HISTORY

by Kirby Gookin

Creative Time: 33 Years and Counting

Writing about Creative Time's thirty-three-year history in New York City is a daunting task. Its public art program includes such disparate projects as exhibitions in landmark buildings, advertisements on milk cartons and public buses, poetry in bars, a drive-in movie theatre, skywriting, renting out an artist's body, and the ethereal but monumental *Tribute in Light*, whose rays commemorate the loss experienced on 9/11. Its identity is principally non-institutional and its peripatetic mission defies categorization. Creative Time has never had its own gallery, a so-called home of its own. Instead its programs are in constant flux, contingent upon the ever-changing social, political, and cultural character of the day. It is, in effect, a moving target. So how do you codify a history that unifies an entity whose works are inherently challenging, diverse, provocative, and innovative while remaining dedicated to supporting artistic freedom and experimentation?[1]

"Ford to City: Drop Dead"

Creative Time was born in the early 1970s, when the nation was at war in Vietnam, and suffering from the Watergate scandal, the Arab oil embargo, and economic recession. Locally, New York City faced bankruptcy, a rising crime rate, and urban flight. The federal government's refusal to bail the city out of debt (the *Daily News* headline read: "Ford To City: Drop Dead") forced Mayor Lindsay to instigate layoffs, increase transit fares, impose wage freezes, and reduce public services.[2] No matter how much the mayor's public relations team pumped up New York as the "Fun City" and the "Big Apple," it could not hide the reality that the parks were unsafe, taxi drivers had to protect themselves behind Plexiglas dividers, and on any given day one could see a line of people unabashedly standing outside some tenement doorway to buy dope. Against this backdrop a deteriorating urban landscape was filled with abandoned buildings, which stretched from Wall Street to the outer boroughs, with some areas like the South Bronx losing several city blocks a week to fire and neglect.[3]

In the midst of this poverty and neglect the voices of activist grassroots organizations could be heard championing the rights of the disenfranchised—minorities, women, gays, the homeless, the infirm,…and artists. New York was an important center of artistic activism and enterprise in the early seventies and it produced a burgeoning alternative arts movement that was largely spearheaded by artists. Creative Time was formed in 1973, alongside other fledgling alternative spaces like 112 Workshop (1970, now White Columns), The Kitchen (1971), P.S. 1 (1971), Artists Space (1972), and A.I.R. Gallery (1972).[4] As museums did not traditionally exhibit the work of living artists, and most commercial galleries were unapproachably bourgeois and detached from the social realities of the world, young artists led the way in creating new and alternative means to the conventional art experience. Rejecting the neutral "white cube," Conceptual artists like Joseph Kosuth and Lee Lozano began exploring ways to deflate art's materiality and de-emphasize its commercial viability, while Adrian Piper took art outside into the streets and Robert Smithson pushed it into the landscape. As Kosuth said about those times, "in the sixties we were very much thinking about the fact that we really wanted to break the form of making meaning radically and we didn't want to show in galleries and museums. We wanted to work directly out into the world."[5]

Within this panorama of experimental artistic activity, Creative Time established itself as an "organization that enables professional artists to test ideas and create new works for public exhibition in alternative spaces." However, unlike other alternatives it had no space of its own. Creative Time's main objective was, and remains, to present temporary art projects in unusual places. Free from the limitations that any one particular location imposes, this mission allows artists to experiment with the physical, historical, and cultural contexts of a variety of spaces, and to address themes inherent to new and previously untested sites.

Artists in Action: A Window into the Creative Process

Creative Time emerged out of an informal discussion between three friends: Karin Bacon and Susan Henshaw Jones, who worked in Mayor Lindsay's administration, and Anita Contini, an actress and dancer, who would become the organization's first executive director from 1973 to 1986. In an effort to revitalize the South Street Seaport area, they organized a summer arts festival that would bring together two rarely intersecting communities: the artists who lived there and the business people who worked there. Conceived as a one-time event, *Crafts in Action* (1974) was not a typical "festival" of dance, theatre, or music. Instead it comprised a month-long exhibition by fiber artists Sharon Fein, Jo Ellen Scheffield, and Joe Scheurer who

made their art daily before an audience. In a glass-lined "galleria" on the ground floor of a newly constructed office tower, the artists worked on projects inspired by the neighborhood and welcomed passersby to "watch the weaving and knot-tying over the artisan's shoulders, and to ask questions and receive instruction."[6]

Crafts in Action helped forge Creative Time's mission to "share with the public not only the art product but the creative process of an artist at work in his medium." It was their guiding force when they sponsored Anne Healy's *Sail* (1974) and Otto Piene's *Anemones* (1976) in the recently completed office building at Wall Street Plaza designed by James Ingo Freed of I. M. Pei and Associates.[7] On the site where turn-of-the-century warehouses once stood, both installations responded to the neighborhood's fading maritime past. *Sail* was "bedecked…with twenty-six triangular sails of varying sizes," and *Anemones* transformed the glass-lined room into an aquarium filled with gigantic balloons in the shape of New England sea anemones, fish, and crustaceans.[8] In both instances passersby were encouraged to meander between the billowing sails or the swaying inflatables that echoed the once-thriving seaport just blocks away. As with *Crafts in Action*, each installation treated the audience as both viewer and participant.

Best known from this era is Red Grooms's *Ruckus Manhattan* (1975; revived in 1981 on Sixth Avenue). Produced in the midst of New York's socioeconomic collapse, the project confronted the dejected character of the city full-on. Partly inspired by his visit to *Sail*, Grooms approached Creative Time hoping to get the necessary support to realize his grand vision of a "sculpto-picto-rama" of Manhattan. With his staff of assistants dubbed "The Ruckus Construction Company," Grooms embraced Creative Time's mission to create an experimental laboratory for artist and audience, and proceeded to demystify the creative process by constructing the work in public view over a seven-month period.

Grooms and his partner, Mimi Gross Grooms, treated the windows as a two-way portal: the public could look inside while the artists could observe the public outside. Not only did the artists sketch the bustling street activity, but the onlookers as well. As the public soon discovered, they had become the subjects of Grooms's work, as was evident in the drawings put on display each day, some of which were incorporated into the final installation. The entire city was the canvas for Red Grooms, whose "Ruckus works are up-to-the-minute headlines of life in Gotham City."[9]

In November, *Ruckus Manhattan*—a cacophonous display of New York in all its glory and decrepitude—opened to critical and popular acclaim. Claiming that the installation was "built for the man in the street," Grooms's city was a satirical mix of miniature and life-size caricatures entangled in a labyrinthine web of warped and cantilevered city monuments, neighborhoods, and activities.[10] Walking through the densely packed environment, you could "board" the Staten Island Ferry, "look" out to the Statue of Liberty (decked out like a floozy in red platform shoes), and "stand" beneath the Twin Towers. You could even witness Manhattan street life, too, including a re-creation of hookers and their pimps under a massage parlor sign beckoning "Girls * Girls * Girls."

Ruckus Manhattan's success rests in the way it rendered all of the energy, grit, and grime of the city's underbelly without the stench or mortal danger. It also opened up new opportunities for Creative Time. By having received the Municipal Art Society Certificate of Merit, the project lent the organization respect and credibility. Soon, various city agencies and real estate firms would begin to approach them to help "spark interest in revitalizing the unused building[s]" and sites scattered throughout the downtown area.[11]

Reinvigorating Lower Manhattan Landmarks

One of Mayor Lindsay's solutions to redress the flight of businesses out of the city was to construct new office towers in Lower Manhattan alongside its turn-of-the-century historical landmarks. Projects like *Ruckus* and *Crafts in Action* took place in these spaces waiting to be leased. By the latter 1970s, as the new offices filled with tenants, many historically significant buildings were left empty. The U.S. Custom House, the First Precinct Police Building, and The Chamber of Commerce were offered to Creative Time as exhibition spaces. For these unique venues, Creative Time encouraged artists to exploit each building's significance as a culturally loaded site, a directive connoted in the programs' various titles: *Custom and Culture, Breaking In, Projects at the Precinct*, and *Projects at the Chamber*.

For the inaugural exhibition at the U.S. Custom House, the pioneering artist Max Neuhaus produced the sound installation *Round: Sound for Concave Surfaces* (1976).[12] Taking advantage of the acoustics in the building's massive rotunda he encircled the room with sixteen speakers and encouraged visitors to relax and listen to the effect of electronically produced notes and overtones moving through space. Subsequent projects were then produced as *Custom and Culture I* and *II* (1977, 1979).[13] These included installations by Dennis Oppenheim, Martin Puryear, and Elyn Zimmerman; experimental music by Laurie Anderson, Robert Ashley, the Philip Glass Ensemble, and Steve Reich; and performances by Laura Dean, Alvin Lucier, and Charlemagne Palestine; and an event that John Rockwell called, "an especially beguiling category…[of] 'storytelling,'" offered by Helen and Newton Harrison and Calvin Trillin.[14]

Breaking In (1980) and *Projects at the Precinct* (1981) took place at the First Precinct Police Building, where Creative Time had moved their offices.[15] There artists such as Vito Acconci, Rosemarie Castoro, Michelangelo Pistoletto, and Barbara Zucker considered the character of the setting, letting such elements as a tall oak desk at the entryway or the men's and women's jail cells dictate the nature of their installations. Not surprisingly, themes of incarceration, secret lives, and time pervaded.

"WHILE EXPANDING ITS INITIATIVES INTO NEW VENUES, CREATIVE TIME CONTINUED TO SPONSOR ART INTERVENTIONS IN NEGLECTED URBAN SPACES."

Likewise, *Projects at the Chamber* (1982) was inspired by the dramatic environment of the Chamber of Commerce's Great Hall, which was decorated with portraits of the great financiers from American history, all of them white.[16] Some performers treated the portraits as their audience, such as puppeteer Theodora Skipitares and performance artist Connie Beckley (who had performed *Principles in Perspectives* in the space several months earlier). For her installation *Past Events*, feminist Ida Applebroog placed a small bronze sculpture of a woman in the midst of the portraits and inserted a speech bubble into her lips that warned: "Gentlemen, America is in Trouble," to which the portraits "replied": "Isn't Capitalism Working?" or "It's a Jewish Plot." Remarking on how Applebroog reinvigorated the antiquated setting with contemporary inferences, the critic Lucy Lippard wrote, "With the lethal and even poetic understatement, she mocked corporate control, pomposity, and pretensions of democracy, forcing the powers that be to expose themselves, deadpan."[17]

Taking Art to the Streets

Beyond the interior confines of buildings, Creative Time also began to initiate its first outdoor works and interventions into more varied contexts. Otto Piene unleashed *Neon Rainbow* (1976), a giant inflatable arc with neon lights in Central Park. Bill Brand installed a sequence of two hundred and twenty-eight painted animation cells along the platform inside an abandoned subway station for *Masstransiscope* (1980, ongoing) which took on a cinematic effect as the subway train passed by.[18] A few years later, Creative Time helped Mierle Laderman Ukeles realize *The Touch Sanitation Show: Part One* (1984), a project that gave voice to the city's public sanitation workforce. Using materials and equipment associated with sanitation work, Ukeles created a massive installation at the Marine Transfer Station, where she choreographed a performance with tugboats and garbage barges on the Hudson River. These projects were part of Creative Time's ongoing endeavor to expand the physical and psychological realm

of art in order to reawaken the viewer's relationship to their environment, as was also the case with *Downtown Drive-In* (1978, 1979), which transformed a parking lot into Lower Manhattan's first ever drive-in theatre. Cultivating a neighborhood atmosphere in the otherwise alienating environment, the free outdoor festival of independent films by Maya Deren, Kenneth Anger, Stan Brakhage, and others turned the shuttered Wall Street area into a vibrant cultural nighttime destination.

New York, "It'll be a great place if they ever finish it."

Nearly a decade earlier, the photographer Danny Lyon began chronicling what he called "The Destruction of Lower Manhattan." In his journals from that time he wrote, "the wrecking is going so fast that buildings disappear overnight."[19] Focusing his lens largely on an area known as Washington Market, he decided to create a "documentary of the demolition work" where in one year alone, "over sixty acres of buildings of Lower Manhattan were demolished" to clear ground for new buildings like the World Trade Center and its surrounding infrastructure.[20] From this rubble not only did new buildings reshape the city's skyline, but the refuse dumped along the western banks of the Hudson River became the ninety-two-acre landfill that is now Battery Park City.[21]

By 1978, this newly minted real estate was still quite raw. In some areas the brick and steel debris remained visible just below the surface of dirt, sand, and weeds, much like the archaeological remains of an ancient city, which in a way they were. In others, particularly a ten-acre stretch to the north, it was graded and filled with thick sand (and eventually landscaped with artificial dunes).[22] These two areas became the sites of one of Creative Time's best-known programs, *Art on the Beach*, an annual event that lasted from 1978 to 1985 on land lent to Creative Time by the Battery Park City Authority to use for exhibitions until it was time to begin construction on the network of buildings that stand there today.[23] (The program moved to Hunters Point, Queens, in 1987 for two seasons.)

In its first year, a group of artists and performers created a collection of works that were strongly united around themes dictated by the site. As Craig Owens wrote in the architectural periodical *Skyline*: "Through time, fragmentary evidence of past human presence has accumulated here: oxidized I-beams upended in the sand, the broken remains of a concrete parking lot, what seemed like miles of dilapidated snow fencing…Even the sand underfoot seems to testify to some forgotten disaster—small bits of broken asphalt mix with the grey, sand-like charred remains…Thirteen sculptors have installed work here; nearly all of it aspires to the feeling that these scattered debris evoke."[24]

With its emphasis on the interplay between Manhattan's island setting and its urbanism, the exhibition exploited the images, ideas, and symbolism of New York's ongoing physical and cultural transformation in ways that echoed the writer O. Henry's proverbial claim, "It'll be a great place if they ever finish it." *Art on the Beach* was an immediate hit and became an annual event. In any given season there seemed to be an unending roster of artists—Alice Aycock, Glenn Branca, Tony Conrad, Petah Coyne, Eiko & Koma, Molissa Fenley, Jackie Ferrara, Simone Forti, Bill T. Jones, Jackson Mac Low, Tom Otterness, Nancy Rubins, Alison Saar, Yoshimasa Wada, Fred Wilson along with artists not usually associated with the downtown art scene like Rock Steady Crew and the Australian Aboriginal dancers. The venue was always a popular summer destination, no matter what was on display.

By 1983, *Art on the Beach* had evolved into a program that required "visual artists, performing artists, and architects…" to team together "in the physical planning of the sites in which their works were to be located."[25] One project that typifies the new collaborative spirit was *The Language of Whales* (1983) designed by Brower Hatcher, Billie Tsien, and David Van Tieghem. Built in the shape of a giant human head from an entangled armature of metal and found debris, the structure became an instrument upon which Van Tieghem climbed about and performed an improvisational composition with drumsticks upon its "various objects and images."[26]

Opposite, from top left: Anne Healy's *Sail* installation at 88 Pine Street (1974); visitors board the model of the Staten Island Ferry at Red Grooms's *Ruckus Manhattan* (1975); exterior of the former First Precinct Building, site of *Breaking In* (1980) and *Projects at the Precinct* (1981)

In its final year in Battery Park City, one of several memorable projects was *Delta Spirit* (1985), a pyramid-shaped beach shack constructed from discarded lumber, driftwood, and found bric-a-brac created by artists David Hammons and Angela Valerio with architect Jerry Barr and the otherworldly free-form jazz music of Sun Ra and his Arkestra. Part Egyptian temple of the Nile Delta and part gris-gris cabin of the Mississippi delta, the handmade shack also alluded to New York's rising homeless population and the increasing disparity between rich and poor that many saw as the product of Reagan's "voodoo economics." In this light, it might have also suggested a do-it-yourself last-resort solution to life's problems: when all else fails, consult a shaman.

Creative Time in the Age of Voodoo Economics

The socially engaged attitude of *Delta Spirit* typifies many of Creative Time's projects during the 1980's. Ronald Reagan's presidency inaugurated a bull market that pushed the Dow up 350 percent between 1982 and 1987, making some people very wealthy. However, federal deregulation and ensuing tax cuts, when combined with the costs of unprecedented defense spending to combat the Soviet "evil empire," ended up tripling the national debt. The new wealth enjoyed by a few never "trickled down" into the pockets of the poor and middle class as promised. Along with the booming economy came increases in unemployment for lower-skilled workers, a homeless population, and as a continuation of the spending reductions endemic of the stark 70's, limited social services.

In New York, the bohemian East Village arts scene rose up. Largely geared toward an urban street culture of graffiti writing, squatters, and nightlife, new galleries often run by artists in small storefronts functioned like ersatz alternative arts spaces. Street artists Keith Haring, Lady Pink, and Martin Wong, for example, exhibited alongside artists who appropriated the urban landscape of mass-media advertising and entertainment imagery like Jeff Koons, Barbara Kruger, and Richard Prince. Other artists rejected commercial exhibition practices altogether and created temporary public projects independently that were decidedly anti-commercial, anti-corporate, anti-gentrification, and pro-community. The loosely knit artists' collective Collaborative Projects, Inc., (Colab) organized *The Real Estate Show* (1980) in an abandoned city-owned storefront on Delancey Street. Fashion Moda, an artist-run gallery in the South Bronx, "mixed the indigenous art of the area (notably graffiti) with contemporary impulses of young artists from downtown Manhattan,"[27] and Group Material solicited items with "sentimental, cultural value" from their neighbors and exhibited them in a local storefront.[28]

In solidarity and support, Creative Time harnessed this political energy and incorporated it into its programming at *Art on the Beach* and elsewhere. In *Podium for Dissent* (1985), Dennis Adams, Ann Magnuson, and Nicholas Goldsmith created a cantilevered stage from a fractured billboard-sized portrait of Reagan. Magnuson was then dropped down from the sky by helicopter onto a dais, where she performed as a singing televangelist and other characters borrowed from popular media. Challenging the partisan authority of Reagan conservatism, The *Freedom of Expression National Monument* (1984) came into being. Now the social critique was given over to the public. Erika Rothenberg, John Malpede, and Laurie Hawkinson built a giant freestanding bullhorn as a kind of low-tech open mike, and set a plaque inscribed with language that encouraged people to "step up and speak up" in order to "combat the sense of powerlessness felt by ordinary citizens in an age of omnipotent electronic media."[29] *Freedom* literally amplified the voices of the disempowered majority. Fast-forward twenty years to 2004, an equally divisive era. This time the country was facing the Bush administration's "war on terror" with covert surveillance programs of its citizenry by wiretapping, monitoring Internet searches, and reviewing bank transactions. The moment was once

"TIME AND AGAIN, THEY STAY AHEAD OF THE CURVE, PUSHING US TO BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF ART."

Opposite, from above: Connie Beckley's *Trio in Five Keys*, part of *Breaking In* (1980), and her project *Principles in Perspective* at the Chamber of Commerce (1982); Vito Acconci's *Devices for Guard and Prisoners*, part of *Projects at the Precinct* (1981)

again fertile for reviving *Freedom*. On this occasion, however, Creative Time aptly installed it in the very public Foley Square near City Hall and the federal court buildings where citizens' rights and freedoms are deliberated.

Art in the Anchorage

Following the success of *Art on the Beach*, Creative Time was presented with a unique opportunity in Brooklyn to program installations and events during the summer months inside the cavernous space of the Brooklyn Bridge's massive stone foundation. In 1983, to celebrate the centennial anniversary of the bridge, *Art in the Anchorage* (1983–2001) inaugurated an annual series of exhibitions.[30] Creative Time selected a group of artists assigned with the specific task of "addressing the vivid historical and visual qualities of the anchorage."

Through the years, the unique combination of artists gave each season a distinct character. From quiet and performative to loud and experimental, for almost twenty years the public witnessed cutting-edge art that embodied a rich variety of media, styles, and subjects by artists working collaboratively or singly, like Doug Aitken, Kate Ericson and Mel Ziegler, Bob Flanagan, The Guerrilla Girls, Joan Jonas, Ilya Kabakov, Christian Marclay, Shirin Neshat, Michael Smith, Fred Tomaselli, Leo Villareal, Vivienne Westwood, and Martha Wilson.

The first year the audience could listen to Spalding Gray muse over his and others' reminiscences about the bridge and its surrounding neighborhood, while around him installations addressed the gothic nature of the environment, a dark rusticated interior reminiscent of Piranesi's dungeons. In 1985, Creative Time handed the space over to a group of socially engaged painters, several of whom were former members of Colab. Artists like Luis Cruz Azaceta, CRASH, Jane Dickson, Mike Glier, Mike Kelley, and Nancy Spero produced works with dark, often macabre content (David Wojnarowicz's *Installation #5* was a case in point: a tableaux vivant of human skeletons). There were also years when artists were invited to collaborate on a single project. In 1986, Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio, Andrew Ginzel and Kristin Jones, Allan Wexler, and others produced sets for Matthew Maguire's theatrical work *The Memory Theatre of Giulio Camillo*.[31]

A decade later, *Affirmative Actions: Artists at Work* (1995) allowed artists to transform the anchorage into something more akin to a hangout. Maura Sheehan invited skaters and boarders to use a giant half-pipe that she constructed, whereas outside Joan Bankemper planted a medicinal garden in the shape of a human body with herbs placed in the region they are intended to heal. The anchorage also hosted artists' residencies. The choreographer and dancer Elizabeth Streb and her Ringside company turned the anchorage's main chamber into a gymnast's playground for the premiere of *Lookup!* (1993); a year later Ann Carlson collaborated with the community to create the performance *Mirage*. In time, music became its own distinct program under *Music in the Anchorage* (1996–2001), with concerts that included pop, hip hop, jazz, punk, rock, electronica, and other forms of experimental sound by the likes of Battery Operated, Dead Prez, DJ Spooky, Emergency Broadcast Network, Lydia Lunch, Mogwai, Mos Def, Phil Niblock, Vernon Reid, and Sonic Youth.

Creative Time Takes On the Culture Wars

Toward the end of Anita Contini's tenure as director, Creative Time had evolved from a small informal operation to a full-blown arts organization whose reach extended into the entire city. In the organization's search for a new director, Creative Time looked for an advocate willing to broaden the public's expectations of an artist, where art can happen, and what art can be. That advocate was Cee Scott Brown, who was made director in 1987 with the promise of bringing performative, multi-disciplinary work to diverse public audiences in an effort that "intensifies the interaction between artist and audience and encourages artistic freedom and exploration for both."

Brown came on board just as Wall Street's economic boom went bust. On "Black Monday," October 19, 1987, U.S. and Asian markets crashed. Like dominoes, the real estate market collapsed which in turn seriously crippled the art market. The once soaring auction prices for modern masters imploded, as did the values of established contemporary artists' works. By 1990, nearly a third of the downtown art galleries, especially those in the East Village, along with several long-standing arts magazines, folded. The art world's downfall was further exacerbated by the AIDS pandemic, which took the lives of so many gifted artists, and by the policies of George H. W. Bush's administration, which not only ushered in the Gulf War, but more significantly for artists, the now-infamous Culture Wars. In the short span of a few years, artists found themselves under assault on multiple fronts.

Ideologically driven, the Culture Wars pitted matters of morals and ethics before the public, who became polarized over such red-button issues as censorship, gun control, the separation of church and state, and the rights of gays, women, and people of color. The cabal of religious and political conservatives that included Patrick Buchanan, Pat Robertson, Senator Jesse Helms, and Donald Wildmon became the self-proclaimed "moral majority," who viciously assailed the way these issues were represented in the country's laws, educational system, on public television, in art, or any other public forum that deviated from conservative, largely Christian orthodoxy.

Their ire was most vociferously expressed by demonizing artists and writers who expressed their cultural and sexual identity, and the critics, curators, and public figures who defended them. For Helms and Buchanan, the homoerotic photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe or Andres Serrano's image of a crucifix in urine (works in exhibitions from 1989 that received partial funding from the National Endowment for the Arts [NEA]), were cast as signs of cultural degeneracy. Buchanan, a leading conservative critic and future presidential candidate, compared their art to a "cancerous cell" that needed to be expunged, while gloating over "the dead pervert" Mapplethorpe for "photographing ...the degraded acts by which he killed himself."[32]

Artists had become the enemy: they were lampooned in the press and chided by pundits as "anti-American," "barbaric," and "demons"; some even received death threats. Publicly funded exhibitions that had explicit sexual content or that challenged Christian mores were duly censored or abruptly cancelled. Threatened with extinction, grants for many individual artists were revoked, most notoriously in 1990 from "the NEA Four" (which included Creative Time alumnae Holly Hughes and Karen Finley), for being abject and "obscene." The entire debacle resulted in an amendment proposed by Senator Helms that would deny funding for art deemed "obscene or indecent" or that "denigrates, debases, or reviles a person, group or class of citizens on the basis of race, creed, sex, handicap, age or national origin"—a qualification so vague it could apply to the most innocent portrait painting.[33] For arts institutions, this meant that federal support was contingent upon signing an agreement promising to abide by the amendment. Cee Brown refused to sign, and then he took a further, more activist role: on behalf of Creative Time he sent a delegation of artists to Washington, D.C., in buses draped with banners proclaiming *Demolish the Wall of Censorship* (1990) to rally support for the reauthorization of the NEA.[34]

"WHILE CREATIVE TIME CONTINUED TO SUPPORT MORE SOCIALLY DIRECTED PROJECTS INSTIGATED BY ARTISTS, ITS COMMITMENT TO EXPERIMENTATION ACCELERATED AS DID ITS SUPPORT OF IDEAS THAT FURTHERED SUCH CONCEPTS AS WHAT DEFINES AN *ARTIST* OR *ARTWORK* OR *SITE*."

Art of the Moment: Engaging Directly, Actively, Passionately

As the 1980s came to a close, Creative Time had effectively pioneered a shift away from the traditional conception of public art as weighty sculptures in parks and plazas (derisively called "plop art" by some) toward a multimedia hybrid premised on art that was "of the moment." By taking its independent, activist spirit directly to the streets, the organization's role as a public arts presenter was now firmly established apart from its institutional colleagues. Creative Time's actions also formed the basis of Patricia Phillips's seminal article "Temporality and Public Art," which argued persuasively for the merits of a temporary public art form "that is contemporary and timely, [and] that responds to and reflects its temporal and circumstantial context."[35] By supporting what Phillips identifies as "more short-lived experiments in which variables can be changed and results intelligently and sensitively examined," Creative Time was able to achieve a truly effective public art form that gave voice to the critical perspectives and debates on culture and society in a specific time and place.[36]

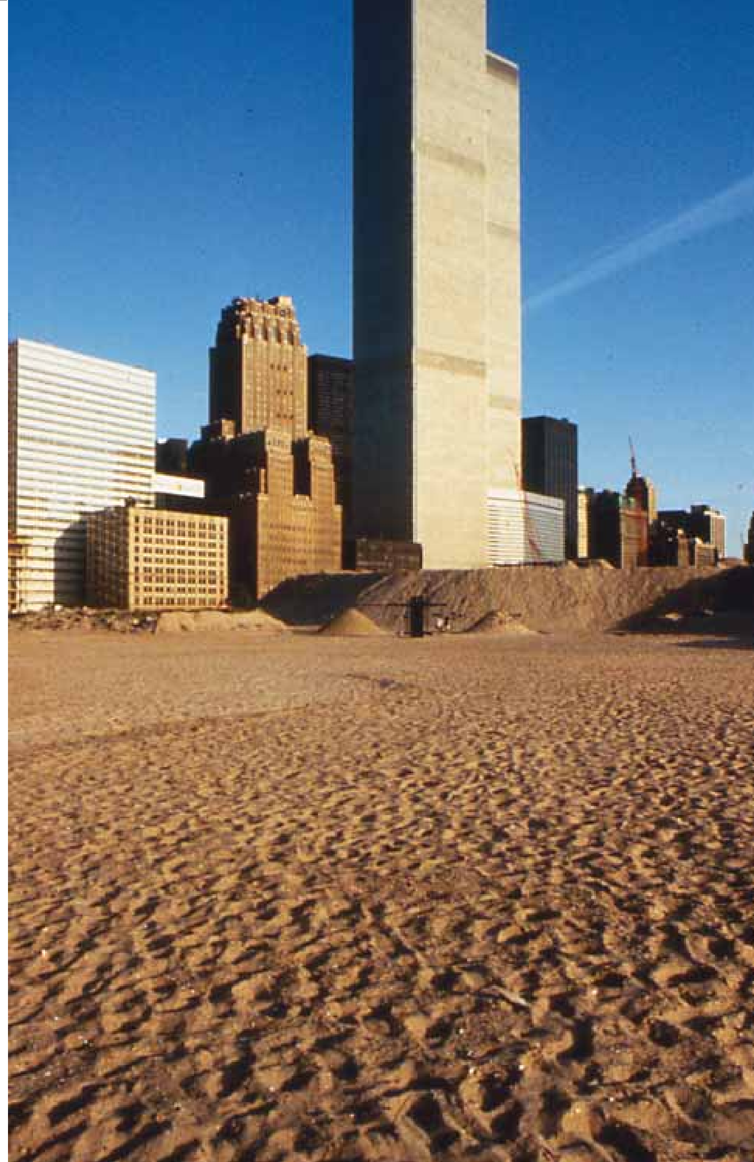
A temporal public art empowers artists to remain relevant with respect to the current cultural climate, and in order to pursue this effectively Creative Time either amplified or initiated new programs. Desiring to engage a more diverse, multicultural audience they expanded their performance programming into more populated, less traditional venues. The first series was *Performance in the Park* (1986, 1987) held in Central Park—at the time not the gentrified arcadia it is today—where a large cross-section of tourists and residents could stop and watch the political theatrics of feminists Holly Hughes and Rachel Rosenthal or experience newly choreographed dances by Ping Chong or Bill T. Jones and Arnie Zane. Performances took place the following seasons at *Lincoln Center Out of Doors* (1989, 1990, 1994, 1995), where Creative Time injected the established highbrow cultural site with in-your-face art by Alex and Allyson Grey, Kim Jones (Mudman), and Tom Murrin (Alien Comic). By contrast, Creative Time's *Poets in the Bars* (1989) were held in lowbrow establishments with works that "celebrated the diversity of contemporary urban poetry," featuring a younger generation of writers like Eileen Myles, Ntozake Shange, and Dennis Cooper, alongside veterans Amiri Baraka, Allen Ginsberg, and Tuli Kupferberg. Creative Time also initiated partnerships to reach specifically diverse audiences. This was partly the impulse for Creative Time's collaboration with El Museo del Barrio in *UP Tiempo!* (1988), an exhibition of performances and visual art "for emerging artists of the Americas to express the visions and concerns of their communities, their neighborhoods, and their barrios." The program enlisted Guillermo Gómez-Peña and James Luna, who explored racial stereotypes, and sponsored readings and performances at spaces like the venerable Nuyorican Poets Cafe on the Lower East Side.

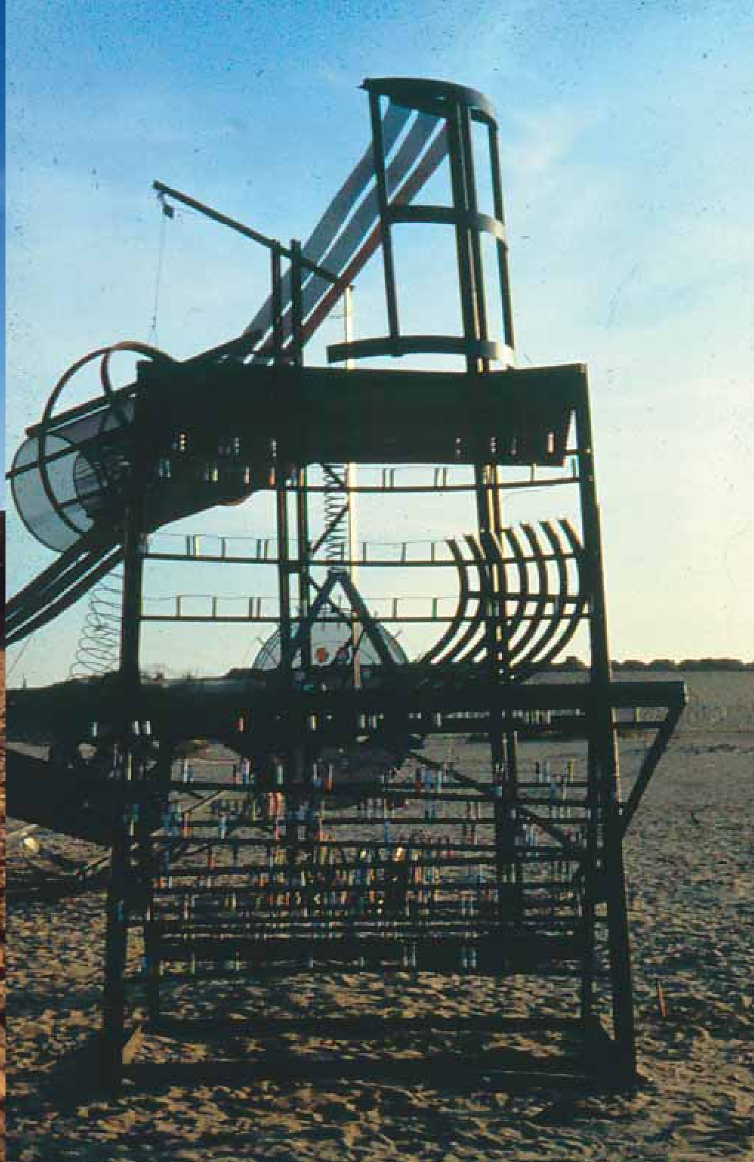
"We turn minorities into majorities"

The power with which a temporal artwork can directly engage the public is most fully realized in Citywide, a program launched in 1989. The program helped artists develop and fund "proposals that address current issues relating to specific communities and the interaction of people from diverse neighborhoods—bridging cultures, ideologies and disciplines." Citywide became a decade-long program that effectively "encourage[d] artists to take risks by using the public forum as a laboratory for developing work beyond the confines of traditional art making" by "making the viewer a participant rather than an observer."

"AS THE 1980S CAME TO A CLOSE, CREATIVE TIME HAD EFFECTIVELY PIONEERED A SHIFT AWAY FROM THE TRADITIONAL CONCEPTION OF PUBLIC ART AS WEIGHTY SCULPTURES IN PARKS AND PLAZAS TOWARD A MULTIMEDIA HYBRID PREMISED ON ART THAT WAS 'OF THE MOMENT.'"

Above: Parade along 100 William Street announcing *Crafts in Action* (1974);
below: Laurie Anderson and Peter Gordon performing at *Custom and Culture* (1979)





Unlike many of their other programs, the public did not always have to make an effort to go out and see a Citywide project. Often it came to them. *Automotive Votive* (1989), by the Kunst Brothers (Tom Leeser and Alison Saar), was an itinerant sculpture that reinvigorated "the lost tradition of community ritual." While driving throughout the boroughs in a pickup truck with a bright blue human figure seated in the back, the artists invited people to "nail trinkets and found objects" to it. As the figure accumulated artifacts, it became a densely packed membrane of community involvement and values. Another roving performance was Jerri Allyn's *Angels Have Been Sent to Me* (1991), an interactive work that encouraged the public to use wheelchairs or wear a blindfold to experience, if only for a moment, life without the physical and cognitive abilities most of us take for granted.

Some projects used interactivity to confound and disrupt the public's expectations of art and culture. For *Masterpieces Without the Director* (1991), Spencer Finch and Paul Ramirez offered a free audio tour of the Met, which provided the public with a special narrative that discussed several essential masterpieces in the collection while also including various unsolicited asides that commented on popular culture, politics, and the spectator's own viewing process. Another example was Danny Tisdale's *Transitions, Inc.* (1992), a performance aimed at addressing the complex pressures confronting people of color to conform to Caucasian standards of beauty. Posed as a traveling salesman, Tisdale set up shop in the street and announced, "We turn minorities into majorities," while hawking such beauty products as hair relaxants, skin bleaches, and laser lip reductions.

Mass Media is the Message

Citywide was also able to increase the scope of its audience when it expanded the idea of *site* to include previously unexploited commercial mass-media venues like billboards, advertisements in public transportation (as with the *Use Mass Transit* initiative), poster campaigns, direct mailings, and Public Service Announcements (PSAs) for television. These unexpected, traditionally nonart contexts and media were implemented to address such loaded themes as the environment, women's rights, sexism, violence, AIDS, and racism.

One of the most unforgettable projects from this period was Peggy Diggs's *The Domestic Violence Milk Carton Project* (1992) which used milk, a symbol of domesticity, motherhood, and innocence, to reach out to women who were victims of domestic abuse. More than one million milk cartons carried the note "When you argue at home, does it always get out of hand? If you or someone you know is a victim of domestic violence call the National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-333-Safe." Taking advantage of the grocery store as a woman's domain and, therefore, a likely venue in which to reach abused women, Diggs created a public yet intimate means for providing information for help. In another radical public-art medium, Juliet Cuming directed a pro-choice PSA called *The Most Exciting Women in Music* (1991). By capitalizing on the recognition of well-known women singers like Kim Gordon, MC Lyte, and Lady Miss Kier among a younger generation of women, the PSA proclaimed, "CHOICE: Keep Abortion Legal." Although it was ready for national broadcast, it became another casualty of the Culture Wars and was never aired by the networks. Ironically, though, the subsequent critical debate in the media brought attention to the project's message, meanwhile highlighting the duplicitous role that network media plays in supporting, if only passively, conservative sponsors and mores.

It's the Politics, Stupid!

Creative Time also avidly supported the renewed feminist radical activities of the early 1990s. In 1992, the summer in which Clinton, Bush, and Ross Perot were at loggerheads, Creative Time dedicated *Art in the Anchorage* to an all-woman cast of artists. They invited the Women's Action Coalition (WAC), a grassroots organization formed in New York that year to advocate for women's rights during the

Scenes from *Art on the Beach*, clockwise from top left: Battery Park City landfill with the newly constructed World Trade Center in the background; Dennis Oppenheim's *Formula Compound. (A Combustion Chamber). (An Exorcism).* (1982) during the day and with fireworks at night

season's heated presidential campaign, who installed *Enter Action* (1992), a series of interactive kiosks that provided information and literature about Bush's political agenda and his disregard for women's rights, low-income workers, and migrant laborers.

One of the issues that Creative Time has addressed most aggressively is public education and support for communities suffering from HIV/AIDS. As a disease with no known cure, AIDS has already killed over 22 million people, with 42 million more currently living with the virus (74 percent of these live in sub-Saharan Africa).[37] Cee Brown recognized the urgency of the pandemic early on, and Creative Time has supported artists in educating the public about the disease, disclosing government inaction, and memorializing those who have died. In 1989, Brown commissioned Gran Fury's *Kissing Doesn't Kill: Greed and Indifference Do* (1989), a campaign that addressed public fears and misinformation about the disease and how it spreads. The phrase was plastered across the side of public buses above an unabashedly suggestive image of hip young men and women of different sexual and racial orientations kissing.

Other provocative mass-media blitzes followed. Nancy Burson designed *Visualize This* (1991), a poster installed in the subways that depicted healthy and unhealthy T cells. *Fear of Disclosure*, a video program that lasted from 1989 to 1994, included projects like Marina Alvarez and Ellen Spiro's *(In)Visible Women* (1991) for the public-access channel's Deep Dish TV, which documented the experiences of women living with AIDS. *We Interrupt this Program*...(1992, 1993) was a live national television broadcast directed by gay filmmaker Charles Atlas in its first year and Mary Ellen Strom the next, which included performances by leather-clad Diamanda Galas and Ron Vawter. Direct action was documented in Gregg Bordowitz and Richard Elovich's *Clean Needles Save Lives* (1991), a video of ACT UP's (AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power) ongoing needle exchange program as a guerrilla effort to stop the spread of HIV. In addition, Creative Time has been one of the pioneering producers of programming for *A Day With(out) Art*, the annual "day of action and mourning" begun December 1, 1989, in collaboration with Visual AIDS.

42nd Street: From Commerce to Culture

While expanding its initiatives into new venues, Creative Time continued to sponsor art interventions in neglected urban spaces. In 1993, the city began executing plans to close down the strip joints and porno theatres on 42nd Street to fabricate their own version of Times Square. In the interim before the buildings were renovated, Creative Time sponsored artists for the *42nd Street Art Project* (1993, 1994) to address the neighborhood's history through temporary installations in the storefronts, windows, public areas, and on signage between Broadway and Eighth Avenue. Incredibly, the entire block on both sides of the street was devoid of commercial business and filled almost exclusively with art. For a district formerly barraged by flashing lights and neon signs advertising everything from food to sex, the environment was wholly transformed. As you walked down the street you could have your picture taken with "a Real Indian" by James Luna; read Jenny Holzer's *Truisms* on marquees; encounter reminiscences about the neighborhood by community members painted on signs by Glenn Ligon; view a mural depicting a multifaceted portrait of the community by Lady Pink; or experience projects by Vito Acconci, Ken Chu, Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio, Karen Finley, Lyle Ashton Harris, Todd Oldham, Tom Otterness, and Nam June Paik. Robert Seng's *Fresh Air Necklace* (1994), a collection of gigantic pine-tree air fresheners that jump-started the future sanitization of the ailing district, were suspended from the façades of a theatre building.

A newly found or rediscovered sense of community permeated the neighborhood. Anyone could walk into John Ahearn and Rigoberto Torres's *42nd Street Sculpture Workshop* (1993) to have their portrait drawn, photographed, or cast in plaster, "and hung on the walls

'AS AN ORGANIZATION THAT CONTINUALLY PUSHES THE BOUNDARIES OF THE *WHO*, *WHAT*, *WHERE*, *WHY*, AND *HOW* OF ART, CREATIVE TIME HAS PROVEN THAT THE PUBLIC SPHERE FOR ART IS LIMITLESS.'

[thereby] creating an art gallery of the world of 42nd street." Without question, the most emblematic work of the program and of Creative Time's overall mission was encapsulated by Tibor Kalman and Scott Stowell's *EVERYBODY* (1993, 1994). Located in the center of Times Square, it consisted of a row of chairs suspended on a yellow wall behind which the word *EVERYBODY* was painted in large black letters. The empty seats and the steps that led up to them invited anyone to sit down and join in with "everybody" else, thereby realizing Creative Time's unique brand of public art egalitarianism.

Artists as Catalysts for Change

In 1993 it seemed as though artists could sit back and take a collective sigh of relief. The previous decade's agitated climate of political aggression had largely abated. By the time Bill Clinton became president the Helms-sponsored amendment had been defeated, and there were promises of universal health care and that the rights of gays would be honored, beginning with their admittance to the military. The fight to preserve individual rights and freedoms appeared to have been achieved by the time that Anne Pasternak became Creative Time's third and present director.

Referencing the 1993 Whitney Biennial as a cultural bellwether, there was a startling shift in the public's previous acceptance of art that carried a social or political message. The art on exhibit, largely made the previous year during the heated political campaign for Bush's reelection, confronted head-on such topics as racism, sexism, and violence. It included the infamous video of the LAPD beating Rodney King; a music video by Spike Lee; handmade weapons with political messages by Jimmie Durham; and Sue Williams's *Irresistible* (1992), a life-size sculpture of a beaten woman lying in a fetal position on the floor with shoe prints and phrases scrawled *riot grrrl*-style across her body. Many of these same artists, whose views were so prominent and "relevant" a year earlier, were now pariahs. It only took four words for Robert Hughes, writing for *Time* magazine, to sum up the overall critical judgment on the show: "A Fiesta of Whining."[38] The *New York Times* published a "Letter to the Editor" from a reader who claimed she felt "pummeled with a politically correct sledgehammer."[39] And the critic and philosopher Arthur Danto declared that the "Whitney's effort to haul something out of the real world and across the line into the sanctum of art has failed."[40] The backlash against socially engaged work was in full play; by 1993, a whole new era for the art world commenced. It became (and remains) decidedly more conservative, market driven, and conspicuously focused on treating art as a commodity.

Anne Pasternak came to Creative Time as an active member of WAC, and a curator and artists' advocate who had worked with Group Material, Mel Chin, Mark Dion, and others to produce exhibitions and temporary public projects that addressed issues investigating political and cultural identity. Her curatorial vision meshed neatly with Creative Time's mission to direct itself as "an artist-focused organization," and today she maintains the optimistic belief that "art moves society forward… as artists can be a positive catalyst for change."

"CREATIVE TIME IS CHALLENGING AND RECONFIGURING OUR PHYSICAL, SOCIAL, AND PSYCHIC LANDSCAPE."

Although support for art with a clear political directive took a backseat during the latter part of the 1990s, society's problems certainly did not disappear, nor did Creative Time's commitment to socially engaged projects. Typical of Creative Time's concerted effort to support projects that amplify the politically charged voices of suppressed artists, they sponsored Robin Kahn's *Time Capsule: A Concise Encyclopedia by Women Artists* (1995), a public record of four hundred and fifty women artists worldwide at the end of the millennium with introductions by Kathy Acker and Avital Ronell, which was presented to delegates at the Fourth International Women's Conference in Beijing. With Karen Finley's *1-900-ALL KAREN* (1998),

Creative Time helped the censored NEA grantee set up a phone line where callers could access "All Karen All the Time," and dial in to hear her personal rants and opinions on contemporary events and issues at the time when the Supreme Court was hearing her suit against the NEA. Continuing their policy of speaking out against censorship, Creative Time sponsored *F.R.E.D. (Freedom Rules Every Democracy)* in 1999, a public forum that addressed then-Mayor Giuliani's censorship of "Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection," an exhibition held at the Brooklyn Museum. Commissioning public forums, print publications as public space, and phone booths as platforms for political activism, Creative Time continued to advance art that defied popular commercial standards. Underscoring the feminist adage "the personal is political," they have helped artists mine every possible way to realize art's potential to shape social discourse and effect change.

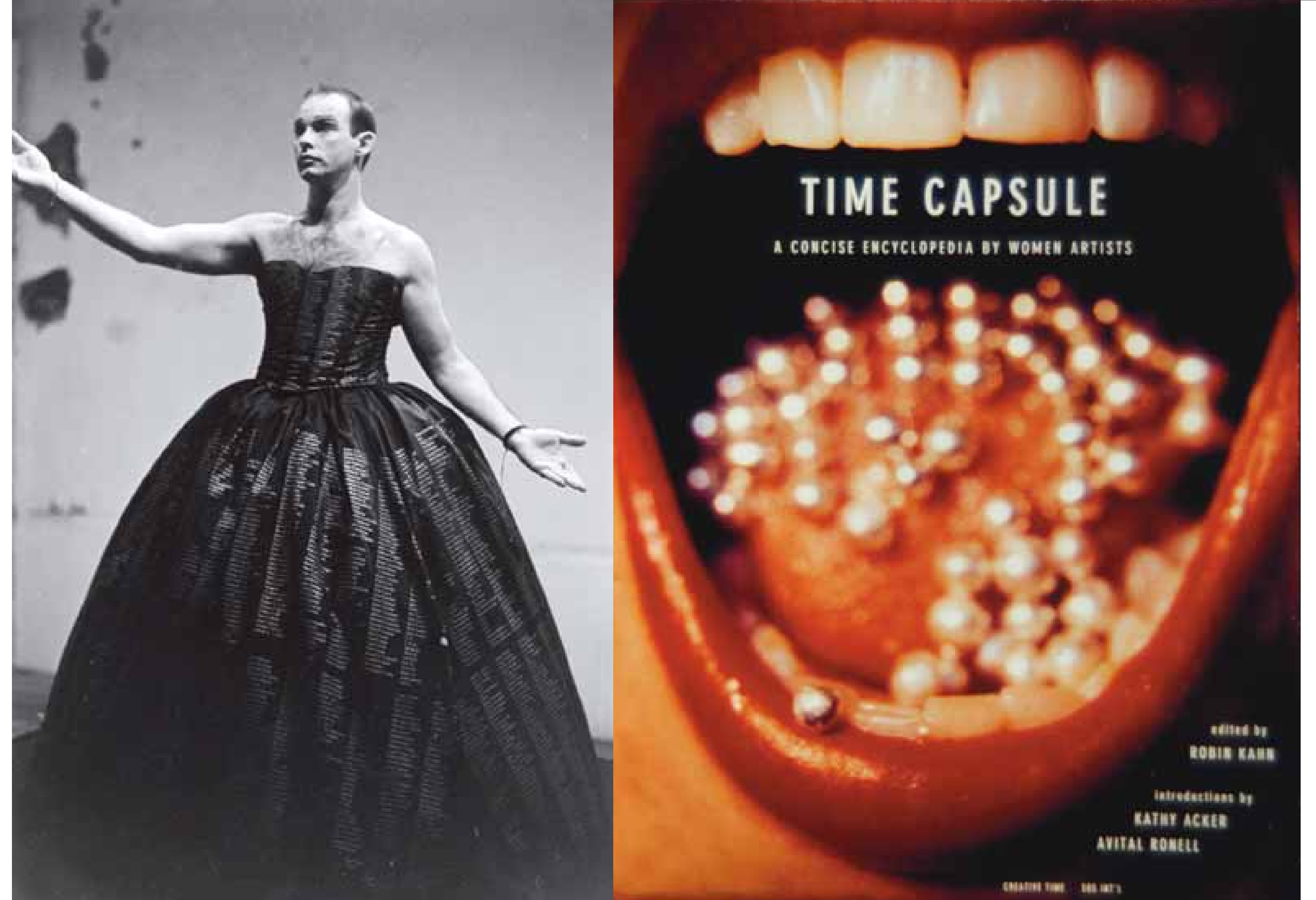
The year 2000 marked a turning point: a new decade, a new century, a new millennium. In science, it was the year that the human genome was sequenced, promising new cures and knowledge about our biological universe. In typical Creative Time fashion, artists were invited to envision the future and shape our understanding of things to come. To mark this event and open up a dialogue on the ethical and cultural implications of genetic engineering, they initiated *DNAid* (2000–2002) by inviting Haluk Akakçe, Nancy Burson, and Alexis Rockman to create billboards, and Roz Chast, Maira Kalman, Cary Leibowitz, Larry Miller, and Tom Tomorrow to design printed messages for paper coffee cups made available at delis, restaurants, and diners. Many artists used humor to engage the public to consider the ethical implications of genetic enhancements. Roz Chast's cartoon, for example, showed parents shouting at their disheveled teenager: "We did NOT spend our life savings on Genius Genes for THIS! NO SIREE BOB!!" But whatever the means, each artist suggested that there are no panaceas or guarantees in our genetically enhanced future, just as there are none in our natural future.

The Public as a Lab for Experimentation

While Creative Time continued to support more socially directed projects instigated by artists, its commitment to experimentation accelerated as did its support of ideas that furthered such concepts as what defines an *artist* or *artwork* or *site*. In this regard, Jenny Holzer has for years challenged herself and her audiences to consider (or *re*consider) each of these notions. In 2005, Holzer produced *For the City*, in which excerpts from twentieth-century poetry exploring themes of life, death, war, and violence were projected onto the front of The New York Public Library and Rockefeller Center; elsewhere, she had recently declassified documents from the National Security Archives scrolled across the exterior of New York University's Bobst Library. The symbolism of Holzer's choice of texts and public buildings was a bold example of democracy in action: the power of every citizen to voice her or his beliefs.

In the spirit of seeking a more personal engagement with the public, Creative Time presented Michael Bramwell's *Building Sweeps* (1995–96), a year-long performance that took place at a run-down apartment building on 128th Street in Harlem. Every Sunday morning the artist arrived unannounced, donned a janitorial uniform, and worked anonymously as he swept and mopped the building's entrance and hallways. This was Bramwell's way to personalize the problems surrounding the impoverishment and neglect of public dwellings. Equally experimental was Paco Cao's *Rent a Body* (1996), in which the artist offered the public the opportunity to literally rent his body. For various fees, one could rent Cao's body as a "prop," or to help execute "all the physical tasks that the rented body can perform," or

"BY TAKING ITS INDEPENDENT, ACTIVIST SPIRIT DIRECTLY TO THE STREETS, THE ORGANIZATION'S ROLE AS A PUBLIC ARTS PRESENTER WAS NOW FIRMLY ESTABLISHED APART FROM ITS INSTITUTIONAL COLLEAGUES."



Opposite, from top left: Hunter Reynolds wearing a dress in *Patina du Prey's Memorial Dress* (1994), printed with the names of 25,000 people who had died from AIDS; book cover of *Time Capsule*, edited by Robin Kahn (1995); scene in front of 110 Mercer Street during Mary Beth Edelson's *Combat Zone: Campaign HQ Against Domestic Violence* (1994)

to provide "profound and intense intellectual activity." Participants leased the artist for purposes that ranged from the banal to the mystical. One client had the artist hold a sign in a subway car that read: "This body has been rented to stay in this space three hours. Please do not talk or disturb it." Another hired him to play the role of Jesus for an Easter service. In projects like Bramwell's and Cao's, the artist-as-instrument pushes the limits of what can be considered an "art activity" and to what extent the body politic may coauthor or inhabit the artist's creative vision.

Creative Time's commitment to "approaching the public realm as a laboratory for experimentation" has developed opportunities for artists to further expand public art into ever new and unusual contexts. For Shimon Attie's *Between Dreams and History* (1998), building façades became a sort of public

"*TRIBUTE IN LIGHT* REACHES OUT INTO THE STRATOSPHERE—THE ULTIMATE SYMBOL OF HOW CREATIVE TIME'S UNIQUE APPROACH TO PUBLIC ART IS CAPABLE OF SOMETHING BOTH PROFOUND AND TRANSFORMATIVE."

canvas. Attie interviewed ethnically diverse residents on the Lower East Side who shared with him their dreams and cherished memories; then, using lasers to draw their words onto buildings—they looked handwritten—he animated the local architecture with the personality of its inhabitants. In another instance, the public's "rising aspirations" were literally projected onto a sixty-foot building on Columbus Circle for Chris Doyle's *Leap* (2000), in which a gigantic video projection depicted over four hundred jumpers leaping upward.

The sky became the next frontier of public space and experimentation, as seen in Vik Muniz's *Clouds* (2001) and Cai Guo-Qiang's *Light Cycle* (2003). For *Clouds*, the fickle February weather was the main challenge that confronted Muniz, who needed clear conditions and an airplane to inscribe his cartoonlike drawings of single clouds in the Manhattan sky. Unsuspecting viewers in New York City, New Jersey, Westchester, and Long Island were able to see the work simultaneously, proof that art could be equally available to "everyone."

One of the most powerful, albeit precarious, projects along these lines was *Light Cycle* (2003), a pyrotechnic spectacle launched over Central Park to celebrate its 150th anniversary. The event began with the eruption of long shafts of light that rose up like flaming poplars. These were followed by a succession of bright explosive bursts over the reservoir—the aggregate effect formed a series of sparkling explosions intended to create a halo-like circle floating vertically in the sky. Although poor weather conditions and heavy winds humbled the effect to a degree, the dynamism of the piece prevailed. The stunning image and the beauty of the symbolism—reservoir, wholeness, cyclicality—transgressed into a multi-sensory flood of sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste (the air was a palpable mix of smoke and mist). Thousands of people in the park and countless others in apartments, offices, and the streets could experience the power, surprise, and experimentation of a public artwork that transcended all expectations.

Unlikely Intrusions

Continuing the appropriation of both unusual as well as highly populated sites, Creative Time continues to commission artists to create temporary interventions into historic buildings and abandoned or lesser-used sites throughout the city. Grand Central Terminal's Vanderbilt Hall was the site for two such projects. Commuters passing through Vanderbilt Hall in 2001 had the opportunity to see *Wink*, Takashi Murakami's first public artwork in the United States, a collection of giant inflatable balloons and floor sculptures rendered in a style that blended American Pop Art with Japanese anime. In 2004 they could walk on *Plan B*, Rudolf Stingel's wall-to-wall carpet that not only filled Vanderbilt Hall, but hushed it. Other works have reinvigorated less-traveled destinations. For *The Dreamland Artist Club* (2004, 2005),

Images from three major series, clockwise from top left: *Noise Reduction Apparatus #1*, Dick Elliot (*42nd Street Art Project*, 1993, 1994); a collaborator works on Ann Carlson's *Mirage* (*Art in the Anchorage*, 1994); Coney Island signage by Rita Ackermann (top) and "Someday," by Jack Pierson, both from *The Dreamland Artist Club* (2004)

"WITHOUT QUESTION, THE MOST EMBLEMATIC WORK OF THE PROGRAM AND OF CREATIVE TIME'S OVERALL MISSION WAS ENCAP-SULATED BY TIBOR KALMAN AND SCOTT STOWELL'S *EVERYBODY*."

a group of artists that included Gary Panter, Os Gemeos, Steve Powers, Jack Pierson, Rita Ackermann, Ryan McGinness, and Adam Cvijanovic painted murals and signs for the vendors along the boardwalk and amusement park at Coney Island. A more derelict site was rekindled in *The Plain of Heaven* (2005), located in a vacated meatpacking warehouse where the abandoned railroad tracks on the High Line terminate. A small selection of artists that included Trisha Donnelly, William Forsythe, Song Dong, and Sol LeWitt filled the rusted and bloodstained concrete edifice with art that responded to the ominous space with wall paintings, video, sculpture, and performance.

For *The 59th Minute* Creative Time ventured smack into the heart of commerce-crazy New York—Times Square, the most populated site of any Creative Time programming. Here, a partnership between Creative Time and Panasonic since 2001 has given artists an opportunity to create video art for Panasonic's Astrovision LED screen. Normally, the Astrovision runs nonstop advertisements, like much of the media directed at Times Square. But with Creative Time's aptly titled *The 59th Minute*, advertising bowed to art for one minute of every hour. The brilliant 60-second works, broadcast on the last minute of every hour, has given such artists as Carlos Amorales, Fischli & Weiss, William Kentridge, Mary Lucier, Aïda Ruilova, Günther Selichar, Michael Snow, Gary Hill, Kimsooja, and Thomas Struth the opportunity to reach a cross section of people from around the world.

Another long-running program based largely on place has been *Art on the Plaza* (2002–the present), located outside The Ritz-Carlton in Battery Park City, where artists have created a range of projects. Some artworks respond to the site by exuding a sense of levity as with Gary Hume's bronze *Back of a Snowman* (2002–2003), a so-called snowman that refuses to melt. Jim Campbell's *Primal Graphics 2002* addressed the sense of illusion and memory, whereas heritage and assimilation played out in Zhang Huan's installation and performance *Peace* (2003–2004). Zhang's elegant sculpture of a large bronze bell and gilded cast of his body symbolized the clash of identity for the artist, past and present; its location within easy view of Ellis Island further amplified the notions of ancestry and belonging.

Technology and Emergent Social Spaces

Creative Time furthered its concerted effort to expand art into new public spaces, including the domain of digital technologies. The "information highway" as labeled by former vice president Al Gore in the 1990s identified the quickly evolving World Wide Web and its role in our lives. With this opening up of new "territory," Creative Time began to focus on how developing systems of communication such as the cell phone, PDAs, and the Internet might push art to new levels of public interaction and access, thereby more fully realizing the organization's desire to "deliver" art into our "own homes."

New media was the theme for the 1997 season at *Art in the Anchorage 14*, a venue for exploring "how technology is influencing the way we perceive ourselves and our surroundings." Titled *Plug In!*, the program introduced eleven installations by many newcomers to the arts community who were receiving little attention or support for their applications of digital media. Projects were presented by such innovators in the industry as Jaron Lanier, a pioneer in virtual reality, and Graham Weinbren, creator of the first interactive film, who exhibited alongside younger artists like Natalie Bookchin and Michael Joo. Each was encouraged to tap into the medium's potential and expand its uses in the public domain. On any given evening one could hear Ben Neill play his digitally enhanced Mutantrumpet; listen to Scanner, the self-proclaimed "telephone terrorist," take cell phone conversations captured over the airwaves and use them in his musical mixes; or dance to DJ Spooky's phono-collages of retro-futuristic "ambient chaos" and dance beats.

Creative Time introduced its first Web-based project in 1995. Not only could *audience* literally be anyone, any time, but *site* could be anywhere. Continuing their commitment to AIDS awareness, Creative Time presented *Day Without Art: Web Action Project* (1995), which was designed by G. H. Hovagimyan and included animated poetry by John Giorno, with hyperlinks to other AIDS-related sites. *The Banner Project* (1999, 2000) followed, wherein downloadable digital banners bearing messages about HIV/AIDS were distributed to sites across the Internet as part of a *Day Without Art*.

Creative Time also commissioned projects that addressed the implications of the "digital revolution." Among the most notable was Natalie Bookchin and Jin Lee's cautionary *MetaPet* (2002), a genetically engineered "worker of the future" that riffed on the digital-pet craze, and which turned the gamer into a company manager with the task of eliciting the highest amount of productivity out of *MetaPet* through a combination of discipline and kindness to create the so-called right balance of health, morale, and energy.

As much of today's emerging digital technology is becoming portable, so too are the possibilities for transporting artists' ideas to ever more public *and* private locations. With the rise in cell phone use, Creative Time launched *Airtime: A Series of Wireless Art Projects* (2000) for artists to broach "how wireless technologies are fragmenting both public and private space, and creating new artistic territory."[41] In 2003, Marina Zurkow, Scott Paterson, and Julian Bleecker developed a wireless application for PDAs titled *PDPal*, which encouraged participants to create an interactive map of their experiences in Times Square. Another interactive and creative use for the PDA was James Buckhouse's *Tap* (2002). Here participants could "teach" tap dance to computerized male and female animated characters using a wireless beaming program in a way that "became a metaphor for networked communication itself." Projects such as *MetaPet* and *PDPal* may sound fun—and they were—but it's important to point out that the technologically based projects Creative Time has supported are selected not so much to explore the bells and whistles of this or that device, but to help us better understand the "emergent social space" that these technologies construct, as was the catalyst behind "Blur," the organization's annual series of new media conferences.

9/11: A Time to Consider

There is perhaps no better opportunity to emphasize Creative Time's adamant belief in the power of art to bring people together, to address the complexity of a community's viewpoints, shape our culture, and even to heal through art than through projects developed in the aftermath of 9/11. The World Trade Center, a symbol of modernity and commercial power, built on a site that gave birth to so much in New York City, including Battery Park City and Creative Time's own *Art on the Beach*, was suddenly reduced to dust. For everyone who lived in the city, as well as for those across the country, the question arose: "How do we address this catastrophe?" For Creative Time, the question was even more reflexive: "How can we as an arts organization adequately address our collective anger, loss, and suffering? How can we use art to serve the community, address its needs, and start the process of healing?" One of the many responses came unsolicited. Mark Malmgren, an artist from South Carolina, arrived in New York with over 4,300 watercolors he had painted over the course of a few months; Malmgren contacted Creative Time, hoping to enlist their help in giving the paintings to residents and relief workers downtown. Sharing his conviction that art was capable of healing the public's emotional and psychological wounds, Creative Time distributed *4316 Watercolors* (December 2001) in subway stations, outside schools, at police and fire stations, and on the streets to passersby.[42]

"CREATIVE TIME BEGAN TO FOCUS ON HOW DEVELOPING SYSTEMS OF COMMUNICATION MIGHT PUSH ART TO NEW LEVELS OF PUBLIC INTERACTION."

“CREATIVE TIME’S MAIN OBJECTIVE WAS, AND REMAINS, TO PRESENT TEMPORARY ART PROJECTS IN UNUSUAL PLACES.”

Creative Time simultaneously announced an open call to “respond to 9/11” by designing a poster. Using the Internet to solicit contributions from a diverse community of artists, designers, architects, and educators, they organized *Time to Consider: The Arts Respond to 9.11* (February–March 2002), an exhibition of submissions, four of which were printed as posters and sniped around the city.[43] Independent of *Time to Consider*, Hans Haacke designed the all-white poster *Untitled* (2002), a die-cut silhouette of the Twin Towers. When posters of this phantom space were pasted over the remnants of other posters on buildings throughout the city, the sense of what had been lost was palpable.

As the World Financial District started to come back to life, Creative Time was offered several opportunities to help revitalize the area. For *Sonic Garden* (2002), held in the rebuilt Winter Garden of the World Financial Center, musicians Laurie Anderson, David Byrne, Marina Rosenfeld, and Ben Rubin presented sound works that created an inviting atmosphere and welcomed the thousands of people returning to work after 9/11. (As David Byrne said, the music was meant to “soothe,” “amuse,” and “cheer up” the public.)

But perhaps the best-known work about 9/11 emerged shortly after the attack on the World Trade Center. This is *Tribute in Light*, involving artists Julian LaVerdiere and Paul Myoda, later joined by architects John Bennett and Gustavo Bonevardi of PROUN Space Studio, architect Richard Nash Gould, and lighting designer Paul Marantz. Since 2002, a vast network of spotlights has been temporarily installed downtown, first during the sixth-month anniversary of 9/11 and then annually thereafter: two shafts of light are projected upward to produce a shimmering, ethereal surrogate for the absent towers. The white luminescence not only replaces the void in New York’s skyline with a sense of memory and the possibility of hope and rebirth, but its ghostly presence is also a moving commemoration of the thousands of men and women who died. Here, an artistic gesture supplied the ultimate response to tragedy. Immaterial, yet powerfully resonant, *Tribute in Light* reaches out into the stratosphere—the ultimate symbol of how Creative Time’s unique approach to public art is capable of something both profound and transformative.

Projects that Enliven Public Spaces with Free and Powerful Expression

Creative Time’s identity is indelibly wrapped in the common history it shares with New York. Whether you’re a resident or tourist, if you’ve been to New York over the past several decades “chances are you have been surprised, delighted, perhaps even mystified by a Creative Time project.” As an organization that continually pushes the boundaries of the *who*, *what*, *where*, *why*, and *how* of art, Creative Time has proven that the public sphere for art is limitless. The next time you pick up a carton of milk, see an advertisement on a passing bus, hear a strange chime, witness an uncanny image in the sky, or find a strange web banner blinking on the Internet, pause for a moment to think about what you’re seeing. Remember that Creative Time is here; having evolved beyond their roots in Lower Manhattan and outside the city itself, they are challenging and reconfiguring our physical, social, and psychic landscape. Now in their thirty-third year, they are, as always, exploring new ideas, new venues. Time and again, they stay ahead of the curve, pushing us to believe in the power of art. ■

“CREATIVE TIME HAS NEVER HAD ITS OWN GALLERY, A SO-CALLED HOME OF ITS OWN. ITS PROGRAMS ARE IN CONSTANT FLUX, CONTINGENT UPON THE EVER-CHANGING SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND CULTURAL CHARACTER OF THE DAY. IT IS, IN EFFECT, A MOVING TARGET.”

NOTES

1. All quotations come from Creative Time’s archive of press releases, mission statements, exhibition announcements, mailings, and their official Web site unless otherwise indicated.

2. Headline, New York *Daily News*, October 20, 1975.

3. For a discussion of New York’s fiscal crisis during the Lindsay administration and the various socioeconomic factors that contributed to it, see: George J. Lankevich and Howard B. Furer, “Disaster and Rebirth,” in *A Brief History of New York City* (Port Washington, NY: Associated Faculty Press, Inc., 1984). Specifically, please see pp. 286–91.

4. For an excellent history of alternative arts spaces and organizations in New York, see: Julie Ault, ed., *Alternative Art New York, 1965–1985* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

5. Joseph Kosuth, “A Conversation, Joseph Kosuth and Felix Gonzalez-Torres,” in *Felix Gonzalez-Torres*, ed. Julie Ault (New York and Göttingen: Steidldangin, 2006), p. 349.

6. William Zimmer, *Crafts in Action* (New York: Creative Time, Inc., 1979), p. 2.

7. Creative Time, *Anemones* (New York: Creative Time, Inc., 1979).

8. William Zimmer, *Sail* (New York: Creative Time, Inc., 1979), p. 2.

9. Judd Tully, *Red Grooms and Ruckus Manhattan* (New York: George Braziller, 1977), p. 7.

10. Ibid.

11. Anita Contini, “Alternative Sites and Uncommon Collaborators: The Story of Creative Time,” in *Insights on Sites: Perspectives on Art in Public Places*, ed. Stacy Paleologos Harris (Washington, D.C.: Partners for Livable Communities for the Visual Arts Program of the NEA, 1985), p. 46.

12. The project was published by Creative Time in Creative Time, *Round: Sound for Concave Surfaces* (New York: Creative Time, Inc., 1976).

13. See: Creative Time, *Custom and Culture* (1977) (New York: Creative Time, Inc., 1979) and Creative Time, *Custom and Culture (1979)* (New York: Creative Time, Inc., 1984).

14. John Rockwell, “Custom House is Setting for a World of New Arts,” *New York Times*, May 4, 1979.

15. See: Creative Time, *Projects at the Precinct/Breaking In* (New York: Creative Time, Inc., 1984).

16. See: Creative Time, *Connie Beckley/Principles in Perspectives and Projects at the Chamber* (New York: Creative Time, Inc., 1985).

17. Lucy Lippard, “Taking Liberties,” *Village Voice*, December 14, 1982, quoted in *Ida Applebroog* (New York: Ronald Feldman Gallery, 1987), p. 14.

18. See: Creative Time, *Masstransiscope* (New York, Creative Time, Inc., 1984). The animation can currently be viewed on the artist’s Web site: Flash animation, http://www.bboptics.com/masstransiscope.html.

19. Danny Lyon, *The Destruction of Lower Manhattan* (New York: Powerhouse Books, 2005), p. 12.

20. Ibid., p. 2.

21. Cesar Pelli, “Cesar Pelli’s Design Statement for a New City on the Hudson,” *Express: The Architecture, Art and Design Newspaper* 1, no. 3, Summer 1981, p. 6.

22. In 1983, Diane Lewis designed “a system of dunes and entries to make spaces for the artists,” while working under James Ingo Freed of I. M. Pei & Associates in response to Creative Time’s new initiative to promote collaborations between artists and architects for *Art on the Beach.* (Diane Lewis, correspondence with Creative Time, June 28, 2006.)

23. See: Creative Time, *Art on the Beach* (1978) (New York: Creative Time, Inc., 1979); Creative Time, *Art on the Beach (1980–1982)* (New York: Creative Time, Inc., 1984); and Nancy Princenthal, *Art on the Beach: 1983–1985* (New York: Creative Time, Inc., 1986).

24. Craig Owens, “Beached,” *Skyline*, October 1978, quoted in Contini, “Alternative Sites and Uncommon Collaborators,” p. 44.

25. Contini, “Alternative Sites and Uncommon Collaborators,” p. 45.

26. For an example of the musical compositions David Van Tieghem created at this time, see his film *Ear to the Ground*, in which he “literally ‘plays’ the streets of New York as if it were a musical instrument.” (David Van Tieghem, *Ear to the Ground*, directed by John Sanborn and Kit Fitzgerald (1985), 4 min., 24 sec.; from the artist’s Web site, MPEG, http://www.vantieghem.com.)

27. Alan Moore and Marc Miller, “The ABC’s of No Rio and Its Times,” in *ABC No Rio Dinero: The Story of a Lower East Side Art Gallery*, ed. Alan Moore and Marc Miller (New York: ABC No Rio and Collaborative Projects, Inc., 1985), p. 3.

28. Elizabeth Hess, “The People’s Choice,” *Village Voice*, 1981, quoted in Moore and Miller, *ABC No Rio Dinero*, p. 24.

29. Princenthal, *Art on the Beach: 1983–1985*, p. 11.

30. See: Creative Time, *Creative Time’s Art in the Anchorage* (New York: Creative Time, Inc., 1983) and Creative Time, *Art in the Anchorage: 1985* (New York: Creative Time, Inc., 1986).

31. Creative Time, *The Memory Theatre of Giulio Camilo (The Complete Work)* (New York: Creative Time, Inc., 1986).

32. Patrick J. Buchanan, “Jesse Helms’ Valiant War Against Filth in the Arts,” *New York Post*, August 2, 1989.

33. Quoted in William H. Honan, “Helms Amendment is Facing a Major Test in Congress,” *New York Times*, sec. C, September 13, 1989.

34. It also prompted Creative Time to actively support censored artists like Karen Finley through such simple but effective means as mailing her essay *It Was Only Art* (1989), which wryly imagined a future America so censorial that the museums were devoid of art.

35. Patricia Phillips, “Temporality and Public Art,” *Art Journal* 48, no. 4 (Winter 1989): p. 331.

36. Ibid.

37. Statistics were taken from http://www.until.org/statistics, the Web site of Until There’s a Cure.

38. Robert Hughes, “A Fiesta of Whining,” *Time*, March 22, 1993, p. 68.

39. Elizabeth Guest, “Possible Backfire?” Letters, *New York Times*, sec. 2, May 16, 1993.

40. Arthur Danto, “The 1993 Whitney Biennial,” *The Nation*, April 19, 1993, p. 533.

41. Creative Time, *Airtime* (New York: Creative Time, Inc., 2000), p. 3.

42. Mark Malmgren, interview with the author, March 9, 2006.

43. In acknowledgment of the myriad perspectives on the events and repercussions of September 11th by so many individuals representing different disciplines, all submitted works were (and remain) accessible online as downloadable PDF files. The poster submissions are available on the Creative Time Web site at http://www.creativetime.org/programs/archive/2002/TimeToConsider/timetoconsider/submissions.html.