

PARTY OUT OF BOUNDS:

**Nightlife As
Activism Since 1980**

curated by

Emily Colucci & Osman Can Yerebakan

for **Visual AIDS**

Nayland Blake
Elegance Bratton
Genesis Breyer P-Orridge
Luis Carle
Clit Club Archive/Julie Tolentino
Chloe Dzubilo
Scott Ewalt
Robert Getso
Keith Haring
Aldo Hernandez Archive
Peter Hujar
Kia Labelija
Marc Lida
Caldwell Linker
Lovett/Codagnone
Charles Lum
Joseph Modica
Hunter Reynolds
Eric Rhein
John Sex
Linda Simpson
Chad States
Nelson Sullivan
Wu Tsang & RJ Messineo
Conrad Ventur
John Walter
John Waters
Jessica Whitbread
David Wojnarowicz

September 18 - October 10, 2015

CAN'T STOP DANCING

Emphasizing the role of mourning, as well as militancy, during the HIV/AIDS pandemic, writer and AIDS activist Douglas Crimp reveals the need to mourn both the losses of individual lives and the diminished sites of sexual possibility in his seminal essay "Mourning and Militancy." Crimp declares:

"Alongside the dismal toll of death, what many of us have lost is a culture of sexual possibility: back rooms, tea rooms, bookstores, movie houses, and baths; the trucks, the pier, the ramble, the dunes. Sex was everywhere for us, and everything we wanted to venture...Our pleasures were never tolerated anyway; we took them. And now we must mourn them too." ¹

Reflecting Crimp's evocation of these lost locations of sexual pleasure, *Party Out Of Bounds: Nightlife As Activism Since 1980* remembers the artists, performers, musicians, drag queens, ball performers, activists, club owners and patrons who died due to complications from AIDS. Along with honoring the memory of those who passed, as well as the continued survival of people living with HIV and AIDS, *Party Out Of Bounds* also sees bars and clubs as essential in the ongoing HIV/AIDS pandemic as spaces for education, activism, community-building, escape and sexual fluidity, navigating various sexual/gender identities and serostatuses.

Whether swiftly shut down by the New York City Department of Health during the height of the panic surrounding transmission or disappearing due to slower yet no less violent gentrification, as shown in Sarah Schulman's *Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination*, shuttered bars and clubs riddle the visual landscape of the exhibition. Like the backrooms and bathhouses conjured by Crimp, these late-night hotspots also deserve to be mourned as significant losses sustained as a result of HIV/AIDS.

As articulated by David L. Eng and David Kazanjian in the introduction to their crucial essay collection *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, loss is not understood through the lost object, space or individuals themselves, but through its remains. "We might say that as soon as the question 'What is lost?' is posed," explain Eng and Kazanjian, "it invariably slips into the question 'What remains?'" That is, loss is inseparable from what remains, for what is lost is known only by what remains of it, by how those remains are produced, read, and sustained." ²

From sex clubs like El Mirage to bathhouses such as St. Mark Baths and clubs including MEAT, the Clit Club, the Saint, Limelight and the Gaiety Male Burlesque, the late locales referenced in the exhibition's multidisciplinary works represent the artistic remains of these bygone spaces. Recording the memories of people, acts, communities, conversations and movements within these spaces, the artworks respond to "an ongoing and open relation-

ship with the past—bringing its ghosts and specters, its flaring and fleeting images, into the present.”³

By creating contemporary art eulogizing the fleeting memories of lost friends, lovers and anonymous encounters, as well as immortalizing the glimpses of bodies moving together on a darkened dance floor, the works in *Party Out of Bounds* do not nostalgically romanticize nightlife since, admittedly, these spaces were not comfortable for everyone. Instead, the artworks act as continual reinterpretations and reevaluations of the partying past, allowing it to remain, as Eng and Kazanjian describe, “steadfastly alive for the political work of the present.”⁴

Asserting that AIDS is not over and neither is nightlife’s strength or vision, *Party Out of Bounds* constructs politically generative intergenerational links between art and nightlife scenes, connecting these past nightlife spaces to current parties, bars and clubs. As artistic memorials to nightlife—both past and present—as well as the state of HIV/AIDS, *Party Out of Bounds* also offers glimpses of future possibilities.

In her integral yet frequently overlooked study of nightlife—*Impossible Dance: Club Culture and Queer World-Making*, Fiona Buckland defines memorial in regards to the dance at the Body Positive T-Dance, a then-monthly event for HIV-positive gay men and their friends. As Buckland writes, “I have come to read memorial as a complicated term, in which not only the past, but also the present moment, and the future possibilities of a life with HIV and AIDS were articulated through the performance of the dancer.”⁵

Despite the unwavering artistic focus of *Party Out of Bounds*, art is certainly not the only means to engage with the past, as well as the present and future of nightlife. Through *Impossible Dance*, Buckland theorizes that dancing can create an embodiment of memory for those living with HIV or AIDS, as well as for those who lost loved ones. In one of her many interviews with nightlife participants, Buckland speaks to Tito Mesa, a frequent nightclubber who had, at the time of publication, been living with AIDS since 1985. Describing to Buckland how he feels at the Body Positive T-Dance, he exclaims, “I never realized...I dance for myself, I dance for the universe, for all of us in the world with AIDS.”⁶

Mirroring Mesa’s moving statement, *Party Out of Bounds* intends to reflect that same embodied memorial. Like Mesa, we dance for John, Ethyl, Cookie and Keith. We dance for David and Peter. We dance for Sylvester, Klaus, Hibiscus, Kwong Chi, Charles, Bruce, Robert, Haoui and Chloe. We dance for countless other artists, performers and nightlife participants who are less known but important nonetheless.

We also dance, like Douglas Crimp, for the lost spaces. We dance for The Saint, The Anvil, Mineshaft, the Toilet, El Mirage, J’s and the Hellfire Club. We dance for MEAT, the Clit Club and Pork. We dance for club Chandelier,

Squeezebox, the Mudd Club, Peppermint Lounge, Danceteria, AREA, the Roxy, the Tunnel, Limelight, Palladium and Paradise Garage.

We dance for those spaces still operating that have been irrevocably altered by the ever-evolving city. And finally, we dance for those spaces that continue in the legacy of the formative, campy, radical, revolutionary vision of the bygone days and nights, sustaining nightlife’s legacy of activism.

Emily Colucci

¹ Douglas Crimp, “Mourning and Militancy,” *October*, Vol. 52 (Winter 1989): 11.

² David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, “Introduction: Mourning Remains,” in *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, ed. David L. Eng and David Kazanjian (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 2.

³ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵ Fiona Buckland, *Impossible Dance: Club Culture and Queer World-Making* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2002), 160.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 159.



Nayland Blake and Collaborators

FREE!LOVE!TOOL!BOX Entry Way, 2012

Lights, markers, plexiglass

Courtesy of the artist



Elegance Bratton

Princely, 2011
Digital print
Courtesy of the artist

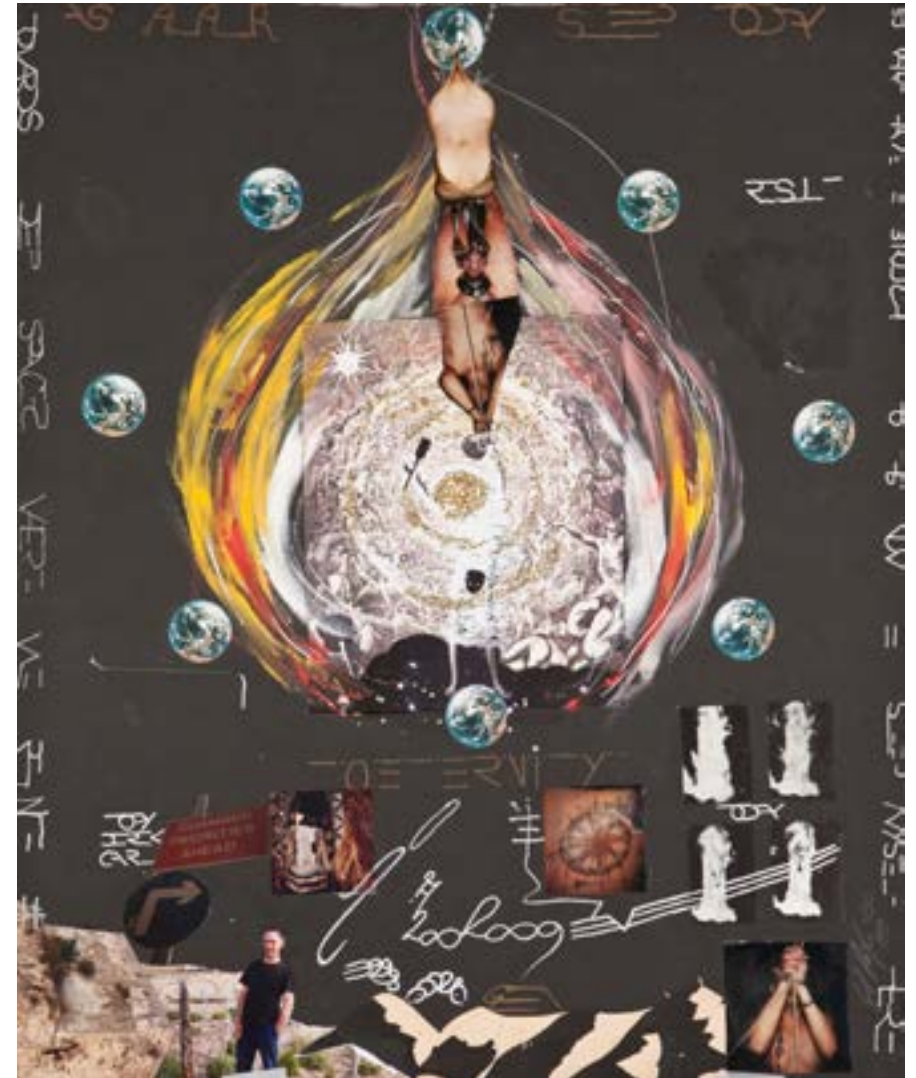


Genesis P-Orridge

Sigil for Derek Jarman (To Eternity), 1994

Mixed media

Courtesy of the artists and INVISIBLE-EXPORTS





Luis Carle

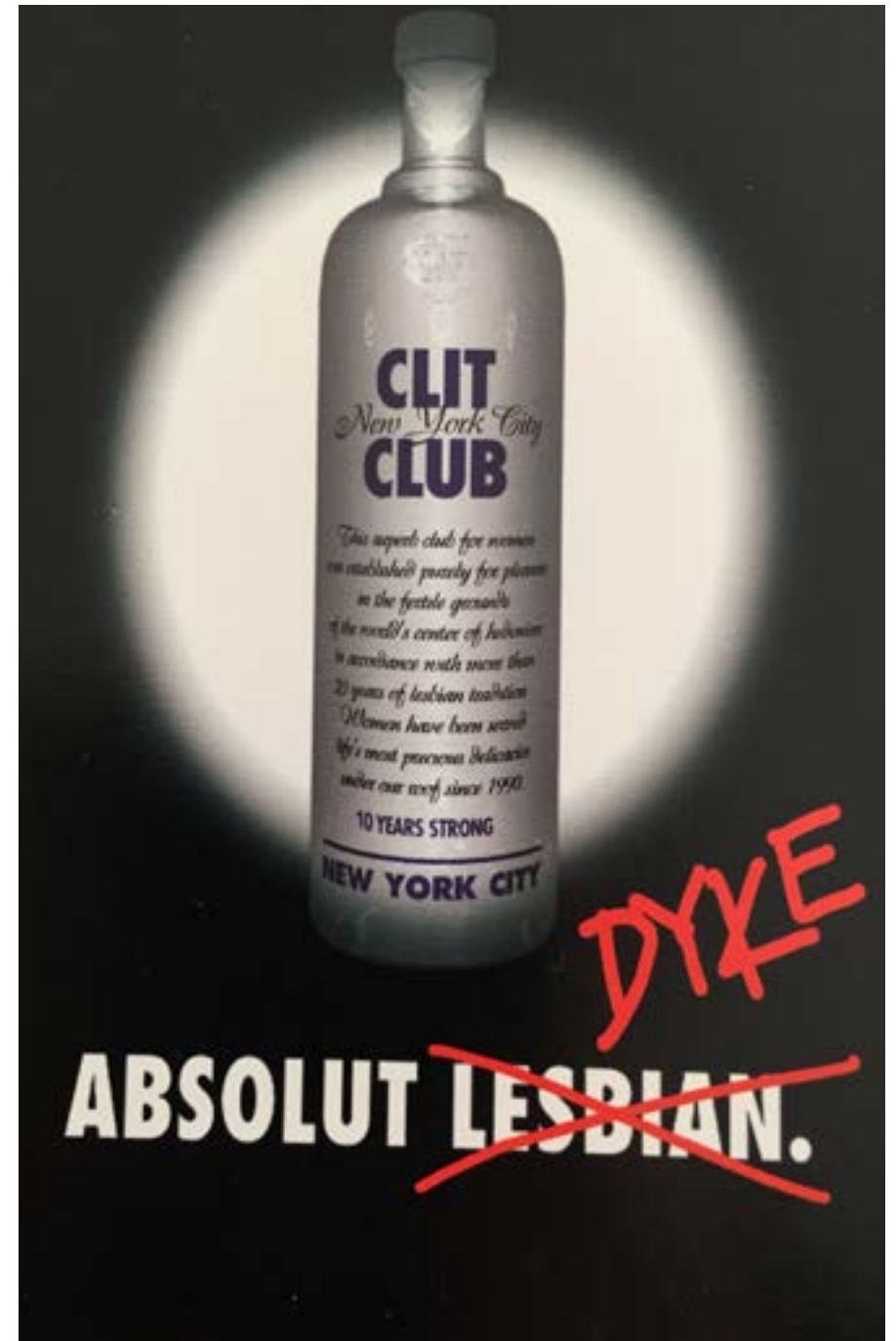
Black Party at Black & Blue Festival, Montreal, 2000
Digital blue duotone print
Courtesy of the artist





CLIT CLUB Archives / Julie Tolentino

CLIT CLUB 10th Year Anniversary Invitation, 2000
Designed by Shigeru McPherson
Double-sided cardstock
Courtesy of the CLIT CLUB Archives





Chloe Dzubilo

Studio 54 (Hands in Air), 2011
Pen and marker on paper
Courtesy of the Estate of Chloe Dzubilo





Scott Ewalt

Gaiety Male Burlesk, 1994
Mixed media
Courtesy of the artist





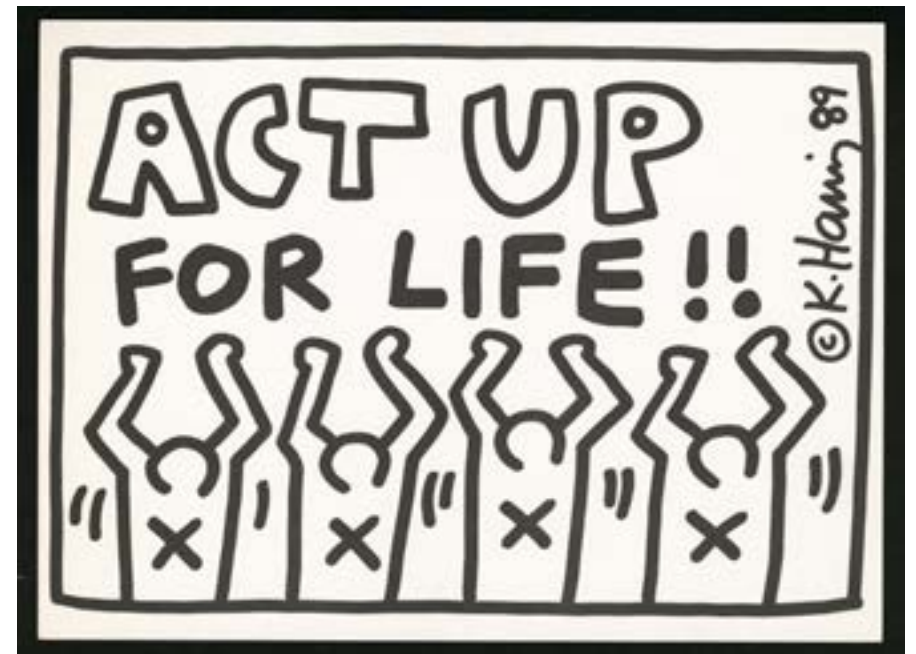
Robert Getso

NYC Go-Go, 2014

Digital print

Courtesy of the Estate of Robert Getso





Keith Haring

“Act Up for Life” invitation, New York City, 1989
© Keith Haring Foundation



Aldo Hernandez Archive

Invitation for ACT-UP Benefit at MEAT, n.d.
Xerox print
Courtesy of the Aldo Hernandez Archive

ACT UP
BENEFIT
SATURDAY
432 W 14 ST
what's sexy ?
DANCING
HOT MEN
& MORE
MEAT
\$7



Peter Hujar

Ethyl Eichelberger as Auntie Belle Emme, 1979

© 1987 The Peter Hujar Archive, LLC; courtesy Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York and Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco



Kia Labeija

Death Mask, 2015
Digital print
Courtesy of the artist





Marc Lida

The Saint, c. 1982-83

Watercolor on paper

Collection of Jonathan Weinberg and Nicholas Boshnack

Courtesy of the Estate of Marc Lida



Caldwell Linker

At Warhol, 2015
Seedbeads and fire line threads
Courtesy of the artist



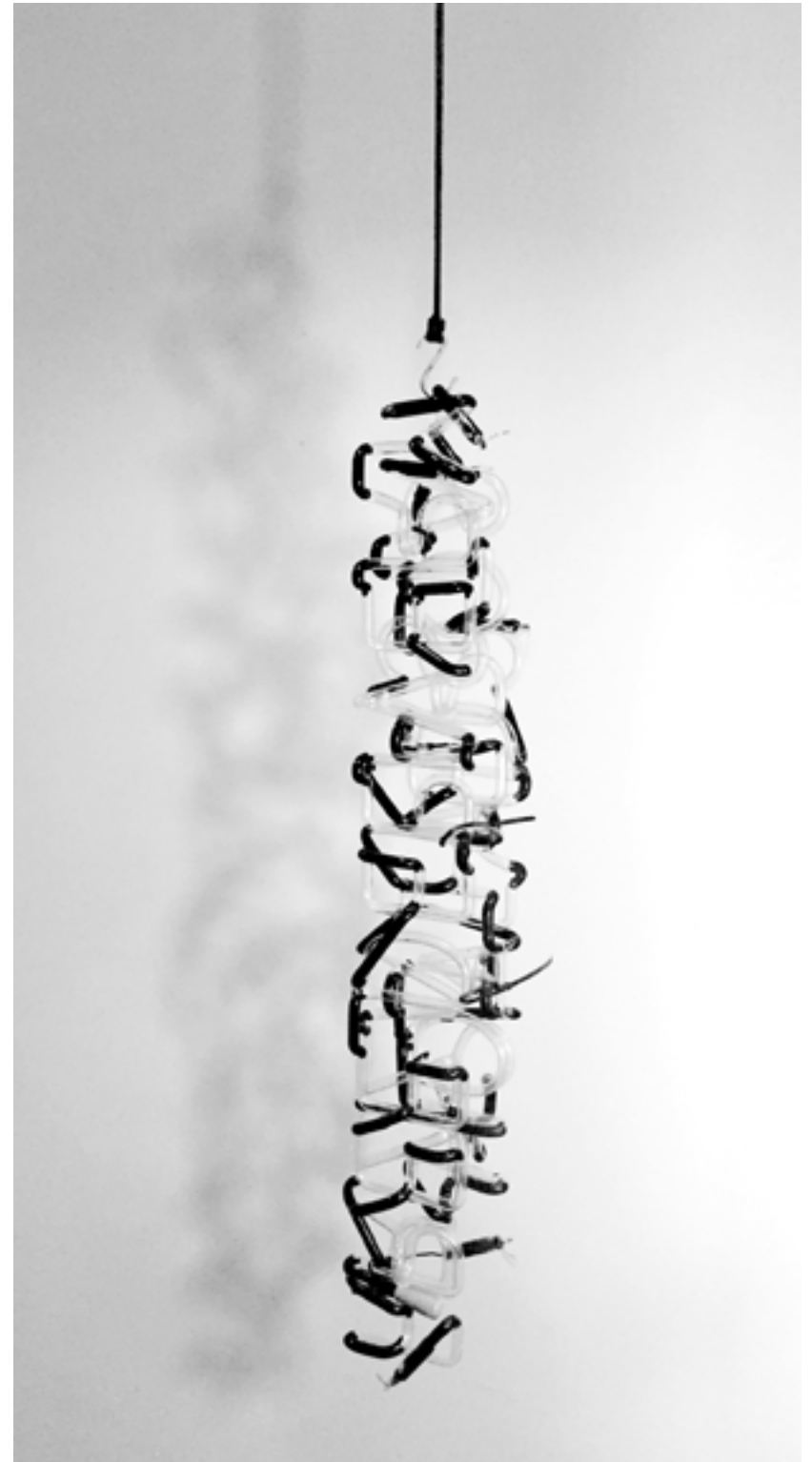


Lovett / Codagnone

Obliterated 1, 2015

Unlit neon signs, rubber strap, metal hooks

Courtesy of the artists and Francesco Pantaleone Arte Contemporanea,
Palermo Italy





Charles Lum

Black n, adj, 2004
DVD (4:00)
Courtesy of the artist





Joseph Modica

*A NIGHT AT DANCETERIA (Ethyl Eichelberger, Keith Haring,
Cookie Mueller & John Sex) Danceteria, NYC, 1984*

Digital print

Courtesy of the artist



Hunter Reynolds

First Mummification Performance, January 29, 1998
Visual AIDS Benefit at the Lure
Courtesy of the artist





John Sex

Danceteria Presents: Sweet Blondes of Youth, n.d.
April Palmieri Papers; MSS 115; Box 1; Folder 12
Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University Libraries



Linda Simpson

Lady Bunny at Webster Hall, 1992

Photograph

Courtesy of the artist



Chad States

A Towel For The Gods, 2013
Gold silk, hand embroidered gold silk thread
Courtesy of the artist





Nelson Sullivan

John Sex at The Saint, 1986

DVD-R (screener copy), Fales Media ID: 174.0054, pt. 2

Nelson Sullivan Video Collection

Image courtesy of Robert Coddington and Dick Richards; Video courtesy of Fales Library & Special Collections, New York University Libraries



Wu Tsang & RJ Messineo

Alter (Life Chances), 2011

Wood, spray paint, photos, frames, plastic flowers, rhinestone clutch
Courtesy the artists, Clifton Benevento (New York), Michael Benevento
(Los Angeles), Isabella Bortolozzi (Berlin)
Photo credit: Thomas Mueller





Conrad Ventur

Where Have All the Flowers Gone? (Installation View from 1/9 Unosunove, Rome), 2008

DVD-PAL (4:40) projection on rotating mirror ball
Courtesy of the artist



John Walter

Courtship Disorder, 2015
HD video (5:10)
Courtesy of the artist



John Waters

Rush, 2009

Polyurethane, oil, PVC plastic

Courtesy of the artist and Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York

© John Waters



Jessica Whitbread

NPNP Facilitating Makeouts Since 2004, 2012

Cloth, felt, glitter, underwear

Courtesy of the artist





David Wojnarowicz

Catch the Danceteria Staff Infection Show, n.d.
David Wojnarowicz Papers; MSS 092; Box 1; Folder 15;
Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University Libraries

'One of the bodyguards said that death was no laughing matter, much less death from illness, but no one paid any attention to him'

Roberto Bolaño, *Woes of The True Policeman*

BECAUSE THE NIGHT

"An 'era' makes it sound too grand. We were all so confused. It felt as if we were dancing one night, one long night at the Pyramid—or the Tunnel—and as we came out in the daylight, our bodies were full of marks and we couldn't breathe.[...] One day the bartender at the local pub was gone, the next day the cigar store had closed down, then a play was taken off the program, and another friend was not feeling well," cites Norman Swann, the protagonist in Elmgreen & Dragset's *Past Tomorrow*, recollecting the untimely vanishing of a community and a culture he was a part of.

When the music stops and the lights are back on, a deserted dance floor awaits, holding onto moments resisting to fade away. Within walls of blazing hues and fog surrounding every leaping torso, those, who otherwise would not cross paths, come together as who, how or what loses its value. The party ends early for many, before the eyes of those that remain to witness this vanishing. Today, those who departed are remembered through what they left behind: a quartet, a play or a painting—some were celebrated and recognized and some slowly evanesced first from streets and later from memories. Today in 2015, a resolute thread weaving into decades of struggle and activism vocalizes countless strong narratives of the ongoing HIV/AIDS crisis, not letting memories dissolve or names disappear. Whilst bright gleams of disco balls tingle their eyes and pulsing rhythm beats in their ears, those who yearn to speak out do not abandon the dance floor as there is no better place to raise their voice.

Party Out Of Bounds: Nightlife As Activism Since 1980 grants access to a territory where the ardor is excessive and the crowd accordingly is ardent. In this club both rests an urge to grip the passing time and anticipation for tomorrow to come. A refuge for the lonely and a shelter for the displaced, this club, like many others, has been to queer kids what Parisian cafés were to the Modernists. Here is a reinterpretation of a past that ties to the present thanks to the efforts of many creative warriors, adopting nightlife and its versatile language as a foundation. Undeniable contrast between the vibrancy of nightlife and the morbidity of an epidemic caters our exhibition, rather than being an inconvenience, embracing unwearying roars of individuals yearning to eclipse the music. Artists in *Party Out Of Bounds* unfold through numerous paths, contributing to the narrative in various mediums and accounts. Photographs by **Joseph Modica**, **Elegance Bratton**, **Peter Hujar**,

Robert Getso, Luis Carle and **Hunter Reynolds** span decades of stories belonging to names, some of which are anonymous and some recounted such as Ethyl Eichelberger or Cookie Mueller. Regardless if their names are remembered or not, those who built a foundation from the ground up did not write their stories on water, as proven in these grasping photographic works from the '80s to the present. Paying homage to fluid moments and fierce vigor encapsulated in locales from The Saint to Danceteria, **Nayland Blake, Lovett/Codagnone** and **Conrad Ventur** orchestrate installation-based manifestations on belonging to a roof, speaking a communal language and regaining time past—in resistance to the loss of a refuge, a dialogue or shared moments. Empowering in their statements, yet calm in presence; their imposing and audacious eulogies substitute for what is no more. **Kia Labelija, Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, Chloe Dzubilo, Scott Ewalt** and **Marc Lida** trace footsteps of artists, performers, hustlers and 'regulars' in their works on paper, for which they employ varying techniques from collage to painting or from print to drawing. Complexities of their visual language align with the imminent buoyancy their subject matter possesses. **John Waters, Chad States, Caldwell Linker, Linda Simpson, Jessica Whitbread, Wu Tsang & RJ Messineo** and **Eric Rhein** deify a history that has not been penned in books as much as it has been recounted in back alleys, forming, building or stitching what they remember, know or witness. A box full of objects commemorating El Mirage or a fabric banner reading expressions of empathy and fortitude not only encompass decades and arrays of endeavor, but also map territories of glorious triumphs and adverse defeats. Moving image, as a form of documentation and rendition, is conveyed by names such as **Charles Lum** and **John Walter**, both claiming their imprints on queer identity and its metaphors, as well as **Nelson Sullivan**, whose ambitious and fervent footage of the '80s downtown scene revives the essence of its time through the lens of an insider. Relics from iconic artists **Keith Haring, David Wojnarowicz** and performer **John Sex** chronicle the earnest joy of ACT UP benefits or the vanguard ingenuity of stage spectacles, accenting nightclubbing as a means for solidarity and interdependency. And, in relation to this unity nightlife has granted, archives of **Julie Tolentino** and **Aldo Hernandez** restore strong piety that governed spaces such as MEAT and the Clit Club, where nightlife served as a hub for deliverance of understanding, education and upholding.

Today is July 3, 2015 and it has been precisely thirty-four years since Lawrence Altman's *New York Times* article "Rare Cancer Seen in 41 Homosexuals" on the disease that later became known as AIDS was published, marking the paper's first feature on the subject. Before, during and after its ample recognition, individuals not only have been battling with a disease, but also have been striving to assemble a pattern, one that espouses and embraces their fervency for true essence. Nightlife undoubtedly has yielded that pattern for many, from the vagabond runaway to the jaded dweller, reassuring that individuals build crowds and crowds make a change.

Osman Can Yerebakan

Party Out Of Bounds: Nightlife As Activism Since 1980

Curated by Emily Colucci & Osman Can Yerebakan
for Visual AIDS

September 18 - October 10, 2015

La MaMa Galleria, 47 Great Jones Street, New York, NY 10003

Opening Reception: September 18, 2015 6-9PM

Catalog Design by Omer Ackerman

Essays by Emily Colucci & Osman Can Yerebakan

Published by Visual AIDS

All Rights Reserved © 2015

Visual AIDS utilizes art to fight AIDS by provoking dialogue, supporting HIV+ artists, and preserving a legacy, because AIDS is not over.

Visual AIDS is grateful to the funders who support all of our work: The Milton & Sally Avery Arts Foundation, Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS, The Cowles Charitable Trust, Gilead Sciences, The Greenwich Collection Ltd., The Keith Haring Foundation, The F.B. Heron Foundation, The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, Lambent Foundation Fund of the Tides Foundation, M.A.C. VIVA GLAM, The Joan Mitchell Foundation, New York Gay Pool League, New York Council for the Humanities, NYU Community Fund, The Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation, and our Patron donors Jim Hodges, Dorothy Lichtenstein, and Yoko Ono. Thank you as well to all our generous individual supporters.

Programs are supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council. Additional funding is provided by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.


The Curators would like to thank: Amy DiPasquale, Anna Gurton-Wachter, April Palmieri, Brent Phillips, Emily King, Jason Baumann, Jonathan Weinberg, Julia Gruen, Karl McCool, Lia Gangitano, Marvin Taylor, Omer Ackerman, Paul Sammut, Rachel Greer, Robert Coddington, Sarah Schulman, T De Long, Tim Landers, Tom Rauffenbart, Valerie Steele and all the participating artists for being a part of this exhibition.

Thanks to Clifton Benevento, Fales Library & Special Collections, The Museum at FIT, INVISIBLE-EXPORTS, The Keith Haring Foundation, Leftfield, Pace/MacGill Gallery and The Peter Hujar Archive.

A special thanks to Nelson Santos, Esther McGowan and Alex Fialho at Visual AIDS, Matt Nasser and LaMaMa Galleria for their great support.

Founded in 1988, **Visual AIDS** is the only contemporary arts organization fully committed to raising AIDS awareness and creating dialogue around HIV issues today, by producing and presenting visual art projects, exhibitions, public forums and publications - while assisting artists living with HIV/AIDS. We are committed to preserving and honoring the work of artists with HIV/AIDS and the artistic contributions of the AIDS movement. **VisualAIDS.org**

Visual
AIDS 526 W 26th Street Suite 510
New York, NY 10001
212 627 9855 / info@visualAIDS.org



As an extension of the internationally acclaimed La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club founded in 1961 by Ellen Stewart, **La MaMa Galleria** is a non-profit gallery committed to nurturing artistic experimentation in the visual arts. La Galleria's programming responds to questions raised by the larger cultural, artistic, and intellectual community.

