THE FINAL FRONTIER

Main Gallery
May 7, 1993—August 15, 1993

The Final Frontier is where art and technology meet to reimagine a new cultural landscape of the body. A group exhibition of photography, sculpture, painting, and electronic media including video installations, computers, and interactive projects, it opens in the main gallery on May 7 and continues through August 15, 1993.

With Lawrence Andrews; Aziz + Cucher; Ana Barrado; Shu Lea Cheang; Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio; Michael Joaquin Grey; Alexander Hahn; José Antonio Hernández-Diez; Howard Hogan; Willis Tsosie; and Lori Ann Two Bulls/Russell Country BBS; Michael Joo; David Kelleran; Middle College High School/Roland Hayes Intermediate School 291; Nela Ochoa; Julia Scher; Softworlds, Inc./Janine Cirincione; Brian D’Amato; Michael Ferraro; Michael Spertus; Fred Tomaselli; and Andrea Zittel.

You’re sitting in your “seismatic body relaxer,” plugged into your “simstim deck machine” watching Murphy Brown. She’s pregnant again. Instantly you feel her labor pains pulse through your body. Could this be television and you bonding in the twenty-first century?

Technology’s rapid growth has brought about many unforeseen changes in contemporary life and culture, once only imagined in science fiction. This exhibition focuses on the body and its transformation by technology. Once conceived as the center of human experience and identity—the final frontier of Western individualism—the body and its borders are no longer fixed, but volatile.

The Final Frontier is organized by Assistant Curator Alice Yang in collaboration with two professionals outside of the field of visual arts: Lisa Cartwright, a scholar of media and technology and Celeste Olalquiaga, a critic of mass media and popular culture.

Our bodies are being infiltrated, fragmented, even rendered invisible by recent technologies of science, industry, and war. A recent New York Times editorial, for example, argued that President Clinton’s call for “development in biotechnology, robotics, artificial intelligence, and digital imaging” to help boost the economy would displace millions of workers. But would this create a new form of labor? Developments in medical technology have stirred similar debates. While new cures for diseases have been introduced, breakthrough techniques like in-vitro fertilization and genetic engineering have challenged the body’s domain as the apotheosis of biological life. How will the body be redefined in this technological climate, and what new cultural perceptions will emerge?

Artists in The Final Frontier address the technological impact on our physical and psychic selves through a combination of electronic and non-electronic projects, incorporating such technologies as surveillance, medical imaging, and various communication systems. The exhibition highlights the interplay between the technological and the organic to suggest the emergence of hybrid forms and experiences that cannot be identified as one or the other.

Exhibitions
Visitors can experience, for example, The Sacrifice Game by Softworlds, Inc., an organization consisting of four artists, writers, and engineers. Here, you are invited into an interactive digital world with Pre-Columbian architectural features in which different rituals of death may be chosen through computer commands. The consequences to the body, while graphically evoked, are displayed in a digital universe.

Venezuelan artist Nela Ochoa implants a monitor inside a fiberglass mannequin’s head in her video installation, Water Rituals. The video footage, incorporating X-ray and thermographic images, zooms in and out of a woman’s body to blur the distinctions between technological and biological life.

Michael Joaquin Grey’s work fuses art and technology to create a fresh sculptural language. Using synthetic materials to emulate biological matter and organic forms, his work suggests a curious, new hybrid. Ana Barrado’s photograph, taken with infrared film, shows a rocket at Florida’s Spaceport surrounded by visitors, some in wheelchairs. Contrasting high- and low-tech, her work comments ironically on the relationship between technological prowess and physical frailty.

Artists in The Final Frontier also explore how the changing relationship between technology and the body, private space, and individual rights relate to current social issues. California artist Lawrence Andrews’ installation, for example, uses simulated surveillance footage to examine the government’s monitoring of political activities in the African-American community. And in Cross Purposes, a three-channel video installation, students of Middle College High School and I.S. 291 worked in collaboration with artists/teachers to produce a piece on AIDS, safe sex, and condom distribution from the perspective of youth culture.

For the Broadway Window, artist Andrea Zittel has created a new project involving chickens. Conceived as a special breeding unit to promote better flight strength in their wings, this installation explores the methods and concepts of genetic engineering.

Support for The Final Frontier was provided by the Director’s Council of The New Museum, and by the Swiss Center Foundation, MicroTouch Systems Inc., AVENSA Airlines, and the National Council of Culture, Venezuela.

Final Frontier Gallery Talks
Saturday, May 15, 2:00 p.m.
Celeste Olalquiaga
“The Organic/Technological Interface”
Saturday, June 19, 2:00 p.m.
Lisa Cartwright
“The Museum as Laboratory, The Artwork as Difference Machine”
Saturday, July 10, 2:00 p.m.
Alice Yang
“Cyborg Aesthetics: Redefining the Sensual”

Gallery Talks are free of charge with Museum admission.
NARI WARD
New Work Gallery
May 7, 1993—August 15, 1993

Carpet Angel, a multimedia installation by Jamaican-born, New York based artist Nari Ward, will be presented in the Museum’s New Work Gallery from May 7 through August 15, 1993. Ward’s installation, made from urban waste materials, consists of a carpet runner, carpet remnants, plastic bags, plastic bottles, and furniture springs. These commonplace materials, selected and reconfigured by the artist, evoke the urban environment, its inhabitants, and their histories. Ward allows viewers to make a direct connection to the work through the use of everyday materials which carry distinct references for each viewer.

Carpet Angel, the first major museum exhibition for Ward, employs materials with the dedicated spirit and handiwork familiar to folk art. This reapplication of discarded refuse also recalls the Jamaican tradition of creating makeshift objects from “found” materials as an alternative to unavailable basic commodities. Ward uses these crude materials to paradoxically embody the presence of the spiritual. Transcending the debasement of waste materials, Ward creates a space for personal reflection.

KAZUMI TANAKA
WorkSpace
May 7, 1993—August 15, 1993

The sculptural works of artist Kazumi Tanaka will be presented in the Museum’s WorkSpace gallery from May 7 through August 15, 1993. In her sculpture, Tanaka explores personal memories of Japan while also reflecting on the cultural differences and complexities of living in the Western world. With meticulous craftsmanship, Tanaka combines fragile materials such as wood, paper, and bamboo to create small, intimate works that address her personal, cross-cultural experiences.

Tanaka’s slow and intricate process of fabrication is significant in terms of her stories. Her working process is akin to keeping a journal or diary, filled with thoughts of everyday dreams and activities. Tanaka’s craftsmanship is a vehicle for poetic ruminations that reflect the artist’s memory. Her stories are autobiographical and profoundly simple. From differences in eating habits to the sound of the rain, Tanaka’s sculptures tell humble anecdotes that connect two cultures through one person.
Corporate members were among those honored at The New Museum’s Annual Donor Luncheon which recognizes contributors of $1,000 or more. Director Marcia Tucker’s annual address was entitled “Just let me change and I’ll be right with you...” The New Museum is grateful to corporate members American Express, Chase Manhattan Bank, Con Edison, I.B.M., Morgan Guaranty, New York Telephone, Philip Morris Companies, Time Warner and U.S. Trust, and corporate supporters Colgate-Palmolive, Macy’s and The Rockefeller Group.

Three Trustees were recently elected to the Board. Eileen Norton is Vice-President of the Norton Family Foundation in Santa Monica, California, and an important collector of work by African-American and young California artists. Wilbur L. Ross, Jr. is Senior Managing Director at Rothschild Inc. in New York. A recognized arts advocate, he serves on the boards of the National Museum of American Art, the Brooklyn Museum and the American Federation of Arts. Robert J. Shiffler is a major collector from Greenville, Ohio, and President of Arcorp, Inc., who also serves on the board of the Dayton Museum of Art.

In February members visited the African art collection of Eric Robertson for InsideArt: Arts D’Afrique Noire in Robertson's art-filled Chelsea loft. They enjoyed an informal lecture and discussion on collecting African art. InsideArt tours are offered regularly to members at the Advocate level and above.

The Trustees, Director’s Council, and members tour of the Miami art scene in late February included contemporary collections, artists studios, museums, and the art deco architecture of South Beach. ArtQuest also visited Northern Jersey artist studios and the collection of Trustee Saul and Ellyn Dennison in April. Participation in ArtQuest Travel is open to members at the Friend level and above.

Chef Dan Kobin of the popular downtown World Cafe prepared the wonderful fare at the March 9th Donor Luncheon. Dan catered the New Group’s Cutting Edge Ball on April 21st and the Silent Auction and Cocktail Party on April 25th. We appreciate his support along with Paul Sipos at South Pass Transart Ltd., and Mike Hort at Enterprise Press, Inc. who provide invaluable services to the Museum for the Annual Benefit and Auction.
THE CURRICULUM RESOURCE GUIDE

The New Museum's $275,000 challenge grant from the NEA helped to expand its High School Arts Program to ten New York City public high schools this year. The grant will also help to fund next year's publication and national distribution of a multicultural, interdisciplinary resource guide for educators, the first of its kind in the country to incorporate contemporary art into high school public education.

The project includes a curriculum resource guide with texts and essays, a slide set of artists' and collaborators' works, and a companion publication for students and general audiences. The following are excerpts from the contributors' and artists' statements sections:

Adelaide Sanford, Member at Large,
New York State Board of Regents

"In the last three weeks I have been to three high schools in New York City. Two of the three would be considered "trouble schools" including one where a student had recently been shot. In those two schools there was absolutely no evidence of an art experience; not in the offices, not on the bulletin boards, not in the display cases. The physical environments were devoid of any kind of artistic symbolism that would be enhancing, that would be revelatory, that would be healing; devoid of any kind of materials that students could use to express some of the disconnectedness or some of the rage or some of the frustration or alienation that they are feeling, so that the weapons would not be necessary. And I felt that the absence of the refining, humanizing experience that art is—both as a discipline in which children can be expressive of the world as they see it, and also as a mechanism for teachers and other members of the staff to understand what is happening in the life of that child—was very much tied in with the self-destructive behavior that I saw in the children.

Why do young people come to school anyway? What is it that we are trying to see as the end result of the education process? Unfortunately, our society has settled on preparing our children for the world of work in the year 2000. That is commonly accepted as the goal of education. And that's terrible, because just preparing people to fill the employment need in a mechanistic world is so below the level of what we should be doing.

We should be educating young people as whole human beings who value themselves and their world and other people, and approach that world and its people with the desire to understand them. The end result of education should be a person who values the environment and looks at the pieces of the world not as separate, but as being together. We don't talk about education like that, and therefore we are just not getting there at all.

There are many children saying, "Well, if it's the world of work that you're preparing me for, how am I going to match that up with the fact the I can't get a job now?" Employment is one of the things that students talk about most of all. They say, "We want a job." At the same time the media is saying that these people don't want to work; that's the problem, they don't want to work. So young people see the world very differently from the way the world sees them. They say very clearly, "We don't have any way of telling you how we really are. The way you say we are is not the way we are." But no one hears that. That is very painful to me, because I think that when we continue not to hear these young people who are very bright, very capable, have so much manual facilities—then they do become self-destructive, they become violent. Why are children presenting themselves to the world that way? We don't ask the question "why?" We don't give the children the opportunity to tell us in many different ways. Art is one of the ways that people tell us how they view the world, and a very important way. It is not a way that should only be available to the talented few". —

(Excerpt from interview conducted by Susan Cahan and Zoya Kocur)

Jimmie Durham: Artist's Statement

According to some official documents I was born in Arkansas (in 1940), but that state is a recent invention. The "united states" were all invented against American Indians, and as a Cherokee I was born in Cherokee territory under the aggressive political act called "Arkansas."

In a long war that still continues, hundreds of thousands of brave Cherokees defended our people and died so that my generation would live and continue the defense. Would it, then, be "patriotic" for me to say that I am an "American," of the "minority" called "Native American"? No, I am Cherokee, and have no other way to be. That does not mean, however, that I must follow some other person's definition of what I am or what I do. I have lived in Europe, New York City, and Mexico as well.
as on reservations. It is a kind of duty to be free, intellectually and in any other way, to break totally out of the isolation in which we are kept.

It is probably that idea that makes me do the kind of art I do. As a little kid I made toys and objects for myself, and used them to make my own pretend world because the world I lived in was not always a good place. Because I showed a kind of talent for making things I was later trained to make things we used in ceremonies and also things to sell to tourists. So on the one hand I was participating in important parts of our culture and on the other hand I was participating in our degradation. But in both cases I learned that it is necessary to connect one's personal world with the public world. There is a concept in Cherokee that might be translated, "It is necessary to speak well and to listen well in the council of the world." I cannot sit in my studio, in my private world, and think up good art ideas, make them, and shove them down the world's face; I must make my art socially, for common use and the common good. But if I do not speak well, if I am not serious about myself, I cannot make anything useful to society. It also seems necessary to me, for the same reasons, to try to combine the art world—the galleries, museums, and art magazines—with the rest of the world. Art has real functions in human life. We know things and we know in ways through art that we cannot know through what we call language. If we could say art or write art we would not make art.

For complex reasons, modern political systems have told us that art either has no function or that its function is to support a political system. I think of art as a combination of sensual and intellectual investigations in reality. The fact that governments want to control art is certainly part of the reality that art must investigate. The fact that a foreign government (the United States) wants to control me as a Cherokee is a part of the reality that my art must investigate. Yet I do not wish to become like those governments. I want my work to give energy and encouragement to any fellow human who might encounter it. The "public" has its own responsibility, too. Normally, people do not try to read a serious novel the same way they might read a comic book; we take time and care, and we do our own investigations. Why would anyone approach art differently? Language is a set of skills we know we must continue to develop simply because it is delightful to speak with more people. The vocabularies of art bring us the same delight.


CROSS TALK:
A MULTICULTURAL FEMINIST SYMPOSIUM

Saturday, June 5 and Sunday June 6, 10:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m.
Co-sponsored by The New Museum of Contemporary Art and The Drawing Center, to be held at The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster Street (in Soho between Broma and Grand Streets).

Cross Talk is a two-day symposium on the entangled questions of race, gender, and sexuality, organized by Ella Habiba Shohat in collaboration with The New Museum's Education Department. Cross Talk brings together a wide range of feminist activists, cultural critics, artists, and curators who have energetically fought against racism and sexism in cultural institutions, educational programs, medical practices, and in the legal system. Many of the speakers have played key roles in forming alternative institutions, and in formulating strategies of resistance. Rather than generate a rotating chain of "third world" feminists each speaking in turn about a particular community, the symposium will try to tear down the walls that separate activists by focusing on theoretical and practical models that have difference at their center. Cross Talk will address the possibility of alliances and coalitions, as well as the complexities inherent in forming them. This gathering makes no claim to represent all communities or to cover all issues. However, it does aspire to address how a framework can be established for feminisms across cultural and community boundaries, a framework that neither erases cultural and political differences nor recreates restrictive understandings of them.

Participants include:

- Marina Alvarez, filmmaker and AIDS activist
- Anannya Bhattacharjee, Executive Coordinator, SAKHI for South Asian Women
- Shu Lea Cheang, media artist and filmmaker
- Coco Fusco, New York-based writer, curator and media artist
- Inderpal Grewal, South Asian activist and Associate Professor of Women's Studies, San Francisco State University
- Rabab Abdul-Hadi, member of the National Executive Committee, Union of Palestinian Women's Organizations in North America and board member, New York Civil Liberties Union
- Janet Henry, visual artist, former program associate at the New York State Council on the Arts, and working member of WAC's Committee on Diversity and Inclusion
- bell hooks, cultural critic, feminist theorist, and Professor of Women's Studies, Oberlin College
- Annette Jaimes, writer and teacher in American Indian Studies, Native American gender issues and Federal Indian Policy
- Lisa Jones, journalist and playwright
- Caren Kaplan, Assistant Professor in the Women's Studies Department, University of California at Berkeley
- Wahneema Lubiano, Professor of Literature and Afro-American Studies, Princeton University
- Maria Milagros Lopez, feminist social scientist in Puerto Rico
- Chandra Talpade Mohanty, intellectual worker who teaches feminist, anti-racist and post-colonial studies at Hamilton College, Clinton, New York
- Cynthia Newbille, Executive Director, National Black Women's Health Project
- Ninohcha Rosca, Philippine-born novelist, National Chair of GABRIELA network, Executive Board member of PEN American Center
- Carmelita Tropicana, performance artist
- Michelle Wallace, teacher of English and Women's Studies, City College of New York, writer and lecturer in Cultural Studies, Afro-American Studies, Literature, Feminist Theory and Gender Studies, Film and Popular Culture
- Kathleen Chiu Jaen Zane, feminist, scholar-teacher, and cultural critic engaged with Asian American culture/studies and in recovery from a Hawaii missionary subjection

Tickets are $15 for one day; $25 for two days in advance; $30 for two days at the door. Members/Students/Seniors receive a 20% discount. Tickets may be purchased at The New Museum during regular hours or at The Drawing Center on the day of the event. No reservations will be taken. For more information, please call (212) 219-1222.
Group Visits

Group visits are available for adult groups and school groups from grades 7 through 12. Gallery talks for visiting groups stimulate active inquiry about issues in contemporary art and culture through close examination of the Museum’s exhibitions. Trained docents conduct talks appropriate to each visiting group. For more information, or to arrange a visit, please call Mayda Perez, Education Department, Mondays, 9:30-5:30 at (212) 614-6650.

Internship Program

Museum internships are designed to provide hands-on training in arts management for qualified college and graduate students throughout the year. They are offered in various departments and give students a comprehensive overview of Museum operations. Two full-time paid Multicultural Internships during the year are sponsored in part by the Museum Program of the National Endowment for the Arts and the Cowles Charitable Trust. For further information, call Jerry Philogene, Education Department, (212) 219-1222. Applications for Fall internships are currently being accepted until July 15, 1993.

Volunteer Program

The Museum welcomes volunteers for behind-the-scenes activities including the gala spring Benefit and exhibition openings. To volunteer, call Richard Barr, Volunteer Coordinator, (212) 219-1222.

High School Art Program

The High School Art Program (HSAP) is a New York City-wide collaborative arts enrichment program for public schools emphasizing an interdisciplinary, multicultural approach to the exploration of contemporary art. The semester-long program aims to cultivate a meaningful relationship to art through integration with existing curriculum and focus on students' life experience. One of the few museum arts education programs specifically designed to serve the culturally diverse public school population, HSAP brings students in contact with a multiracial teaching staff or internationally-exhibited artist/educators. For more information, contact Mayda Perez, High School Associate, (212) 614-6650.

Curriculum Resource Guide

A curriculum resource guide for teachers is forthcoming in late 1994. The guide will present works by over 60 artists from different racial and cultural backgrounds. The project includes: a curriculum resource guide for teachers; slide set containing over 150 slides of works by all of the artists in the book; and a companion publication. The guide will contain lesson plans, individual statements from each artist, and teaching methods, as well as a framework for interdisciplinary teaching of contemporary art from multicultural perspectives. For more information, please call Zoya Kocur, Associate Curator of Education, (212) 614-6650.