What's Inside...
In Transit
Who Defines Our Audiences?
You’re Asking Us??!!

Ann Hamilton Limited Edition
Sweet Celebration
The New Museum of Contemporary Art is a non-profit institution committed to exploring nontraditional ideas and experimental works in an ongoing investigation of what art is and how it relates to individuals and society. Exhibitions and programs receive support from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the New York State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, and our many members and friends.

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WHERE ARE THEY NOW?
Some artists who early on showed at The New Museum have subsequently enjoyed success as part of the Museum of Modern Art’s projects series. They include Dennis Adams, Erika Rothenberg, Jana Sterbak, and Felix Gonzalez-Torres.

SPRING 1993 PREVIEW
The Final Frontier, a group exhibition that explores the frontier as it applies to the body and the various ways the body’s boundaries have been affected and reconfigured by recent technologies, opens on May 8, 1993. Using a variety of electronic media and other formats, this exhibition invokes the concept of the frontier to suggest that such borders, once thought to be impermeable, have become increasingly volatile. It is being organized by Assistant Curator Alice Yang with curatorial assistant Lisa Cartwright and critic Celeste Olalquaga. Artists include Shulea Cheang, Peter d’Agostino, Jose Antonio Hernandez, Michael Joo, Julia Scher, and Andrea Zittel, among others.

IN TRANSIT
January 15, 1993—April 11, 1993

In Transit is a project that explores both the involuntary movement of human beings and objects through different urban spaces, and the representation, production, and reconfiguration of the spaces themselves. On view in the main gallery, this collaborative project represents the perspectives of more than 30 artist-participants through a variety of lenses.

New, specially created works are by Maria-Thereza Alves, Y. David Chung and Matt Dibble, John Fekner and Don Leicht, Tadashi Kawamata, Hung Liu, Marlene McCarthy and Laura Cottingham, Lois Nesbitt, Gabriel Orozco, Martha Rosier, Lorna Simpson and Ramona Naddaff, and Krzysztof Wodiczko.

Organized by Senior Curator France Morin with anthropologist Costas Gounis and political economist Dr. John Jeffries, this exhibition suggests that, in our time, displacement has become a defining aspect of the urban experience. Photojournalist Camilo Jose Vergara’s 200 color photos serve as a visual commentary on the politics of space that generate different forms of social traffic. Installed along the main wall, the photos depict the physical and social transformations of public and private spaces in major U.S. cities, including New York, over a number of years.

To represent various forms of constant movement and its consequences, In Transit’s works are situated within the gallery to question universal categories such as “home,” “the street,” “public and private spheres,” and “empty vs. vacant spaces”—as well as their perceived dividing lines. Weighing the same as the artist himself, Gabriel Orozco’s plasticine ball is inscribed with urban “impressions” from its roll around city streets. Recreating the space of a “real” home by using the metaphor of a mirror and a bathroom cabinet is Lorna Simpson’s and Ramona Naddaff’s installation influenced by myths, memories, and the expectations of second generation female immigrants in the U.S.

Lois Nesbitt’s interactive installation explores the “forbidden zones” of the city and the individual’s ability to transgress assumed or enforced borders. Museum visitors will be asked to contribute their own lists of such “zones” and to volunteer their own documentation.

In Transit attempts to illuminate the political conditions that govern how urban spaces are used and occupied by defining experience and perception in terms of everyday practices. For example, Santu Mofokeng’s photos about issues of race and class in South Africa demonstrate the politicization of every public and private activity—even the most daily routine—in a country under apartheid.

Participants for In Transit are Maria-Thereza Alves, Bullet Space, Andrew Castrucci with Beissie Bass, Erik Freeman, John Pitts and Lee Quinones, Y. David Chung and Matt Dibble, Martha Cooper, Ernest Drucker, John Fekner and Don Leicht, Mildred Howard, Dorothy Imagon, Tadashi Kawamata, Helen Levitt, Hung Liu, Marlene McCarthy and Laura Cottingham, Santu Mofokeng, Margaret Morton, Antonio Muntadas, Lois Nesbitt with Aki Fujiyoshi, Glenn Ligon, Paul Ramirez-Jonas, Roger Denson and Simon Watson, Gabriel Orozco, The Parks Council-Green Neighborhoods Program-Success Garden, Larry Rogers, Martha Rosier, Lorna Simpson and Ramona Naddaff, Camilo Jose Vergara, Weegee, and Krzysztof Wodiczko.

Gallery Talks with In Transit’s three curators
Saturday, January 30, 2:00 p.m.
Senior Curator France Morin, The New Museum
Saturday, February 20, 2:00 p.m.
Co-curator Dr. John Jeffries, political economist
Saturday, April 3, 2:00 p.m.
Co-curator Costas Gounis, anthropologist, and Andrew Castrucci, member of the Bullet Space Collective

Gallery Talks are free of charge with Museum admission.

Exhibitions
SKIN DEEP
Peter Hopkins, Byron Kim,
Lauren Szold and Jack Whitten
Organized by Alice Yang, Assistant Curator
New Work Gallery
January 15—April 11, 1993

Skin Deep presents four artists whose works reinterpret the forms and issues of painterly abstraction through reference to skin. The works in this exhibition recall the dynamic and process-oriented character of traditional abstract painting, while simultaneously exploring conceptual elements of contemporary abstraction. Although the works are non-figurative in a strict sense, they share an allusion—metaphorically, structurally, and politically—to the body and its skin.

Peter Hopkins’s luminous, abstract paintings are created by pouring various fluids such as industrial dyes, Cherry Coke, and Pepto Bismol on bed sheets. In Hopkins’s work, painting becomes a kind of social body layered with cultural waste. Byron Kim produces pristine monochromes in the tradition of minimalist, abstract painting. He bases his palette, however, not on pure colors but on the flesh tones of individuals, raising questions of cultural and racial identity. Taking mixtures of flour, eggs, and other organic substances, Lauren Szold works directly on the floor. Her “spills”—a combination of painting, drawing, and floor sculpture—suggest, in its rosy tints and sense of fluidity, the material processes of the body. Jack Whitten’s paintings consist of small building blocks of paint, which are made by pouring paint on plastic, cutting it into squares, and attaching the squares to canvas in a grid-like structure. His paintings bridge the forms of drip and grid paintings, and refocus the viewer’s attention on the skin of paint that is the fundamental basis of all painting.

Both Byron Kim and Lauren Szold will create site-specific projects for Skin Deep, while Peter Hopkins and Jack Whitten will contribute paintings produced in recent months.

Broadway Window
An installation by Lyle Ashton Harris
January 15—April 11, 1993

New York based artist Lyle Ashton Harris presents his first New York museum exhibition in The New Museum’s Broadway Window. Harris uses a variety of media to address the “terrain of Black male subjectivity.” For the Window installation, the artist combines photography, video, and an audio track with segments of rap, to critique masculinity and explore the constructions of sexuality, race, and gender. A mirror will be included in this Window installation to incorporate the identities of the passersby on the street.

The complex intersection of who we are—identity-wise—is at the heart of Harris’s work. In The Secret Life of a Snow Queen, 1990, the artist examined the multiplicity of his identity as a Black gay male through the juxtaposition of performance, text, and photography. For The New Museum, Harris continues his investigation of self-portraiture while calling into question the viewer’s identity as well. In his own words, “I’ve found self-portraiture...to be a challenging and rewarding way to interrogate the construction of my identity, as well as exploring the multifaceted relationship I have towards that construction.”

WorkSpace
An installation by Oliver Herring
January 15—April 11, 1993

For his first museum exhibition, Oliver Herring knits, weaves, and interwines transparent tape to create fragile sculptural objects. Presented as an installation in the Museum’s WorkSpace gallery, Herring’s art takes the form of various garments—a coat, sweater, and a pair of trousers—calling attention to how delicate and vulnerable the human body is both physically and emotionally.

Along with raising questions about traditional gendered models of art making, Herring’s creative process undermines assumptions about male sexuality and masculinity. The articles of clothing are ambiguous in gender, further rendering sexuality as an individual experience. Herring’s work offers a composed and heartfelt exploration into issues of sexuality that might otherwise be addressed with anxiety, tension, and confrontation.

The installation at The New Museum is part of an ongoing project entitled A Flower for Ethyl Eichelberger, named for a performance artist whose cross-gender roles addressed issues concerning sexuality and gender, and who took his own life two years ago while sick with AIDS.
THE CAMEO PROJECT

In Spring 1991 The New Museum’s Education Department invited CAMEO (Community, Autobiography, Memory, Ethnography, Organization), a project initiated by The Committee for Cultural Studies at the Graduate Center of City University of New York, to collaborate on an education installation at the Museum. As a community outreach project, CAMEO’s work focuses on Latin American immigration to New York City. The installation was conceived as an educational complement to the Museum’s exhibition program which will address, among other issues, the construction/dissolution of national boundaries and the diffusion of national identities within an emerging global economy.

The project continues to evolve into a multifaceted collaboration between CAMEO, The New Museum, and residents and representatives of the many communities—including political leaders, legislators, and political activists, among others—have been meeting on a regular basis to discuss the project and share each other’s field work, research, experiences, and overall goals and themes of the project.

Still under consideration, the three installations, along with one or more local educational organizations modeled after The New Museum’s High School Art Program, will share the results of three years of fieldwork. Some of the many possible themes of these projects include an inquiry into the definition of Latinidad (a universal “Latin” identity); the role memory plays in the production of history; who and what defines a community; how community leaders emerge; the relationship between the police and the community; how the global economy affects Latinos in the United States; how specific sites, such as the Audubon Ballroom and the Brooklyn Navy Yard, relate to memory and history.

Participants from The New Museum include staff members of the Education, Curatorial, Development, and Public Relations Departments. CAMEO staff members include three field workers and several CUNY faculty members and students, including Stanley Aronowitz, Juan Flores, Cindi Katz, Augustin Lao, Barbara Martinsons, Carmen Medeiros, and Pedro Rivera.

The CAMEO Project is scheduled for Fall 1993 during The New Museum’s exhibition Trade Routes, on view September 10 through November 28. Organized by Curator Laura Trippi, Trade Routes explores the social and cultural effects of rapidly shifting patterns of distribution and exchange within a global economy.

MEMBERS TOURS

This fall members enjoyed a private tour of young artists’ studios working in Harlem. Members also enjoyed a private corporate collection tour at Neuberger & Berman led by Trustee Arthur Goldberg; a weekend excursion to private collections and major exhibitions in Washington, D.C. and Baltimore; an art study tour to see new exhibitions and galleries in Philadelphia; a tour of The New Museum exhibitions The Spatial Drive and FluxAttitudes with curators Laura Trippi and Alice Yang; and special opening receptions.
SWEET CELEBRATION: 16th Anniversary Gala Benefit and Art Auction

The New Museum will celebrate its 16th year by hosting the Sweet Celebration Gala Benefit and Art Auction on Sunday, April 25, 1993, honoring Trustee Laura Skoler. The event begins at the Museum with a cocktail party and silent auction, followed by a live auction and dinner dance at the Rainbow Room. Over 100 important works of contemporary art will be on view at the Museum, April 21 through 25. Tickets for the event are $100 for cocktails and the silent auction, and $350 for the full evening, including the live auction and dinner dance. Special Patron and Sponsor tickets and tables are also available. Please call the Special Events Office for ticket information, for advertising in the Dinner Program, or for a copy of the Auction Checklist, (212) 219-1222.

THE 15TH ANNIVERSARY BENEFIT CELEBRATION AND ART AUCTION
The Rainbow Room • Rockefeller Plaza • May 3, 1992
Photo: Catherine McGann

The New Group will host the Cutting Edge Ball on Wednesday, April 21, with proceeds to benefit projects in the WorkSpace gallery. Formed this year, The New Group will honor artists who give works to the Museum’s auction. Tickets are $50. Please call the Special Events Office.

FUTURE SAFE sent to artists
A grant from the Design Industries Foundation for AIDS(DIFFA) made possible the distribution of Future Safe: Estate Planning for Artists in a Time of AIDS to the 1,000 artists on The New Museum’s mailing list. The Museum is grateful to DIFFA and The Alliance for the Arts for helping us provide this important service. Future Safe is a publication of The Alliance for the Arts. Please call the Alliance for copies, (212) 947-6340.

LIMITED EDITION SCULPTURE
Ann Hamilton • untitled • mixed media • edition 40 • Photo: Fred Scruton

New Edition by Ann Hamilton

Ann Hamilton
untitled
1992
book, stones, lacquered birch, glass
3 5/8 x 9 1/4 x 38 5/8 inches
Edition 40

Ann Hamilton joins a distinguished group of artists including Claes Oldenburg, Bruce Nauman, Donald Judd, Richard Artschwager, Jenny Holzer, Nancy Dwyer, Dennis Adams, Louise Bourgeois, Haim Steinbach and Christian Boltanski, in creating The New Museum’s eleventh Limited Edition sculpture. The Ann Hamilton Limited Edition is available at $5,000 to members at the Associate ($300) level and above. For more information please call Wiesje van Hulst or Aleya Saad at 219-1222.

Ann & Laura Skoler at the Rainbow Room, May 3, 1992
Photo: Catherine McGann

Trustees Complete $1 MILLION ENDOWMENT CAMPAIGN
The New Museum’s Board of Trustees completed a $1 million endowment campaign, nearly doubling the Museum’s current endowment. This achievement was made possible by the extraordinary generosity of Trustee Emeritus Vera List who contributed $500,000 in a challenge to her fellow Trustees. The Museum is grateful to Mrs. List and to the following Trustees: Gail Berkus, Saul Dennison, Richard Ekstran, Arthur Goldberg, Allen Goldring, Paul Harper, Sharon Hoge, Nanette Laitman, Henry Luce III, Penny McCall, James McClennen, Patrick Savin, Paul Schnell, Carol Schwartz, Herman Schwartzman, Laura Skoler, and Laila Twigg-Smith.

1992 Edition by Ann Hamilton
The following informal notes by Director Marcia Tucker formed the background for a panel discussion organized by the Art Dealers Association of America.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art
October 13, 1992

THE ART MUSEUM TODAY: WHO IS ITS AUDIENCE?

Who Defines Our Audiences?

You're asking US??!! We're the directors, the people who produce the cultural experience for others. We are generally in the process of creating the experiences we ourselves want to have, since most people who come to museums are actually "like us" or like you—empowered, even if not as museum visitors (Spivak).

We don't ever engage our audiences in the process of defining themselves, or you'd have my Uncle Harold or a Black or Hispanic kid from the urban ghetto up here, or a doctor from Romania who is working as a locker-room attendant because she doesn't speak English very well—if those are examples of who we are trying to "reach out" to. (Image is of holding a hand out to a drowning person, or someone about to lose a grip on the edge of the cliff!)

In a periodical called Visitor Behavior, museum visitors are described in terms of "knowledge deficiency." Survey: treating visitors like laboratory animals: Market research used to prove how stupid people are, so they can justify the need for education.

In an essay published in 1985, a prominent museum professional wrote: "At the level of the individual visitor the problem is the superficial, usually inept encounter the average visitor had with art works in the museum galleries... Only an elite made up of those who [are] prepared—knowledgeable, visually skilled and even brave" are able to experience the "remarkable qualities" of art museums.

What's wrong with the ways in which museums traditionally approach their audiences?

Museums are irrelevant to most people; and in fact, many people feel that museums are against them, in the same way that they believe that the police, or the educational system, are against them. The democratic ideal, the museum as a "palace of the people," hasn't worked. Museums don't really want to respond to what audiences want because we have such a low opinion of what they'll come up with. We aren't interested in democracy because we think it would mean "lowering our standard."

a) Museums present themselves as elite repositories of high culture.

They resemble temples, places of worship, halls of fame, fortresses or hospitals: places of contemplation, rest, protection, restoration. (The contemporary art museum, on the other hand, most resembles an airport, which tells us something about the state of things today!)

This is because in the dominant pedagogy, the highest mode of existence for individual consciousness is seen to be one of transcendence, going beyond the contingencies of history to resolve the contradictions that are not resolvable in [this] society. Art, music, literature, and religion are all means by which the individual can purify his worldly and contradictory existence into a contradiction-free moment of lucidity, transparency, and presence."

b) Museums are bastions of authority and expertise, where power is exercised from on high, both inside and outside.

It is assumed that there is a core truth in the work of art itself and that the ultimate goal of interpretation is to gain access to this truth, which is given in the work by the author, and interpreted by the expert or connoisseur.

Here, analysis (professionalism; meaning extracted from the text through close analysis) is preferred over inquiry (interrogation).

Interrogation=Critique

c) People are seen as consumers rather than producers of culture: passive model of education.

The museum tries to elevate people's tastes rather than engaging them on the level of shared experiences. As consumers, we are provided with the Universal Studios model of visitor transportation; can't sit down, can only go in one direction, can't touch anything. And the only truly comprehensible explanation of what's going on can be obtained from the guards.

Why should we try to change this relationship?

a) Because we say we want diverse audiences.
If we truly want different audiences, we have to think about what other relationships exist. For instance, if we want more heterogeneous audiences, we have to have more than “special constituency” exhibitions and programs. Change needs to take place at the level of perspective, that is, the level prior even to planning. We need boards and staffs that can provide multiple and differing perspectives on the museum’s public role.

“artists” and “audiences” share a reality

Art is not a means of lifting people outside the world in which they live, or a means of producing “catharsis” and thus achieving ‘stasis’ (if art ever does produce whatever these are). Rather, it is a means of making working people conscious of their world and actions within it, of extending their experiences of that world, indeed of enlarging the world they could experience.

This is very different than looking for the timeless and transcendent, for contemplation as an end, for metaphysical complexities of language and for ironies of tone.4

b) Because simply “understanding” or “knowing” the culture doesn’t mean that it ever leads to an engagement in it.5

How can we actually do this?

a) By looking to other models; for example, to feminist values/practice.

Replace hierarchical authority with participatory decision-making. “This does not imply structurelessness, but structure that is democratic.”6

Rejection of a system that assumes that one person with greater power and wisdom has the knowledge to dispense to others. Enter into a dialogue, learn with audiences, in community.7

More fluid; entertaining multiple and shifting perspectives; understanding that value judgments are made according to where you are positioned and what you have at stake.

b) By engaging with class issues in our practice.

We might, for instance, become more involved with popular culture—"what people who share class, ethnicity and/or race produce in communicating with one another.”8 This is not “mass culture,” or culture that is produced for consumption by the masses.

Contemporary art museums can’t be repositories of culture (although they’re still trying); instead they should be engagements with contemporary culture. We can integrate folk or popular art with “high” art, and subject them to the same critical analysis.

We could encourage the breakdown of tradition and custom (or habit—“that’s the way it’s always been done”) to allow the possibility of creating critical viewers rather than good ones (to paraphrase Stanley Aronowitz on students, and countless others on citizens.)

This doesn’t, by the way, mean that all we’ll have are Leroy Neiman shows; but we might find that high art and popular culture can be seen side by side in a non-hierarchical way, subject to the same kind of analysis, in order to make connections between past and present.

In conclusion: what are we afraid of?

Empowering audiences means the demise of the absolute authority vested in museums. It means leaving ourselves open to criticism, and therefore to a possible change in the way we think about museum exhibitions and programs of all kinds. It’s the end of the Tradition and Heritage. If you don’t do it the way we always have, then how do you do it? In a series of conversations with our curators about museum practice and policy, Gayatri Spivak actually said, “Take away your own confidence in what you’re doing.”

What might the results be?

If museums were no longer seen as intimidating or irrelevant, we might actually see an increase in museum attendance. Our audiences might be more racially and culturally diverse than they are at present. We might see more meaningful experiences occurring in our museums and cultural organizations. And within the museum body, if we experienced the desire to change rather than the fear of change, we might feel the excitement that comes from uncertainty, which is generally called learning, the basic function of education.

2 Ibid., p. 3.
3 Ibid., p. 7.
5 Ibid., p. 22.
7 Ibid., p. 20.