

The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation presents a Visual AIDS exhibition

## VOICE = SURVIVAL

Featuring multimedia artwork by Chloe Dzubilo, Gran Fury, Donald Moffett, Kameelah Janan Rasheed, Marlon Riggs, LJ Roberts, Ultra-red, David Wojnarowicz, and more.

The 8th Floor, 17 West 17th Street, NYC

June 15 – August 11, 2017

Opening Reception, Thursday, June 15, from 6:00 to 8:00pm



LJ Roberts, *Portrait of Deb from 1988-199?*, detail, 2012-13. Courtesy of the artist.

New York, April 17, 2017 – The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation and Visual AIDS are pleased to announce **VOICE = SURVIVAL**, an exhibition curated by Claudia Maria Carrera and Adrian Geraldo Saldaña for Visual AIDS, on view from June 15 to August 11, 2017. **VOICE = SURVIVAL** examines voice as a medium and a metaphor used by artists and activists confronting oppression amid the ongoing HIV/AIDS epidemic. The multidisciplinary exhibition features work and archival materials by ACT UP, Jordan Arseneault and PosterVirus, Yann Beauvais, Mykki Blanco and Adinah Dancyger, Chloe Dzubilo, Gran Fury, Andrea Geyer and Sharon Hayes, Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Gustavo Vazquez, Shan Kelley, Audre Lorde, Donald Moffett, Pat Parker, Bob Rafsky, Kameelah Janan Rasheed, Marlon Riggs, LJ Roberts, James Romberger and Marguerite Van Cook, Vito Russo, Kiki Smith, Ultra-red, Rosa von Praunheim, and David

## Wojnarowicz.

The title of the show inverts the ACT UP movement's rallying cry of SILENCE=DEATH. The exhibition is comprised of works that mobilize the multivalent concepts of silence and vocality, and the effectiveness of vocal empowerment to fight for individual and communal survival. It explores the entanglement of the voice and its absence with battleground concepts in HIV/AIDS activism such as agency and citizenship, language and representation, and intersubjectivity and the body. **VOICE = SURVIVAL** weaves sound and video works together and includes excerpts from seminal pieces such as **Marlon Riggs'** *Tongues Untied* (1989) alongside contemporary works like **Adinah Dancyger's** 2016 video of Mykki Blanco reciting Zoe Leonard's 1992 poem, "I want a president..."

**Ultra-red's** sound installation *Untitled (for multiple voices)*, 2010, serves as a preliminary draft for a multi-vocal composition. It consists of a libretto of demands assembled from *SILENTILISTEN*, a series of video and audio recordings of seven testimonial performances from 2005 to 2006. The performances were staged as a series of tactical occupations of major American art institutions. Collectively, they highlight how the arts serve as a crucial arena for open discussion and, in some communities, as the only public space to speak out about crucial societal issues.

The exhibition also includes a selection of archival audio materials from the **David Wojnarowicz** Papers at the NYU Fales Library, engaging themes such as sound, death, temporality, and memory. The archive includes personal answering machine tapes spanning from 1981 to 1992, sporadic personal "audio journals," interviews of friends, and his performative readings of his own AIDS-related writing. In addition to the Wojnarowicz materials, audio recordings of speeches by **Audre Lorde** and **Pat Parker**, *The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action* (1977) and *Where Will You Be* (1979), respectively, trace the intersectional activism of queer women of color in the 1970s and 80s. Framing language as crucial to survival amid oppression, they mirror the text works of **Chloe Dzubilo** and **Shan Kelley**.

In diverse ways, these sound and video works mobilize the power of the voice to communicate sonically, affectively, physically, and linguistically in the fight for individual and communal survival.

The artwork and ephemera in the exhibition include posters, drawings, and text-based works that play on the metaphoric implications of voicing vitality, agency, and subjecthood. **Kameelah Janan Rasheed's** text-based prints from *How to Suffer Politely (And Other Etiquette)*, 2014, blend satire and societal suppression to, as Rasheed states, "explore how suffering, anger, and responses to trauma are policed to ensure that said expressions of suffering do not disrupt or declare accountable oppressive systems." The implications of suffering in silence are also evident in **Donald Moffett's**

poster *He Kills Me* (1987). Moffett depicted President Ronald Reagan in a poster used in ACT UP's demonstrations against his 1987 Presidential Commission on the HIV Epidemic, which was widely criticized by activists for the Commission members' demonstrable lack of expertise.

In **LJ Roberts'** embroidered work *Portrait of Deb from 1988-199?* (2012-2013), Roberts draws from an archive containing activist buttons, stickers, and other articles belonging to a friend's ex-partner who participated in ACT UP, the Women's Health Action Mobilization, and the Lesbian Avengers from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s. Compiled and sewn together in Roberts' work, they illustrate the intersectional politics active during this era.

By exploring the vital importance of the voice in both art and activism surrounding the fight against HIV/AIDS in the US and Canada, **VOICE = SURVIVAL** reveals the capacity of vocal protest to turn isolation into connection, impotence into agency, oblivion into memory, and extinction into survival. Ultimately, the exhibition highlights the potential of voice to confront the bio-political crises of the present.

### About **Visual AIDS**

Visual AIDS is the only contemporary arts organization fully committed to HIV prevention and AIDS awareness through producing and presenting visual art projects, while supporting artists living with HIV/AIDS. Visual AIDS is committed to preserving and honoring the work of artists with HIV/AIDS and the artistic contributions of the AIDS movement. Capturing critical and audience acclaim, Visual AIDS' art exhibitions examine the deep cultural history of the AIDS crisis and contemporary issues around HIV/AIDS today. Exhibitions are organized by guest curators and feature a range of emerging, international and HIV+ artists. **VOICE=SURVIVAL** was selected for The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation exhibition from a competitive call for proposals.

For more information on Visual AIDS, contact us at [info@visualaids.org](mailto:info@visualaids.org) or join us on Facebook ([Visual AIDS](#)), Instagram ([@visual\\_AIDS](#)) and Twitter ([@visual\\_AIDS](#)), and visit [www.visualAIDS.org](http://www.visualAIDS.org)

### About **The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation**

The Foundation believes in art as a cornerstone of cohesive, resilient communities and greater participation in civic life. In its mission to make art available to the broader public, in particular to underserved communities, the Foundation provides direct support to, and facilitates partnerships between, cultural organizations and advocates of social justice across the public and private sectors. Through grantmaking, the Foundation supports cross-disciplinary work connecting art with social justice via experimental collaborations, as well as extending cultural resources to organizations

and areas of New York City in need. [sdrubin.org](http://sdrubin.org)

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