-end at the center of the gallery, stretching over twelve feet, where visitors could help themselves to activist flyers and informational pamphlets concerning AIDS (Figure 4.6). Karen Ramspacher, a curatorial assistant at Dia who was in ACT UP and was a founding member of Women's Health Action and Mobilization (WHAM), had held activist meetings for these groups in Dia's spaces and helped collect the materials to put on the tables through the organizations with which she was affiliated.<sup>29</sup> The tables were bookended by two monitors showing a program of videos, designed not only to provide information but also to emphasize how much of the moment's most compelling work on AIDS was being made in video.<sup>30</sup> They included documents 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, and *Testing the Limits*; 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 videos that performed a cultural critique or deconstruction of some aspect of the crisis, such as the Paper Tiger Television video mentioned above, in which author Simon Watney criticized the response to AIDS by British prime minister Margaret Thatcher.<sup>31</sup> Group Material member Doug Ashford's photos of the "AIDS and Democracy" opening show people grouped in particular around the video monitors, standing and sitting in the chairs provided (Figures 4.7a, 4.7b). The images suggest that visitors saw the video material as compelling and worth their time, even at a busy and social exhibition opening.

Between the artworks and the information table–video station, "AIDS and Democracy" proposed an experience of AIDS that had social, political, and affective dimensions. The artists provided insight into how they conceived its mode of address in the draft of a letter to the *Village Voice* in response to a critical review, which I will discuss below. They write that they intended it "to be somber, evocative and reflective, in keeping with Brecht's theory of the Epic that allows for a critical distance in order to consider one's own emotional responses."<sup>32</sup> Brecht's epic theater aimed to politicize



**FIGURE 4.6.** Information–video table in Group Material’s *Democracy*, “AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study” installation. Courtesy of Julie Ault and the Dia Art Foundation, New York.





A



B

**FIGURE 4.7.** Visitors at the opening of Group Material's *Democracy*, "AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study" installation. Photographs by Doug Ashford. Courtesy of Doug Ashford Studio.

the audience explicitly by refraining from creating strong emotions. When theater refrained from creating cathartic emotional release, Brecht theorized, emotions could be “submitted . . . to the spectator’s criticism,” thereby enabling human social interaction to come into view as something striking, not taken for granted. Walter Benjamin argues that unlike naturalist theater, which attempts to bring viewers into contact with reality or “society,” Brechtian theater distances viewers from those conditions in order to make them seem strange.<sup>33</sup> This alienation creates the conditions for social criticism, making theater a practice whose “origins, means and ends are practical and earthly,” as Brecht describes it. That representational practice then feeds back into the transformation of the social relations it represents.<sup>34</sup> Benjamin stresses that the alienation effect operates through the display of the representational process itself. The “first dictum” of epic theater, he argues, is that “‘the one who shows’—that is, the actor—‘shall be shown.’”<sup>35</sup> Herein lies a dialectic: between what is shown on the stage and the act of showing something on the stage.

The Brechtian framework elucidates two important visual aspects of the “AIDS and Democracy” installation. First, with the exception of Mapplethorpe’s work, the show did not contain graphic representations of AIDS-related disease, which might have provoked an emotionally intense reaction from viewers. Ault states that Gonzalez-Torres in particular was opposed to showing graphic images of disease and that his position had a strong influence on Group Material’s approach to the exhibition.<sup>36</sup> In a 1993 interview with former Group Material member Tim Rollins, who left the group in 1987, shortly after Gonzalez-Torres joined, Gonzalez-Torres stresses the importance of Brecht as a primary influence in his practice, particularly in terms of the directive to “keep a distance to allow the viewer, the public, time to reflect and think.”<sup>37</sup> Gonzalez-Torres locates this importance specifically relative to his authorship as a Hispanic artist, who bears the burden of expectations to be “crazy,” “colorful,” and emotional, not intellectual.<sup>38</sup> Brecht, he emphasizes, wants viewers to realize that a play is just a play, not life. It constitutes an intellectual experience, not an opportunity for catharsis. In Gonzalez-Torres’s own work, the intersection between personal emotion and a Brechtian framework gives rise to a dynamic that Ault, in her edited volume on his work, describes as one of “intimacy and remoteness, locked in symbiosis.”<sup>39</sup> In many of his artworks, the intimacy–remoteness dialectic becomes visible in the space between the minimal or quotidian nature of a particular object and its highly affecting quality when considered relative to love, death, or the texture of lived experience, to which some of the works’ titles point. For example, starting in 1991, Gonzalez-Torres began producing pieces using lightbulbs, such as “Untitled” (*Last Light*) (1993; Figure 4.8).<sup>40</sup> These unadorned strings of illuminated lights are, as objects, hardly distinguishable from regular patio lighting. But their draped display in the gallery, and the context that Gonzalez-Torres’s life and work provides, makes emotion flood in, calling up feelings of fragility, hope, loneliness, tenderness, and mortality. It is specifically the gap between these feelings and the form that gives rise to them that lends these works a highly affecting quality, because it stages for the viewer the intensity of context and emotion in shaping aesthetic experience.<sup>41</sup>

To view this image  
please see the  
print edition

**FIGURE 4.8.** Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *"Untitled" (Last Light)*, 1993. Lightbulbs, plastic light sockets, extension cord, and dimmer switch. Dimensions vary with installation. Edition of twenty-four, six artist proofs. Published by A.R.T. Press, Los Angeles, and Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York. Copyright The Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation. Courtesy of Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York.

“AIDS and Democracy” made room for viewer emotion and association by presenting clusters of work that, as described above, could be read in terms of political critique but that were also affectively and intellectually evocative on different terms and in the circuits of meaning they created among themselves. In addition, I also see a dialectical model at work in the physical structure of the installation, in its juxtaposition between the art on the walls and the information–video station at the center of the gallery. The central tables functioned to showcase the extensive collective organization taking place and to provide visitors with concrete information that might enable them to join a protest or to better practice safer sex. At the end of the roundtable discussion with Hawkins, Maggenti, Callen, and Zita Grover, Gonzalez-Torres made it clear that providing information was one of the group’s central investments in developing the project by exhorting the participants to send to Group Material information about AIDS that could be used for the show: “Send *any* flyers, *any* information, because the main focus of this project is to hand out that information to another, different audience.”<sup>42</sup> Alongside its practical purpose, the table constituted an important aesthetic component of the whole installation. By contrast to the carefully curated arrangements of art on the walls, the folding tables had an explicitly utilitarian, provisional appearance to them. They were presented bare, without any tablecloths to hide their metal legs or to conceal the cables wrapped through them from the video monitors. Every installation in *Democracy* contained some kind of seating, in this case in the form of light folding chairs arranged around the video monitors (the previous installations had included school desks, a La-Z-Boy chair, and picnic tables, respectively). The physical connection between the tables and the videos stressed their unity as a sort of informational island at the center of the gallery. The information–video island also invited different types of interaction than did the installed walls, not only because of the durational viewing the videos elicited but also because viewers were allowed to leaf through and take with them the pamphlets made available.

Art critic Elizabeth Hess, in her review of “AIDS and Democracy,” writes that the contrast the show presented “between cool ‘art’ and hot ‘propaganda,’” was “initially jarring.”<sup>43</sup> Hess reads that jarring feeling like an avant-garde shock, which resolves productively “as the information gleaned from the software and hard copy begins to color our general vision,” giving the viewer an understanding of how the AIDS crisis has created a permanent shift in cultural meaning. “Nothing in the gallery is immune to AIDS,” she writes. Hess’s framing suggests that the show located the viewer’s experience as the place where its dialectic between art and activist information would resolve. Benjamin writes that in Brecht’s work, the dialectic between social life and representation becomes visible by being brought to a “stand-still,” through the interruption of action to create “gestures.”<sup>44</sup> A gesture captures the dialectic between social conditions and their representation and is the key link between the play itself and the wider social life conditions to which viewers might apply the insights they glean. I read the setup of the “AIDS and Democracy” installation like a dialectic at a standstill in which viewers were presented with a strongly aesthetic pole, in the form of the art on the walls, and an explicitly social–political pole, in the videos and pamphlets. Each pole

offered the viewer different forms of cultural production, and hence different modalities of engagement and experience. Like a montage, the installation staged the viewing experience as that of moving between these different apparatuses in order to elaborate a critical and affective position.

Despite the parallels with Brecht's approach, however, there are important differences between the operation of the dialectic in epic theater and in Group Material's project in terms of how each envisions the relationship between the subject and history. Namely, epic theater revolves around a single dialectic that the author programs into the work and that, through a resolution of the spectator's false consciousness, directs him or her into a general history, that is, into the Marxist analysis of capitalist history. "AIDS and Democracy" used dialectical address in order to open it up into a form of postmodern art practice that gave rise to multiple, personal histories.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, Brecht's theater encompasses the dialectic within the scope of the play itself. The dialectic exists in the play's form, which solicits viewership but which is not brought into being as such through the act of viewing. By contrast, Group Material's polysemic model of viewership unfolded formally within a minimalist lineage, bringing attention to the role of the viewer in charting a meaningful experience across the artifacts offered by the installation.<sup>46</sup> This attentiveness to the agency of the audience in generating meaningful experience is evident in Ashford's documentation photos of the "AIDS and Democracy" exhibition opening. The series of black-and-white images pays close attention to the behavior and comportment of audience members as they move around the installation, which appears in these images as a luminous white. They group around the video monitors, browse the pamphlets, and study the art on the walls (Figures 4.9, 4.10a, 4.10b). Their exact experience is opaque to us, but the photos document their behavior as activity with significance, emphasizing the import of their presence as something the installation *needs* in order to be complete. Wending through the gallery and between the table and the walls, the audience traverses the installation's dialectic, to give it their own affective and intellectual shape.

### The Project's Reception in Context

"AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study" was one of the earliest thematic shows in the United States to deal with AIDS.<sup>47</sup> Group Material's treatment of AIDS-related experience occurred not in a vacuum, however, but within the context of an already rapidly developing discourse about the relationship among AIDS, activism, and representation, a discourse that was passionate and in some respects very polarized. Katz argues that art production addressing AIDS was necessarily a strategic activity, involving a "complicated calculus" in which artists were constantly attempting to discern their own relationships to systems of power in a highly self-conscious way.<sup>48</sup> It is unsurprising that such a situation would lead to debate, as artists and critics tried to reckon collectively with a set of representational challenges that were themselves constantly in transformation. Douglas Crimp's argument, which I mentioned in the chapter introduction, played a defining role in this debate. In his essay (originally written in



**FIGURE 4.9.** Visitors at the opening of Group Material's *Democracy*, "AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study" installation. Photograph by Doug Ashford. Courtesy of Doug Ashford Studio.



A



B

**FIGURE 4.10.** Visitors at the opening of Group Material's *Democracy*, "AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study" installation. Photographs by Doug Ashford. Courtesy of Doug Ashford Studio.

1987), Crimp writes that AIDS is its representations, by which he means that there is no core or essence to the disease outside its visual and textual representation in venues including the news media, government policies, popular culture, and contemporary art.<sup>49</sup> This position itself can be understood as a tactical response to the situation that Gabriele Griffin describes, in which AIDS, originally a visually underdetermined disease, over the course of the 1980s became visually overdetermined in the American media, which concealed its own political agendas by downplaying its representational quality.<sup>50</sup> Because AIDS is representation, Crimp argues, artists and cultural producers must break out of the passive, liberal mentality that assigns them the roles of either fund-raising or “expressing” human suffering. That mentality, he writes, stems from traditional discourses about art that stress its commodity value while emphasizing its separation from engagement in social life.<sup>51</sup> Filmmaker and Testing the Limits collective member Gregg Bordowitz, in his contribution to Crimp’s 1988 edited volume, describes the culture AIDS activism seeks to foster as an emergent popular “counter-culture that will grow out of a broad-based mobilization to end the global epidemic.”<sup>52</sup> A letter sent to arts professionals in September 1988 by NEA chairman Frank Hodsoll and Assistant Secretary for Health Robert Window reflects the kind of liberal thinking against which Crimp and Bordowitz were at war. It asks actors to come forward at the end of their performances and share basic information about AIDS with the audience, including emphasizing the importance of volunteer care of the sick.<sup>53</sup> The letter envisions appending a humanitarian message about AIDS to art, but in a way that does not transform aesthetic experience itself and that moreover recruits volunteer work as a Band-Aid solution for the lack of government-supported health services in the United States.

Crimp advocated that artists act collectively to change representations and thereby the course of the epidemic.<sup>54</sup> He specifically discusses the value of *Let the Record Show*, a project Gran Fury created for the New Museum’s vitrine on Broadway in 1987, at the invitation of Bill Olander.<sup>55</sup> The work consisted of a rogues’ gallery of cardboard cutouts of public figures, including President Reagan and Jerry Falwell, whose indifference or blatant homophobia had greatly exacerbated the AIDS crisis. Each figure was accompanied by his or her grossly homophobic statements, cast in a tombstone-like concrete slab (Reagan’s slab was simply blank). The rogues stood against the backdrop of an image from the Nuremberg trials, and crowning the installation was a neon SILENCE = DEATH sign. Crimp also commends Gran Fury’s efforts to reach AIDS-affected communities more directly—for example, through illegal posterage in collaboration with the group Metropolitan Health Association, in which they spread information in the New York subway in both English and Spanish that safer sex and clean needles could prevent HIV transmission.<sup>56</sup> Art, in this model, is more successful relative to AIDS the more it can operate at a purely informational level. David Deitcher, looking back on this period, recalls that the pursuit of independent art practice felt “comparable to Nero fiddling while Rome burned,” compelling artists either to turn their art into an “angry, articulate, and political response to AIDS” or to divide their time between art making and activism.<sup>57</sup> The 1989 creation by Visual AIDS of the



first Day without Art underscored this idea that art without activism was not only useless to the AIDS crisis, but detrimental.<sup>58</sup>

Like Group Material's Brechtian tactics, Crimp's approach resonated with the history of the early-twentieth-century avant-garde, in that it reanimated the total conflation between artistic production and social engagement characteristic of Russian constructivism. Simultaneously, like Group Material, he displaced that model into a postmodern context, where the subject that it addressed was a post-Stonewall subject of self-realized gay desire. That subject, rather than laboring toward world revolution, carried out bounded acts of tactical activism, aimed at weakening a neoconservative political paradigm. In this new context, the art–engagement conflation also took on the valence of a representational critique, becoming a tool for assessing the efficacy of different specific representations. Predictably, there were dissenters against this paradigm. For example, in 1988 Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE) hosted an exhibition of art and writing by gay men titled *Against Nature*, curated by Dennis Cooper and Richard Hawkins. Hawkins participated in Group Material's "AIDS and Democracy" roundtable. Hawkins and Cooper describe their show as

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 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.<sup>59</sup>

Cooper and Hawkins do well to point out the importance of not taking a particular kind of visual production as an unproblematic signifier of political transformation. Simultaneously, the equation between activism and a certain type of art had political and emotional momentum because of its compatibility with what Deborah Gould has described as the "emotional habitus" of ACT UP. That emotional habitus, Gould argues, is key to understanding ACT UP's efficacy. She defines this habitus as the group's socially constituted ways of feeling, as well as a historically specific, embodied set of understandings about feelings and how they should be expressed.<sup>60</sup> ACT UP's habitus encompassed discourse but also less conscious, embodied practices that guide ways of feeling and expressing, producing an emotional cohesion among group members that provides the basis for collective action.<sup>61</sup> Gould sees transformations in the emotional habitus of lesbians and gay men as closely connected to the different phases of AIDS activism in the United States, from early activity that was often mournful in character, to the rise of an angry, direct-action activism starting in 1986 that gave birth to ACT UP, to the fatigue that accompanied ACT UP's dissolution at the beginning of the 1990s. Gould places particular emphasis on the drive, among direct-action activists, to turn grief into anger in order to continue political work, a tendency that Crimp

described in 1989 as the transformation of mourning into militancy.<sup>62</sup> Gould points out that like many social movements, ACT UP sought to cultivate their own particular emotional way of functioning *at the expense* of other modes, through a process of developing community consensus. In that process of consensus building, speakers and writers might acknowledge the pull of another, older constellation of feelings and its particular politics but still encourage lesbians and gay men to embrace the turn toward angry militancy.<sup>63</sup> Art features only peripherally in Gould's discussion. But it is intimately bound up with the phenomenon of the emotional habitus that she describes. The two stand in a relationship of mutual feedback, where art contributes to shaping the habitus, which then in turn informs the aesthetic experience of art.

Reading the archive recording the reception of "AIDS and Democracy," I not only see reflected there the debate about the role of art relative to AIDS activism, but also believe that the exchanges that unfolded were shaped by the angry-militant affective habitus, as well as by resistance to it. The project met with mixed reception. Two things are notable about the way audiences and critics received it, the first being the incredibly wide range of responses, from deeply appreciative to scathingly critical. The second is that the critiques and their rejoinders seem to ricochet off each other affectively, building an explosive, angry mode of discourse on the project. The reception unfolded in the venues of written criticism as well as in the town-hall meeting. I will deal first with the written responses before going on to consider how some of the themes they raised played out in the town-hall meeting's live open forum.

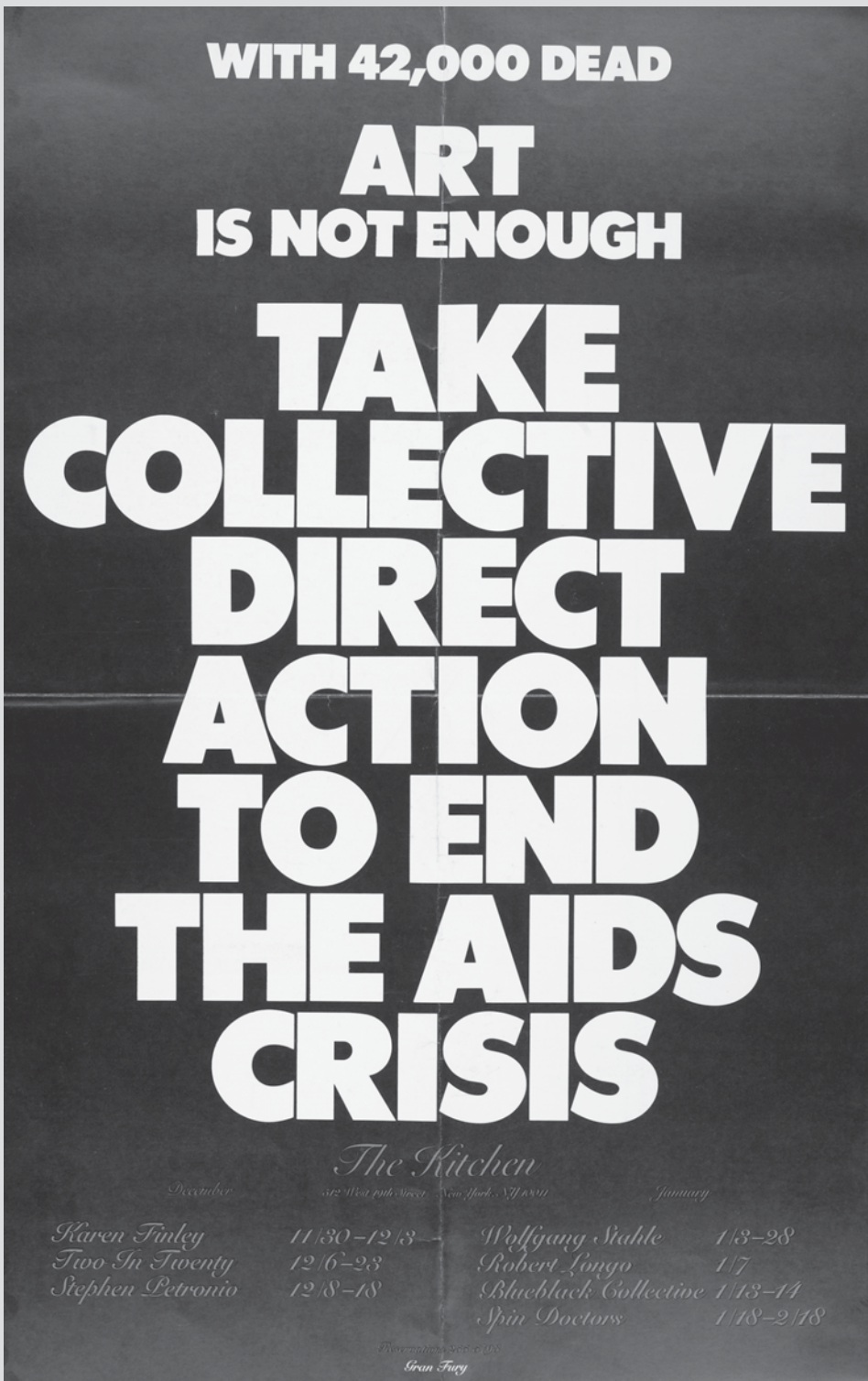
Ault, in *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material*, describes the evening of the show's opening as being "tinged by a measure of antagonism to the memorializing orientation of some art in the show by a number of visitors wanting a more militant exposition."<sup>64</sup> Ault's description effectively inverts Claire Bishop's model of participatory art as holding the potential productively to antagonize its audience: here, it is audience members who react antagonistically to a project that approaches them, enthusiastically, as allies.<sup>65</sup> Tension had materialized even before the show was hung. Ault described to me an interaction between Group Material members and Gran Fury members during the installation process, when Gran Fury delivered their *RIOT* painting late, after hanging had already begun. Gran Fury then expressed unhappiness with the work's placement on the small strip of wall by itself because they saw this location as marginalizing it from the rest of the installation.<sup>66</sup> This came as a surprise to Group Material, who had never considered that the work's placement might be a source of conflict and who moreover had chosen to place the work between two windows so the street was visible as its backdrop, to signify its situation at the boundary between the inside and the outside, the art institution and the street.<sup>67</sup> Ault has a faint memory of Gran Fury threatening to withdraw the work from the show, but she is unsure how or if this actually happened. In her recounting, the incident seems to act like an affective knot, whose exact historical details melt away in the wake of an impression left by difficult emotion.

Additionally, leading up to the show, Group Material had had a disagreement with *Village Voice* art critic Kim Levin, who, Ault relates, had made a recommendation

for work to be included in the exhibition. Levin, at the time, had a close friend who was an artist also working as a home health aid for people with AIDS. She had agreed to be a person he could talk to at any time, which was a requisite part of the health program in which he was enrolled. At the time, she remembers, he was calling her five or six times a day “and nearly having a nervous breakdown because it brought back memories of the friends he had cared for and lost.”<sup>68</sup> I believe that this friend was Dui Seid, an artist and home-care worker who attended the “AIDS and Democracy” open forum and spoke about the grueling but necessary nature of home-care work. Ault remembers that when Dia announced that it would host a project by Group Material about AIDS, Levin contacted Dia and sent material by Seid, whose work she recommended for inclusion in the exhibition. Ault recalls few details about the artwork, but she remembers that it involved real blood and that the group was not interested in showing it. As discussed above, Gonzalez-Torres in particular was adamant that the show not include works that reaffirmed the physical reality of the disease.<sup>69</sup>

A week after the publication of Hess’s positive review in the *Village Voice* on January 10, Levin published a scathingly critical review titled “It’s Called Denial.”<sup>70</sup> She condemned the show as dangerously “nonconfrontational,” arguing that its “conceptual” approach avoided “directly confronting the horror of reality,” ultimately acting as a “psychic shield” against the disease. Levin contrasts Group Material’s show unfavorably with Gran Fury’s ART IS NOT ENOUGH poster, to which she attributes a directness and political power she finds lacking in “AIDS and Democracy” (Figure 4.11). “The art world tends to be insular and anesthetized and denial is endemic in our society,” opines Levin, “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.”<sup>71</sup> Levin registers the presence of the information–video table but attributes its contents entirely to ACT UP. The tone of the review was incredibly angry and provoked backlash from other people in the community, who wrote responses to the *Voice*. Gran Fury members Donald Moffett and John Lindell, who as discussed above had individual works in the show as well as works authored collectively by Gran Fury, took issue with Levin’s polarization between Group Material’s work and their collective’s. In a response that was sent to the *Voice* but never published, Moffett and Lindell chastised Levin’s tone, arguing that it belittled the efforts of people all working against the common enemy of AIDS. “With the 1,000 bullshit idiotic exhibits going on in this town at any one moment,” they write, “[Kim Levin] chooses to blast the Group Material show about their method of responding to the AIDS crisis.” Instead of polarizing the approaches of different collectives,

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. . . . Levin’s comment that the show “simply doesn’t evoke emotion leading to compassionate action” sounds dangerously like a call for sympathy. Sympathy has only roused people to buy flowers for the dead.<sup>72</sup>



**FIGURE 4.11.** Gran Fury, ART IS NOT ENOUGH, 1989. Offset poster. Courtesy of Avram Finkelstein.

Moffett and Lindell express suspicion that Levin's approach polarizes not only Gran Fury and Group Material but also artists and people with AIDS (PWAs), disempowering both by eliding the many different tactics they might use to fight the epidemic and the many different personal or political reasons they might have for doing so (as well as the fact that many people identified as both). Though this letter did not find its way into print, the *Voice* did publish other responses, from artists Martha Rosler and Rudolf Baranik, that attempted to disrupt Levin's conflation of political action with one specific type of art. "Art is not direct action," wrote Baranik. "The powerful poster by Gran Fury is not direct action—it merely calls for it."<sup>73</sup>

Group Material members themselves also wrote a response letter to the *Village Voice* in which they responded forcefully and angrily to Levin's attack:

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 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.<sup>74</sup>

The letter originally sent in went on to elucidate the group's intentions relative to the Brechtian framework discussed above, but it was redacted by the editors to explain the intended approach as "evocative and reflective, encouraging critical distance." If Levin found that the "AIDS and Democracy" installation lacked strong emotion, the same could not be said of Group Material's response to her, which comes across as defensive, even hurt, suggesting that there were high personal stakes bound up with the show. Notably, both Levin and Group Material members avoid writing directly about their own emotions. She does not mention her work to provide emotional support to a friend in crisis or the frustration she might have experienced at Group Material's rejection of Seid's work, and they voice the necessity of their approach relative to a generic second person: "You don't need or want to see pictures of it." Levin, in her brief counterresponse to their letter, directed yet another stinging missive at their claim to speak to PWAs: "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'?"

As I study this encounter between Levin and Group Material, I feel shaken by both sides of it: the anger and self-righteousness of Levin's tone; the harshness of Group Material's response. I will return later to the second point and its implications for the question of aesthetic judgment concerning participatory art based on a pedagogical model. For now, I want to register that despite Levin's tone and her problematic equation between activism and a certain type of art, her review contains a seed of something that rings true to me. That is, the "AIDS and Democracy" installation seems to me to have occupied a slightly displaced position relative to the affects it treated. As discussed above, the installation of the gallery walls made space for viewers' emo-

tional and critical engagement by presenting clusters of works that were evocative and not proscriptive, opening up a plethora of potential different ways of reading and feeling. The video–information center, by contrast, showcased a very different mode of address in the intense, directive urgency of the flyers and information pamphlets and in the strongly politicized, pragmatic address of videos such as Spiro’s ACT UP documentation and *Testing the Limits*. Much of the literature and also the video material was collectively authored, even to the point of anonymity of specific participants, whereas on the walls, more expressive works by recognizable authors such as Mapplethorpe, Nancy Spero, and Andres Serrano predominated.<sup>75</sup> The wall installation had a somewhat cool, spacious feeling, as reflected in Hess’s comment about the contrast “between cool ‘art’ and hot ‘propaganda’” and also in a description by then graduate student Richard Meyer, who wrote that “AIDS and Democracy” struck “a cooler, more conceptual address than one would anticipate in an ‘AIDS exhibition.’”<sup>76</sup> The layout of the show, which consolidated the activist literature and video materials into a central station, surrounded by the art on the walls, highlighted these two components as dialectical poles, between which the viewer would move to arrive at an overall view. As such, it seems the show relied significantly on viewers’ experience and their existing emotions to create what Group Material described as “a juncture in which sorrow, rage, and fear can be used to reinforce our decision to act.”

Group Material’s aim was to create a representation of the epidemic that would break down divisive binaries between the activist and the aesthetic. That goal was reflected in their dedication of the *Democracy* project, and later of its accompanying book, to New Museum curator Bill Olander, whose life work had epitomized a rigorous commitment to both those fields.<sup>77</sup> As I discussed in chapter 1, Olander, who at the time was very sick with AIDS-related disease, visited the exhibition in a wheelchair with the help of art critic David Deitcher and expressed great appreciation for the show.<sup>78</sup> But in its foregrounding of viewer experience as the place where its activist–aesthetic dialectic would find emotional and intellectual integration, the show arguably heightened the possibility for misreadings of that intention from viewers who had a very different experience or who wanted to see their existing feelings given form in a more concrete way. Hess, in her review, successfully resolves the dialectic into higher understanding, but Levin, on the other hand, is unable to integrate the video–information station conceptually into her reading of the show, instead focusing just on the art and taking issue with its cooler tone. Moreover, in staging the centrality of the viewer’s contingent thought and emotion in realizing its process of meaning making, “AIDS and Democracy” inadvertently raised questions about the sufficiency of representation relative to daily experience and social life, which, as I discussed above, was already a hot-button issue among cultural practitioners and activists. In a review that also remained unpublished, Jack Ben-Levi and Sydney Pokorny point out a tension between the work’s dual address to an aesthetic and to a collective political modality. They suggest that between the aim to create “an impactful art statement” and the ambition to reach a diverse audience, the point becomes lost. “Who represents? Who is represented? To what end, and for whom? . . . What role does the Group Material show play within this dynamic?”<sup>79</sup>

With this line of reflection, Ben-Levi and Pokorny implicitly pose the question of how the theoretical audience position implied by the installation intersected with the experiences of the actual people who viewed it. As I stated above, the relationship between those entities constituted a central and productive tension in Group Material's work, and one that was constantly in transformation from project to project. In "AIDS and Democracy," an important characteristic of the real audience was that, perhaps more than in some of Group Material's other projects, this audience encompassed a strong constituency of people who were already informed, opinionated experts on the AIDS crisis. Ramspacher remembers that at the public town-hall meeting, which I will discuss next, "everybody from ACT UP came, hundreds of people."<sup>80</sup> This extant expertise may have in itself caused friction with the Brechtian approach that structured the show. Benjamin talks about the audience of Brecht's theater as a group of "interested" persons in whom the epic play evokes astonishment, which it then transforms into a "technical" or "expert" interest.<sup>81</sup> Audiences who bring a certain interest by virtue of their life experience thus leave with a more technical understanding of the ideological function of representation. Many people in the "AIDS and Democracy" audience, however, were already experts, not only in the medical and scientific dimensions of AIDS but also in terms of representational discourses and strategies surrounding it.<sup>82</sup> The prevailing social order was, for them, already totally denaturalized, without the jolt into critical consciousness offered by neo-Brechtian tactics. A few vocal members of that already-expert constituency dominated the town-hall meeting, to which I now turn.

### The "AIDS and Democracy" Town-Hall Meeting

The audio recording of the "AIDS and Democracy" town-hall meeting indicates that intense, difficult feelings predominated in its discussion. A difference between this meeting and the other three held for *Democracy* was that AIDS was perceived to be a much more urgent problem than public education, consumer culture, and electoral politics. Group Material state as much in the press release for the show, where they write that of the four parts of *Democracy*, "'AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study' will confront our most pressing crisis as a society."<sup>83</sup> The perception of AIDS as a crisis was particularly acute within the artists' own communities. The meeting, held at Dia's Mercer Street event space on the evening of January 10, 1989, four days before the close of the gallery installation, drew widespread participation from people engaged in AIDS activism. The meeting was on a Tuesday, coincidentally the day after the weekly Monday night ACT UP meeting. It was chaired by film director Maria Maggenti, an ACT UP member who had participated in the earlier roundtable discussion. In the audio recording, Maggenti at one point comments on the presence of the ACT UP members and on their voracious appetite for exchange and debate: "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."

Over the course of the meeting, there is a tendency on the part of participants to stress the quality of their experience as being *too much* for the framework of the meeting, and particularly for the institutional host: too political, too painful, and especially too angry. Specific criticism of the gallery show was voiced mainly by Avram Finkelstein, a member ACT UP and a founding member of Gran Fury. Finkelstein delivered a long monologue in which he criticized the “codified” nature of the exhibition 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, as far as I’m concerned, is that frequently, the information that it’s dealing with is *highly codified*. It’s personalized. . . . I [also] have questions about why this [meeting] is being documented. . . . I’m inferring, that by discussing these issues in codified ways, in very elitist circles, which has to do with the people who are funding this evening, and funding the show that is accompanying this, . . . 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 guerrilla 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.

Finkelstein connects the “distanced” nature of the show not only to the specific work on display but also, more broadly, to the agency of the art institution, which he represents as separating art from life, to commodify social engagement. Like David Deitcher, whose essay I discussed in chapter 1, Finkelstein feels suspicious of the audio-recording process, seeing it as potentially capturing the event in order to make it serve the institution by enshrining it as a legitimate contribution to culture. For Finkelstein at this moment, activism clearly takes place outside the gallery. He is wary enough of aesthetization even to steer clear of terms related to the visual while describing Gran Fury’s activities, which he instead labels the production of “guerrilla information.”

Following Finkelstein’s torrent of words, Maggenti, a diligent meeting chair, attempts to get him to be more specific in terms of strategies, to deliver a proposal for some concrete course of action:

MAGGENTI: Avram, um, before you go away, I have a question. What would *be* then, a strategy for anybody 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 guerrilla 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 vision* of the way the culture is responding to the crisis, I feel angry and *confused*, because I think that there's not enough concrete information, and I think, I mean, I think *facts*—crimes—are in order. I think poster-ing is in order. . . . I really do feel that *clarity* is the strategy.

Here, Finkelstein articulates a position in favor of art's instrumentalization along the lines of the model Crimp lays out, but he does so as a sort of afterthought, only when prompted. Listening to the recording of his speech, I get the feeling that his clarification about specific action feels tacked on because it is not really the point. Rather, the anger is. The anger itself is characterized by a double trajectory. On the one hand, it has the feeling of what Silvan Tomkins describes as the “self-satisfying” aspect of affect, where the affect is satisfying in itself apart from any teleological goal.<sup>84</sup> Finkelstein's anger seems to feel satisfying for him. His speech is *long*, both intense and drawn out, as if he wants to stay as long as possible in the space it creates. Unlike ACT UP meetings, Group Material's town halls were not run according to *Robert's Rules of Order*, which strictly limit speaking time, and Finkelstein takes full advantage of the laxer format in order to discourse at length.

Along with its self-satisfying quality, Finkelstein's anger serves a political function within the context of the meeting. In effect, by generating affect, it restores the emotional habitus of ACT UP, where mourning is converted into militancy. His speech manifests a combative affect that characterized Gran Fury's work and that he experienced to be missing from “AIDS and Democracy.” The speech disrupts what he describes as the distancing effect of the institutional space by injecting confrontational anger into it and making that anger felt by everyone present. It is like a spoken equivalent of the intervention performed in the visual realm by the *ART IS NOT ENOUGH* poster, in which art is made to admit its insufficiency in the face of a political crisis but is simultaneously marshaled into political action. Finkelstein's injection of confrontational anger into “AIDS and Democracy” appears to have been quite successful, as demonstrated by the fact that others take up his call of insufficiency as the meeting goes on. Dui Seid seconds the comments about the problems with the exhibition: “I agree with Ave about the exhibition at Dia in that it was *coded*. And I think that it falls *perfectly*, whether consciously or unconsciously, into the mind frame that the commercial galleries and the commercial system would like us to have.”<sup>85</sup> Sydney Pokorny discusses feeling skeptical about ACT UP because they have not had an action in three weeks and encourages listeners not to get “carried away with the idea that the image *is* the action.” The tone is summed up near the end of the meeting by a clearly disappointed

art teacher who concludes: “[There’s been] a lot of artist-bashing—I don’t know if that’s a politically correct term.” Maggenti answers: “It’s not.”

Throughout all of this, Group Material’s show is not the only target of anger. Anger circulates among participants themselves, as we can hear at a point well into the two-plus-hour discussion, when a misunderstanding arises between two people. A woman, in a discussion of ACT UP, makes a comment about lack of participation perpetuating the crisis, which is followed by a curt, ardent demand from a fellow audience member: “ACT UP is somehow perpetuating the AIDS crisis—is particularly insidious. Please clarify that then for me.” The original speaker answers: “Um—I didn’t mean—of course—we’re not perpetuating it, I think that other people [who] aren’t participating more is perpetuating it.” Her interrogator seems nominally satisfied: “Okay.” Original speaker: “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.” He answers, cooling off: “Yeah thanks, ’cause that really—pissed me off.”

The recording of this encounter gives a sense of the space of the meeting as one flooded by affect. People are on edge, swimming in a reservoir of feeling that is ready to explode based on a comment that someone else made, or in this case, actually did not make. We might think of their collective dynamic in terms of what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari describe as the wolf pack. The pack is a multiplicity to which the individual subject is proximate, or attached, without ever being fully absorbed. The pack is constantly, unpredictably, in motion, and that motion causes continual fluctuations of feeling and intensity in the bodies of its participants. It has no fixed hierarchy.<sup>86</sup> The place where its interaction unfolds is the “plane of immanence,” which is both conceptual and material and is characterized by the encounter of multiple bodies with infinite small and large differences among them, as opposed to by binary oppositions.<sup>87</sup> In addition to being pack-like, the dynamic at the “AIDS and Democracy” meeting has the characteristic of a flock, where a group movement emerges through moment-to-moment decisions and interactions among members, which can be triggered by any individual. The flock model is useful in thinking about participant interaction because it indicates a degree of coordination and mutual reaction, without implying transparency. At the meeting, the speech acts of audience members waterfall, piling on to each other to build the affective dynamic of the event. Simultaneously, their feelings and intentions are not transparent to one another, as is evident in the misunderstanding about the woman’s comment regarding ACT UP. That misunderstanding also demonstrates that, despite the fact that the meeting takes dialogue as its structuring premise, discourse and affect often run quite obliquely to each other in the audience’s interactions. After the woman makes the comment about perpetuating the crisis, the other participant’s abrupt anger only gradually begins to subside once the initial speaker has clarified her position. That gap, the moment of affective vertigo that must dissipate from the body of its own accord before rational discourse can resume, is evident in the recording not only from the speaker’s tone of voice but also from the fact that he totally fails to pick up on the content of her closing comment, returning again to an explanatory narrative of his own anger. She says, “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." And he says: "Yeah thanks, 'cause that really—pissed me off."

In my discussion above of the written reception of "AIDS and Democracy," I read the installation critically relative to the artists' intentions, arguing that it inadvertently staged precisely the opposition between art and activism that the artists wanted to break down. The town-hall meeting opened up space for a different set of voices and intentions, for which Group Material had purposely made room in the project. But the dynamic of the meeting does not indicate that the artists' intentions failed while those of audience members such as Finkelstein succeeded. Rather, I see the live context of a town-hall meeting as providing a forum for collective meaning making, but in a way that did not follow the individual intentionality of anyone involved. In addition to evoking the pack on the plane of immanence as a way of thinking about how that process unfolded, I want now to look more carefully at the specific kind of "presence" that forms the basis for the interaction between the meeting participants. Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy is based on a vibrant presence. But the centrality, in debates about presence in performance since the 1990s, of deconstructive theories of deferral, absence, and dependence on context requires that I situate the events I discuss relative to "presence" with more qualification. The generation of affect that I have been discussing here is based on the presence of embodied subjects, together, at a certain place and time. The question of what collective bodily presence might generate relative to art is one that art historians have posed concerning performance art, a category that Kristine Stiles argues consolidated around 1973, as it came to subsume ideologically and formally diverse practices including body art, actions, Fluxus, destruction art, and direct art.<sup>88</sup>

A central question for scholars and critics has been how live presence enables the sharing of meaning and feeling. Under that umbrella, various early contributors placed different emphases on the direct communication of performers' intentions versus the effacement of boundaries between artists and audiences to create new, more democratic modes of address. Ira Licht, in the catalog for the 1975 show *Bodyworks* at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, expounded on the ability of body art directly to reveal the artist's specific "corporeal reality, activities and psyche" to the audience. RoseLee Goldberg, in her pivotal 1979 study *Performance: 1909 to the Present*, celebrated performance as an "avant avant garde," a generator of newness that would smash artworld convention.<sup>89</sup> Performance's direct address to perception, Goldberg argued, opens up the possibility for a truly mass audience.<sup>90</sup> In 1985, Catherine Elwes approached performance presence from an explicitly feminist standpoint, arguing that its bodily directness enabled women artists to break away from objectifying representations and into dialogical relationships with audience members, constituting "a kind of internal democracy" within the performance work.<sup>91</sup>

Elwes's embrace of performance's feminist potential was somewhat unusual in the context of American art of the 1980s. By contrast to the 1970s, the 1980s saw a turn away from artists' direct presentation of their own bodies. Feminist artists such as Mary Kelly, deeply engaged with questions of language, signification, and ideology, came to equate performance with a problematic claim "directly" to present the body, outside

of culturally determined structures of power and meaning making.<sup>92</sup> Subsequent to that turn, the 1990s saw two particularly important feminist accounts that formulated antiessentialist approaches to performance in response to political and aesthetic concerns specific to the 1980s. Those accounts would be foundational for the resurgence of interest in performance that has only intensified up until the present day. The first was Peggy Phelan's *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (1993). Phelan's book demonstrates an interest in the possibility of an ethical relation between socially differentiated subjects that characterized the identity politics of the 1980s. But she undercuts the emphasis on identification that dominated in that earlier context by positing performance as characterized by an ontology of disappearance. Performance's way of becoming itself in disappearance not only resists capitalism's reproductive logic, Phelan argues, but also opens the possibility of ethical encounters where we recognize that our identity is never stable or autonomous but, rather, constituted through our desire to be seen by the other.<sup>93</sup> Amelia Jones, in her book *Body Art / Performing the Subject* (1998) and her article "'Presence' in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation" (1997), also argues for performance's potential to reveal intersubjective relations among specific, embodied, social subjects. Jones takes on Kelly's critique by arguing that body art in fact foregrounds the *inability* of the body to ensure self-sufficient presence, showing that the body's meaningfulness always depends on its context and on other subjects.<sup>94</sup> Moreover, Jones argues, body art solicits the viewer's (sexual) desire, showing his or her implication as a specific, embodied subject with the material under study. As a result, the neutral critical subject, which modernism and masculinist postmodernism would like to assert, is decentered into a more ethical network of personal implication and acknowledgment of difference.<sup>95</sup> In "'Presence' in Absentia," Jones discusses her particular interest in photographic documents of performance—"supplements" to performance—for their Derridian potential to demonstrate that the supposedly "original" live moment of performance never existed as such.<sup>96</sup> Jones goes as far as to argue that performance's documents are *more* effective than live events in stressing the implications of viewer and performance artwork and therefore in interrogating the singular, self-possessed male subject of Greenbergian modernism.<sup>97</sup> More recently, Rebecca Schneider has approached the question of performance's live presence from a different angle, arguing that performance reenactment engages with "theatrical" time, a time that does not obey diachronic linearity. Theatrical time opens up the possibility of intersubjective and intermedial encounters that operate across time, in which a given moment can reenact, interrupt, or even revise another.<sup>98</sup>

In sum, for Licht, Goldberg, and Elwes, performance's ability to create intersubjective encounter depends on the fullness and uniqueness of a particular presence, whereas Phelan, Jones, and Schneider reject that idea as essentialist, instead linking performance's intersubjective relations to intertemporal relations of remembering, interpretation, and desire. Recently, Mechthild Widrich has responded to the latter authors' problematization of presence by arguing for a more metaphysically minimal idea of presence as concerning something that happens in a certain time and place. Presence can only be understood, Widrich argues, by looking at specific cases of how artists

engage with the idea of it.<sup>99</sup> Widrich's model awards historical moments a greater specificity and integrity than do the theories of Phelan, Jones, and Schneider. The performance document can work to bridge multiple moments by suspending bodily presence between a moment in the past and a moment of future remembering.<sup>100</sup> That suspension enables the circulation of the work to a wider "reading" public, whom artists in many cases anticipate even as they assert the primacy of the original event. Widrich's formulation is particularly valuable because it points out that placing more weight on the historical specificity of presence is not the same thing as accepting a subject who is *self-present* and thus fully in control of his or her own intentionality.

Returning that weight of specificity to presence appeals to me because it creates a basis for understanding the materiality of the situation that enables a participatory audience to create meaning through interaction. The "AIDS and Democracy" town-hall meeting I have discussed here demonstrates how a particular moment can give rise to collaboratively generated feeling and meaning, in a way that in this case depends on the embodied vocal communication of people all physically present in one space. Without imagining that certain stretch of time on a Tuesday night in early 1989, in this specific location, it would be impossible to investigate the event and the particular discussions and affective dynamics to which it gave rise. Presence, here, is social. Erika Fischer-Lichte argues that the cohabitation of bodies in the space of performance breaks down boundaries between the artist and audience members, giving rise to unique, intense experiences that have a powerful bodily and affective logic prior to their later interpretation or critical digestion.<sup>101</sup> The "AIDS and Democracy" recording documents intense experiences that arise from bodily copresence in a given space. But the meeting also, in its dialogical form, suggests that as the collective interaction unfolds, affective experiences do not have temporal priority or ontological separateness from reflection and critical interpretation but, instead, are bound up with it in smaller and larger cycles of mutual, ongoing feedback that play out in the audience dynamic.

Moreover, the archival material I study undermines the idea that taking that moment as singular and historically unique must necessarily be connected to a singular, self-present subject. The dynamic of the meeting is fundamentally relational. Though certain ideas or feelings that arise can be sparked by individual participants, the way those ideas get taken up, or not, depends not on those people's intentionality but on the collective flocking dynamic that operates among all present. In addition, the process of researching these participatory events brings home the fact that their particular dynamics cannot be generalized as representative of a "whole" or continuous self on the part of the people involved. Both Levin and Finkelstein told me they had no memory of their responses to Group Material's project.<sup>102</sup> It is impossible to draw conclusions about why that might be the case, but the fact indicates at least that an attempt to narrate these events as part of a fully intentional, self-possessed subjecthood on their part would be problematic. Nicolas Bourriaud, in *Relational Aesthetics*, refers to relational artworks as opportunities for "the collective elaboration of meaning," a position that Bishop and others have critiqued as idealist.<sup>103</sup> We might instead maintain the emphasis on collective experience while critiquing the idealism, by saying that indeed,

these works do create a collective elaboration of meaning, but not in the way that any person involved intends.

Finally, the collective nature of the event captured by the archival record poses questions about my position as a researcher vis-à-vis the affects of live art. In contemporary art history, live art's affects most often enter critical texts in the form of scholars' descriptions of their own experience of a given work. These passages tend to be narrative and markedly subjective in tone. For example, we might think of Claire Bishop's description of experiencing a Santiago Sierra work as uncomfortable and unsettling; Jennifer Doyle's powerful exploration of her own "difficult" responses to performance in *Hold It against Me*; Tom Finkelpearl's description of a highly affecting visit to Bolek Greczynski's *Battlefields Project*; or Amelia Jones's description of feeling "depressed and a bit distressed" at the spectacle of Marina Abramović's *The Artist Is Present*.<sup>104</sup> These vignettes provide both insight into a given live artwork and an important sense of implication of the critic in the social work that she discusses. Sometimes, as with Rebecca Schneider's discussion of her observation of other people watching Tino Sehgal's *Kiss*, they locate the writer relative to other audience members, but most often, they revolve more closely around the writer's personal, subjective experience.<sup>105</sup> With Group Material's "AIDS and Democracy," my "own" experience is based on installation shots, audio recordings, and textual documents, which have a certain sensory materiality for me but which also locate me, affectively, relative to other participants. Thinking through my own experience is indissociable from processes of identifying and disidentifying with participants and with the artists that can be hard to distinguish from my own position and that exercise a complex influence on my arguments as they take shape. In the final section of this chapter, I will unpack one such instance concerning "AIDS and Democracy" as a way to move deeper into the discussion of affect as it operated relative to Group Material's representations of AIDS.

### ***AIDS Timeline and the Mapping of Experience***

I mentioned above that I felt upset by the reactions of both parties in the dialogue between Kim Levin and Group Material. It took me some time to arrive at this realization and specifically to own the feeling of disappointment I experienced about Group Material's collective voice in this instance. My disappointment stages my own desire for what I want "AIDS and Democracy" to have been. I find myself wishing that the group's response had been kinder or, more fundamentally, that they had taken Levin's anger not as a stimulus to reciprocate in kind but, rather, as a prompt pedagogically to establish a different kind of dialogue. This sentiment raises difficult questions for me. Does my attempt to investigate the relationships materialized by participatory art ultimately run up against the roadblock of personal judgment for actions taken long past, as I find my way, with my own emotional orientations and specifically situated identifications, into the archive? And more fundamentally, how can I square the pettiness of this particular archived interaction, and its disproportionate impact on me, with the life and death stakes that structured "AIDS and Democracy" and the affective present of which it was a part?

The question of the criteria by which we should judge participatory artworks has been a recurring theme in the debate about these practices. It frequently arises relative to the issue of the division between the aesthetic and the social as it pertains to participation, and specifically in relation to whether critics must fight to maintain these categories' distinct identities in order to maintain the ability appropriately to judge art.<sup>106</sup> To state the obvious: the defense of such a boundary revolves around the idea that there are certain kinds of experience that belong in an aesthetic category and are thus appropriate grounds for judgment, and other kinds that do not and are not. As Doyle points out, what art history and art institutions consider to be excessive versus aesthetic affects, and the way that viewers come to embody that difference, is a learned, and specifically classed, divide.<sup>107</sup> Doyle is interested in both artworks and art histories that eschew this division to make audible the historically situated "noise of the body" in our experiences and judgments of art.<sup>108</sup> I agree with Doyle that it is impossible to filter the excessive, emotive dimension out of the judgment of contemporary artwork, whether it stems from live experience, from encounters with archives, from our own fantasies, or from some combination thereof. What is important is to make these moments of necessarily impure judgment into teachable moments, both about the historical developments and encounters that give rise to them and as pauses for reflection on the possibility of moving beyond the heat of difficult affect into other types of knowledge and awareness.

For help with how to move through these questions relative to the death that is omnipresent in art about AIDS, I turn to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's luminous essay "Pedagogy of Buddhism." Sedgwick's text revolves around three nodes: the scene of pedagogy, American popularizations of Buddhist teachings from the nineteenth-century transcendentalists through the present, and the author's own diagnosis with terminal cancer. The essay presents affect as something that is necessarily present when one approaches both teaching and dying but that in certain forms can tether us to identifications that are ultimately incompatible with self-care and intellectual freedom. Sedgwick discusses the difficulty of a teacher faced by forms of affectively potent resistance from a "student-patient," which can cause the teacher to misrecognize the student's motivations and thus ultimately the scene of pedagogy itself. Deeper insight into the dynamics at stake in the failed scene may materialize only too late, after the fact: "We may wonder afterwards whether and how we could have managed to turn into the particular teacher/therapist needed by each [student]."<sup>109</sup> Sedgwick also discusses the conscious dying movement developed in the United States and England since 1980, in which the AIDS crisis played a major role and which draws on the Buddhist pedagogy of nonself.<sup>110</sup> Within that movement, dying is a scene of pedagogy that compels a loosening from affectively intense attachments to the self through practices in which the philosophical and the everyday and material are immanent to one another. This space breaks down the delineation among the roles of student, teacher, caregiver, and patient. Sedgwick describes the practices of multidirectional pedagogy in the space of dying as "the most passive and minimal of performances":

"Opening to" (a person or predicament), "opening around" or "softening around" (a site of pain), *listening*, relaxation, spaciousness, patience in the sense of *pateor* or

lying open, shared breathing: these practices of nondoining, some of them sounding hardly more than New Age commonplaces, seem able to support a magnetic sense of the real far into the threshold of extinguished identity.<sup>111</sup>

Sedgwick describes life, in proximity to fatal illness, as a plane of micronegotiations in which pedagogy consists in the simultaneous recognition of powerful affective attachments to self and practices of their deliberate loosening. My interest in that plane of negotiation and the acts of affective reworking that take place within it animates the following analysis of *AIDS Timeline*, a project that Group Material developed in the year following “AIDS and Democracy.” I see in this later project an implicit, perhaps even partially unconscious, counterproposal to the polarizing, affectively laden identification with certain positions that “AIDS and Democracy” seems to have provoked from some audience members. Ann Cvetkovich, in *Depression: A Public Feeling*, reads art’s therapeutic participation in a praxis of survival as existing on a continuum with forms of critical thought that denaturalize one’s own position by revealing its historical and political determinants.<sup>112</sup> That lack of polarization between the political and the therapeutic is important to my approach here.

*AIDS Timeline* was installed for the first time at the MATRIX Gallery in the University of California, Berkeley, Art Museum starting in November 1989. By the time the project opened, Group Material had expanded to include Dia assistant Karen Ranspacher, whom Gonzalez-Torres, Ashford, and Ault invited to join the group in March 1989.<sup>113</sup> The invitation to create a work in Berkeley came from gallery director Larry Rinder, with whom Group Material met in early January 1989 to discuss the possibility of addressing AIDS again in an exhibition at MATRIX.<sup>114</sup> Rinder had seen “AIDS and Democracy,” which closed that month on January 14. Rinder asked Group Material to do another version of “AIDS and Democracy,” but the group in principle did not repeat shows, as they considered each installation to be keyed to its particular context.<sup>115</sup> Moreover, their relationship to the topic of AIDS was changing. Ault relates that “AIDS and Democracy” was a show where Group Material were working through something themselves, in terms of figuring out what the public value was in making a show on AIDS, specifically relative to their own personal investments as well as to the embeddedness of the topic within a broader social landscape. The audience responses elicited by the earlier project were food for thought that the group took seriously and that played a role in how *AIDS Timeline* cohered.<sup>116</sup> In putting together a show for Berkeley, they were particularly conscious of the gallery’s context at a university, which shaped the information-rich, didactic nature of what they produced.<sup>117</sup>

To create *AIDS Timeline*, the group repurposed the format they had used previously in the 1984 work *Timeline: A Chronicle of U.S. Intervention in Central and Latin America* at P.S. 1 in New York.<sup>118</sup> In contrast to the earlier *Timeline*, which consisted primarily of artworks and consumer products structured relative to the visual device of a red dateline on the wall, *AIDS Timeline* was heavily textual. Taking as its central axis a black vinyl line, marked off with every year from 1979 to 1989, it interspersed small information panels with artworks, media images, sex-education material, and found objects (Figure 4.12). At each year along the timeline, a red-framed text registered the





**FIGURE 4.12.** Installation view of Group Material's *AIDS Timeline*, University Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley, November 11, 1989–January 28, 1990. Courtesy of Group Material and Four Corners Books.

number of new cases, total cases, and deaths to date as calculated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The project involved a huge amount of research into events of the preceding decade, a task to which group members devoted much of their time over the course of 1989. Their other projects that year, *Elegy* at the Neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst in Berlin (December 16, 1988–February 13, 1989), *Unisex* at the Lesbian and Gay Community Center in New York (June 1–December 1), and *Shopping Bag* at Kunstverein in Hamburg (October 14–November 26), required considerably less preparation, making it possible for the members to dive into *AIDS Timeline* from early in the year.<sup>119</sup>

Like “AIDS and Democracy,” *AIDS Timeline* also encompassed elements of audience dialogue and engagement, but this time in a more curated form. The gallery show went accompanied by a *DA ZI BAOS*, or “democracy wall,” on the exterior of the museum, of the kind Group Material had previously installed in Union Square (1982) and in Cardiff, Wales (1985). For *AIDS Timeline*, they surveyed people in the Berkeley community and elsewhere about AIDS, using questionnaires with questions including “How does AIDS affect you, and your lifestyle? What do we need, as a society, to fight and overcome AIDS? How do you see the future in terms of AIDS?” Using the responses they received, Group Material created large text placards in blue and yellow, the university’s official colors, which were mounted on the face of the museum building (Figure 4.13). The resulting wall evoked a strong sense of the diversity of political and personal positions from which different people all over the country approached AIDS, from the indifferent (“AIDS doesn’t affect me at all. I don’t really sleep around.—Student, UC Berkeley”) to the staunchly politicized (“Obviously, our illustrious elected leaders still think that ‘niggers and queers’ don’t vote. There is a special place in hell being prepared for Reagan, Helms, et al.—AIDS Activist, New York City”). In showing this diversity, the wall problematized the idea that only a limited “community” was affected by AIDS while also showing how identification with a certain group could shape people’s perceptions of how the crisis addressed them—for example, in the case of the student who felt unaffected because of not “really” sleeping around. Also part of the project at Berkeley was a series of film screenings and a one-day insert in the student newspaper, the *Daily Californian*.

In addition to its heavily informational nature, *AIDS Timeline* was also visually full and rich. Moreover, though its factual narrative ran chronologically, artworks and objects did not necessarily obey the temporal categorization; instead, they were arranged to create affectively and semantically evocative clusters. Near the 1988 marker, two ACT UP “Silence = Death” shirts, one in Spanish and one in English, hung above a text reading: “January, New York State Health Commissioner David Axelrod still has not ruled on a request for free needle distribution made by 2 City Health Commissioners, and first proposed by ADAPT in 1985.” Nearby hung Mitchell Syrop’s *Insider Trading* (1986), showing the title text with a microscope image of a cell under attack. Moving further along, past 1989, the viewer encountered a large group of masks created by PWAs participating in the art program at San Francisco’s Rest Stop Support Center (Figure 4.14).<sup>120</sup> The masks displayed huge expressive variety, from a whimsical



**FIGURE 4.13.** *Democracy Wall* installed on the exterior of the University Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley, for Group Material's *AIDS Timeline*. Courtesy of Group Material and Four Corners Books.



**FIGURE 4.14.** Installation view of Group Material's *AIDS Timeline*, University Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley. Courtesy of Group Material and Four Corners Books.

one painted in pink and white with golden antlers, to one proudly bearing the stripes of the rainbow flag, to a somber, unadorned one painted in slate grey, to a comic one that resembled a skinny Santa Claus wearing eyeliner. As an ensemble, the masks paralleled the diversity of positions expressed on *Democracy Wall*, expressing the extremely varied political and emotional alignments of PWAs and undermining any idea of them as a homogeneous group. Below the masks was a broadsheet for a Montreal protest, a Batman logo, and an ACT UP poster declaring “AIDS—It’s Big Business! (But Who’s Making a Killing?).” Pop culture references abounded throughout the installation, including right at the beginning of the timeline, where a poster for *The Empire Strikes Back*, 1979’s highest-grossing film, hung above an image of Ronald Reagan’s inauguration.

The show also contained works by artists who had contributed to “AIDS and Democracy,” with Michael Jenkins’s broken flag, *June 30, 1986*, capping the timeline, just beyond its end in 1989. Also present was a portrait of Jesse Helms from the *Animal Farm* series (1987) by former Group Material member Tim Rollins and KOS. Running along the bottom of the wall was Steven Evans’s work *Selections from the Disco, Various BPM, 1979–89* (1989), consisting of vinyl letters spelling out the titles of the top disco hits in each year. The titles, including “Never Can Say Goodbye,” “Sex,” “Menergy,” “It’s Raining Men,” and “Got to Be Real,” resonated in ways both poignant and humorous with the images and objects in the show. On the wall just above “Sex” hung the San Francisco AIDS Foundation poster “Dress for the Occasion,” showing a muscular man with an erect penis naked save for a condom. Sexy images were to be found throughout the installation, including in Robert Buck’s *Safer Sex Preview Booth*, where viewers could watch videos including a safe-sex tape by Gay Men’s Health Crisis, as well as hard-core pornographic images on different channels directed toward gay men and lesbians. Another channel showed men, and then women, masturbating, “so it was even safer sex,” as Buck describes it.<sup>121</sup>

Art historian Claire Grace describes *AIDS Timeline*’s mode as one of “anachronic relay,” creating a convergence between personal experience and public history to produce historically situated political and social concern.<sup>122</sup> The way the work enacted the convergence of the personal and the public was related to the way it deployed clusters of objects, whose polyvalent meanings made them operate both with and against the media in which they were presented. *AIDS Timeline* leveled numerous forms of media onto a single, relational plane of immanence. For example, the span between 1983 and 1984 included an issue of *Time* magazine on “Disease Detectives”; a copy of *Newsweek* magazine titled, in block letters, “EPIDEMIC”; a page from the gay magazine *New York Native* with an article titled “1,112 and Counting”; and an issue of the *Advocate* with the headline “Coping with a Crisis,” showing three young men in towels in a bathhouse, miming the gestures evoking “See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil” (Plate 12). Just above the *Newsweek* issue was posted the CDC’s 1981–85 adult and pediatric case definition for AIDS. At the center of this selection of media, right below the black dateline, was located a picture of soldiers in combat fatigues and helmets, loaded down with gear packs and semiautomatic weapons. In the foreground, two soldiers lock hands, their faces animated, as if in victorious celebration. The image, with its evocations both of

warfare and camaraderie, is powerful in itself, but it also enters into different constellations of meaning with the diverse objects arranged around it. We might read the image relative to the information panel up and to its right, discussing Larry Kramer's criticism of "the horrifying inaction of governmental and medical institutions," taking it to show an example of where the government is putting its money. Or we could view it relative to the CDC case definition and think of it as showing a possible site of viral transmission. The soldiers might also be taken metaphorically to represent the doctors or patients on the "front line" fighting the disease, as evoked by the *Time* "Disease Detectives" cover just above the photo. And the nearby copies of the *Advocate* and *New York Native*, publications specific to the gay community displaying bare-chested men on the covers, suggest a homoerotic reading of the military image. These readings are obviously not exhaustive. But they demonstrate the way *AIDS Timeline's* assembling of diverse media not only offered a wide range of possible entry points and forms of address but also heightened the slippage of individual images and objects between medial forms and contextual frameworks. Moreover, whereas *Time* and *New York Native* imagined their reading publics in very different, perhaps even incompatible, terms, the viewer of Group Material's installation reads across those varied modes of address. The effect was fundamentally to eliminate any possible distinction between aesthetic and informational-political frameworks of engagement.

Group Material members talked about *AIDS Timeline* as a highly didactic work. In a 1990 interview with Maria Porges, Ramspacher explains: "We've . . . admitted that this is probably one of our most didactic installations . . . [a statement about] why AIDS is a crisis in this country and a kind of, if I can use the word, indictment."<sup>123</sup> Reviewers of the show echoed this interpretation, as did participant artists.<sup>124</sup> Reporter Frank Rizzo of the *Hartford Courant*, in a review titled "Art as Activist: An Education about AIDS," expresses enthusiasm about the way the work gives viewers a broad picture of the crisis and praises Group Material's efforts to adapt the work directly to Hartford, efforts that included meeting with area artists, activists, and museum staff.<sup>125</sup> Ann-Sargent Wooster, reviewing the Whitney Biennial incarnation of the show in *Afterimage*, stressed the way it forged 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."<sup>126</sup> Other accounts, such as a review in *Metropolis* magazine, framed the project as activism as such: "This month, the New York-based artists' collective called Group Material is *doing something* about America's number one medical crisis" (italics mine).<sup>127</sup>

Though the informational nature of *AIDS Timeline* was clearly central to its didactic address, there was more at stake in terms of how didacticism operated in the piece. In the Berkeley guest book, a couple of visitors link the work's didactic nature to its highly emotional quality:

I was extremely impressed with the AIDS Timeline. It was a moving and educational creative process. It was inspiration[al] and disturbing. My eyes and heart are more open. Thank you.

I found the AIDS Timeline exhibit very informative. It takes a great deal of time to read and absorb so much. . . . The facts . . . 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?<sup>128</sup>

These comments suggest that *AIDS Timeline's* didacticism was connected to its address to viewers' emotions.<sup>129</sup> Indeed, I argue that what it proposed was a *remapping* of affect relative to AIDS. Ault describes the work as viewer experience-centered, in that it provided information in a particular spatialized format, creating an arena for visitors to make connections among different layers and elements and thus configure meaning and narrative.<sup>130</sup> "AIDS and Democracy" at Dia had staged the centrality of live viewer experience, presenting it in the installation as the place where the cool art-hot information dialectic would find resolution, and even more dramatically in the town-hall meeting, as a generator of information and insight. In doing so, it essentially brought attention to however audience members might be feeling in the moment, making that unpredictable affect into core sensory and semantic content of the project. *AIDS Timeline* also sought to activate personal affects, this time as a way of soliciting audience identification with the history it presented. Ashford, in the interview with Porges, specifically mentions the inclusion of pop cultural objects as "things . . . that would bring people in and say, oh, yeah, I remember 1980."<sup>131</sup> But by soliciting that affective identification, the work simultaneously proposed a way of moving beyond it. Even as it moved to activate personal feeling, the history it presented was collective and far-reaching, going beyond the scope of any individual's particular experience. Moreover, *AIDS Timeline* placed its artworks and artifacts in an informational framework that demonstrated chains of action and reaction across the sociopolitical field, creating the possibility of viewer insight into the conditions that gave rise to particular kinds of experience. This sweeping, or even somewhat distanced, quality comes up in a series of interviews that curator Sabrina Locks conducted in 2009 with people involved in *AIDS Timeline*. For example, artist Steven Evans comments that the installation told "a great, all-encompassing story." Artist Tom Kalin recalls the strength of the installation's ability to make connections between different realms of culture in order to "propose a narrative." And Mike Glier remembers the installation as typical of Group Material's way "of looking at things somewhat dispassionately, organizing it in sweep, and with a lot of different people, and perspectives."<sup>132</sup>

*AIDS Timeline* was structured by a politics of communication, both in the way it communicated with audiences and in the interchanges and encounters it established between different communicational regimes. Étienne Balibar, in his analysis of Spinoza's political philosophy, connects the democratic power of communication to the transformation, by the body politic, of the collective relationship between knowledge and feeling. Spinoza's conception of the body politic depends on the specific way that knowledge is understood within his philosophy. He identifies three types of knowledge, of which the most common are the first two: "imagination" and "reason." Imagination

is produced through the encounter of our bodies with other bodies in the world—a literal bumping into each other—to which we then attribute a particular cause. It is inseparable from our existence in the relational world, and it is what lets us learn about singular things and about the social world around us from the specific vantage point of our own position.<sup>133</sup> But its closeness to our own experience can also cause problems, because that closeness sets up associations based on past experience, which Spinoza argues can lead people to be politically manipulated.<sup>134</sup> In order to understand how things in the world fit together and how we in turn fit into that big picture, we need the second type of knowledge, reason. Reason is based in “common notions,” which reveal the true causal relationships that make up the world as it is. Reason is key to the ability to be active in the world.<sup>135</sup> Balibar describes Spinoza’s body politic as a mass that is always undergoing a process of internal transformation. In this context, the process of democratization is one in which the mass increasingly gains “common” knowledge, in the form of an awareness of the true relationships of power that govern their collective existence.<sup>136</sup> From this perspective, secrecy surrounding power is not an effect of a government’s violence and incompetence but its cause. Transformation of the mode of communication, and specifically a progression toward greater exchange of knowledge across communicational regimes, is thus a tool through which knowledge can be democratized and new forms of statehood can be imagined.<sup>137</sup>

The question of statehood stood front and center in *AIDS Timeline*. The work gestured toward the possibility of a new type of statehood through a sustained critique of government and corporate inaction, manifested in the activist material on display and in the critical tone of the informational texts (such as an entry that criticizes the slow release and high cost of the drug Trimetrexate, concluding: “Many people still die from a preventable and treatable illness”).<sup>138</sup> Against the extant deficient government, Group Material provided a counterproposal in the politics of communication the work enacted. The work’s leveling of different communicational regimes onto a single plane foregrounded the sharing of information as a democratic act that operated across those boundaries. Moreover, in using that information to help people better understand the causes of their own intense feelings, the work opened up the possibility of a double position. I would describe the position it offered, at the most basic level, as a feeling of being simultaneously inside and outside one’s own experience.

The timeline addressed viewers as people immersed in the affect of a particular moment but also able to see a bigger map of common relations that let them understand how that affect came about. We might think of this along the lines of the third type of knowledge in Spinoza’s system, which he refers to as intuition. The third type of knowledge enables us to grasp both common relations and the singularity of things as we encounter them.<sup>139</sup> It brings us an understanding both of our own infinite essence—for Spinoza, we are part of “God”—and simultaneously of our own material finitude.<sup>140</sup> This position evokes the way Sedgwick describes the work done through dying’s minimal performances, which produce a “magnetic sense of the real far into the threshold of extinguished identity.”<sup>141</sup> With intuition, we glimpse eternity, or synchronous time, from within the ongoing flow of diachronic time.<sup>142</sup> Indeed, *AIDS Timeline* was highly



affecting at the same time as it let the viewer survey a sweep of objects and events from a godlike position. In doing so, it fostered a sense of the radical in-timeness of a current configuration of experience but also situated that experience within a larger, ongoing, perhaps even eternal, flow. The third type of knowledge, as Genevieve Lloyd describes it, yields “a clearer understanding of ourselves and our affects—an understanding which cannot be separated from the highest form of love.”<sup>143</sup> Love is also the term used by Cesare Casarino, who describes it specifically as “love of the world,” the actualization of an “ontological connectivity” that is simultaneously a singularity and a being-in-common.<sup>144</sup> Casarino’s description of “love of the world” recalls the chain of association activated in Gran Fury’s *RIOT*, which runs from Indiana’s *LOVE*, to General Idea’s *Imagevirus AIDS*, to a demand for activist rebellion. *AIDS Timeline* encompassed all three layers within itself, proposing a didacticism-proximate-to-death that illustrated the inextricability of AIDS from loving the world in a particular moment but that also offered the possibility of remapping affectively laden identifications within that field.

Part of the strength of the affective remapping that *AIDS Timeline* opened up was that it generated a feeling of tangible activism, as reflected in the work’s reception, without taking the side of a single emotional habitus. Ault’s frustration with the art-is-not-enough discourse, which dominated the reception of “AIDS and Democracy,” is palpable in a set of typed working notes for a statement about *AIDS Timeline*, into which she inserted notes by hand. Part way through the statement, she crosses out the typed text, inserting a justification for doing so in 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 beginning. It becomes a gratuitous writing device & sets up a problematic argument.~~<sup>145</sup>

Instead of picking sides with or against art-is-not-enough and the militant anger that accompanied it, *AIDS Timeline* presented a plane where various affective states of being could coexist as part of the same map. In this sense, the work’s mode is one of reconciling, or even accommodating, different forms and feelings into one overall trajectory. That shift also has consequences for the political horizon that the work implies. During the course of my research, a friend commented to me that *AIDS Timeline* reminded him of Facebook, which also integrates text and images into affectively potent clusters.<sup>146</sup> Clearly, the politics of Facebook and Group Material’s project are different, not least because the former tailors itself to each individual, based on his or her behaviors and preferences, whereas *AIDS Timeline* provided a plethora of individual entry points into a history that it envisioned as collective. Nevertheless, there is something interesting about this metaphor, because it points to the porosity of *AIDS Timeline*’s framework. There is almost no object or image that it could not accommodate in the networks of meaning and feeling it sets up. In this sense, though the artists’ collective voice as it materializes in the information panels is one of staunch, government-critical radicalism,

the political world the work envisions is a realm of ongoing negotiation, across many realms that together make up the texture of a collective life, where radical activism is just one agent among many. Lauren Berlant, in *Cruel Optimism* (2011), describes this realm as one that arises when crisis is no longer a singular trauma but an ongoing state that compels large and small negotiations and adjustments from subjects as they try to carve out a livable life. Berlant writes about Gregg Bordowitz's autobiographical film *Habit* (2001), which includes scenes from the artist's daily regimen as a person living long-term with AIDS, as well as footage documenting activities of the South African AIDS activist group Treatment Action Campaign, fighting for democratic drug access. Berlant argues that *Habit* extends to the viewer an atmosphere of dehabitation and forced improvisation, which invites a solidarity connected to practices of inhabiting the shared present:

The solidarity around surviving this scene and staying attached to life involves gathering up diverse practices for adjusting to the singular and shared present. In a sense, *Habit* responds to an imperative to develop and to circulate as many idioms of the claim on life as can be imaginatively effective.<sup>147</sup>

It is important that Berlant pinpoints this mentality in a work about AIDS from 2001, after the activist fatigue that Deborah Gould argues marked the end of ACT UP in the 1990s. In this sense, the singular quality of *AIDS Timeline* lies in the fact that it was very much born of the height of the crisis, and it was infused with the intensity of that moment while also laying out a political horizon that augured the feelings and challenges germane to a later period. Like *Habit*, *AIDS Timeline* gathered up many different idioms. In assembling them, it illustrated the parameters of a certain configuration of collective experience, envisioning the ways different forms of feeling and action coexisted and also the ways they influenced one another. Very early in its practice, Group Material defined its aesthetic as one of "social communication."<sup>148</sup> Throughout the group's work, from 1979 to 1996, the social nature of that aesthetic was constantly taking on different forms. The town-hall meetings held for *Democracy* created a relational plane for live social interaction at the heart of the work itself. That plane opened up potential for unpredictable interactions and feelings, which implicated the artists, not only as authors but also as embodied, specific people with their own positions. *AIDS Timeline*, by contrast, laid out a plane whose relationality concerned not live interaction between audience members but, rather, relations of exchange and encounter among communicational regimes. In doing so, it positioned art not as one side of a dialectic with social activism but, rather, as a process of showing that opened up the possibility simultaneously to be deeply affected and to have some space from total identification with those feelings, by understanding their place in a map of collective relations. Relative to crisis, the question of whether art is enough must always be answered in the negative, because it enacts, in itself, a splitting between art and the social field. *AIDS Timeline* reframed the question, by embodying art as a process that remaps existing positions, therapeutically and politically, to open up the possibility of new configurations of feeling and thought.



**FIGURE C.1** Thomas Hirschhorn, *Gramsci Monument*, 2013. Children's class run by Lex Brown, Forest Houses, Bronx, New York. Photograph by Romain Lopez. Courtesy of the Dia Art Foundation, New York.

## CONCLUSION

# PARTICIPATION IN THE PRESENT

During the research for this study, I was as curious about live events of participation as about the way those events remain after the fact. That dual curiosity is reflected in my gravitation toward moments where the live and its documents rub up against each other and also in my attempts to trace the ways those documents create meaning alongside or sometimes in spite of the events they “document.” As is logical for a historical study, the purview of those analyses has been mainly retrospective. I will close the book by reversing this backward gaze to consider what might be made, in the present and future, of participation’s archives and also to make some concluding points about what my historical case studies suggest for the analysis of current participatory art.

The question of how we should deal with the archives of participatory art is one on which I was forced to reflect early on in this research process because of the strange circumstances under which I researched Martha Rosler’s personal archive. When I did the bulk of the research for this project, in 2010 and 2011, the Dia Art Foundation’s archives were still accessible (at the time of this writing, they are indefinitely closed to the public). I could view the material at Dia’s offices in Soho, not far away from Fales Library at New York University, where the institutional accessibility of the Downtown Collection made research on Group Material’s archive easy and convenient. Julie Ault assembled the archive from the personal collections of various members and deposited it at Fales in 2008. The deposit was part of a conscious decision on Ault’s part to enable a different kind of historicization of Group Material than had previously been possible.<sup>1</sup> The decision was not taken lightly; rather, it was part of a many-years-long process of thinking, writing, and organization that also produced the book *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material* (2010), on which I have drawn throughout this study.<sup>2</sup> By contrast to the now officially institutionalized Group Material archive, Rosler’s material

related to *If You Lived Here . . .* was physically on the move during the period of my research. Her boxes of documents were traveling as the basis of the documentation show *If You Lived Here Still*, curated by Anton Vidokle at e-flux in New York and subsequently sent to other global venues, including Casco in Utrecht, Netherlands, and La Virreina Centre de la Imatge in Barcelona, Spain. Rosler's private collection is extensive, providing excellent documentation not only of her own project but also of Group Material's (for example, through items such as the grant application Dia made to the NEA for both shows). The show as presented at e-flux, and also in Utrecht and Barcelona, consisted of the archival boxes, on a shelf or table, for viewers to look through, with certain important documents placed under glass on other tables. The walls bore further documentation of the original project, including a slideshow of installation shots, and also material related to antigentrification struggles, local both to New York in 1989 and to each particular context where the documentation show is installed. The posters and pamphlets on the wall created a colorful, information-dense presentation for viewers.

Once it became clear that I would not have the opportunity to access the boxes privately in the United States, I did what any resourceful graduate student would do: I requested funding from my department, flew to Barcelona, and spent a week sitting in La Virreina for all the time it was open, doing my archival research. It is notable that as I sat there, photographing documents and taking notes on my laptop, not once did a gallery attendant ever ask me what I was doing. Sitting full-time in the gallery gave me occasion to observe the behavior of other visitors. Most interesting in this regard was the brevity of their examinations of the boxes of documents, which lasted for a maximum of about four to five minutes. Once, a woman briefly lifted a lid and then asked me what language the documents were in—French? Witnessing these fleeting acts of perusal, I began to have the sense that I was undertaking a strange, uninvited, durational performance in which I was manifesting, unbeknownst to either Rosler or Vidokle, a sort of ideal fantasy subject of the show: a curious expert-in-the-making, with a real desire to plumb the archive and discover the history of the original project. It seemed that visitors in any other position would have a hard time gleaning anything meaningful from the boxes, except to see them as sculptural objects, the image of an archive, or as a sort of Yoko Ono—esque fanciful proposal for engagement, never meant to be realized by the majority of visitors.

When I asked Rosler about the question of viewer address in the archive show, she said that its original version at e-flux was intended as a sort of professional resource. The show had not originally been intended to travel, but when she received requests, she let it go so that it could spur local discussion of local issues, supported by a conference in each location and by the inclusion of site-specific materials. She admitted ambivalence about putting a mass of documents on display for people to peruse, not only because fragile paper documents can be damaged as they are touched by viewers but also because such a display creates an archive-oriented representation of an explicitly activist exhibition.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, *If You Lived Here Still* strikes me as an ambivalent presentation. However, I believe that that ambivalence has its source not simply in Rosler's or Vidokle's intentionality in conceiving it but, more fundamentally, in a larger lack

of clarity surrounding the question of how to use participation's documents. In the e-flux show, the document took on a fetishistic value that both mirrors and confirms a certain fetishism of the social transformation we imagine the participatory activist artwork might create. At e-flux, the documents were presented as if they have an inherent value, as if just being near them would effect some kind of transfer of past knowledge to present viewers. The result is a sort of *documentation aesthetic*, which I would argue serves to romanticize the participatory process and New York's 1980s activist art, at least as much as it will ever spark fresh activism.

As with any archive, the management of records of participatory art should strive to balance the two core, and sometimes conflicting, priorities of accessibility and physical preservation. Essential, in that equation, is to think through what exactly constitutes "accessibility" relative to the history of this type of art practice, a form of art that is constituted by complex networks of social relationships, whether live or mediated. *If You Lived Here Still* provides physical accessibility—indeed, perhaps too much—but limited conceptual accessibility. On one level, placing the archive in front of the audience seems like a democratic gesture of letting them make their own history of the event. But, more fundamentally, it reinscribes the self-evident importance of a particular, New York-centric history without giving people the contextual coordinates or detailed narrative that would let them come to an informed opinion of its importance. Though I am admittedly biased, as a historian working in this area, I believe that, more than with other art forms, conceptual accessibility to participation's histories can come only through extended research. This work can be conducted not just by professional scholars but also by artists, students, and other interested parties, who can use available documentation to create stories that communicate about the history of participatory art. Archives may find their homes in museums, in educational institutions, in community-run spaces, or elsewhere, but central to their public functionality is that we be able to make long-term plans to visit them, to return repeatedly, and to converse with their guardians about the principles guiding their organization and management. Research, whether it finds its eventual materialization in a publication, an artwork, a presentation, or some other form, is the key vehicle through which we will be able to understand the networks that participatory practice creates and to grasp their importance as a form of recent cultural heritage. The imperative for research in this area dictates that those who conduct it should think in methodologically innovative ways about what constitutes the record. (In this study, my decision to use audio-cassette recordings to research audience dynamics was a key move in this respect.)<sup>4</sup> In Spinoza's philosophy, power exists only in the act of its use; it has no abstract or generic form.<sup>5</sup> I would go as far as to argue that these archives *are* their acts of use. That means that artists and institutions who hold relevant materials should approach the cumbersome, ongoing process of enabling research accessibility as central to the constitution of their archives as such. In understanding past participatory art, approaches that fetishize "The Archive" visually or conceptually will be less enlightening than those that cumulate many different acts of motivated narration, which bring archives into being through using them.

My emphasis on demystification here also extends to the question of how to approach participatory practices unfolding in the present. Central to the approach I propose is an understanding of participation as a historically specific regime of mutual spectatorship, which is both live and necessarily connected to processes of representation. In this book, I have argued that participatory art is bound up with acts of viewing ourselves and others and, moreover, with reflection on who might be viewing us viewing others. How those relations unfold in a given project responds to discourses current at a particular time and place, not only to the questions about the politics of identity I have discussed here, but also to the technologies currently shaping contemporary vision. The relationship between participation and technologies of vision is particularly evident in another project dating to New York in the 1980s: *Hole in Space* (1980), in which artists Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz used satellite technology to connect passersby at the Lincoln Center in New York and the Broadway Century City Shopping Center in Los Angeles. The piece was site specific to both locations; or rather, its specificity lay in the linking of the two sites through a live television feed. For three evenings in a row, pedestrians walking by the windows of each building came face-to-face with a life-sized television image of the people in the other city, with whom they were able to speak. This giant public pre-Skype appeared unaccompanied by explanatory aids. Accounts of the work relate that people figured out the structure of the piece by asking the others on the screen, "Hey, where are you?" TV crews in both cities covered the project, and word about it spread fast. By the third night, it was "mobbed," with people calling ahead to arrange virtual meet-ups with family and friends on the opposite coast. The TV documentation of passersby encountering the work illustrates in a strikingly literal way the process by which they become conscious of the fact that the image's capture of the people they see on the screen mirrors their own. In the footage, a reporter points this out pedagogically to interviewees, acting as an impromptu guide to the work. A man with white hair and glasses exclaims, "Who are we talking to, are they actors? They look like young people in a show!" "They're just people like you and me," replies a reporter. A young woman: "Did they just walk by some place and they're just talking, just like we saw it?" Reporter: "How did you get here?"<sup>6</sup>

Galloway's comments about the project embody the intensely optimistic view of new media's social and political potential common to early accounts of digital culture. He states that he and Rabinowitz aimed to create a "commons" that would break away from the "tyranny" of broadcast media. Instead of warning audience members about the installation ahead of time, they wanted just to turn it on "and let people acculturate by owning it with their imaginations." If those people could occupy this new space, they might be able to become "the architects of a new future. They might be able to define what kind of information they want, instead of being consumers of it."<sup>7</sup> In our own moment, digital participation is of course an essential factor not only in determining the relational network that a participatory artwork will produce, but also in enabling the utopian or dystopian fantasies through which we come to understand it.

Within the larger discussion on participation in media studies, numerous scholars have emphasized that in the digital realm, participation is an intensely ambiva-

lent concept in that it promises democratization but, precisely for that reason, can also reentrench existing inequalities. Dutch media theorist Geert Lovink has argued persuasively that as networked participation grows in value as such—that is, when commenting on content even in a negative way only serves to build hype—the possibility for participation to be resistant decreases.<sup>8</sup> Concerning class relations, digital media scholar Lisa Nakamura has demonstrated that the labor of Chinese worker-players becomes racialized in fan-produced video content on the massive multiplayer online game *World of Warcraft*, with the effect that the imaginary racial war that constitutes the game's theme is grafted onto a real-world racist narrative.<sup>9</sup> Nakamura's example deals with overt compensated labor, but the monetization of digital participation equally concerns the less overt relationship between surveillance and profit. In 2007, communication scholar Mark Andrejevic argued that interactive platforms act as “digital enclosures” that solicit participants to submit freely to surveillance while withholding from them real control over the means of interaction.<sup>10</sup> In the wake of Edward Snowden's NSA revelations of 2013, Andrejevic's argument comes to appear as a generalized condition of our engagement with communication technologies, where the surveillance of our regular use is being woven into a lasting record with truly sinister consequences for democratic freedom. As journalist Glenn Greenwald and others have argued, these conditions dictate that the question of freedom must be posed simultaneously with the question of privacy.<sup>11</sup>

Group Material's *Democracy* and Martha Rosler's *If You Lived Here . . .* arose from an impulse on the artists' part to democratize art through a participatory format. That move gave rise to extensive questioning, testing, and elaboration by the participants involved, which responded to a specific urban context and a particular configuration of relationships between the artists and their institutional host. The framework of the projects might have invited a reading of participation as necessarily associated with democratization. But the way that they unfolded with their specific audiences has demanded that I produce a reading that is more complex and that attends in particular to the role of the representation of agency in the networks the projects produced. The reading I have enacted here, as well as the concerns about privacy and inequality in networked participation just mentioned, demonstrate that participation today has no politics as such. Rather, in contemporary art and elsewhere, it is a technology for generating affect and content, which carries associations with agency attributed to those who contribute.

These three considerations—the situationally dependent nature of participation's politics, the content it creates, and its involvement with the representation of agency—are good places to start evaluating the social aesthetics of present-day participatory artworks. In 2013, the Dia Art Foundation again commissioned a major participatory artwork, this time by Swiss artist Thomas Hirschhorn. Hirschhorn's *Gramsci Monument* was open from July 1 to September 15, 2013, seven days a week, at Forest Houses housing project in New York's South Bronx. *Gramsci Monument* followed the approach the artist had employed previously in Avignon, Kassel, and Amsterdam, of hiring local residents at low cost to help construct and staff a pavilion, which would host activities



including philosophical readings, performances, art workshops, and open mics.<sup>12</sup> Each pavilion includes a bar, to encourage people to hang out, and a library of philosophy books, which in my observation rarely get read but which constitute a sort of philosophical matter at the heart of the pavilion, a bit like the archival boxes in Rosler's e-flux show. Staff of *Gramsci Monument* ran a local radio station and produced a daily newspaper. An essential part of each pavilion is the Internet area, a dependable magnet for local children, who come to use the computers for free. Dia has also published an extensive book for the project, structured, like those for Group Material's and Rosler's projects, as a "manual" with contributions from a wide range of scholars and project participants.<sup>13</sup>

Across the extensive coverage and social media conversation about *Gramsci Monument*, the questions that circulated about Dia and the artist read like a reenactment of responses to Group Material's and Rosler's projects. What was Dia's motivation for staging the project, and how should its institutional involvement be understood relative to the work's overt politics? What kind of audience did the project reach? What were its politics of representation relative to race and class? Did it positively empower its neighborhood participants or problematically objectify them? Was its political engagement just a spectacle, or did it enable genuine encounter and change?<sup>14</sup> Reading these responses, I get the impression that Dia did an excellent, thorough job of executing the project, including liaising with the host community in a responsible and communicative way. Simultaneously, their involvement was based on a conception of the project as a time-limited venture, which, as artist Glenn Ligon points out, is problematic in a context where there is an ongoing, structural need for community resources.<sup>15</sup> When I visited the work in September 2013, the critiques of its staging of difference rang true on one level. But the pavilion also had an atmosphere that seemed genuinely open-ended and dynamic, offering the possibility for area residents, employees, and visitors to take up a wide range of positions in relation to it.

Were I to begin detailed research on the *Gramsci Monument*, a key question I would pose about its representation and content generation would concern the role played in both by children. Children are the ideal subjects of institutionalized participatory art because of their simultaneous energy, malleability, and generalized associations with political futurity, which I discussed in chapter 2. Indeed, children are the lifeblood of Hirschhorn's monuments. Visitors to the pavilions can observe them monopolizing the computers, running around, and making noise, which boosts the animation and conviviality of the general vibe. They are omnipresent in the photographic documentation of the project and central to almost every discussion of its politics, specifically in terms of the impact it had on the community.<sup>16</sup> Talking about the child participants is both the way people articulate the project's ambitions, and the way they measure the gap between its utopian nature and the structural needs of the host community. Many of the photos that Dia circulates of the project feature children engaged in creative production, such as one image that shows six kids at a table, painting, overseen by three calm, benevolent-looking young women (Figure C.1). The room in which they work is bright with natural light and colorfully decorated. Its construction

is amateur and provisional, in Hirschhorn's signature style, but it is spacious, with well-organized shelves of craft supplies in the background. In this image, the children are producing more than paintings: they are working to create the very social fabric of the *Gramsci Monument* itself. In representing them exercising their creative abilities in the happy and well-staffed environment of the pavilion, the photograph performs the realness of the project's connection to the community and the expansive possibilities that connection creates for the people involved. Children epitomize unskilled labor—they are literally still in the process of developing basic adult skills—but in the context of the image, they are experts uniquely positioned, through their enthusiasm and innocence, to perform the artwork's site-specific politics. Looking in detail at the *Gramsci Monument* would mean analyzing such images alongside the participant experiences to which the project gave rise, following the intermingling of representation and liveness across a complex, uneven terrain of collective meaning making.

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## INTRODUCTION

1. Julie Ault, e-mail correspondence, May 22, 2015.
2. Doug Ashford, interview by the author, New York, July 17, 2010.
3. During the same year that these projects were hosted in Dia's Soho spaces, Dia showed work by Joseph Beuys, Imi Knoebel, and Blinky Palermo in its Chelsea gallery, then located at 538 W. Twenty-Second Street.
4. The dates of the individual shows were as follows: for *Democracy*: "Education and Democracy," September 15–October 8, 1988; "Politics and Election," October 15–November 12, 1988; "Cultural Participation," November 19–December 10, 1988; and "AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study," December 19, 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.
5. Tim Rollins, interview by author, New York, May 27, 2011. Rollins was a founding member of Group Material and left the group in fall 1987, shortly before *Democracy*, to devote himself full-time to his work with Kids of Survival (KOS). For more on Rollins's impact on *Democracy*, see chapter 2.
6. Brian Wallis, ed., *Democracy: A Project by Group Material*, Discussions in Contemporary Culture (New York and Seattle: Bay Press, 1990), and Wallis, ed., *If You Lived Here: The City in Art, Theory, and Social Activism / A Project by Martha Rosler*, Discussions in Contemporary Culture (New York and Seattle: Bay Press, 1991).
7. Julie Ault, ed., *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material* (London: Four Corners Books, 2010), 149.
8. Elizabeth Hess, "Safe Combat in the Erogenous Zone," *Village Voice*, January 10, 1989, 79.
9. Claire Bishop, "The New Masters of Liberal Arts: Artists Rewrite the Rules of Pedagogy," *Modern Painters* 19, no. 7 (September 2007): 86–89, 88–89.
10. The platforms included "Democracy Unrealized" in Vienna and "Experiments with Truth: Transnational Justice and the Processes of Truth and Reconciliation" in New Delhi, among others. See Platform5\_Documenta 11, <http://www.documenta12.de/archiv/d11/data/english/index.html>, accessed November 6, 2014.
11. Documenta (13), <http://d13.documenta.de/#venues/>, accessed November 6, 2014. See Christov-Bakargiev's discussion of the participants in Wes Hill, "The Place Where Thought and Action Meet: Documenta (13)'s Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev in Conversation with Wes Hill," *Art and Australia* 49, no. 2 (2012): 562–67.



12. For a discussion of related practices taking place outside formal institutions and of the challenges to institutions presenting new institutional practices in the first decade of the twenty-first century, see Nina Möntmann, "The Rise and Fall of New Institutionalism: Perspectives on a Possible Future," *Transversal Texts*, August 2007, <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0407/moentmann/en>, accessed April 13, 2015.

13. Joe Nocera, "Money in New York; the Patron Gets a Divorce," *New York Times*, October 14, 2007.

14. William Olander, "Material World," *Art in America*, January 1989, 127–28.

15. *Ibid.*, 167. Notably, Dia at this moment was in fact not at all well endowed, though it remained strongly associated with elite privilege.

16. David Deitcher, "Social Aesthetics," in Wallis, *Democracy*, 42.

17. Gary Garrels, telephone interview by the author, October 14, 2010.

18. Gregory Sholette, *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture* (New York: Pluto Press, 2011), 51–52. Sholette cites as other examples of this trend the exhibit *Committed to Print* (1988), discussed below, at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) and the 1993 Whitney Biennial, known for its political content and focus on issues of identity.

19. Lucy Lippard, telephone interview by the author, August 15, 2011. Lippard states that at the time, the identity of Dia as an institutional host to Group Material's project was not particularly important to her; more significant were the resources and space it provided to the group as activist artists.

20. Works include Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October* 110 (Fall 2004): 51–79; Bishop, "The Social Turn," *Artforum*, February 2006, 178–83; Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London and New York: Verso, 2012); Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002); Kwon, "One Place after Another: Notes on Site Specificity," *October* 80 (Spring 1997): 85–110. Janet Kraynak has also written critically about "lighthearted" participation, favoring instead "radical" and "destabilizing" practices that reveal the way technocratic society compels forms of participation that result in commodification and alienation. Kraynak, "Dependent Participation: Bruce Nauman's Environments," *Grey Room* 10 (Winter 2003): 30–40. See also Kraynak, *Nauman Reiterated* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

21. See, among other works, Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Durham, N.C., and London: Duke University Press, 2011); Shannon Jackson, *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (New York and London: Routledge, 2011). Other writers whose work embodies this socially engaged tendency include Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette, in their edited volume *Collectivism after Modernism: The Art of Social Imagination after 1945* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); and Marc James Léger, in essays such as "Afterthoughts on Engaged Art Practice: ATSA and the State of Emergency," *Art Journal* 70, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 50–65.

22. Media Farzin, "Still Here: An Interview with Martha Rosler and Anton Vidokle," *Art in America*, September 9, 2009, <http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-opinion/conversations/2009-09-09/interview-with-martha-rosler-and-anton-vidokle/>, accessed February 10, 2012, among other dates.

23. Ault, *Show and Tell*, 149.

24. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" (1936), in *Walter Benjamin, Selected Writings*, ed. Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2002); Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor, *Theory and History of Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); Christian Metz, *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974); André Bazin, *What Is Cinema?*, vol. 1, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967); Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory* (New

York and London: Routledge, 1988); Susan Bennett, *Theatre Audience: A Theory of Production and Reception* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997). The introduction to Bennett's book provides an excellent treatment of reception studies as it concerns theater.

25. Frazer Ward, *No Innocent Bystanders: Performance Art and Audience* (Lebanon, N.H.: Dartmouth College Press, 2012); Judith Rodenbeck, *Radical Prototypes: Allan Kaprow and the Invention of Happenings* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011).

26. Grant Kester, "The Device Laid Bare: On Some Limitations in Current Art Criticism," *e-flux*, no. 50 (December 2013), <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/the-device-laid-bare-on-some-limitations-in-current-art-criticism/>, accessed April 29, 2015. Adorno's pessimism in this respect is consistent with his philosophy, specifically with the worry that studying actual audience reactions might constitute a positivistic approach that would shut down the open-endedness of the aesthetic. While aware of that risk, I believe that it is in fact more imaginary than real because the very process of archival investigation of the audience demonstrates to the researcher the impossibility of ever completing the task. The archive is both partial and endless, creating a fundamental openness at the heart of this investigation, but one that is simultaneously social and aesthetic. For a discussion of Adorno relative to current debates on participatory art, see Jackson, *Social Works*, 50.

27. Kester, *The One and the Many*, 10; Claire Bishop, "And That Is What Happened There," in *Thomas Hirschhorn: Establishing a Critical Corpus*, ed. Thomas Bizzarri and Thomas Hirschhorn (Zurich: JRP/Ringier; New York: D.A.P., 2011). Bishop's text is a raw transcription of interviews she conducted with people involved in Hirschhorn's *Bijler Spinoza-Festival* in Amsterdam, which she admits she is unable to integrate into an art historical account of the work.

28. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 2–3.

29. The model of performance as disappearance was most famously pioneered by Peggy Phelan in *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993). Rebecca Schneider critiques it in her article "Archives: Performance Remains," *Performance Research* 6, no. 2 (2001): 100–108. I return to Phelan's work in chapter 4.

30. Michel Foucault, in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, argues for the status of the archive as a locus not just of knowledge retrieval but of knowledge production. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (London: Tavistock, 1972).

31. See Amelia Jones's classic essay "'Presence' in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation," *Art Journal* 56, no. 4 (Winter 1997): 11–18, and its recent reprint, "'Presence' in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation," in *Archaeologies of Presence: Acting, Performing, Being*, ed. Gabriella Giannachi Nick Kaye and Michael Shanks (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), as well as the volume edited by Jones and Adrian Heathfield, *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History* (London: Intellect, 2012); Philip Auslander, "The Performativity of Performance Documentation," *PAJ* 28, no. 3 (September 2006): 1–10; Jane Blocker, *What the Body Cost: Desire, History, and Performance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004); Rebecca Schneider, "Solo, Solo, Solo," in *After Criticism: New Responses to Art and Performance*, ed. Gavin Butt (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005); Schneider, "Archives: Performance Remains."

32. Chris Thompson, *Felt: Fluxus, Joseph Beuys, and the Dalai Lama* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), xxvi–xxvii.

33. 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.

34. Jackson, *Social Works*, 14.

35. Pablo Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook* (Bethesda, Md.: Jorge Pinto Books, 2011), 36.

36. Jan Avgikos, "Group Material Timeline: Activism as a Work of Art," in *But Is It Art? The Spirit of Art as Activism*, ed. Nina Felshin, 85–116 (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995). Examples of scholarship from the recent resurgence in interest in Group Material include Alison Green, "Citizen Artists: Group

Material,” *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context, and Enquiry*, no. 26 (Spring 2011): 17–25; Claire Grace, “Spoils of the Sign: Group Material’s ‘Americana,’ 1985,” *October* 150 (Fall 2014): 133–60.

37. Avgikos, “Group Material Timeline,” 113.

38. David Deitcher, “Polarity Rules: Looking at Whitney Annuals and Biennials, 1968–2000,” in *Alternative Art New York, 1965–85*, ed. Julie Ault (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 222.

39. Kim Levin, “The Whitney Laundry,” *Village Voice*, April 9, 1985, 82. Levin’s comments are reproduced in *Show and Tell*, ed. Ault, 96.

40. Museum of Modern Art, “Committed to Print, January 31–April 19, 1988,” press release, New York, January 1988, [https://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared//pdfs/docs/press\\_archives/6508/releases/MOMA\\_1988\\_0011\\_11.pdf?2010](https://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared//pdfs/docs/press_archives/6508/releases/MOMA_1988_0011_11.pdf?2010), accessed July 28, 2015.

41. The New Museum, “Three NY Museums Collaborate for Ground-Breaking Exhibition on the 1980s,” press release, New York, 1990, [http://archive.newmuseum.org/index.php/Detail/Object/Show/object\\_id/7908](http://archive.newmuseum.org/index.php/Detail/Object/Show/object_id/7908), accessed July 28, 2015.

42. Susan Cahan and Zoya Kocur, eds., *Contemporary Art and Multicultural Education* (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, Routledge, 1996). A second edition, *Rethinking Contemporary Art and Multicultural Education*, was published in 2011.

43. On Hodsoll’s introduction of the new award to individuals, see Mark Bauerlin and Ellen Grantham, eds., *National Endowment for the Arts: A History, 1965–2008* (Washington, D.C.: National Endowment for the Arts, 2008), 71–74. This in-house history of the NEA is clearly favorable to the Endowment’s various successive leaderships, but for a critical reader, it still provides a valuable wealth of detail about the changes the funding body has undergone. The report Hodsoll commissioned to study art education was National Endowment for the Arts, *Toward Civilization: A Report on Arts Education* (Washington, D.C.: National Endowment for the Arts, 1988).

44. When Hodsoll was appointed, David Stockman of the Office of Management and Budget was already making calls to defund the NEA. Bauerlin and Grantham, *National Endowment for the Arts*, 69. Another instance before the full-blown culture wars was when congressmen Tom DeLay and Dick Armey (both R-Tex.) complained about funding to two “pornographic” artists and about cronyism of awardees getting to sit on later juries, thereby supporting more work like their own (*ibid.*, 79).

45. Bauerlin and Grantham, *National Endowment for the Arts*, 89.

46. D’Amato performed this act on May 18, 1989. For an overview of the culture wars debates concerning art, see Richard Bolton, ed., *Culture Wars: Documents from the Recent Controversies in the Arts* (New York: New Press, 1992).

47. Judith Miller, “Federal Arts Agency Slices Its Smaller Pie,” *New York Times*, April 10, 1997.

48. Ed Cardoni, telephone interview by the author, October 6, 2014.

49. “Pages from Budget Director Stockman’s ‘Black Book,’” *Washington Post*, February 8, 1981, quoted in Bauerlin and Grantham, *National Endowment for the Arts*, 70.

50. *Ibid.*, 76.

51. George Yúdice, “The Privatization of Culture,” in *Art Matters: How the Culture Wars Changed America*, ed. Brian Wallis, Marianne Weems, and Philip Yenawine (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 293.

52. Chin-Tao Wu, *Privatising Culture: Corporate Art Intervention since the 1980s* (London and New York: Verso, 2002), 123.

53. 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 Wallis, Weems, and Yenawine, *Art Matters*, 284.

54. Alan Moore, "Artists' Collectives: Focus on New York, 1975–2000," in Stimson and Sholette, *Collectivism after Modernism*, 194–95.

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

56. *Ibid.*, 184–85.

57. *Ibid.*, 202–7.

58. PAD/D was founded following a 1979 call by critic Lucy Lippard for an archive of political art, and it continued its activities until 1986. In its mission statement, it stated that its 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," [http://www.gregorysholette.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/14\\_collectography1.pdf](http://www.gregorysholette.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/14_collectography1.pdf), accessed August 19, 2016. 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, modeled on the Guerrilla Girls but specifically addressing questions of racism. Julie Ault, "A Chronology of Alternative Structures, Spaces, Artists' Groups, and Organizations in New York City, 1965–85," in Ault, *Alternative Art New York*, 72–74.

59. Ashford interview.

60. Lane Reylea, *Your Everyday Art World* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2013), 32–33.

61. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, N.C., and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 123–51. Tavia Nyongó, in 2010, offered an interpretation of the modes of "paranoid" and "reparative" reading that Sedgwick identifies as different "moments of each other" whose interconnection reflects a coexistence between dualistic and nondualistic thought that is at the center of Sedgwick's intellectual project. Nyongó, "Trapped in the Closet with Eve," *Criticism* 52, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 243–51, 246. Note also that Kester, in his response to Bishop's critique, has pointed to the value of Sedgwick as a model for reading contemporary art in a way that does not phobically defend it against implication with the social. Kester, "Another Turn," *Artforum*, May 2006, 22.

62. Group Material had worked on various occasions with Schles, who had a sympathetic understanding of their installations and knew how to photograph them well. In this case, Group Material suggested that Dia hire him. Ault, e-mail correspondence, May 22, 2015.

63. When I accessed these cassettes, they were archived in a drawer with other event recordings at Dia's office, and not with the rest of the records for the projects. Research about the tapes seemed to indicate that little or no use had been made of them since they were used to create the discussion transcripts for the project books.

64. Ault, e-mail correspondence, May 22, 2015.

65. Martha Rosler, e-mail correspondence, April 21, 2015.

66. Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), 167.

67. Mechtild Widrich, *Performative Monuments: The Rematerialisation of Public Art* (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 2014), 59–60. See also Widrich, "The Informative Public of Performance: A Study of Viennese Actionism, 1965–70," *TDR* 57, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 138, 149.

68. Poster for Rosler's forum "Housing: Gentrification, Dislocation, and Fighting Back!," February 28, 1989, Dia Art Foundation archives.

69. My understanding of the status of sound on these recordings follows that which Jonathan Sterne describes in *The Audible Past*: they are technologically reproduced traces that communicate something of the past event, without ever being able to reproduce the "auditory past," that is, what it was like to hear in a certain past time and place. Sound itself, and these traces that remain, are "artifact[s] of the messy and political human sphere." Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003), 13, 19. Jane Blocker offers a

deconstructive reading of accounts including Sterne's, arguing for a performative or representational understanding of sound as something that "poses" to be heard. Blocker, "History in the Present Progressive: Sonic Imposture at the Pedicord Apts," *TDR* 59, no. 4 (Winter 2015): 38–39. As Sterne's account suggests, the material trace and the performative pose exist on a continuum with one another, along which I would argue that scholars take up tactical positions based on the historical and intellectual investments germane to their specific projects.

70. Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 109.

71. *Ibid.*, 115–16.

72. Adriana Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. Paul A. Kottman (Redwood City, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005), 34–35.

73. As Greg Hainge points out, what is taken to constitute noise versus information in a given auditory signal is necessarily subjective. Moreover, we must employ certain guiding concepts of intentionality in order to establish the distinction. Hainge, *Noise Matters: Towards an Ontology of Noise* (New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 5.

74. Susan Best, *Visualizing Feeling: Affect and the Feminine Avant-Garde* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 3.

75. Kirsi Peltomaki, *Situation Aesthetics: The Work of Michael Asher* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2014), 14–15.

76. Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006); Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007); Eugenie Brinkema, *The Forms of the Affects* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2014).

77. For a discussion of some of these core tendencies, see Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth's introduction to their *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010), 1–25.

78. Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham, N.C., and London: Duke University Press, 2002). See in particular the introduction, 1–21. Another important interpreter of Gilles Deleuze's work within the context of affect theory is Erin Manning. See Manning, *Relationescapes: Movement, Art, Philosophy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009); Manning, *Politics of Touch: Sense, Movement, Sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

79. Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, bk. 3, definition 3. This translation is the one Deleuze provides in *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988), 49.

80. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* (1991; repr., New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 164.

81. Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd, *Collective Imaginings: Spinoza, Past and Present* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 14.

82. A clear example of this explicit turn away from human agency can be found in Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, N.C., and London: Duke University Press, 2010). Bennett turns away from human actors and toward networks of nonhuman ones, analyzing, for example, the large-scale impacts of the tiny movements of worms. Another example of this way of working can be found in Nigel Thrift's *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), where he analyzes concatenations of human and nonhuman agency, such as traffic patterns. See also Mel Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2012), and the recent issue of *Angelaki* devoted to the overlap between affect theory and posthumanism, Gerda Roelvink and Magdalena Zolkos, eds., "Posthumanist Perspectives on Affect," special issue, *Angelaki* 20, no. 3 (2015).

83. Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011), 6.

84. Gould lays out such a model, referencing Massumi, in the introduction to her impeccably researched *Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT UP's Fight against AIDS* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 19–23. Derek McCormack describes affect as a transpersonal movement, and emotion as its articulation by an individual: "The affective quality of the space in which bodies move is never only something personal . . . you can feel it in your gut[.] The extent to which this felt sense is an

emotional one depends on the degree to which it can be articulated." McCormack, "Geographies for Moving Bodies: Thinking, Dancing, Spaces," *Geography Compass* 2, no. 6 (November 2008): 1827–28.

85. See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, eds., *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995). The masterful introductory essay, "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tomkins," is reprinted in Sedgwick's *Touching Feeling*.

86. Sedgwick and Frank, "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold," in Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 97. In their essay, Sedgwick and Frank discuss how current readings of Tomkins in the humanities are likely to react against his scientism, a response they see as baked into poststructuralist theory's habit of diagnosing cultural construction (93–97). In Tomkins's work, contempt is referred to as "dis smell."

87. Silvan Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness: The Complete Edition*, 4 vols. (New York: Springer, 2008), 1: 114.

88. *Ibid.*, 1: 291–92. Thanks to Sue Best for emphasizing to me the fluidity between the affects in Tomkins's system. Sedgwick and Frank see the understanding of affect as a single entity or substance (the Massumi model) to be a "digital" impulse, in the sense that it operates essentially according to an on/off switch, where there can be more or less affect but not fundamentally different kinds. Tomkins layers a binary model—figured in his thought as "neural firing"—with the analog, or representational, map of specific affects, which are activated by various levels and frequencies of neural firing. Sedgwick and Frank, "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold," in Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 101–3.

89. Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, 1: 105.

90. *Ibid.*, 3: 404.

91. *Ibid.*, 1: 61–65. For Tomkins, drives are more fixed in both time and space than affects. They must be satisfied in a very specific way within a given amount of time (for example, by inhaling within seconds, if we lack oxygen) and thus can motivate our behavior only when they are operating (1: 25). Affects, by contrast, are more "general," permitting us to learn and apply that stored knowledge relative to our environment in a way that the drives do not (1: 24, 26). Affect is thus, for him, the primary motivational system in human beings (1: 61). Key in the learning process and thus in our ability to gain freedom is the ability to make "motivational error," that is, to be wrong about what we want, a flexibility not afforded by the drives (1: 63–65). Affects, here, in their connection to learning and thus to freedom, are no less than what makes us human.

92. *Ibid.*, 1: 66.

93. *Ibid.*, 1: 236.

94. *Ibid.*, 1: 237.

95. *Ibid.*

96. Blake Stimson, "The Promise of Conceptual Art," in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1999); Kraynak, *Nauman Reiterated*, 217–20.

97. Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon: Presses du réel, 2002; originally published as *Esthétique relationnelle*, 1998), 7; Bartholomew Ryan, "Altermodern: A Conversation with Nicolas Bourriaud," *Art in America*, March 17, 2009, <http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/interviews/altermodern-a-conversation-with-nicolas-bourriaud/>, accessed January 4, 2016.

98. See, in particular, Claire Bishop's article "The Social Turn," where she takes up Grant Kester's earlier article "Aesthetic Evangelists: Conversion and Empowerment in Contemporary Community Art," *Afterimage*, January 1995, 5–11. This was followed by Kester's response, "Another Turn," and then by Bishop's rejoinder, "Rate of Return," *Artforum*, October 2010, 231–37. In this debate, Bishop aligns Kester's work with a "Christian" moralism, insofar as he understands participatory art to contribute to the meaningful transformation of social life. Kester, in his response, locates Bishop's work as part of a larger phobia on the part of mainstream critics to the relationship between political engagement and aesthetic innovation. Indeed, as I show here, if we analyze the affective dimension

of participation, it becomes impossible to split the aesthetic/conceptual and the political when discussing these practices.

99. Widrich, "The Informative Public of Performance," 145, 148–49.

## 1. THE POLITICS OF PARTICIPATION

1. See Claire Bishop's discussion of the projects in "The New Masters of Liberal Arts: Artists Rewrite the Rules of Pedagogy," *Modern Painters* 19, no. 7 (September 2007): 86–89. For Rosler's project, this canonization is also evident surrounding e-flux's show of the documentation of the project, which began in 2009, titled *If You Lived Here Still. Martha Rosler: If You Lived Here Still*, <http://www.e-flux.com/program/martha-rosler-if-you-lived-here-still/>, accessed November 14, 2013. The documentation show has since visited numerous other venues. In relation to Group Material, see Yates McKee's discussion of *Democracy* in "Contemporary Art and the Legacies of Democracy," in *A Guide to Democracy in America*, ed. Nato Thompson (New York: Creative Time Books, 2008).

2. David Trend, "Back to School," *Afterimage*, December 1988, 17–18.

3. Cenén Moreno, who often used just her first name (which is what is listed in all documentation of Rosler's project), was a poet and activist who published her work in various venues, including the 1983 volume *Cuentos: Stories by Latinas*, ed. Alma Gómez, Cherríé Moraga, and Mariana Romo-Carmona (New York: Kitchen Table Press, 1983). She passed away in 2002.

4. Dia 1975 annual report, as quoted in Bob Colacello, "Remains of the Dia," *Vanity Fair*, September 1996, 186, <http://www.vanityfair.com/magazine/archive/1996/09/colacello199609>, accessed May 2011.

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

6. For example, the first volume, *Discussions in Contemporary Culture*, published in 1987 and edited by Hal Foster, contained a contribution by Trihn T. Minh-ha, and the fourth volume, *Remaking History*, from 1989 and edited by Barbara Kruger and Phil Mariani, featured contributions by Homi Bhabha, Cornel West, Edward Said, Paula Treichler, Gayatri Spivak, and Michele Wallace. Hal Foster, ed., *Discussions in Contemporary Culture*, *Discussions in Contemporary Culture 1* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1987); Barbara Kruger and Phil Mariani, eds., *Remaking History*, *Discussions in Contemporary Culture 4* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1989).

7. Nancy Spector, "Democratic Vistas," *Artscribe*, November–December 1988, 11.

8. Ault, *Show and Tell*, 149.

9. Colacello, "Remains of the Dia," 181.

10. Lynne Cooke emphasized Dia's 501(c)(3) status when I spoke with her. Lynne Cooke, telephone interview by the author, April 1, 2011.

11. Yúdice, "The Privatization of Culture," 293–94.

12. Phoebe Hoban, "Medicis for a Moment: The Collapse of the Dia Dream," *New York Magazine*, November 25, 1985, 56.

13. Hoban, "Medicis for a Moment," 54–55. Former Dia trustee Margaret Douglas-Hamilton states that in the mid-1980s, the maintenance of *Dream House* alone cost approximately \$500,000 a year. Ashton Hawkins, Lois de Menil, Margaret Douglas-Hamilton, and Peter Wolff interview by the author, New York, May 9, 2012.

14. 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* 90, no. 3 (September 2008): 479.

15. 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.” Quoted in Hoban, “Medicis for a Moment,” 54. Notably, the emphasis here is not on the status of World War II as a collective crisis but on what it meant for Heiner and the personal mission he developed as a result of it. Equally personally, Philippa once referred to Dia as “our first child” (quoted in *ibid.*, 55).

16. Garrels, telephone interview. 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, to 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), 155. Dia’s attitude toward 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,” *New York Times Magazine*, April 6, 2003.

17. Cooke, telephone interview; Grace Glueck, “Dia Foundation Cuts Art Funding,” *New York Times*, February 12, 1985. Glueck notes that “the foundation has dismissed 30 persons from a staff of 80.”

18. Dia’s commitment to a serious publication initiative began in 1987 with the Discussions in Contemporary Culture series.

19. Dia’s aim was to step out of the commodification created by the museum and by commercial gallery cycles and to let an 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,” 200.

20. Charles Wright, telephone interview by the author, May 3, 2011.

21. Cooke, telephone interview.

22. Kay Larson, “New Landscapes in Art,” *New York Times*, May 13, 1979. In 1985, Grace Glueck noted the idiosyncratic and nonpublic 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.”

23. Dia’s change in directorship was precipitated by Philippa’s mother, Dominique de Menil, who contacted her economist son George de Menil and his wife Lois in fall 1984 seeking urgent assistance with the situation at Dia, which Philippa had described to her. Dominique’s action was motivated by her concern that Philippa stood in danger of losing all her assets. Part of the problem at this point was that Philippa’s only remaining assets were in Schlumberger, and 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. Hawkins, de Menil, Douglas-Hamilton, and Wolff interview.

24. Colacello, “Remains of the Dia,” 174–75.

25. Hawkins, de Menil, Douglas-Hamilton, and Wolff interview.

26. In addition to Hawkins and Lois, the new board consisted of John C. Evans of Morgan Stanley, future U.S. Supreme Court justice Stephen Breyer, Margaret Douglas-Hamilton of Schroder, and Herbert Brownell, Dwight Eisenhower’s first attorney general, who was outside counsel of the Metropolitan Museum.

27. The new board undertook to sell the buildings quickly enough to restore 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. Some buildings had not been used or inhabited for some time, and thus many were lacking basic facilities such as plumbing. 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. Hawkins, de Menil, Douglas-Hamilton, and Wolff interview.

28. *Ibid.*



29. Ibid.

30. Hoban, "Medicis for a Moment," 58. Wright's mother knew Hawkins and the de Menils through collecting circles, and Wright had previously interned at Hawkins's law firm. Hawkins, de Menil, Douglas-Hamilton, and Wolff interview.

31. In the words of Karen Kelly, who came to work at Dia in 1989 and served until 2011 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 reenvision what could be done with that to keep the institution moving—alive, actually." Karen Kelly, interview by the author, New York, 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 Wright 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, "Remains of the Dia," 200.

32. Garrels telephone interview; Kelly interview.

33. Kimmelman, "The Dia Generation."

34. "Dia Art Foundation New York City Real Property," document showing addresses and uses of Dia's New York City properties. Martha Rosler personal archives. Consulted December 2010.

35. Charles Wright, "A Note on the Series," in *Vision and Visuality*, ed. Hal Foster and Dia Art Foundation, Discussions in Contemporary Culture 2 (Seattle: Dia Art Foundation with Bay Press, 1988), vii.

36. See Dia Art Foundation, "Readings in Contemporary Poetry," <http://awp.diaart.org/poetry/>, accessed May 12, 2012.

37. Garrels telephone interview; Wright telephone interview. See the exhibition dates in Gary Garrels and Dia Art Foundation, eds., *The Work of Andy Warhol*, Discussions in Contemporary Culture 3 (Seattle: Bay Press, 1989), ix–x.

38. Wallis, *Democracy*, xiii. At the time, their respective positions were as follows: Szeeman was a curator at the Kunsthhaus in Zurich; König was director of Portikus and chancellor of the Städtisches Kunstinstitut in Frankfurt; Halbreich was curator of contemporary art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Rainer was an instructor at the Whitney Independent Study Program; and Bellamy was director of the Oil and Steel Gallery.

39. Yvonne Rainer, telephone interview by the author, April 1, 2010.

40. Wright telephone interview.

41. According to Garrels, Rainer also proposed the name of a New York filmmaker, whom Dia did not go on to support because they lacked a professional screening facility. Neither Garrels nor Rainer nor Charles Wright, however, can remember who this third person was. Garrels, Rainer, and Wright telephone interviews.

42. Ault, *Alternative Art New York*, 17–25.

43. Lucy Lippard, "Biting the Hand," in Ault, *Alternative Art New York*, 79.

44. Martin Beck, "Alternative: Space," in Ault, *Alternative Art New York*, 251. Beck specifically mentions the AWC in this regard.

45. Ibid., 254–55.

46. Heather Green cites an ad in the September 1978 *Gallery Guide* for apartments in the "Bleeker Renaissance," a Greenwich Village complex "with the matchless intrigue of NoHo, SoHo, Little Italy, and Chinatown all round." Heather Green, "Space Invaders? Artists in the East Village, 1977–1983" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 2009), 13.

47. Rosalyn Deutsche and Cara Gendel Ryan, "The Fine Art of Gentrification," *October* 31 (Winter 1984): 93.

48. Brian Wallis, "Public Funding and Alternative Spaces," in Ault, *Alternative Art New York*, 162, 178.

49. For NEA annual appropriations, see National Endowment for the Arts, "National Endowment for the Arts Appropriations History," <http://arts.gov/open-government/national-endowment-arts-appropriations-history>, accessed June 2, 2015. Chin-Tao Wu provides information on total corporate donations between 1975 and 1986 in *Privatising Culture*, 53. By 1985, corporate donations equaled \$488 million, while NEA appropriations were much more slowly creeping upward, to \$163.66.

50. Wallis, "Public Funding and Alternative Spaces," 164. Melissa Rachleff corroborates these points in her essay "Do It Yourself: Histories of Alternatives," in *Alternative Histories: New York Art Spaces 1960 to 2010*, ed. Lauren Rosati and Mary Anne Staniszewski (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012), 25–26.

51. Jacki Apple, ed., *Alternatives in Retrospect: An Historical Overview, 1969–1975* (New York: New Museum, 1981), 6–7.

52. Group Material, "Caution! Alternative Space!," in Ault, *Alternative Art New York*, 186–87.

53. Ault, *Show and Tell*, 74–75, 78–79.

54. For a discussion of Rosler's art and activism during that period, see the interview with Hans-Ulrich Obrist in *Martha Rosler: Passionate Signals*, ed. Inka Schube (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz; Portchester: Art Books International, 2005).

55. Rosalyn Deutsche contributed the text "Alternative Space" to the project book, Wallis, *If You Lived Here*, 45–66. Smith participated on the panel "Housing: Gentrification, Dislocation and Fighting Back," and Marcuse spoke on the panel "Planning: Power, Politics and People."

56. Martha Rosler, "Lookers, Buyers, Dealers, and Makers: Thoughts on Audience," in *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (1979; repr., Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009).

57. Ault, *Show and Tell*, 258–59.

58. *Ibid.*, 138–39.

59. Ault, e-mail correspondence, May 22, 2015.

60. Both Ault and Alexander Alberro cite the influence of *Democracy's* format on *If You Lived Here* . . . . Ault, *Show and Tell*, 139; Alberro, "The Dialectics of Everyday Life: Martha Rosler and the Strategy of the Decoy," in *Martha Rosler: Positions in the Life World*, ed. Catherine de Zegher (Birmingham, U.K.: Ikon Gallery; Vienna: Generali Foundation; Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), 110. Rosler also said when I spoke with her that the format of her project was influenced by sharing the year with Group Material. Martha Rosler, interview by the author, Brooklyn, July 21, 2010.

61. Rosler interview.

62. Ault, *Show and Tell*, 139; Ault, e-mail correspondence, May 22, 2015.

63. Michael Govan, telephone interview by the author, February 13, 2012.

64. Salem Alaton, "N.Y. Artists Get Vocal about Politics," *Globe and Mail*, October 20, 1988.

65. Hess, "Safe Combat in the Erogenous Zone," 79.

66. Roberta Smith, "Gallery View: Working the Gap between Art and Politics," *New York Times*, September 25, 1988.

67. Ernest Larsen, "Who Owns the Streets?" *Art in America*, no. 1 (January 1990): 55.

68. 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.

69. Dia Art Foundation audio archives, consulted January 2011.

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

71. Wallis, *Democracy*, 1.

72. Poster image included in Ault, *Alternative Art New York*, 73.

73. Julie Ault, telephone interview by the author, July 7, 2015.

74. The costs listed also include a \$4,000 fee for Hal Foster, who was projected in the early phases of the project as the eventual editor of the book. NYSCA application for 1988–89 made by Gary Garrels on behalf of Dia for the “Town Meeting” projects. Martha Rosler archives, consulted December 2010.

75. A 1989–90 application Group Material made to the NEA states that all members were devoting “100%” of their time to their practice during a period when they all had other jobs. NEA grant application, Group Material Collection, Fales Library, Series V, Box 8, Folder 20, “NEA Applications 1989–91, 1 of 2.”

76. Garrels telephone interview; Wright telephone interview. 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 stressed that for him the projects were clearly authored by Group Material and Rosler.

77. Julie Ault, interview by the author, Portland, Oregon, May 22, 2011.

78. *Ibid.*

79. Ashford interview.

80. Ault, *Show and Tell*, 155.

81. Karen Ramspacher, interview by the author, New York, July 30, 2010. Ramspacher had done an internship at the MIT List Center for Visual Art, where Garrels also completed curatorial training, providing connections that segued into a job at Dia.

82. Ault, *Show and Tell*, 183.

83. Rosler interview.

84. Martha Rosler, “Place, Position, Power, Politics,” in *The Subversive Imagination: Artists, Society, and Social Responsibility*, ed. Carol Becker (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 69.

85. Rosler, “Lookers, Buyers, Dealers, and Makers,” 221.

86. 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.

87. Garrels telephone interview.

88. Ashford interview.

89. For *The People’s Choice*, Group Material asked neighbors of their project space on the Lower East Side to contribute “beautiful” objects to be shown in an exhibition, resulting in a diverse mix of objects. Another group of works involving a preparatory process with the audience were the various incarnations of *DA ZI BAOS / Democracy Wall* of the mid-1980s, in which Group Material collected quotations from people on social and political issues, using these as the basis for posters installed as a frieze in both outdoor and indoor spaces. Rosler reprised the garage sale format for her *Meta-Monumental Garage Sale*, a solo show at MoMA in New York in November 2012.

90. Edited transcript of Group Material interviewed by Steve Kurtz, Group Material Collection, Fales Library, Series III, Box 6, Folder 13, “Articles, Interviews, Statements.” In this interview, all

statements made by the members of Group Material are attributed to the group collectively, so it is not possible to tell from the transcript who is talking at this point.

91. Lucy Lippard, *Mixed Blessings: New Art in a Multicultural America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990), 6.

92. 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 Clement 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 desires of the critic become invisible—veiled—in order to produce an idea of the universal, privileged viewing subject.

93. Rosler, "Lookers, Buyers, Dealers, and Makers," 214–15.

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

95. Martha Rosler, "Fragments of a Metropolitan Viewpoint," in Wallis, *If You Lived Here*, 41.

96. Alberro, "The Dialectics of Everyday Life," 90–92.

97. Marilyn Nance, telephone interview by the author, April 10, 2011.

98. Betti-Sue Hertz, telephone interview by the author, April 6, 2011.

99. Farzin, "Still Here."

100. Marcia Tucker, "A Museum in the Village: An Idea Whose Time Has Come," *Villager*, October 20, 1977.

101. Dia Art Foundation, Visual Arts grant application to the NEA to fund *Democracy and If You Lived Here . . .*, Group Material Collection, Fales Library, Series V, Box 8, Folder 21, "NEA Applications 1989–91, 2 of 2."

102. Hawkins, de Menil, Douglas-Hamilton, and Wolff interview.

103. Mary Anne Staniszewski, "The New Activism," *Shift*, no. 5 (1988): 11.

104. "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.

105. Govan telephone interview. 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.

106. Wright telephone interview. Wright stressed the essential importance, for Dia's institutional development, of support from the Lannan Foundation. The Lannan Foundation, created by J. Patrick Lannan Sr. in 1960, is dedicated to "cultural freedom, diversity, and creativity" through support to artists, writers, and Native American activists. Wright speculated 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. 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.

107. 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.

108. *Ibid.*

109. National Endowment for the Arts, "1988 Annual Report," May 1989, 193, <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/NEA-Annual-Report-1988.pdf>, accessed August 28, 2016.

110. *Ibid.*, 188.

111. *Ibid.*, 198.

112. Boris Groys, *Art Power* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), 93.

113. *Ibid.*, 53–66.

114. Jackson, *Social Works*, 2–3, 15.
115. *Ibid.*, 14.
116. Deitcher, “Social Aesthetics,” 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).
117. *Ibid.*, 40.
118. *Ibid.*, 42.
119. Crimp, *On the Museum’s Ruins*, 167.
120. See, for example, Jennifer Doyle’s discussion of affective labor in Santiago Sierra’s work in *Hold It against Me: Difficulty and Emotion in Contemporary Art* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2013), 90–93; Jessica Santone, “The Economics of the Performative Audience,” *Performance Research* 19, no. 6 (December 2014): 30–36; Sami Siegelbaum, “Business Casual: Flexibility in Contemporary Performance Art,” *Art Journal* 72, no. 3 (Fall 2013): 50–65. Various articles in the journal *e-flux* have also touched on this topic, such as Hito Steyerl’s “Politics of Art: Contemporary Art and the Transition to Post-Democracy,” *e-flux*, no. 21 (December 2010), <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/politics-of-art-contemporary-art-and-the-transition-to-post-democracy/>, accessed August 28, 2016; and Sven Lütticken’s “General Performance,” *e-flux*, no. 31 (January 2012), [www.e-flux.com/journal/general-performance](http://www.e-flux.com/journal/general-performance), accessed August 28, 2016.
121. Dallas Smythe, *Dependency Road: Communications, Capitalism, Consciousness and Canada* (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, 1981), 39.
122. *Ibid.*, 26. Mark Andrejevic, in his analysis of reality TV, describes this as “the work of being watched.” Andrejevic, *Reality TV: The Work of Being Watched* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004).
123. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (London: Penguin, 2004), 109–11.
124. Jerry Kearns, telephone interview by the author, March 30, 2011.
125. Hertz telephone interview.
126. David Avalos, e-mail correspondence, March 26, 2011. Avalos had previously participated in an event that had a somewhat similar structure to Group Material’s town-hall meetings and that might be seen as a precursor to *Democracy*. This was BAW/TAF’s October 1986 *Café Urgente*, an event that brought together scholars, artists, and the public to discuss issues connected to the U.S.–Mexican border region and migration across it. For a discussion of *Café Urgente*, see Ila Sheren, *Portable Borders: Performance Art and Politics on the U.S. Frontera since 1984* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015), 38–41.
127. Cenén, in addition to speaking at the panel, also contributed a painting to Martha Rosler’s *Homeless* installation.
128. Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, 1: 498.
129. Susan Somers-Willett, *The Cultural Politics of Slam Poetry* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 4.
130. See Somers-Willett’s chapter “I Sing the Body Authentic,” in *The Cultural Politics of Slam Poetry*, 68–95.
131. Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 1.
132. Daphne Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850–1910* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006), 8.
133. *Ibid.*, 7.
134. “William Olander, 38, Art Curator, Is Dead,” *New York Times*, March 21, 1989.
135. William Olander, “Social Aesthetics,” in *Art and Social Change, U.S.A.* (Oberlin, Ohio: Allen Memorial Art Museum, 1983).

136. Deitcher, "Social Aesthetics," 18.
137. David Deitcher, interview by the author, New York, September 10, 2013.
138. Ibid.
139. Doyle, *Hold It against Me*, 1.
140. José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 1.

## 2. THE PEDAGOGICAL SUBJECT OF PARTICIPATION

1. Karen Ramspacher, Dia employee and later a member of Group Material, states that this show went first of the exhibitions in *Democracy* to purposely coordinate it with the beginning of the school year. Ramspacher interview.
2. See bell hooks, "Altars of Sacrifice: Re-Membering Basquiat," *Art in America*, no. 81 (June 1993): 68–75, and also a later volume of essays, hooks, *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics* (New York: New Press, 1995). Claire Bishop, in a chapter from her *Artificial Hells* addressing pedagogical projects, discusses artists' interest in critical pedagogy in the later twentieth century. See Bishop, "Pedagogic Projects," in *Artificial Hells*, 241–74.
3. On Hull House, see Shannon Jackson, *Lines of Activity: Performance, Historiography, and Hull-House Domesticity* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000).
4. Ashford and Ault quoted in Spector, "Democratic Vistas," 11.
5. The group defined its aesthetic as one of social communication in the flyer for its inaugural exhibition, reproduced in Ault, *Show and Tell*, 22–23.
6. Andrea Fraser, "From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique" (2005), in Alberro and Stimson, *Institutional Critique*, 412.
7. See Bishop, "The New Masters of Liberal Arts"; Bishop, "Pedagogic Projects." Grant Kester takes up the question of the pedagogical explicitly in "The Noisy Optimism of Immediate Action: Theory, Practice, and Pedagogy in Contemporary Art," *Art Journal* 71, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 86–99, and throughout *Conversation Pieces* and *The One and the Many*; Lane Reylea discusses it relative to changes in the role of art schools in *Your Everyday Art World*; see also Irit Rogoff, "Turning," *e-flux*, no. 0 (November 2008), <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/turning/>, accessed March 28, 2015.
8. J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 6.
9. Ault, *Show and Tell*, 7.
10. Ibid., 131.
11. Ault, e-mail correspondence, May 22, 2015.
12. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1997). The book was first published in Portuguese in 1968.
13. Wallis, *Democracy*, 99–105. Claire Bishop also mentions Freire as an explicit influence on Group Material. Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 269.
14. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 35–36, 71.
15. Felix Gonzalez-Torres to Julie Ault, July 27, 1988, Group Material Collection, Fales Library, Series I, Box 2, Folder 9, "Democracy (Correspondence)." The letter was written while Gonzalez-Torres was in Toronto with his partner Ross Laycock.
16. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 87–124.
17. Peter McLaren, "Review Article—Postmodernity and the Death of Politics: A Brazilian Re-prise," *Educational Theory* 36, no. 4 (Fall 1986): 392.
18. Ibid., 396.
19. Ira Shor, "Developing Student Autonomy in the Classroom," *Equity and Excellence in Education* 24, no. 3 (1988): 35.
20. As reproduced in Ault, *Show and Tell*, 22–23. This statement was important enough that the

group repeated it again in a short 1983 manifesto, authored by a membership then consisting of Rollins, Ault, Ashford, and Mundy McLaughlin. Group Material, "Statement (1983)," in Alberro and Stimson, *Institutional Critique*, 238.

21. Tim Rollins to Group Material members, July 22, 1980, reproduced in Ault, *Show and Tell*, 15.
22. Ault, *Show and Tell*, 7.
23. Doug 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.
24. Joe Kincheloe, "TV Is Here to Stay: Use It," *Clearing House* 54, no. 1 (September 1980): 44–45.
25. For an example of the former, see David Trend, "Changing the Subject: From Reproduction to Resistance in Media Education," *Afterimage*, November 1988, 10–13; and of the latter, Coco Fusco, "Video at Documenta," *Afterimage*, September 1987, 4.
26. Ault interview, May 22, 2011.
27. Catherine Lord, "Letter to Group Material," in Wallis, *Democracy*, 77–81.
28. For an explanation of DBAE from the perspective of some of its key proponents, see Elliot W. Eisner, *The Role of Discipline-Based Art Education in America's Schools* (Los Angeles: Getty Center for Education in the Arts, 1988); Getty Center for Education in the Arts, *Education in Art: Future Building / Proceedings of a National Invitational Conference* (Los Angeles: Getty Center for Education in the Arts, 1989).
29. Margaret Moorman, "The Great Art Education Debate," *ARTnews*, Summer 1989, 127.
30. Lord, "Letter to Group Material," 78.
31. National Endowment for the Arts, *Toward Civilization: A Report on Arts Education* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1988). This report was commissioned by Congress in 1985. Hodson'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 (ACAE). 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).
32. National Endowment for the Arts, *Toward Civilization*, v.
33. William Honan, "Education; American Teaching of the Arts Is Assailed," *New York Times*, May 4, 1988. Hodson's suggestions drew on the thought of neoconservative intellectuals Secretary of Education William J. Bennett and author Samuel Lipman.
34. Charles L. Heatherly and Heritage Foundation, *Mandate for Leadership: Policy Management in a Conservative Administration* (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 1981).
35. Lord, "Letter to Group Material," 79.
36. Karen Hamblen, "What Does DBAE Teach?" *Art Education* 41, no. 2 (March 1988): 33.
37. Moorman, "The Great Art Education Debate," 128–29.
38. Susan Cahan and Zoya Kocur, "Contemporary Art and Multicultural Education," in *Rethinking Contemporary Art and Multicultural Education*, ed. Eungie Joo and Joseph Keehn II (New York: Routledge, 2011), 14. The original edition of this manual was Cahan and Kocur, *Contemporary Art and Multicultural Education*.
39. For a discussion of the range of programs, see Moorman, "The Great Art Education Debate," 127.
40. John Howell White, "20th-Century Art Education: A Historical Perspective," in *Handbook of Research and Policy in Art Education*, ed. Elliot Eisner and Michael Day (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004), 67–70. For an example of the critique White describes, see 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 she draws negative conclusions about its results for art education. Gee, "Spirit, Mind, and Body: Arts Education the Redeemer," in Eisner and Day, *Handbook of Research and Policy in Arts Education*. 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” (1997), *VTW: Visual Thinking Strategies*, accessed July 30, 2015, downloadable from <http://www.vtshome.org/research/articles-other-readings>.

41. Philip Yenawine, “Introduction: But What Has Changed,” in Wallis, Weems, and Yenawine, *Art Matters*, 9–11.

42. Group Material to teachers, May 6, 1988, Group Material Collection, Fales Library, Series I, box 2, Folder 9, “Democracy (Correspondence).”

43. The concept of art practice as research 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 emphasizes archival exploration of a particular site or issue. See, for example, Florian Dombois, Ute Meta Bauer, Claudia Mareis, and Michael Schwab, eds., *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, Calif.; 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.

44. Group Material, “Education and Democracy” exhibition checklist, Dia Art Foundation archives.

45. Amy Brandt has argued convincingly for “neoconceptual” as a more appropriate term to designate the work of artists typically described as “neo-geo” such as Peter Haley, Jeff Koons, and others from this moment, artists whose work is united more by a set of concerns inherited from pop art and conceptualism than by a geometric style as such. Brandt, *Interplay: Neoconceptual Art of the 1980s* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2014).

46. Dia provided major financial support for Beuys’s *7000 Oaks* in Kassel in the 1980s, and in 1988 Dia had installed a continuation of the project along West Twenty-Second Street. Dia Art Foundation, “Joseph Beuys, *7000 Eichen (7000 Oaks)*,” <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. Beuys’s show in Dia’s Chelsea gallery on West Twenty-Second Street took place from October 1987 to June 1988, alongside exhibitions of work by Imi Knoebel and Blinky Palermo.

47. Note that *Show and Tell* is the title of the history of Group Material edited by Julie Ault.

48. Shor, “Developing Student Autonomy in the Classroom,” 35.

49. Roberta Smith, “Working the Gap between Art and Politics,” *New York Times*, September 25, 1988.

50. Grant Kester, “Rhetorical Questions: The Alternative Arts Sector and the Imaginary Public” (1993), in *Art, Activism, and Oppositionality: Essays from Afterimage*, ed. Grant Kester (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998), 121–22. Kester argues that many artworks produced in the alternative sector of the 1980s and early 1990s claimed a political position by addressing 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 (121). Kester argues that leftist viewers’—and crucially, artists’—failure to recognize that they are themselves the true addressees of political art blinds them to the limitations of a certain kind of art to reach outside the art world. He 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. Richard 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.” Bolton, *Culture Wars*, 22. George Yúdice makes a parallel argument, stating that the culture wars were characterized by the tension between overtly leftist artists and their target audience of “polite” society, including Jesse Helms and the like, with mainstream TV viewers and magazine readers relishing the conflict between the two. However, he argues, most performance artists either were not aware of or disingenuously denied the difference between the conservative pundits and the broader voyeuristic public, in essence thereby also denying the performative quality of their own enactment of their position in the debates. Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003), 50.

51. Ault interview, Portland, May 22, 2011. See Rollins’s speech as transcribed in Wallis, *Democracy*, 83–84.

52. Rollins interview.

53. Ault, *Show and Tell*, 259.

54. Geno Rodriguez, telephone interview by the author, April 28, 2011.

55. Audiocassette recordings, Dia Art Foundation archives.

56. The specific shows in question were the Whitney’s *The 1930s: Painting and Sculpture in America* of 1968, and MoMA’s *Harlem on My Mind* of 1969. Ault, *Alternative Art New York*, 19–20. For accounts of the broader politics of art in this period, see Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers*; Francis Frascina, *Art, Politics and Dissent: Aspects of the Art Left in Sixties America* (Manchester, U.K.: University of Manchester Press, 1999).

57. David Trend, “Big Macs and Whoppers,” *Afterimage*, March 1987, 3.

58. National Endowment for the Arts, “1988 Annual Report,” 1989, 32.

59. Rodriguez telephone interview.

60. Ault interview, May 22, 2011.

61. Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 109.

62. Arun Saldanha, *Psychedelic White: Goa Trance and the Viscosity of Race* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), ix.

63. For a discussion of Chi’s work, see Amy Brandt, ed., *Tseng Kwong Chi: Performing for the Camera* (New York: Chrysler Museum of Art / Grey Art Gallery / Lyon Artbooks, 2015).

64. Kwon first articulated her critique of site-specificity in her essay “One Place after Another.”

65. Kwon, *One Place after Another*, 138–39.

66. *Ibid.*, 140.

67. Wallis, *Democracy*, 1.

68. Group Material Collection, Fales Library, Series I, Box 3, Folder 11, “Democracy—(Notes: Organization of Book and Process).”

69. “On Describing Past GM,” Group Material Collection, Fales Library, Series I, Box 3, Folder 11, “Democracy—(Notes: Organization of Book and Process).”

70. Press release reprinted in Ault, *Show and Tell*, 111.

71. Doug Ashford, quoted in Jim Drobnick, “Dialectical Group Materialism,” *Parachute*, no. 56 (October–December 1989): 31.

72. Doug Ashford, “An Artwork Is a Person,” in Ault, *Show and Tell*, 221.

73. Ault, *Show and Tell*, 63.

74. Sheet of notes labeled “Democracy,” Group Material Collection, Fales Library, Series I, Box 3, Folder 11, “Democracy—(Notes: Organization of Book and Process).”

75. Dia curator Gary Garrels told me that for him, Group Material and Rosler were clearly the authors of their respective projects at Dia. Garrels telephone interview.

76. Town-hall audio recordings, Dia Art Foundation archives.

77. David Trend, “Back to School,” 17.

78. Salem Alaton, “N.Y. Artists Get Vocal about Politics,” *Globe and Mail*, October 20, 1988.

79. Joshua Decter, “Group Material—Dia Art Foundation,” *FlashArt*, March–April 1989, 111.

80. In 1972, at the time of Beuys's 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 thirty-four people in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, Ulrike Meinhof, Holger Meins, and Jan-Carl Raspe were arrested in June 1972.

81. Group Material, "Notes for our statement . . .," Group Material Collection, Fales Library, Series I, Box 2, Folder 18, "Democracy (Notes, Drafts, Statements for Book)."

82. Felix Gonzalez-Torres to Julie Ault, July 27, 1988.

83. Page of typed notes labeled "Julie," Group Material Collection, Fales Library, Series I, Box 2, Folder 18, "Democracy (Notes, Drafts, Statements for Book)."

84. Group Material, "On Democracy," in Wallis, *Democracy*, 2.

85. Shor, "Developing Student Autonomy in the Classroom," 37.

86. Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, trans. Kristin Ross (San Francisco: Stanford University Press, 1991). The book was first published as *Le Maître ignorant: Cinq leçons sur l'émancipation intellectuelle* (Paris: Fayard, 1987).

87. Kester, *The One and the Many*, 63, 155–72.

88. Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins*, 167.

89. Thanks to Stuart Lingo for this observation.

90. Lee Edelman discusses the strong associations in Western culture between the figure of the child and the political imaginary of futurity. For Edelman, the 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, at 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." Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004), 2–3.

91. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 6.

92. Group Material, "Notes for our statement . . .," Group Material Collection, Fales Library, Series I, Box 2, Folder 18, "Democracy (Notes, Drafts, Statements for Book)."

93. Charles Wright, "Almost No Boundaries: The Dia Art Foundation," in *Breaking Down the Boundaries: Artists and Museums*, ed. Tamara Moats (Seattle: Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, 1989), 30.

94. Christine J. Vincent, study director, *The Artist as Philanthropist: Strengthening the Next Generation of Artist-Endowed Foundations*, 2 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Aspen Institute Program on Philanthropy and Social Innovation, 2010), 1: 15.

95. Dia Art Foundation certificate of incorporation, August 27, 1980, Dia Art Foundation archives.

96. New Mexico tax ruling 714–82–10 (formerly 82–12), issued October 18, 1982.

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

98. For a history of Bay Press, see Charles Mudede, "The Mysterious Disappearance of Bay Press," *Stranger*, January 24, 2002, <http://www.thestranger.com/seattle/the-mysterious-disappearance-of-bay-press/Content?oid=9829>, accessed January 20, 2016.

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

100. 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 believed 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 [Ann Hamilton's] 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." Brighde Mullins, telephone interview by the author, April 28, 2011.

101. Ibid.

102. See, for example, the May 24, 1999, press release "The 1998–99 Arts Education Program 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." Dia Art Foundation, "The 1998–99 Arts Education Program Student Exhibition at Dia Center for the Arts," press release, May 24, 1999, [http://www.diacenter.org/press\\_releases/main/131](http://www.diacenter.org/press_releases/main/131), accessed June 19, 2012.

103. For example, the June 8, 2012, press release "Miuccia Prada and Larry Gagosian Make Leadership Gift to Support Preservation of Walter De Maria's *The Lightning Field*" describes Dia:Beacon as follows: "Dia:Beacon, which occupies a former Nabisco printing factory, features major installations of works by a focused group of some of the most significant artists of the last half-century, as well as special exhibitions, new commissions, and diverse public and education programs." Dia Art Foundation, "Miuccia Prada and Larry Gagosian Make Leadership Gift to Support Preservation of Walter De Maria's *The Lightning Field*," press release, June 8, 2012, [http://www.diaart.org/press\\_releases/main/226](http://www.diaart.org/press_releases/main/226), accessed March 25, 2015.

104. NEA grant application 97–4172–6005, dated March 22, 1996, made by the Dia Art Foundation, archives of the National Endowment for the Arts.

105. Mullins telephone interview.

106. Other examples include London's Tate Modern, which opened in 2000, and the Power Plant in Toronto, which opened in 1987.

107. Erica Stewart, "PreservationNation Blog—Thinking outside the Box: An Artful Adaptive Use Project in Hudson Valley," <http://ntcic.webfactional.com/2010/10/15/thinking-outside-the-box-an-artful-adaptive-use-project-in-hudson-valley/>, accessed April 1, 2012.

108. 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 create 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.

109. José Luis Blondet stressed the importance of the education program in creating a connection between Beacon and its host community. José Luis Blondet, telephone interview by the author, January 17, 2012.

110. Kirsten Mosher, telephone interview by the author, December 10, 2014. Mosher also contributed work to Group Material's "Cultural Participation" installation, the third show in *Democracy*. "Checklist for Group Material 'Cultural Participation,'" Dia Art Foundation archives.

111. Meeting minutes, Beacon Board of Education, March 26, 2001, and March 15, 2002, obtained from the Beacon Board of Education.

112. Beacon Board of Education minutes, March 15, 2002, 2. Jaeger uses the term “development” here in the sense of building resources in the region, not in the sense that it is often used today to indicate fund-raising activities.

113. Dyson Foundation, “Grantmaking,” <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), 2008 (\$195,000), and 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>.

114. NEA grant application 05-5100-8031, dated June 3, 2005, made by the Dia Art Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts archive. This application resulted in a grant of \$20,000 from the NEA to support the Beacon education programs.

115. Dia Art Foundation, “Dia Beacon Education Outline September 2009,” internal document obtained from Dia. 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 “Dia Art Foundation Opens New Education Learning Lab at Dia:Beacon, Riggio Galleries,” press release, October 3, 2005, [http://www.diacenter.org/press\\_releases/main/55](http://www.diacenter.org/press_releases/main/55), accessed June 19, 2012.

116. Blondet telephone interview.

117. Mosher telephone interview. Hal Foster has argued that the grid is paradigmatic to the works presented at Dia:Beacon across the various art-historical movements and tendencies represented there. Foster, “At Dia:Beacon,” *London Review of Books*, June 5, 2003, 29.

118. NEA grant application 03–5100–8067, dated August 12, 2002, submitted by the Dia Art Foundation. National Endowment for the Arts archives.

119. Dia Art Foundation, “Arts Education Program at Dia:Beacon,” <http://www.diaart.org/programs/main/7>, accessed July 3, 2015.

120. Friedrich: “The 20th century clearly stands beside the Renaissance as one of the most powerfully visual ages. We have artists of the magnitude of Titian, be it Andy Warhol; of the magnitude of Michelangelo, be it Dan Flavin; of the magnitude of Donatello, be it Walter De Maria. This is why we did Dia.” Colacello, “Remains of the Dia,” 182.

121. Wright, “Almost No Boundaries,” 27.

122. Heiner Friedrich quoted in Colacello, “Remains of the Dia,” 186, 191.

123. Chave, “Revaluing Minimalism,” 466.

124. Nocera, “Money in New York.”

125. Vogel cites this \$15 million figure in “An Old Box Factory Is a Haven for New Art.”

126. These grants are listed in the Lannan Foundation’s 2001 990-PF, downloadable from <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/366062451>. Neither the staff of the Lannan Foundation nor Patrick Lannan Jr. responded to my requests for information about the foundation’s interest in Dia.

127. Fawn Wilder, telephone interview by the author, December 9, 2011.

128. Yasmil Raymond, telephone interview by the author, December 1, 2011.

129. This kind of performance can be seen at work in the images of the Community Free Days that Dia posts to its Facebook page. For legal reasons regarding parental consent, they would not license these images for reproduction.

130. Ashford interview. Ashford has also stated something similar in an unpublished 2000 interview by Michael Oren, where he argues that when Group Material’s approach of combining art and nonart objects was absorbed into the curatorial mainstream, it helped solve the “museum crisis”

of the late 1970s to the late 1980s, “and what museums were going to do to figure out how to relate to larger audiences.” “Doug Ashford, interviewed by telephone by Michel Oren, 12/16/00,” Group Material Collection, Fales Library, Series II, Box 5, Folder 23.

131. Most frequently, this absorption is discussed in terms of what art is shown and how often. Ault, for example, discusses the changing visibility of Group Material’s practice in terms of the two instances of their participation in the Whitney Biennial, in 1985 and 1991. She 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.” Ault, *Show and Tell*, 91. She 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 (182–93). For a discussion of the changing politics of the Whitney Biennial, see Deitcher, “Polarity Rules,” 201–46.

132. Reylea, *Your Everyday Art World*, 175, 164.

133. Wright, “Almost No Boundaries,” 31.

134. Santone, “The Economics of the Performative Audience,” 31.

135. Foster, “At Dia:Beacon”; Smith, *What Is Contemporary Art?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 46–48.

136. See, for example, Amelia Jones, “Art History / Art Criticism: Performing Meaning,” in *Performing the Body / Performing the Text*, ed. Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson (London: Routledge, 1999); David Getsy, *Abstract Bodies: Sixties Sculpture in the Expanded Field of Gender* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

### 3. PHOTOGRAPHY, AGENCY, AND PARTICIPATION

1. Claire Doherty, *Contemporary Art from Studio to Situation* (London: Black Dog, 2004), 8–12.

2. This includes all the major accounts of participatory practice so far, including those by Claire Bishop (*Artificial Hells*), Grant Kester (*Conversation Pieces* and *The One and the Many*), Nicolas Bourriaud (*Relational Aesthetics*), Shannon Jackson (*Social Works*), and Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette (*Collectivism after Modernism*).

3. Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 5.

4. Jones, “Temporal Anxiety / ‘Presence’ in Absentia”; Jones and Heathfield, *Perform, Repeat, Record*; Auslander, “The Performativity of Performance Documentation”; Schneider, “Solo, Solo, Solo”; Blocker, *What the Body Cost*; Widrich, *Performative Monuments*.

5. Gayatri Spivak, in a 2005 essay, (re)defines the subaltern as those removed from lines of social mobility. Spivak, “Use and Abuse of Human Rights,” *boundary 2* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 147. See the end of the chapter for a discussion of the use of Spivak’s theory in this context.

6. Kathleen Teltch, “Tabloid Sold by the Homeless Is in Trouble,” *New York Times*, May 24, 1990.

7. Andrew Castrucci, interview by the author, New York, January 29, 2012; Bill Batson, telephone interview by the author, February 7, 2012; Alan Moore, telephone interview by the author, December 22, 2011.

8. My article that treats this material was published before I was able to speak to Prime. Adair Rounthwaite, “In, Around, and Afterthoughts (on Participation): Photography and Agency in Martha Rosler’s Collaboration with Homeward Bound,” *Art Journal* 73, no. 4 (Winter 2014): 46–63.

9. Nelson Prime, telephone interview by the author, February 2, 2016.

10. Rosler and I think differently about the relationship between *If You Lived Here . . .* and Homeward Bound’s political agency. Namely, whereas she sees the project from a Marxist perspective as an act of class solidarity with the group members that broke the logic of the various systems and institutions in proximity to which it was located, I view the project as one of a series of sites of the production of discourse surrounding the group members and their work, which the group navigated in a tactical way. Martha Rosler, e-mail correspondence, March 10, 2016. I am appreciative of the

role of Rosler's Marxist approach as a foundation for *If You Lived Here . . .*, but I feel that limiting the present-day analysis of the project to the terms of that approach risks ignoring the visual dynamics of the project and how they played a role in its politics. "Homeless: The Street and Other Venues" certainly represented an act of solidarity, but it was also an art exhibition, and I would argue that the visual must play an important role in how we evaluate its politics.

11. Both essay and artwork are published in *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 Documentary Photography)* (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1981). Benjamin Buchloh, in an important early analysis of these works, describes them as acts of historicizing contemporary photography that disrupt aesthetic neutrality to show the political dimensions of photography's conventions. Buchloh, "Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art," *Artforum*, September 1982, 53.

12. Martha Rosler, "In, Around, and Afterthoughts (on Documentary Photography)," in *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*, ed. Richard Bolton (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 306.

13. Elizabeth Hess, "No Place Like Home," *Village Voice*, May 2, 1989, 105.

14. Dan Wiley, interview by the author, New York, May 26, 2011.

15. Rosler interview.

16. Michael Marriott, "Homeless in Park Sticking to a Cause," *New York Times*, November 28, 1988.

17. In an interview with Media Farzin, Rosler states, "I had one rule: no images of people lying on the ground." Farzin, "Still Here." Rosler also made an almost-identical comment in my interview with her.

18. Michael Harrington, *The Other America: Poverty in the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 2–3, 173–74.

19. David Shipler, *The Working Poor: Invisible in America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 11.

20. 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.

21. Rosalyn Deutsche, "Homeless Projection and the Site of Urban 'Revitalization,'" in *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 3–7.

22. Randall Cohn, "What We Talk about When We Talk about Homelessness," April 7, 2015, *Streets MN*, <http://streets.mn/2015/04/07/what-we-talk-about-when-we-talk-about-homelessness/>, accessed May 15, 2015.

23. Rosler, "In, Around, and Afterthoughts," 191.

24. Deutsche, *Evictions*, 7.

25. David Lurie and Krzysztof Wodiczko, "The Homeless Vehicle Project," in Wallis, *If You Lived Here*, 217.

26. This statement is drawn from a recorded telephone interview that I performed with Gregory Sholette on November 28, 2011. In subsequent correspondence, Sholette has disavowed this memory, stressing that it does not represent his own opinion of Rosler's project, which he believes fruitfully "questioned the institution" by bringing critical art and activist practice into an elite context. Gregory Sholette, e-mail correspondence, February 28, 2015.

27. Castrucci interview.

28. Camilla Fallon, telephone interview by the author, December 6, 2011.

29. Martha Rosler, e-mail correspondence, March 6, 2015.

30. Peg Tyre and Jeannette Walls, "Down but Not Out in Soho," *New York Magazine*, April 24, 1989.

31. Prime telephone interview.

32. Homeward Bound meeting minutes, Martha Rosler personal archives, consulted December 2010.

33. Rosler interview.

34. Martha Rosler, "Fragments of a Metropolitan Viewpoint," in Wallis, *If You Lived Here*, 38.
35. Rosler e-mail correspondence, March 6, 2015.
36. Rosler interview; Wiley interview.
37. Rosler e-mail correspondence, March 6, 2015.
38. Woodward, "Serving Up the Poor as Exotic Fare for Voyeurs?"
39. Letter from Charles Wright, Martha Rosler personal archives.
40. Marriott, "Homeless in Park Sticking to a Cause."
41. John Jiler, *Sleeping with the Mayor: A True Story* (St. Paul, Minn.: Hungry Mind Press, 1997).
42. This date is given in the Homeward Bound letter sent to members. Martha Rosler personal archives.
43. Martha Rosler, e-mail correspondence, March 8, 2015.
44. See Marriott, "Homeless in Park Sticking to a Cause"; Marriott, "City Hall Notes; 35 Homeless Protesters Stay Put in 'Kochville,'" *New York Times*, June 19, 1988.
45. Batson telephone interview.
46. Marriott, "Homeless in Park Sticking to a Cause."
47. Homeward Bound, letter to members, Martha Rosler personal archives.
48. See Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing, "Our History," <http://www.iahh.org/about/our-history>, accessed January 22, 2012.
49. Prime telephone interview.
50. Dia had these two images organized with the rest of its slides for *If You Lived Here . . .* as of 2010, but they have since been misplaced and so cannot be reproduced. The labeling on Dia's slides for the project suggests, though it does not directly confirm, that the two photos of Homeward Bound it had were taken by Slor. However, Rosler points out that the dimensions and style of these two images are less consistent with Slor's photography and with the large-format, wide-angle lenses he was using to make installation shots than with the 35 mm single-lens reflex camera that she was shooting with at the time. Martha Rosler, e-mail correspondence, March 6, 2015. However, one of the images in the series shows Rosler posed with the group, suggesting that for at least some of the images, someone else was behind the camera. The images might also have been taken by Dia assistant Karen Rampsbacher, though Rampsbacher has no memory of who took them. Rampsbacher, e-mail correspondence, March 4, 2015. Slor died in 2008, before I started this research.
51. Garrels telephone interview.
52. Fallon telephone interview.
53. Wiley interview.
54. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 92, 10–11.
55. See bell hooks, "In Our Glory: Photography and Black Life," in *Picturing Us: African American Identity in Photography*, ed. Deborah Willis (New York: New Press, 1994), 43.
56. Before returning to her native Brooklyn, where she was based during *If You Lived Here . . .*, Rosler had obtained an MFA from the University of California, San Diego (UCSD), graduating in 1974. At UCSD she formed close associations with a group of students and young faculty who included Allan Sekula, Phel Steinmetz, Fred Lonidier, and Brian Connell, later joined by Adele Shaules and Marge Dean. The San Diego group sought to develop photographic theories and practices that emphasized the socially contingent and embedded nature of image making. Martina Pachmanová, "Mobile Fidelities: Conversations on Feminism, History, and Visuality," *n.paradoxa*, online issue no. 19 (May 2006): 99, <https://www.ktpress.co.uk/pdf/mpachmanova.pdf>, accessed March 13, 2014. In this context, anti-Vietnam activism overlapped socially and intellectually with the activities of left-wing faculty, including philosophers Herbert Marcuse and Fredric Jameson; painter and film critic Manny Farber, for whom Rosler worked as a teaching assistant; and poet and performance artist David Antin, who had significant impact on Rosler and her collaborators. Benjamin Buchloh, "A Conversation with Martha Rosler," in de Zegher, *Martha Rosler*, 32–33.

57. Allan Sekula's essay "Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation)," *Massachusetts Review* 19, no. 4 (Winter 1978): 859, is often considered to be an unofficial manifesto of the group. The essay stresses that photography is not only present at every level of culture but is bound up with power at each of those levels, from the large-scale disciplinary to the moment of negotiation between photographer and subject that goes into creating a portrait (865). Another important text in articulating photography's function in producing subjects divided by class is Sekula's "The Body and the Archive," *October* 39 (Winter 1986): 7, 10.

58. Lonidier pointed out to me that the police photographer's act is, in itself, ambiguous in purpose, in that these are clearly not mug shots, as they lack identifying case numbers and a height grid. Fred Lonidier, e-mail correspondence, July 8, 2015.

59. Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," 7.

60. Craig Owens, "Posing," in *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 206.

61. Rosler, "In, Around, and Afterthoughts," 186.

62. Martha Rosler, "Lee Friedlander, an Exemplary Modern Photographer" (1975), in *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Writings, 1975–2003*, ed. Martha Rosler (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 115.

63. Two-page fax from Rosler to Wright, August 24, 1990, Martha Rosler personal archives.

64. Fax from Wright to Rosler of August 29, 1990, Martha Rosler personal archive.

65. Rosler, "Fragments of a Metropolitan Viewpoint," 38.

66. Alcina Horstman, telephone interview by the author, March 12, 2015.

67. Batson telephone interview.

68. Audiocassette recordings, Dia Art Foundation archives, consulted January 2011.

69. Batson telephone interview.

70. Rosler, "In, Around, and Afterthoughts," 322.

71. Audiocassette recordings, Dia Art Foundation archives, consulted January 2011.

72. Wiley interview. 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). Emmaus House is a transitional housing facility.

73. Rosler e-mail correspondence, March 8, 2015.

74. *Ibid.*

75. Mechtild Widrich has argued for an understanding of performance documentation that attends to these relays and interconnections among the live performance, documents, and later acts of historicization. Widrich, *Performative Monuments*, 26.

76. Rosler interview.

77. "Interview with Martha Rosler," by Jane Weinstock, *October* 17 (Summer 1981): 81. Steven Edwards also argues that creating a clash between distinct narratives is central to Rosler's practice. Edwards, *Martha Rosler: "The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems," One Work* (London: Afterall, 2012), 69.

78. "Interview with Martha Rosler," by Weinstock, 79.

79. Edwards discusses the import of the garage sale as a cultural-commercial form within Southern California social relations. Edwards, *Martha Rosler: "The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems,"* 81.

80. Buchloh, "A Conversation with Martha Rosler," 44.

81. Edwards, *Martha Rosler*, 111.

82. Sekula, "Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary," 867.

83. *Ibid.*, 865.

84. Rosler alludes to the fact that a limiting stasis is inherent to photography in her discussion with Buchloh about her attitude toward video. Video is not unproblematic, she says, but compared to photography "it is better in some ways because at least people move and speak and aren't fixed



into icons,” though it remains very difficult to represent the experiences of other people. Buchloh, “A Conversation with Martha Rosler,” 45. In “In, Around, and Afterthoughts,” Rosler pinpoints fixity as central to what she sees as the objectifying quality of Diane Arbus’s photography, arguing that 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. Rosler, “In, Around, and Afterthoughts,” 180. More recently, in a 2006 interview with Martina Pachmanová, Rosler also describes women’s objectified existence in dominant culture as an “iconic” state of being in which one cannot freely move. Pachmanová, “Mobile Fidelities,” 107.

85. See Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*; Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1959).

86. Richard Schechner and Victor Turner, *Between Theatre and Anthropology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985); Schechner, *Performance Theory*; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Phelan, *Unmarked*.

87. Prime telephone interview.

88. “Interview with Martha Rosler,” by Weinstock, 82.

89. Alberro, “The Dialectics of Everyday Life,” 112.

90. Pachmanová, “Mobile Fidelities,” 102; “Interview with Martha Rosler,” by Weinstock, 83.

91. Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 21–25.

92. Doherty, *Contemporary Art from Studio to Situation*, 8–12.

93. Reylea, *Your Everyday Art World*, 52–167.

94. *Ibid.*, 53.

95. Hal Foster, “An Archival Impulse,” *October* 110 (Fall 2004): 9.

96. Gayatri Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 104.

97. See the discussion of the conversation between Deleuze and Foucault where Spivak argues that any attempt, within academic discourse, to claim to present a pure subaltern voice amounts to a denial of one’s own investment in the process of that representation. Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” 272–81.

98. Gayatri Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Point* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 198–99.

99. Gayatri Spivak, “In Response,” in *Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections on the History of an Idea*, ed. Rosalind Morris (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 235.

#### 4. ART, AFFECT, CRISIS

1. Jean-Paul Rocchi, “Writing as I Lay Dying—AIDS Literature and the Death of Identity,” *Études anglaises* 61, no. 3 (2008): 350.

2. Douglas Crimp, ed., *AIDS: Cultural Analysis / Cultural Activism* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), 12. Crimp’s 1987 essay, originally published as “AIDS: Cultural Analysis / Cultural Activism,” *October* 43 (Winter 1987): 3–16, became (with light revision) the introduction to his edited volume.

3. The full text, in white sans serif on a black ground, reads: “WITH 42,000 DEAD, ART IS NOT ENOUGH. TAKE COLLECTIVE DIRECT ACTION TO END THE AIDS CRISIS.” A year later, the group produced an updated version for a catalog edited by Jan Zita Grover, modifying the text 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.” *Gran Fury*, text in *AIDS: Artists’ Response*, by Jan Zita Grover et al. (Columbus: Ohio State University, 1989), as quoted in David Deitcher, “AIDS, Art, and Reaction,” in Wallis, Weems, and Yenawine, *Art Matters*, 100.

4. See “The AIDS Memorial Quilt—History of the Quilt,” <http://www.aidsquilt.org/about/the-aids-memorial-quilt>, accessed July 13, 2015.
5. See Crimp, “Mourning and Militancy,” *October* 51 (Winter 1989): 3–18.
6. The dates of the respective installations were these: Berkeley University Art Museum, November 11, 1989–January 28, 1990; Wadsworth Atheneum, September 30–November 18, 1990; and Whitney Biennial, April 16–June 23, 1991.
7. Tom Finkelpearl, *Dialogues in Public Art* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), 419.
8. Ault, *Show and Tell*, 179.
9. “Group Material Installation ‘AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study,’” press release, December 8, 1988, Dia Art Foundation archives.
10. Gould, *Moving Politics*, 6–10.
11. Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*, Series Q (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003), 5.
12. This reading, which took place in 1992 during a benefit for the Needle Exchange, occurred shortly before the artist’s death. For a text of the reading, see the Web site of ACT UP New York, <http://www.actupny.org/diva/CBwoj.html>, accessed July 21, 2015.
13. Jones, “‘Presence’ in Absentia,” 11.
14. Jonathan Katz, “How AIDS Changed American Art,” in *Art AIDS America*, ed. Jonathan Katz and Rock Hushka Katz (Seattle and London: Tacoma Art Museum with the University of Washington Press, 2015).
15. Vito Russo, “Viewpoints: It Isn’t Happening to Them,” *Windy City Times*, July 28, 1988, 10–11, as reproduced in Wallis, *Democracy*, 299. The speech was delivered in Albany, New York.
16. Flyer reproduced in Wallis, *Democracy*, 280.
17. *Ibid.*, 281.
18. *Ibid.*, 250. Tom Stoddard also analyzes health care in the United States relative to the crisis. Stoddard, “Paradox and Paralysis: An Overview of the American Response to AIDS,” in Wallis, *Democracy*, 259–69. Stoddard expresses hope that the crisis will lay the groundwork for a public health-care system.
19. “Group Material Installation ‘AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study,’” press release, December 8, 1988, Dia Art Foundation archives.
20. Dan Cameron, “Group Material Talks to Dan Cameron,” *Artforum*, April 2003, 198.
21. Ashford and Ault, *Documenta 13, 100 Notes—100 Thoughts No. 32*, 2.
22. Jennifer Doyle makes a similar point about the work of David Wojnarowicz. Indeed, perhaps this sensibility is more generally characteristic of the socially engaged practices that emerged from New York’s alternative scene in the late 1970s and 1980s. Doyle, *Hold It against Me*, 146.
23. Ault, *Show and Tell*, 212.
24. Doyle makes a similar comment about David Wojnarowicz’s practice, based in turn on a comment about his work by Kiki Smith. Doyle, *Hold It against Me*, 146. Indeed, this can be seen as true in different respects of many of the artists who emerged from this milieu.
25. Julie Ault, e-mail correspondence, July 7, 2015.
26. ACT UP New York, “ACT UP Chants,” <http://www.actupny.org/documents/newmem5.html>, accessed October 26, 2012.
27. Julie Ault, e-mail correspondence, October 18, 2012.
28. Gran Fury began as an ad hoc subcommittee 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, <http://artforum.com/inprint/id=4466>, accessed April 5, 2013.

29. Ramspacher interview.
30. Ault e-mail correspondence, July 7, 2015.
31. List of half-inch and three-quarter-inch videos for "AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study," Dia Art Foundation archives.
32. Group Material, "Letter Sent to the Village Voice," Group Material Collection, Fales Library, Series I, Subseries B, Box 2, Folder 26, "Letters to the Editor—AIDS + Democracy: A Case Study," 1989. The full text of the letter also includes a reference to Kim Levin's calling to recommend work for inclusion in the show, which I discuss later in the text.
33. Walter Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht*, trans. Anna Bostock (London and New York: Verso, 1998), 5.
34. John Willett, trans. and ed., *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), 122, 125.
35. Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht*, 11.
36. Ault interview, May 22, 2011; Ashford interview.
37. Tim Rollins, "Felix Gonzalez-Torres: Interview (1993)," in *Felix Gonzalez-Torres*, ed. Julie Ault (Göttingen: Steidl, 2006), 69.
38. In a 1995 interview with Robert Storr, widely quoted since then, Gonzalez-Torres discusses the politics of minority visibility. "Here on the Left we should stop wearing the fucked-up T-shirts that say 'Vegetarian Now.' No, go to a meeting and infiltrate and then once you are inside, try to have an effect. I want to be a spy, too. I do want to be the one who resembles something else. We should have been thinking about that long ago. We have to restructure our strategies and realize that the red banner with the red raised fist didn't work in the sixties and it's not going to work now. I don't want to be the enemy anymore. The enemy is too easy to dismiss and to attack. The thing that I want to do sometimes with some of these pieces about homosexual desire is to be more inclusive. Every time they see a clock or a stack of paper or a curtain, I want them to think twice. I want them to be like the protagonist in *Repulsion* by Polanski where everything becomes a threat to her virginity. Everything has a sexual mission, the walls, the pavement, everything." Storr, "Felix Gonzalez-Torres: Être un espion," *ArtPress*, January 1995, 24–32, republished online at <http://www.queerculturalcenter.org/Pages/FelixGT/FelixInterv.html>. "Inclusive" here comes to operate not just in terms of viewer accessibility, but also in terms of a fundamental disintegration of boundaries between the marginal and the mainstream. Nicolas Bourriaud, in his discussion of Gonzalez-Torres in *Relational Aesthetics*, stresses the work's simultaneous engagement with homosexual intimacy and "enthusiasm for the universal," which reaches out toward a potentially infinite sharing with a boundless public. Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 50. Gonzalez-Torres's stance against easy identification also parallels the concerns with identification expressed by some queer theorists of the period. Lee Edelman, in his 1989 article "Homographesis," expresses concern about the parallel between the ways that "the homosexual advocate and the enforcer of homophobic norms inflect the issue of gay legibility with a sense of painful urgency," which he argues stems from the powerfully proscriptive negative position that homosexuality occupies relative to language in Judeo-Christian culture. In this framework, denial of the easy legibility of gay sexuality in specific bodies and texts is a political project aimed at disrupting this prescriptivism and the objectification it fosters. Edelman, "Homographesis," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 3, no. 1 (1989): 189–207, 190.
39. Ault, *Felix Gonzalez-Torres*, x.
40. The first of these works was "Untitled" (*March 5th*) #2 (1991). *Ibid.*, 373.
41. I have written in more detail about emotion in Gonzalez-Torres's practice in Adair Rounthwaite, "Split Witness: Metaphorical Extensions of Life in the Art of Felix Gonzalez-Torres," *Representations*, no. 109 (Winter 2010): 35–56.
42. "Town Hall" roundtable audiocassette recordings, Dia Art Foundation archives.
43. Hess, "Safe Combat in the Erogenous Zone."
44. Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht*, 12.

45. Thanks very much to Joost de Bloois for his comments on this point.

46. The classic articulation of the “theatrical” role of the viewer vis-à-vis minimalist sculpture is of course Michael Fried’s “Art and Objecthood.” Amelia Jones argues that though Fried’s essay predicates an implicitly masculine, white, hegemonic subject, it in fact opens up space for investigating differences among viewers and the impact those differences have on the experience of the work. Jones, “Art History / Art Criticism.”

47. Though there was art made about AIDS before Group Material’s show in 1988, “AIDS and Democracy” was one of the first, if not the first, widely visible thematic shows held on the subject in New York City. Other important early thematic shows were *AIDS: The Artists’ Response* at the Hoyt L. Sherman Gallery at Ohio State University, from February to April 1989, and *Witnesses: Against Our Vanishing* at Artists Space from November 1989 to January 1990. The former resulted in the catalog by Grover et al., *AIDS*. Earlier, in 1987, Daniel Fox and Diane Karp curated a show at New York’s American Museum of Natural History titled *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 of Plague: Infectious Disease in the Visual Arts,” in *AIDS: The Burdens of History*, ed. Elizabeth Fee and Daniel M. Fox (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1988), 172–89.

48. Katz, “How AIDS Changed American Art,” 24–26.

49. Crimp, *AIDS*, 3–4. For an overview of the evolution of Crimp’s thinking concerning AIDS from the 1980s to the early millennium, see Crimp, *Melancholia and Moralism: Essays on AIDS and Queer Politics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002).

50. Gabriele Griffin, *Representations of HIV and AIDS: Visibility Blue/S* (Manchester, U.K.: 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.” Stoller, *Lessons from the Damned: Queers, Whores, and Junkies Respond to AIDS* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 47.

51. Crimp uses the term “traditional discourses” broadly. I take it to mean a generalized form of Kantian modernism.

52. Gregg Bordowitz, “Picture a Coalition,” in Crimp, *AIDS*, 183. Bordowitz’s writings on AIDS are collected in Bordowitz, *The AIDS Crisis Is Ridiculous and Other Writings, 1986–2003* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006).

53. Letter on NEA letterhead, dated September 16, 1988, Group Material Collection, Fales Library, Series II, Box 5, Folder 22, “Correspondence.”

54. Crimp, *AIDS*, 7.

55. The installation was on display from November 20, 1987, to January 24, 1988. Katz and Katz, *Art AIDS America* featured a reconstruction of this work.

56. Crimp, *AIDS*, 12.

57. Deitcher, “AIDS, Art, and Reaction,” 99–100.

58. 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.

59. Richard Hawkins and Dennis Cooper, “Against Nature,” in *In a Different Light: Visual Culture, Sexual Identity, Queer Practice*, ed. Nayland Blake et al. (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1995), 57.

60. Gould, *Moving Politics*, 10. Gould’s definition of emotional habitus draws on Anne Kane, “Finding Emotion in Social Movement Processes: Irish Land Movement Metaphors and Narratives,” in *Passionate Politics: Emotions and Social Movements*, ed. Jeff Goodwin, James Jasper, and Francesca Polletta (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 251–66. Kane, in turn, derives it from the work of Norbert Elias, Pierre Bourdieu, and Thomas Scheff.

61. Gould, *Moving Politics*, 32–36.

62. *Ibid.*, 8, 255; Crimp, “Mourning and Militancy.”

63. Gould, *Moving Politics*, 214.
64. Ault, *Show and Tell*, 153.
65. Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," 51–79.
66. Ault interview, May 22, 2011.
67. Ault e-mail correspondence, July 7, 2015.
68. Kim Levin, e-mail correspondence, June 14, 2015.
69. Ault interview, May 22, 2011. It is also important to note in regards to Group Material's context with Levin that she had previously been vocal about her dislike of their practice. She had reviewed *Americana*, their contribution to the 1985 Whitney Biennial, as a "titillating, weakly rebellious installation" that failed to disrupt the Whitney's privilege or its commodification of art. Levin, "The Whitney Laundry."
70. Kim Levin, "It's Called Denial," *Village Voice*, January 17, 1989, 87.
71. *Ibid.*
72. Donald Moffett and John Lindell, "Unpublished Letter to the Editor of the Village Voice," Group Material Collection, Fales Library, Series I, Subseries B, Box 2, Folder 26, "Letters to the Editor—AIDS + Democracy: A Case Study," 1989. A note attached to the text reads: "Doug—I know it's a different century now but John + I wanted you guys to know what went to the Voice."
73. Baranik writes: "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 her letter, Rosler 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. Baranik and Rosler, letters to the editor, *Village Voice*, February 7, 1989, 4.
74. Group Material, letter to the editor, *Village Voice*, February 7, 1989, 5.
75. The work by Spero included was *The Second Hour of the Night* (1974), and that by Serrano, *Winged Victory* (1987).
76. Richard Meyer, "Unpublished Review of Group Material's 'AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study,'" Group Material Collection, Fales Library, Series I, Subseries B, Box 3, Folder 3, "AIDS Timeline Berkeley (Corresp., checklists, show, process)," 1989.
77. Ault e-mail correspondence, July 7, 2016.
78. Ault, *Show and Tell*, 152; Deitcher interview.
79. Jack Ben-Levi and Sydney Pokorny, unpublished text, "Review of AIDS Art Activities," Group Material archive, Fales Library, Series I, Subseries B, Box 2, Folder 26, "Letters to the Editor—AIDS + Democracy: A Case Study."
80. Ramsbacher interview.
81. Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht*, 2, 5.
82. David France's documentary *How to Survive a Plague* (USA, 2012) provides an excellent treatment of the development of medical and scientific expertise as a means survival for those affected by AIDS.
83. "Group Material Installation 'AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study,'" press release, December 8, 1988, Dia Art Foundation archives.
84. Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, 3: 404.
85. "AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study" town-hall meeting audiocassette recordings, Dia Art Foundation archives.
86. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 29–34.
87. Deleuze and Guattari discuss the plane of immanence (or "consistency") throughout *A Thousand Plateaus*. See, for example, pages 20–21. For a discussion of Deleuze and Guattari's theory of

the rhizome as it relates to embodied difference, see Elizabeth Grosz, "A Thousand Tiny Sexes: Feminism and Rhizomatics," *Topoi*, no. 12 (1993): 167–79.

88. Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz, eds., *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists' Writings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 670.

89. RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance: Live Art 1909 to the Present* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1979), 6.

90. See also Goldberg, "Performance—Art for All?," *Art Journal* 40, nos. 1–2 (Winter 1980): 369–76.

91. Catherine Elwes, "Floating Femininity: A Look at Performance by Women," in *Women's Images of Men*, ed. Sarah Kent and Jacqueline Moreau (London: Writers and Readers, 1985), 164–65, 178–79.

92. Mary Kelly, "Re-Viewing Modernist Criticism," *Screen* 22, no. 3 (1981): 41–52. The essay was re-published in Brian Wallis, ed., *Art after Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, Documentary Sources in Contemporary Art (New York, Boston: New Museum of Contemporary Art and D. R. Godine, 1984). See Jones's discussion of Kelly's critique in Jones, *Body Art / Performing the Subject*, 22–29.

93. Phelan, *Unmarked*, 146–52.

94. Jones, *Body Art / Performing the Subject*, 34, 254n43.

95. *Ibid.*, 29–31.

96. See Jones, "'Presence' in Absentia," 11–18.

97. *Ibid.*, 12.

98. Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (New York and London: Routledge, 2011), 7.

99. Widrich, "The Informative Public of Performance," 145, 148–49.

100. Widrich, *Performative Monuments*, 16.

101. Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*, trans. Saskia Iris Jain (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), 11–23.

102. Levin stresses that during this period, she was attending up to fifty exhibitions a week, making it difficult, many years later, to recall specific projects. Kim Levin, e-mail correspondence, June 15, 2015.

103. Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 15. See Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," 54–62.

104. Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," 73; Doyle, *Hold It against Me*; Tom Finkelpearl, *What We Made: Conversations on Art and Social Cooperation* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2013), 1–5; Amelia Jones, "'The Artist Is Present': Artistic Re-Enactments and the Impossibility of Presence," *TDR* 55, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 18.

105. Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 133–37.

106. Bourriaud defines the possibility of judgment of relational works as follows: "This 'arena of exchange' must be judged on the basis of aesthetic criteria, in symbolic value of the 'world' it suggests to us, and of the image of human relations reflected by it. Within this social interstice, the artist must assume the symbolic models he shows. All representation . . . refers to values that can be transposed into society." Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 18. Bishop critiques this model as problematically open-ended: "What [Rirkrit] Tiravanija cooks, how and for whom, are less important to Bourriaud than the fact that he gives away the results of his cooking for free." Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," 64. She argues for a closer attention to the specific textures of experience and relationships that these works produce, and in particular for the analysis of how they may reflect or reproduce dominant capitalist power relations. See also the debate between Bishop and Kester, cited in footnote 97 of the introduction.

107. Doyle, *Hold It against Me*, 4–5.

108. *Ibid.*, 23.

109. Sedgwick, "Pedagogy of Buddhism," in *Touching Feeling*, 154.

110. *Ibid.*, 173.

111. *Ibid.*, 174–75.
112. Ann Cvetkovich, *Depression: A Public Feeling* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2012).
113. Ault, *Show and Tell*, 155.
114. Julie Ault, e-mail correspondence, June 7, 2015. See also Ashford and Ault, *Documenta 13, 100 Notes—100 Thoughts No. 32, 2*.
115. Ault interview May 22, 2011; Ault e-mail correspondence, June 7, 2015.
116. Ault interview, May 22, 2011.
117. *Ibid.*; Ault e-mail correspondence, June 7, 2015.
118. 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 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.
119. Ault e-mail correspondence, June 7, 2015.
120. Sharon Siskin, interview by Sabrina Locks, in Locks, "Behind the Timeline," in Ault, *Show and Tell*, 247.
121. Robert Buck, interview by Sabrina Locks, in Locks, "Behind the Timeline," in Ault, *Show and Tell*, 246. Rinder and gallery director Jacquelynn Baas screened all six hours of this material prior to the exhibition in order to be aware of its full content should it cause any controversy. Larry Rinder, interview by Sabrina Locks, in "Behind the Timeline," 264; transcript of longer interviews, courtesy of Julie Ault. The explicit material seems to have caused only minimal stir, though the gallery's guest book does record angry comments from one visitor: "'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." Berkeley Art Museum, "Museum Guest Book," Group Material Collection, Fales Library, Series I, Subseries B, Box 3, Folder 3, "AIDS Timeline Berkeley (Corresp., checklists, show, process)," 1989.
122. Claire Grace, "The Artist as Curator #4 / Group Material, Aids Timeline, 1989," *Mousse*, October–November 2014, 11–18.
123. Ramsbacher quoted in Maria Porges, "Group Material," *Shift* 9, no. 4 (1990): 21.
124. For example, Gran Fury member and "AIDS and Democracy" contributor John Lindell, in an interview with curator Sabrina Locks about *AIDS Timeline*, argues that the work's didactic quality is its strength: "Maybe [Group Material] are a little bit didactic. Or a lot didactic. But that's kind of great. And there's a place for that." Lindell, interview by Sabrina Locks, in Locks, "Behind the Timeline," 249.
125. Frank Rizzo, "Art as Activist: An Education about AIDS," *Hartford Courant*, September 7, 1990. For more on the work's informational quality, see "New Wadsworth Exhibit Set," *Metroline*, September 21, 1990, 57; State of Connecticut Department of Health, "Health Update—Aids Awareness Month," Group Material Collection, Fales Library, 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," *Hartford Courant*, November 4, 1990. Schwendenwien writes that the work provided an "open-ended perspective that even a lay audience can get into." Finkelpearl, closer to the present day, also stresses the installation's highly informational quality. Finkelpearl, *Dialogues in Public Art*, 419. Of all the reviews I have read of *AIDS Timeline*, only Arthur Danto's objects to the informational emphasis of the show. Danto experienced the work as lacking in beauty and therefore in emotive appeal. Danto, "Art for Activism's Sake: The 1991 Whitney Biennial," *Nation*, June 3, 1991, 743–48.
126. Ann-Sargent Wooster, "Cube with a View," *Afterimage*, October 1991, 16.
127. "All Together Now: AIDS," *Metropolis: The Urban Magazine of Architecture and Design* 10, no. 5 (December 1990): 28. Also, Michael Kimmelman, in his review of the Whitney, 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. Kimmelman, "At the Whitney, a Biennial That's Eager to Please," *New York Times*, April 19, 1991.

128. Berkeley Art Museum, "Museum Guest Book," Group Material Collection, Fales Library, Series I, Subseries B, Box 3, Folder 3, "AIDS Timeline Berkeley (Corresp., checklists, show, process)," 1989.

129. Jan Avgikos, in her discussion of the project, also marks its highly emotional quality. She describes it as simultaneously "brutal in its anger" against government neglect, "touching" in its evocation of the sexual naïveté of the 1970s, and "poignant" in its reflection of the realization that life would never be the same after AIDS. Avgikos, "Group Material Timeline," 110.

130. Ault e-mail correspondence, July 7, 2015.

131. Ashford, quoted in Porges, "Group Material," 22.

132. Tom Kalin, interview by Sabrina Locks, in "Behind the Timeline," 244; Steven Evans, interview by Sabrina Locks, in "Behind the Timeline," 244; Mike Glier, interview by Sabrina Locks, in "Behind the Timeline," 238.

133. Antonio Negri, in *The Savage Anomaly*, argues that the first type of knowledge lets us know about the social world and holds a "savage" power, always connected to our specific lifeworld, that makes it inseparable from reason. Negri, *The Savage Anomaly: The Power of Spinoza's Metaphysics and Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

134. Spinoza describes the political consequences of the lack of adequate knowledge as follows: "If anyone has been affected with pleasure or pain by someone who belongs to a group or nation that is different from his own, and this is accompanied by the idea of that person, under the universal name of that group or nation, as its cause, then he will love or hate not only the person in question, but all the members of that group or nation." Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. G. H. R. Parkinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), bk. 3, prop. 46, p. 199.

135. Philosopher Genevieve Lloyd points out that though others have read the relationship between the first and second types as hierarchical, with reason trumping imagination, they are in fact fundamentally complimentary. They focus on different kinds of objects: "singular things, in the case of the imagination; what is 'common to all,' in the case of reason." Lloyd, *Spinoza and the Ethics*, Routledge Philosophy Guidebooks (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), 70.

136. Étienne Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics* (London and New York: Verso, 2008), 120–21.

137. *Ibid.*, 124.

138. Ashford and Ault, *Documenta 13, 100 Notes—100 Thoughts No. 32*, 18.

139. Lloyd, *Spinoza and the Ethics*, 67.

140. Spinoza, *Ethics*, 308; Lloyd, *Spinoza and the Ethics*, 110, 114.

141. Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 174–75.

142. Cesare Casarino, "Surplus Common: A Preface," in *In Praise of the Common*, by Cesare Casarino and Antonio Negri (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 33.

143. Lloyd, *Spinoza and the Ethics*, 110.

144. Cesare Casarino, "Marx before Spinoza," in *Spinoza Now*, ed. Dimitris Vardoulakis (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 217.

145. Julie Ault, "Notes for Statement about AIDS Timeline," Group Material Collection, Fales Library, Series II, Box 5, Folder 24, "General Correspondence 1989."

146. Thanks to Thorn Chen for this observation.

147. Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 57.

148. Group Material, *Inaugural Exhibition* poster, reproduced in Ault, *Show and Tell*, 22–23.

## CONCLUSION

1. For a discussion of the process, see Julie Ault, "Active Recollection: Archiving 'Group Material,'" in *Self-Organised*, ed. Stine Hebert and Anne Szefer Karlsen (London: Open Editions, 2013).



2. The whole process constituted the focus of Ault's doctoral thesis, "Remembering and Forgetting in the Archive: Instituting 'Group Material' (1979–96)" (Ph.D. diss., Malmö Lund University, 2011).

3. Martha Rosler, e-mail correspondence, April 21, 2015. The later incarnation of the show at the New Foundation in Seattle in 2015, shown in coordination with their "\$100K Prize" award to Rosler, differed notably in that it physically and visually backgrounded the boxes themselves. In the first installment of the New Foundation's planned three-part exhibition of *If You Lived Here Still*, the boxes were in a back room with a select library of Rosler's materials pertaining to the project and to her stay in Seattle in the 1990s, whereas the front room was given over to video and to the display on the walls and glass-topped tables of documentation of current and historic activism. Notably, the New Foundation's presentation of the boxes to viewers also came accompanied by a wall text with a list of handling instructions for the fragile documents, absent in various earlier incarnations of the show. This text cited the importance of presenting the archive "for public viewing and research" at a time when homelessness is rising to record levels and unequal housing policies prevail. The New Foundation reduced its operations and closed its exhibition space in May 2015, interrupting its planned set of three exhibitions of Rosler's work.

4. This research was conducted in January 2011 at Dia's Soho offices.

5. See Spinoza, "On Human Servitude; or, On the Strength of the Emotions," in *Ethics*, part 4, 225–86. See also Balibar's discussion about the role of the collective in the emergence of right/power, *Spinoza and Politics*, 60.

6. This footage can be viewed in the YouTube video "Excerpts from *A Hole in Space*—The Mother of All Video Chats," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QSMVtE1QjaU>, accessed June 7, 2015.

7. *Ibid.*

8. Geert Lovink, *Networks without a Cause: A Critique of Social Media* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012). See also Nico Carpentier, "The Concept of Participation: If They Have Access and Interact, Do They Really Participate?," *Communication Management Quarterly* 6, no. 21 (Winter 2011): 13–36, and Carpentier, "Contextualizing Author–Audience Convergences: 'New' Technologies' Claims to Increased Participation, Novelty, and Uniqueness," *Cultural Studies* 25, nos. 4–5 (2011): 517–33.

9. Lisa Nakamura, "Don't Hate the Player, Hate the Game: The Racialization of Labor in World of Warcraft," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 26, no. 2 (June 2009): 128–44.

10. Mark Andrejevic, "Surveillance in the Digital Enclosure," *Communication Review* 10 (2007): 295–317.

11. Glenn Greenwald, *No Place to Hide: Edward Snowden, the NSA, and the U.S. Surveillance State* (New York: Signal / McClelland and Stewart, 2014).

12. The *Gramsci Monument* was part of a series of four, which Hirschhorn initiated in 1999 with *Spinoza Monument* (Amsterdam, the Netherlands), followed by *Deleuze Monument* (Avignon, France, 2000) and *Bataille Monument* (Kassel, Germany, 2002). In 2009, he created *The Bijlmer Spinoza-Festival* in Amsterdam, which was not officially a monument but took a form very similar to that of the Bataille, Deleuze, and Gramsci projects. The 1999 project in Amsterdam was physically smaller, without the extensive interactive components of the later projects.

13. Thomas Hirschhorn, *Thomas Hirschhorn: Gramsci Monument* (Köln and New York: Walther König and Dia Art Foundation, 2015).

14. The full scope of this debate can best be understood by viewing the posts hash-tagged #gramscimonument on Twitter, <https://twitter.com/hashtag/gramscimonument>, accessed July 5, 2015. Specifically, see Ken Johnson, "A Summer Place in the South Bronx: A Visit to Thomas Hirschhorn's *Gramsci Monument*," *New York Times*, July 26, 2013; Randy Kennedy, "Bringing Art and Change to Bronx: Thomas Hirschhorn Picks Bronx Development as Art Site," *New York Times*, June 27, 2013; Chris Arnade, "Photos: Swiss Artist Builds Marxist Clubhouse in Bronx Housing Project," *Gothamist*, August 22, 2013, [http://gothamist.com/2013/08/22/photos\\_bronx\\_housing\\_project\\_art.php#photo-1](http://gothamist.com/2013/08/22/photos_bronx_housing_project_art.php#photo-1), accessed February 1, 2016; Whitney Kimball, "How Do People Feel about the

Gramsci Monument, One Year Later?," *Art F City*, August 20, 2014, <http://artfcity.com/2014/08/20/how-do-people-feel-about-the-gramsci-monument-one-year-later/>, accessed February 1, 2016; and Glenn Ligon, "Thomas Is a Trip," *Artforum*, November 2013, 228–32.

15. Ligon, "Thomas Is a Trip," 231–32.

16. See, in particular, Ligon's article, where he talks not only about children who were involved in the piece but also about his own experience as a child living in Forest Houses, and Whitney Kimball's interviews with people involved in the project. Kimball, "How Do People Feel about the Gramsci Monument, One Year Later?" Chris Arnade's photographs included with the above-cited article feature children prominently.

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**PLATE 1.** Installation view of Group Material's *Democracy, "Politics and Election,"* October 15–November 12, 1988. Photograph by Noel Allum. Courtesy of the Dia Art Foundation, New York.



**PLATE 2.** Installation view of Martha Rosler's *If You Lived Here . . . , "City: Visions and Revisions,"* May 13–June 17, 1989. Photograph by Oren Slor. Courtesy of the Dia Art Foundation, New York.



**PLATE 3.** Dia employee Camilla Fallon staffing the raffle desk for Group Material's *Democracy*, "Cultural Participation" installation, November 19–December 10, 1988. Photograph by Ken Schles. Courtesy of the Dia Art Foundation, New York.



**PLATE 4.** Installation view of Martha Rosler's *If You Lived Here . . .*, "Home Front," February 11–March 18, 1989. Photograph by Oren Slor. Courtesy of the Dia Art Foundation, New York.



**PLATE 5.** Installation view of Group Material's *Democracy, "Education and Democracy,"* September 15–October 8, 1988. Photograph by Ken Schles. Courtesy of the Dia Art Foundation, New York.



**PLATE 6.** Installation view of Group Material's *Democracy*, "Education and Democracy," September 15–October 8, 1988. Photograph by Ken Schles. Courtesy of the Dia Art Foundation, New York.





**PLATE 7.** Gallery office in Martha Rosler's *If You Lived Here . . .*, "Homeless: The Street and Other Venues" installation, April 1–29, 1989. Photograph by Oren Slor. Courtesy of the Dia Art Foundation, New York.



**PLATE 8.** Group photograph of Homeward Bound members in their gallery office in Martha Rosler's *If You Lived Here . . .*, "Homeless: The Street and Other Venues" installation. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Martha Rosler.



**PLATE 9.** Group photograph of Homeward Bound members in their gallery office in Martha Rosler's *If You Lived Here . . .*, "Homeless: The Street and Other Venues" installation. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Martha Rosler.



**PLATE 10.** Installation view (with work by Steven Evans at upper right) of Group Material, *Democracy*, "AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study," December 18, 1988–January 14, 1989. Courtesy of Julie Ault and the Dia Art Foundation, New York.



**PLATE 11.** Installation view of Group Material's *Democracy*, "AIDS and Democracy: A Case Study." Courtesy of Julie Ault and the Dia Art Foundation, New York.



**PLATE 12.** Installation view of Group Material's *AIDS Timeline*, University Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley, November 11, 1989–January 28, 1990. Courtesy of Group Material and Four Corners Books.