

**David Wojnarowicz with Tom Warren (b. 1959;
Lakewood, Ohio)**

Self-Portrait of David Wojnarowicz, 1983–84
Acrylic and collaged paper on gelatin silver print

Collection of Brooke Garber Neidich and Daniel Neidich

From left to right:

Journal entry, New York (Piers sketch and text), 1979–80
Typewriter ink, fiber-tipped pen, and colored pencil
on paper

Journal entry, Paris (Rimbaud J.O. Study #1), 1979–80
Graphite pencil, colored pencil, and wax crayon on paper

Journal insert, Paris (Rimbaud Masturbation Study #2),
1979–80
Watercolor, colored pencil, and ink on paper

Journal entry, France (Rimbaud sketches and photobooth
strips), 1979
Ballpoint pen on paper; collaged gelatin silver prints
on paper

Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University

Wojnarowicz was a poet and writer before he became a visual artist. His journals—a collection of notes, reminiscences, dreams, and sketches—offer early examples of the fluid relationship he saw between writing and images. The journals on view here, written between 1979 and 1980, give some sense of how Wojnarowicz planned works that might initially seem improvised—including *Arthur Rimbaud in New York*.

Untitled (Genet after Brassai), 1979

Collage of offset lithographs and colored pencil on paper

Private collection

At the same time as he conceived the Rimbaud series, Wojnarowicz created homages to other personal heroes, including Jean Genet (1910–1986), the French novelist, poet, and political activist. Genet resonated with Wojnarowicz for his erotic vision of the universe, his embrace of the outsider, and his frank writing on gay sex. For *Untitled (Genet after Brassai)*, Wojnarowicz transforms the iconoclast writer into a saint; in the background, a Christ figure appears to be shooting up with a syringe. When later criticized by religious conservatives, Wojnarowicz explained that he saw drug addiction as a contemporary struggle that an empathetic Christ would identify with and forgive.

Bill Burroughs' Recurring Dream, 1978

Collage of offset lithographs

Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Ralph M. Parsons Fund

Untitled (Joseph Beuys), 1979

Colored pencil, watercolor, ink, and acrylic with collaged paper mounted on paper

Private collection

Iolo Carew, 1980

Gelatin silver print

Collection of Brooke Garber Neidich and Daniel Neidich

Autoportrait—New York, 1980

Gelatin silver print

Collection of Gail and Tony Ganz

From left to right:

Arthur Rimbaud in New York, 1978–79 (printed 1990)
Gelatin silver print

Arthur Rimbaud in New York, 1979
Gelatin silver print

Collection of Philip E. Aarons and Shelley Fox Aarons

From left to right:

Arthur Rimbaud in New York, 1978–79 (printed 1990)
Gelatin silver print

Arthur Rimbaud in New York, 1978–79 (printed 1990)
Gelatin silver print

Collection of Philip E. Aarons and Shelley Fox Aarons

From left to right:

Arthur Rimbaud in New York, 1978–79 (printed 1990)
Gelatin silver print

Arthur Rimbaud in New York, 1978–79 (printed 1990)
Gelatin silver print

Collection of Philip E. Aarons and Shelley Fox Aarons

On pedestal:

Rimbaud Mask, c. 1978
Photocopy mounted on cardstock, with rubber bands

Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University

Arthur Rimbaud in New York, 1978–79 (printed 1990)
Gelatin silver print

Collection of the Estate of David Wojnarowicz; courtesy P.P.O.W, New York

From left to right:

Arthur Rimbaud in New York, 1978–79 (printed 2004)
Gelatin silver print

Arthur Rimbaud in New York, 1978–79 (printed 1990)
Gelatin silver print

Collection of the Estate of David Wojnarowicz; courtesy P.P.O.W, New York

Arthur Rimbaud in New York, 1978–79 (printed 2004)
Gelatin silver print

Collection of Philip E. Aarons and Shelley Fox Aarons

Arthur Rimbaud in New York, 1978–79 (printed 1990)
Gelatin silver print

Collection of Philip E. Aarons and Shelley Fox Aarons

From left to right:

Arthur Rimbaud in New York, 1978–79 (printed 1990)
Gelatin silver print

Arthur Rimbaud in New York, 1978–79 (printed 1990)
Gelatin silver print

Collection of Philip E. Aarons and Shelley Fox Aarons

Arthur Rimbaud in New York, 1978–79 (printed 1990)
Gelatin silver print

Collection of Philip E. Aarons and Shelley Fox Aarons

Arthur Rimbaud in New York, 1978 (printed 1990)
Gelatin silver print

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase with funds from the
Photography Committee 2005.12

Hear how a nineteenth-century poet inspired these photos.

 551

3 Teens Kill 4

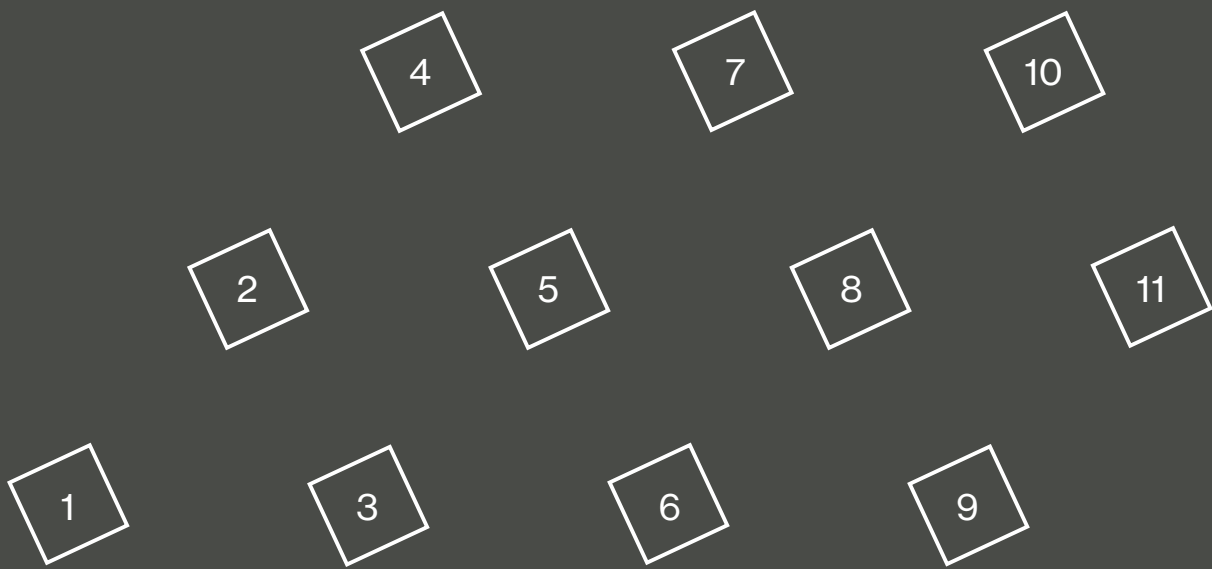
(Doug Bressler, Brian Butterick, Julie Hair,
Jesse Hultberg, David Wojnarowicz)
Active 1980–1987, New York

No Motive, 1983

Label: Point Blank Records

Recorded at Crossfire Studios, New York

This album can also be heard in its entirety at
whitney.org/Wojnarowicz.



From the *Metamorphosis* series:

1. *Untitled (Map Head)*, 1984
Collaged paper and acrylic on plaster
Collection of Beth Rudin DeWoody

2–4. *Untitled*, 1984
Collaged paper and acrylic on plaster
Hall Collection

5. *Untitled*, 1984
Acrylic on plaster with metal globes
Hall Collection

6. *Untitled*, 1984
Collaged paper and acrylic on plaster
Hall Collection

7. *Untitled*, 1984
Acrylic on plaster
Hall Collection

8. *Untitled*, 1984
Collaged paper and acrylic on plaster
Hall Collection

9. *Untitled*, 1984
Acrylic and photocopy on plaster
Hall Collection

10, 11. *Untitled*, 1984
Collaged paper and acrylic on plaster
Hall Collection

Discover what these heads may mean.

Science Lesson in 3D, 1984

Acrylic on collaged paper and papier-mâché,
monofilament wire, nail, glass, rock, and plastic toys

Collection of Gail and Tony Ganz

Gallery 4

Peter Hujar Dreaming/Yukio Mishima: St. Sebastian, 1982

Acrylic and spray paint on composition board

Collection of Matthijs Erdman

In this painting from 1982, Wojnarowicz composes a meditation on male desire. His friend and mentor Peter Hujar stretches across the bottom, reclining with his eyes closed, apparently dreaming the scene above. An image of the Japanese author Yukio Mishima (1925–1970) masturbating dominates the center of the composition; it is inspired by the writer’s description of his first masturbatory experience, initiated by a reproduction of a Renaissance painting of Saint Sebastian. The torso of the Christian martyr—young, statuesque, and pierced with arrows—rises above, a glowing aura linking him to the night sky and offering him up as an icon of queerness.

Hear a recording Wojnarowicz made with Peter Hujar.

▶ 554

From top to bottom:

Peter Hujar

b. 1934; Trenton, NJ

d. 1987; New York, NY

David Wojnarowicz in Dianne B. Fashion Shoot II, 1983

Gelatin silver print

Collection of Brooke Garber Neidich and Daniel Neidich

David Wojnarowicz (Village Voice “Heartsick: Fear and Loving in the Gay Community”), 1983

Gelatin silver print

Collection of Philip E. Aarons and Shelley Fox Aarons

This photograph of Wojnarowicz with his head bowed appeared on the cover of the June 28, 1983, edition of *The Village Voice*. It accompanied the article “Heartsick: Fear and Loving in the Gay Community” by Richard Goldstein. At the time of publication, very little was known about HIV and AIDS, including how it spread. Goldstein wrote: “If one were to devise a course of action based on incontrovertible evidence alone, there would be no conclusion to draw. Should I screen out numbers who look like they’ve been around? Should I travel to have sex? Should I look for lesions before I leap? How do I know my partner doesn’t have the illness in its (apparently protracted) dormant stage?” By the end of 1983, there were 2,118 reported AIDS-related deaths in the United States.

Hear about the gay community’s early response to AIDS.

▶ 555

Untitled (Green Head), 1982
Acrylic on composition board

Collection of Hal Bromm and Doneley Meris

Untitled (Peter Hujar Dreaming), 1982
Spray paint on paper

Collection of Ted Bonin

From left to right:

Peter Hujar

b. 1934; Trenton, NJ

d. 1987; New York, NY

David Wojnarowicz Reclining (II), 1981
Gelatin silver print

Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, NJ; gift of Stephen Koch

David Wojnarowicz, 1981
Gelatin silver print

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase with funds from the
Photography Committee 93.76

Peter Hujar

b. 1934; Trenton, NJ

d. 1987; New York, NY

David Wojnarowicz with Hand Touching Eye, 1981
Gelatin silver print

The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Fellows of Photography Fund

Peter Hujar

b. 1934; Trenton, NJ

d. 1987; New York, NY

David Lighting Up, 1985

Gelatin silver print

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; promised gift of the Fisher Landau Center for Art P.2010.321

Gallery 5

History Keeps Me Awake at Night (For Rilo Chmielorz),
1986

Acrylic, spray paint, and collaged paper on
composition board

Collection of John P. Axelrod

In *History Keeps Me Awake at Night (For Rilo Chmielorz)* Wojnarowicz presents a dystopic vision of American life. Presenting simulated American currency and bureaucratic emblems alongside symbols of crime, monstrosity, and chaos, the painting's threatening imagery runs counter to the apparently placid sleep of the man below. If the painting is about fear, perhaps the fear of staring down AIDS, Wojnarowicz presents it as an endemic condition in which new fears are built upon historical ones.

I Use Maps Because I Don't Know How to Paint, 1984

Acrylic and collaged paper on composition board

Rubell Family Collection, Miami

Das Reingold: New York Schism, 1987

Acrylic and collaged paper on board

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; promised gift of Emily Fisher Landau P.2010.284

A nightmarish allegory of violence and capitalism, *Das Reingold: New York Schism* makes reference to Richard Wagner's opera *Das Rheingold* (1854), in which the holder of a magical ring will gain the power to rule the world should he renounce love. This narrative assumed particular power at a moment when artists were joining the group ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) to protest the profiteering of pharmaceutical companies and government mismanagement of the AIDS crisis.

Discover the personal symbolism behind this painting.

▶ 556

The Death of American Spirituality, 1987

Spray paint, acrylic, and collage on plywood, two panels

Private collection

The Death of American Spirituality contains a number of Wojnarowicz's recurring symbols and imagery densely layered in a single composition. With its radically juxtaposed motifs that suggest different temporalities—from geologic landforms to emblems of the American West and the Industrial Revolution—the mythical tableau depicts destruction proliferating alongside technological advancement and geographic conquest.

Mexican Crucifix, 1987

Acrylic and collage on wood, five panels

P.P.O.W, New York

One of five paintings Wojnarowicz created from photographs and film footage taken during a trip to Mexico in 1986, *Mexican Crucifix* addresses the forced imposition of Christianity on indigenous Aztec culture. On the right side is a depiction of Christ on a cross swarming with fire ants—symbols that Wojnarowicz would use repeatedly in his work to stand for the imperatives of nature. On the left side is a typical representation of Coatlicue, the Aztec goddess of the earth and war. Pictured as a woman wearing a skirt of snakes and a necklace made of human hearts, hands, and skulls, Coatlicue is presented as not only a nurturing mother but also a monster that consumes every living being.

The Newspaper as National Voodoo: A Brief History of the U.S.A., 1986

Acrylic, spray paint, and collage on wood

The Broad Art Foundation, Los Angeles

The Birth of Language II, 1986

Acrylic, spray paint, and collaged paper on wood

Collection of Matthijs Erdman

Dung Beetles II: Camouflage Leads Us Into Destruction, 1986

Acrylic, spray paint, and collaged paper on composition board

Collection of Noel Kirnon and Michael Paley

Queer Basher/Icarus Falling, 1986

Spray paint and acrylic on board

The Art Institute of Chicago; gift of Susan and Stuart Handler, 2004.761

A Worker, 1986

Acrylic, spray paint, and collaged paper on wood

Collection of Matthijs Erdman

Evolution, 1987

Oil on board

Collection of Brooke Garber Neidich and Daniel Neidich

Hear what the artist thought about nature and humanity.

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Earth, Wind, Fire, and Water, 1986

Acrylic and spray paint on canvas

Private collection; courtesy Galerie Buchholz, New York

In order of appearance:

Unfinished film (*A Fire in My Belly*), 1986–87

Super 8 film transferred to digital video, black-and-white and color, silent; 13:06 min.

Hear why the artist used a crucifix in this film.

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Unfinished film (Mexico, etc... Peter, etc...), 1987

Super 8 transferred to digital video, black-and-white and color, silent; 10:22 min.

Unfinished film (with sequence in memory of Peter Hujar), c. 1987

Super 8 transferred to digital video, black-and-white, silent; 15:30 min.

Unfinished film (Mexico Film Footage II), c. 1988

Super 8 transferred to digital video, black-and-white and color, silent; 4:05 min.

Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University

Clockwise, from right:

Water, 1987

Acrylic, ink, and collaged paper on composition board
two panels

Collection of the Second Ward Foundation

Earth, 1987

Acrylic and collaged paper on wood, two panels

The Museum of Modern Art, New York; gift of Agnes Gund, 2007

Wojnarowicz describes the emotions behind this work.

▶ 559

Fire, 1987

Acrylic and collaged paper on wood, two panels

The Museum of Modern Art, New York; gift of Agnes Gund and Barbara Jakobson Fund, 1992

Wind (For Peter Hujar), 1987

Acrylic and collaged paper on composition board,
two panels

Collection of the Second Ward Foundation

Wind (For Peter Hujar) is the most personal and self-referential of Wojnarowicz's Four Elements paintings. A red line running through an open window connects a baby—based on a photograph of his brother Steven's newborn—to a headless paratrooper. Wojnarowicz, in his only painted self-portrait, stands behind. The bird's wing dominating the upper left quarter of the painting is a copy of one of Hujar's favorite works—a 1512 drawing by the German artist Albrecht Dürer. Hujar would die less than two months after this painting was first exhibited and Wojnarowicz later had the wing carved into his friend's tombstone. Three days after Hujar's death, Wojnarowicz wrote in his journal after visiting his grave: "He sees me, I know he sees me. He's in the wind in the air all around me."

Wojnarowicz explains this painting's significance.

▶ 560

From left to right:

Untitled, 1987 (printed 1988)

Gelatin silver prints

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase with funds from the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation and the Photography Committee 2007.122a–c

Hear how the artist memorialized Hujar.

▶ 561

Untitled (Hujar Dead), 1988–89

Black-and-white photographs, acrylic, screenprint, and collaged paper on composition board

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of Steven Johnson and Walter Sudol in memory of David Wojnarowicz T.2018.107

This painting presents an urgent condemnation of systemic homophobia and government inattention to people with AIDS—including, by that point, Wojnarowicz himself—and expresses the artist's extreme anger at being at the mercy of those in power. The nine photographs at the center of the painting are of Peter Hujar, taken shortly after his death. The painting was included in *Witnesses: Against Our Vanishing* at New York's Artists Space from November 16, 1989, to January 6, 1990. Curated by Nan Goldin, the exhibition also included work by other artists responding to the AIDS crisis: David Armstrong, Tom Chesley, Dorit Cypris, Jane Dickson, Philip-Lorca DiCorcia, Darrel Ellis, Allen Frame, Peter Hujar, Greer Lankton, Siobhan Liddel, James Nares, Perico Pastor, Margo Pelletier, Clarence Elie Rivera, Vittorio Scarpati, Jo Shane, Kiki Smith, Janet Stein, Stephen Tashjian, Shellburne Thurber, and Ken Tisa.

Hear Wojnarowicz read the text on this painting.

▶ 562

All works:

Untitled, 1989

From the *Sex Series (For Marion Scemama)*

Gelatin silver print on board

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase with funds from The Sondra and Charles Gilman Jr. Foundation, the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation Inc., and the Richard and Dorothy Rodgers Fund 92.75.1–8

The works in Wojnarowicz’s *Sex Series* are punctuated with circular insets containing an array of cropped details, including pornographic imagery. For Wojnarowicz, these voyeuristic “peepholes” evoked surveillance photos or objects under a microscope. This was one of his first projects after Hujar’s death and Wojnarowicz’s own diagnosis with HIV. “It came out of loss,” he said. “I mean every time I opened a magazine there was the face of somebody else who died. It was so overwhelming and there was this huge backlash about sex, even within the activist community. . . . And it essentially came out of wanting some sexy images on the wall—for me. To keep me company. To make me feel better.”

Nan Goldin discusses *Witnesses: Against Our Vanishing*.

▶ 563

From left to right:

Something from Sleep II, 1987–88

Spray paint, acrylic, and collaged paper on canvas

Collection of Steven Johnson and Walter Sudol; courtesy Second Ward Foundation

Bad Moon Rising, 1989

Four gelatin silver prints, acrylic, string, and collage on composition board

Collection of Steven Johnson and Walter Sudol; courtesy Second Ward Foundation

Hear from the artist on how this work was a response to his HIV diagnosis.

▶ 564

On monitor:

Phil Zwickler

b. 1954; Alexandria, VA

d. 1991; New York, NY

Footage of Wojnarowicz speaking about the National Endowment for the Arts controversy, 1989

Video transferred to digital video, color, sound; 7:23 min.

Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University; courtesy the Estate of Phil Zwickler

This 1989 video by Phil Zwickler, a filmmaker, journalist, and AIDS activist, was shot in Wojnarowicz's apartment days before the opening of *Witnesses: Against Our Vanishing*, an exhibition that presented artists' responses to the AIDS crisis. John Frohnmayer, the chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), withdrew the NEA's \$10,000 grant to the exhibition in response to the essay that Wojnarowicz wrote for the catalogue. The grant was later partially reinstated, but with the stipulation that no money was to be used to support the catalogue. Zwickler filmed Wojnarowicz while the controversy was unfolding.



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Bank check for \$1.00 in damages awarded to Wojnarowicz in David Wojnarowicz v. American Family Association and Donald E. Wildmon, 1990

Pamphlet circulated by Donald E. Wildmon, American Family Association, 1990

Affidavit (with Wojnarowicz annotations) for David Wojnarowicz v. American Family Association and Donald E. Wildmon

Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University

In 1990, Wojnarowicz sued the American Family Association (AFA), a nonprofit organization that promotes fundamentalist Christian values, for slander and copyright infringement. Earlier that year, Reverend Donald E. Wildmon, the head of the AFA, had sent out 200,000 flyers entitled “Your Tax Dollars Helped Pay For These ‘Works of Art’” to his supporters. The pamphlets contained cropped details of Wojnarowicz’s *Sex Series*, works that were included in his 1990 exhibition at the University Galleries of Illinois State University that received funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, and a small detail of his 1979 collage of Jean Genet depicting Christ shooting up.

In his affidavit, Wojnarowicz charged that “the images represented in the Pamphlet to be my work have been so severely mutilated that I could not consider them my own.” Federal District Judge William C. Connor ruled in Wojnarowicz’s favor and ordered the AFA to send a corrective mailing explaining the misrepresentation to everyone who had received the original. Since Wojnarowicz could prove no negative financial ramifications, the judge awarded him only one dollar in damages. Wojnarowicz insisted on a hand-signed check from Wildmon. He never cashed it.

Hear the artist on NPR’s *Fresh Air* with Terry Gross.

▶ 565

From left to right:

Spirituality (For Paul Thek), 1988–89

Seven gelatin silver prints on board

Collection of Steven Johnson and Walter Sudol; courtesy Second Ward Foundation

Wojnarowicz often presented a series of photographs as a single composition, as he does with *Spirituality (For Paul Thek)*. This method allows the images to retain their singularity as they merge into one entity, and to serve as potent metaphors for the role—and importance—of the individual in the larger society. The central image of the crucifix was taken while Wojnarowicz was in Teotihuacán, north of Mexico City. He wanted to stage an image that suggested the eternal conflict between nature and man-made culture. Wojnarowicz considered ants to be evolved beings, writing in a 1989 text that they “are the only insects to keep pets, use tools, make war, and capture slaves.” The photograph of the reclining man was taken in 1980 and depicts Wojnarowicz’s friend Iola Carew, then a coworker at the nightclub Danceteria. Carew was the first person Wojnarowicz knew to be diagnosed with AIDS. The work is dedicated to the artist Paul Thek, who died of AIDS-related complications in 1988.

Silence Through Economics, 1988–89

Five gelatin silver prints on board

Collection of Steven Johnson and Walter Sudol; courtesy Second Ward Foundation

Presented with permission of the Estate of David Wojnarowicz.



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Something from Sleep III (For Tom Rauffenbart), 1989
Acrylic and spray paint on canvas

Collection of Tom Rauffenbart

Untitled, 1987
Sumi ink and collaged paper on wood

Collection of Jane Dickson

Childhood, 1988
Acrylic, watercolor, and collaged paper on canvas

Collection of Eric Ceputis and David W. Williams

Top row:
Untitled (Desire)
Untitled (Control)
Untitled (Spirituality)

Bottom row:
Untitled (Time and Money)
Untitled (Violence)
Untitled (Language)

From the *Ant Series*, 1988–89
Gelatin silver prints

Collection of Steven Johnson and Walter Sudol; courtesy Second Ward Foundation

Untitled, 1988–89
Gelatin silver print

Collection of Steven Johnson and Walter Sudol; courtesy Second Ward Foundation

Weight of the Earth, Part I, 1988
Fourteen gelatin silver prints and watercolor on paper on board

The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Family of Man Fund

Weight of the Earth, Part II, 1988–89
Fourteen gelatin silver prints and watercolor on paper on board

Collection of Dunja Siegel

Through compositions like these Wojnarowicz sought to create a language out of images. To him, the combination of images described something painful but also mysterious about the experience of being alive—“about captivity in all that surrounds us,” in his words, and the “heaviness of the pre-invented experience we are thrust into.”

Fever, 1988–89
Three gelatin silver prints on board

Collection of Michael Hoeh

From left to right:

I Feel A Vague Nausea, 1990

Five gelatin silver prints, acrylic, string, and screenprint on composition board

Collection of Michael Hoeh

Americans Can't Deal with Death, 1990

Two gelatin silver prints, acrylic, string, and screenprint on composition board

Collection of Eric Ceputis and David W. Williams

We Are Born into a Preinvented Existence, 1990

Two gelatin silver prints, chromogenic print, acrylic, string, and screenprint on composition board

Private collection

Wojnarowicz describes painting flowers.

▶ 566

At left:

He Kept Following Me, 1990

Five gelatin silver prints, acrylic, string, and screenprint on composition board

Collection of Dunja Siegel

In center of gallery:

Globe of the United States, 1990

Acrylic on illuminated plastic globe

Hall Collection

Untitled (Globe of the United States), 1990

Fiber-tipped pen on illuminated plastic globe

Collection of Gail and Tony Ganz

Something from Sleep IV (Dream), 1988–89
Gelatin silver print, acrylic, and collaged paper on composition board

Collection of Luis Cruz Azaceta and Sharon Jacques

Sub-Species Helms Senatorius, 1990
Silver dye bleach print (Cibachrome)

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of Steven Johnson and Walter Sudol 2007.216

In this work, Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina appears as a spider with a swastika on his back. In 1989, in response to the controversy regarding his essay for the *Witnesses: Against Our Vanishing* catalogue, Wojnarowicz drafted a press release that included a description of Helms as one of seven particularly bad actors in the fight against AIDS. It read, in part:

One of the more dangerous homophobes in the continental United States . . . Has introduced legislation that denies federal funding for any program that mentions homosexuality . . . Cut out any and all AIDS education funding that relates to gays and lesbians. Introduced legislation that we must now live with that prevents any HIV-positive people or PWA's [people with AIDS] from entering any border of the U.S.A. as well as deporting people with green cards forcibly tested and found to be HIV-positive.

Untitled (When I Put My Hands on Your Body), 1990

Gelatin silver print and screenprint on board

Collection of Eric Ceputis and David W. Williams; promised gift to the Art Institute of Chicago

Wojnarowicz visited Dickson Mounds, a museum on the site of an ancient Indigenous community in Lewistown, Illinois, around the time of his 1989 exhibition at Illinois State University. There, he photographed a burial site displaying skeletons and artifacts that had been excavated in 1927. Wojnarowicz, facing his own mortality and the deaths of many whom he loved, returned to the photograph a few years later and layered it with his own text about loss to create this work.

The exhibit at Dickson Mounds closed in 1992 after years of protests by Native American activists and their supporters who objected to the public display of human remains. Activists also were fighting at the national level around this time for legislation affirming Indigenous peoples' right to protect the graves and remains of their ancestors. Wojnarowicz, who frequently wrote and spoke out in support of those who had been forgotten and disenfranchised due to U.S. policies, including Native Americans, recorded the following in an audio journal from 1989: "If I'm making a painting about the American West and I want to talk about the railroad bringing culture—white culture—across the country and exploiting or destroying Indian culture . . . I see that there's a certain amount of information that is totally ignored in this country. That all this is built on blood."

Untitled (ACT-UP), 1990

Screenprint, two parts

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of Steven Johnson and Walter Sudol 2002.490a–b

In center of gallery:

Bread Sculpture, 1988–89

Bread, string, and needle with newspaper

Collection of Gail and Tony Ganz

Wojnarowicz used red string as a material throughout his practice. From his early supermarket posters to the flower paintings, he stitched red string into the surface of his compositions to suggest the seams and irreconcilable breaks in culture. In his unfinished film *A Fire in My Belly* (1986–87), Wojnarowicz included footage of the stitching together of a broken loaf of bread. This sculpture is a physical manifestation of that earlier idea. The film also included footage of what appeared to be a man's lips being sewn together. A version of that image by Andreas Sterzing—picturing Wojnarowicz himself—would become one of the most galvanizing images to come out of the AIDS crisis.

Untitled (Face in Dirt), 1991 (printed 1993)

Gelatin silver print

Collection of Ted and Maryanne Ellison Simmons

This photograph was taken in late May 1991 at Chaco Canyon in New Mexico while Wojnarowicz and his friend Marion Scemama took a road trip around the American Southwest. Cynthia Carr, Wojnarowicz's biographer, describes how the photograph came to be:

He had been there before and knew exactly where he wanted to stage this. "We're going to dig a hole," he told her, "and I'm going to lie down." They began digging without saying a word, a hole for his upper body and a bit for the legs. They used their hands. The dirt was loose and dry. He lay down and closed his eyes. Marion put dirt around his face till it was halfway up his cheeks and then stood over him, photographing his half-buried face first with his camera and then with hers.

What's This Little Guy's Job in the World, 1990

Gelatin silver print

Collection of Penelope Pilkington

Hear one of the exhibition's curators describe this photograph.

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Untitled (SOMETIMES I COME TO HATE PEOPLE), 1992

Gelatin silver print and screenprint on board

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase with funds from The Sondra and Charles Gilman, Jr. Foundation, Inc., the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation Inc., and the Richard and Dorothy Rodgers Fund 92.74

Untitled (One Day This Kid . . .), 1990–91

Photostat mounted on board

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase with funds from the Print Committee 2002.183

Listen to one of the exhibition's curators discuss this work.

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Untitled (ACT-UP), 1990

Screenprint, two parts

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of Steven Johnson and Walter Sudol 2002.490a–b

Wojnarowicz made this print in 1990 to benefit ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power). ACT UP was founded in 1987 and Wojnarowicz participated in its meetings and demonstrations, notably the October 11, 1988, action at the headquarters of the Food and Drug Administration in Rockville, Maryland, protesting the agency's slow pace of drug approval. Wojnarowicz painted the back of his jean jacket to read: IF I DIE OF AIDS—FORGET BURIAL—JUST DROP MY BODY ON THE STEPS OF THE F.D.A.

As early as 1988, ACT UP used the rallying cry “the AIDS crisis is not over” to keep HIV and AIDS in the forefront of politics and culture. HIV and AIDS continue to affect individuals and communities throughout the world, disproportionately people of color. On the evening of Friday, July 27, 2018, members of ACT UP New York staged an action in the Whitney's galleries to reassert that AIDS is not history. Members carried placards with articles and information pertaining to the ongoing HIV and AIDS pandemic. To find a selection of those articles as well as exhibition-related videos, interviews, and writings, please visit whitney.org/Perspectives.