

A BOOK OF INTER-  
 VIEWS ABOUT  
 CREATIVITY AND THE  
 GROUPS THAT  
 INTERVIEW WITH:

THE EX PEDRO DELLL  
 FUNKADLLIC AA BRONSON  
 GENERAL IDEA  
 POLITICAL ART  
 DOCUMENTATION/ DADDD  
 DISTRIBUTION  
 WHAT, HOW & FOR  
 WHOM  
 WOHENKLAUSUR

Group Work, edited by Temporary Services, ISBN 0-89439-021-X, 2007, \$15.00

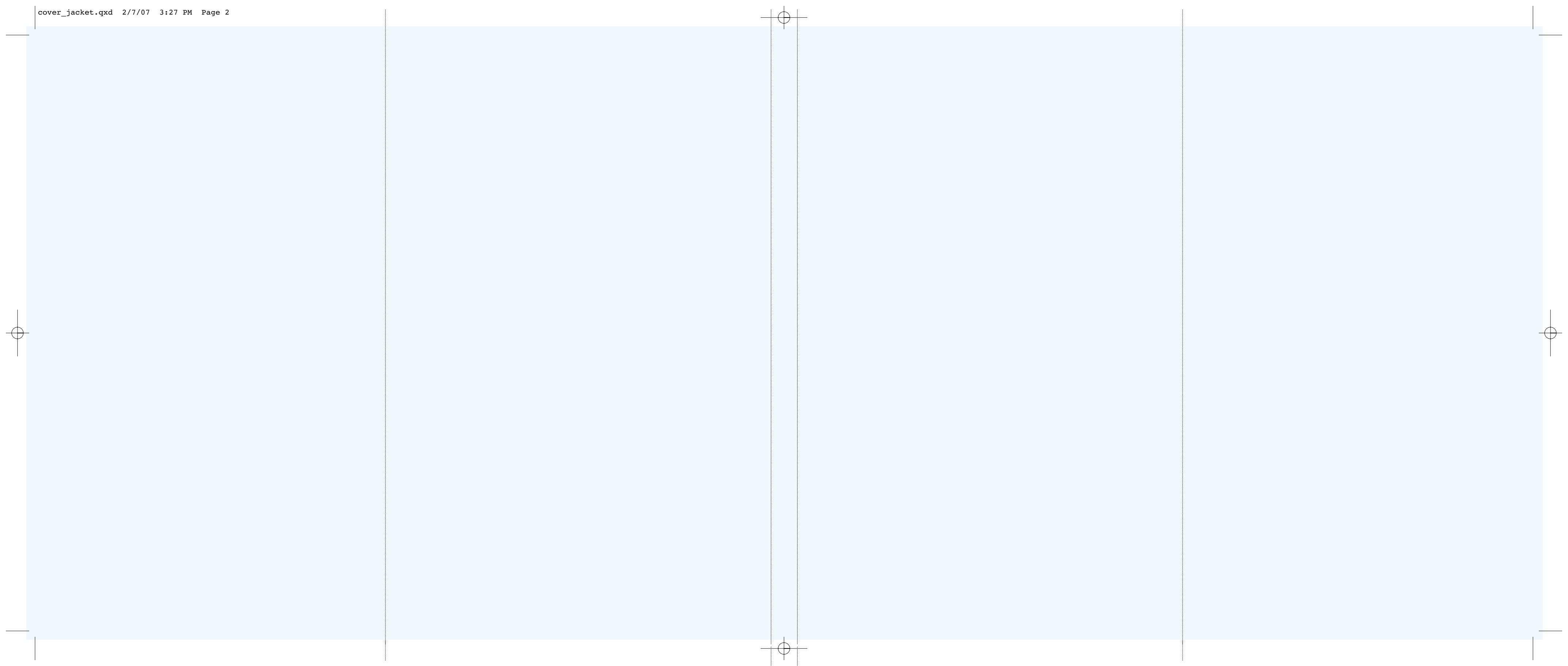
Printed Matter, Inc.



# GROUP WORK

EDITED BY

TEMPORARY SERVICES



Group Work  
by Temporary Services  
Copyright © 2007 by Temporary Services & Printed Matter, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or translated in any form or by any means, in whole or part, without prior written permission from the publisher and artist / author.

Published by:  
Printed Matter, Inc.  
195 Tenth Avenue  
New York, NY 10011  
USA

ISBN-13: 978-0-89439-024-1  
ISBN-10: 0-89439-024-4

First edition of 1000

Edited by AA Bronson  
Designed by Garrick Gott  
Cover image by Esteban Garcia and Nick Martin

Printed and bound in China

This publication is made possible through the generous support of The Gesso Foundation.

Printed Matter's Publishing Program for Emerging Artists is made possible through the generous support of the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, and The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

Printed Matter, Inc. is an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded in 1976 by artists and art workers with the mission to foster the appreciation, dissemination, and understanding of artists' books and other artists' publications.

[www.printedmatter.org](http://www.printedmatter.org)

**Printed Matter, Inc.**



## Acknowledgments

Temporary Services met Esteban Garcia and Nick Martin in 2006 when we were invited to visit Purdue University for a lecture and workshop. Deeply impressed by their seemingly effortless graphic skills, we invited Esteban and Nick to try their hand at working together to make this book's cover. Inspired by the interviews, and the art of Pedro Bell, they delivered a design that is not only the cover of a book about group work, but a great example of the potential in collaboration.

Special thanks to AA Bronson, James Hoff, Max Schumann, Philip Arons and all at Printed Matter for giving us the opportunity and assisting in the making of this book. Printed Matter's unusual interest in the book's subject, and their long commitment to artist groups and their respective publications has made this invitation exceptionally meaningful.

Greg T. Strella gave us a great deal of assistance on many aspects of this book. Greg Sholette provided many details about other groups in addition to PAD/D. The Gesso Foundation provided much needed late funding for this publication. All of the interviewees were exceedingly generous, kind, and patient.

Thank you to the following people for their support and help: our families, Julie Ault, Jake Austen, Anthony Elms, Rob Kelly, Steven Leiber, Alan Moore, Mary Patten, Scott Rigby, Zena Sakowski, Ronnie Seward, Emily Trovato, Dan S. Wang and the many groups and individuals who responded to or forwarded our call for information about artist groups.

Group Work

—

edited by

Temporary Services

—

ISBN 0-89439-021-X

—

2006

—



*In memoriam*

Michael Piazza, 1955-2006

Michael was our friend, mentor, fellow artist, but, most importantly, a true pioneer in collaborative art and a major influence on our work. He had a huge influence on a Chicago articulation of socially-engaged practice with which we heavily identify. We were inspired by many of the collaborations to which he contributed. We were proud to work with Michael on several projects and initiatives and it is with love that we dedicate this book to him.



6	Introduction
10	General Idea/AA Bronson
18	Haha interview
29	Jane profile
32	WochenKlausur interview
38	The Ex interview
46	What, How & for Whom (WHW) interview
>	Insert: An Incomplete List of Words Used to Describe Groupings of Humans
57	The Diggers profile
98	Funkadelic/Pedro Bell interview
110	Political Art Documentation/ Distribution (PAD/D) interview
123	Quotes About Group Work
128	A List of Artist Groups



## Working Together

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.

—John Donne, in *Meditation XVII* from *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* (1624)

The book you're reading now was a group effort. One can tell from the title page. The editors are three people who work together as a group. There are interviews with other groups and people. It's obviously not a case of one writer talking to herself for over 100 pages of soulful insight.

But what about that kind of book – “*Title, by Author*” – a story conceived in one writer's mind, transcribed to page? Take any book with only one author listed, from *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens to *Great Expectations* by Kathy Acker. Is it truly the work of one person? A book, like many items and documents of human culture, is the result of many hands. Some aspects of a book come from deliberate collaborations – the writer, her editor, and a graphic designer have endless meetings on the subject of the font chosen to demarcate page numbers to the weight and brightness of the paper the book is printed on. The writer asks an old college buddy to take a flattering photograph of her to accompany a succinct biography on the back cover's inside flap.

There are unconscious, often overlooked makers involved in any book as well. The people at the printing plant have to work the machines that process the pages. The plant depends on the machinists who create and fix the printing gear. The machines are built to process paper – which is not something that itself appears from air. Paper is manufactured as well, from trees, plants, and existing paper scraps. The people who create, sell, ship, and buy the paper are dependant upon the people who cut the trees and gather the scraps.

These are only the journeys of a few of the materials involved in bookmaking. Of course, we cannot forget that each of these people are dependent on others for their food, and shelter. Someone has to grow the corn that gets processed by someone else into corn syrup that gets added by someone else to a mixture that someone bottles and caps and then that gets sold by someone else to a secretary who takes it up into an office building built and designed by many people and serves it in glasses with ice to the group of people arguing over page numbers.

One might argue that authorship has nothing to do with this dizzying array of connections. It doesn't matter how many printers there are in the world, one might say, because Dickens' tale of Pip came from his imagination and hit the page. The printers had nothing to do with that.

However, even Dickens had to learn the English language. Someone had to teach him how to write, and hold a pen. He didn't make up the idea of poverty, or the human need to succeed in the face of one's meager origins. Inspiration comes from much more than divine providence – a writer creates based on experiences that they have with others or that others share with them.

Temporary Services is a group comprised of three people: Brett Bloom, Salem Collo-Julien, and Marc Fischer. Temporary Services was first the name of a space that Brett organized and lived in, a modified storefront that supported projects and presented exhibitions. The idea of Temporary Services as a

group was first hatched in 1999, after several people who had participated in, organized, or attended exhibitions at the Temporary Services space were inspired to attempt working together.

We've been through some personnel changes over the years. The initial group included Brett, Marc, Kevin Kaempf, Lora Lode, and Lillian Yvonne Martinez. Nance Klehm and Salem joined a few years later. Each of the current group members brings a variety of backgrounds to Temporary Services - including working with other people and other groups. Former members of the group have collaborated with each other, and sometimes current members have collaborated with former members outside of Temporary Services. Group work can happen in myriad configurations. Untangling a group's history can require a lot of patience. Many groups have a hard time just keeping their own histories straight.

One important aspect of Temporary Services' current approach is our dedication to finding ways of working together while still maintaining our own individual voices. Each of our perspectives breathes underneath the umbrella of Temporary Services without the necessities of group speak. We do write together, and often speak in public together, but we don't feel the need to dress alike or think alike. Our current group configuration of Brett, Marc, and Salem has its own history, set of needs, and voice that isn't exactly the same as past configurations of Temporary Services. We've grown together, and feel that it's necessary to keep learning and working together in order to enrich each of our individual lives.

The daily challenge of reconciling one's desires with the always complicated mesh of your collaborators' wants, needs, and environments is a daunting one. Making decisions and creating things with other people is never easy. Beyond the struggle that we experience within our own groups, we are also often forced to make concessions in order to get support from individuals and institutions that are inexplicably ill-equipped to work with groups. If we get invited out of town, there is often not enough support for everyone in the group to show up. More outspoken members of the group are de facto labeled "leaders" of the group, even in groups that do not ascribe to an internal hierarchy.

Fortunately, groups thrive, despite many challenges. If we can't always be in the same place at the same time, we can enjoy the advantages of being in multiple places at the same time. While one person edits this text, maybe another person sleeps, or works on the website, or represents the group in another country, or goes to see what mail arrived at the post office box.

We have conducted interviews with members from seven groups of artists and musicians for this book. We wrote short profiles of two other groups. We didn't have enough room for full interviews of these groups, but we still wanted to highlight their work. We had a limited number of pages and the selection process was not easy. We have included groups that are still active and groups that are inactive. We have included groups that are based in the U.S. and groups that are based in Europe. There is a group that consisted entirely of men and a group that consists entirely of women. There are groups working from the late 1960s through the present. We spoke to groups who have suffered the loss or death of members and groups whose membership has remained constant. We have included people we have known personally since Temporary Services began as a group, groups we have always admired, groups we only recently came to understand and people we always wanted to talk to but didn't have a good reason to contact.

Another component of this book is a list of historic and current art groups. We have tried to be as inclusive as possible. We are certain that the list is not exhaustive. It does begin to give the sense of just how many people work or have worked in a group situation. The culture of group work has a history that is buried and obfuscated for many reasons. We hope that this list opens up further possibilities for exploring this work.

It's our sometimes contentious relationship to naming that makes us call ourselves a "group" rather than a "collective", "collaborative entity", or "cooperative". Choosing "group", for Temporary Services, celebrates certain aspects of our own personal backgrounds in group work that aren't easily named within the sometimes narrowly focused language of art practice. Being a group, for us, means reiterating our place in a larger general culture of people working with other people. It's this kind of self-analysis that led us to seek out other groups and their histories, and bring this book to the table.

The English language is very rich and deeply nuanced when it comes to naming different configurations of humans. Humans choose to group themselves in many ways. We have compiled a list of words that give a sense of the diversity of kinds of groups humans find themselves in. These are simply descriptive words for many different kinds of groups that humans create, join, or participate in. It is important to us to know when three people are a "team" or when they are a "trio". Each person participates in hundreds of groupings simultaneously without even thinking about it. We move fluidly in and out of groups all day long, even if we spend that time entirely by ourselves.

Finally, we sought out quotations from a wide range of sources – from housewives to firemen – in an effort to include insights that are articulated differently or not expressed elsewhere. The quotes give a robust sense of how humans have to rely on one another to get just about anything done. They also help put the interviews and artist groups' work in a larger framework of working together, which is frequently glossed over or systemically denied. The contemporary art world is all too often beholden to the corrosive fundamentalist individualism of the larger market society. Hyper-individualism is a material and factual impossibility propped up by force and concomitant inequalities.

Much recent writing about artist groups employs mostly impractical academic theory and language - an approach that belies the cooperative tradition that many groups attempt to engage within their daily practice. There is a sensibility that emerges for those that learn to enjoy and rely upon group work - a down-to-earth homage to groups before that plays itself out within the very act of choosing to work with others. We hope that this book can exist alongside other biographies, histories, and annals of analysis in the emerging world of writing on group work. This is our effort to reflect on group work by interrogating and researching the work of others in our past and in our midst. It is our hope that this book will give the reader a fuller understanding of what it can mean to work in a group, while inspiring existing groups and assisting in creating new ones.

– Temporary Services



# General Idea / AA Bronson

General Idea worked together from 1967 until 1994, making them perhaps one of the longest running artist groups of their kind. The three members, AA Bronson, Felix Partz and Jorge Zontal (all aliases) lived and worked together for the duration of the group. The group formed in Toronto, but they also lived for extended periods in New York and Amsterdam while traveling ceaselessly for projects and exhibitions.

General Idea was extremely prolific. In their twenty-six years they had ninety-nine solo exhibits and 145 group shows. From 1972-89 they published twenty-six issues of *FILE* "megazine." The group also founded Art Metropole, an artist book and multiples store, publisher, distributor and exhibition space.

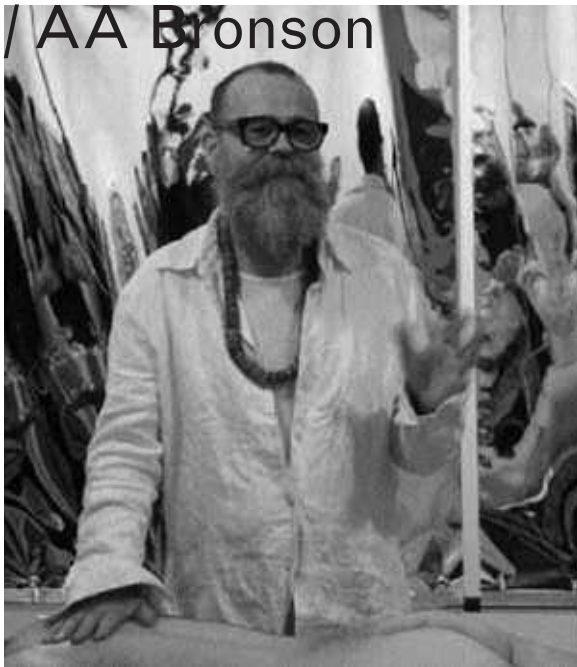
Getting a handle on General Idea's vast, idiosyncratic and highly varied body of work is no easy task. Depending on what you look at, their work was alternately (often simultaneously) funny, bizarre, poignant, campy, glamorous, ironic, serious and playful. For some the group is known mainly for their AIDS logo campaign, which co-opted Robert Indiana's *LOVE* design to create a publicity campaign to draw attention to the AIDS crisis. This project was highly public and manifested itself well outside of the art world's primary channels. The group's sobering installation of oversize capsules, *One Year of AZT/One Day of AZT*, depicting one year's worth of dosages of this anti-AIDS medicine, is another standout work from their later years.

Others may be aware of General Idea's unusual and often very funny group self-portraits, such as *Baby Makes 3* or *P is for Poodle*. The group made hundreds of multiples including chenille Poodle badges and skull flags with copyright symbols for eyes. Still others may know General Idea for their publication *FILE*, or their participatory mail art projects, contests and public relations campaigns and announcements leading up the 1984 *Miss General Idea Pavilion*, which collapsed after a mysterious fire that may or may not have happened.

General Idea members Jorge Zontal and Felix Partz were diagnosed as HIV-positive in 1989 and 1990. Both members died in 1994, ending the group and leaving surviving member AA Bronson to complete several unfinished projects and represent the group's history for future inquiries.

AA Bronson is currently the Director of the New York artist bookstore, distributor and publisher Printed Matter. Printed Matter is the publisher of this book. Printed Matter invited us to make a book with them without knowing what we would propose. We did not propose the idea for a book on collaborating in groups because of AA's involvement with Printed Matter, but when we pitched the idea for the book, the casual conversation naturally turned to the topic of collaboration and AA's insights were many. We also learned through this proposal process that for an earlier publications of ours – *Group Work: Quotes on Collaboration* – we obviously stole an early General Idea graphic for the cover and didn't credit the group. Oops! Fortunately General Idea and Temporary Services have similar ideas about copyright, though we do regret the moronic error.

While generating ideas for this book, we came to realize that it would be a huge missed opportu-



General Idea, FILE: General Idea's 1984, 1984. Photo courtesy of AA Bronson

nity if we didn't interview AA Bronson, for he can not only speak on collaborating in *General Idea*, but about trudging on after the demise of the group. AA continues to exhibit, write and publish widely. Working as a healer using massage therapy is one of the more prominent features of his recent work.

Marc Fischer from Temporary Services conducted this interview on March 2, 2006. It took place in AA's apartment, conveniently located near Printed Matter.

**Temporary Services (TS):** In your book *Negative Thoughts* (2001) you wrote: "In 1969 I had never heard the expression gay. My generation had to dream up what it was to be a homosexual in the wake of the sexual revolution..." That idea of creating an identity for yourself... I was wondering if that carried over to inventing a way of collaborating, or if there was a feeling analogous to starting to work in a collaborative group?

**AA Bronson (AAB):** I came out of a hippie generation and I had been one of the founders of a commune in Winnipeg – a fairly radical sort of commune in which anybody who came to the door was allowed to join the commune. All the decisions of the commune were made with weekly house meetings in which everybody who lived there had an equal vote. Every week that group might change. We also published an underground newspaper. I'd been involved with publishing as a student before that, but I think that my involvement with the underground newspaper scene, which was such an international scene, set the stage for *FLE*, and for some sort of approach to working collaboratively with other people. So by the time *General Idea* started, I already had that background.

**TS:** Did you meet Felix and Jorge while you were still living in the commune?

**AAB:** Well, we didn't actually know each other, but Felix was studying art in Winnipeg and we had friends in common, so we met. And then while I was in that commune a psychologist, who was specializing in group therapy for intentional communities, took a special interest in us and at a certain point invited me to travel with him as an apprentice doing group therapy sessions for intentional groups, and at one of those sessions, in Vancouver, Jorge appeared. He wasn't actually in the group, but he had taken an interest and inquired about it and actually met the psychologist and me, even though he didn't participate in the workshop. The three of us, Jorge and Felix and I, met again more or less by accident in Toronto about a year later. We were all looking for a place to live and there was this little

cheap house and our friend Mimi was looking for a group of people to move into this house together and we all moved in – about seven of us.

**TS:** And that's when you started creating displays in the window...

**AAB:** Yeah, the house had been made into a storefront at some point, and to entertain ourselves we raided the garbage of the local businesses and we made all these fake stores in our window. I think this was the origin of our whole interest in consumerism and consumer culture and to art in relation to the economy, that experience of living in a storefront.

**TS:** Was there a particular moment where you decided: "We should come up with a name for what the three of us are doing together?"

**AAB:** Well it happened in an odd way. We had been working together for about a year and we'd gotten a reputation for the projects we did in our store window. In 1970 a gallery called the Nightingale Art Gallery, which later became A Space, invited us to participate in an exhibition called *Project 70*, a conceptually-based exhibition that included people like Vito Acconci and Dennis Oppenheim as well as local Toronto artists. For that we produced a project that we called *General Idea*. It wasn't our name; it was the name of the project. But somehow people started calling us *General Idea* and the name stuck. I don't have any memory of where the name came from except that we liked the anonymous corporate feel of it.

**TS:** That sounds familiar. [laughter] You were also working under aliases. When did that start?

**AAB:** That began right at the beginning. We really liked the idea of anonymity. We really liked the fact, for example, that Warhol didn't sign his work. That really appealed to us. We were politically against the notion of copyright. So we liked the idea of using pseudonyms just to be more anonymous and not fall into that trap of the "artist as genius". I think in the end pseudonyms don't make the slightest bit of dif-

ference to all of that, but that's how we felt at the time.

**TS:** Also in *Negative Thoughts*, you mentioned some informative models, like the Situationists and the Paris riots... was there anything in any of your art educations, or other artists...you mentioned Warhol.

**AAB:** I was educated as an architect, not an artist, although I read voraciously about art from about the age of six, so I knew a lot. Jorge was also trained as an architect, not as an artist, which was pretty normal for the day, actually. When you start running down the artists of the time, it's amazing how few of them studied art. Dan Graham, Vito Acconci, Joseph Kosuth, Lawrence Weiner... there's a long, long list of people who never studied art. Felix studied art, but he broke loose of that quite early on while in school, and consequently they kept failing him in his classes [laughs], because he was doing things that they thought were too weird.

**TS:** Do you think the degree of collaboration that is inherent in architecture was in any way helpful... or was your communal living situation maybe more conducive?

**AAB:** Frankly I think that architecture is *not* so different from art that way. Even though architects do collaborate, there's always a name that goes out in front. It's "Frank Gehry" ...

**TS:** Real hierarchical...

**AAB:** Very hierarchical world, the world of architecture, and that's one of the reasons that Jorge and I left it. We couldn't bear the atmosphere, that very hierarchical and almost corporate atmosphere, especially at that time. It got better, I think, in the 1980s but in the 60s... I lasted one month working in an office, which is sort of odd because it was an office where they gave me enormous freedom and had me doing design work straight out of school and I still couldn't last.

[Getting back to influences] For artists, we read *Artforum*... we were actually extremely informed. The people who were important to us were Joseph Beuys, Warhol, Robert Smithson in particular, I'd say. It's a funny triumvirate, those three, but I'd say those are the three that were most important to us.

**TS:** What was the impetus for starting to

publish *FILE*?

**AAB:** It came from being in a very isolated situation in a city—Toronto—where there was really nothing going on in the art world from our point of view. I mean, there was an art world there but it didn't interest us in the slightest. The only interesting artist of an older generation was Michael Snow and at that point he was living in New York. So there were no mentoring possibilities, the community was very tiny and we began to connect to artists in other cities and other countries—first of all through mail art. Then we set up *FILE* specifically as a sort of communications tool, both to put out into the world things that we received in the mail, and also to act as a point of contact. It was actually an Internet project before the Internet began. That was really what it was. If we were doing it now it would have been a web site, not a magazine.

**TS:** There were the "Image Bank Request List" and the "Artist Directory" components of *FILE*. It's kind of amazing to see the international scope of the addresses, but also the number of practitioners who have gone on to be extremely well known and important. To me it also gives a sense of the art world being much smaller than it is now.

**AAB:** Oh, it was much smaller and consequently there was much more access. We sent a free copy of the first issue of *FILE* to Andy Warhol, for example, and he became our first subscriber. From then on I would always go and deliver *FILE*



General Idea, *FILE: General Idea's 1984, 1984*.  
Photo courtesy of AA Bronson

in person whenever it came out. It was like an excuse to go visit Andy Warhol and he was completely available. I could go to the Factory and he'd have a chat with me and hang out. It was extraordinary when you think back on it that that was possible... I was like twenty-four or something and completely unknown to him. The only thing he knew were these issues of *FILE*.

Ray Johnson was another person, although Ray was not famous at the time by any means. Ray really took me under his wings whenever I visited New York and introduced me to artists and showed me around. And also the dealers, like Paula Cooper, started buying ads in *FILE* at a very, very early point. She had absolutely no reason to. It really did her no benefit whatsoever, but it was out of a sort of generosity of spirit on her part. And the fact that I could go into the gallery and just talk to her without anybody in the middle is amazing by today's standards.

**TS:** Some issues of *FILE*, you open them up and it's like a foreign language, or it's like being transported to this other kind of world that seems sort of playful but bizarre and maybe kind of insular. But then there's also this very practical kind of thing, like, "Here are all of these addresses." Anyone who picks this up can just go ahead and write to any of these 700 people. Or they can suddenly introduce themselves to a person whose work they find admirable by helping them with the images they collect.

**AAB:** Right.

**TS:** Was that intentional? To be helpful in this way?

**AAB:** Yeah, it was a sort of networking tool. The intention was to create links between people, because in the art world at that time there weren't many links. For one thing people didn't travel as much then as they do now. It was an extremely different place and time. Yes, so it was a networking tool. And our own universe as we described it in *FILE* was sort of semi-fictional, so if that's what you call a sort of insular world, it seems insular because a lot of it didn't actually even exist. A lot of it was made up. For example those "BZZZ BZZZ BZZZ" columns where "*FILE* goes to a party" were based on *LIFE* magazine's "*LIFE* goes to a party" columns from the 1950s. All of those parties are totally fabricated. People would send us snapshots of themselves at parties and then we would sort of collage them together

to create a non-existent fictional party that supposedly we had thrown. They were like a representation of that networking but there was no actual party.

**TS:** The way *FILE* was disseminated ... you were sending out and giving out a lot of free copies, right, but there are some issues that seem like they were designed to create the most extreme kind of mindfuck to someone who found them on a newsstand.

**AAB:** Well the interesting thing was because it looked like *LIFE* magazine – especially the first seven issues – it looked familiar. So people *would* pick it up on a newsstand without having the slightest idea what it was. And that was the idea, that it could act as a parasite on the newsstand and that it could go out there and infiltrate the newsstands and just about anybody would pick it up, unaware of what they were getting into by opening it. And we *were* able to get a fairly major distribution, especially in certain cities and areas because of that look, because it had that look of familiarity. I think probably it would be hard to get that distribution today for that magazine. But in particular in the Northeast U.S. and in parts of Europe, England and Holland especially, and France I guess, we had really very good distribution.

**TS:** How the three of you worked together...it's really mind-blowing how much work General Idea did in twenty-six years, and the number of places you exhibited and the number of shows you had. In the group, did roles sort of fall into place, did all of you always travel together, or did you travel separately so that you could be in multiple places at the same time?

**AAB:** We mostly traveled together. We would spend all of our time together, because I guess we were just best friends as much as anything. Every day was a day about conversation. When we were at home we would start every day by sitting around a big table drinking coffee and looking at the mail, because there were always massive amounts of mail. And we would dream up stupid ideas and the more stupid they were the more we wanted to do them. We had a rule of thumb that we only actually carried out a project by consensus. So if anybody wasn't sure about something, then we would put it on the back shelf. We didn't reject it. We'd just put it on the back shelf so there were always these quanti-



ties of half-baked ideas sitting around waiting to be taken advantage of and then at a later date – it could even be ten years later – we might pick up one of those ideas again and knit it into some other project we were doing.

By working together for so long, we really built up a sort of group vocabulary and group language, but then also a big backlog of partial ideas that we could call on at any moment when we wanted to do a new project. So it was amazing how much work we were able to do. We produced an incredible quantity of work. We never said “No,” I think. We always said, “Yes.” [laughter]

**TS:** So a way of resolving conflict in the group was simply to wait on things, or come up with new ideas?

**AAB:** Well, that was one way. If we weren't in agreement we'd just set it to one side and move on to something else. Then inevitably that would sort of cook in the background and at some point come back in some altered form. But we also were always processing what was going on in the group, so it was a little bit like ongoing group therapy all the time. Any feelings of tension or conflict between the three of us, we always dealt with right away. The conversation often got into a sort of therapeutic language, a meta-language. I think that's probably pretty unusual for an artist group. I think the fact that we lived together probably produced that, and then also my background from commune life. It was like a mini-commune in a way.

**TS:** When you were dealing with others outside of the group – people inviting you to do projects – what sort of form did communications take? Was there one person who would do more of the work of representing the group's ideas in order to streamline communications?

**AAB:** It varied a little. I tended to be the communicator to the outside world, but ... if a curator visited us and wanted to do a project with us, it was basically the person that clicked with them the best that ended up being the front person for that project. Usually it tended to be me, but not always, by any means. The roles we played for every project were always shifting, always changing. Equally, when we were producing work, our roles for any project could shift completely. Although Felix was trained as a painter, for example – that was his background – I did most of the AIDS paintings. It just shifted

around according to convenience, or who wanted to do what, or who wanted to try what. And then sometimes we would hire people to carry things out. We never advertised who did what. And people always thought they knew. People tended to think that Jorge did all the photography and Felix did all the painting and I did all the writing, but it wasn't true at all. It was truly collaborative.

**TS:** Were there any periods where the three of you tried to continue making your own work outside of the group?

**AAB:** We never did, oddly enough. In 1986 we moved to New York and Felix sort of freaked out. He couldn't handle New York, and he moved back to Toronto. After that, Felix lived in Toronto and Jorge and I lived here in New York and I would go back and forth between the two and the fax machine was running continuously every day. We sort of made art by fax during that period. But then we did so many exhibitions and so many projects together that I'm sure there were at least four months of the year that we were actually on the road together. So it didn't seem to disturb our ability to work together as a group when that happened.

There came a point where Felix would get nervous about starting up a new idea without our morning chat to process everything, but at that point we'd already been working together for almost twenty years. We began going on a sort of retreat to that little island off of Puerto Rico – Vieques – where we tried to plan the coming year's projects each time. We realized during those meetings that we really did have a sort of group mind. We had worked together for so long that it was impossible for any of us to come up with an idea that wasn't an appropriate General Idea idea. You could really do anything and just check in with the rest of the group a little further along, and usually everything was fine. So we made this decision that anything any of us did individually was also a General Idea work.

**TS:** You had done some curating also. Did you consider that a different sort of professional practice?

**AAB:** Yes and no. Jorge and Felix did not want to be involved with curating, or at least they didn't want anyone to know they were involved because they didn't want to have to deal with the administrative side of it or artists they knew

pressuring them about being in shows or that sort of thing. But of course, every morning at coffee, I would always babble away about my curatorial projects if I had any, and they would input. So usually the projects could as easily have been said to be “curated by General Idea.” It would have been totally accurate. But they liked to keep a low profile with that.

**TS:** Did people often treat *FILE* as one thing and General Idea as something else? Was there any confusion, like a magazine audience and an art audience not making the connection?

**AAB:** Well, it's not that they didn't make the connection but that there was a spectrum of audiences. There were people who thought of us almost like a rock band, that we were part of this trendy scene. And they didn't really get the art part of it at all. And there were people on the opposite end of the spectrum who saw it totally as an art project, and then everything in between. There were a lot of people who just related to us as in the same way that you might relate to the newest fashionable magazine. Also the music, art, and design scenes had a lot more overlap than I find they do now. So in particular with the music world, we were in touch with a lot of bands and musicians, which is why we also produced the “Punk” issue of *FILE*.

**TS:** Right. That was another issue, like the “Artist Directory,” that was like a really helpful primer, as a difference from the more confusing, playful issues of *FILE*. You get to this Punk issue and it's like, “here's the band, here's their photo, here are sample song lyrics, here are reviews of all of the 'zines, here are reviews of maybe a dozen singles”... and for someone who is unfamiliar it's like, “Wow! This is really helpful.”

**AAB:** There was somehow a big crossover between the punk scene and the art scene. I'm not sure why but there was. A lot of them played in art venues and a lot of artists were fans of punk and so on and so forth.

**TS:** Do you think the self-organizing spirit was...

**AAB:** I think that was part of it. Self-organizing, self-publishing, the whole phenomenon of independent publishing was what really interested us. Especially out of England, the enormous amount of self-publishing that was going on by these little bands that had no money, working

class kids from the east end of London and all of that was totally fascinating.

**TS:** So seeing people putting out their own records and all of the multiples production that you were doing...

**AAB:** And all of the 'zines. We had at one point a big collection of the punk 'zines and the singles: the singles were more interesting than the LPs because so many of them were self-produced. The other point about the punk thing, about all of the self-production, was that it was collaborative, right? It was groups of people coming together to do a 'zine or a band. That phenomena of group activity always really interested us.

**TS:** Toward the end, when Felix and Jorge got sick, how did you initially deal with that ... did you start making preparations for what would happen to the group?

**AAB:** We did. First of all, when they were both diagnosed – about a year apart from each other, 1989 and 1990, it was like a death sentence. We knew they weren't going to survive. And then we began to try to think as clearly as we could, I mean it was pretty traumatic, but we tried to plan the estate of General Idea. We consulted with a lawyer and then we started talking to museum people. We realized that because of the nature of our work we needed one museum to act as a repository for a broad spectrum of our work, because any individual pieces, especially from the 1970s and early 80s, didn't make much sense by themselves. We struck a deal with the Art Gallery of Toronto that involved a series of five exhibitions (only two were carried out) and we helped them assemble a comprehensive collection of our work.

Then as Jorge and Felix declined, we moved back to Toronto. They decided they wanted to die at home, and the nurses and doctors began coming to our home. We rented a penthouse apartment that was big enough for wheelchairs or hospital beds and it was also a luxurious surrounding to die in. It had an enormous living room which became our studio, and we were able to continue working together until they died. In each case they continued working until about three days before their death. We had an amazing assistant who carried out the projects and acted as their arms and legs to a large extent.

So the actual period in that apartment... Felix moved in, in April of '93 and it was

September before Jorge and I arrived. Jorge died the following February. So from September to February was an incredibly intense period where I think we churned out as much work as we had in the previous three or four years. It was amazing. We were on full throttle. It was like all the ideas that we ever wanted to do we had to accomplish as quickly as possible. It was clear they weren't going to last a lot longer. So it was, in a peculiar way, an extraordinarily satisfying period too, because we were really working in unison, very, very close. The collaboration was probably at its best during that period.

**TS:** I know there were some things that you finished up after their deaths. Was there a pretty clear feeling that this was the final moment of the group?

**AAB:** Oh yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. And we drew up a document about a month before Jorge died in which we laid out which works I could complete when they died, because there were things that were conceptually far enough along that everything had more or less been decided, it just needed to be executed. So it was actually an extraordinary experience.

**TS:** When you talked about a group mind developing after you'd worked together for such a long period and it was kind of the main way that you had done all of your art up to that point, how hard was it to extract yourself from...

**AAB:** It felt almost impossible. I didn't know how to make art anymore because General Idea was over but I'd only ever made art as General Idea. I had no idea how to stop being General Idea. There was a five-year period where I didn't produce anything. I completed some of the G.I. pieces but I didn't do anything else. And then the first piece I produced was a set of three Bertoia chairs with a red, green and blue cushion on them, which really felt still like a General Idea work: it's sort of like the aftermath of General Idea. And then it wasn't until '99 that I produced my first independent pieces. I realized I had to start with what I had, and what I had was the fact of their deaths. So the first pieces I produced were portraits of them: Felix immediately after the moment of his death and Jorge a week before his death, and then I made a coffin for myself as a sort of portrait of the part of me that died, that part of me that was General Idea.

**TS:** There's a personal, biographical, confessional tone to that work. Is that something you felt like General Idea couldn't accommodate?

**AAB:** Yeah, General Idea never was like that. There was always an autobiographical narrative aspect but it was heavily fictionalized or mythologized. Somehow all of that dropped away with Jorge and Felix gone. Also any sense of irony dropped away and that's what emerged. In some way my work is totally different from General Idea because it is so brutally autobiographical.

**TS:** It's a really abrupt kind of shift, reading up on past work by General Idea and moving from the writings in *Negative Thoughts* back and forth.... it's kind of like, "Whoa, there's really no fucking around here."

**AAB:** Yeah. Yeah. My use of media, and my continuing interest in consumerism and the visual language of advertising – all of that continues, but the underlying reality is totally, totally different.

**TS:** Do you feel like your healing work is a conscious way of making participatory or collaborative work?

**AAB:** That's an interesting idea. When I first began to make work again, I approached all sorts of people about doing collaborations. I did a collaboration with Matthias Herrmann, and another with Nayland Blake, a video piece... But I'm trying to think if any of the other collaborations happened and I don't think they did. There were about ten of them.

So the healing thing, when it happened – you're right, you're absolutely right, there is this sense of the collaborative to it that I hadn't thought of as being part of the impulse for doing it, but I think you are actually right.

**TS:** Do you still hear Felix and Jorge's critical voices?

**AAB:** I don't usually any more. They seem to have dropped away.

**TS:** Did that take quite a while?

**AAB:** Yeah, it took ten years. [laughter] Unbelievable. Unbelievable how long that could last. But I think that's mostly gone, except I had some experience of it with Felix's voice again a



few months ago. I don't remember what it was but every now and then it literally kicks in again.

**TS:** Do you think that your healing work, where you have this close encounter with another person, do you think that that is a way that maybe helps with superceding these past collaborators' voices, or maybe making a relationship with another person so strong that it has to be focused on what you share with that person in that moment?

**AAB:** I think you're probably right, because the relationship between Jorge and Felix and I was pretty intense and then suddenly I was without it, and the process of collaborating with other artists on artworks didn't seem to ever really gel. The healing relationships – first of all, my clients are mostly other artists, oddly enough, or artists in different disciplines, like dancers or whatever. But they are primarily creative people, almost entirely. It's like 90% people who come out of creative fields.

**TS:** Do you think that's because artists are more familiar with the fact that you do this work?

**AAB:** I think that's the kind of person that is attracted to me. I'm not exactly sure why. It's mostly smart creative people.

**TS:** Well, I guess you could do worse than that, huh?

**AAB:** Yeah, it's great. [laughter] When I first started to do the healing work I couldn't believe the people that were coming to me, it was such an amazing group of people. Really, really interesting people. So it was very enriching for me, very satisfying.

**TS:** Would you have any desire to work in a continuous group situation again?

**AAB:** I don't know. It's hard to imagine but I think if the situation arose I would probably go for it. I still feel a little like I'm floating around. I still feel a bit rootless without what I think of as my usual - even though it's twelve years since they died - my usual situation of being grounded in a group situation. I haven't come across anything like that that has attracted me but it could happen again.

**TS:** What about having to constantly return to General Idea to represent the group in say, the retrospective show of the multiples: "General Idea Editions 1967-1995", a retrospective of prints, posters, books, multiples and editions that is currently touring?

**AAB:** I found that really hard at first. I felt it was my duty, as it were, to make sure that the work remained visible and looked after and so on. That has been emotionally draining for years, and I have tried to step out of it and let other people take over as much as possible. But recently I find that I can deal with General Idea again, and it's also a moment right now when there seems to be a lot of interest returning to General Idea. So it's sort of good timing, because I can cope with it now, and the world is interested, so I've just been going with it. But it is sort of peculiar in relation to my own work. I find that I always end up putting General Idea ahead of my own work. I have no idea if that's good or bad but it seems to be what I do. ■

# Haha

Haha is a group of three: Laurie Palmer, John Ploof, and Wendy Jacob. They have been working together since they were students at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in the late 1980s. Richard House, a fourth founding member, left the group in 1999.



Haha, Flood raised bed with kids. Photo courtesy of Haha.

Haha's work consistently varies in form and content as does the frequency and rate at which they make new work. It is difficult to pin down the aesthetic qualities of a Haha artwork or long-term initiative. They have cultivated a working process that makes this variation possible. It gives them a flexibility to engage a wide range of topics and communities with their ideas and sensibilities—a highly desirable point of practice.

Palmer, Ploof, and Jacob have collectively and individually been important to generations of younger artists, activists and educators. Each creates work separately from Haha's projects, including sculptures, project-based work, and pedagogical practice. Haha has enjoyed its share of art world success, but this has never been a priority or a factor in their decision-making process. In fact, they often seem to make choices or work at a pace that takes them away from this traditional option. They have given themselves a great deal of autonomy and freedom to articulate their practice.

In 1993, Haha participated in *Culture in Action*, the watershed exhibition that opened up floodgates of possibility for the intersection of contemporary art and community-based practice. It was a breakthrough on many levels, positing a huge crack in the monopoly that the commercially driven art market had over both articulations of contemporary art and the roles that "museum-quality" art could have in local communities.

*Culture in Action* was a series of projects and events organized by Chicago-based curator Mary Jane Jacob. Jacob leveraged her status as a curator, at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, and consequently at the Sculpture Chicago organization, which sponsored *Culture in Action*, to make the series happen. She brought the seriousness of the museum and all of its cultural capital and largesse into dialogue with the ethical human-centered machinations of working in specific communities. She invited artists to participate who either had their practice in both places or were flexible enough to work in a variety of ways.

Haha's contribution to *Culture in Action* was a project called *FLOOD*. It lasted for three years—well beyond the originally intended duration. The headquarters of *FLOOD* was a storefront space in Rogers Park, a neighborhood in the northeastern corner of Chicago, far away from the traditional museum and gallery districts. Haha built a hydroponic garden in the front of the space. It was used to grow produce for people living with HIV/AIDS. Soil has large concentrations of bacteria, some of which could be harmful, if not deadly, to people with severely taxed immune systems. Raising food hydroponically removed soil from the equation. The produce was then delivered to those needing it. This was at a time before protease inhibitors and more recent generations of drugs used to combat the disease. There were demonstration gardens in front and back of the storefront. The back interior of the space had a meeting space, with racks of informational literature lining one wall.

*FLOOD* presented itself both as a service and community resource to a range of people. Its distributed aesthetics were in tandem with larger shifts that were happening internationally. First world countries were beginning the massive and painful shift from manufacturing-based economies, send-

ing jobs overseas to more service-based and immaterial labor oriented economies. This shift has been reflected in a growing number of artists' practices. Despite their reluctance to categorize their work in this way, Haha provided a range of services as their aesthetic practice. It is this aspect of their work and all the ethical implications it entails which has had an important impact on Chicago practices.

Since 2003, Haha has been presenting a project called *Taxi*. Using a cab with a roof-mounted LED message sign that is connected to a global positioning device, groups and individuals have been invited to draft messages that the cab will flash as it drives past locations chosen by the participants. *Taxi, Chicago* took place in 2003 and *Taxi, North Adams* was launched in Massachusetts, in 2004. A third city is currently being selected.

This interview was conducted at Brett Bloom's apartment after dinner on December 29, 2005. The following people were present: from Haha: Laurie Palmer, John Ploof, and Wendy Jacob; and from Temporary Services: Brett Bloom, Salem Collo-Julin, and Marc Fischer.

**Marc Fischer (MF):** When and how did Haha begin?

**Wendy Jacob (WJ):** I think it was 1988.

**Laurie Palmer (LP):** We were in a class together, a group studio class where you go in and look at peoples' work in the Masters of Fine Arts program. Wendy and I knew each other from undergraduate school, but the four of us identified each other there.

**WJ:** I had met John actually several years previously in upstate New York.

**LP:** But, when we got together. John and I had already graduated. Wendy and Richard were close.

**WJ:** Our first project was in Richard's old apartment.

**MF:** What was the first project? Did the name come before the project?

**WJ:** It came afterwards. For the first project, we moved everything from Richard's house out of his house. I don't know where it went. Out on the street maybe. And we were working individually within the house. Each of us was doing a project in a different room. Somewhere in that process it became evident that it was more fun to work together.

**John Ploof (JP):** Due to the proximity we couldn't help but work together.

**LP:** Richard was baking bread all weekend and other people were coming through and in the end that's what I remember. The work that we installed has faded and become less relevant than the social hanging out... the idea was that

his house had been burglarized and that it had already been evacuated. The idea was kind of turning it inside out... putting all his furniture on the front lawn and... people came over and hung out.

**Salem Collo-Julin (SCJ):** Did you make a formal decision at some point to work as a group and do things together?

**LP:** Yeah we did. We had to come up with a name in order to be an entity that people could deal with and I think that came out through a show in Milwaukee. We realized when we were invited to do that show that we should just do it all together.

**MF:** How did that happen? Did someone invite one person from the group?

**WJ:** No, they invited the group. But they were open and nice... And they said "Well, who are you?" and we had to have a name.

**LP:** So, then we spent a while trying to...

**WJ:** Agonized a while to come up with the name. [laughter]

**MF:** Do you remember what the thinking was, how you came up with the name?

**JP:** Well, there were other more earnest attempts. [laughter] But none was successful. I think that Haha was the relief. We couldn't pin a meaning down to it and we liked something about that.

**LP:** It was a deflector of meaning.

**WJ:** And of course it has meaning too.

In British landscape history, a “haha” is a kind of wall cut into a slope...it’s like a step so that from the house on top there’s the illusion of property without any boundaries but in fact there’s this wall in the hillside so the cows or sheep can be on the lower part and the house on the upper part and, from the vantage of the landowners, it all looks like one big open landscape.

**LP:** So it contains the animals. There’s agriculture going on, nature being ordered and contained, but it looks like a pastoral landscape...

**JP:** And the term “haha” apparently came about as a result of the approach, right, like the exclamation of someone encountering the hidden divide...

**LP:** ...As they fall. [laughter]

**Brett Bloom (BB):** Was that a metaphor for your process?

**LP:** Yes! [laughter] The best thing about the name is how it attracted things like what you just said. And you could just say “yes”.

**WJ:** It also means “mother” in Japanese. [laughter] Yes! [laughter]

**SCJ:** Were drawn together because your work was moving in similar directions, or was it more that you were drawn to each other socially or academically?

**LP:** I think it was the work. I feel strongly that it was a sensibility issue. I didn’t know John or Richard at all except through art talk and through liking their work and... trusting their work. I think it happened on an aesthetic level. It is interesting that you are focusing on the school part because in my memory I just thought, “Oh well, there was school, but that didn’t really matter,” but actually it did. It was huge—both as something to resist, in terms of the structures that were there, and as something to make something else with even while we were inside it. And it also allowed us to have some kind of connection through this art discourse, but our initial connection did happen on a sensibility level.

**JP:** It did. But the work itself was all very different. It was so different.

**BB:** How did that translate from an initial trust

you had in each other’s aesthetic practice to Haha operating with a single voice?

**LP:** There was something about whom we all were and how we interacted that allowed each of us to not jump in and take center stage, any of us. Nobody would go in and say, “This is what we are doing”. So it was a gradual teasing up of ideas. When they arrived and clicked, fully fledged, nobody felt any personal ownership except collectively.

**MF:** Were all of you still trying to do your individual practices simultaneously?

**Haha:** Yes.

**MF:** How did that balance work? Were there conflicts in trying to do your own work and participate in Haha projects at the same time? Or would an invitation come to one person and maybe they would say this should be a Haha project and not just an invitation for me? How did that work out?

**JP:** There’s never enough time to do everything. Each of us at different points has dedicated more energy to the group and at other times the group has maintained the practice while individuals have pulled out to make their own work.

**LP:** That’s been a pretty huge struggle trying to figure out how to do both.

**WJ:** And at the same time, people’s individual careers have helped the group too. When individuals travel and do things, invitations come back to the group. It works both ways.

**LP:** I don’t think that we each had the same level of need to do both. That was a source of tension also. It is an interesting question why any one of us felt that they had to have an individual practice as well as the group practice. I have always felt that I needed both. It was just an inarticulate demand, like John was saying, there was never enough time, but it always felt necessary.

**SCJ:** Did you talk about that early on? When you were still forming and still learning how you would work together? Did you develop a structure for “this is how we are going to determine whether or not the group is going to work on a project?”

**WJ:** I am not sure we knew the group was going to go on for so long. I don't think we were having those conversations.

**JP:** It seems to me that sometimes we would engage in a project and the project would call for a duration or way of working that drew us all in, in ways we couldn't pre-plan. To answer your question directly: no, we didn't start out with a configuration that we could imagine. It was the projects themselves that demanded the duration and determined how we were to be involved.

**LP:** Something that came up last night was interesting... Wendy, you were talking about the way in which Haha allowed us to do work that we didn't have to take individual responsibility for. We did in the end take full responsibility.

But it was not really ours. So part of the group process is its thorough disentanglement from our individual selves... whatever resulted, each project felt "so not mine," which was incredibly freeing. At the same time it was ours in a wonderfully owned way. It was also like having multiple selves. It was great to be able to do work that you wouldn't have recognized as yours otherwise.

**WJ:** Then after a number of years of working together, Haha projects really started to look like "Haha projects". They didn't look like any of our works individually. So Haha became this other thing that I always referred to as outside of myself, like, "Haha did it."

**SCJ:** Can a Haha project be defined at this point for you guys?

**LP:** I think that each project was so different that there was no "Haha" characteristic. They were definitely not any of ours individually, but I thought that they were all so different from each other that it almost became a problem in that nobody could recognize a style. There was an idiosyncrasy.

**WJ:** It's true. Maybe they were Haha in the sense that they weren't Laurie's, they weren't John's, they weren't Richard's, and they weren't mine.

**MF:** Were you thinking of historical models of group work at all?

**LP:** I don't think we were, which is kind of embarrassing... I know that it was really great to have people to hang out with, to talk about art

with, and to throw out ideas with. There was such a need for that resource. I don't remember thinking initially that we wanted to be able to be together to make things happen.

**WJ:** And that was even before thinking we would be working together.

**MF:** As a way of dealing with being out of school?

**JP:** As a form of self-sufficiency, not wanting to wait to be invited, or even having to affiliate. I remember early discussions, many of them about the idea of self-sufficiency, which I guess would translate in many ways to things that Temporary Services has done as well—the desire to do it yourself.

**SCJ:** Have you found difficulties dealing with people administering or organizing, inviting you guys as a group, even in independent spaces? We've had situations arise where we are invited as a group, but the person who's dealing with us doesn't really understand how to address a group rather than one person, and their conversations with one person start to get more important than their conversations with the group. And that's just with people who have dealt with groups before. So I imagine you guys...

**WJ:** Sometimes we would just take turns being the point person. It was too confusing for a curator or administrator to have to call someone different every time. We would all go places together. If there was a project in another city or country we would all go. It was never a case of one person going and doing it.

**LP:** It was impossible to pre-fab anything. It was completely "present tense."

**JP:** I think that's something we learned early on. When we tried to meet as a group, and one person was missing, or two people were missing, there was always difficulty getting the whole group back together. That is something we've addressed in our process, to remove the possibility of that conflict. It always works better when everybody is together.

**BB:** How do you deal with that now that you are in three separate places? Two of you are in the same place some part of the year. How has your group process shifted over the years?





**LP:** The internet has made a big difference relatively recently in Haha's history.

**WJ:** And three-way phone calls. A lot of conference calls.

**JP:** I think we've learned too how to split some of the logistics up and trust each other and our abilities to maneuver whatever that is.

**WJ:** Yeah. That's really nice. I feel like I have known Laurie and John for so long now that it is this complete trust.

**SCJ:** Is that mainly in dealing with a curator or making a decision about administrative things or do you also extend that to decisions about projects you are working on and one or two people can decide to go a certain way?

**JP:** I'm thinking even of the *Taxi* project in North Adams that required many site visits. We needed to meet with many, many groups. It was impossible for us all to go there at once but we were able to devise different gathering methods in order to go at different times.

**LP:** But it did take a lot of work to get to that point. I definitely think that that was a later form of Haha.

**MF:** At what point did Richard leave the group? How did that happen that the group went from

four people to three people?

**WJ:** He lost his green card.

**JP:** His H1 visa expired ... He was out of the country then. It was about 1999.

**MF:** Was there an interest in trying to work with that distance or did you feel that this wasn't going to be possible with one member in another country?

**JP:** We were partners, and we tried to continue in spite of the distance. Things at first seemed possible; eventually they just seemed impossible. That was a very difficult moment for all of us, for Haha as a group. If Richard isn't a part of Haha, then what is Haha? What could Haha be now? We had meetings and tried to figure out if we should invite another member, or if we should completely change what the group was, or whether we should not work together any more. What did we decide?

**LP:** Here we are. [laughter]

**WJ:** And it's three of us.

**MF:** Do you feel like there's been a big change in your group process with this more streamlined group of three? Someone once said something really nice about this: "Every time you add another person it doubles the amount of time it

takes to make a decision.” [laughter] Not to say it’s better or worse, but have you noticed a difference in how the three of you work together with one less person?

**LP:** The structure has dramatically changed.

**WJ:** It’s not just Richard leaving. It’s living in different places and being older and doing different things.

**LP:** And wanting change. Wanting to give each of us more autonomy in what happens.

**JP:** ...more flexibility to be able to work collectively. I think our ideas about collaboration have evolved over time so that maybe we work in ways that would be better defined as collective. We have a common project goal, but what we do within the group can be separate, together, or in pairs.

**MF:** How did you resolve conflicts? Did you have techniques to come to agreement?

**LP:** I feel like one of the techniques was to throw out an idea and then close your eyes and turn the other way and pretend you never said it. [laughter] It would be out there, stew and rot a little bit, and then it would disappear if it really rotted, but sometimes someone else would pick it up and call it his or hers for a while and then

throw it away. It was all about putting something out but completely disowning it. So that an idea would be as independent as possible. And then everyone had to own it for a little bit, and then they would all disown it. And then it was just left as this thing, this pancake.

**WJ:** And the best part was misunderstandings. You throw something out there and then the others might misunderstand completely what it was and so they re-interpret it as something more interesting, maybe.

**JP:** Often times the misunderstanding is the most significant part of the process.

**MF:** So, you avoid forming an idea so completely that it feels like you have a personal investment in it?

**WJ:** Yeah. That never worked.

**MF:** Let’s talk about *FLOOD* from the beginning.

**BB:** When did the invitation come?

**JP:** 1992 it started. There was an extensive planning period before the storefront began. It involved a year of planning. And then proposal writing.



Haha, Flood, lemonade stand. Photo courtesy of Haha.

**LP:** Hydroponic schooling.

**BB:** You didn't hire some geeks... you actually learned hydroponics yourself?

**LP:** Yeah! And we learned about indeterminate tomato plants, in a greenhouse in Ohio that had tomato vines that had been growing *ad infinitum* as if there was no season, so that the vines were thick and they just kept going on and on. And they were wrapping all the way around the perimeter of the greenhouse like some massive snake. The growers had figured out how to turn off the thing that said, "stop". Anyway it was really fascinating.

**MF:** Did the core idea—if there was a core idea—that you would create a garden that would grow food for people with HIV... did the idea come first and then all the relationships and knowledge that needed to be learned in order to figure it out...

**WJ:** That came later.

**LP:** Yeah—because there had to be a proposal to Sculpture Chicago. There had to be a budget and all that... As opposed to earlier manifestations of Sculpture Chicago, the premise for this one was that of creating work that would be situated in the neighborhood and would involve some form of interaction between participants and artist-makers. That was the given. During *FLOOD* we all were living in Rogers Park and this was a

chance to do a project in our own neighborhood.

**WJ:** It was the only time in our history that we've all lived within a few blocks of each other.

**JP:** One thing that's very exciting about Rogers Park is that it's so incredibly diverse. Richard and I were living at Clark and Lunt and we talked about the incredible diversity just within the storeowners that lived and worked on our block. There were Assyrians, Greeks, Mexicans, Chinese—people from all over the globe. We wanted the project to engage the diversity of that block—of the whole neighborhood—and what was happening there. Our early ideas involved things like a gardening project. We thought we could actually work on a garden in the alley behind those storefronts and involve the storekeepers. In fact, the area behind the stores was eventually determined to be an important place to park cars. [laughter] That seemed more important than the garden... and the idea of gardening year-round in Chicago didn't make much sense. Then the ideas of the storefront and the garden and the hydroponics all kinda came together at once.

**LP:** And HIV and AIDS were just so huge on everybody's mind.

**SCJ:** Was it always considered that you would be growing food as a way to talk about the HIV issue?

**WJ:** That neighborhood, at that time, was the fastest growing population of people with HIV/AIDS in the city.

**LP:** One of the really effective parts of the project—if effectiveness is even relevant—is that the people on that block gradually came in. We met people who either hadn't known they were positive or had just discovered they were positive... This kid who was living with his family as a gay teen who hadn't come out and was positive... And all of this was in an immediate area of a few hundred yards and was focused through the garden. It was only maybe a handful of people, but it was huge.

**MF:** That must have been intensely different from any other Haha project that I can think of. There was this intense constant social involvement with the audience and also a blur as to how people are involved: they're not just



Haha, *Flood*, harvesting. Photo courtesy of Haha.



Haha, Flood, tables. Photo courtesy of Haha.

spectators or people who are deliberately going to an art space.

**WJ:** Well it's the only project that we've done where we were there all the time.

**SCJ:** Was it open seven days a week? When it was open?

**JP:** Well. There was always tending...Somebody was there everyday.

**MF:** Were there people knocking on the window like, you know, "What is it?" [everyone laughs]

**LP:** ...[laughing] You know, that's what happens isn't it? With a storefront, people see it and feel a kind of welcome-ness. [laughter]

**WJ:** That was the best part.

**MF:** Do you think that having to deal with that together changed anything for the group? In terms of future work was there a kind of, "I don't want to do something where we have to talk to so many people" or "let's do things differently so we don't have to deal with this all the time"...or "this person turns out to be so much more effective at dealing with...." Did you learn things about how each of you responds in a situation like that?

**LP:** Yeah, but there were a lot more people in *FLOOD* than were in Haha.

**WJ:** And for that project, I don't even think of it as a Haha project I think of it as a *FLOOD* project. And Haha really grew to be this larger group...called *FLOOD*.

**BB:** And how is that different or how did it grow out of Haha initiating the project?

**WJ:** In fact, we didn't have the name *FLOOD* until we met as a larger group and tried to come up with a name for what we were.

**BB:** What was *FLOOD*? Can you describe how it formed and who it was?

**JP:** Yeah, a lot of invitations. We tried to use the resources that were available to us. Part of the group formed because we were teaching and able to run seminars for undergrad/grad students from DePaul University and Columbia College and from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, who formed a regular, ongoing meeting group. They became part of another group of people from the neighborhood and then people from across the city would come to the storefront to meet—those groups all merged. This is just what Wendy was saying, we wouldn't want to define *FLOOD* exclusively as a Haha project because each of those groups then took up

aspects of the project and developed *FLOOD* in different ways.

**LP:** We all did work at various AIDS organizations and we were giving greens to the service organizations Better Living with HIV (BeHIV) or to OPEN HAND. And Chicago House. We were doing voluntary labor at these other places as well.

**JP:** That was another element of inclusion in the project that became really important. We wanted the group to have those connections, and so every week we invited a speaker to come from Chicago Women's AIDS Project, The Children's Place, Test Positive Aware Network, BeHIV, or any number of groups to talk to our group. Then people from *FLOOD* would make connections. I remember one member, a chef, who went to cook for Chicago Women's AIDS Project. In fact, I saw him a few years after the *FLOOD* storefront was gone and he was still cooking for them. Those types of relationships just emerged from the project in different ways.

**BB:** You must have been asked this question a lot, but I'm curious how you frame it. Where is the art in this project? Why is this an art project? Why is it necessary that it start from this place of an artistic practice?

**MF:** Did people harass you about this or demand it of you? [Haha members nod] That seems like an emphatic yes.

**WJ:** Our answer for a while was to list all of the things that we weren't. We weren't a social service; we weren't really educational outreach—although we did that too. We weren't a business—because we were losing money. So we could list all of the things that we weren't. I don't know if by default that left us as an art project.

**JP:** That is partly self-determined as well, not to accept someone else's preconceived definition of what art can be. Rather, why not say that this is what I want art to be and then try to figure out why it is art, instead of why it isn't. When you were at the storefront, you weren't simply looking at a garden and thinking about a garden. When you went to the *FLOOD* garden there was something about its presence that allowed you to go beyond the immediacy of the place. There's a conceptual element to that leap in thinking that to me became important as art.



Haha, *Flood*, kids watering. Photo courtesy of Haha.

**SCJ:** Like the idea that you don't have to walk in and immediately have somebody asking you what time your appointment is, you don't have to pick up the literature or whatever. Do you think the garden became a kind of a barrier to that kind of stuff or was having the plants growing there more of an invitation?

**LP:** Oh, it was an invitation...

**WJ:** Especially in the winter when you're walking to the train and it's snowing and you look in the window and there is somebody harvesting a garden.

**LP:** It's something that was indefinable and really compelling, how it provoked curiosity. So people going to the train would think, "What is this?!" That to me was the closest answer to the art question. You don't know what it is.

**BB:** What were your personal involvements with this project in terms of the need to provide people living with HIV/AIDS with a bacteria-free source of vegetables?

**LP:** We all were losing people left and right.

**JP:** For a lot of us *FLOOD* was more than a kind of magnanimous gesture of providing something for someone else. It became a way of figuring out something for ourselves and then figuring out something collectively. AIDS is a situation that

impacts each person differently. But it's something that everyone was and is dealing with now. [pensive silence] I think that's different than the production of food, too. The social aspects, the networks, the conversations, the kind of information sharing and teach-ins that happened: they were part of the whole project in very important ways.

**LP:** At the time, nobody knew what this disease really was. So the need to be self-educated was a huge guiding force. I remember making food for a friend who had AIDS and not knowing—even then—that I had to wash the vegetables really carefully. And he died. You know, he didn't die because I didn't wash his carrots, but there was this incredible sense of “what we don't know and what we know” and the dire consequences of that. There was an incredible urgency to learning stuff together and getting people together who knew stuff that you didn't know, trying to pool your resources.

**MF:** Were you making a conscious effort to make your art practice include something that would be specifically beneficial to other people? To be a way of learning and being able to apply this knowledge in an activist way or a socially progressive way?

**JP:** Yes, Yes. We hosted lectures, teach-ins and events. Dr. John Phair from the Division of Infectious Diseases at Northwestern University met with us about emerging research and Charlotte Gyllenhaal from University of Chicago who was doing rainforest research and had actually tested a part of a tree that had...do you remember that miraculous story? It had stopped the AIDS virus flat—in a Petri dish—but when she returned to the rainforest the tree had been harvested... [moans and gasps] There was a real conscious effort to make information sharing part of the political drive in the project.

**WJ:** I don't think we ever thought that hydroponics was the answer. It wasn't a cure...we were talking to Dr. Phair but also people who were approaching it through Chinese medicine and massage therapy.

**JP:** SWAN [Surviving With AIDS Naturally] was a group that met at the garden for a while...

**WJ:** The garden was a place where other groups could meet too...

**SCJ:** Was there a moment when Haha wasn't really involved in the daily operations of *FLOOD*? Because it sounds like groups started using it on their own. People started meeting of their own volition. Then there was this larger group of students, the larger group of *FLOOD* doing their thing. Were you guys always involved? At every moment?

**LP:** We had a maintenance schedule and people signed up and people had keys. So every day was taken care of—it wasn't always a Haha person. The groups had a schedule and they came and used it when we weren't there sometimes. We were always involved, but it was really pretty open.

**BB:** How much did it rely on your energy as Haha even within this larger group? Did you keep things going or did it take on a life of its own beyond you at some point?

**JP:** That's where my thinking changed, from being about a collaborative project to being about a collective project. We tried to make *FLOOD* open, to allow people to come in and work as long as they wanted. I think that Haha participated in that structure as well.

**MF:** Our last question is how do you handle Haha's history or archives? Are you interested in finding a better way to present or document your past? Is it important for you, for example,



Haha, Flood, Richard (right) and a guest. Photo courtesy of Haha.

to be able to present *FLOOD* as a model of a way to do something? Do you talk about that or think about how you could deal with it?

**WJ:** We haven't been very good with all of that.

**JP:** Well, the book might be the way that we are dealing with it.

**MF:** The book that you're working on now where you talk about past work? Or is the book more of a Haha project...something new?

**LP:** Both. It's both.

**SCJ:** The extension of that question is how do you conceive of the future when you are talking to each other? Or are you still just kinda working at it project by project? Do you talk about what Haha will look like five years from now?

**LP:** One of the things that came up in a conversation last night was the origin of Haha and our interest in doing things ourselves instead of waiting around. So we started talking about things that we're interested in now—even if they're not Haha necessarily—projects that are

laterally organized as opposed to hierarchically organized. Projects that are focused on addressing problems or finding solutions without having to deal with the state or without having to appeal to some triangular relationship to authority. That may happen through future Haha stuff, because that is where we began, even though it was in relation, or non-relation, to an art-world authority. I think of future projects having a similar structure but in a different context. I don't know if that will be with this group or pieces of this group, but it feels connected—structurally—to what we started out trying to do.

**WJ:** The authority has changed...

**JP:** To go back, this impacts the consideration that we bring to an issue when looking at it as something that's not just the art world, when you see it as something that extends into our personal and political lives. The way that you can think about social relevance changes. I don't know. For me this really changes what the group might look like or what the group might do. It moves the idea of collective or collaborative effort into a much different social sphere. ■

# Jane

In the United States, before 1973, most women had limited or no access to abortion. While the legality of abortion was determined on a state-by-state basis, it was not always a viable option for a number of cultural and economic reasons. Women with money could travel to an area where abortion was legal, but even money could not guarantee the safest passage. Those who did not have the option of travel could take their chances with dangerous illegal abortionists. It's the estimated 5000 women per year that died as a result of these faulty conditions that made the coat hanger a chilling visual symbol of the plight of U.S. women.

The Abortion Counseling Service of the Chicago Women's Liberation Union (CWLJU), better known by its nickname "Jane", began as an underground counseling and referral group for women seeking support. Jane was chosen as a discreet nickname for the group because of its "everywoman" connotations.

Jane traces its roots back to Heather Booth, a University of Chicago student in 1965, who was well known around campus for her civil rights activism. A fellow student asked Booth for help with his sister, who was pregnant and distraught. Booth called around and found a doctor who would perform an abortion for the girl. Word spread that Booth could arrange abortions and she received all kinds of calls and referrals. After several years, Booth recruited other women to help. Soon after, Booth stopped working with the group to concentrate on her own pregnancy and graduate school.

When the Chicago Women's Liberation Union formed in the late 1960s, many in the new group had been involved in the abortion referral services that Heather Booth instigated. A few people at the first CWLU organizing meeting suggested making abortion one of the union's causes. While some were opposed, the union agreed to make Jane a work group within the organization, under the premise that a woman having control of her own body was the most basic of rights.

The Women's Liberation Movement, and years of civil rights activism, was of paramount importance in helping women seek quality obstetric and gynecological services. Many in the movement found it necessary to give themselves the tools to take care of each other. Groups of women formed in communities all over the United States, dedicated to learning about and teaching others about women's health.

After several months of working with doctors who would perform abortions on Jane's clients for exorbitant fees, Jane's members quickly realized that a safer and more accessible abortion was widely needed. Members of the group also found out that one of their most trusted abortionists was not really a doctor—just someone who had been trained to perform abortions. With this knowledge, the group decided that they had the power to perform the procedures on their own, and trained themselves and others to do so.

Jane's membership was a mixture of housewives, mothers, professionals, and college students. Most of the members had no formal medical training. Some were pregnant while they were members. Most were also white and middle class, although several women of color were part of the group from the beginning. Many women who received abortions or counseling from Jane chose to become part of the group after using their services. Those who used the service came from all walks of life, and all races. Eileen Smith, another Jane member, described it as:

[A] mishmash of people in one room ... I felt like we were all working together ... We weren't doing this to them or for them. It was regular people making a big difference. It really shaped my life and showed me what's important.

During the four years that Jane was active, over 100 women worked for the group at various times.



Former Jane members estimate that they performed more than 12,000 illegal abortions. Jane became legendary for the quality of care that they provided. However, the political and social climate at the time forced the entire operation to take place under the shadow of anonymity. Women did not generally have many options with regards to their sexual being. Single motherhood and teenage pregnancy were morally condemned in most circles. Many doctors were known to deliver lectures on promiscuity or the joys of motherhood instead of giving medical advice to women who came to them for help. Birth control was not widely available to women, single or not. A United States Supreme Court ruling in 1965 guaranteed the right of married people to legally obtain and use birth control but the right was not affirmed for single people until 1972.

Women seeking help found Jane through word of mouth, coded advertisements and listings in Chicago's student and alternative newspapers, and from sympathetic health care workers. Some referrals even came from the Chicago Police Department, who mostly chose to look the other way. Jane kept the same phone number, 643-3844, for its entire existence. The number was listed in the telephone book under "Jane Howe", with no address. An answering service fielded phone calls at the beginning, and was later replaced by an answering machine.

Messages were written down on index cards, and divided amongst the group at regular meetings. A Jane member would call the woman back and say, "Hello, this is Jane returning your call. I can't talk freely on the phone, but I want you to know that I can help you." The vague message was necessary both for Jane members, worried about possible police intervention, and also for the woman seeking services, who might be underage, with an unsympathetic partner, or otherwise unable to freely talk.

The Jane member would contact the woman and have a counseling session with her. Jane would help women prepare for the emotional and financial aspects of the abortion, and collect a \$25 donation from women who could donate money to a fund to help finance other women's care. The counseling session was also a screening process for detecting conflicts and potential legal threats. If abortion seemed to be the best option, Jane members would arrange everything and give the woman a time and place to meet.

A woman who had decided to receive an abortion from Jane would go to an address given to her by her Jane counselor. It was usually someone's apartment, and was referred to as "The Front". Women (and their partners, children, or whomever they chose to bring with them) were greeted at The Front by Jane members and offered food, drink, and a place to relax. Then the woman who was getting the abortion would be driven by a Jane member to "The Place"—another apartment, where only Jane members and the women were permitted.

Jeanne Galatzer-Levy was a University of Chicago dropout who worked with Jane. She describes her experiences starting out at The Front in an interview with Becky Kluchin:

Everybody was expected to work The Front, and it was a really long day, and it was hard. People would come and their significant others of some sort or another, their sisters or aunts or cousins or boyfriends or whatever would come, and we were very woman centered. We had all this food at The Front. We always had all this food and tea and soda and things like that. And we gave out—we started them on a dose of tetracycline. And gave them a box of pills that included ergotrate and tetracycline. They took these afterwards, to contract the uterus and help them get back into shape ... You would talk to people. They'd be nervous and then the people who were going for the abortions would be driven off and their significant cousins, brothers, sisters, children whatever would then be sitting there. And so you would have to kinda entertain them. And you know, I was a fairly shy person and it was hard, you know it's kinda hard to be conducive to strangers in this very peculiar circumstance. I was very young, and you were giving a kind of tea party all day long, and you really were kinda out of the loop, you really didn't know exactly what was going on. So first you did that. And I did that for a while. And then there was the driver and I moved very quickly into driving because I was one of the few people who had a driver's license. Lots of people didn't have their license. Well U of C [The University of Chicago] at the time was full of New Yorkers and New Yorkers don't drive [...]

A woman who asked to remain anonymous wrote about her experience in an e-mail to Temporary Services:

I was seventeen and about to graduate from high school when I "did it" for the first time...the common

story of “girl meets older guy, girl has sex with him in the back of his car, guy gets shipped off to Vietnam, girl spends next month throwing up every morning.” I was involved in my school’s branch of Students for a Democratic Society, and my friends and I considered ourselves pretty suave and worldly, but I still had no idea what was going on. I knew I might be pregnant, but I didn’t have any clue about what to do about it. I was scared of a lot of things – my parents’ reaction, the idea that I may not go to college, and what everyone else would think of me for giving it up. Getting pregnant was basically like telling the world that you were a slut, stupid, or deserved to be sent away in those days. It really ruined people’s lives. A friend of mine got pregnant the year before, and her parents kicked her out of the house.

My best friend at the time was a bohemian type. She performed with a dance troupe on the weekends and was always reading copies of the hippie newspapers that her older fellow dancers would leave for her. I confided in her about my possible pregnancy, and she immediately grabbed one of those papers and showed me a small classified ad in the back that had some sort of manifesto of “reproductive choice” along with a phone number for someone named “Jane”. This frightened me even more, but I took the paper from her, and called the number while on a break from my after-school job the next day.

My actual experience getting the abortion was other-worldly. There was pain, but I hardly remember feeling anything because there were about four women in the room with me [Jane members]. They were talking me through it and telling me exactly where the “nurse” was putting her hands. I knew at the time that these women weren’t real doctors or nurses – the ones that I met were at the most three or four years older than me. But I still felt cared for, and it was honestly the first time I had ever talked to anyone other than my mother or the family doctor about my body. It was really strange, but it felt good to know that so many others were going through it too. There were about four women waiting for their own abortions when I came out of the room [a bedroom in the Place where her abortion was done] and I stayed behind to chat with all of them. One of the women was an immigrant from the same country that my parents are from. We spoke in my parents’ language for a while and actually laughed about the idea of two “good girls” like us in a situation like this. I don’t regret my abortion. I ended up married two years later, and gave birth to a wonderful child when I was ready for motherhood. It made sense for me, with a few years of young adulthood going, to become a mom and work, go to school, and raise my daughter. I honestly don’t know what would have happened if Jane wasn’t there when I was in high school, though. My life would have been very different.

Jane received about eight to ten calls a week during their first few months. One year after the service started, they were receiving more than 100 calls per week. No one ever died as a result of an abortion performed by Jane. However, in 1972, the police raided Jane after the sister of a Jane client lodged a complaint, and seven women were arrested. The case was continued into 1973, and dropped after the famous “Roe v. Wade” Supreme Court decision made in January of 1973 finally made abortion a legal choice in all fifty states. After the police raid, some members considered disbanding Jane. However, several of the most active members refused, insisting that there was no choice in the matter. Women desperately needed their services. After abortion was deemed legal, though, several clinics in Chicago started offering the service, and Jane disbanded.

#### SOME RESOURCES AND READINGS:

The Chicago Women’s Liberation Union web archive has a great deal of information about Jane, articles written at the time of Jane’s activity, and several interviews with former Jane members. The web archive also includes the text of the original pamphlet that Jane produced to explain the Abortion Counseling Service, as well as a song written in tribute to Jane after the group disbanded. The quote from Jeanne Galatzer-Levy comes from “On the Job with Jane”, an interview of Galatzer-Levy by Becky Kluchin from 1999. Available at [www.cwluherstory.org](http://www.cwluherstory.org).

The quote from Eileen Smith comes from “Abortion in the Underground Before Roe v. Wade,” an article by Cheryl ter Horst for the Chicago Tribune’s September 15, 1999 edition. The article was spurred on by a showing of writer Paula Kamen’s 1999 play *Jane: Abortion and the Underground*. Much information from Kamen is available at [www.paulakamen.com](http://www.paulakamen.com).

A film titled *Jane: An Abortion Service*, was produced and directed by Kate Kirtz and Nell Lundy for Juicy Productions for the Independent Television Service (ITVS) San Francisco in 1998.

Finally, Laura Kaplan, a former Jane member, wrote a definitive history of the group titled *The Story of Jane* in 1995. The University of Chicago Press is the publisher.

# Wochenklausur



WochenKlausur, Wolfgang and Claudia in their Vienna office, 2005.  
Photo by Temporary Services.

Since 1993, the Vienna-based group WochenKlausur has been attacking the popularly held opinion that art is not an effective tool for creating lasting social change. They do this not by pretending that they can solve all of the world's ills, but by setting small and realistic goals for concrete social interventions that can be accomplished during a set time period. Their group name roughly translates to "Weeks Enclosed"—that is, a period of time set aside for focused meetings, discussions and the activities necessary to solve a certain problem.

Among their twenty-one projects, they have: established a non-profit organization that offers a wide range of "Learning by Doing" projects to the schools of Fukuoka (Japan, 2000), provided activities for the mentally challenged (Graz, 2003), set up language schools for Macedonia (Venice, 1999), created a shelter where drug-addicted women who earn their money through prostitution can sleep, relax and seek counseling (Zurich, 1994), and made medical care available to homeless people (Vienna, 1993).

WochenKlausur develops these interventions so that they can be sustained by others after the group moves on to pursue new challenges in other places. Between new projects, it is common for the people who are running or benefiting from past interventions to check in with the members of WochenKlausur in an effort to keep their initiatives active and vital. Some of the group's initiatives have run smoothly for years; others have been harder to maintain.

In 2002, WochenKlausur was dealt a devastating blow when Pascale Jeannée, a member of the group since 1995, died unexpectedly of sudden heart disease. The group has not only continued since her passing, but has maintained a seemingly equal sense of vitality. They have forged imaginative new projects and expanded membership in accordance with their needs in solving a particular problem during a set period of time.

After following their work for several years, Temporary Services met the members of WochenKlausur when they came to Chicago in July and August, 2005. Here they initiated *Intervention to Upcycle Waste and Museum Byproducts* in conjunction with the exhibition "Beyond Green: Towards a Sustainable Art" at The Smart Museum of Art.

On October 10, 2005, Marc from Temporary Services interviewed WochenKlausur members Claudia Eipeldauer and Wolfgang Zinggl in their office on Gumpendorferstraße in Vienna. In this small storefront, the group convenes for meetings, hosts visitors and stores their archives from past projects. A photo of Pascal Jeannée hangs over the bookcase, a reminder of her lasting impact on the group's direction. They also have a terrific moss garden in the window.

At the time of the interview the group's core team were Claudia Eipeldauer, Martina Reuter, Karl Seiringer and Wolfgang Zinggl. The group's past projects are documented on their website: [www.wochenklausur.at](http://www.wochenklausur.at).

**Temporary Services (TS):** Wolfgang started WochenKlausur so Claudia, could you explain how you began working with the group?

**Claudia Eipeldauer (CE):** I heard about the group from a friend of mine and it sounded very interesting. So I started to listen around and watched their web site. Then I just called Wolfgang, very spontaneously and thought, "Okay, let's see what he thinks, if I can be involved and if I can work with them or not." We met and talked and as it all sounded quite interesting I started to work with WochenKlausur.

**TS:** And have you worked on every project since you joined in 2002?

**CE:** No, not on every project. I did the first project in 2002 and right after I did the next project, but then I finished my studies, and started to work with the group again a few months ago.

**TS:** Do you actively seek new members for the group to try to make it larger?

**Wolfgang Zingg (WZ):** It depends a little bit on the project that comes up. For instance now we are looking for someone who can help us with a project in Leipzig, Germany, because we are four people at the moment and we need a fifth or sixth person. Therefore we have to look actively. Often artists ask to participate but there may not be a project coming up, so we have to ask them to wait. It's a kind of coming and going and telling people "No" and "Yes". There's not really a rule for it.

**TS:** Do you look for people with specific skills?

**WZ:** They should come out of the art scene, and it's not necessary that they are artists in a pure sense doing art and nothing else. For instance they could have studied medicine and then changed to the art scene, or the other way around.

**TS:** How do you divide the labor in these projects? Does one person assign tasks to the other people? Are most things done with all of you in the same room discussing everything?

**WZ:** Nobody specializes but during a project we each have skills that we do better than others. Karl, for example, is much more of a specialist in digital and computer things. So we don't have designated specialists but from the start of a proj-

ect we each concentrate on the things that the others have less space or air for.

**CE:** I think it comes in a very natural way. I mean, Karl is the computer specialist but...

**WZ:** ...he's not "declared".

**CE:** He's just doing the computer work because he knows more about it than the others.

**WZ:** But all of us are responsible for everything in the end so we can't say, "Karl, it's your job."

**TS:** What are some of the techniques you use to work together when some of you are traveling at separate times and all of you live in separate places? Do you coordinate things by e-mail or do you edit writing by trading a computer file back and forth, or do you get together in person to do it...

**CE:** E-mailing around, telephoning, meetings from time to time.

**WZ:** All of it. We have this space here and we are all connected by e-mail and by phone so it's not really a problem.

**TS:** Are any of you involved in other groups or separate art practices in addition to WochenKlausur?

**WZ:** We had that several times before. It was always difficult and sometimes the reason for stopping the collaboration. If a traditional painter for instance is exhibiting, he might have to declare why painting is so important for him. At the same time, he might have to explain why solving problems is an upcoming part of the arts. To identify with both sides might be the crucial problem and we have had such cases, two or three of them.

**TS:** Did the people then leave the group by choice, or was there a discussion or what would happen that would cause someone to leave the group? Would it be just a general disagreement?

**WZ:** We haven't had any fights or quarrels. Most of the time it was like this: "I do not have time for the next project" or "We already have completed our group and next time you can join us again."

**TS:** Is there a hierarchy in the group? Is each member equally important? Can any member represent the group when talking to the press, or on the radio or do you have a preference?

**WZ:** On paper it's equal, but in the end, I founded the group twelve years ago and I'm the one who's still with the group so there's much more natural than formal hierarchy.

**TS:** When three of you spoke at Mess Hall in Chicago it seemed very equally divided. Everyone seemed equally capable of presenting the group's ideas but if people have questions about the group's history, the person who has the longest history with the group...

**CE:** Yes, it is exactly like this, because if someone has been with the group longer he has more to tell, but I think everyone is quite identifiable within the group.

**WZ:** And Claudia is our new upcoming star! [laughter] I have much more experience, but in the end it's also a kind of negative influence, when it is boring to do similar things again. I cannot explain it in English, but I cannot explain it in German either! [laughter] But you know what I mean?

**TS:** Yeah. Do you, Wolfgang, feel burdened sometimes, like maybe you are given more credit than you deserve on these projects that all these people work on because you've been around the longest?

**WZ:** Yes. When you have a new idea in the arts you want to have success with it, and you bring everything you can. But after twelve years and twenty projects you know already how to run it in most of the cases. And there is not the same fire as when you started. And that's the point when new people come into the group, they put much more intensive work into it than I can give.

**CE:** And I think that it's quite important to get that dynamic into a group that has already lasted that long, otherwise I think it would get stuck if you don't somehow include new ways of working on it and spreading out.

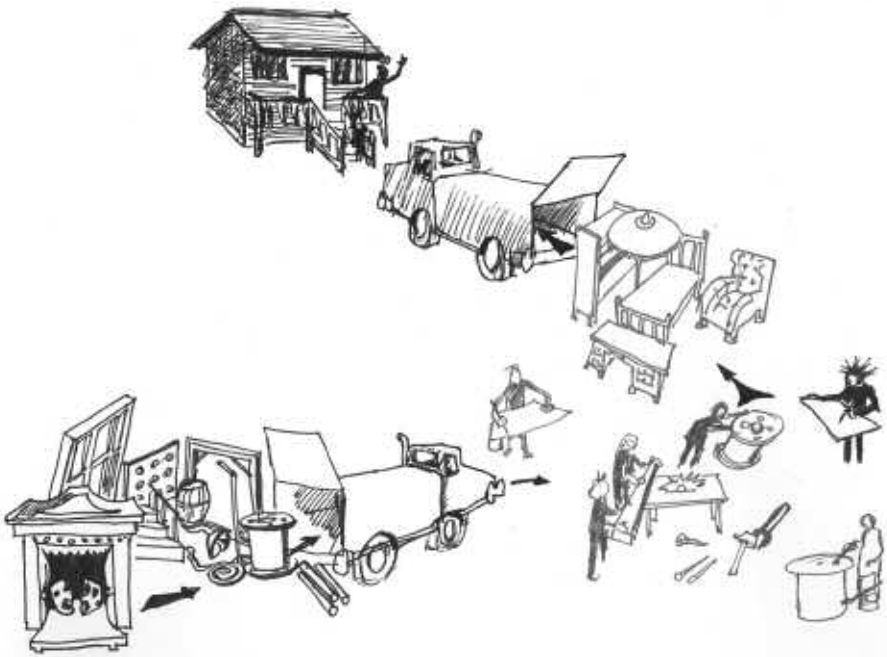
**WZ:** Right. We had members who worked with us on ten projects and then it was enough. And without any arguments they said, "That was it. I want to change."

**TS:** How do you make decisions in the group about what to propose if you are invited to do something? Do you work by a consensus model, or do you vote, or what happens if one person disagrees with everyone else?

**WZ:** There is a strategy we use. With the last project, in *Beyond Green*, we didn't have such problems with it because we are only four people and there was not a big discussion on it. But when we started we were nine or ten people and we had this strategy to discuss and research a lot of things from different points of view, and then we had one date, one day when we said, "Today it should all come to an end and we should all



WochenKlausur: Banner outside of Midway studios during *Intervention to Upcycle Waste and Museum Byproducts*, Chicago, 2005. Photo courtesy of WochenKlausur.



have consensus.” And the rule was that we shouldn’t go to bed until we have consensus and if one person goes to bed then she is with the consensus. [laughter] So by going to be bed, he or she says, “Whatever you decide to do, I’m with you.”

**TS:** So it’s “consensus by exhaustion?”

**WZ:** Right. But it makes sense. It’s not stupid. It happens something like: “I have my point of view but I’m more tired than willing to bring it into the discussion.” Those who are real hardliners in the discussion stay, and in the end they find a compromise to get to a consensus or something similar.

**TS:** I think probably all groups would say that the fewer people you have, the faster you can reach consensus.

**CE:** Of course. We’ll be meeting in the evening together discussing different points and hearing the arguments of the others. If I’m already very tired, I think “Let’s come to consensus.” Someone who is very interested in one point will be very forceful and want to see his arguments come through. Even if it is not a long discussion like when you are going to develop a new project,

there’s still this sitting together waiting until we come to consensus.

**TS:** Could you describe *Intervention to Upcycle Waste and Museum Byproduct*,” the project you just did in Chicago in conjunction with the exhibit *Beyond Green* at the Smart Museum?

**CE:** We planned a network between three different kinds of institutions: social institutions, art institutions, and designers or design classes. First we asked social institutions who were in need of interior fittings if they could give us a list of certain things they are in need of like specific furniture. Then we asked art institutions like museums or theaters who have leftover materials—mostly they have things after exhibitions. If they are doing a rebuild of their rooms and they have good materials like plexiglass or whatever that they can’t store because it’s quite expensive, so they normally throw it away. We asked if we could have this material, and in a third step we ask design classes or designers if they are interested in upcycling these items, which means making new interior fittings out of these leftover materials. And then, when they are ready, they donate them to these social institutions.

Again, it’s also our strategy to have a very intensive time there and a certain number of

weeks to do everything, because then I always have a feeling that you have to work quite enthusiastically or give all of your power in these weeks and try to solve the problem or try to reach your aim.

**WZ:** I think there's a big difference from the many other groups that work together in art. For a period of time when we have our projects we are concentrating only on the project. Normally groups—for instance bands—have rehearsals to record or for stage, but half of the time they do other things. We are very concentrated for a fixed period, and that's a difference.

**TS:** Is the work of the group a constant thing?

**WZ:** We can't exist from our work alone. We are paid only for these periods during the projects. The things we have to do in between like previewing the next project, or all the bureaucratic stuff, we do as volunteers. So we always have to have a job in addition to our projects to make money.

**TS:** Are any of your projects self-initiated or are they all initiated by invitations?

**WZ:** They are all initiated by invitations.

**TS:** In general, what do you think people's misperceptions of the group are? Do you ever hear

or read things written about the group that are common misunderstandings—maybe about how you work, or what your intentions are, or who is in charge?

**CE:** I think very often there is this argument: “Why does this have to be art?” or “Why isn't it social work?”

**WZ:** Or “Isn't it social work?” [laughter]

**TS:** Because you are a group with a number of people and you are working with these institutions, do you run into problems where they only want to pay for the accommodations for one person, like a normal individual artist, or do you find that people are supportive of having all of you come, because that's how the group works? Are institutions reluctant to fly in and house multiple people?

**CE:** In my experience it's been totally okay that we come as a group. We present ourselves as a group. I never had the feeling anytime that we'd have to face such arguments because we are a group and it's absolutely impossible that just one person could come.

**WZ:** It's up to them to invite all of us or not. You can invite Mick Jagger or you can invite the Rolling Stones.



WochenKlausur, Language Schools, 1999. Set up for refugees in Macedonia and Kosovo in the wake of the war in the Balkans. Photo courtesy of WochenKlausur.



**TS:** I used the same argument with a curator. I named a band with three members and I said, “Would you invite them to perform and just bring the drummer?” And finally, three plane tickets materialized. [laughter]

**WZ:** But we are always asked to send our individual biographies and we deny that, because our biography is the biography of the group. It was born in 1993. We do not send a biography of Claudia, and me and the others...I mean it wouldn't be a secret, but they invited a group and this group has its biography.

**TS:** Let me ask one last thing—and it's okay if this is too personal and you don't want to talk about it...

**WZ:** I'm not married. [laughter]

**TS:** I was going to ask about Pascale Jeannée's sudden death and how that impacted the group, and if there was a concern about whether the group would continue.

**WZ:** That was really the biggest problem we ever had, because she was the center of the group. I was a little outside of the group at that time because I had a big governmental job; she

arranged everything and she was really the heart of the group. And when she died suddenly, we thought about stopping the whole thing. But because that wouldn't have been in her interest, we first finished the project in Stockholm, Sweden where she died, because we said she started it and we have to finish it. And after that, we decided to continue, or I have to say *I* continued, because I was the only one left in the group. The others left for different reasons but one reason was that they didn't think the group could be stabilized again. And then I decided to ask other people to come into the group and as we see, it has worked. ■



# The Ex

The Dutch music group The Ex formed in 1979, in the midst of burgeoning punk scenes and squatter communities in Amsterdam and Wormer, in the Netherlands. Like many groups of the time, The Ex started in a burst of urgent musical and political energy and learned how to play their instruments as they went along. They released records on their own labels.

Packaging, distribution, promotion and live concerts with musical peers were organized with a do-it-yourself (DIY) ethos. The 2005 CD compilation *Singles. Period.* captures The Ex's output from 1980-90 as they released numerous seven-inch records. Their releases were often collaborations with other bands or musicians and were packed with posters, flyers and texts.

Twenty-seven years later, the group's musical chops have attained an undeniable level of power and control. Their sound no longer belongs to any one genre and is unmistakably their own. The Ex's bristly naked electric guitar sound is highly distinctive and capable of both extreme abrasion and tender interplay. Hard-hitting polyrhythmic drummer Katherina (Katrin) is one of the more formidable percussionists of any musical genre. Vocalist G.W. Sok (a.k.a. Jos), an intense ranter and provocative lyricist, has become increasingly sophisticated in his wordplay and emotionally affecting in his delivery.

The Ex frequently collaborates with guest musicians and creative people outside of the band. This has helped to widen their sonic palette considerably. Non-Western music has also had a striking impact on their work. The Ex are huge fans of African music in particular and the tours they organized of Ethiopia with jazz drummer Han Bennink were an extraordinary achievement for a band operating with limited resources. The Ex's inspiring commitment to maintaining an ethical practice that favors personal connections and exchanges over faceless profiteering has never abated. They are rigorous about who they work with and how they release their music.

The Ex's discography is vast and varied. *Singles. Period.* can be seen as a study of the band finding its footing and charging hard out of the gate. In 1986, the group released *1936*, a beautifully designed double single dedicated to the Spanish Revolution. It includes arrangements and adaptations of Spanish folk-songs and is accompanied by a 144-page book of historical photos of the anti-fascist movement.

1988's *Joggers & Smoggers* is a double album in which the band includes a huge number of guests—a deeply satisfying creative experiment that is loaded with phenomenal songs. Also, from 1988, *Aural Guerrilla* is an extreme sonic attack of rage and passion. In 1991, the band made *Scrabbling at the Lock*, a collaboration with the late American cellist Tom Cora that has an almost cinematic grandeur. Cora and The Ex released another great album in 1993, *And the Weathermen Shrug Their Shoulders*, which has Katrin singing a traditional Turkish song.

The group made *Starters Alternators*, their first album with the Chicago-based label Touch & Go, in 1998. It is a clear, loud recording, thanks to engineer Steve Albini; G.W. Sok's playfully caustic lyrics are his best yet. In 2003, The Ex's longtime bassist Luc left the band after nineteen years. His replacement on the 2004 double CD, *Turn*, was Rozemarie Heggen, an upright bassist who added yet another musical twist. Recently, Rozemarie left the band. The Ex is currently comprised of vocalist G.W. Sok, guitarists Andy and Terrie, and drummer Katrin. Colin, who does sound for live shows is also considered a member, as is Arrrd who handles merchandise sales. Generally only first names are listed on



The Ex in 2006 (left to right: Katrin, Andy, G.W. Sok, Terrie).  
Photo courtesy of The Ex.

the band's albums and website.

The Ex have many friends in Chicago and we have been privileged to see them perform quite often, sometimes in separate nights of improvisation with musicians from Chicago's free jazz scene. Concerts by The Ex are never nostalgic: the group usually does not trot out old fan favorites. They play music that is fresh and meaningful for them, which is to say, what they are working on at the moment. They are one of the world's great live acts and their obvious sincerity and generosity of spirit can be extraordinarily moving, exuberant and just plain furiously rocking!

In 2002, Temporary Services approached G.W. Sok to reprint a collection of his essays that were included in a long out-of-print book. Sok agreed to let us publish the texts, and then volunteered to do all of the graphic design himself. The end result is the booklet *Into The Gravy*, which can be downloaded for free on Temporary Services' website.

For this interview, Andy Moor responded to our questions via e-mail in March of 2006. For more information on The Ex, visit: [www.theex.nl](http://www.theex.nl).

**Temporary Services (TS):** The Ex has had many different personnel additions, but a core group has been around since the beginning. Four of the current members have been playing together for about sixteen years, three of you have worked together since 1985, and G.W. Sok and Terrie have played together since 1979.

Very few bands stay together with so many of the same people for so long and continue to make such vital music. Why do you think The Ex has been able to work together for so many years? What keeps your working relationship productive, exciting, and interesting over such a long period of time?

**Andy Moor (AM):** As I'm the most recent member of the band clocking in at a measly sixteen years, I may not be the most qualified of us to answer this. I think one of the main reasons that the band has lasted so long is a combination of us being very focused and certain about how we want to sound and organize ourselves, and at the same time, constantly staying open to trying things differently both musically and in how we run the band. We haven't allowed ourselves to get locked into one style or mode. Though we may be seen from the outside as coming from a very specific "scene", we don't see ourselves in that way. For sure the roots of The Ex come out of punk. That was the music we were listening to and inspired by when the band started, and because of that beginning the label "punk" has kind of stuck.

By the time I joined The Ex in 1990 I was hardly even listening to electric guitar music, not because I didn't like it anymore but because there was so much more music out there that I wanted to discover. This attitude has existed for me personally long before I joined The Ex. When I started playing music with the band

Dog Faced Hermans in 1985, our influences were from all over the musical spectrum: free jazz, African music, old ska, East European folk music. The Ex had the same attitude and openness. Our influences and references were Kurdish or Hungarian folk songs or Ugandan court music or Italian anarchist songs, but the important thing was to keep the sound and identity of the band and not to try and sound like a Romanian Gypsy band. There would be no point. They will always do it better than us. Instead we took inspiration and borrowed ideas or melodies from this music but did it with electric guitars in our own style. This approach hasn't changed much. We still draw inspiration from very diverse music and styles. Sometimes they are more obvious and direct like "Theme from Konono"—almost a cover version of a fantastic song by the Congolese electric thumb piano group Konono—but still it has become very much an Ex song. Another song from the last CD, *Turn*, ["The Prism Song"] actually began in the rehearsal room while working our way around a catchy Moroccan Gnawa riff.

Another important factor that has kept us alive for so long is that we organize nearly everything ourselves. You could call this a punk



The Ex in 1981. Photo courtesy of The Ex.

approach, if you take the idea that “punk” was about the band taking control of its own life and development—though most of the first generation of punk bands signed up to big record labels as soon as they had the chance. Hardly a punk philosophy. They made some great records but as far as operating as independent autonomous groups I wouldn’t cite them as examples. We operate on quite a low cost non-waste small level. We decide how many concerts we play a year. It’s hardly ever more than sixty or seventy. This keeps the music (and the band) alive. None of us want to spend two months in a van together playing the same songs over and over.

If there’s any advice to be given to a band, if they want to know how to last long and stay happy playing their music, it would be this. One of the many problems about working with big labels is that so much of the band’s money is spent without the band having any idea where it is going. And there is a massive amount of waste—that would drive me insane. Also the idea of what constitutes a success—is it selling 10,000 CDs? 50,000 CDs? A million? Or is it simply playing a great gig that makes the band and the audience happy? The line is usually drawn by the record label and can make a brilliant young creative band feel like a failure if they don’t reach this level. We sell three or four thousand maximum of each CD we release. That’s probably much less than most people imagine we sell but I think it’s also to do with the fact that the main focus of the band is the live event. When we make our music in the rehearsal space we are constructing a set to play live, not our next CD. I think our live performances are a much bigger success than our CD sales. We don’t go on tour to promote the new CD. We tour to play our music to people and if people want something to take home with them then they can buy a CD. If big record companies thought in this way they wouldn’t last a year, or wouldn’t be big.

**TS:** The Ex often brings in “guests” to play on certain tours or projects. At what point did the core members decide to invite others from outside the group to collaborate? What made you want to add additional people to your recordings and concerts?

**AM:** The Ex started inviting people to join them very early on. The CD *Blueprints for a Blackout* was an early example of this and throughout our twenty-six year lifespan there have been similar projects and CDs: *Joggers* and *Smoggers*, the “6

Point Single Series,” the two CDs with Tom Cora, *Instant* and *Ex Orkest*. We get inspired or excited by certain musicians and usually end up becoming friends with them first and at some point, though not always, we play together. It’s quite an organic process. It changes the musical balance of the band, which is always a good thing. We learn a lot from these collaborations and always hope that the musicians we invite do as well. But it is also a chance for us to expose them to our audience, and vice versa.

We don’t always play together on stage. Sometimes we invite a musician along to tour with us, for instance the English saxophone player John Butcher who joined us on a tour in Italy to play solo every night before our set. Many Italian Ex fans had never heard of him before, and likewise John had not played in these places before. So it opened up something. We’ve done the same with Anne James Chaton, a French sound poet and Djibril Diabate, a Malian kora player. It’s a way of introducing our favorite musicians to our audience. For us this is more challenging and adventurous than putting us on with a local hardcore or punk band.

The Ex Orkest was a very big operation. In this case we did a bit more preparation work. It wasn’t just inviting a few musicians to play along with us. We rearranged the songs and wrote out the parts for each musician and carefully selected Ex songs that we thought would work in a big band context—as well as choosing one or two compositions by other musicians.

The *Joggers* and *Instant* CDs were more improvised. With these we spent a few weeks building up a collection of skeletal frames, simple ideas or riffs and arrangements, and then invited musicians to add their own musical ideas to it. This was really exciting because the songs were really created in the studio and none of us knew how they would sound till very late in the recording process. Again, for me, this is a kind of celebration of both our and the guests’ music—and a big challenge to try and combine our sound despite having very different musical backgrounds. Often it worked; sometimes it didn’t. That’s a risk, but mainly it was good fun to do, and still is.

Inviting Tom Cora was different again. He became a band member when we were doing the Ex and Tom Cora thing, though The Ex also did tours in the same period without Tom. With Tom, we wrote the songs together and rehearsed together. It was a big challenge and sometimes a struggle. Trying to incorporate this acoustic



instrument, a cello, into our full electric sound was not a simple task, but I think we succeeded.

**TS:** There have been so many notable collaborations in The Ex's history. What were some that you felt were particularly important or meaningful?

**AM:** The collaboration with Tom was very important, partly because it happened at an important moment in The Ex's musical evolution. The band's musical world was changing—becoming wider and more diverse. I also joined at this time and it felt like I was joining a group that was moving into another musical world. So it was great timing. Also, of all our collaborations with musicians the one with Tom lasted the longest and we had a big success with the audiences. The first CD with Tom, *Scrabbling at the Lock*, also sold more than any of the others. I think people find this the most “accessible” Ex CD. It has more melodies and less abrasive guitars.

Han Bennink has also been a very important collaborator and musical inspiration. We played a whole set of Ethiopian songs with Han when we toured in Ethiopia in 2003 and 2004. His energy and incredible swing as a drummer were for me the most exciting musical challenge and adventure that I experienced.

**TS:** Have you ever tried to collaborate with another person and things simply didn't click, or were perhaps even awful?!

**AM:** We've had a couple of collaborations that didn't click. They've never been awful. I always learn something. Maybe we learn even more from the ones that don't work so well. What I notice is you know pretty quick if it's going work or not. And if you feel it's not working early on there is a tendency for the musicians to close off from each other and as soon as this happens it's quite hard to remedy this.

There're two kinds of stubbornness in musicians. One kind I like and it works and one kind limits possibilities. The stubbornness that I like is the Han Bennink variety. When Han is full on and he is totally focused and concentrated—listening, choosing to play along or play around—it becomes like a crazy musical game and I get very surprised by the music that emerges. Being surprised by your own music while you're playing it is for me essential and also the drive for continuing to do it.

The other kind of stubbornness is about staying in your musical camp and not listening or creating openings for the music to go in unknown directions. I'm sure we all do this from time to time, some more than others.



Another important aspect of collaboration is that it puts us in different contexts and this keeps us alive and fresh to new ideas. We don't allow ourselves to get stuck in a little corner just playing our own music to our own fans. By working with other musicians, dancers, actors, filmmakers, we discover new things about ourselves and also marvel at how different people from other disciplines perceive what we do.

**TS:** Are there other collaborations, not just in music, but in other fields that you look to for inspiration, or that have suggested ways of proceeding in your own work?

**AM:** Recently we did a project with a theatre group called *Electrique*. We did a version of *A Clockwork Orange*. There was a six-week rehearsal period followed by three weeks of performances in a giant old shipbuilding warehouse in the dock area of Amsterdam. They are a fantastic working group and we learned a lot from them. The difference is that we are six people and they are twenty. The way they divided their work up amongst themselves was very impressive. Part of the reason it worked is because the people in this group didn't seem to have the need for big power or ego struggles. We all recognized we had to get an almost impossible thing done in way too little time; it worked because a lot of time was saved by the

fact that everyone knew where their strengths lay and contributed them where needed.

I found this inspiring because we grew up in the DIY scene where we did everything ourselves—including things that we weren't very good at. Because a band is in most cases a much smaller group of people than a theater group, we often just didn't have all the skills and resources needed to get everything done. But everyone did a bit of everything—which wasn't always so efficient. Fixing the van, building the rehearsal space, repairing our equipment—I guess we learned how to do these things through necessity and now we can afford to get the van fixed at a garage, or rent out a rehearsal space, and it gives us more time to make music and do all the other organizational things necessary to keep the band going.

In this theater group they had everything covered. Whenever something specific was needed it was very clear who would be the best person to take this on. From building a massive crane-operated moving stage to buying fifty used chairs that would be smashed up each night to making sure there was good coffee and food in the backstage each night. And it was done on a relatively low, non-wasteful budget, which again is something we find very important. It's so much more complicated than what we have to organize as a band, but I'm sure we would learn a lot from being involved in such a production.

Ola Mafalaani, the director of the *Clockwork*

*Orange* production, had a very different eye in how she perceived what The Ex were doing as musicians. She was particularly taken with Jos' ability to read text in a completely honest intense open way without having to act or add any theatrical elements and still be totally convincing. This is something very different from how actors perform, and it's because Jos isn't acting—he is singing or ranting, as he has done for twenty-six years. But the result was for me one of the most intense performances I've seen by Jos and it was due to him being in this very different context and Ola pulling something very different out of Jos—something we may have never seen or discovered ourselves. And as a result it changes how Jos approaches the next set of Ex songs. That is a big luxury, that we can move far away and explore other ways of expressing ourselves, and always return to our core group, with new energy and ideas for making our next set.

**TS:** All of the members of The Ex have done other things outside of the band—other musical projects, record labels, tours, publishing and writing projects. How does each member's participation in other projects affect The Ex's ability to function and come together as a band? Are the individual members' involvements with other projects ever a source of conflict in the band? Have they ever been the reason that someone left the band?

**AM:** Most of the time peoples' side projects end up feeding back into the life force of the band. I play with several other musicians, especially musicians using electronics. I have to approach my playing in such a different way than when I play with The Ex that it has changed my overall musical approach and horizon. This I can give back to The Ex, and if I change it means all the others will change as well, if they want to keep it working. This happens with all of us. I guess we are constantly adjusting to each other's development and evolution as musicians. There is a constant transformation happening, something that probably isn't perceptible at any one moment but noticeable over a longer period of time. For example, by playing with Yannis Kyriakides and John Butcher I have discovered a lot about space and emptiness in music. The Ex is also concerned with space and even emptiness, though it may not appear so, but in a very different way. But it has affected the way I approach new arrangements and how I play with The Ex even when the sound is full on. The Ex is a great monitor for

me. Because it is a constant in my musical life, I can measure a lot of my musical developments when I play Ex music.

Sometimes we overdo it with our side projects and end up going on tour or going to a rehearsal already tired from having worked too much on something else. The good thing is nobody in the band makes comments about this because we've all been in that situation and know it can happen and just being aware of it somehow has prevented it from ever getting out of hand.

I don't think anyone has left the band because of side projects. People leave bands for very complex reasons. It's never simple and very difficult to completely understand—usually a mixture of musical and personal reasons, or financial. If a side project has enough power or influence to make someone leave the band, I don't think it's the side project that actually causes it. It's more to do with the development of the person. They have obviously been searching for something else and once they find it, then they are ready to move on. I think it's better if everyone tries other things and keeps these possibilities open.

Most of my personal and also The Ex's musical history has been about collaboration and improvisation. None of us have really endeavored to make music alone. The idea of making music for me from very early on has meant working with people. Finding a way to express yourself and at the same time making space for others and finding a common collective expression is an exciting dynamic. I know several great musicians who work alone and do an amazing job of it and I can imagine doing it myself, though it always strikes me that I may feel quite lonely if I did it for any length of time. Occasionally I make things at home on the computer or record a bit of solo guitar for a dance project or a film, but even here it is in collaboration with other artists. I think we always believed that three or four peoples' ideas combined is going to be more fun and interesting than just one—at least, it's more fun.

Improvisation is an essential tool in collaboration, and not just musically. When you work with people it's also about sensing their boundaries and finding their strengths and energy. Also sensing the space you're in—the room, the sound in that room. It's something we taught ourselves in the rehearsal space, without completely being aware at first that what we were doing was improvising. It was one of those situa-

tions where you are very focused working on one particular thing—in this case making a set of new songs—and not really being conscious that at the same time we were developing invisible skills that would make much more sense to us ten or fifteen years later.

**TS:** What moments in The Ex's history would you consider to be turning points? What moments stand out as strongly affecting the band's ideas, sound, or way of working?

**AM:** As I mentioned earlier I think a big turning point with The Ex was when I joined; not because I joined. I think The Ex were already in the process of a big change and I appeared at this moment as did Tom Cora. I think we are in another big turning point now. After Luc left, which was an enormous upheaval for all of us (especially as he had been in the band nineteen years), we really needed some courage and energy to continue. It was hard work. Roze joining gave us quite a challenge: trying to incorporate a new member into a band that has worked together so long is not easy. In the end it didn't last very long—again for so many personal and musical reasons—but I am happy we made this music together with her. It had a very different feel and direction from the last CDs we'd made with Luc.

And now, working as a four piece—which again was bloody scary at first—we decided to use baritone guitars to compensate for the bass disappearing, rather than take on another bass player. The reasons for this were partly practical ones. It is very hard to find a great bass player who has enough time to work full time with The Ex. We worked a bit with Massimo Pupillo from Zu and Colin McClean who I used to play with in Dog Faced Hermans. Both were great, but both had so many other commitments that we thought it would be too much for them to try and work with The Ex full time—something that involves touring, rehearsing, recording, organizing gigs and running the label.

The four piece has turned out to be a fantastic discovery, and Colin has been doing quite a lot of live sound for us which has worked great. He gave us some very encouraging signals in the very first concerts, which we needed, as we were quite unsure about how it would work without a bass player. It works. It's a very rhythmic dance oriented set and there's plenty of low-end sound provided by the baritone guitars and two fifteen inch bass cabinets. It's maybe my favorite set since I joined The Ex. We're still learning how to work

in this formation but I feel quite optimistic.

**TS:** How do you divide the administrative work that supports all of The Ex's activities? How do you split up the work of booking tours, getting the records you release on your own labels distributed, answering emails, designing your CDs, talking to the press, building the website and other activities that go into the band?

**AM:** We divide the work amongst ourselves. Jos does all the artwork, layout, mail order, general answering of emails. Terrie does the bookkeeping, keeps the distributors stocked with our CDs and organizes the French and Dutch gigs. I do the US, England, Italy dates, some mixing and mastering, and DVD editing. Kat organizes the German dates. We have good friends who help us with the web design work, and work with a few booking agents and two main labels: Touch and Go in the US and Vicious Circle in France. We have separate releases in these two countries as this is where we have our biggest and most enthusiastic audience.

There isn't really very much time left once you include the touring, rehearsals etc. But it's a small operation and our income is low—almost hand to mouth. We don't have big reserves or back up.

**TS:** How do you resolve conflicts in the band when they arise? What happens if the band can't come to consensus about an important decision?

**AM:** That's a good one. We are conflict avoiders but occasionally we have to sit down and thrash a few things out. Sometimes we get mad at each other and shout a bit. It's not very different from a slightly dysfunctional family. Usually we can resolve things, but we don't find it easy to sit down and have these talks very often so things can build up. Sometimes we can't resolve these things and then they usually resurface again and remain unresolved. They are private things; a bands' personal life should remain a well-kept secret. I think we've learned after fifteen, twenty, twenty-six years how to deal with each other and when to give space and when to insist. But it's a constant learning process.

If a band doesn't come to a consensus about an important decision—that is, if it is an action that one or two want to take but they don't feel the enthusiasm of the others—then we usually drop it. However, sometimes if one or two of us are convinced that it will be a success then they push for it and the others agree to give them the

benefit of the doubt. The Ex works best when one person gives a lot of enthusiasm or energy to an idea and usually we trust each other enough to support them. It seems to work out more often than not.

**TS:** Many of your recordings have been released by the band on its own labels, or through various independent labels like Touch and Go, Mordam and Homestead. What kinds of decisions go into how you release and distribute your music? What kinds of decisions inform which bands you play with and tour with?

**AM:** We chose Touch and Go based on recommendations from friends; Ian Mackaye and Steve Albini both suggested contacting them. They are also friends of the label. A lot of contact we have with labels and distributors and booking agents works like this. We don't usually go out searching for them. We are either approached or recommended to them by friends. One of the main priorities we have is, "Do we like the people?" We have to work with them and deal with them so this is important. The other important aspect is how they operate as a business, whether they are fair and especially how they treat the people they work with. We're not looking for tough business style dealers who get us the best deal or the highest fee. It is more important we can trust their judgment about how they choose to work, because in the end we have to deal with all the people that they put us in contact with. So as far as booking agents go, we work with people who are very trustworthy and who don't set up ropey deals with venues just to get us a few extra bucks. We want to come back to these places of course.

Choosing bands is simple: a combination of liking the music and the people. It doesn't matter what style. We're not looking for musicians who work or sound the same as us. That would be a bit pointless and narcissistic. A good example of the kind of varieties of music we have invited can be seen if you look at the programming of our 25th anniversary party at Paradiso in Amsterdam in November 2004.

**TS:** After twenty-six years of being a band, are there any goals that you feel disappointed about not having achieved after such a long period? Have you had any long-term expectations for the band that you feel have not been met?

**AM:** It's hard to answer this but I would say no. I don't feel disappointed because there have been

so many unexpected surprises in the long history of our existence. I never would have imagined playing with all the musicians we have, or having played in Ethiopia, or setting up these big anniversary parties, or touring with Konono, or our project playing with Getatchew Mekuria. Five years ago we found a cassette of his music in a small music shop in Addis. We didn't even know if he was alive at that point. I couldn't have imagined seeing him play live let alone playing with him a few years later. Those surprises tend to eclipse any disappointments, and most of the goals or ambitions that we still have, I'm sure if we continue long enough, will happen.

We've just completed a tour with Getatchew Mekuria and some guests: Colin Mclean, Xavier Charles, Brodie West and Joost Buis. We played a collection of Getatchew's songs—mostly written in the 60s and 70s—a few of which were based on traditional Ethiopian music that Getatchew ingeniously transposed to the saxophone, plus a few other Ethiopian tunes by various musicians such as Mahmoud Ahmed and Ayelew Mesfin. It was an amazing experience and a great success—very intense rehearsals which were spent mostly learning the melodies and chords and finding good arrangements that would work with two guitars, a rhythm section, and a horn section. It was great fun and a bit like working on a puzzle trying to figure out the best way to get this amazing music across. It's probably the first time we've made a whole set of songs, none of which were original Ex songs, but we made them into original Ethiopian-Ex songs. It was a fantastic collective effort. Everyone really contributed to the construction of the songs, adding some new ideas when they were needed, but never losing the really strong catchy melodies of this music.

Getatchew proposed the idea in the first place, which I already found incredible, that a seventy-year-old Ethiopian saxophonist invites The Ex to play his music. I guess he wasn't looking for a slick back-up band. I think he could feel our energy and spirit when he saw us playing and for him that was enough to trust us with his music. It was a joy to play some of our favorite Ethiopian tunes and have him as a kind of front man. We're not really used to that idea of a "front man", but in this situation it was totally appropriate and very humorous as well. ■



Being in groups is a fundamental component of being a person, and, without an impossibly huge number of people using and creating language before us, we wouldn't have these letters or words with which to communicate. Even a hermit needs a group of people from which he may be isolated in order to be what he is. When there is more than one hermit, we have "hermits." Like countless words in English, simply adding an "s" turns an individual into a group. The English language is incredibly nuanced when it comes to describing the multiplicity of ways in which human beings group themselves or others. English speakers have also adopted many words and expressions from other languages to describe groups, such as "ménage à trois." The following list is partial and is intended to give a sense of the variety, complexity and frequency of human groupings.

—Temporary Services, 2007

## An Incomplete List of Words Used to Describe Groupings of Humans

ADMINISTRATION — AFFILIATES — AGENCY — ALLIANCE — ALLIES — ALUMNAE — ANARCHY — APOSTLES — ARISTOCRACY — ARMY — ARRAY — ASSEMBLY — ASSOCIATES — ASSOCIATION — AUDIENCE  
AUTOCRACY — BAND — BANDWAGON — BATTALION — BATTERY — BEGGARY — BELIEVERS — BIGOTS — BOARD — BODY — BOURGEOISIE — BRANCH — BRIGADE — BROTHERHOOD — BROTHERS — BUNCH  
BUREAU — CABAL — CABINET — CAMP — CARNIVAL — CARTEL — CAST — CASTE — CAUCUS — CELL — CHAMBER — CHAPTER — CHOIR — CHORUS — CHURCH — CIRCLE — CIRCUIT — CIRCUS — CITIZENRY — CLAN — CLASS  
CLERGY — CLIENTELE — CLIQUE — CLUB — COHORT — COLLABORATIVE — COLLECTIVE — COLLEGE — COLLOQUIUM — COLONY — COMMISSION — COMMITTEE — COMMONWEALTH — COMMUNE — COMMUNITY  
COMPANY — COMRADES — CONCERT — CONCLAVE — CONFEDERATION — CONFERENCE — CONFRATERNITY — CONGREGATION — CONSORT — CONSORTIUM — CONSTITUENCY — CONSULTANCY — CONVENTION  
CONVOCATION — COOPERATIVE — CORPS — CORPOCRACY — CORPORATION — COTERIE — COUNCIL — COURT — COVEN — CREW — CROWD — CULT — CULTURE — DAUGHTERS — DEFENSE — DEFENDERS — DELEGATION  
DEMOCRACY — DEMOGRAPHIC — DEPARTMENT — DIASPORA — DIOCESE — DIRECTORATE — DISCIPLES — DIVISION — ELDERS — ELECTORATE — EMBASSY — EMPIRE — ENCLAVE — ENDORSER — ENEMIES — ENSEMBLE  
ESTATE — FACULTY — FAIR — FAMILY — FANS — FATHERS — FEDERATION — FELLOWSHIP — FELONS — FESTIVAL — FIRM — FOLLOWERS — FORUM — FORMATION — FOUNDATION — FRIENDS — FRONT — GALLERY  
GANG — GENERATION — GENTILITY — GOVERNMENT — GROUP — GROUPING — GROUPIES — GUARD — GUILD — GYNECOCRACY — HAGIARCHY — HAREM — HAVES — HAVE-NOTS — HEIRS — HEPTARCHY — HERD  
HIERARCHY — HOBBYISTS — HOI POLLOI — HOMELESS — HOUSEHOLD — HUDDLE — HUMANITY — HUMANKIND — ILLUMINATI — IMMIGRANTS — INFANTRY — INHABITANTS — INDUSTRY — INSIDERS — JAMBOREE  
JUDICIARY — JURY — KAKISTOCRACY — KIBBUTZ — KINFOLK — KINGDOM — KITCHEN — KLATCH — KREWE — LAITY — LEAGUE — LEGISLATURE — LITERATI — LOWER CLASS — MADWOMEN — MAIDS-IN-WAITING  
MAILMEN — MAIL-ORDER-BRIDES — MAJORITY — MAJOR LEAGUE — MANKIND — MARKET — MARRIAGE — MASS — MATERIALMEN — MEINY — MEMBERS — MEN-AT-ARMS — MÉNAGE À TROIS — MENFOLK — MENTORS  
MIDDLE CLASS — MILITARY — MILITIA — MINISTRY — MINORITY — MOB — MONASTERY — MOTHERS — MOVEMENT — MULTITUDE — MUNICIPALITY — MUTUAL AID ASSOC. — NATION — NATIONALITY — NATIVES — NAYSAYERS  
NEIGHBORHOOD — NETWORK — NEXT OF KIN — NOBILITY — NONBELIEVERS — OFFENSE — OFFICIARY — OLD GUARD — OLIGARCHY — OPPOSITION — ORCHESTRA — ORGANIZATION — ORGANIZED CRIME — ORDER  
OTHERS — OURSELVES — OUTFIT — OUTSIDERS — PANEL — PARATROOPERS — PARENTS — PARISH — PARTICIPANTS — PARTNERSHIP — PARTY — PASTORATE — PATRIARCHY — PEASANTRY — PEERAGE — PENTARCHY  
PERSONNEL — PETITE BOURGEOISIE — PETIT JURY — PHALANSTERY — PHALANX — PHYLE — PLATOON — PLAYERS — PLEBS — PLEDGES — PLUTOCRACY — POOR — POPULACE — POPULATION — POSSE — POWWOW  
PRESBYTERATE — PRISONERS — PRIVILEGED — PROFESSORiate — PROGENY — PROLETARIAT — PUBLIC — PULPIT — QUADRUMVIRATE — QUALITY CIRCLE — QUANGO — QUATERNION — QUINTET — QUORUM  
RACE — REAR GUARD — REGIMENT — REGIME — REPRESENTATIVES-AT-LARGE — REPUBLIC — RETINUE — REVOLUTIONARIES — RHAPSODERS — RICH — ROSTRAL COLUMN — ROTARY CLUB — SCHOLACANTORUM  
SCHOOL — SECT — SECTION — SECTIONAL — SEGMENT — SEGREGATE — SENATE — SERIES — SET — SEX — SHARE — SISTERHOOD — SISTERS — SOCIETY — SONS — SQUAD — SQUADRON — STAFF — STATE  
SURVIVORS — SYMPHONY — SYNDICATE — TALKOOT — TEAM — TERRITORY — THEATRE — TOURNAMENT — THRONG — TRIBE — TRIBUNAL — TRIUMVIRATE — UNION — UNIT — UNIVERSITY — UPPER CLASS

# What, How & for Whom (WHW)



The Ex in 2006 (left to right: Katrin, Andy, G.W. Sok, Terrie).  
Photo courtesy of The Ex.

Ivet urlin, Ana Dević, Nataša Ilić and Sabina Sabolović work together in Zagreb, Croatia, as What, How & for Whom (WHW). WHW is often called a “curatorial collective”. However, this term is not expansive enough to adequately describe their multifaceted practice. They curate exhibitions, organize networks of like-minded cultural producers and activists, unearth and make visible important historical Croatian art practices, host lectures and discussions, run a non-commercial exhibition space in Zagreb, and make really beautiful books with their long-term collaborator Dejan Kržić.

WHW’s practice is highly creative and unique. They continually push at the usually tight limits of what is acceptable curatorial practice. In addition, they never shy away from the inherent politics in any subject they choose to take on. They use and put faith in the exhibition format to engage enormous questions in ways that they could not be otherwise. WHW was formed around a hugely ambitious exhibition and series of public discussions around the legacy of Karl Marx’s Communist Manifesto in 1999. They found themselves in a peculiar historical situation: Yugoslavia no longer existed and was ripped apart by a brutal regional war; the socialist system had completely collapsed; neoliberal capitalism was coming in big and unknown ways; and yet there were no significant discussions about what to do next and how to openly and honestly evaluate what was good about socialism. WHW organized a large exhibition, numerous talks, and made a book. They were able to start a much larger discussion in Croatia on issues around the then current economic and political situation that went well beyond the confines of exhibiting art.

We first met WHW when they came to Chicago on a research trip for an exhibition they were organizing in Germany called Collective Creativity (2005). The exhibition culled together the practices of historic and contemporary art groups, Temporary Services included, from Brazil, Korea, Croatia, the U.S. and many other places. This exhibition functioned less like a historical survey, than it did to make visible how collective and group practices manifest themselves in totally different and diverse locales. The book they produced is one of the finest we have seen on collective practices. It deeply inspired the production of this book.

This interview was conducted by Brett Bloom of Temporary Services at WHW’s office in Zagreb, March 2006. All four members of WHW were on hand for the interview.

Temporary Services (TS): How did the four of you begin working together?

Sabina Sabolovic (SS): We got together on a particular project, which was the first exhibition that we did and from which we also have our name "What, How, and for Whom". This was in 1999. We started working on the exhibition dedicated to the 152nd anniversary of the Communist Manifesto. Just as with our projects now, this particular exhibition was very much rooted in a particular local and political situation. We were invited to do the project by ARKzin, a publishing house, which published a magazine and also later published books. ARKzin was one of the very rare really critical voices during the 90s in the time of a right wing government and heavy isolation on all possible levels, which also included culture. They republished *The Communist Manifesto*, with a preface by Slavoj Žižek. Although Žižek was a theoretical star, the book went totally unnoticed. This was 1998, the exact 150th anniversary. And then they were compelled to see if through art, through an exhibition, maybe some things could be communicated in a different way. That's how they invited us to do an exhibition. Somehow this first project went really well. We were really happy with our own communication and with what we came up with, and how it was accepted in the local circumstances. After that exhibition, which was dedicated to the relation between art and economy, we chose "What, How, and for Whom" as three basic questions of every economical organization. We decided to stay together and work together and try to keep in mind these questions which are always overlapping things that we want to do, for whom we are doing it, and of course this important how, which is shaping this realistic way in which the project will develop.

TS: Did you all know each other before you started working or did you come together just for this

Nata Ilić (NI): We came together just for this show. We knew each other from the university. Sabina and I met a few months before in an internship in Belgium. But it was more or less like intuition that we might try working together and then it went very well. Ivet joined just after we opened the *Communist Manifesto* show. It was only four of us and since the beginning we've collaborated with Dejan Kržić who is the designer and theoretician. He was the one

working with ARKzin, the independent publishing house that published the *Communist Manifesto*. He is still with us.

SS: Somehow, during the late 90s, all three of us started to work separately either writing or creating some small projects. And I have to say that what the two of them were doing was quite interesting. We somehow felt a similar sensibility.

NI: But we didn't come together thinking we would stay together. It was just that this project seemed to be too important for one person. We thought it was stupid to miss this opportunity to make something that could probably initiate public debate on socialism, because that was the main point of this project. It was a time of total amnesia of the socialist past. We felt personally deprived and intellectually challenged to put it back on the table to think beyond neoliberal capitalism as the only horizon. It was not about nostalgia about socialist times, but just to put it critically on the table again.

TS: When Marc talked with Ana in Madrid, she told him that Sabina had a background as a journalist?

SS: Yes. I started working as a journalist at the local radio station, 101, which used to be important in the 80s and then, unfortunately, it went slowly downhill. I worked there for five years. I started when I was eighteen, immediately after I started university. I was working for a daily cultural show and I was also editing an hour-long special dedicated to visual arts, culture and so on. And after that I also edited the visual art section in cultural newspapers. In fact, from these newspapers I started working with WHW. Then I completely quit journalism. But on the other hand both Ana and Nata were writing reviews.

NI: More or less, just starting. For me, the *Communist Manifesto* was the first exhibition I ever did . . . and it was ambitious.

SS: It was important, definitely, that all of us did have some links in this Croatian cultural scene, which is not that big; it was important that we already knew people and could approach them. We already had people that we could call, ask for advice, contacts, and so on. It was not like we came from out of the blue and nobody knew us.

Ana already had already organized

some exhibitions before and so on. So we knew some people already. Although I think that with that first exhibition we developed the circle of people who really keep supporting us until today.

Ana Dević (AD): One thing that brought us together and is keeping us together is this preparation time which means lots of discussions, and the process itself—the preparation—is very important. That means that all our questions and doubts during this process lasted for a very long period, at least six, eight months or something. So we discussed all these questions with the participants informally and somehow the results of these talks influenced the final results.

TS: How do you make decisions?

Ivet Ćurlin (IC): Talking. Consensus, I would say. We can all figure out things. I think we are very lucky in the respect that we have a very similar sensibility, and that's how we chose each other and that's why we stay together. So, we never had a serious confrontation about artistic practice in our projects, like, let's say two of us really wanted to do a project and then two didn't want to do it. Of course we have disagreements and misunderstandings. It's a normal process of a group.

SS: Most of our disagreements and big discussions in a tiring way come much more from the administrative burden.

IC: Operational issues. Yeah I would say most of the strain comes from the fact that we very often take on more things than we can handle. But, otherwise, in terms of content, we discuss it and talk and see what each of us thinks. We build upon each other more.

TS: But it's always really important that you all agree? That you have consensus?

IC: It's always important that none of the decisions we make makes any single one of us uncomfortable. And that has never happened. If there something that one person feels strongly uncomfortable with, then we discuss it at great length and give it up.

AD: But that happens very rarely, I would say, 'cause of the way that we are proposing things or concepts, angles, whatever. It happens that you

put your idea on the table. Everybody is influencing it so it is not any longer her or my idea. It already changes in this process of communication.

IC: It's not like we are coming and saying, "Okay, I have an idea about this or that," but very often the ideas for the exhibitions or projects come from our discussions on political situations or things that are happening, on things that are in crisis or are burning issues that we feel strongly about and then we start discussing: "Oh what can we do?", "How can we address it?" And that is how it comes about.

TS: So it's more organic. These things emerge from long discussions. But how do you deal with conflict? You already said you talk things through, but do you have other ways of dealing with it when it comes up? It sounds like there is not so much.

NI: Oh, no. We are just out of a big crisis. [Laughter]

SS: You caught us at a good moment. [Laughter] I think that it is a combination. On the one hand, we also do tend to maybe neglect some things and hope that they will pass. And maybe the dynamics will change in time, and in the process and so on. This is one thing that sometimes leads you to something but sometimes it just puts you in a dead-end street. I think that basically we do try to talk, and when there are things that really are a conflict which we cannot solve we also try to think of rules. Sometimes it turns out that rules are somehow the only thing that can solve a certain situation.

That's a bit new. We only came up with that in the last year, the last six months.

NI: I think it has to do with our realization that what we are doing is not only about how much we like it and how much we enjoy it. We have learned to value it. Okay, we created something. You cannot just abandon it. And in that sense, what Sabina mentioned about rules actually helps. Okay, sometimes we skip the friendship part and try to be professional. And then for a while it works like that and you become friends again.

AD: It's easy when you have a rational conflict or something which is really based in reality and concrete relationships. The worst is when you

have to deal with these irrational conflicts. That's why these rules and arguments and suggestions done in a very constructive way are just the tools.

TS: What are the rules that you have?

SS: I mean, it's hard to say. Usually we come up with rules for things that are troubling us the most. For example, one of the things we had recently was the traveling issue. So there were times when, you know, some people felt like they were traveling more for the things that we all agreed we have to do for different reasons. So now, you know, we try to make the rule that everybody has to take one "Have To" travel. [Laughter]

NI: There are travels when we all want to go and we can't. And there are travels no one wants to make and we have to.

SS: And then there are neutral travels—the third category is very recent. It is a category that can be refused, but somebody feels like doing it. So then you don't get either a "plus" or "minus" for it. [Laughter] You do it because you want to.

NI: The other thing is, of course, the administration. Since we started there is constantly more and more administrative work. Some of it is really boring. Some of it is totally new to us and totally hard to learn. The distribution of this kind of burden, but not only this kind of burden, after a number of years became an issue.

SS: This is also quite recent, maybe last year, we tried to do something which functions quite well. We tried to put two people in charge of a certain thing. Everybody is doing things, discussing, and of course involved in shaping the content and everything. But just on these practical terms . . .

IC: We have to divide it. Before everyone was doing everything.

NI: For the first project we were writing every e-mail together.

SS: Literally. We were sitting in front of the computer and saying, "Today we are answering e-mails."

IC: We sometimes still do it. We don't have the

luxury of doing it every day.

TS: But is it also maybe a matter of trusting each other to handle responsibilities?

NI and SS: Yes.

IC: I think we trusted each other before too, but it was fine and we maybe didn't trust ourselves! We needed the backup of others to have more confidence.

SS: But still when we are in a tricky situation, we have this collective e-mail writing. When either we have done something wrong or we really want to persuade someone to do something, then all of us try to put something into it. My feeling is that these e-mails always work.

IC: We try to shift because there are some things that absolutely nobody likes to do. Then we try to balance it and there are things that we all like to do. So we try to give each other freedom and to give each other space to really enjoy what we are doing.

NI: We really try to support each other in the sense that there are things that I know I am not doing well that someone else does better, but then again I am not doing it well because I am too lazy to learn it. So they try to make me responsible so that I learn it, but then again if someone still does it better, the other person does it. Something like this.

SS: We almost never have the conflict of not backing each other up. This really doesn't happen. So, whenever somebody is doing something, as Nata?a was mentioning, and it is really not going perfectly—although maybe the work is divided and this one person is supposed to do it—it is understood that at any moment you can just ask, "Can somebody do this with me," or "It is too much," or "It's going wrong."

NI: Basically, we try not to divide it that much. We don't want that Sabina becomes the press professional, I become the administrative professional, Ana the concept writer and that Iveta handles the realization. We try not to have it like this. Somehow each one of us is involved with everything.

AD: It's a good process of learning by doing things you are not very good at. Generally there

are rules. They are not written in stone, but at the moment we are keeping them.

NI: There are hierarchies also. Once you realize them, you try to untangle them, to break them down. They do happen now and then. Nobody is happy with them.

SS: In all the relationships in life, roles get set at a certain moment and then it's really a lot of investing and hard work to change them. We do try to work on them.

TS: How do describe your work internally and externally? How do you deal with those things?

NI: One of the first sentences we say about ourselves is that we make exhibitions. Sometimes it looks like something you have to defend. Like, why do you stick with the exhibition format? We tend to believe that this is a medium that should not be abandoned just because it doesn't always work perfectly. For us, making exhibitions has to do with working with artists. We also see our work a lot as a kind of service. Very often our work is about providing the chance, providing the means, giving support. For example, now, our plan for this year is really not to have grandiose curatorial concepts or anything, but just to help . . .

IC: Produce more work of Croatian artists.

NI: Not only Croatian artists.

IC: But also to produce more works. As Nataša mentioned, one very important aspect of our work is the question of opening things for public debate, opening things that are suppressed within society. And this is why for us it is also very important that we contextualize all our exhibitions. That's why we do all the lectures and all the other programs. So it's never only about exhibitions.

NI: We try as much as possible not to instrumentalize the art or the artists. Once we establish a contact, we try to keep it going on. Not like, "We use you for this one exhibition because your work fits perfectly," and then we abandon the person. We try to keep this contact alive. That's something I would say is very important for us.

TS: You also spend time supporting older artists and preserving history or making history visible.

IC: In Croatia, conceptual art is really a myth. It has never become a part of official structures. Important artists are not teaching at any schools, at the academy. They are not shown enough. There has never been a contemporary art museum or any place where you could see all those things. There are no catalogs. There are no video archives. We really felt there is a need to bring these things up to light and make them accessible to younger generations. We started from our own need. We were curious.

NI: I think it really has to do with the position of everything that used to be considered "non-official" art in the former socialist countries. It really has to do with the institutions that continually fail in their institutional role. So very often what we do is fill in the gaps left open by institutional culture. So it is a very different dynamic, as I see it, than it is in the Western, developed world. One of our motivations was, always half-jokingly, but not totally jokingly, that we would like to have a new museum. Our work would be complete once we open the new museum of contemporary art, new art history departments, a new academy and a new magazine for art, because none of these things are working properly. Of course we cannot do that. Of course we don't have a serious wish to do it, but it is a line you go after.

TS: But it seems like you are already doing it in your own way.

NI: In a way, yes.

IC: We have been working together for six years—it is very interesting to see how we are perceived now by the younger generation that is now in their early twenties. It was interesting for us when we were working on an exhibition these last few months and people told us, like, "You are an institution for us," and we were a bit surprised. But when you think of it, we did build a certain model of work that is now being taken as a model by younger people.

NI: We got a lot of validation from our international work. That is something which actually gives us power here, not visibility, but power.

TS: What are some terms you feel are important for describing? Like "collective"—how do you feel about that word? What is some terminology



that you feel comfortable with in describing the work you do together? And what do you absolutely hate when people talk about your work? Or not hate, but it just doesn't fit?

SS: I think we definitely like words like “collective”. We like something connecting us to the local, specific, political situation. For a while we were using this term “visual culture” while trying to find the word that would be as wide as possible. But lately we are not super happy about it.

We also like to stress that we organize different productions, always putting exhibitions first, but also we try to organize both lectures and screenings, and we try to publish books and newspapers.

NI: Sometimes what could be irritating is the understanding of “curatorship”. Because yes, we are curators, we don't really have problems with this, but not in the sense that we are this big authority that just comes and chooses or makes a concept into which other works are placed. We connect the notion of our curatorship with the questions of “what,” “how,” and “for whom” which cover more of the terrain than just displaying or making a representation of art works or of certain problems.

SS: We love when they call us “why, when” and all the other questions—which happens really

often. And also, something about our position, since it's like a curatorial collective—and I personally don't like it—is that they ask us to produce things as if we were artists. They invite us to participate in something, then they don't expect us to invite an artist, but to do something ourselves, which is not what we do. So we always try to stress that if we want to communicate something, we either do a publication—and then it is something with our input—or we do an exhibition, and this is what we do.

NI: But what is really irritating for us is when we are compartmentalized into Eastern Europe or post-socialism without any kind of understanding of what this could mean. This talk about a homogeneous idea of Eastern Europe is wrong. Or this talk about linking all the critical voices before 1989 to anti-communism, or this totalitarian darkness of communism against which artists were fighting. This kind of oversimplification is something which we encounter a lot. And one of our main agendas is to put some layers into these discussions. Recently, we got invited to do a show, and they asked, “Could you show something new and interesting from Eastern Europe?”

SS: No, no. Even worse, “New and surprising from Eastern Europe.”

NI: All these geopolitics, cultural geopolitics,



which are happening a lot in this area, are something that really concerns us. And there we see our role.

SS: When we do projects we try to stress the background that we come from and our really strong relations with other out-of-the-institution initiatives in Zagreb. We feel our projects are really trying to be developed in communication with these people, in dialogue. The background they give us and which we are also trying to give them is important to us.

TS: It still seems to be a fairly rare phenomenon that anyone would choose to curate in a collective fashion. What is your sense of this? Who has inspired the work you are doing together? Is that your sense that it still really isn't a common thing to be organizing things in the way you do?

IC: In terms of curators it is quite a rarity. You're right.

NI: People do get together on certain projects very often more and more.

TS: But to self-identify in the way that you have and to do it over a long period of time?

NI: I think it has also to do with this authoritarian finalized position. I think this way we do have a polyphony of voices that can't necessarily be compromised by each other but are completed by each other.

SS: I don't think that we have a precise inspiration that we can point our fingers at. There was an important heritage that we tried to turn back to in local terms, in the recent past, stuff that ARKzin was doing was definitely important and we were kind of connected with them at the beginning. Then also now in our activities we often return to the 70s and some of the things that were done in both artist-run institutions and alternative institutions and also to the beginnings of conceptual art. There are many things there that we feel we are building upon. Croatia has a rich and important history in those times. What is also interesting for us is that most of these activities, they were critical to the regime, which was in power, not from some dissident position but by taking some of the socialist values more seriously than the regime itself. Some of its criticism and standpoints are important for us.

IC: Also I think in terms of the long-term collaboration it's important that we all started together. We grew up together. When you look at other examples of curatorial collaboration it's usually very developed individual personalities artificially put together. It is hard to sustain that kind of collaboration in the long run. For us, our collaboration grew organically. We liked working together, we continued and we tried different things.

NI: But I also think that we see this collective framework is for us the only possible way to really become individual. I don't see that I have to concede something in order to make a project. For me to be me, I need this collective framework.

TS: In a way it's more honest about the fact that it takes other people to get things done.

NI: When we talk about What, How, and for Whom, it's also very practical. We did big projects. It would certainly be different if they were done by a single person.

AD: But also, in terms of personal ego dynamics, it is quite comforting to have this united front. You are part of it. You are positioning yourself much more easily in the surroundings.

NI: We are not canceling the possibility of each of us doing something individually. Not at all.

TS: Do you all work individually on things?

NI: Sometimes now and then. We do keep this possibility open. It is important for us. But we also like this utopian idea that you start from a collective and it becomes a movement.

TS: It's a nice idea that maybe is implicit. I wonder if it is a more practical collectivity, or more practical way of doing this. Looking back at the 70s, at least my own reflections in relationship to collectives in the U.S. in the 70s, they are just chaotic, open, and people are coming and going. They burn people out really quickly because they didn't address a lot of things. They didn't focus on something and things would fall apart really rapidly. I wonder, and I am just speculating now, if it isn't a generational thing, lessons learned from history, that maybe there is another way of doing it. Do you think about it like that?

NI: I tend to believe that this kind of history should be better known and that maybe then it could just be a generational thing, because we did learn something from this generation. One of the ideas of Collective Creativity was to show this experimentation which goes through generations without turning it into official history.

SS: It is also nice somehow, I don't know where we read that, that somehow this thing with collectives is like falling in love. You know everything. You know the scenario and you know all the possible outcomes. Nobody can teach you that. You have to go through all the phases yourself. Although there are all kinds of examples, in a way you have to try this thing for yourself.

NI: I think this practical element that you mention is very important. We are connected through our needs. Therefore the relationship helps us with our individual needs, and I think that there is nothing wrong with this. On the contrary, if you manage to make a structure in which these needs get fulfilled, then that's the goal.

SS: On the one hand, there are personal needs. On the other hand, this practical moment exists very much in the outside space: how are we perceived from the outside? There are so many things that we couldn't make happen if we weren't a collective. We make a front. We are just stronger.

TS: I am curious about the language you have developed special to your own practice, how you communicate within the group, how your communication has developed. I have noticed that every group that has worked together for a long time has developed their own language. Do you talk about it? Could you describe that?

NI: I actually do think we have a quite a certain strong division between our internal and external language, and one of the best things for me in working together is that this language we use internally is completely without censorship. You can say the most . . .

SS: Ridiculous things. [Laughter]

NI: In order to put your point through. It works. And that is certainly something we don't go out in public with.

AD: It is the most relaxed way to communicate about projects and ideas. Also, what has happened lately, since, two years ago, we started to collaborate within this platform called Zagreb Cultural Capital 3000, which includes Platforma 9,81, Multimedia Institute (MaMa), Center for Drama Arts, BLOK, Kontejner, Shadowcasters, and Community Art. What happens between these different groups and collectives together is that we also established internally a much more relaxed but still very critical way of discussing things.

SS: We will not get into the loads of stupid words that we have. [Laughter]

TS: If people saw our internal correspondence, they would think we were children. Just the language we use is so cheesy and silly.

NI: Ours is plain stupid. [Lots of laughter] But it works.

TS: The publications you make are really beautiful. How does publishing play a role in your work? What is the significance of making so many publications?

NI: It's really about distribution, actually, which we never did properly. But it was always material to give away, that can reach people.

IC: To make a trace. To fill a gap. When we started there was no critical theory being published in Croatia at all. In the 90s, the book market in Croatia completely collapsed, along with the translation of any serious critical texts. So we wanted to fill that gap and publish things we thought were very relevant and are not being read here. Also, throughout doing it, we learned how much people value it and how many people we reach through it.

NI: And maybe we would treat it differently if we did not work with Dejan. I am not sure if we had to find a new designer every time that we would do it. Making publications was never really about designing. It was about making a point through design. Dejan's favorite quote is "You can judge the book by its cover." [Laughter] And also we publish a lot of these little leaflets. And we treat it as propaganda material. If we could we would drop them from the planes on the city—which we can't afford, but that would be beautiful.



AD: Another important and very simple reason for publishing is that this is the way we actually create the context for the exhibition. Our own curatorial voice within the shows themselves is often not so prominent in the way that we construct things and objects. It is also a follow up to the show.

TS: Most curatorial collectives tend to be predominantly made up of women: first of all, do you think that's accurate? Why do you think that might be the case?

SS: We know only one other women curatorial collective: B+B.

NI: I am not sure it is accurate, but it could make sense. Curating is servicing. Servicing is traditionally, but also actually, a woman's job much

more than a man's job. And if we understand groups as a kind of protection, then probably women are more in need of protection.

IC: It is very interesting to see how we are perceived from the outside. Croatia went through a really long period of reinstating traditional values where it's not considered appropriate for women to be too ambitious and too successful. If you look at the papers and what is going on the media, there is this whole new wave of motherhood.... It is interesting to hear, sometimes a bit scary, how people perceive us as not being feminine enough.

SS: I don't have a very precise and articulated standpoint about it, but also sometimes I feel we do manage to do some things because we are four women. I think that maybe somehow with

this political background that we keep on stressing, if we were four guys it would be perceived in a different, more militant way, maybe be more easily dismissed.

NI: I am not sure if it is good or bad for us. It is probably bad for us. [Laughter] It could be true. Four men would be an army. [More laughter]

NI: For women to feel protected by a group is admissible or permissible, but for men, they should never cry.

TS: We used to come up against really sexist interpretations of our work together, that Marc and I were the leaders and Salem just followed. But it was also really racist too because it was like they wouldn't see her because she was biracial, half Filipino, and she would be really marginalized in the way that people saw the group. We worked hard against it for a long time. We don't hear that same crap anymore, because the way we communicate with people has changed. We have internal conversations about all the problems. Sometimes it is hard for Salem to put up with two stubborn men. But, it's really strange how those external perceptions form.

NI: We certainly do live in a sexist world. Even in Zagreb Cultural Capital 3000, this collaborative platform of eight organizations, we are half and half in terms of gender, and we very often feel that there is a very male or patriarchal way of discussing things. The starting positions are all equal, and we all try to be equal, but it is just really hard. And we all know from personal... every heterosexual relationship is burdened with this patriarchy. But you can't just get rid of it by saying that you don't agree with it.

TS: It takes a lot of work, and you have to be conscious of it and work through it.

NI: It has taken already generations of women and men working on this. And it can be swept from under our feet so quickly.

TS: I want to shift now and talk about Collective Creativity. Maybe you could start by describing the parameters of the exhibition, some of the organizing principles and how you gave it form initially, and how that shifted.

SS: I think it is important, first of all, to say that this exhibition was the outcome of a really long

process. We started working on Collectivity in Zagreb. We've been working around it with smaller exhibitions, series of lectures and discussions and so on. And we always planned to do an exhibition as the outcome of some of these processes. Then the invitation came to do it in the Kunsthalle Fridericianum in Kassel, Germany, which gave us totally different parameters than if we were doing it back home. It was really important for us that we didn't start from scratch to build something for the Fridericianum, but we had this process behind us, which was very much rooted in the local situation and heritage, and so on.

NI: Also, out of personal curiosity. Like this interview, it is really about trying to find out how groups come together, how they stick together, how they fall apart. That was really personally interesting from our experience of working in a group, initially, not a very ambitious task.

TS: What were some of the surprises you came across in asking people about their group process? Were there things that were completely surprising and new to you in some of the folks you worked with and talked to? Or just some way of doing something that seemed really outside of your own experience but that also was really plausible within the way that somebody else worked?

SS: On a very private level, I think, what was really nice for us was that we realized that in working with so many groups that somehow tolerance was bigger than when working with individual artists. When we got this invitation, we were thinking of how to shape something for the Fridericianum, which is a completely different context for what we do than in Zagreb, and so on. On the one hand this was a test for our belief in the exhibition format. On the other hand, we also had to find the answer to "For whom?" And for us it was very important to somehow have a feeling that we were also trying, maybe even in very small ways, to give back something to the people who are involved, to the groups.

We didn't have a huge budget, so it's not like we could invite everyone over.... it was not even that. It was some effort to try to have a meaningful conversation with each group, to try to give them space, freedom for making their own decisions, giving them space to present themselves as they wanted. And in the process of installing the exhibition there were loads of people there

and this limited time to do the set up. But somehow there was really no tension between people. Really something happened: an extremely productive atmosphere of communication and tolerance. And then some people from the outside said that they were not used to having exhibitions that were so big where you had these moments of solidarity. I think that for me personally, this was a really important and nice experience.

NI: But also, in the end we realized how hierarchical the whole system was: the Kunsthalle Fridericianum has one position in Germany, and Germany has one position in Europe, and us, four women from Zagreb, non-institutionalized, I mean at least not institutionalized like the Kunsthalle Fredericianum is... It became a really strong realization for us. I mean, it is something of course you know, but it is different when you go through this process.

Making a museum exhibition of all of this was also... it's an attempt that I am glad we did, but I am not sure it is an attempt I would do again. What Sabina mentioned about physical

presence during the set up, it was magnificent, I would say. It's on the one hand a very ambitious call. It's almost like you try to create an international understanding between people who share something, some beliefs about how the world looks and what we can do about making it look better.

IC: A certain atmosphere happened that really brought people together . . .

NI: In which knowledge could be shared . . .

SS: And some things really came out of it. We were so happy—in e-mails just a month ago, there was this joke that “brotherhood and unity between Russian and Argentinean people happened.” [Laughter] So Russians are now in Argentina. They met at the show and they got invited to go there.

TS: I think you made a lot of people visible to each other for the first time.

WHW: Yes

# The Diggers

The Diggers were an enigma. They were an anarchist guerilla street theater group that provided services to others, but also a non-linear organization that eventually relinquished control of its own identity. They were actors and actresses who did away with the theater, and eventually did not need plays. This excerpt from The Diggers' 1968 manifesto, *Trip Without a Ticket*, gives us an idea of how they were thinking about street theater:

Guerrilla theater intends to bring audiences to liberated territory to create life-actors. It remains light and exploitative of forms for the same reasons that it intends to remain free. It seeks audiences that are created by issues. It creates a cast of freed beings. It will become an issue itself.

This is theater of an underground that wants out. Its aim is to liberate ground held by consumer wardens and establish territory without walls. Its plays are glass cutters for empire windows.

The Diggers ran a bank, but gave everything away. Digger philosophy propagated the ideas of free culture and the practice of generosity throughout the Western world. Both their activities and their ideas helped to instigate and challenge the 1960s counterculture.

The origins of what came to be the twentieth century Digger movement can be found in a street theater group started in 1959. The Diggers were originated by members of both the Artist Liberation Front., and of the San Francisco Mime Troupe, a theater group that offered free plays in public spaces, often without permission from city entities.

The Diggers took much of their energy from the ideas of public space and giving to others that had been fostered by San Francisco Mime Troupe productions. Their ideas and subsequent activity expanded upon this, developing the ideas of 'sharing' and 'free' into a philosophy, and eventually a movement. They created many public spectacles and actions, including a parade to celebrate the Death of Money, public games spread out over traffic-congested intersections, and countless free rock concerts and performances in vacant lots and public parks.

The Diggers' name was adopted from an earlier community, who had also called themselves The Diggers. The original Diggers were a seventeenth century English collective, led by Gerrard Winstanley, whose vision was to rid the world of private property, and of any market. They became notorious for putting their beliefs into action. Winstanley and his collective came to be known as the Diggers after taking over several areas of public property in various areas of England during 1649. They farmed the land and gave away the harvest to their followers. The English Diggers desired a society where nothing could be bought or sold. The Diggers of 1960s San Francisco were inspired by this and by their own past experiences performing free street theater. The twentieth century Diggers attempted to create a truly "Free City". Their ideas and activities were set towards revolution and mutual liberation while maintaining autonomous self-organization.

The following is from a Diggers essay titled *The Post-Competitive, Comparative Game of a Free City*:

Free Cities are composed of Free Families (e.g., in San Francisco: Diggers, Black Panthers, Provos, Mission Rebels and various revolutionist gangs and communes) who establish and maintain services that provide a base of freedom for autonomous groups to carry out their programs without having to hassle for food, printing facilities, transportation, mechanics, money, housing, working space, clothes, machinery, trucks, etc.

The notion of Free manifested itself in many ways, from basic to systemic. The Diggers became well

known outside of the bohemian/artist/activist/hippie community by giving away food. Diggers would make large pots of stew and endless loaves of bread and offer meals in public parks free to anyone who wanted them. The Diggers were known in San Francisco for their Free Bread initiative: their bread was easily recognized by its unique shape, caused by the coffee cans in which it was baked. They used donated or salvaged flour at the Free Bakery, from a variety of sources: often the bags of flour had been damaged and could not be sold to consumers or retailers. The Diggers were good at finding surpluses and turning them into a free resource for others through communal action.

They also maintained Free Stores—storefronts where nothing was for sale, but anything could be taken. The Diggers didn't invent the notion of giving away items in a setting that resembled a retail experience, but were good at inspiring others to do the same. This is a definition of the Free Store concept from the Wikipedia common encyclopedia at [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org):

A Free Store is a shop where people exchange goods without a pricing system: items that are no longer wanted are put on one table, and items available to be taken are put on another. Although the roots of the "free store" lie in the anarchist movement, hippies of the 1960s ran a few initially successful free stores across North America. Today the idea is kept alive by the new generations of environmentalists who view the idea as an intriguing way to promote the reusing of products, and as a project with positive social impacts. However, outside certain North American environmental circles, free stores are very rare in modern North American society.

In many communes, Free Stores took the form of Free Boxes. The Free Boxes would be left outside of the communes and filled whenever anyone had something they wanted to give away. They were easier to organize and maintain than an entire store.

The Diggers inspired later groups, like the Yippies, with their savvy use of the media to disseminate their ideas. Each event and initiative was advertised, celebrated, and documented by self-published broadsides, posters, and newspapers that were distributed as handbills throughout San Franciscan neighborhoods. They later used publications to call for mass participation in larger projects, like the Free City Bank. Local merchants and rock bands, spurred on by Diggers propaganda, were encouraged to contribute 1% of their profits during a given time to the Free City Bank, which in turn would pay for Diggers Free Food initiatives, rental of spaces for Free Stores, and more Diggers publications. An example of an early manifesto calling for an active participation in Diggers philosophy can be found in this text from their 1966 handbill *Money Is An Unnecessary Evil*:

#### Money Is An Unnecessary Evil

It is addicting.

It is a temptation to the weak (most of the violent crimes of our city in some way involve money).

It can be hoarded, blocking the free flow of energy and the giant energy-hoards of Montgomery Street will soon give rise to a sudden and thus explosive release of this trapped energy, causing much pain and chaos.

As part of the city's campaign to stem the causes of violence the San Francisco Diggers announce a 30 day period beginning now during which all responsible citizens are asked to turn in their money. No questions will be asked.

Bring money to your local Digger for free distribution to all. The Diggers will then liberate it's [sic] energy according to the style of whoever receives it.

The Diggers came up with many slogans and phrases that impacted American culture—so much so that the origins of these sayings are not known to most people. A sampling of phrases includes: "do your own thing," "today is first day of the rest of your life," and "create the condition you describe." Each encourages self-organization and self-definition in direct distinction to the dominant culture's common definitions of social and economic relationships.

Many Diggers projects were replicated outside of their California base. As the movement grew, The Diggers' ideas of questioning the uses of public space and common economics spread to the point where they became a general characteristic of the counter-culture.. They intended from the beginning to be an anonymous organization, allowing others to freely distribute their ideas and build their own "Diggers-style" communities. Their dedication to living free of the ideas of identity and capital

allowed many people to use the Diggers name for their own groups and initiatives. Diggers Free Stores sprouted up internationally, none run by the original group.

It is difficult to estimate the number of people involved with the Diggers. Many people who weren't in San Francisco or who had never worked with the original group called themselves "Diggers." They easily identified with the Diggers' spirit, politics, and activities. Even people who were later identified as founding members of the movement have gone to great lengths to downplay their individual roles and stress the collective energy of the many people involved. In 1967, the Diggers finally gave away their last "possession"—their name. They re-named themselves the Free City Collective, in honor of their vision of a new San Francisco filled with free culture. An event in October of 1967, called The Death of Hippie, was a tongue-in-cheek public parade and performance celebrating the handing over of the Diggers name to the scores of other groups that were using it. Free City Collective pushed the initial ideas of the Diggers even further. The common practice of giving food away in neighborhood public parks was amplified into Free Food Distribution, an initiative by which the Diggers distributed free bags of groceries to each commune in the city.

The Diggers produced their last collective publication in 1968. Paul Krassner, publisher of *The Realist*, agreed to print 40,000 copies of this edition. In return, he published an issue of *The Realist* inside *The Digger Papers*. The final publication was a combination of new articles and some of the most celebrated manifestos and handbills that had been distributed over their last two years.

#### RESOURCES:

An extensive archive of information on the The Diggers can be found at [www.diggers.org](http://www.diggers.org).

The definition of Free Stores and information on Gerrard Winstanley came from [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org).

*Sleeping Where I Fall: A Chronicle*, published by Counterpoint Press, is actor Peter Coyote's 1999 memoir that chronicles his experiences while a member of the Diggers.



# Funkadelic / Pedro Bell

Pedro Bell, 2006. Photo by Temporary Services.

Funkadelic and Parliament are two interrelated music groups whose origins date as far back as doo-wop test records cut fifty years ago. At the height of both bands' popularity in the late 1970s, the groups were releasing several albums a year on multiple record labels with shared personnel numbering in the dozens. The total number of participants throughout "P-Funk" history numbers in the hundreds. Additional bands and solo projects in the P-Funk family include Bootsy's Rubber Band, Fred Wesley and the Horny Horns, Parlet, Eddie Hazel, Brides of Funkenstein, and Zapp.

While many associate the creation of funk music with well-known names such as George Clinton or Bootsy Collins, gaining an accurate understanding of the many contributions to the work of Parliament or Funkadelic is a staggering feat. There are hundreds of musicians, engineers, stage managers, bus drivers, artists, and bystanders that in some way affected and created the evolution of P-Funk. Throughout the histories of both bands, musicians and others in their coterie constantly took many roles.

Pedro Bell, also known as "Captain Draw", "Sir lleb" and "Pedrodelic", was a college student at Roosevelt University in Chicago in the early 1970s. He was inspired to write for Roosevelt's student paper *The Torch* when he read in Abbie Hoffman's *Steal This Book* the suggestion that journalism be used as a means of scamming free records and concert tickets. Bell contributed reviews, articles and comics to the paper and attended concerts by such diverse acts as Sun Ra, Blue Cheer, Alice Cooper and Jimi Hendrix. Bell's art and writing were hardly the work of a mere scammer—during this time, Sir lleb was developing a shockingly original writing style and a seriously complex, sarcastic, critical and often scatological comic drawing language.

After hearing the first strains of the song "Mommy, What's a Funkadelic?" on the radio, Bell knew that he had found something that required further investigation. He contacted the group and soon became the primary provider of Funkadelic's complicated and dense album covers and liner notes. Bell's first album cover design for Funkadelic was 1973's *Cosmic Slop*. Additional covers include: *Standing on the Verge of Getting it On* (1974), *Tales of Kidd Funkadelic* (1976), and *Hardcore Jollies* (1976). In 1981, Bell's extraordinary (and just a little kinky) art for Funkadelic's album *The Electric Spanking of War Babies* was censored by Warner Brothers—a cause for justified and long-felt bitterness.

Pedro Bell DJed in clubs during the late 1970s disco craze in Chicago. In the 1980s he produced art for George Clinton's many solo albums along with record reviews in comic form for the *Village Voice*. Pedro's art and writings (including reprints from his *Torch* days) regularly appear in *Roctober* magazine. He released his own magazine *Zeep* in 1997 and his artwork continues to appear in selected P-Funk related projects as recently as George Clinton and the P-Funk All Stars' sprawling double CD mess *How Late Do U Have 2BB4UR Absent* (2005). While problems with his eyesight have made drawing difficult



for Bell, he maintains a crew of helpers to aid him in his visionary artistic pursuits because, as he told us, his “third eye” remains fully intact.

Temporary Services and our intern Greg Stella met up with Pedro Bell in Chicago’s Hyde Park neighborhood on April 26, 2006, where this self-described “multi-level operational crazoid” and “self-taught pagan” has been living of late.

We have included a variety of quotes directly after the interview with Pedro. They are from others in the P-Funk camp and shed additional light on the creative process in this gargantuan family of funkateers.

**Marc Fischer (MF):** Before Funkadelic you had been sending art and ideas out to Frank Zappa, Sun Ra, Hendrix...Did you propose album cover designs for those people?

**Pedro Bell (PB):** Well yeah, that was the original purpose. I contacted Hendrix, Sun Ra and Zappa.

**MF:** When did you contact Hendrix? Because you must have been really young—were you in high school?

**PB:** Oh yeah. Yeah.

**MF:** So when you were in high school you sent art to Hendrix?

**PB:** Letters. Well, Warner Brothers was set up in a whole different way. It was kind of hard to get through the wall of flam. I never talked to anybody from Hendrix’s camp at all. Just when I got to a point where I was beginning to infiltrate, he kicked the bucket. But making contact took a long time. Sun Ra I never heard from at all. But Zappa—I heard from him quick, which surprised me. He already had his own posse. So I was cool with that.

**MF:** So with George Clinton, how did you get through to him?

**PB:** There was really no information on his first two albums to contact him directly.

**Salem Collo-Julin (SCJ):** How did you first hear about their music?

**PB:** In the late 1960s, there was an ABC affiliate called WLS, an FM radio station. They were the first ones, and they had a show called *Spoke*. And back in those days, they didn’t have to go through a chain of program directors and all those other kind of people and could go ahead and play records. One night they had this female DJ and she said “Oh, I just got this record in the

mail, this came through today and it’s a really unusual name; it’s called ‘Funkadelic.’” Ooooh, shit, I said. [Laughter] “Since it just came in we’re just going to play it because I think it’s going to be pretty interesting.” And the first track starts out with “If you will suck my...” [Pedro imitates radio static, laughter by all] “Um, we’re going to go to a commercial while we give this record a listen.”

**MF:** Nobody even got their “funky emotion” licked?

**PB:** Right! Right! [Laughter] So they came back from the hurriedly inserted commercial...[Pedro imitates the DJ again] “We cut out the technical difficulties but the rest of the track seems okay, so once again, Funkadelic, and it’s really okay.” So the first line goes “If you will suck my soul, I will lick your funky emotion.” I thought the spoken part of the song was cool but that didn’t affect me as much as the music did, because it was sleazy, beyond the Blues thing. And of course it was basically Hendrix playing in slow motion to me in the way all the stuff was played, and kinda James Brown-ish too, as far as still being on the beat and all that. So I was through from that point. So it took me about three weeks to find the album because there was no direct information connecting it to George Clinton. So I went through Westbound—it took me almost as long to find Westbound because it was a small label out of Detroit...but by *Free Your Mind*...I had heard from George. So the real deal for me as far as me getting involved with P-Funk was I was the only one in line. It was an easy thing.

**SCJ:** Were you the most persistent?

**PB:** No—the only one in line. [Laughter] And one of the things I had learned by accident, or experimentation...they said when you do business letters, be nice, if you can use a typewriter, no typos, and all that kinda stuff. Well as long as it took me to make a nice little letter, I said, “I’ve gotta put some kind of edge on my stuff.” So I

would do fancy lettering on the envelope and always use the big envelopes. And I would get fancier and fancier...I wasn't doing them wild at first but later I started getting compliments from business entities about those envelopes. If I didn't know a department I'd contact customer service using a decorated envelope and so I'd get a letter back from the Head of Customer Service, or sometimes, the Vice President or the President saying, "We enjoyed your letter, blah blah blah." [Laughter] And sometimes they'd send me free stuff or I'd make a catalog request and they'd send a catalog free. I'd ask for a product and they'd go ahead and send me some free samples. So I said, "This is workin'!" So naturally for P-Funk I did hand-lettered organic lettering—Robert Williams style I should add.

**MF:** Did you know of his work back then?

**PB:** Yeah. In fact, when I was in high school, a teacher said my stroke was Surrealistic. And I'd say, "Okay, what does that mean?" So I'd go to the Art Institute of Chicago and go to the library and—okay, that's Dali and Max Ernst and all that. But Williams really inspired me more and Big Daddy Roth because they was writing crazy stuff. That's why I give Williams more props in terms of being inspiring, because he's a hell of a writer as well. Especially when he started doing underground comics by himself because he would write the stuff and illustrate it.

**MF:** Even in the paintings he makes he always has these extremely long titles right?

**PB:** Right. Of course. And that inspired me. You know, *Inspired Unrotating Rodan Acute Blasphemy*. [Laughter] And that's how I got the writing assignment for doing the liner notes for P-Funk. George got around and asked me about the art work... actually the story's so old I don't know which one came first, but maybe he asked me to do the artwork. For which I was grateful. Or maybe he asked me to do the liner notes for *Cosmic Slop*. So that started me off. I said, "I can go ahead and write crazy stuff like Zappa and Williams." 'Cause Frank Zappa always wrote his own liner notes. He had his own artists that did the graphics but he always wrote his own liner notes. So I got the chance to do both of them myself.

**MF:** You were doing this under the name "Sir lleb". Where did that come from—because you were using that for *The Torch* at Roosevelt too.

**PB:** Right. It's from elementary school. We did the name game. Turn your name backwards and see if you could make a name out of it. I was lleb, so we said Sir lleb. One of my friends was named Duck, so if you make the "c" or the "k" silent he was "King Kcud". [Laughter] So I kept mine and then later I used that as my signature.

**MF:** Politically the liner notes in *Cosmic Slop* are pretty tough—there's the stuff about the "napalm-jelly and barbecue sandwich of war" and Nixon. Was there any resistance to that writing from the record label?

**PB:** No, not Westbound. What *did* happen, as soon as I started corresponding with George, Armen Boladian from Westbound called me one time and told me that the Canadian equivalent of the F.B.I. came by the office looking for him and me. Because they wanted to find out what was going on and he had to tell them. And George said that some envelopes were written on by people from the post office—like, "What's this all about?" Putting notes on the envelopes.

**SCJ:** Well the Canadian postal service is really notorious for censoring things coming in. Were you ever challenged by members of the bands on what you were writing or was everyone in agreement with your liner notes? I admire that you fit in so much information in your designs. You're working with this huge cardboard gatefold cover, but there's still about five hours of reading on it because you've got little comic strips buried in little comic strips...

**Brett Bloom (BB):** And you often miss a lot too. You keep coming back; it's a really nice part of the experience of the covers.

**PB:** Earlier, I had taken some courses in advertising and marketing. So therefore, even though record companies did not like me originally because I was an outsider and it looked like I was in flagrant violation of all of the rules, I already knew what the advertising thing was at least as far as basics. Some things I followed to the letter as far as how to design a package. Some rules I bent, and some rules I broke. But there was always a logic to my madness, so to speak. So, at first band members would say, "I don't know what the hell this is! But it's all right!" [Laughter]

**BB:** Were there ever times where everybody in the band was really heavily involved with the

design of the gatefold or did you have a lot of control and say and autonomy?

**PB:** For the first two albums they actually came and kind of looked over them. Everybody was cool. The first time the boys in Parliament came through. And then the second visit some of the Parliament boys came through and most of the Funkadelic boys came through just to look and see what was goin' on. And I wasn't sure—well actually out of a technical necessity—was that some people had nicknames and some people didn't. So in order to fill out the descriptive sentences, I'd say, "This sentence is too short—oh, because that person doesn't have a nickname." So I created nicknames for everybody just to fill out the columns... [Laughter] And everybody was happy about that. "I was lookin' for a nickname. That's cool. That's cool."

**SCJ:** Did most of those stick?

**PB:** Most of them. Uh... "Doo Wop"—Gary "Doo Wop" Shider, I gave him that. His first name was with one "r" but he puts two "r's" in now. "DiVinci" for Bernie Worrel because he's a genius. He's that deep. He was playing killer orchestral stuff at like four years old. He's no joke. "Bootsy"—that was his all along. He had that before. "Magic Mike" Hampton—the band called him "Kidd Funkadelic". I called him "Magic Mike." Ray Davis became "Stingray" Davis.

**MF:** When you came up doing art, did you ever have the idea that you would want your work to go in a gallery or in a museum or were you always thinking more about books or records? Did you have an idea of where the things you made should go?

**PB:** No, I really didn't think about that. I just knew I wanted to do album covers for somebody. I wasn't thinking past that.

**SCJ:** Were there any particular album covers you remember looking at and thinking, "Oh yeah, I could do this. I wanna do this."

**PB:** No, I'd look at covers and say "Damn, I wish I could do that!" [Laughter] That dude Mati [artist Abdul Mati Klarwein] who did Santana's *Abraxas*, Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew*, I'd think, "Man, I can't do him!" And his artwork would come out and I'd think, "Man, he's kind of obscene." He's kind of a nasty boy too. But he can't write worth a damn.

[Laughter] So I thought, "Okay, he can't write. So I'm still good." He can't write.

**SCJ:** Looking at the Funkadelic albums that you designed, up to *The Electric Spanking of War Babies*, feels like reading a chronicle of current events through the years the albums were published—both the issues of the day and also a mini-history of Funkadelic's evolution. There are so many story lines and characters that reoccur—it's almost like this long Victorian serial novel. Were there times where your input was sought out in designing story lines that happened in the songs? Your writing and art always seems to match what the music is doing.

**PB:** Well, in the early days I would get an acetate of the album. Later when George started getting involved in more groups or production time, he'd get me just the song titles. And then later, he would give me brief descriptions and names of the albums. [Laughter] So he kind of forced me to be more separate-minded as far as that. And at the end he would say, "Before we finish the album, write the liner notes up first and send them to me so I can see what the hell I'm supposed to be talking about."

**MF:** In another interview, it said you did a little makeup for Parliament once or for P-Funk when they were on tour?

**PB:** Oh yeah, at the Auditorium in Chicago. Yeah. There were some union boys handling the lights, and so they didn't know who the people were. So I went all the way up in the projector thing and I said, "No, no—not the guitar, the bass!" That was so they could start the show. So I did a little make up too. George would say, "Why don't you do my makeup tonight?!" [Laughter] But that's the George Clinton style. He had no problems grabbing people and recruiting them, either for a minute or for, I imagine, their life.

**MF:** Did you ever tour with them at all?

**PB:** No. I'm probably the only long-time member of the organization that never toured. Because I went to a couple of hole-in-the-wall joints back in the chitlin' circuit days and I said, "This is not fun! There's nothing cool about this! Hell no, I don't wanna go on no tour." You know I had been out in the world by that time. You know most musicians spend all their life in such and such a town, and when you're in the ghetto you

only got two choices. You either get with a band to join and go on tour and get outta town or you go into the Army. But I didn't have to do that. So I was not curious about being in another part of the country and what you had to live in to be there. So I never went on tour. Never. I should have gone on tour with them at least one time so I could have networked with more people.

**MF:** So in your role did you feel like you were a member of Funkadelic?

**PB:** I'd say, "I'm a Funkadelic." I didn't care what the Parliaments did in 1967 with "I Wanna Testify."

**MF:** But you feel like you were part of that band during the time that you did the covers.

**PB:** Oh yeah. Well I've been in...if you see who's on the roster now—the band members, nobody goes back as far as me except...

**SCJ:** It's a lot of kids too.

**PB:** Yeah, a lot of second generation people coming up. But I've been around the longest out of the original cluster. Ray's dead. Calvin has left. So there's only Fuzzy and Grady and George from the original Parliament clique. And then from the Funkadelic side it's only Bernie.

**MF:** This last time they played in Chicago Michael Hampton and Blackbyrd McKnight played...

**PB:** Yeah, but they new school.

**MF:** They only came in in the late 1970s.

**PB:** Yeah. And Bernie's not touring anymore with them anyway. So if someone wants to sing me some old Parliament stuff, I don't wanna hear that. I want Funkadelic.

**MF:** Another thing with the album art...you compare representations of women to other soul records of the time like Ohio Players' *Honey* and there's like this naked woman pouring honey in her mouth and it's pretty basic "sex sells" kind of stuff. And *Cosmic Slop* and other records—it's so much more complicated. I mean, people have diseases, they have bodily secretions, they pass gas...

**SCJ:** Marc, the man is eating! [Laughter]

**MF:** He can handle it.

**BB:** He drew it. [Laughter]

**MF:** Is this something you were consciously thinking about—"female sexuality needs to be represented differently than it is", or is it just what naturally happened...

**PB:** This other dude, David Mills, he was an original writer for the *Washington Times*. Mills has always been a friend of mine...he's a journalist. And he's so much of a journalist that he tried to pull that on me one time. Talking about the same thing, about "What's the concept behind you doing that kind of stuff?" And I said, well, George always told me, "The more out, the better." In other words the more crazy, the more it pulls attention. So Mills said, "In other words, the stuff was out of your subconscious, blah blah blah." I said "Nah nah nah nah nah!" [Laughter] I was basically following orders. It wasn't that bad compared to underground comics.

**SCJ:** A lot of farting in those.

**PB:** Yeah. [Laughter]

**MF:** So you felt you had the freedom to do... whatever?

**PB:** Yeah. I'd ask my subconscious and it would always tell me sooner or later they're gonna throw my stuff out and put it in a censorship thing because as the albums piled up the higher on the record company evolutionary scale, I'm gonna be in it with the big boys in a minute. And I knew they was gonna say, "Naw, you can't do that." I was about to find where the glass ceiling was as far as that was concerned. But the only way I could find out was to try it, see what I can get away with.

**MF:** The other thing also is on *Uncle Jam Wants You* there are these really obvious representations of Black Power groups—George Clinton's sitting in the Huey Newton butterfly chair and inside *Electric Spanking*...there's, like, a group of black radicals.

**PB:** You mean funk militants.

**MF:** Right. [Laughter] Was there any resistance to that? James Brown did the album *Say It Loud I'm Black and I'm Proud* but there wasn't any kind of direct link to the Black Panthers. It's obviously still touchy—there's a headline today in the



Funkadelic, *Cosmic Stop* (detail), cover art by Pedro Bell, Westbound Records, 1973.

*Chicago Sun Times* about Fred Hampton not getting a street sign named after him.

**PB:** Right, right.

**SCJ:** Was anyone in the band also as politically radical as you were? It's sometimes hard to tell where exactly the politics on the albums are coming from. Who added the politics into the mix first—you or Funkadelic?

**PB:** Well, I went to Bradley my first year, in Peoria, Illinois, for college. I got thrown out of that bad boy because I was affiliated with the Panthers back then, myself. And they couldn't flunk me out, because everyone else got too far involved in the politics and didn't go to classes. I was taking eighteen to twenty-one hours a semester because I could read fast. I was tested at 2900-3100 words per minute, with comprehension. So they couldn't throw me out because of grades, because my grades was cool. So they threw me out because I was...

**SCJ:** You were a "bad influence".

**PB:** Right. They issued some technical statement. I was a "disruptive presence on campus".

**SCJ:** Wow. Were you recruiting other students?

**PB:** No. No. I got disillusioned with some of the Panthers' activities. Things got worse when I got back to Chicago and checked out their west side base. It's a good thing they pissed me off to the point that I dismissed them completely, otherwise it could have been my ass that was up in that apartment where Fred Hampton was murdered. I got disenfranchised with them but I found out later that Clinton's number two man was a dude named Archie Ivy. He was in the L.A. Panthers. So, that's where George was influenced. He just didn't get around to it right away.

As a matter of fact, I don't care how nobody tells it now but...according to a March 1969 issue of *Esquire*, cloning was mentioned in a feature that it was going to be a thing in the foreseeable future. Well, that's why Clinton ended up doing *Clones of Dr. Funkenstein* later. But I was his sci-fi connection. I told him about cloning—I'd send him tear sheets of articles I had done. I sent him the paperback *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson. I sent him my copy after I read it.

I put UFOs in my science fair project I did in high school. I got thrown out of the science fair. [Laughter] Oh yeah. I got 'em back though. I did a 180. I came back the next year with "Theories and Problems of Automotive Aerodynamics"—they gave me "First Place, Physics"! Honorable mention at the State level or the District level or whatever. [Laughter] Lleb let 'em know, I'm not crazy. I'm on a mission. I know what I'm doin'.

And even though with the UFO thing they laughed me out, I did one on the Bermuda Triangle too. [Laughter] A decade later everyone was makin' movies about the Bermuda Triangle. In fact I sent my whole science fair project on UFOs and the Bermuda Triangle. When I met George in 1972, I gave him my whole science fair project. [Laughter] I said, "You need to use this, you know." I also sent him some pyramid stuff—he got that from me. All that stuff. And people said, "You didn't do that." But if you look at the details or even the graphics or drawings on early Funkadelic albums you can see it. As a matter of fact, on *Cosmic Slop*, you know what there's a picture of? Three Mile Island.

**SCJ:** It's totally amazing how your output mirrors the vernacular that emerged at the time. After *Clones of Dr. Funkenstein* came out, the trends of the 1970s incorporated the horror of the disco era mixed with really weird sci-fi. Your covers and the band's performances at the time reflect that. When you read magazines from that era, there's language peppered in cut straight from your liner notes. It must have been nice to know that Clinton kind of shared a lot of your views and was open to learning...

**PB:** Oh yeah, he had no problem taking anything. I'd say, "Check this out," and he'd say, "Oh yeah, show it to me, blah blah," and in fact by the 1990s he was showing me books and I'd say, "Oh, I read that one already." [Laughter] But he found a few ones that I knew about but I couldn't find, because other people were hooking him up with some reading material.

**BB:** So what science fiction were you reading when you were first getting interested in it?

**PB:** Well, in approximately chronological order my daddy put me on the Bible and the only two books I was really interested in were Genesis and Revelations. And from Revelations I said "Oh, monsters and dragons and this and that." And then H.G. Wells, Ray Bradbury, Robert Bloch, all the way to Harlan Ellison—I liked his stuff 'cause he's a new age one. So I started with the horror books and science fiction books back in the day. I saw all the "A" science fiction movies as well as all the "B" ones, and there were plenty of those. *Forbidden Planet*—ever see that? Made in 1953? It was so many years before they made another decent flick it was like well into the 60s, right?! You know all the other stuff was just cheap crap.

[Laughter] But I'd still watch them because they were the only thing that was happenin'. But all the other stuff, that's where I really got into it. Oh yeah, I'd hand all that stuff to George.

**SCJ:** Clinton's public persona and I think, by proxy, the personality that's out there for the band now—as opposed to the band maybe in 1980, or '81—is so "big party, no thinking". His personality is so happy-go-lucky...but earlier on it felt like there were more politics behind what they were putting out.

**PB:** Okay well, you're right. You're right.

**SCJ:** Is that because of the members that were in the group at the time, or because of the times themselves or...

**PB:** Well, lemme tell ya. The whole P-Funk thing, in terms of external pressures has been: Parliafunkadelic—and that was in the 70s until the Parliament tracks started hittin'. Then the Mothership thing was basically phase two—a heavy Parliament thing. And basically at that particular point... the older shows was kinda like touchy feely freestyle. And when the Mothership thing hit, it was about as tight as a James Brown set. And then afterwards there was a transitional period, because the original boys began to really leave because they wasn't gettin' paid. And so they'd bring in a new group. And the last phase, which is now, is just a band leader draggin' along everybody else because they need to get paid.

**SCJ:** So you see it now as a real top-down kind of organization?

**PB:** No. They're mercenaries. It's a mercenary kinda thing—just to get that paycheck. Nobody's dressin' up. They still throw down, because—I forget the actual number—but about half of P-Funk came from James Brown originally. Because of "the stroke" or "the one"—as they called it—they can do that in their sleep. They will always sound tight to a certain extent, no matter how drunk or disinterested they are individually, because they've been well trained by James Brown to hit everything "on the one". So they will sound good regardless of their mental or physical condition to a certain point but beyond that... that's why no old school fans come to the new shows. I went to a P-Funk show at the Vic in Chicago a few years ago. Because it was on the north side of the city, I said, "I'm gonna see

how many brothers from the old hood is up in there.” There was so few people from the old school funk thing, I knew everybody up in there—about six people.

**MF:** It was a very white young audience at the show I just saw last month. The thing that strikes me live is that George Clinton is sort of in the forefront of the billing but to me it still feels very democratic on stage. Everyone kind of gets their own moment in the spotlight...

**PB:** Right.

**MF:** It feels like everyone has enough space to...

**PB:** Do whatever they wanna do. Right. Well that’s because of this—another one of the side reasons why a lot of musicians would rather stay with P-Funk. Because James Brown didn’t play that. If you threw an extra hook in the song James Brown would fine you fifty bucks. [Laughter] Bootsy being told, “You put an extra stretch in that bass. Fifty dollars!” Whoah! Or [Pedro imitates Bootsy] “Uuooaaahh!” [Laughter] So he’d go through staff for that. Of course George is basically the reverse. He’d go ahead and let you do what you want—especially if you were recording. But just like James Brown, you didn’t know if your name was going to be in the song credits or not.

**All:** Ooohh. Okay.

**PB:** So a lot of members of the band would get disinterested. They’d say, “Just tell me what you want George,” so that’s why the material is falling off now.

**SCJ:** People felt like, “We’re not gonna get credited anyway so why...”

**PB:** Right. “Just tell us what you want. Tell me what you wanna hear.” That kinda thing. So they would say, “Dictate to me what you want me to play.”

**SCJ:** Did you ever play their music and think, “Oh, well my thing looks good but you play the rest of the album and what happened?!” Did you ever want to disassociate your work from the group’s?

**PB:** No. My tendency was to separate the visuals from the hearables anyway. It was never a problem for me, but I was really pissed about *Electric*

*Spanking* because that was my best technical album and Warner Brothers f’d me over and P-Funk f’d me over because they didn’t support me when it started getting thick with the censorship business. The other thing that really insulted me was that the material on *Electric Spanking* was so pitiful. [Laughter] People were shocked and dismayed. They said well you know about the other Funkadelic. I said yeah, “LAX”—‘cause that’s what everybody called it, LAX Funkadelic, when Parliament members jumped off over money disputes. *Connections and Disconnections* by LAX was a hell of an album. I’ll tell anybody that. It smoked *Electric Spanking* as far as the music on it. It’s tight. And people were like, “You like that?” And I’d say, “You’ve been listening to *Electric Spanking*—it ain’t shit on this.” [Laughter] And that really pissed me off because this was my best stuff. I told the dude at the record company at LAX, I said, “You should have came to me before you did this. Because all you had to do was let me hear the music and I would have knocked you out a hell of a cover.” I did some Benedict Arnold stuff for them, but I couldn’t do the cover of the album because the album was already put out. I did an ad—because Warner Brothers tripped when they found out about this other group—so they decided to put out a 45 and had me do the liner notes on the 45.

**SCJ:** For Warner Brothers?

**PB:** Right. I turned around and did an ad for LAX Records. And they let me do the liner notes for that, and I dogged the other Funkadelic like I didn’t even know ‘em. [Laughter]

**SCJ:** So you were kinda playing both sides for a moment there.

**PB:** [Pedro makes the fingers rubbing together hand signal for money] But I warned ‘em, because they had dogged me so much. On Super Bowl Sunday 1981, they called me in for a so-called emergency meeting. I wasn’t cutting ‘em no slack. I said, “I am absolutely sure as of this moment, that this organization has turned out to be a pimp/ho relationship so everyone up here that isn’t a spectator, you’re either pimpin’ or ho’in.” I said, “I’m going to tell you right now, you don’t get nothin’ out of me creatively at all in no way shape or form unless I am paid. I am mercenary as of this day.”

**SCJ:** And did they say “Goodbye!!”?





**PB:** No, they didn't say nothin' at first because they was just trippin' anyway. But when they found out about the LAX thing, they knew I was serious. They called me "Bell-edict Arnold" after that.

**MF:** So you did this art for *Electric Spanking* and what was the sequence of events that led to the censorship?

**PB:** It started with those kids getting killed down in Atlanta...

**MF:** Oh, the Atlanta Child Murders.

**PB:** Yeah, something like that. Something weird and then I don't know how it connected to females being depicted on album covers but I guess someone decided it must be album covers people are getting in stores and then they're getting these crazy ideas to cut and murder people... which is really kind of ironic to me because those heavy metal boys got all the blood and gore. Right?

**MF:** So it was this group Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW). And they had gone after the Rolling Stones' *Black and Blue* album.

**PB:** Yeah, they went to them 'cept the Rolling Stones said basically, "We're putting that album

out, kiss our ass, we ain't changin' nothin.'" The Rolling Stones album was out—they released it in England first, so WAVAW found out about it and said, "No you better not!" and they did—they went out and put out a million copies just like they would the English version. And WAVAW went to the Rolling Stones and said, "What are you going to do about that?" and the Rolling Stones said, "Not our problem. Take it to Atlantic Records." So WAVAW got in front of them, so Atlantic got real paranoid about releasing anything that was controversial in terms of any suggestion of violence and S&M-isms and all that. When they saw the braces on the cover art [the woman bound on the cover of *Electric Spanking*], I told Warner Brothers, "Okay let's turn them into a barcode—so then they ain't gonna tie the woman down! If she wants to break the sticker, all she's gotta do is kick her skinny legs!" But, that didn't change the implications that she was being tied down, so they said no.

**MF:** So you wanted to put the bar code so it looked like the bar code was holding her down?

**PB:** Right! Change the chains into a bar code! [Laughter] They didn't go for that.

**SCJ:** That's really funny because out of all of the album covers that had been out over those last couple of years and other things that WAVAW

and a couple of other groups like them had gone to protest, *Electric Spanking* is one of the more complex things, I mean there's a lot of things going on in that album.

**BB:** I think there's a really complicated sexuality in those drawings too that isn't—like Marc was mentioning in this other Ohio Players album, where it's purely sexual and it's really one dimensional. But the drawings you make have this complicated sexuality where it's clearly not this simple...I'm not sure how to say it.

**SCJ:** I was pretty afraid of a lot of your albums for a long time. [Laughter] The women on all of the other albums that my dad had were polished—these idealized portraits of female sexuality...but your drawings are so realistic in a way. There are pock marks on your people and the skin doesn't always look that good. It looks like they just rolled out of bed. And then there's green people. Plus there's all this writing on the covers.

**PB:** Right. Right. Well that's why I really loved the whole liner note thing because of Zappa. I thought, "Oh I can go ahead and put a lot of stuff on there." And that's why I broke one rule about the size of print. I would never worry about the size of print. I'd go down as small as I could. Because I was gonna fill up as much space as I could. Because then I could really pay some serious attention about what kind of graphics I was puttin' on. Like I can show you on *Standing on the Verge*...if I show you what's on the inside of the gatefold, you'll see. The Art Director from Westbound—who I never did get along with—I told him to make the print in the liner notes a certain size and he went and did it a different size. I said, "You can't do that!" He decided to go to a larger size anyway like twelve point. I always told them to go eight. So when you look at the print, it doesn't fit within the line of the graphics. It overprints over different graphics that should not have been overprinted, because he didn't pay attention to what I told him. I would tell the record company boys, "No unnecessary stuff. Put this here. Put that there. Put that there." I never left stuff to them to determine with the liner notes placement and stuff likethat...because I didn't trust them.

**SCJ:** So Women Against Violence Against Women Against Women [laughter] has this public response to the cover...

**PB:** The Rolling Stones' *Black and Blue*. They said, after the thing...what they did was they printed an all black cover. The Rolling Stones just walked away from it. They said, "We'll do what we want. We're gettin' paid anyway." So then WAWAW said, "Okay, we are putting you on notice that if you do anything else that might offend us, you've gotta talk to us first." WAWAW made a blanket statement: "We will keep our eyes on you."

**SCJ:** On the record makers.

**PB:** Right. "Especially you, Atlantic, because you let the Rolling Stones do that." So Atlantic was affiliated with Warner Brothers. So when they got the artwork, Warner Brothers said, "Oh we've got problems. We're having problems." And in fact they contacted the L.A. division of WAWAW and you know what they told them? They said, "No, we're too busy doing other things but if you put an album out that we don't like, we're gonna be in your face."

So Warner Brothers didn't like that. They said, "Damn, they won't even meet with us" because Warner Brothers wanted to set up a meeting between them and me. And I said, "I'm not gonna have these suburban white tarts go ahead and tell me how to design an album." [hysterical laughter from all] "This is a ghetto project." [Laughter] And if whites like it, cool! Which actually flies in the face of advertising—you're supposed to make product designs crossover. And of course I never did that.

**SCJ:** You're supposed to appeal to the people with the money to buy it.

**PB:** Right. Right. We had a female on the art design crew and I said there was a few changes that we made because she said this was over the line. So I said, "I'm not responsible to make some artwork appealing to you. That's not my job. I wanna appeal to my part of the market." But that would have been my conversation to them. I have an eight-page thing, which I don't have a personal copy of but when that got printed, that was basically what I would have said to them. It was sent to WAWAW and to one of those big powerful dudes at Atlantic. But everybody at Warner Brothers...whoever was in charge of printing they made copies for everybody on the production staff to read it. So they said, "Oh, Bell's crazy, but he ain't no joke." So WAWAW said, "We're not gonna meet with you, but if you do something we're gonna..." So Warner

Brothers had sent Atlantic prints of the cover art for *Electric Spanking*, not WAWAW.

**SCJ:** They hadn't seen the cover art...they had no idea what they were even looking at?

**PB:** They didn't even care...but Warner Brothers said, "Well...what are we gonna do? Could we see you and could you just change it a little bit?" I said, "The whole thing? No, that's not gonna happen." They said, "Well, just the front." And I said, "Okay, entertain me."

**MF:** So they told you they wanted to censor this record.

**PB:** Right. They started with the whole thing. I said, "You can forget that 'just the cover'. Can I just give you a cover up panel and you can just drop it on top of the artwork?" They said, "Oh, excellent, excellent idea!" I said, "Okay, no problem." Easiest four hundred dollars I ever made in my life. [Laughter] So that's what I did—I went ahead and went to an art store and got a green fluorescent board and cut it out and did my little thing on top of it, and I gave it back to them. And the first thing that happened was as soon as I got home they called me and was almost politely angry with me. They said, "You're going to cause our printing costs on the album to go up twenty percent." I said, "Twenty percent?! Just because you added on a panel on top of an original artwork?!" They said, "No, it's the ink, it's the ink." I said, "What about it?" They said, "Because we used fluorescent board, the cost of colors is going to cause our printing costs to go up twenty percent." I said, "No, the reason why I did it on fluorescent board is because I wanted it to be that bright of a color without being chemically day-glo," and I gave them the exact Pantone number and said, "Are you happy now?"

They said, "Well, we didn't know." I said, "Well, if I had said I wanted a real bright green, I don't know what kind of pissy green you would have picked or somethin'." [Laughter] So we were having problems with 'em because as soon as they find out that you might be deep, they'd say, "I know what he was talkin' about," or "I can't tell him that because that'll make me look stupid if I ask him a question." So when I was negotiating with them, they said, "Oh, we can print the original design uncensored on the inside." I said, "That's a good idea," because the area of the original artwork on the gatefold was square. So I was thinkin', "Okay, I'll just have to tell them

later that that was where the liner notes were supposed to go, and therefore, they had to pay me to do the liner notes on the dust sleeve."

Which of course is exactly what happened on the album. [Laughter] So I said are you happy now and they said, "Oh yeah, we'll take it Mr. Bell." I said, "Yeah, but you know what? George really wants some liner notes, like there's always been. You just covered up the liner note area with the original artwork picture." They said, "Well what do we do?" I said, "We'll have to use that dust sleeve." So we had to print a dust sleeve. Of course, I designed and wrote it so I got paid again. [Laughter]

**SCJ:** What was the band doing during all of your negotiations? Were you getting support or were they making their own phone calls?

**PB:** The band didn't mess around at all.

**SCJ:** Because it was art or because there was a problem?

**PB:** No, they always stayed outside of that loop. They was glad when they saw the finished artwork, that if you open *Electric Spanking* up and turn it upside down, you see this little micro-cartoon of the management. The cartoon reads, "When do we get paid? Next week!" [Laughter] That was their favorite thing. If someone says when do they get paid, they'd say we'll pay you next week. When? Next week. They'd hand you an envelope and say, "Okay, bye!" and you'd stand there counting the money, because they'd never give you a check, and you'd say, "I'm \$200.00 short!" and you'd look to see them and they're gone. And that was basically premiering the first of many revolutions that took place behind closed doors or behind backstage. Because there was revolts, for real, in the early 1980s.

**SCJ:** All based on people getting paid or not getting paid?

**PB:** All that.

**MF:** In his book *Funk*, Ricky Vincent mentioned that at some point Mattel had contacted the group about making toys based on the characters from the records. That never happened. What was the story behind that?

**PB:** Yeah! Starchild, Sir Nose, Bootsy. You know, the obvious ones.



Funkadelic, *The Electric Spanking of War Babies*. Detail of dust sleeve together with the inside of the gatefold showing the original uncensored cover design in the center.

**MF:** Right. Not the decomposing woman on the cover of *Cosmic Slop*?

**PB:** [Laughter] Yeah. Right. They probably looked at the catalog and said, “Oh, it goes that far back?” Between mountains of coke that they were snorting [laughter] somebody came up... that’s where that black power/Black Panther thing really went too far, because first of all it was too late in the day. Then somebody came up with the idea that they’d get a black toy company to go ahead and make the dolls. And the first thing I said was, “What black toy makers? There’s none around!” [Laughter] I said, “Once you get all five or six of them together, they’re not gonna have no capital to do no damn toys and have ‘em out in the next two years. It ain’t gonna happen!” I said, “No, it’s not gonna work. Lease the stuff off to Mattel for a few years and let them take care of the bulk of the money problems because they have world-wide distribution, you’ll get yours and if you don’t sell it outright, you’ll get the rights back.” They said, “We gonna do it this way.” That was stupid. Because you know what Kiss did?

**SCJ:** They leased their likeness...

**PB:** Yep. P-Funk did a lot of stupid mistakes in the course of their business.

**SCJ:** You’re talking about seventy people at once worrying about where their money is, right?

**PB:** Seventy? Some people say 114. Some people say 420! [Laughter]

**SCJ:** So everybody’s getting paid...

**PB:** Not paid...

**Greg Strella:** They’re getting fed and...

**PB:** Right. Most of the time. Oh! When I was doin’ my “Bell-edict Arnold” thing with LAX, one day I came to the office and everybody is standin’ around the office lookin’ *hungry*. I said, “What’s up? What’s everybody look so glum about?” They said, “Well, Archie Ivy was supposed to come in here and pay us some money.” I said, “Oh yeah, okay, I’ll have to see this.” Eight o’clock, Archie comes in, eyes all blasted from doing cocaine, and tells them, “I’ll have it for you next week. Okay, bye.” One dude said, “I ain’t eaten all day.” Another said, “I ain’t eaten since last night.” This was soon after they had actually pulled that “Bell-edict Arnold” thing on me. I thought it was kinda funny but I wasn’t going to forget about it.

I said, “There seems to be a lot of *hungry* mouths up here tonight.” I said, “You know what?” One of the guys was complaining about

how *hungry* he was. I said, “You want me to get you a hamburger, fries and a drink?” He said, “You got some money?” I said, “Yeah, you didn’t think I was gonna go downstairs and stick up the hot dog stand just for you?” “Yeah alright ‘Dro,” he said, “go ahead and do that.” Someone else said, “Yeah, can you do me too?” I said, “Yeah, I can do you, no problem.” Then I heard, “What about me?” I said, “I seem to be doing quite a few people up in here.” I started fakin’ shock and someone said, “What’s wrong?!” What’s wrong?! You got the money?” I said, “Yeah, I got it. I just forgot that the money’s a little tainted. It came from LAX. Okay, anybody got any problems with that?” [Laughter] And that was the last time—I never heard them call me “Bell-edict Arnold” ever since that. [Laughter] Because for a while they had pulled the ad out of the magazine to show everybody, and whoever didn’t see it, they was told about it “Yeah, ‘Dro did an ad for LAX Funkadelic. Ohh, Bell-edict Arnold, huh?” But I silenced them so...[all laugh]

**MF:** With your vision, are you still able to do art?

**PB:** Can I? I do some but not a lot. Most of the stuff—that’s what I’ve got a little posse for. I’ll go ahead and do some rough drawings and a lot of notes and hand those to the posse. Just in the nick of time. [Laughter]

**MF:** You should explain about the other people that you’ve worked with because there are certain parts of the art that other people did.

**PB:** Yeah. I’m gonna tell you a side story, which has actually nothing to do with this, about P-Funk. [TS and Greg laugh, recognizing that we’re in for something]

They handed me a fan club to handle. Without even tellin’ me nothing. [Laughter] I had a Post Office Box. All of a sudden I start getting all these tapes at the mail box. And they had ran a contest and didn’t tell me nothin’. And people started sending all these tapes to the mail box. And then they gave me the fan club. I had it for about a couple of years—three years maybe. I found out a few things about P-Funk that I didn’t think existed in any other fan club-based cult. And that was, [Pedro speaks very quietly and seriously] a lot of people were so down and out until P-Funk came into the picture and they’d say, “This is the future, and blah blah blah. My momma beat me down, and this and that, and until I saw the Brides of Funkenstein I didn’t feel

like I could be somebody.”

**BB:** That’s pretty amazing.

**PB:** It affected people.

**MF:** So...your “crew”?! Your “posse”? Let’s start with the first ones.

**PB:** Sir Lance Everret. The reason why we hooked up together was because he was the artist and I was the outcast and the artist in high school. And we both was into hot rods. My brother Bruse, who works for the Chicago Transit Authority—he was the one who helped me draw those 29,000 maggots on *Cosmic Slop* on the hair. And actually he did the ones on the second one—*Standing on the Verge*—where I use maggots for borders around the members. Rapidographs—that was our machine of choice at that particular time. And neither one of us had ever even imagined drawing those freakin’ maggots over and over. But my brother was the first one to help me. And then he also helped draw some of the things on the back of *Cosmic Slop* like the pimp and ho-type figures at the bottom. It was really the car link that kept me and Lance rollin’ together the longest.

**MF:** There was a woman you had mentioned also before...

**PB:** Oh, his biological half-sister. Edwina Owens. She helped on *Electric Spanking*. So I can do a quantum leap, because between my brother Bruse and Lance, that was 90% of the people I used all the way up until then. Even though I used Seitu Hayden and this other local boy Turtel Onli on a George Clinton album, Lance was the main up until a certain point. The certain point was *Electric Spanking* and I called Lance “Mr. Machine” because when I looked at the design for the cover of *Electric Spanking*, I knew



that I had to...that's a lot of words for a title. So I figured, okay, let me split it. Because I want the logo to be a certain size and I want the little ship to be a certain size—I don't want it to be too small—so that meant that whatever lettering style I was gonna use for the title was going to have to be connective. So that really narrowed down the field as far as lettering. Because I didn't have too many choices, neon was the obvious one to pick—because the letters connect.

Well, I spent about two days trying to draw those damn letters. Couldn't do it! I called Lance up, and he showed up with not a ruler—a pencil and a triangle. And he knocked that lettering out in about twenty minutes. And so I knew then—a light really went off in my head—whatever takes me too long to do myself, I'm gonna get somebody else to do it that can draw it. Cut out the production time. I don't care as long as the thing looks like I want it to look like, I don't wanna be spending no time. So, that's really when I decided I was gonna do just the front and the back panel. But after that, I said, "I'm gonna do the whole thing this size." So what happened was I cut down a lot of the production time because I would draw some part of one panel, and give it to Lance—"Draw this, blah blah blah. Tighten that up. Do that." Get the next panel, give it to Edwina. "Tighten that up. Put that back." So those panels were cycling between us all, which was pretty convenient. Now Edwina, it took me a while before I realized—I had gone to her house for some other reason and saw these pictures on the wall of some watercolors of models. I said, "You do these?" She said, "Yeah." I said, "I didn't know you was a killer artist too." She said, "You never saw my stuff before?" I said, "No. This stuff is tight." She had a whole stylized fashion thing—as far as design skill. So she was the one I had do the tart on the cover ship. That's her style. You could tell that wasn't really me couldn't you?

**MF:** I brought the CD so we can use that as a visual reference [The reissue CD of *The Electric Spanking of War Babies* comes with a fold-out of the album cover art enlarged]

**PB:** This is the first time I've seen that. [Pedro points to the uncensored front cover] She did this—the woman in the ship.

**SCJ:** Yeah, that doesn't really look like your style now that you've said it. The lines are leaner. And it's a different kind of woman.

**PB:** Yeah.

**MF:** So WAVAW got totally worked up about something made by another woman?

**PB:** Right, right. That was one of the points of irony. But the body still had the booty thing, which was technically illegal too, and the ship—they ignored that [the shape of the space ship is extremely phallic]. So it basically came down to the bracelets, the chains. So like I said, this lettering took me two days to draw even though I knew exactly what to do but Lance had the skills to do it by hand. And this stuff—I had said draw these towers and me—the round stuff, I was gonna do the controls but any of the little details may not have been in perspective. But he has a natural thing about that.

**SCJ:** As you're telling us who did what I can see layers.

**PB:** Now the pattern—I had Lance draw the pattern in pencil because I knew that that stuff's not really straight per se; it curves a little bit. I wasn't sure that I would be able to do it straight the first time around. I didn't wanna take no chances—I wanted Lance to do the electronic patterns in perspective, so he did those. So I didn't do that. The back designs—that was easy for me. That's a flat surface. Even in perspective that's easier for me to do than curved perspective.

Oh! Let me tell you about Warner Brothers and this side scar. If you look on this panel, that's not supposed to be there, that white spot. [Pedro points out a tiny curved white shape in a blue section opposite the "ZBS" camera in the lower right corner of *Electric Spanking*] The reason why is because originally, I had put in a five dollar bill as part of the screen inside the tower, and when the album came out I saw that section was missing. So I asked them about it and they said, "You're not supposed to be mutating or reprinting U.S. money, blah blah blah..."



Funkadelic: *The Electric Spanking of War Babies*. The knife blade points to a detail that was cut out by Warner Brothers' art department.



**SCJ:** Oh are you kidding?! So they just erased it?!

**PB:** No, they did worse. They cut it out!

**SCJ:** That's a hole?!

**PB:** I told them, "You some sorry motherfuckers. Why you gotta go ahead and cut the shit out and you didn't go ahead and patch it in in post-production."

**BB:** That's crazy. You'd think they'd at least put blue in there.

**SCJ:** So Edwina and Lance were working under you. You talked to them about what you were looking to do and asked them to do things that you knew they had the skills for.

**PB:** Right. Right. That they had skills for.

**SCJ:** Did they have their own ideas that they would add in as well?

**PB:** I didn't tell Edwina to draw every single detail. I left that on to her to go ahead and do. [Pedro points out another section of the cover]. This was me but I messed up. I should have let Edwina do it to match. I called Lance in I had to have Lance turn her [the woman on all fours on the back cover] head because once I draw a figure in a certain posture I can't turn it into another one. So he had to straighten her head up—forward. I

had her head turned toward the camera. So then I sat Lance down and I started telling him to draw supercharger inject on the supercharger engine, and then strap her in and break the strap. So when he drew the strap he drew the shadow, perfectly correct—and that's why I like him.

The TV thing—ZTV. I could not draw that thing there at that correct perspective. But it's no problem for him. He had the cord with the dollar bill thing—he had that perspective. I had Edwina do her hair. So I had at least some kind of tactile connection to the front cover. So I shoulda had her do whole body but I had her do the hair and the eyes. Sir Lance, because he doesn't draw as realistically in a lot of stuff—I had him draw some band members in silhouettes in the song track boxes. And then, of course, the ghetto thing—"Meanwhile, back in the ghetto,"—that's Edwina. "Ho Derelict" and the sister—she did both of them. I wanted a realistic lookin' stroke so that's why I had her draw them. That's basically the way I have them fit in with the technical skills.

**SCJ:** Quite a bit of group work on this album.

### **Additional Quotes on Group Work From the Funkadelic Family**

Everybody on the road wants to be out front—even the roadies, the light people, everybody has some kind of deep-down desire to be on stage. In order to

keep everybody happy, and to give them some kind of dream, we let them all be musicians for themselves. Eddie Hazel, Bernie Worrell, the Horny Horns, the Brides of Funkenstein, the Parlets. Plus, it helped pay for the band. We'd give them their own shot, their own record deal and enough room to accommodate them so that they could participate in something else other than just being on salary, but it was always hard, because people always want more people involved. Like right now, we're about to go to Japan, but we've got more people who want to go than can go.

—George Clinton, interviewed by Barry Henssler and Mike Rubin. "Stuffs + Things: a Motorbooty Rap with George Clinton of Parliament-Funkadelic." *Motorbooty*. 1989.

George is the doctor. He let me experiment in his lab. By him letting me experiment with thangs, it allowed him a chance to experiment with different thangs... we never knew what the end results was gonna be.

—Bootsy Collins speaking in the documentary film *PARLIAMENT FUNKADELIC: One Nation Under a Groove*. Directed by Yvonne Smith. 2004.

Like, when we did Parliament and Funkadelic and Bootsy, it was actually one thing. But there were so many people that you could split them up into different groups. And then, when we went out on tour and they would see us all up there together—we had five, six guitars playing at one time, not including the bass! They said, "Wait a minute, that's just one whole group, selling different names!" But it wasn't—we had enough people in the group that each member would have a section to be another group. So now we're finally starting to get them to understand that.

—Gary Shider, interviewed by Peter Jebesen. *New Funk Times* #2, 1990.

It was like a party. Can you imagine yourself just being invited to Christmas dinner, and the whole family comes and it's so natural, it's just like, you don't really plan anything. It's automatic. Bootsy would be there, Bernie, Eddie Hazel, Michael Hampton, Tyrone Lampkin, all the girls—there was Debbie Wright, Jeannette Washington, Sheila Horne, myself, Lynn, Glenn Goins, Gary Shider, Peanut, Mudbone, just all these talented individuals would come in, and the first thing to start would just be a groove. And then Bernie says, "Wow, I hear this," and he would play something. And George would say, "That was nice. Dawn, why don't you sing this?" Or, "Yeah Eddie, that was a great lick, why don't you do that?" Or, "Michael, why don't you harmonize with him?" Or, "Maceo, Maceo..." That's the way it was. It's just like, "Would you pass me the sugar?" "Oh, I need some more salt and pepper on my potatoes." Just hav-

ing dinner, that's how it was, just natural. Everyone was sitting down having dinner.

—Dawn Silva, interviewed by David Mills. *Uncut Funk*, April 20, 1997.

It's like the geese, when the geese fly in a V-formation and one takes the lead, and when he gets tired he rotates to the back and another one comes to the front. And if one gets wounded, two go down with it and stay with it until it dies or it heals. In other words, they support each other. When a goose honks at another goose, it's coaching, like, "You're doing good," but when we honk it's a different story.

—Sheila [Horne] Brody, interviewed by David Mills. *Uncut Funk*, November 9, 1996.

It might be a bit foolish but it's a movement. We try to keep it that way 'cause I ain't no guru.

—George Clinton, interviewed by William C. Leikam. *JoyZine*, 1999.

You know, with the funk, we can build a whole paragraph from one person saying something, and somebody fills in the next word. It's just a natural thing, we have our own language, and people get the concepts just like that. One person could start the joke, somebody else can finish the joke, now somebody else will laugh at it, and then everybody's laughing at it. George is completely surrounded by people who can fill in the blanks.

—Ronald "Stozo" Edwards, interviewed by David Mills. *Uncut Funk*. March 23, 1998.

If anybody got in trouble, we had to say that we were all going to stay with that person no matter what because we're all in it together. We had to say, "Funk it!" We couldn't fire anybody because these were all our little brothers and sisters, all the people who grew up together, so we had to deal with it no matter what the problem was. So, it made us strong being able to say, "Funk it as far as problems." We had to hang together or we'd have broken up...A lot of that holds over into the group right today. Billy is about thirty-nine and I'm in my late forties and he hasn't played with us in years but for the last two weeks he's been playing with us and that's the way it is. If you've ever been in the Funk one time, you're in it all the time and the fans feel the same. They feel like they're part of the band. They don't feel like they're just an audience and so you get a real loyalty from all that.

—George Clinton, interviewed by William C. Leikam. *JoyZine*. 1999. ■



# Political Art Documentation/ Distribution (PAD/D)

PAD  
Please Do Not Remove

Press photo of Group Material, from the PAD/D archives at the Museum of Modern Art.  
Photo courtesy of Julie Ault.



Standing L to R : Peter Snygals, Patrick Brennan, Timothy Rollins, Julie Ault,  
Michael Sebron, Marybeth Nelson  
Seated L to R : Mark Pakulski, Hannah Alderfer, Lilliana Dones, Beth Jaker  
Not Pictured : Randy McLaughlin, Yolanda Hawkins, Michael Uwardy, Anna Deillick,  
George Zell

Political Art Documentation/ Distribution was active from 1980 through 1988. Based in New York, they helped to create and consequently served a global network of makers and organizers of activist art. The group originated when writer and activist Lucy Lippard issued a call to document political artwork. At the time, Lippard wrote about political art for the *Village Voice*. Her writing helped to create attention for political art within the art world, and she was a critical voice in the growing awareness of socially-engaged work.

An enormous amount of political work was being made in the late 1970s, but it often did not enjoy the same attention and visibility within the art world as more commercial, gallery, and museum-based output. Today, political art can be found in museums, as easily as on a street corner or mass rally, and yet even now a substantial amount of political art from the 1980s still has not received a great deal of attention. PAD/D formed initially with the purpose of documenting this political and engaged work. As some of the group's members and interests shifted, PAD/D began self-initiated actions and campaigns.

Gregory Sholette, a member of PAD/D, and often a de facto historian of the group's activities, has written about what he calls the "dark matter" of the art world. "Dark matter" is the vast amount of artistic and cultural activity that remains largely invisible or in the background, but nonetheless is absolutely necessary to prop up that tiny percentage of artwork that gets broader critical attention and enjoys commercial success. It wasn't until we examined PAD/D's vast archive, housed at the library of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, that we were able to get a deep sense of what Greg might be talking about. The PAD/D archives are enormous: posters, publications, fliers, postcards, photographs, ephemera, correspondence and documentation of political artistic work collected from Iran to Texas. Group archivists, including Barbara Moore and Mimi Smith, spent nearly fourteen years working on the archives, continuing well after the group folded. It is a dense, rich resource that is waiting to be fully explored by later generations of artists, historians, activists and those interested in the "dark matter" of the art universe.

PAD/D had a number of core members and became large enough that several smaller committees were established to manage the group's activities. Most PAD/D members also worked with other political and art groups. Some members had recently started their own groups when PAD/D was born, but

still consistently contributed to PAD/D's activities. PAD/D was an umbrella organization for a diverse array of practices, diligently documenting political art as well as realizing some ambitious initiatives.

The following text is compiled from three separate interviews. Brett Bloom from Temporary Services interviewed Gregory Sholette and Janet Koenig at their New York apartment on February 3, 2006. The following day he interviewed Jerry Kearns in his Chelsea studio, and Barbara Moore at a small teahouse around the corner from the Printed Matter bookstore.

## Gregory Sholette and Janet Koenig

**Temporary Services (TS):** I know that PAD/D began as a call for people to come together and make an archive of politically engaged artwork, but at the first meeting it changed. Can you describe how you all came together in the first place, and what happened in the course of that meeting?

**Gregory Sholette (GS):** The first PAD/D meeting on February 24th, 1980, was initially a continuation of meetings that had been taking place at Printed Matter, then located on Lispenard Street at the southern edge of SoHo, on the first Sunday of every month. I think they even called it "First Sunday". People would show up and talk about their work. It was an exchange of ideas. So there had already been this structure in place with people who were beginning to get to know each other, among them Tim Rollins and Julie Ault (who had already formed Group Material within the same time frame), along with veterans of other collectives, like Lucy Lippard, and others who went back to previous generations of activism. A lot of people knew each other from previous art groups and activist groups, such as Art Workers Coalition [AWC], Artist Meeting for Cultural Change [AMCC], et cetera. But I don't know if everyone was activist-oriented. Some people were there just to present their art.

This first meeting that I attended was the one where PAD/D was founded. I came to the meeting with another young artist named Richard Meyer. We'd both been involved in an intensive, weekend-long, community-based anti-nuke and disarmament art festival on the Lower East Side called Artists For Survival.

Parts of that event took place at many venues including theaters and even the local public library branch. We had a connection to one of those venues, a not-for-profit group called Seven Loaves, as in the Biblical seven loaves of bread, which was based in El Bohio – a former school house on the east side of Tompkins Square Park. El Bohio had been virtually taken over (I mean legally) by a group of Nuyorican activists called

Charas. They had negotiated with the city for the building. So Richard and I said to these people at Printed Matter, "Maybe we can get a space at El Bohio. They rent spaces." And sure enough, that's where PAD/D ended up for about a year and a half before moving to the A.J. Muste building at Bleecker and Lafayette Streets, where the War Resisters League is located.

What really started the group off was a request by Lucy Lippard to help her archive the mounds of documentation she was receiving about socially-engaged art. It was overwhelming her. To her surprise and chagrin, people actually wanted to do more than operate as an archive. They wanted to start a full-blown group. Lucy had already helped start several groups, the Heresies collective, among others. So this was not her intention, although she was swept up by the enthusiasm as were we all. Clive Philpot, the director of the Museum of Modern Art's library, was also at the meeting, and it was he who christened the new group when he proposed, "Why don't we call this PAD?" for "Political Art Documentation."

**Janet Koenig (JK):** The first few meetings in El Bohio were sort of work meetings to deal with the archiving of posters. And of course that was dull work. [Laughter] And people started drifting out or wanting to do other things.

**GS:** Janet's point is well taken, because it wasn't too long afterwards that people, I think, began to feel like, "...why should we be doing all of the doggy work?" You know? "This is boring." And so that's when this idea of "...let's also be producers" happened. Group Material had already started to create exhibitions and do other public actions, so there was a model at hand to suggest we should be doing something like this too.

**TS:** How did you make decisions? Did you have to reach some sort of consensus, did you vote, or what was the process?

**GS:** I don't remember it being very structured at all. My sense was that it was fairly open and that

anyone who wanted to speak had a turn to speak up. I don't remember someone acting as a facilitator; it was just people speaking out.

**JK:** I seem to remember from AMCC that there was a definite procedure—the meetings were huge in that previous group. There would be like 30 people there. This was in 1979. People realized there were always a few people that were dominating the discussion. So that brought about the procedure where everyone had to speak and we had to go around the room. There would be a different chairperson every meeting. That was an attempt to make it more democratic. I think that kind of carried through to PAD/D.

**GS:** The immediate predecessor to both Group Material and PAD/D was AMCC. In an historical sense, it fits in between AWC from the late 1960s and the emerging art groups of the 1980s. There are definitely connections because the same people appear again and again.

As time went on, PAD/D became very structured—a lot more structured even than AMCC, to the point where there were elaborate flow charts about how you submitted a proposal to the group. There were numerous subcommittees, and the question came up about how could a given subcommittees' proposals get support from the whole group? You had to submit the proposal through a process. If it wasn't selected, then it would go into this other process where maybe you could bring it back one more time.

There was a steering committee—which I was on—acting as the über committee to try to keep track of everything else that was going on. Within one year there was a newsletter being produced. There were regular public events called Second Sundays where people would come to speak about what they were working on. Second Sundays took place at a different location, often at Franklin Furnace in SoHo. There was something called Red Letter Days, which was a calendar of events that we put out sort of around Left culture issues. There was a reading group, which later became the Not For Sale Anti-Gentrification Committee. There were probably two or three other committees as well. All of these things had to somehow be coordinated—at least that's how we looked at it. It wasn't super-hierarchical, but it was pretty darn hierarchical by comparison to any group today.

**JK:** It was no longer terribly democratic, at that point, at least to my mind. "Democratic central-

ism" is nearly an oxymoron.

**GS:** Well, it had a very structured notion of democracy...

**TS:** That raises some really interesting questions. You clearly founded PAD/D to deal with the material and the ambitions of the organization. I'm curious about the language that you developed. Do you recall how you talked about this with other people, how you talked about this structure, how you talked about what you were doing?

**GS:** I think that, in general, we did inherit some of the structure from previous groups, including AMCC. The model was a kind of Leninism with pastel shades. [Laughter] But as much as artists try to be disciplined in a radical revolutionary sense, it is not very sustainable. But there was an element of organized self-control there, definitely. One of the reasons for that was Jerry Kearns, who had come from a group that Amiri Baraka had founded called The Anti-Imperialist Cultural League. It was very much a Leninist-Maoist style, 1970s splinter group from the New Left/SDS era.

**TS:** Greg, in an essay that you wrote about the history of PAD/D, you mentioned that Lucy Lippard made a plea not to form another organization, but just to be a resource. Were there a lot of organizations or collectives that were being formed at that time?

**GS:** Lucy told me that she had not wanted to form a group and I was surprised by that. Others might recall differently, but to me it was like, "Oh yeah, great, let's start a group." There was a lot going on, it seemed like, an awful lot going on. Members of other collectives such as Group Material, Paper Tiger Television, and Carnival Knowledge overlapped with PAD/D. Some of us showed in Group Material's Tenth Street gallery space and they in turn would become involved in our projects. It seemed to me that the idea of forming groups and collectives was really in the air.

**JK:** There was another collective with Arlene Goldberg.

**GS:** NAPNOC (Neighborhood Arts Programs National Organizing Committee), which later became Alliance for Cultural Democracy (ACD). ACD may still have some pieces, some remnants,

somewhere. ACD was intended to be a national organization that would support various forms of local arts and cultural activity. It wasn't necessarily political per se, I mean not in the ideological sense that PAD/D was, but it was a form of localized activism. At a certain point the NAP-NOC/ACD model began to have quite an influence on PAD/D, which tugged us away from this more centralized organizational structure that we had been working with, or at least away from the political vanguardist model that you could feel in the group from about 1981 on. This broadened PAD/D's practice and was positive in my opinion.

I think the ambition of PAD/D was to galvanize groups like ACD, Group Material, and dozens of other groups around the country, into a coalition that would really, literally, become a counter-institutional structure. Or at least this was clearly and explicitly the intention at one point. There was something that was called the February 26th Movement that was launched in 1982, a huge event that took place in the Bread and Roses Auditorium.

I chaired one session of this weekend-long event. There were dozens of panels and people coming from all over. There was a lot of enthusiasm, but it never really took off, for all kinds of reasons, probably most of them having to do with the difficulties of organizing people at a time when the left was in decline. But a lot of people did come together and had conversations, and some of them were very art-oriented and others were neighborhood, community, local activist discussions.

**TS:** What were some of the reasons, in your opinion, that The February 26th Movement didn't function—that things didn't get built up into a larger social movement?

**GS:** This was before the internet and before e-mail. So technically it was complicated to produce an alternative network. There are probably a lot of other factors. But one of the reasons that I'm not as clear here is because this was the point where Janet and I and others started a reading group, which became the PAD/D reading group. And there was always a bit of tension between the reading group and the larger group. At one point we were actually accused of trying to create a faction.

**JK:** Now why was that? A similar thing happened earlier with AMCC and its subcommittee,

the Catalogue Committee, which went on to produce *The Anti-Catalog*. The *Anti-Catalog* was published in 1977 by a group of fifteen artists and two art historians (mostly from AMCC) as a protest to the Whitney Museum's bicentennial exhibition. Drawn entirely from the private collection of John Rockefeller III, the Whitney exhibition was made up primarily of white male artists. The Catalog Committee paid for the publication out of its own pocket with little help from the much larger AMCC.

**GS:** Some of us felt that we didn't have enough theory. We didn't feel like PAD/D had really thought through these issues of art and society very deeply. And so we tried to be the more intellectual part of the organization. I circulated my first essay, which was a critique of PAD/D, misspellings and all. Something to the affect of "Fear of Formalism" or "If I See One More Painting of Ronald Reagan as a Vampire I'm Going go back to Landscape Art." [A long period of laughter] And I made copies of this thing and handed it out at the February 26th event. In retrospect, I should have realized that maybe that wasn't the right way to do it. But I did this, thinking: "Okay, we really need to think through what is political art."

**JK:** That's how Greg and I met: when he said he was going to open up this reading group.

**GS:** And that's kinda how the reading group got started. It was actually started by Jim Murray. At the time, he was editor of *Cultural Correspondence*, a very important journal founded by Paul Buhle that was connected to the left-leaning American Surrealist Movement. So the reading group spun out of a critique of PAD/D and therefore got off to this somewhat splintery start. I mean we never thought of ourselves as a faction, but we really did want to think through these issues intellectually. Thus there was a certain amount of separation that took place.

**TS:** How did you deal with the conflict? How would you resolve things when they exploded?

**GS:** Nothing ever exploded. Nothing ever got to that stage. Maybe individuals had issues with other individuals, but that was about it. There was a very strict structure within the group for dealing with problems. At that time, Lucy Lippard and Jerry Kearns were involved in steering the group (I was on the

steering committee partly because I was the treasurer for many years), and I think, at a certain point, they realized, "Okay, these people that are doing a lot of reading are like a resource for the group." I think that's the way they began to perceive it with the hope we would feed things back into the organization.

There were people in the reading group who were not part of PAD/D, and this gets complicated because to officially become a member of PAD/D you had to go to X number of meetings and belong to at least one committee and do a certain amount of work in that committee.

The reason for this rule was that, so often, the group would come up with an idea and suddenly one person comes, for the first time, to a meeting and everything changes. And so we realized that we had to have some way of limiting that disruption.

And there was actually a voting structure, to go back to your earlier question. I believe it was majority vote. It might have been 75%, but I think it was a simple majority.

**TS:** And that was a really effective way of making decisions? Did it work better than other things?

**GS:** It worked better than consensus, which was probably, more or less, the model that we were operating with during the first year or so.

**TS:** Did the initial call to come together and archive all of this work maybe help form the structure in some way, or influence peoples' expectations about how it was structured?

**JK:** I would have to say no, but...

**GS:** I don't think the structure that I was talking about—I agree with Janet—came out of the archival aspect. I think for some people, plugging in as an archivist or a documentarian or whatever gave them a good, structured entry to the group. But they weren't as involved in the decision making of the entire collective. Again, I think the group structure really was inherited from these earlier, more left-wing organizations.

**JK:** Yeah. I would say that the people who did the archive work were fairly separate from the rest of the group...

**GS:** They were fairly autonomous. They were doing this simultaneously with the group doing

all of these other things. But there was almost no discussion of like, "Well, what goes in the archive; what doesn't?" It wasn't a central part of the group, despite the name.

**JK:** Similarly, there was not that much interaction between the Not For Sale group and the rest of PAD/D. We had very little support.

**GS:** Not For Sale, the reading group, transformed itself into a committee that actually did anti-gentrification work. It kind of mutated. But, like the reading group, it remained almost virtually autonomous from PAD/D, except that we did get some money from them, and we kept them abreast of what we were doing.

**TS:** That's really interesting, given the intense structure that you built.

**GS:** Yeah, and that's probably where this tension came up that we were creating a "faction" or whatever. Because we were fairly autonomous. But it never went beyond that suggestion, you know, like there was no trial. Which there might have been if we had been in the Situationists or Surrealists.

**TS:** So, what about the social networks that made this all possible? You were all working together, talking together, going to each others' things... Did it affect the social networks behind PAD/D to have separate activities starting to form within PAD/D? What was the dynamic that formed given previous social situations and how the group changed?

**GS:** I think, in terms of social structure, we really met more as a group with some business to do than we did as a group of people who were hanging out and were friends, let alone tight. We weren't really a social group in that sense. There were generally good relations between people, but it was business. We would get together, and sometimes people left, because we would have meetings that were all business. You know, whatever finances there were, "Do we make a vote on this? Are we gonna just go with this?" And for a bunch of artists that can just become incredibly oppressive.

**TS:** How did PAD turn into PAD/D?

**GS:** Probably between early 1981 and spring. We added this notion of Distribution. If you distrib-



ute work in different ways, then it actually creates this alternative network.

**JK:** Right, so it was definitely trying to be an alternative to the pull of the art world.

**GS:** Yeah. More recently, if I'm not mistaken, Jerry Kearns said he saw PAD/D as much more art world oriented than the work he had been doing prior to that with Amiri Baraka, which admittedly was much more heavy duty political from my perspective. However, if you read the mission statement that PAD/D printed, it was like, "We don't really want to have anything to do with the art world." You know, "We want our separate sphere." And I think this is where I find this interesting difference between PAD/D on the one hand and Group Material on the other. Because I think that Group Material conceived of its mission as rekindling an avant-garde that had ossified within the art world. By contrast, PAD/D, more influenced by New Left politics than by avant-gardism, was saying, "Well, we just don't want to have anything to do with the official art world."

**TS:** Maybe we can talk about Up Front and the decision to publish it. Why was that a necessary part of your activities? How did it fit into the mission of PAD/D at that time?

**GS:** My only accurate recollection, and again this is a bit foggy, is that the idea was to have a newsletter that would be able to distribute the material in the archives. I think that was the

initial impetus behind the newsletter. Keith Christensen coordinated the look of the group's first publication, which was initially called First Issue—later changed to Upfront with issue number three, for obvious reasons. The first First Issue, whose editorial "Waking Up in New York" outlined PAD/D's mission, was printed exactly a year after the group was founded. But remember, there was no internet. So the aim was to take material out of the archives, copy it and distribute it via the newsletter as a type of information or archival distribution activism. Over the years, the archive pages, as I recall, came and went in different issues. And I think there was some vote at one point that we should always have something from the archive in there, but it didn't necessarily happen.

Remember, again, that Lucy Lippard was the arts writer for the Village Voice. So while the PAD/D newsletter didn't have a lot of visibility in the art world, by contrast her weekly art column did. Thus the whole idea of politicized, social art was starting to get play that it would never have had otherwise. Sure, prior to 1980, people were doing this kind of work, but nobody was getting any recognition from the art world whatsoever. And I really do credit her, in a lot of ways, with having helped expose this work and making it something that people had to take seriously in the art world. At the same time, to some degree PAD/D in less direct ways, and Group Material perhaps more overtly, did alter the art world landscape in favor of "political art". In some sense you can say that we were victims of our own success because by the end of the 1980s, everybody wanted to do political art. However, it had lost its connection to activism and to broader political issues. This was the moment when MoMA's print curator Deborah Wye organized the large survey exhibition entitled Committed to Print in 1988—which was an excellent show—but it was, in a way...

**JK:** A retrospective or a kind epitaph.

**TS:** I remember looking at slides with you, Greg, a few years ago, of these gatherings at street corners where you'd declare a street corner a gallery or you'd use the names of prominent institutions and people would come and put up their work (stencils, posters, flyers, a range of things, even paintings). Was that a PAD/D activity or was that just something that was happening...

**GS:** Well it didn't quite work that way. The read-



ing group that we had started, that then became a committee, was dealing with the issue of gentrification in 1982. We decided to call ourselves the Not For Sale committee, meaning that the neighborhood, the Lower East Side, is not for sale. So we staged an exhibition at El Bohio in 1983 where we built an installation space, temporarily, and invited people to come and put work up about the neighborhood. And it ranged from people who were just part of the East Village art scene doing their crazy stuff, to people who had, like, crocheted things, to people who openly made anti-gentrification projects. It was really all over the place.

But when Grace Glueck of the New York Times reported on our exhibition by linking it to the neo-bohemian East Village art scene, we became alarmed. Janet even coined this very funny term “Off, Off West Broadway”—because West Broadway was the center of SoHo at the time. So we decided, the following year (1984) to do a new project called Art for the Evicted. We chose four street corners. We staked them out and decided which ones to use. It was possible then to post things on the walls because so many buildings were abandoned and they were just covered with flyers anyway—so we had those as spaces. These were in between the commercial gallery scene that had emerged, the so-called East Village scene. We called on artists specifically to do work about either the scene itself, from a

critical point of view, or gentrification. And to submit twenty copies of whatever they were doing, and we would, over the course of time, post them and re-post them until they ran out, in those four locations.

Then we gave each one of those four locations its own mock moniker: one was the “Leona Helmsley Gallery” before she was in jail, “The Guggenheim Downtown” before there was a Guggenheim downtown, “Discount Salon”, and “Another Gallery.” We created logos for each one, and put those on the poster.

**TS:** Were there precedents for doing this kind of stuff, had people been working in public in this way?

**GS:** Well, the one show that was probably the most immediate precedent was PAD/D’s Death and Taxes, because it took place in different locations around the city and not in an art gallery.

**JK:** But our experience with the El Bohio show was that we thought that the public would come in, that the community would come in. But the community did not come in... to that space. The community just didn’t feel that it was their space. We didn’t want to have that happen again, so we decided to bring the gallery outdoors.

**TS:** How long were you doing the outdoor gal-

leries within the gallery district?

**GS:** Maybe three, four months total, essentially until we ran out of duplicate posters to wheat-paste.

**TS:** What's the legacy of PAD/D? How would you characterize the impact that PAD/D had on these ways of working?

**GS:** PAD/D hasn't had a direct impact on art or activists. You can see the ideas generated by PAD/D kind of reiterated, often unknowingly, by younger people. And it goes back to the notion of dark matter that you mentioned before. PAD/D is part of an underground or shadow archive that circulates informally.

But certainly the more structured nature of the organization didn't carry over. You don't find groups today that resemble PAD/D in any way, shape or form—in terms of having committees and having ways that you have to tender a proposal and having voting—that just doesn't happen anymore. And, I think that that tells you something about the current period of political culture: that PAD/D was very much keyed into a particular kind of political moment that came out of the late 1960s.

**TS:** In a way PAD/D did have an impact—or still can. The archive in MoMA is this massive thing waiting to be reinvested with energy. That you did the work you did at all is so important. The collection is amazing. I saw posters from Denmark in the archive. I don't know why I thought this, but I initially thought, "Oh, the PAD/D archive will just be really New York-centric," and I found really quickly that there was just so much stuff that it was difficult to even find the New York stuff in there, just because there was such an incredible amount of stuff coming from everywhere.

I think MoMA is just really an excellent place to have this archive, because they really have the resources and wherewithal to actually maintain something that's completely antithetical to just how horribly corporate that place has become.

**GS:** Well, it's definitely ironic that the archive is there too, because, on the one hand, it will be the legacy of this group. But, the people who really committed themselves to making the archive (Barbara Moore, Mimi Smith, et cetera) were, in a sense, autonomous from the group. And the

other irony, of course, as you say, is that it's in this highly corporatized institution.

### **Barbara Moore**

**TS:** Along with Mimi Smith you were the primary worker on the PAD/D committee, archiving, cataloging, and cross-referencing thousands of items.

**Barbara Moore (BM):** Well, it was fourteen years of volunteer work. I've said to Mimi many times I think that that's what I'll be remembered by—of all the things I've done professionally or whatever. That's one of the things I'm proudest of, actually.

**TS:** Can you describe the process of creating the PAD/D archive?

**BM:** PAD/D was about this networking between people who were doing something that, at that time, was not in the mainstream as it has sort of gotten to be. And there was this necessity to document this and I think you have to go back to the context of the times. I've been involved in archives all my professional life and if you have that mindset you basically have the attitude that this is something that is not likely to be preserved automatically—that it's under the radar and also . . . nowadays everything is so over-documented [laughs] that you have to go back to a time when we didn't have the extensive technology that we have now—nothing digital—and I'm still a great believer in archiving by paper anyway. I think the original ephemera says a lot more than the reproductions in any form.

So the idea of an archive was put forth and nobody really knew quite how it would take form. And there were numerous meetings that had false starts, and I got the feeling that it needed some direction and several of us started working on it and I just don't remember how it came about that I suggested the format it would take. I had already been accustomed to using 3" x 5" cards in various cataloguing capacities. I'm not trained as a librarian at all. And my philosophy particularly about this kind of archive is that you can't put it into a pre-existing system if you want the broad general public to use it and you don't have the resources... for example, putting it into something like the Dewey Decimal System or some professional library system would have taken a course of training for every single person who



wanted to work on it, and would have required financial and technical means that we wouldn't have had at our disposal. We had to have something that could be created by people without training and then accessible in a similar way.

Anyway, Mimi and I were working on it and other people at various times were working on it. But people got filtered out of it, because actually there are not too many people who can sit there for hours and hours—particularly hand writing those cards [laughter] and are of the mindset to see the goal through to the end. We had a lot of dedicated people—Carol Waag, Kate Linker, and other names that escape me. First of all, being interested in the material is a very important place to start. It keeps you committed if it seems like drudgery—it never seems like drudgery to me, because I found in my experience as a book dealer... you know I had been a rare book dealer. I no longer am. My experience with archiving in general and my book business has been that when I delegate the cataloguing to another person, I don't ever examine the book as thoroughly as I would have if I did the cataloguing. So it's a self-educating thing. All these things, under the circumstances, have to be taken into account. You're starting off with a psychologically supportive environment but with no materials, no anything...

So the willingness to stick with it under those circumstances and to be interested in it and realize how much you're learning from it was very important to me, and probably to Mimi, I'm sure. But also Mimi and I ended up making a little social thing out of it. We became fast friends—we hadn't known each other before. We would have lunch and be working for several hours and we'd meet every single week and it became something to look forward to.

**TS:** And so the rest of PAD/D—were they very supportive of these activities?

**BM:** Of course. And as I say, there was a whole contingent of various people passing through the archives helping us. We remained the constant. It wasn't just that people lost interest or considered it boring, by any means. Peoples' lives change, they move away or they have projects elsewhere or whatever, but we were the core, obviously and I think that consistency was a big help. But the system was so easy—if you look at those cards you'll see different people's handwriting. It was this very basic system of recording who was the creator, the author, and if there

was a title and any publishing or other information that was visible, and we made up these categories. We sort of kept adding to these categories as we went along. We had something there that was in a category we hadn't had before so we added a category. It constantly evolved over the years. And the interesting thing, when you are talking about cataloguing, is that terminology changes over the years too. When we started there were no words for HIV and AIDS, and I think you'll find differing things and... sometimes we'd start with broad categories and narrow them down and make subsets of things. I can't think of specific examples now but I know with women's issues and feminist things there were discussions about terminologies, abortion rights, or whatever. And I suspect that if I went and looked at it now that some of these categories might not be the most appropriate way to deal with it in our current situation, because the terminology has maybe changed several times now.

**TS:** What were your hopes for the archive in going through this whole process? You must have been giving this a lot of thought—did you?

**BM:** Not in the way you are saying. To me it was enough to make the archive. That was, for me, definitely a goal. I know that I personally never dreamed that it would end up in the MoMA library. I mean that was really an extraordinary development. One hopes it will be of use but one didn't know the lifespan of PAD/D itself and we also had this series of very makeshift offices and we were going every couple years to a new place before we finally ended up in the War Resisters League building at 339 Lafayette Street. Anyway, I'm trying to think of my mindset back then and I don't remember any lofty goals.

**TS:** Were you continuing to do the archive after PAD/D shifted and stopped its activities and people mutated into other organizations?

**BM:** PAD/D lasted from 1980-1988 and I've always felt that it was like a victim of its own success because one of its initial purposes was to make people aware of this kind of artistic thinking, and by 1988 this kind of work was getting into the mainstream and we have a lot of very socially conscious art these days, right?

**TS:** Yeah, yeah. It laid the groundwork for younger people. I've had these conversations with Greg Sholette about how alien and unac-

ceptable it was to be working in these ways and to have peer support for it.

**BM:** Yes, the thing was that political art has become something different but it's still there and it's very badly needed more than ever.

**TS:** When did you finish the archives and then when did they go into MoMA's collection?

**BM:** You have it in reverse order. It went into MoMA's collection in 1990 or so and Mimi and I worked for four years within the museum library. We had to fine tune it. By the time that PAD/D lost its last office and the organization dissolved we just had piles of stuff that hadn't been catalogued yet and so we needed to continue.

**TS:** So it's a closed archive now—nothing's really being added to it?

**BM:** It went into Special Collections. That was partly due to the fact that we were not within their cataloguing system. And then they obviously could not be expected to carry on the catalog. They cannot be expected to carry on parallel cataloguing systems—they have their own system. So it went into that segment of the library with its own sub-cataloguing system being retained—although it was put on a computer. They said they would keep accepting things but they'd put them into their own system. Which basically I think means their artist files—unless they are books or something. But they do have these wonderful artist files.

**TS:** Were there any challenges you faced cataloging and archiving the work of people working in groups versus people working as individual artists? Were there certain things you were confronted with in terms of systems you developed?

**BM:** Constantly, and as I said, we kept fine tuning it every time we came into a situation like that—a new cross-referencing category, a subject, a group of artists. But a group of artists—let's say like ACT UP. ACT UP is what you're cataloguing under as the group, on its own collectively. I don't know if you noticed but I think in every ACT UP case—we didn't have all of the posters—we had a nice selection. But we had gotten the names of the individuals and we put them in parentheses. The system being that if you had information that wasn't visible on the

item itself you put it in parentheses. So I believe that it says ACT UP and then lists the artists for that poster if we'd know their names, but then we also wrote the names in pencil on the back of the poster itself. The idea was to get this background information whenever possible when it was pertinent and not visible. Because it was accessible to us then. Going back now and trying to reconstruct it would be a lot more work.

**TS:** That would be really hard. I can't even imagine.

**BM:** Well people have done that—particularly for organizations like ACT UP. I've seen names of people at various times. But being that they had rotating people on their graphics committee, or whatever it was called, who did a particular poster could vary.

**TS:** Because we are thinking of this book as a resource for people—people wanting to work in groups, people wanting to collaborate, people wanting to document their work and make historical records—do you have any advice that you can give to collaborative groups that are concerned with preserving their work and making something similar to the PAD/D archive?

**BM:** That feeds into something that I've seen a lot of today, which is that people get very involved in technology, and I think you have to remember that if we are going to have this technology, it's also going to cost money, and they think they are going to need funding. And I think if you're really serious about this you have to work with what you have. If you have the technical means, that's wonderful. Use whatever you do have. One thing I see with funding that has always disturbed me is that people too often say that they can't do a project unless they get the funding. And I think if you're really serious about your work as an artist, or in politics or whatever it is, you find the means. And if it's primitive, so what? I mean, we did the most primitive thing possible. Even without the digital technology, there probably are other technologies that would have been more sophisticated that we didn't have access to. But why obsess about that? Why retrain yourself? Work with what you have. If you have lousy handwriting and you can't stand the idea of writing the stuff out, then keep a decent paper file system with folders marked. Any logical system. We have the alphabet we can work with... whatever!

[Laughter] You can go back to the most primitive thing—alphabetization.

**TS:** The example of the file cards is really great. The PAD/D archive is just unbelievable. I just wasn't prepared for what was actually there, and it's really effective, it's really gorgeous and it's really important. And really low tech—which is great. For all of the digital crap we have, holding the press release for the first Group Material show, or seeing original flyers, or handwritten notes on the back of postcards for invitations to shows is just really fortifying and really connects you in a way that you can't through art history or learning from a really removed or detached place.

What do you think is the legacy of PAD/D but also of this archival work that you and Mimi did?

**BM:** Well, first of all the archive is not just the history of this work; it's the history of PAD/D itself. This is a double archive. I've not only been involved with archives all my professional life, I've been involved in more alternative means—my whole orientation as a book dealer was alternative means of producing art. I never carried things about figurative sculpture. I carried everything from performance materials to artist books to conceptual works.

It's very interesting to me how, being that I've been involved in this stuff for over forty years? the broader thing not just PAD/D – it's interesting to see how it gets out into the broader public consciousness and the mainstream. And how eventually, no matter how subversive you are, 90% of the time, somebody will find a way of marketing it. So the legacy of PAD/D is a testament that some people were working in a different way, but...I relate it to all these other things.

That brings up another thing: Mimi and I had broad discretion—since we were the archive workers basically—in what we defined as suitable for the archive as well as how we presented it. And we came to a decision that almost anything could be included, including some slightly right wing material. In other words, an archive is not a qualitative thing. You don't make judgments, and if you are defining “socially conscious”, they never said everything had to be “liberally socially conscious.” [Loud laughter] Also I remember somebody sent us their woodcuts of cats, and we said “Well, we'll draw the line at pictures of cats.” [More laughter] You know an archive is a collective record of something and it

has to be as all-inclusive as possible. So we didn't make judgments about the art and we got some very interesting things in as a result.

When we moved into this room at the War Resisters League building and had our best offices and our final offices there for many years, we inherited that office from the Iranian Students Organization. I don't know if you had it in Chicago, but they stood on New York street corners wearing black and white striped prison garb with documentation and posters of what the Shah had done in Iran. And this had been their office. And if you remember the Shah was overthrown in 1979—the hostage crisis and all of that. Anyway, we inherited their offices and there were these posters on the wall that were in I guess Farsi, which were incredibly graphic, but we had no idea what they said, and they were mostly these photographs of people's heads or busts. They were obviously political, without us knowing really what they were. And rather than coming into an office and clearing everything out, we ripped them off the wall and put them into the archive. [Laughter] And then years later, Shirin Neshat who is now famous, but at the time she was working at the Storefront for Art and Architecture, and one of the members who worked with us on the archive knew her and got her to translate them. So we added the translations to the 3” X 5” cards several years later.

**TS:** One last question—could you talk about the breadth of the archive? I was originally thinking it would be really New York-centric and I was blown away by what was actually there.

**BM:** A lot of this had to do with Lucy Lippard's travels, and of course other people were traveling also. So once we had this strong group of people committed to this like Greg and Lucy and a lot of others, whenever anybody went any place—giving a lecture or doing an exhibition or curating or being in an exhibition—they brought back materials or made connections: the networking concept was essential. Of course there was no internet, but things spread by mail. You know I was affiliated with Fluxus. People talk about mail art but it goes beyond mail art. The 60s was when the concept of making these international connections began, either because people traveled here or Americans traveled abroad. You still got the word out somehow, maybe not to millions of people like we do now with the internet but word would spread when it was something interesting.



The archive consisted of material outside the conventional political arena—Mimi and I were setting these parameters—and it was also of course PAD/D's own archive of itself, but when we decided what subjects to include, we decided that subversive artistic strategies, even if they didn't deal with national issues, were in themselves political. So there is a little collection of mail art in there and things like that.

**Jerry Kearns**

**TS:** Can you tell me how you got involved with PAD/D?

**Jerry Kearns (JK):** I remember PAD/D began taking form about a year before I joined. I think

it was in the spring of 1980 when I saw a leaflet stapled to a pole somewhere in SoHo. It referred to an artists' meeting to talk about social issues and art at the Printed Matter bookstore on Lispenard Street. I hadn't been paying much attention to the art world and was surprised to see the leaflet.

When I came to the city in 1975, one of the first activities I got involved with was an artists' protest at the Whitney Museum against a show called 200 Years of American Art. AMCC was leading a series of demonstrations at the museum to protest the exhibition. It was the Rockefeller family collection and it was practically devoid of women and people of color. A friend told me about these AMCC-hosted public meetings, every other Sunday evening, at Artists' Space on Wooster Street. I began to go and sup-

ported the protests.

By the mid 1970s, the American Left was in shock and disarray. From 1968 to 1973, the state had carried out a number of assassinations and other forms of repression that effectively buried the rebellions of the 1960s. The New York art world had begun to protest the Vietnam War in 1969 or 1970, but the professional art world is something like the Loch Ness monster. Heads peer above the surface in times of prolonged crisis, then quickly sink back to swim in calmer waters. [Laughter]

In the AMCC, there was a small collective known as The Fox. They had published several journals of Left cultural theory, which were influenced by the British collective, Art & Language. It is my memory that following the Rockefeller demonstrations they pushed for a more street-oriented community involvement than the larger membership of AMCC could tolerate and that this led to a split within the organization.

Soon a small group of us left the AMCC to form a group we called The Red Herring. Our goal was to become involved more directly with cultural activism as part of direct political action. We saw the need to become part of community-based political organizations in the city. We wanted to directly use our art as a political tool in support of progressive social causes. The Red Herring began publishing a journal called *MainTrend*. I think there were five issues.

We heard of the poet and writer Amiri Baraka's activities in Newark and around the Lower East Side. He and his wife Amina were central to a number of Left cultural activities—plays, poetry readings, and musical events. Through checking their work out we discovered the NuYorican Cafe and the Puerto Rican cultural Left, and some leftist Asian groups. With several of those people we initiated The Anti-Imperialist Cultural Union and embarked on a couple of years working together. We worked on various Left newspapers, organized a variety of cultural events around inner city issues: housing, jobs, education, community parks, et cetera. Working together was fascinating and very difficult. We were a mixture of contradictions. Several people were quite chewed up in the process. Ultimately, the centralized cult-like quality of the leadership blew the group apart.

**TS:** The Anti-Imperialist Cultural Union...that's great! It seems like the time was full of these groups with really big names like that.

**JK:** You could really feel the passing of the 1960s. There were a few refugees from the mainstream art world looking for a connection to "reality". Various factions from black, Asian and Latino nationalist groups were already out there in "reality". They were trying to reach from their respective isolation of past politics and build a broad based movement of progressive politics. No one really knew what they were doing. I used to call us paperback revolutionaries, because everybody was reading Marx, Lenin, and Mao-paperbacks.

I think the art Leftists were trying to make a clear statement of intention. We were disaffected with the direction of mainstream culture and fine art, and wanted to join our art directly with change-oriented politics. There was an emerging scene of academic Leftism in art, such as that of the AMCC leadership, and we wanted to distinguish our efforts from those "petite bourgeois" art world professionals. We wanted to put more on the line, risk more, and join the action in the streets. Those groups in the mid-to-late 1970s Lower East Side scene, including Artists for Survival, EL Bohio, COLAB, Group Material, and others were part of what informed PAD/D's beginnings.

In addition to a variety of publishing efforts, we organized events in public schools, union halls, churches, community spaces, bars, and so forth. I think these activities expressed a process that PAD/D, Group Material and other groups elaborated upon. We developed an art festival format, which included as many art forms as possible. Poetry, music, photography, painting, sculpture, theater, were all frequently part of our activities. Merging entertainment with art and education, we placed an emphasis on the event rather than the object as art—and on the group rather than the individual as the center of production. It was a politicized extension of performance and process art. It was not unlike some of the things going on in Germany—with people like Joseph Beuys—at the time. After a year or so of those activities a small number of us became more directly involved in social protest movements and political action.

In the late 1970s, police brutality in minority neighborhoods became a flashpoint issue in New York City. Over several years a number of questionable beatings and deaths occurred as the NYPD behaved like an invading army in the Black and Latino communities. In the summer of 1978, an unarmed black teenager was shot in the back and killed by the police in Crown Heights,

Brooklyn. A long simmering social protest movement immediately jumped into the headlines when a march of several thousand came across the Brooklyn Bridge to City Hall.

The Reverend Dr. Herbert Daughtry, minister of The House of The Lord Church, on Atlantic Avenue, emerged as the most visible spokesperson for a diverse community-based movement. The coalition quickly spread to include elements from electoral politics to the most radical of progressive organizations in the city. We soon caught wind of the Sunday evening community meetings held at the House of The Lord Church and began to attend. Our five or six white faces really stuck out in a sea of Black, Latino, and Asian politicians.

By the end of the first summer we had been accepted by the coalition and formed the base of a support committee of liberals and radicals who worked with the Black United Front (BUF) for the next two or three years. The committee was comprised of lawyers, union organizers, teachers, artists, and so forth. I worked on a number of publications, fundraising posters, photographic documentation, calendars, and the like. One of my assignments was to photograph demonstrations in order to gather evidence of police brutality at these events. Another was to photograph victims of brutality from the neighborhoods for use in court cases the BUF began to bring against the police. I felt like I had achieved my goal of making art in the heat of political change. It was an exciting time.

In the fall of 1979, a group of Puerto Rican activists from the Bronx brought a new struggle to the meetings and asked for people to work with them. They were opposing the making of a Hollywood film in their neighborhood. Paul Newman and Ed Asner were starring in a new cop movie titled *Fort Apache, The Bronx*. At the time, NYC Mayor Ed Koch and various real estate elements in the city were working together to empty the South Bronx. A series of suspicious building fires had been gutting the community. Social services and businesses were closing everyday. The activists saw the film as perpetuating the same criminal stereotypes that made the destruction of the community acceptable in the daily press. The situation particularly interested me because it was so clearly a cultural issue. I began going to the South Bronx to oppose the film.

**TS:** So how did this committee against the film form? How did anybody get wind of the film being made? Did somebody see a script that got

everybody riled up?

**JK:** Exactly, somebody got a script. Then location scouts and pre-production teams began to descend on the South Bronx. They ran into the remnants of The Young Lords Party, a Black Panther-like organization from the 1960s that did a lot of organizing in the community throughout the 1960s into the 1970s. Richie Perez, who had been a member of the party and the editor of their newspaper was active in various community organizations in the late 1970s. His and several other community organizations formed The Committee Against Fort Apache, The Bronx. Perez, Panama Alba, and others in the committee were sophisticated media manipulators from their Young Lords history. They had connections in the New York press and TV media and used them brilliantly to oppose the film. Early on the producers responded to quiet the uproar by hiring a number of neighborhood people for menial jobs on the film. Among them were activists who spied on the shooting schedule, and passed information on to the committee. We always knew what they were planning and were generally there waiting for them each day. They couldn't figure out how we knew so much about them.

I think the national publicity raised by our opposition to the film played a big role in helping to turn the declining situation around in the South Bronx. We put the neighborhood on the national media map. Reagan even stopped there to be photographed when running for President. He was photographed in front of a giant stenciled "DECAY" on an abandoned building by artist John Feckner. Soon money and social services began to come back to the neighborhood. It is now a much-revitalized place with a new generation of artists piling in for reasonable rents. It was about that time that I saw the PAD/D leaflet in SoHo. I thought, "Wow, artists organizing again...that's interesting." I had been reading Lucy Lippard in the *Village Voice*, and recognized her name, so I sent her a letter telling her of my work with The BUF and with The Committee Against Fort Apache, The Bronx. As it turned out she had heard of what we were doing and a letter from her passed mine in the mail. [Laughter] She said, "Come to these meetings." I did, in the fall of 1980.

As I recall those first months that I was involved, we met on the first Sunday of each month at Printed Matter bookstore and talked. I don't remember specifically but I'm sure people

wrote discussion papers and the like. There were a number of opinions about what kind of organization PAD/D should be, what it should try to do, and so forth. It is my experience that unless a group comes together around a specific issue, and the necessary action seems obvious, a long period of discussion seems to be required to get on the same page.

**TS:** So it was still a pretty unformed thing when you got there?

**JK:** That's my memory: lengthy, interesting crowded gatherings, with people showing slides of their work, presenting discussion papers and the like. People wanted some kind of active group. I think we next moved to public events at Printed Matter and Franklin Furnace with the help of Lucy and Martha Wilson. There was a performance art series, Lucy curated window art, and we attempted to reach out to other artists inviting them to participate in these and other events, exhibitions, and publications.

The wars in Central America heated up, in El Salvador and Nicaragua for example, and became the focus of a great deal of work and a nationwide exhibition campaign with numerous venues in NYC organized by PAD/D working in coalition with other artists, poets, writers, and a variety of groups, both cultural and political.

1980-86 was intensely active. We maintained a core membership of twenty or so, sometimes growing to much larger numbers as we moved forward with major projects. Lucy Lippard and I were working collaboratively, as a team, during this period. We traveled around the country, frequently speaking at universities and various alternative cultural spaces. During those trips we began to explore the possibility of a building a national network of progressive culture. At one point PAD/D called a national convention or conference in NYC. It was held at the Health and Hospital Workers Union headquarters on 43rd Street. Groups came from around the country. Our main thing was building networks beyond the art world. If you're always just relating to the art world, that's a problem. Don't try to make everybody a "political artist". Organize people as people.

**TS:** Was PAD/D effective at doing that or did they close that door? How did that actually manifest itself?

**JK:** We were effective within our limitations.

One of the things that you have to offer artists and cultural people is a venue for expression. We made it a central issue that we would create venues in the communities of the city. PAD/D was the fringe art world reaching out into the community and we facilitated a community perspective back toward the art world. Although we didn't receive much credit in the mainstream, I think we and the other groups of the late 1970s were fuel for the political art boom of the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Building a national network proved too much for our resources. There are complex problems when working in concert with organized political groups whether they're left or right or whatever. Their agenda is political and culture is a potentially mercurial voice, one they want to control and manipulate for their purposes. We stood for an independent cultural movement, one that worked with organized political groups not for them. We wanted our own power based within progressive political change movements. We didn't have the resources to carry that forward.

**TS:** Could you talk about the nuts and bolts of how PAD/D functioned, how they made decisions, how they got things done, how you resolved conflict?

**JK:** I recall that we tried to make PAD/D democratic; decisions were open to the membership and made by them. We used simple majority voting procedures. We tried to make power transparent within the group. But we also tried to avoid the endless group therapy sessions that consensus decision making often leads to.

The importance of Lucy Lippard cannot be overstated. Without her, there would have not been a PAD/D. Her leadership was very much a leadership of doing. Everyone was involved in numerous activities and projects. But Lucy was omnipresent. A number of us were 24/7 on the job for years, but Lucy more than anyone gave the process a rudder. She displayed a tireless determination that flowed through the whole enterprise. She was also a highly respected emissary to the Women's movement, the Native American movement, and to mainstream art.

Initially, while we were working out organizational procedures, Lucy and I, along with several others, were generally accepted as leaders. There was a mix of age and experience in PAD/D that gave that period a natural sort of hierarchy. Soon we organized. Basically, people would present ideas or projects and, if they could get others

to participate, things went forward. Artists from outside PAD/D could also present project ideas to the group. Project members would update the general meeting on their various projects as they progressed. Other members or artists outside the group might join to help complete a given project. We frequently brought outside artists aboard on specific projects. This gave people a way to work with us without joining the core membership. That proved to be a useful method. We had a little centralized money and that was given to support PAD/D projects. There were a significant number of more or less independent projects that went forward under the PAD/D umbrella.

There were an evolving number of practical committees to get things done. They came and went according to specific projects. There were a number of smaller meetings continually reporting back to the whole. There was a kind of central or steering committee. But the people on it understood that we were advisory—not a top down sort of thing. A number of us had been through those top down organizations and knew the traps pretty well. I think PAD/D worked well for about eight years because of this bottom up organizational plan. Most ideas came from the people who would be doing the work on a given project. That way, members were working on projects that had individual meaning to them. There was less discord in PAD/D than any group I'd worked in to that point.

The core membership of PAD/D was made up of people who wanted to work collectively to accomplish something meaningful outside the winner-take-all mentality of the New York art scene. There was a belief that art could serve some broader social purpose than the commercial scene allowed. There was a shared desire to re-picture the world around us. We were into sharing imagery, information, and ideas for a common purpose. We tried to organize PAD/D to best do those things within the scope of our resources.

**TS:** Yeah, that makes a lot of sense

**JK:** I think we were pretty good at finding ways for artists to work socially with their creative talents. Some groups I had worked with like the Black United Front were top-down organizations. They had specific things they were trying to accomplish, and an agenda for long term goals of Black participation in New York politics, so they just assigned people. “You be here, you watch that, you do this.” That kind of centralized

leadership doesn't work well with educated creative types who aren't there to earn a living from the boss.

PAD/D members were college-educated people, most with masters degrees, and career ambitions. It was a tricky business for radical members of the professional class—part of the intelligentsia—to organize and employ those talents for social change.

**TS:** Were there precedents for what PAD/D was doing that you were aware of or that people would know about?

**JK:** Well several among the membership brought the 1960s with them, that's for sure. The painful lessons of the split between left politicians and the counter culture flower power people were not so far in the past. The anti-war, civil rights, and feminist movements of that period were still fresh. There was a growing understanding of the awesome power of the media and mass imagery as a source of social control, and consequently artists of my generation began to see imagery as a political battlefield as important as any other. I think we understood that we were undertaking an image war and that we wanted to oppose the ceaseless flow of lies moving through the daily media. Much of the ensuing history of art since then bares witness to that understanding.

**TS:** What's your assessment of the legacy of PAD/D?

**JK:** Beyond the archive, I don't really know what it is. I do know that the mainstream embrace of “political art” in the 1980s and 1990s did not acknowledge the contributions of PAD/D, or many of the other groups of that period. And more recent surveys of that period haven't included our activities. Most of mainstream art history takes structure in the recognition of individual achievements which reinforce the market perspective of the system. PAD/D did not do that. We did not fit that agenda. In the past few years several young historians have stopped by for interviews, but I doubt that young artists now working in a social manner know of PAD/D. The internet changes things a lot. Perhaps a new kind of collectivity will emerge. I think it is already happening. It too is outside the mainstream of contemporary art. ■





## Quotes on Groups and Group Work



# What's all this stuff about collaboration, multiple producers and groups?

Everything in the world we want to do or get done, we must do with and through people.

– Earl Nightingale. *The Strangest Secret*. Keys Company, Inc., 1996.

The idea of collaboration among visual artists is rarely entertained by the public. The perception of the artist as a loner confirms the generally accepted notion of the solitary genius ... This impression, however, does not seem to apply to other creative professions.

– Abram Lerner. *Forward to Artistic Collaboration in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Cynthia Jaffee McCabe. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1984.

I think that art is not something you do totally on your own, because the process of bringing about the actual work of art involves more than one. There is always a friend, a handyman, or a colleague who enriches the idea in a general sense.

– Marco Castillo de Los Carpinteros, quoted in "Conversation/Interview with Los Carpinteros (Alexandre Arrechea, Marco Castillo and Dagoberto Rodríguez) on July 15, 2003, in Havana, Cuba" by Margaret Miller and Noel Smith. *Los Carpinteros: Inventing The World/Inventar El Mundo*. Chicago Cultural Center brochure. January 2006.

Immaterial labor is increasingly a common activity characterized by continuous cooperation among innumerable individual producers. Who, for example, produces the information of genetic code? Or who, alternatively, produces the knowledge of a plant's beneficial medical uses? In both cases, the information and knowledge is produced by human labor, experience and ingenuity, but in neither case can that labor be isolated to an individual. Such knowledge is always produced in collaboration and communication, by working in common in expansive and indefinite social networks – in these two cases in the scientific community and the indigenous community.

– Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. New York: The Penguin Press, 2004.

Out of the threads of interrelationships, the fabric of art history, like that of life, is spun. Camaraderie, friendship, mutual interests and ambition, the dynamism of nascent art movements, and proximity amid wartime and other disruptive conditions are all incentives toward the creation of collaborative works of art.

– Cynthia Jaffee McCabe. "Artistic Collaboration in the Twentieth Century - the Period Between Two Wars." In *Artistic Collaboration in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Cynthia Jaffee McCabe. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1984.

With collaborative art we can no longer assume we are having an aesthetic and private meditation on the distilled sensibility of another person. When we look at a collaborative work of art, we are examining a dialogue or a conversation between artists.

– Robert C. Hobbs. "Rewriting History – Artistic Collaboration Since 1960." In *Artistic Collaboration in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Cynthia Jaffee McCabe. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1984.

Even when artistic production is a more "individual" activity as in painting or writing a novel, the collective nature of this activity consists in the indirect involvement of numerous other people, both preceding the identified "act" of production (teachers, innovators in the style, patrons, and so on), and mediating between production and reception (critics, dealers, publishers). Secondly, the ideas, beliefs, attitudes and values expressed in cul-

tural products are ideological, in the sense that they are always related in a systematic way to the social and economic structures in which the artist is situated. Without accepting any simplistic theory of reflection, it can be shown that the perspective (or world-view) of any individual is not only biographically constructed, but also the personal mediation of a group consciousness. And to that extent, too, what the author or artist says in the work of art is actually (or perhaps one should say also) the statement of a social group and its world-view. Styles and conventions of literary and artistic construction confront both artist and ideology, and determine the modes in which ideas can be expressed in art.

– Janet Wolff. *The Social Production of Art*. Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 1981.

The test of a successful collaboration is when both people feel like they said what they wanted to say. My idea of collaboration is not about compromise, it's about both people doing what they want to do. That's really the critical thing – neither participant should feel like they had to give up a lot to get what they wanted. When you think about a collaboration you really have to look at it as a range of activities. There are also unacknowledged collaborations – the institution is always a collaborator, as the curator often is. You're always also somehow collaborating with the architecture of a space. You have to negotiate that. There are all kinds of contextual elements, like curatorial concepts involved if you're creating some kind of site-specific installation as opposed to sculpture or painting. One great thing about collaboration is that it's like taking a vacation from yourself, if you're honest about it. I have a way of doing things and other artists have their way of doing things, and I learn a lot from that. Sometimes methods are very contradictory and it has to be their way or my way. It can be a struggle, things turn out differently. If I design a collaboration and it comes out exactly the way I thought, then it wasn't a productive collaboration. If it looks nothing like how I imagined it would look then it is really successful. The best test for me, personally, is how much the idea evolves with the influence of another person. My collaborators have always been strong personalities with definitive positions, and, so while it is always rewarding, it is not always easy. Some collaborations are also simply good excuses to travel and spend productive time with friends. We enjoy working together even if it is a challenge.

– Mark Dion. "Collaboration: A Conversation." In *Mark Dion: Collaborations*. West Hartford, CT: University of Hartford, 2003.

Scientists are beginning to realize that the theoretical framework which underpins contemporary physics can be adapted to describe social structures and behavior, ranging from how traffic flows to how the economy fluctuates and how businesses are organized.

– Philip Ball. *Critical Mass: How One Thing Leads to Another*. New York: Heinemann/Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004.

The reward of a successful collaboration is a thing that cannot be produced by either of the parties working alone. It is akin to the benefits of sex with a partner, as opposed to masturbation. The latter is fun, but you show me anyone who has gotten a baby from playing with him or herself, and I'll show you an ugly baby, with just a whole bunch of knuckles.

– Attributed to Harlan Ellison. In *The Painter's Keys*, available at: [www.painterskeys.com/getquotes.asp?fname=ac&ID=39](http://www.painterskeys.com/getquotes.asp?fname=ac&ID=39).

# Why do people work in a group? What makes group work and collaboration desirable?

There were various conditions and shared purposes that led to the formation of the group. A lot of us had just come from art school, where we were trained to develop a "unique" artistic voice. We were also trained to believe that after school you then can go exercise this voice in the so-called real world. This seemed to be pretty much of a false promise considering the limitations and biases which accompanied market principles and the commercial art system, and, many of us were not interested in making objects, but in collaborative processes. We were collectively intent on combining our social and political motivations with artistic practices, which is more common now than it was at that time. Then, the lines between art and politics were more clearly drawn and that delineation was commonly supported, often with the stated interest of preventing the contamination of art with politics.

– Julie Ault of Group Material. From a presentation at La Generazione Delle Immagini, a series of conferences held at the Milan Triennial, Milan, Italy, 1997. Also available online at: [www.undo.net/cgi-bin/openframe.pl?x=/Pinto/Eng/fault.htm](http://www.undo.net/cgi-bin/openframe.pl?x=/Pinto/Eng/fault.htm).

We were a group of about twenty friends who decided to not sit around smoking cigarettes, drinking coffee, and complaining about how awful the commercial art world was. We pooled our money instead: everyone put in fifty dollars a month – about all we had – to rent a space on a block on East Thirteenth Street, between Second and Third Avenues, that many people were afraid to walk down then. It cut into my disco money, big time. We painted the gallery red and called it Group Material Headquarters, and we organized exhibitions that weren't about works of individual artists or groups, but addressed social themes and subjects like alienation, consumerism, fashion, music, and gender. One of my favorites was "The People's Choice (Arroz con Mango)," in 1981, for which we asked everybody on the block to bring in an object that had special value to them. That's when I realized: This is how you do it. This is what democracy might look like. It was full of fantasy and surprise and joy and humor and with – all the things so often lacking in "political art".

– Tim Rollins of Group Material, interviewed by David Deitcher. "David Deitcher on Tim Rollins." *Artforum*, April 2003.

Scientific knowledges too are produced in wide collective networks that are hampered by private ownership and unitary control. The productive realm of communication, finally, makes it abundantly clear that innovation always necessarily takes place in common. Such instances of innovation in networks might be thought of as an orchestra with no conductor – an orchestra that through constant communication determines its own beat and would be thrown off and silenced only by the imposition of a conductor's central authority. We have to rid ourselves of the notion that innovation relies on the genius of an individual. We produce and innovate together only in networks. If there is an act of genius, it is the genius of the multitude.

– Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. New York: The Penguin Press, 2004.

If you have someone that you can work with, make a commitment and work through the differences. Make a commitment to supplement the gaps with your own contributions. Pay no attention to those who will tell you not to work with your friends. It is an insurmountable work to be an artist. It is shallow to rely on your own energy. Ideas like to be cross fertilized. The bonding that happens between artists working together produces an

integrity that reads into the work ... is visible in the work ... communicates to the audience and viewer.

– Goat Island. "Letter to a Young Practitioner." In *Schoolbook 2*, edited by Goat Island. Chicago: Goat Island and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 2000.

I like everybody workin' together. You chip in for a meal together. One guy goes to the store, one guy cooks, one guy washes the dishes. A common goal. We got a lieutenant there, he says the fire department is the closest thing to socialism there is.

– Tom Patrick (fireman), interviewed by Studs Terkel. *Studs Terkel. Working*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.

I want to have dialogue, argument, and to be corrected when I am wrong. Collaboration forgets the errors, remembers the success, and disputes the end. I go to sleep knowing that my concerns are being mullied over by those I trust, admire, and aspire to be compared to.

– Lucky Pierre, e-mail message to Temporary Services, March 2006.

The terms of collaboration are very practical, and they become important, once you decide that you are not working solo. You share your ideas and sign under a common name, which is what unifies the collaboration and gives authorship. You're working within a community of people with similar interests and there is no need to know the author of the idea. The idea in our case is to receive the benefit of what we are creating as a team...

– Alexandre Arrechea of Los Carpinteros, quoted in "Conversation/ Interview with Los Carpinteros (Alexandre Arrechea, Marco Castillo and Dagoberto Rodríguez) on July 15, 2003, in Havana, Cuba" by Margaret Miller and Noel Smith. *Los Carpinteros: Inventing The World/Inventar El Mundo*. Chicago Cultural Center brochure, January 2006.

We would all have been miserable doing a 9-to-5 thing. We figured the only way for us to do music would be to do it on our own. That also meant that we had to be like the Manson family and just all live together. But there was no other way for these particular people to do it.

– Dez Cadena of Black Flag, quoted in "Their War" by Jay Babcock. 2005. Available at: [www.jaybabcock.com/blackflag.html](http://www.jaybabcock.com/blackflag.html).

In SRL [Survival Research Laboratories], compared to other machine organizations, we have a large number of women engineers, structural welders, forklift drivers, and women in general – having worked for other international machine arts organizations and had horrifying sexist experiences, I can tell you that SRL is the only place that gender does not matter, only ability. In SRL, we have a number of Canadians ... Also, we have few card-carrying lesbians and gays, but the largest number of bisexual women and men in one organization I've seen outside a bi conference. Also a large number of vegetarians and motorcycle riders. And everyone is brilliant in their own field – women who weld the Golden Gate Bridge, men who collide atoms at the Stanford Linear Accelerator, stagehands at the top of their game, sign makers, programmers, inventors, an author, teachers, women and men who race motorcycles. Try to pin us down, and we blur your categories.

– Violet Blue of Survival Research Laboratories.

Journal entry (November 18, 2003), available at: [www.tinyinbbles.com/archives/angst.html](http://www.tinyinbbles.com/archives/angst.html).

Any group of people of whatever nature that comes together for any length of time for any purpose will inevitably structure itself in some fashion. The structure may be flexible; it may vary over time; it may evenly or unevenly distribute tasks, power and resources over the members of the group. But it will be formed regardless of the abilities, personalities, or intentions of the people involved. The very fact that we are individuals, with different talents, predispositions, and backgrounds, makes this inevitable. Only if we refused to relate or interact on any basis whatsoever could we approximate structurelessness – and that is not the nature of a human group.

– Jo Freeman. "The Tyranny of Structurelessness." 1970. Available at: [www.flag.blackened.net/revolt/hist\\_texts/structurelessness.html](http://www.flag.blackened.net/revolt/hist_texts/structurelessness.html).

I think that people love [rock groups] more than solo artists maybe ... because there's something fantastic about four people being able to meld together in that way and move forward in one direction. Because that's hard enough with two people, never mind four, and mathematically it must be increasing the chances of arguments by millions every time you add another person to the unit. And so people like to see that, because it makes us think better of ourselves ... as a species.

– Joe Strummer of The Clash speaking in the documentary film *End of the Century: The Story of The Ramones*. Directed by Jim Fields and Michael Gramaglia. New York: Magnolia Pictures, 2003.

Societies change and the arts can be a powerful way of expressing these changes. However, the arts are essential for helping individuals find their place within society and for shaping a collective cultural identity.

– REPOhistory. "Who is REPOhistory." Available at: [www.repohistory.org/who.html](http://www.repohistory.org/who.html).

In the common meal we find an increase ceremony of a special kind. In accordance with a particular rite each of the participants is handed a piece of slain animal. They eat together what they captured together. Parts of the same animal are incorporated into the whole pack. Some part of one body enters into all of them. They seize, bite, chew and swallow the same thing. All those who have eaten of it are now joined together through this one animal; it is present in all of them.

– Elias Canetti. "The Communion." In *Crowds and Power*. Carol Stewart, trans. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1984.

My mom had always wanted me to better myself. I wanted to better myself because of her. Now when the strikes started, I told her I was going to join the union and the whole movement. I told her I was going to work without pay. She said she was proud of me. (His eyes glisten. A long, long pause.) See, I told her I wanted to be with my people. If I were a company man, nobody would like me anymore. I had to belong to somebody and this was it right here.

– Roberto Acuna (farmworker and organizer), interviewed by Studs Terkel. Studs Terkel. *Working*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.

It's tough to be part of a band. Every band is ultimately doomed to fail. There are emotionally charged issues constantly cropping up that invite ridicule or shame, usually in a three against one scenario. A band demands of its members relationships more akin to family than to coworker, however, the lifelong experience at accommodation developed in family relationships is lacking. And on top of the vagaries of the musician's life itself, the work involved in writing, arranging, practicing, recording and performing music with others is more apt to bend egos than conventional jobs. Each individual player's ego is on the line to some extent at every little artistic decision. And generally there is one dominant personality in the band and so even the required accommodations are not equally distributed. Ideally the dominant personality is not a control freak and the others are not frustrated leaders. Still they should be more than simply hired guns and find satisfaction and stimulation in the mass of work necessary to write, arrange, record, and perform a band's work.

– Joe Carducci. *Rock and the Pop Narcotic: Testament for the Electric Church*. Laramie, WY: Redoubt Press, 2005.

[When you] talk about continuity in the band, why we had that continuity – that musical ... that blend, that harmony, that balance, that psychic communication amongst...the chemistry, it's because we all came from the same place. The same little village. Same tribe. Same school. When you start putting more and more people together who are like-minded, what you create is another person. You create another consciousness. You have five people who are like-minded enough to liberate their thoughts – to let it become a collective thought. And a collective thought - once you start working it – it's free. It takes on a personality of its own – which is beautiful. And that's where really really really good art comes from.

– Dennis Thompson of MC5 speaking in the documentary film *MC5: A True Testimonial*. Directed by David C. Thomas. Chicago: Future/Now Films, 2002.

# Can I join? Should I stay or should I go? The ins and outs of group membership.

We are not leaders or experts – and never will be. People who expect everyone involved with the network to be able to know about every aspect of space travel are deluding themselves. We cherish the learning process, the dialogue between interested individuals. That is how all of our ideas have developed, and that is how we will achieve our aims. Our training methods reflect this approach – they are as much about social interaction as they are about acquiring skills. Those who project their hopes and desires onto us must understand that they are involved – they are astronauts too.

– John Eden of the Raïdo Association of Autonomous Astronauts.

"On Becoming an Autonomous Astronaut." Available at:

[www.uncarved.org/AAA/becoming.html](http://www.uncarved.org/AAA/becoming.html).

I always worked as an individual artist even when Group Material asked me to join the group. There are certain things that I can do by myself that I would never be able to do with Group Material. First of all, they are a totally democratic entity and although you learn a lot from it, and it's very moving, it's very exacting, everything has to be by consensus, which is the beauty of it, but it is much more work. It's worth it 100%. But as an individual artist there are certain things that I want to bring out and express, and the collaborative practice is not conducive to that.

– Felix Gonzalez-Torres, interviewed by Robert Storr. "Felix Gonzalez-

Torres: Etre Un Espion." *ArtPress*. January 1995.

DOUGLAS CRIMP: How did a shifting group of people become a collective with a fixed membership? / JOHN LINDELL: Since initially the meetings were open, anybody could come, but it became frustrating. / MARLENE MCCARTY: You couldn't move forward; you always had to backtrack and regroup. / JOHN LINDELL: There was a debate about whether we should be open or closed, and we finally decided closed. / TOM KALIN: We went from being wheat-pasting hooligans to suddenly having real resources and opportunities and a platform from which to speak. This brought about a crisis of conscience in discussing how to articulate the group because the stakes had been raised.

– Excerpt from "Gran Fury Talks to Douglas Crimp." *Artforum*. April 2003.

We wanted have a collective of men, different heads, with everybody not thinking the same but our ideologies are similar enough for us to get on the stage.

– Abiodun Oyewole of The Last Poets, interviewed by Jason Gross and

John Grady. *Perfect Sound Forever*. February 1997. Available at:

[www.furious.com/Perfect/lastpoets.html](http://www.furious.com/Perfect/lastpoets.html).

We've lost the sense of intimacy. Once you go from 10 people to 100, you already don't know who everyone is. So at that stage you might as well keep growing, to get the advantages of scale

– Sergey Brin (co-founder of Google.com), interviewed by Adi Ignatius.

"Meet the Google Guys." *Time*. February 20, 2006.

Some [intentional communities], like the Shakers and the Harmony Society, have endured for a century or even longer. The Hutterians, to cite an extreme example, are today still strongly committed to communal living after practicing it, punctuated only by occasional lapses into private enterprise, for 450 years. The Hutterian rate of membership turnover has been only about 0.0006 per year.

– Benjamin Zablocki. *Alienation and Charisma: A Study of Contemporary*

*American Communes*. New York: Free Press, 1980.

PLATFORM describes itself as artist-led, but this is only part of the picture in that we are also (variously) teachers, naturalists, campaigners, trade unionists, ecologists, activists. This practice of multiple identification serves to challenge territorial notions of knowledge or understanding, and creates situations where recognition of common aims and desire for shared, although distinct languages is fostered: this is what we promulgate through our collaborative practices beyond PLATFORM's core members. We believe such an approach creates thought and activity which benefits from and honours specific expertise whilst broadening the sensibility and reach of the work and its participants.

– PLATFORM, from the 1995 PLATFORM manifesto.

Available at: [www.platformlondon.org/process.htm](http://www.platformlondon.org/process.htm).

## Take me to your leader! Does the group have a spokesperson? Does the group maintain anonymity? Do names and authorship matter?

The decisions have been mainly mine but this is getting to be less and less. Originally all the ideas were mine, but I'd taken them from other people. Now we have meetings, whenever anyone thinks we need one. Several times people have disagreed with me and we did it the way the majority felt.

– Kay Stepkin (director of a bakery co-op), interviewed by Studs Terkel.  
Studs Terkel. *Working*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.

As art with high production values has become increasingly common, the role of the artist has evolved into something closer to that of a film director who supervises a large crew of specialists to realize his or her vision. But there's a difference: in filmmaking, each individual – from cinematographer to key grip – is acknowledged, if only for a few seconds when the final credits roll. In the art business, there are no established conventions for crediting the people who transform artists' ideas into well-made objects. And some art workers may just prefer it that way.

– Mia Fineman. "Looks Brilliant On Paper. But Who, Exactly Is Going to Make It?" *The New York Times*, May 7, 2006, Arts and Leisure section.

The Center for Tactical Magic [CTM] is often conflicted in its own identity as a "collective", since our organizational structure is not easily defined. We struggle with this all of the time, because there's a commitment to an open-ended collaborative process when the projects call for it. Admittedly, some projects are much less about collaboration than about specialized participation (meaning, people with certain skill-sets are recruited to work on a particular part of a project). So, at times our structure more resembles [the television show] *The A-Team* where different people play specific roles under the leadership of one person. On the other hand, the CTM membership structure is consistently grow-

ing as more and more folks contact us and ask how they can get involved. So, we're trying to figure out how to become an [organization] that has a membership base that it can draw on when needed – kind of like the National Rifle Association. But as an aside, it's funny to think that a lot of non-governmental organizations are basically a Director, an Assistant Director, and a couple of interns, yet their membership is based on how many people get their newsletter. It's hard to get away with that in art since folks are still so stuck on authorship questions, and want to know who the creators are. For the most part, we've always acknowledged that the Center for Tactical Magic is rather de-centered, and "center" should be thought of as a verb. And the number of people that are in the CTM depends on the scale of activity and the desire to participate.

– Aaron Gach of the Center for Tactical Magic, e-mail message to Temporary Services, July 2006.

When two artists work together to create a work, it is as if we have given birth to another character – an entirely different artist – who makes something neither of us could have made independently. There are works by Michael Piazza and there are works by Bertha Husband; and the works of the collaboration are created by the Third hand. For this Third hand to emerge, there has to be a willingness from the two collaborators not to individually force things – a willingness to give up personal solutions and a willingness to wait and see what arrives.

– Bertha Husband. From her eulogy for artist Michael Piazza, May 2006.

My reducing club is a great success. We've lost 148 pounds. However, none of it was mine personally.

– One matronly lady to another, noted in *Reader's Digest*.



# Fundamentals. How are decisions made in groups?

But how does anything get decided [without a Director]? Through near-endless, often-ugly, makes-you-know-you're-alive argument, debate, discussion. And if, after all this brou-ha-ha, there's no agreement, we have something called Actor's Prerogative. The person on stage most-affected by the decision at hand (for instance, it's their line, or their prop) gets final say. Actors don't realize how much power they have. Every moment of every play in every theater on every stage belongs to the actor. She can do anything she wants. Say anything! Do anything! This is obvious, but the actor is trained to ignore the obvious. Actor's Prerogative is the faith of the collective in the individual. Actor's Prerogative is the mechanism for ending one debate and moving on to the next one. Is there a happy side-effect to this? Can the freedom that each performer feels on stage be felt by each audience member and encourage them to sense their own freedom vis à vis the play?

– Manny Festo (pseudonym for Theater Oobleck).

"Notes on Oobleck '95." Available at:

[www.geocities.com/theateroobleck/soapbox.html](http://www.geocities.com/theateroobleck/soapbox.html).

[If] one works full time or has a similar major commitment, it is usually impossible to join [a group] simply because there are not enough hours left to go to all the meetings and cultivate the personal relationships necessary to have a voice in the decision-making. That is why formal structures of decision-making are a boon to the overworked person. Having an established process for decision-making ensures that everyone can participate in it to some extent.

– Jo Freeman. "The Tyranny of Structurelessness." 1970. Available at:

[www.flag.blackened.net/revolt/hist\\_texts/structurelessness.html](http://www.flag.blackened.net/revolt/hist_texts/structurelessness.html).

Group Material is itself collaborative, which is non-hierarchical and we don't use the corporate model which is along lines of expertise but we work together and take responsibility as a group for every aspect of the work. And then there's a collaboration or dialogue with those artists and non-artists we work with, in terms of participation in the various projects.

– Julie Ault of Group Material. From a presentation at La Generazione

Delle Immagini, a series of conferences held at the Milan Triennial, Milan, Italy, 1997. Also available online at: [www.undo.net/cgi-bin/openframe.pl?x=Pinto/Eng/fault.htm](http://www.undo.net/cgi-bin/openframe.pl?x=Pinto/Eng/fault.htm).

Voting is a win or lose model, in which people are more often concerned with the numbers it takes to "win" than with the issue itself. Voting does not take into account individual feelings or needs. In essence, it is a quantitative, rather than qualitative, method of decision-making. With consensus people can and should work through differences and reach a mutually satisfactory position. It is possible for one person's insights or strongly held beliefs to sway the whole group. No ideas are lost, each member's input is valued as part of the solution. A group committed to consensus may utilize other forms of decision making (individual, compromise, majority rules) when appropriate; however, a group that has adopted a consensus model will use that process for any item that brings up a lot of emotions, is something that concerns people's ethics, politics, morals or other areas where there is much investment. Consensus does not mean that everyone thinks that the decision made is necessarily the best one possible, or even that they are sure it will work. What it does mean is that in coming to that decision, no one felt that her/his position on the matter was misunderstood or that it wasn't given

a proper hearing. Hopefully, everyone will think it is the best decision; this often happens because, when it works, collective intelligence does come up with better solutions than could individuals.

– Act Up New York chapter. "Consensus Decision Making." Part of Civil Disobedience Training Documents by Act Up, available at: [www.actup-ny.org/documents/CDdocuments/Consensus.html](http://www.actup-ny.org/documents/CDdocuments/Consensus.html).

There are three types of decisions made by Paper Tiger ... Major decisions: Major decisions include: approving the annual budget and planning a retreat date. Major decisions must be made at a collective meeting and must be announced at least a week in advance on the discussion list. Major decisions use the consensus minus one approach ... Regular decisions: Regular decisions must be made at a collective meeting, but do not need to be announced in advance. Regular decisions also use the consensus minus one approach ... Minor decisions. Minor decisions include: agreeing to endorse an event that only requires us to make an email or web announcement ... Minor decisions can be proposed by a collective member via email on the Paper Tiger discussion list. If nobody objects within two days, then it is considered approved. If anyone objects, then it becomes a regular decision and must be decided at a meeting. The minor decision making process is based on trust of collective members' judgment and is intended to allow Paper Tiger to move quickly when necessary ... Consensus minus one means that rather than voting on one of several options, all Paper Tiger members are encouraged to offer unique options with the goal of merging the possibilities into one decision that everyone feels is the best for the collective ... Consensus minus one means that one person may not block a decision by themselves. In order for a decision to be blocked, at least two people must oppose it ...

– Paper Tiger Television collective. Available at:

[www.papertiger.org/index.php?name=faq#decisions](http://www.papertiger.org/index.php?name=faq#decisions).

It seems to me that in L.A., ad hoc artist groups seem to work the best, setting achievable goals, bringing the right people & energy in to do it, and dispersing once the goals are met. The networks still remain and can form nodes of action/power around the next need.

– Steven L. Anderson (a Los Angeles-based artist), e-mail message to Temporary Services, June 2006.

Basically, by the time anything we make gets out to the public, you've got to realize it's gone through four, five, or six bullshit detectors, and it's been thoroughly vetted by the Negativland "creatively successful, fiscally failing" project-review department. [Laughs.] If it gets to the point that we're putting it out to the public, I feel like we've all critiqued the crap out of it by then, and it's probably pretty good. That's another benefit of being in a collective. I don't think I would trust my opinion on anything we make if it was just me.

– Mark Hosler of Negativland. Interviewed by Noel Murray for

*The Onion*. July 6, 2005.

Trust is the lubrication that makes it possible for organizations to work.

– Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus. *Leaders: Strategies for Taking Charge*.

New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1985.

# What is the creative process like in groups?

Lyric writing is an interesting process in Sonic Youth. There's three people writing now, and we've all had a lot of interest and involvement with expression through words, or poetry or whatever. I hardly think we're the only people writing lyrics with that frame of reference or that frame of mind, but our fusion of styles in this framework is interesting. Most people can't tell now who wrote what, and to make it more confusing, I wrote some lyrics that Kim sings, and vice versa. I like that blurring of identities within the band, because it becomes a unified thing that can't be related to other forms of historical poetry.

– Thurston Moore of Sonic Youth, interviewed by Andrew McCutchen. "Sonic Spice." *SPIKE Magazine*, January 2000. Available at: [www.spikemagazine.com/0600thurstonmoore.php](http://www.spikemagazine.com/0600thurstonmoore.php).

The Rain Dances are increase dances intended to procure rainfall. They, as it were, stomp the rain up out of the ground. The pounding of the dancers' feet is like fall of rain. They go dancing through the rain if it begins during the performance. The dance which represents rain finally becomes it. Through rhythmic movement a group of 40 people transforms itself into rain.

– Elias Canetti. "The Rain Dances of the Pueblo Indians." In *Crowds and Power*. Carol Stewart, trans. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1984.

The way Tim and K.O.S. work together is very organic, like a perpetual dialogue that results in works of art that people find interesting. There is no management! (laughter) Roles interchange all the time, especially in order to facilitate learning together. We mold art and learning strategies according to each member's particular needs. For instance, when I first joined K.O.S., I needed to work on my painting skills and develop better study habits. We accommodate each member's strengths and weaknesses.

– Robert Branch, interviewed by James Romaine. "Interview with Tim Rollins and Kids of Survival (K.O.S.) members Robert Branch and Nelson Ricardo Savinon." International Arts Movement site, March 14, 2000. Available at: [www.iamny.org/resources/int\\_rollins.html](http://www.iamny.org/resources/int_rollins.html).

We hardly ever brainstorm an initial idea. But the collaboration varies on different projects. Different people do different things, and different amounts of things, on any given project. It's not broken up by job assignment. It's very spontaneous. Some people are more interested in some projects than others. But we all generally get in on everything to some degree.

– Don Joyce of Negativland. Interviewed by Noel Murray for *The Onion*. July 6, 2005.

One of the things about the way the band works live is that we always improvise the sets. We never use a set list, so it's never scripted. So like at any moment, everyone in the band has to be ready to go into any one of the seventy or eighty songs that we've written over the years. It's really important that you almost enter a kind of a group mind or something so that you are able to pick up on cues from each other - which could be like a body motion or a move on a guitar or just eye contact. And from that you have to know where to go or what parts to extend, how to segue into the next song, what the next song's going to be. On nights where it doesn't work it can really be a disaster. But on nights where it's really clicking, it's almost like we're reading each others' minds and it just flows.

– A member of Fugazi speaking in the documentary film *Instrument*. Directed by Jem Cohen. New York: Jem Cohen, 1999.

We tried to have everybody do everything. Just because someone had written before, he or she was not assigned to specialize in press releases. We wrote press releases together. We hung shows together. We did talks and presentations together. And the struggle and generosity of learning from one another in friendship, which was in essence the process of the group, reflected a larger idea of inclusion, of democratic space. But let's remember that democracy is complex, and inclusion alone is not always adequate.

– Doug Ashford of Group Material, interviewed by Dan Cameron. "Dan Cameron on Group Material." *Artforum*. April 2003.

# Conflict is inevitable. What do groups fight about? How are conflicts confronted or avoided?

It hardly needs saying that such mutualistic communities will also be plagued by conflict. Conflict is at the very heart of life, resulting not simply from the malevolence of others in the struggle for place or portion, but also from the fact that men of the best will in the world seem to suffer incurably, so far as one can tell, from what William James called "a certain blindness" in perceiving the vitalities of others.

— Benjamin Nelson (sociologist), quoted by Benjamin Zablocki. In *Alienation and Charisma: A Study of Contemporary American Communes*. New York: Free Press, 1980.

There were also certain rules you had to obey and if you broke any you had to go in front of this tribunal and explain your actions to these fuckers! Even when I wanted to buy a new pair of stockings I had to ask the "cashier" for money. This is why we split from Amon Düül I; they were too involved with this political shit.

— Renate Krotenschwanz Knaup of Amon Düül II, interviewed by Edwin Pouncey. "Amon Düül II." *The Wire*. February 1996.

It was 8:30 on a Saturday morning, I was barely awake and was on my way to a board of directors meeting. In my family, we have the habit of being early. My father does not allow tardiness and I did not mind waiting. According to my time, I was punctual. This would be my first meeting as one of the directors and I was excited. They told me to arrive at 9:00 am. I was there. No one else was. Thirty minutes passed. I called the person who told me to be there. He said the meeting was actually at 9:30 but he normally says 9:00 am to give some margin for late comers. "Then why are you not here?!", I asked. "I am on my way", he responded. His voice faded in a vague wireless connection. He was giving himself a margin, I told myself.

— Kellman Vox. "Ten Things To Expect From A Typical Fil-Am Meeting - Foibles Of An Ethnic Imperfection." *The Filipino-American Community Builder*, February 2006.

What we debate about and fight about are ideas. Not about who's getting the biggest cut of the royalties or who's going to get their picture on the front of the record. We're not fighting about the sort of stuff that can really tear apart creative collectives. We do go to battle over these projects, absolutely. But there's not a lot of ego involved. Everyone's just fighting to make the project as cool and smart and funny and weird and interesting as we possibly can.

— Mark Hosler of Negativland. Interviewed by Noel Murray for *The Onion*. July 6, 2005.

At the end of this first year that we had the gallery space there were various factions and arguments that had developed in the group and we decreased from a group of thirteen to a group of three. Although we started with a lot of energy and enthusiasm, as we more clearly identified and refined our ideas and interests, in terms of what we wanted to do individually and as a group, the original configuration basically fell apart. One reason we then identified was we had fallen into the trap in setting up an alternative space. We were feeding into the commercial system and accepting the role of being overdetermined by our alternative status. We were waiting for people to come and see what we were doing rather than taking ideas and production to the streets and other places, rather than taking our own question to heart, "Who is culture for and where should it be seen?"

— Julie Ault of Group Material. From a presentation at La Generazione Delle Immagini, a series of conferences held at the Milan Triennial, Milan, Italy, 1997. Also available online at: [www.undo.net/cgi-bin/open-frame.pl?x=Pinto/Eng/fault.htm](http://www.undo.net/cgi-bin/open-frame.pl?x=Pinto/Eng/fault.htm)

Over the past ten years, we've come to resemble a large, crazy, but caring dysfunctional family. We argue, shout, whine, complain, change our minds and continually threaten to quit if we don't get our way. We work the phone lines between meetings to understand our differing positions. We rarely vote and proceed by consensus most of the time. Some drop out of the group, but eventually most of us come back, after days, months and sometimes years. The Christmas parties and reunions are terrific. We care a lot about each other, even if we don't see things the same way. Everyone has a poster she really hates and a poster she really loves. We agree that we can disagree. Maybe that's democracy.

— "Alice Neel" (pseudonym) of the Guerrilla Girls, quoted in *Confessions of the Guerrilla Girls* by the Guerrilla Girls. New York: Harper Perennial, 1995.

Concentrations of power do not always respect the rights of persons. If one denies this fact one gets: concentrations of power always respect the rights of persons. This does not correspond with our experiences. Concentrations of power characterize our society. Concentrations of power force persons to concentrate on participating in competition and power games, in order to create a social position for themselves. Concurrently with the concentrations of power dominating our conscious mind and being decisive to our situations, the significance of our fellow humans diminishes. And our own significance becomes the significance we have for concentrations of power, the growth of concentrations of power, and the conflicts of concentrations of power.

— N55. From *Art and Reality*. Available online at: [www.n55.dk/MANUALS/DISCUSSIONS/N55\\_TEXTS/ART\\_REALITY.html](http://www.n55.dk/MANUALS/DISCUSSIONS/N55_TEXTS/ART_REALITY.html).

We all leave together. We don't compete with each other like Daddy does. We stay a team.

— Comment made by a mother to her child in a grocery store, overheard by Temporary Services, 2001.

Voluntary collaboration constantly checks its health by the increasing autonomy and equality of its members.

— David Shapiro. "Art as Collaboration – Toward a Theory of Pluralist Aesthetics 1950-1980." In *Artistic Collaboration in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Cynthia Jaffee McCabe. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1984.

There was a time when we had a bus that had four compartments ... and if we'd see each other, it would get real ugly. We couldn't even walk out of the bus together ... We couldn't look at each other.

— Dee Dee Ramone of The Ramones. Quoted in *Spin*. 1990 (volume 6, number one).

While we were discussing about "important" matters, someone asked a question. And then another asked a question about the question. An answer was given to the second question that was not connected to the first. So the person who asked the first asked the second person what the answer was about. The person beside me asked the person in front what the subject matter was. The person behind was not listening. I had to explain. And then I missed the answer. For more than thirty minutes we lost track and deviated. Petty arguments took place. A senseless debate followed. Gibberish all over.

— Kellman Vox. "Ten Things To Expect From A Typical Fil-Am Meeting - Foibles Of An Ethnic Imperfection." *The Filipino-American Community Builder*, February 2006.

# Outside Perceptions and misperceptions – how are groups misunderstood? What assumptions do people commonly make of groups?

Funnily enough, we ourselves didn't call ourselves that name but more and more other people did ... so one day we decided 'what the hell' ... and made a letterhead with "ARCHIGRAM GROUP" on it ... and there we were ...

– Peter Cook. "Archigram – The True Story Told." Comic available at: [www.archigram.net/story.html#](http://www.archigram.net/story.html#).

The normal citizen looked at us and saw a mixture of gangster, hippy, criminal and ape. Once somebody rang us up with a nice voice and asked if they could do a feature article on us about how a commune works. They came and asked us questions, took our photos and disappeared. One week later the article appeared and it said: "This kind of community stinks and if this is the future of Germany then we need Adolf back."

– Chris Karrer of Amon Düül II, interviewed by Edwin Pouncey. "Amon Düül II." *The Wire*. February 1996.

Most people think our marriage is just an excuse for freewheeling sex, but that's not true at all. If sex was what we wanted, why go to all the trouble of marrying in a threesome, which makes almost everyone think we're weird? The real reason we married is that we all love each other, and we want to stay together, sharing our lives. Sex is just one part of that sharing, although it's a part we usually enjoy.

– A twenty-six-year-old man involved in a triadic marriage with another man and a woman, quoted in *Alienation and Charisma: A Study of Contemporary American Communes* by Benjamin Zablocki. New York: Free Press, 1980.

# The long haul. What keeps collaborative groups together? When is it over? What happens when it's over?

THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER: To what do you attribute your long-lasting partnership with Penn? / TELLER: We stay out of each other's face when we're not working – which, to be honest, isn't all that often. His personal life is his; mine is mine. We've also learned how to fight in a way that's not painful. The only things we argue about are creative. We agree on all of the life stuff: neither of us drinks, neither of us does drugs, we don't smoke, we don't gamble, neither is a spendthrift. We're also Libertarian minimal-government guys, and we're both atheists.

– Teller of Penn and Teller. Interviewed in *The Hollywood Reporter*. March 30, 2004.

I also want to make it clear that the dissolution of Gran Fury wasn't quick, and it wasn't happy in any way. Our decision to stop didn't come as a relief. It was the result of frustration with our inability to find a means to continue working.

– John Lindell of Gran Fury. Quoted in "Gran Fury Talks to Douglas Crimp." *Artforum*. April 2003.

Every marriage has its ups and downs. There are the days when you look at your spouse and hear choirs humming hallelujahs and there are the days when you wonder, "Who are you and what is your stuff doing in my house?"

– Garrison Keillor. "Misery is the Secret to a Lasting Marriage." April 13, 2006. Available on AZ StarNet: [www.azstarnet.com/altsn/snredesign/relatedarticles/124354](http://www.azstarnet.com/altsn/snredesign/relatedarticles/124354).

For the Kings, like a sitcom, it had run its course. More episodes would have just diluted the quality of the show itself. The Chicago Kings were produced by four individuals – we never operated as a collective though group acts were created collaboratively – and so you had people giving disproportionate amounts of time to the group. We were a membership-based group, yes, where there were meetings and such, but most major decisions were made by the four producers. And I think that was smart for the sake of manageability – there were anywhere between 20-30 performers involved at one time – but anytime an organization adopts a hierarchical structure, you are going to run into problems with individual investment. I am of the belief that if you share responsibility, you will only get shared commitment in return. That was the Kings' problem, in my opinion. It gave members a reason to complain, and consequently, the producers felt like they weren't appreciated for the work they put into the troupe. A collective structure would have delegated leadership to the members and I think that was too risky a venture for such a large voluntary group. But then it became a matter of quality-control which I think really started the downward spiral. The troupe had peeked – with a few members contributing to what the four producers considered our "best" creative work – and so the producers had a reputation to uphold. They started picking and choosing which acts should be included where and at the end of the day, it was just a lot of work to keep managing a large group of people. However, I know that a chosen few of like seven or eight still go on college trips performing acts from the Kings' repertoire. Now I'll bet that this smaller, selective, informal group of Kings work more collaboratively together.

– Kristen Cox (a.k.a. Holden Cox of The Chicago Kings), e-mail message to Temporary Services, February 2006.

## A List of Artist Groups

This is an incomplete list of previously and currently active artist groups. While there are some performance art groups, theater and dance troupes are generally not included, nor are music groups, publishers, or more strictly activist political groups. Some curatorial collectives are included – both collectives of strictly curators and collectives of artists who curate.

The seemingly patternless variety of places and names in this list belies the idea that group practice or collaboration are part of a trend defined by time or location. Rather, these groups are part of a larger culture of collectivity and collaboration – a way of making art that is built upon the idea of working together.

The creation of this list was itself a group effort. We reached out to our friends and colleagues, to announcement lists and bulletin boards on the Internet, and additional people, groups and organizations. We have tried to confirm information to the best of our abilities, but any list like this is bound to contain errors. Many people sent us information on behalf of inactive groups that we were unable to confirm through other sources. Information on many of these groups – particularly inactive groups – is often very hard to come by. Histories of many groups are scarce, or were never recorded in a focused way or made accessible. Additionally, not all group members agree on the year that their group was founded, the date when it may have ceased operations or what to list for their location. Many groups become inactive but never officially dissolved.

This list is also part of an internet-based initiative called Groups and Spaces. If you visit [www.groupsandspaces.net](http://www.groupsandspaces.net) you will find websites for many of these groups.

Some groups on this list began as three or more people but are now administered by one or two persons or have changed focus; these groups are still listed in "Groups of 3 or More People" in the event that they may grow again. Some groups were started by two people but quickly grew and remained a larger group; these groups are primarily in "Groups of 3 or More People" as well. "Groups of 1 or 2 People" are groups that are generally administered by one or two people but commonly execute projects with additional people outside of the group and/or use a group name to both complicate the authorship of their work and insist on the fact that all art making is collaborative at some point, even if one chooses to hide this.

We have not included studios and ateliers that are named for an individual artist (for example, Atelier Van Lieshout or Acconci Studios). These arrangements typically have a more hierarchical structure than most of the groups included in this list and don't necessarily celebrate the more egalitarian forms of creation that come from collaboration. This list also excludes individual artists who maintain individual authorship but work as a collective primarily to share resources, information and opportunities (for example, a women's photography collective). The focus is on people who produce collaborative projects under a group name. Pairs of artists working together under a group name are included.

Collaboratives of two people that use the artists' actual names (for example, Komar and Melamid) are not. These personally named collaborations imply a closed structure rather than a platform for collaboration that could potentially expand to include others, or endure a change of membership.

**#:**

0100101110101101.org  
 24/7 – various locations  
 The 8th of March - Bulgaria  
 16 Beaver Group - NY, NY  
 The 404 - Canada, UK and US

**A:**

AAA Corp. – Marseille, France  
 A-Clip - Berlin, Los Angeles, London  
 Action Against Racism in the Arts (1978-1981) - NY, NY  
 Actual Size Artworks – Wisconsin  
 AES - Moscow, Russia and Brooklyn, NY  
 African Commune of Bad Relevant Artists (AFRICOBRA) - various locations  
 Las Agencias - Madrid, Spain  
 Allegoric Postcard Union – Utrecht, Netherlands  
 An Architektur - Berlin, Germany  
 Ant Farm (1968-1978) - San Francisco, CA  
 Anti Gravity Surprise - Chicago, IL  
 ARC group - London, UK  
 Archigram (1961-1974) - London, UK  
 Arde Arte - Argentina  
 Art & Language - Coventry, United Kingdom  
 Art Kits International - Bristol, UK  
 Art Positive - Madison, WI  
 Artist Placement Group - London, UK  
 Artists' Call against Intervention in Central America (1983-1986) - Chicago, New York and other cities  
 Artists Meeting for Cultural Change (AMCC) (1975-1978) - NY, NY  
 Artworkers Coalition (1969-1971) - NY, NY  
 The Artists Village, Singapore - Singapore  
 a.titolo - Torino, Italy

**B:**

Bank - London, UK  
 BankMalbekRau – Copenhagen, Denmark  
 BASEKAMP - Philadelphia, PA  
 Bernadette Corporation – NY, NY and Berlin, Germany  
 BGL - Québec City, Québec  
 Big Art Group – NY, NY  
 Big Hope - Berlin, Germany and Budapest, Hungary  
 Big Tail Elephant - Guangzhou, China  
 BijaRi - São Paulo, Brazil  
 Billboard Liberation Front - San Francisco, CA and various locations  
 Black Emergency Cultural Coalition - NY, NY (Founded 1968)  
 BLOC - Troy, NY  
 Blue Noses – Various cities in Russia  
 Boat-people.org - Sydney, Australia  
 Border Art Workshop/Taller de Arte Fronterizo - San Diego, CA  
 Boyle Family - London, UK  
 Bread & Puppet Theater - Glover, VT  
 Buga Up (Billboard Utilizing Graffitists Against Unhealthy Promotions) (1980-?) - Sydney, Australia  
 Bureau D'Etudes – Paris and Strasbourg, France

**C:**

c.cred (Collective CREative Dissent) - London, UK  
 The Cacophony Society – various locations  
 Calc (Casqueiro Atlantico laboratorio cultural) - Navia - Asturias, Spain  
 CAMEL - NY, NY  
 Campbaltimore - Baltimore, Maryland  
 Carbon Defense League - Pittsburg, PA  
 Career Day Team - Chicago, IL  
 Carnival Knowledge (1982 -1984/5) - NY, NY  
 Los Carpinteros - Havana, Cub

Center for Land Use Interpretation (CLUI) - Culver City, CA  
 Center for Parascientific Research - various locations  
 Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) – New York, NY  
 CHAos (2004-2006) - Chicago, IL  
 Chance of Showers - Chicago, IL  
 Chicago County Fair - Chicago, IL  
 Chicago Public Art Group (formerly Chicago Mural Group) – Chicago, IL  
 Chicago Teaching Artists Collective - Chicago, IL  
 Civic Studio - Grand Rapids, MI  
 CLUBSProject Inc. - Melbourne, Australia  
 CoBra (1948-1951) – Paris and other Western European cities  
 COLAB (Collaborative Projects, Inc.) (started in 1978) - NY, NY  
 Colectivo Cambalache - various locations Colectivo Muralista Brigada  
 Ramona Parra - Chile  
 Collective Actions (late 70s / early 80s) - Moscow, Russia  
 Common Places & Center for Getting Ugly - Tampa, FL  
 Commons Service Group - Grenoble, France  
 Conservas - Barcelona, Spain  
 Contra Filé - São Paulo, Brazil  
 Copenhagen Free University - Copenhagen, Denmark  
 Cremer Projects - London, UK  
 Critical Art Ensemble - various locations  
 Criticalartware - Chicago, IL  
 Crveni Peristil - Croatia  
 Cuckoo - Auckland, New Zealand  
 Culture and Conflict Group - Dublin, Ireland & NY, NY

**D:**

Damp - Melbourne, Australia  
 Danger Museum - Asia and Europe  
 Dearraindrop - Virginia Beach, VA  
 Deflowered Collision - Bangkok, Thailand, Stuttgart, Germany, Boston, MA, USA and Caracas, Venezuela  
 Democratic Innovation - Copenhagen, Denmark  
 The Department of Ecological Authoring Tactics, Inc. (DoEAT) - San Diego, CA  
 Department for Public Appearances – Munich, Germany  
 Derivat - Barcelona, Spain  
 Dispute Resolution Services (1990s) – Los Angeles, CA  
 Dumbeyes - Milwaukee, WI  
 Duplus - Argentina  
 Dynamite - Grand Rapids, MI & Champaign/Urbana, IL

**E:**

echo system - Pittsburgh, PA & Los Angeles, CA  
 Eksperimentelle Skolen (1961-1968) - Copenhagen, Denmark  
 Electronic Disturbance Theater (also called Electronic Civil Disobedience)  
 EPOXY Art Group (1982-1988) - NY, NY  
 Escape Program - Moscow, Russia  
 Etcetera Collective - San Diego, CA  
 Experimental Skeleton – Tampa, FL  
 e-Xplo – NY, NY  
 exyzt – Paris, France

**F:**

Factory of Found Clothes - St. Petersburg, Russia  
 Fallen Fruit - Los Angeles, LA  
 Fakir - Mexico City, Mexico  
 The Family (also known as Black Mask or Up Against the Wall, Motherfucker) (1960s and 1970s) - NY, NY  
 Fease - Jersey City, NJ  
 Feel Tank - Chicago, IL  
 Feminist Art Workers - Los Angeles, CA  
 Flat Pack 001  
 Fluid Movement - Baltimore, Maryland



## Groups of 3 or More People

Fluxus - various locations

Flying City - Seoul, South Korea; www.flyingcity.org

Forcefield - Providence, RI

Free Soil - various locations

Free Walking - Chicago, IL

Freud's Dream Museum - St. Petersburg, Russia

Friends of William Blake - NY, NY

Future Farmers - various locations

### G:

Galeria Chilena (started as a nomadic space, but became a group) - Santiago de Chile and NY

General Idea (1969-94) - Toronto, Canada, and NY, NY

Gelitin - Vienna, Austria

Goat Island - Chicago, IL

Gob Squad - Nottingham, UK & Berlin, Germany

Gorgona - Zagreb, Croatia

Glowlab - Brooklyn, NY

G-Rad - Grand Rapids, MI

Gran Fury (1988-1994) - NY, NY

Group Material (1979-1996) - NY, NY

Group of Six Artists - Zagreb, Croatia

Grupo Poro - Belo Horizonte, Brazil

Grupo Um - Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Grupo Urucum - Macapá, Brazil

Gruppo A-12 - Genova, Italy

Gruppo Parole e Immagini - Schweiz, Switzerland

Grupo de Arte Callejero - Buenos Aires, Argentina

Guerrilla Art Action Group (GAAG) (1969-1976) - NY, NY

Guerrilla Girls - NY, NY

### H:

Haha - Chicago, IL & Cambridge, MA

The Haide Group - Russia

Hay! Market Research - Chicago, IL

Heavy Trash - Los Angeles, CA

A Home For Clouds - online art community

Henry the Eighth's Wives - UK

### I:

Icelandic Love Corporation - Reykjavik, Iceland

ICOLS (International Corporation of Lost Structures) - Various locations

iKaton - Boston, MA

Illegal Art - NY, NY

Image Bank - Vancouver, Canada and Berlin, Germany

Incident - Paris, France, Montreal, Quebec and Dakar, Senegal

Industrial Ranch - Staten Island, NY

Instant Coffee - Toronto & Vancouver, Canada

Institute for Advanced Architecture - NY, NY & Chicago, IL

Institute for Applied Autonomy - various locations, United States

Institute for Infinitely Small Things - Boston, MA

Intermedia - Vancouver, Canada

International Corporation of Lost Structures - various locations

International Curators Program Antwerp (ICPA) - Antwerp, Belgium

International Movement for an Imagist Bauhaus - various locations

Intersystems (late 60s / early 70s) - Toronto, Canada

Irwin - Ljubljana, Slovenia

### K:

Kannonklubben (1967-1968) - Copenhagen, Denmark

Kill Your Television (KYTV) - Singapore

King Mob - London, UK

Kleines Postfordistisches Drama - Germany & Switzerland

KNEKTIV (1988-1992) - Cleveland, OH

Knifeandfork - Los Angeles, CA and NY, NY

KOD (1970s) - Novi Sad, Serbia

Kultainen timantti (Golden diamond) - various locations in Finland

### L:

Laboratorio curatorial 060 - Mexico City, Mexico

Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination - London, UK

Ladyfest Midwest Chicago (2000-2001) - Chicago, IL

LAPD (Los Angeles Poverty Department) (1985) - Los Angeles, CA

Late Night Off-Center - Sautee Nacoochee, GA

Law Office (1997-2003) - Chicago, IL

Learning Group - various locations

Leipziger Kamera - Leipzig, Germany

LIGNA - Hamburg, Germany

Little Warsaw - Budapest, Hungary

Los Angeles Urban Rangers - Los Angeles, CA

Love and Devotion - Umeå, Sweden

LTR (Lesbians To The Rescue) - Brooklyn, NY

Lucky Pierre - Chicago, IL

Lumpen - Chicago, IL

### M:

Madame Binh Graphics Collective (1975-1985) - Chicago, IL, Jersey City, NJ and NY, NY

Makrolab - Ljubljana, Slovenia and other locations

Maj 75 - Croatia

Manoa Free University - Vienna, Austria

Map3 - US & Italy

Material Exchange - Chicago, IL

Medical Hermeneutics - Moscow, Russia

Meme-Rider Media Team - Anchorage, AK, Eugene, OR, Tampa, FL, NY, NY,

London and New Brunswick, UK

Mess Hall - Chicago, IL

Milhaus - Milwaukee, WI

Mixküche - Munich, Germany

Mobilivre-Bookmobile - Montreal, Canada and Philadelphia, PA

MORPH - Budapest, Hungary

Moscow Portraits - Serbia, Montenegro, USA, Slovenia, Croatia and Russia

The M.O.S.T. - Portland, OR

Muhomor - Moscow, Russia

Multistory Complex - Toronto, Canada

### N:

N55 - Copenhagen, Denmark

Neasden Control Centre - London, United Kingdom

NeMe - Cyprus

Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK) - Ljubljana, Slovenia

Next Question - Pittsburgh, PA

New Beginnings - Malmö, Sweden

New Social Art School - Aberdeen, Scotland

Newsense enterprises - Cleveland, OH

New Stupids - St. Petersburg, Russia

Nomads + Residents - various locations

Northland Poster Collective - Minneapolis, MN

NYC Surveillance Camera Players - NY, NY

### O:

October Surprise (2004) - Los Angeles, CA

Ocular Lab - Melbourne, Australia

Oda Projesi - Istanbul, Turkey

OHO Group (1966-1971) - Slovenia

OODA Group - Midwest, United States

Otabenga Jones & Associates - Houston, TX

Otobal - Milano, Italy

Otto - Copenhagen, Denmark

**P:**

p-10 - Singapore  
 PAD/D (Political Art Documentation / Distribution) (1980-1990) - NY, NY  
 Pages - Tehran, Iran  
 Paper Rad - Easthampton, MA  
 Park Fiction - Hamburg, Germany  
 People's Republic of Delicious Foods - Chicago, IL  
 pFARM - Woodstock, NY  
 People Interested in Making Psychogeography Sexy (PIMPS) - Tempe, AZ  
 Pink Bloque (2001-2005) - Chicago, IL  
 Platform - London, UK  
 Post Theater - Berlin, Germany, NY, NY, Tokyo, Japan  
 Projekt Atol - Ljubljana, Slovenia and other locations  
 projektgruppe - Hamburg, Germany

**Q:**

The Quality of Life Team - Troy, NY

**R:**

Radek Community - Moscow, Russia  
 Radical Software - NY, NY  
 Radio Taxi - East Anglia, UK  
 Randomroutines - Budapest, Hungary, and Helsinki, Finland  
 Rebar - San Francisco, CA  
 Raketa - Stockholm, Sweden  
 Raqs media collective - Delhi, India  
 Reclaim The Streets - various locations  
 Red76 - Portland, OR  
 Reinigungsgesellschaft - Dresden, Germany  
 Relax - Biel and Zurich, Switzerland  
 Reloading Images - Berlin, Germany  
 REPOhistory - NY, NY  
 The Revolution Will Not Be Televised - Brazil  
 ROR (Revolutions on Request) - Helsinki, Finland  
 The Royal Art Lodge - Winnipeg, Canada  
 Royal Chicano Air Force - Sacramento, CA  
 RTMARK - various locations  
 rum46 - Århus, Denmark

**S:**

Sabotage - Vienna, Austria  
 Sandbox Projects - various locations in the Midwest  
 San Francisco Poster Brigade - San Francisco, CA  
 SCUD - NY, NY  
 Sisters of Survival - Los Angeles, CA  
 Situaciones (Colectivo de Investigación Militante)  
 Situationist International - various locations  
 Skart - Belgrade, Serbia  
 Slanguage - Los Angeles, CA  
 SLAAAPI (Sexually Liberated Art Activist Asian People) - NY, NY  
 Sluice Group (1996-1997) - Cape Town, South Africa  
 Société Réaliste - Paris, France  
 soontobecollective - Southampton, UK  
 South Venice Billboard Correction Committee (SVBCC) - Venice, CA  
 SOUP - Berlin, Germany  
 Speculative Archive - Los Angeles, CA  
 Spell #7 - Singapore  
 The Spiral (1960s) - NY, NY  
 Spurse - Various locations  
 Stalker - Rome, Italy  
 STEALTH Group - Netherlands  
 Stockyard Institute - Chicago, IL  
 Streetrec. (2001-2002) - Chicago, IL  
 Student Bolsheviks (1990-1996) - Winnipeg, MB, Canada  
 subRosa - various locations

Superflex - Copenhagen, Denmark

Supernova Group - Moscow, Russia  
 Survival Research Laboratories - San Francisco, CA  
 swopnetwork - Copenhagen and Århus, Denmark

**T:**

Taller Popular de Serigrafía - Buenos Aires, Argentina  
 Tapioca - Atlanta, GA  
 Temporary Services - Chicago, IL  
 Tercerunquinto - Mexico City, Mexico  
 Terry Plumming - Chicago, IL  
 Tetrapak - Hamburg, Germany  
 THE THING, Inc. - NY, NY  
 Tim Rollins and Kids of Survival - NY, NY  
 Titanic Anatomy - Tampa, FL  
 TNWK - Various locations, UK and US  
 TODT - Brooklyn, NY  
 Torolab - Tijuana, Mexico  
 Toy Shop Collective - NY, NY  
 TRAMA (2001-2005) - Various cities in Argentina  
 Transmute Collective - Australia and various other locations  
 TriKlops - Milwaukee, WI  
 Tucumán Arde Archive [Graciela Carnevale] (1967-69) - Argentina

**U:**

UDflugt - Copenhagen, Denmark  
 ULTRAFUTURO - various locations, international  
 Ultra-Red - Los Angeles, CA  
 Union Media Services Pty Ltd (1981-1985/87) - Sydney, Australia  
 The United Victorian Workers (2005) - Troy, NY

**V:**

V3TO - Copenhagen, Denmark  
 Value - Zurich, Switzerland  
 Videofreex (1972-1977) - Lanesville, NY  
 Video Machete - Chicago, IL  
 Videotage - Hong Kong, China  
 Viennese Lounge - Vienna, Austria  
 Visible Collective - various locations  
 VSSD (1980s) - Ljubljana, Slovenia

**W:**

We Are Invisible - Amsterdam, Holland  
 What's to be done? - St. Petersburg, Russia  
 Weekend Art (1990s) - Zagreb, Croatia  
 WHW (What?, How? & for Whom?) Curatorial Collective - Zagreb, Croatia  
 WochenKlausur - Vienna, Austria  
 Women Artists in Revolution (WAR) (\*Splinter group of Art Workers' Coalition) - NY, NY  
 Women Down the Pub (Kvinder på Værtshus) - Copenhagen, Denmark

**X:**

Xurban - NY, NY and Istanbul, Turkey

**Y:**

Yixiangju Art Group - China  
 YNKB - Copenhagen, Denmark  
 Yomango - various locations  
 Your Art Here - Bloomington, IN

## Groups of 1 or 2 People

Academy Records - Chicago, IL  
ArtLab - London, United Kingdom  
Assume Vivid Astro Focus - NY, NY  
The Atlas Group - NY, NY  
B + B - London, UK  
Be Something - Brooklyn, NY and various locations  
Biggest Fags Ever - Chicago, IL  
Blindspot (2003-2006) - Chicago, IL  
Burn Out - Copenhagen, Denmark  
CAA Contemporary Art Archive/Centre for Art Analysis -  
Bucharest, Romania  
campesina|o collective - Albuquerque, NM  
Capsula - Barcelona, Spain  
The Center for Tactical Magic - Oakland, CA  
Conceptual Art Research (CAR) - Oak Park, IL  
Cupola Bobber - Chicago, IL  
The E-Team - Brooklyn, NY & Geraberg, Mannheim, Germany  
Fast and French - Charleston, SC  
friendly vandalism - Zurich, Switzerland  
gyrl grip - Portland, OR  
God Bless Graffiti Coalition - Chicago, IL  
Hideous Beast - Chicago, IL and Denver, CO  
In the Field - Los Angeles, CA and Chicago, IL  
In the Weather - Chicago, IL  
InterReview - Los Angeles, CA  
It Can Change - NY, NY  
JAM - Chicago, IL  
Jodi - Belgium and The Netherlands  
Little Warsaw - Budapest, Hungary  
Map Office - Hong Kong, China  
N.E. Thing Company (1966-1978) - Vancouver, Canada  
neuroTransmitter - Brooklyn, NY  
Orgacom - Amsterdam, Netherlands  
Parfyme - Copenhagen, Denmark  
PAUHOF - Linz, Vienna, Austria  
People Powered - Chicago, IL  
Potter-Belmar Labs - San Antonio, TX  
Radioqualia - New Zealand and England  
Roomer's Sight - Vienna, Austria and Frankfurt, Germany  
RoToR - Barcelona, Spain, Belgrade, Serbia, Bruxelles, Belgium  
The Samaras Project - Troy, NY and various locations  
Simparch - Chicago, IL and Cincinnati, OH  
Smelling Salt Amusements - Berlin, Germany  
Spiel 99 - Munich, Germany  
Spirit Quest - Portland, OR  
Sundown Salon - Los Angeles, CA  
Tactical Art Coalition - Calgary, Canada  
The Trinity Session - Johannesburg, South Africa  
Ubermorgen - Austria and Switzerland  
United Net-Works - Stockholm, Sweden  
[The User] - Montreal, Canada  
Volksboutique - Berlin, Germany and Brooklyn, NY  
The Yes Men - various locations  
Yoke and Zoom - Worcestershire, UK



Academy Records - Chicago, IL  
ArtLab - London, United Kingdom  
Assume Vivid Astro Focus - NY, NY  
The Atlas Group - NY, NY  
B + B - London, UK  
Be Something - Brooklyn, NY and various locations  
Biggest Fags Ever - Chicago, IL  
Blindspot (2003-2006) - Chicago, IL  
Burn Out - Copenhagen, Denmark  
CAA Contemporary Art Archive/Centre for Art Analysis - Bucharest, Romania  
campesina|o collective - Albuquerque, NM  
Capsula - Barcelona, Spain  
The Center for Tactical Magic - Oakland, CA  
Conceptual Art Research (CAR) - Oak Park, IL  
Cupola Bobber - Chicago, IL  
The E-Team - Brooklyn, NY & Geraberg, Mannheim, Germany  
Fast and French - Charleston, SC  
friendly vandalism - Zurich, Switzerland  
gyrl grip - Portland, OR  
God Bless Graffiti Coalition - Chicago, IL  
Hideous Beast - Chicago, IL and Denver, CO  
In the Field - Los Angeles, CA and Chicago, IL  
In the Weather - Chicago, IL  
InterReview - Los Angeles, CA  
It Can Change - NY, NY  
JAM - Chicago, IL  
Jodi - Belgium and The Netherlands  
Little Warsaw - Budapest, Hungary  
Map Office - Hong Kong, China  
N.E. Thing Company (1966-1978) - Vancouver, Canada  
neuroTransmitter - Brooklyn, NY  
Orgacom - Amsterdam, Netherlands  
Parfyme - Copenhagen, Denmark  
PAUHOF - Linz, Vienna, Austria  
People Powered - Chicago, IL  
Potter-Belmar Labs - San Antonio, TX  
Radioqualia - New Zealand and England  
Roomer's Sight - Vienna, Austria and Frankfurt, Germany  
RoToR - Barcelona, Spain, Belgrade, Serbia, Bruxelles, Belgium  
The Samaras Project - Troy, NY and various locations  
Simparch - Chicago, IL and Cincinnati, OH  
Smelling Salt Amusements - Berlin, Germany  
Spiel 99 - Munich, Germany  
Spirit Quest - Portland, OR  
Sundown Salon - Los Angeles, CA  
Tactical Art Coalition - Calgary, Canada  
The Trinity Session - Johannesburg, South Africa  
Ubermorgen - Austria and Switzerland  
United Net-Works - Stockholm, Sweden  
[The User] - Montreal, Canada  
Volksboutique - Berlin, Germany and Brooklyn, NY  
The Yes Men - various locations  
Yoke and Zoom - Worcestershire, UK