

TheNewMuseum
OF CONTEMPORARY ART

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November 12, 1990

Jenny Holzer
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Dear Jenny:

I am writing in the hopes that you may be able to assist us on an important project we have undertaken with Gran Fury.

As you may know, in 1987, the late Bill Olander invited ACT UP to create an installation in the Museum's Window on Broadway. The result was Let the Record Show..., a temporary installation that made use of the combined art viewing and commercial space on Lower Broadway to heighten public awareness of the AIDS crisis, and whose importance has been underscored by its appearance on the cover of Douglas Crimp's Cultural Activism. Another outcome of this window project was the formation of the group Gran Fury out of the participants from ACT UP who conceived and produced the window.

On Bill's death in the spring of 1989, the William Olander Memorial Fund was inaugurated with the acquisition of the neon rendering of the "Silence = Death" sign from Let the Record Show... Following our proposal and agreement with Gran Fury, we have installed the neon sign in the lobby of the Museum as a continuation of the activism of the original work. Situated just behind the Admissions desk, "Silence = Death" is visible from the street through the Museum's entryway windows, and will remain in place until such time as AIDS activism is no longer necessary -- that is, until such time as the threat of AIDS has been eliminated.

From the beginning, our intention has been to include, along with the neon "Silence = Death" sign, the LED sign programmed with current statistics on AIDS that was a crucial component of the original piece. Gran Fury is committed to keeping the LED program up-to-date, and we at the Museum increasingly feel the importance of including the LED sign as part of the lobby installation. As Gran Fury's subway poster for The Decade Show last summer asserted, "the AIDS crisis isn't over for anyone until its over for everyone."

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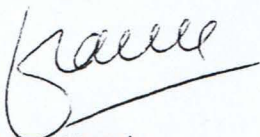
Unfortunately, our approach to electronic sign companies for a donation has proved unsuccessful. Our interest, however, in acquiring the LED sign at this point in time has been heightened by the immanent arrival of the third annual "Day Without Art." As we did last year, The New Museum will work with Gran Fury to produce a simple, but extremely effective, window installation. The Broadway Window, along with the entire entryway window area, will be draped with black, while -- in the same position that the LED had appeared in Gran Fury's Let the Record Show -- an LED sign programmed by Gran Fury will be installed. The result is, in effect, a re-creation of the original installation, but one in which all the "art" has been erased and only the statistics on the range and demographics of the AIDS epidemic remain.

Last year, we were able to accomplish the temporary installation of the "Day Without Art" window thanks to the generosity of Blue Man, a performance group willing to lend the LEDs that they use in performance to the Museum for the duration of that installation. This year we have sincerely hoped to locate a permanent donation, so that the LED, once deinstalled from the "Day Without Art" window, could become part of the "Silence = Death" lobby installation.

We are looking to you in the hopes that you may have contacts with a sign company that could assist us in securing a donation. Our own resources on this project have been exhausted. With its semi-permanent status in the in The New Museum's lobby, looking out onto Lower Broadway in Manhattan, the installation of "Silence = Death" and the LED demographics form an extremely valuable extension of Gran Fury's work. Through that, it also constitutes a key aspect of the Museum's engagement with the community. Any assistance from you in securing a donation would be greatly appreciated. Either I or my colleague, curator Laura Trippi, will be giving you a call in the next week to follow up on this letter.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,



France Morin
Senior Curator