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New Museum
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Visual AIDS
NEW YORK COMMITTEE
MEETING

THURSDAY, JANUARY 10, 1991
6:00PM

Alternative Museum
17 White Street
212/966.4444

Please remember to bring your 1991 wish list for
Visual AIDS and DAY WITHOUT ART

Call Patrick J. O'Connell or Alexander Gray
212/513.0303

VISUAL AIDS

Robert Atkins: VISUAL AIDS WISH-LIST a/k/a "THE VISION THING"

This memo arises from the desire that Day Without Art be a springboard for on-going activities rather than Visual AIDS's primary activity, and that these activities be more substantive, more focused on education and outreach. What follows is intended to provoke discussion about those goals and possible ways to implement them. It represents only the views of its author.

As we enter the second decade of the AIDS epidemic, we might identify HIV-related problems in the US that we might be able to address. (We have few legal resources to directly address, for instance, the CDC's failure to include women in clinical trials. But that doesn't mean we can't point out the problem.) A few areas of concern--and there are surely others--include:

- The increasing number of women, children, and people of color with HIV infection.
- The alarming diminution of resources and volunteers at PWA service organizations and information/outreach groups.
- Health services cut-backs and failure to appropriate federal money for already-passed legislation for AIDS disaster relief.
- The racism, sexism, and homophobia that remain serious impediments to epidemic-alleviating progress.
- Specifically art world problems of the inability of some PWAs to afford art supplies; unavailability of health insurance and lack of an artist's trust for dealing with deceased PWA's work.

Example--Some possible projects to deal with women and AIDS, the first focusing on reaching women's (non-AIDS) organization; the second, the art audience. (What about general audiences?)

- Network with womens-AIDS groups (ACT UP Women's Caucus, Women and AIDS Resource Network) to create (or borrow) an information packet that might inform women's groups (College Art Association Women's Caucus, Art Table, even NOW) of the scale of the problem and the racism, sexism, and homophobia (or whatever) that seem to prevent women's groups from getting involved. Info would be coupled with potential action-oriented nudges.
- A Visual AIDS information campaign comprising, bi-monthly, double-sided xeroxable leaflets that some museums and many galleries and organizations nationwide would simply make available. The first might focus on women and AIDS, and include 1) information and statistics; 2) places to get more info and 3) organizations with which to get involved.

A similarly activist approach might be used to "draft" artworld volunteers for service and outreach groups. If there were a second Night Without Light it might be an opportunity to link corporations with service providers in order to educate employees and beef up the volunteer pool. If there is another Day Without Art, xerox leaflets should be on every door explaining the action. In other words, my feeling is that almost all of our activities can be enriched, broadened and made to do triple duty to strike the balance between spectacle and substance.