Members of the Not For Sale Committee of PAD/D (L - R) Gregory Sholette, Michael Anderson, Janet Koenig, Ed Eisenberg, 1984.

A COLLECTOGRAPHY OF PAD/D

Political Art Documentation and Distribution: A 1980's Activist Art and Networking Collective

GREGORY SHOLETTE

> *Our goal is to provide artists with an organized relationship to society, to demonstrate the political effectiveness of image making, and to provide a framework within which progressive artists can discuss and develop alternatives to the mainstream art system.* —PAD/D Mission Statement

I. From archive to organization in the course of one evening

What started as a straightforward call to establish an archive of politically committed art wound up instigating an ambitious new artist's collective. A decade before the emergence of the world wide web and prior to the introduction of the personal computer, one organization of artists and activists sought to produce a networked,

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parallel arena in which to nurture, theorize, display and distribute creative practices opposed to, or simply desperate to be something other than, capitalist culture. It began with a meeting called together February 24th, 1980 by the art critic Lucy R. Lippard. The call itself had been printed on the flip side of an invitation for an exhibition she organized at Artists Space featuring the "many good, socially active artists no one heard of." By using the mailed invite as an organizing tool, Lippard had also transgressed her own, presumed curatorial disengagement, a point I return to below. Nevertheless, on this winter's evening, a group of fifty or so artists, writers and veteran political activists eagerly answered her call. Lippard's planned agenda was to explore ways of archiving her swelling collection of documents about art with political intent. The meeting took place at Printed Matter Book Store that was then located on Lispenard Street in Downtown Manhattan. Lippard's plea to not found another organization was quickly disregarded and the rest of the story forms a chapter in the unknown history of collective, activist art gradually being excavated by a new generation of historians.

I attended the meeting in search of an intellectual and creative community that held similar beliefs about the place of art within a broader movement of progressive, social transformation. Having recently graduated from The Cooper Union School of Art where I studied with Hans Haacke, what I discovered that evening was a group of cultural workers who, rather than merely discussing their own art or career, instead eagerly debated issues of racism and sexism in the US, ending apartheid in South Africa, and opposing the stationing of US "tactical" nuclear weapons in Europe. What I did not know then however was the degree to which this encounter would alter the direction of my career as well as my life. Before the end of that February evening a new, artists' collective had been conceived, named and given a mission.

Present that evening was Clive Philpot, then the Director of the Museum of Modern Art Library. Philpot christened the new group Political Art Documentation or PAD. But in the months ahead the new group experienced a minor split within its ranks. Contemplating the many thankless chores required to service other artists, including archiving, cataloging and cross-referencing their work, the membership expressed a strong desire to produce its own, collectively authored art. Sometime later in 1980 or early 81 therefore the 'D' for Distribution was adopted by the group, thus transforming PAD into PAD/D. In the immodest language typical of the period the group's mission sought to,

> ...Build an international, grass roots network of artist/activists who will support with their talents and their political energies the liberation and self-determination of all disenfranchised peoples.(PAD/D. 1st Issue. New York City, issue no.1, Feb. 1981.)

Within a year of its founding PAD/D was making art as well as archiving. It was also programming public events, networking with other organizations, and publishing its own newsletter named simply 1st Issue. (And soon renamed Upfront after it became apparent that a many issues of 1st Issue would be extremely confounding.) Along with Upfront, the group also published a one-page calendar of progressive, cultural events in the NYC area called Red Letter Days. In sum, it would not be unfair to describe the driving force behind this frenetic, multileveled activity as a desire to unilaterally reconstruct the entire, corrupted world of bourgeois art from the bottom up. As the group stated in its first newsletter:

> PAD [/D] can not serve as a means of advancement within the art world structure of museums and galleries. Rather, we have to develop new forms of distribution economy as well as art... (Ibid.)

no one will
for bread be crying,
we'll have freedom,
love and health,
when the grand
red flag is flying
in the workers'
commonwealth.
Joe Hill
1879 – 1915

HISTORY SO FAR

WOMEN TAKE BACK THE NIGHT

HOW TO SEND MATERIALS TO PAD

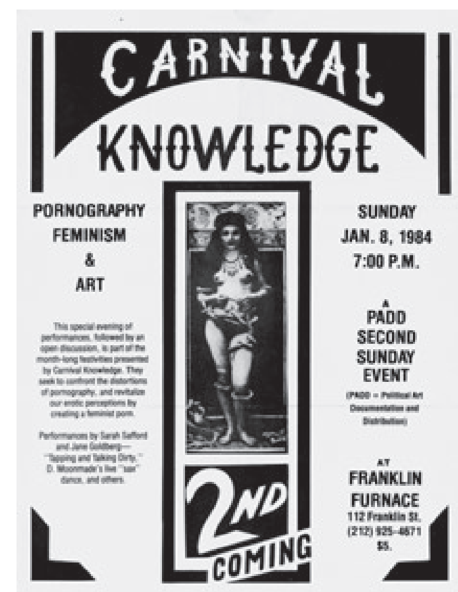
SEND TO:

Back Page of 1st Issue, PAD/D's first newsletter, Feb. 1981.

To achieve this objective, the group began developing plans for an organization of even larger size and complexity: a national or perhaps even international network of like-minded activist artists working in consort with non-art, progressive activists. If PAD/D's immediate goal was to organize a highly fractured, post-68 counter-culture, the group's larger vision sought to bring into being a bona-fide counter-hegemonic or oppositional public sphere. Woven from equal parts recovered genealogies (from the PAD/D archival materials) and politically sympathetic exhibition outlets (university galleries, labor unions, community centers, even church halls), this longed-for, counter-hegemony was, more than anything else, the feature that set PAD/D apart from other, self-organized, art collectives then or since.

The high stakes PAD/D placed on networking artists with activists is instantly apparent if one examines the diverse topics touched-upon in its monthly, public dialogue series known as Second Sundays. First held at Printed Matter Books and later moved to the Franklin Furnace a few blocks away, a sample list of Second Sunday evenings from 1981 includes: The History of Abortion Rights; Civil Liberties and Domestic Surveillance; War Tax Evasion; Unauthorized Art in Public Spaces; Hispanic Culture and Struggle and Art and Ecological Issues. (1st Issue. no. 2, May-June 81). In addition, the group's public platform presented issues related to Art Education, Native American art and one evening hosted by Lucy Lippard and Jerry Kearns that celebrated what they described as the culture of "The Street." As much as these programs sought to connect artists with progressive activists however, they were also intended to prove to activists the political value of art. Today, from Seattle to Genoa, from to New York to London, the cultural politics visible in the counter-globalization movement, as well as the emerging anti-war movement, offer strong evidence that PAD/D's strategy was in fact a forward-looking one.

PAD/D flyer announcing an upcoming presentation by the feminist art collective Carnival Knowledge in 1984.



On February 26th, 1982, two years and two days from its inaugural meeting at Printed Matter, PAD/D hosted a sizable gathering of

activists and artists at the Bread & Roses, 1199 Health and Hospital Workers Union Hall on West 43rd Street in New York City. Timed to conflict with the College Art Association's Conference, the "February 26th Movement" as it was called brought together dozens of organizations and individuals ranging from Los Angeles-based, Social and Public Art Resources or SPARC to local participants including Group Material. It also featured presentations by several energetic if comparatively politically ambiguous alternative spaces including, Fashion Moda from the Bronx and ABC No Rio from the Lower East Side of Manhattan. As PAD/D member Keith Christensen put it, "I went to the February 26th conference after learning about it from the Village Voice and found a whole world of alternative paths for an artist to take. It changed my life because I learned how to integrate my political and artistic sensibilities." Christensen soon find himself working with PAD/D to re-design Upfront. And while the newsletter would indeed become a platform for the dissemination of activist culture, the larger goal of a sustainable, progressive cultural network eluded the group. Yet if the group's overconfidence and sense of political mission led it at times to outstrip its own resources, PAD/D's collective, organizational verve nevertheless out-performed many other, more traditionally structured and better funded cultural institutions, including many "alternative spaces."

Perhaps PAD/D's success at organizing artists, a denomination typically antagonistic to administrative rules and discipline, appears somewhat less remarkable if one takes into account the background of the group's initial membership between 1980 and1982. Lucy R. Lippard for example was not only a noted arts writer, but was also an activist and accomplished organizer who participated in the founding of the feminist art collective Heresies, Ad-Hoc Women Artists, and Printed Matter Books, the group's initial home. Perhaps as many as two thirds of PAD/D's early membership brought with them previous experience working with other cultural collectives, institutions or programs. Along with the aforementioned Clive Philpot of MoMA, PAD/Ds organizational assets included veterans of the Art Workers Coalition or AWC, Fluxus, Cultural Correspondence, Artists Meeting for Cultural Change or AMCC, Collaborative Projects or Colab, Red-Herring, Amiri Braraka's Anti-Imperialist Cultural Union; The Neighborhood Arts Programs National Organizing Committee or NAPNOC, (later renamed the Alliance for Cultural Democracy or ACD); The Women's Building and Angry Arts. In addition, several PAD/D members simultaneously belonged to other; recently formed artists' collectives such as Group Material, World War 3 Illustrated, and Carnival Knowledge. (A partial list of the PAD/D membership and their affiliations appears at the end of the essay.)

Exhibition PAD/D organized in Chicago displaying a range of "demonstration art" for public use.

Nevertheless, in order to accomplish so much in such a short period of time - essentially between 1980 and 1985 in terms of the group's most significant work - the members of PAD/D devoted many

hours of in-kind, unpaid labor. What actual cash revenue was raised went to cover the rent, publication costs and but never labor. And money did come, in the form of donations from sympathetic artists including Hans Haacke, Leon Golub, Jenny Holzer, Nancy Spero; Barbara Kruger and even on one occasion Julian Schnabel. Funds were also generated through the call for modest dues as well as through benefit events, including one that I organized at Club 57 on St. Marks Place with very mixed success that featured the late artist David Wojnarowicz and his band Three Teens Kill Four.

"Image War on the Pentagon," PAD/D's contribution to a massive street demonstration in Washington DC during the summer of 1983.

II Structure

A snapshot of how the group initially structured itself to achieve its ambitious mission is visible from an internal memo dated October 26th, 1980 entitled; "P.A.D. Work groups." The typewritten agenda lists twenty-four people and phone numbers. Each is assigned to one or more of three working groups that include:

Group I: P.R. Community Organizations, Cross-country outreach via newsletter and posters.

Group II: The Physical Archives and its organization; the ninth street office and building Archival shows.

Group III: Exhibitions in public places; outreach to political organizations.

(Original memo is in the Lippard Papers at the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institute.)

Originally headquartered in a former school building on the eastern side of Tompkins Square Park called El Bohio, PAD/D later moved to larger quarters and into the building owned and operated by the A. J. Muste Foundation at the corner of Lafayette and Bleecker Streets. Dubbed the "peace" building because it also housed the pacifist organization The War Resisters League, the groups other neighbors included Paper Tiger Television and CISPES, the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador. Initially, membership consisted of anyone who happened to be present at any given PAD/D meeting. This soon became untenable when it became apparent that one, highly vocal newcomer could sidetrack an entire project already invested with weeks of work. Membership was soon reformulated to include only those who already showed a commitment to the group by their involvement in specific, PAD/D projects or Work Group. The organizational structure continued to develop. Sometime prior to February of 1982 a Steering Committee made up of one person from each work group was established. Flow-charts were drawn-up and debates held about how to vote: for example, does the group pass a resolution based on a majority rule, or does it seek total consensus? (In the end, the group adopted a three-fourths voting rule.) Before long, a somewhat more centralized

and rule bound organization emerged. And in order to allow donors to deduct financial contributions to PAD/D as well as for the group to attract grant money the appropriate legal paperwork was filed making PAD/D both a charitable organization and a not for profit, 501 (C) 3 corporation. It was nevertheless a great surprise to group members when PAD/D was in fact selected by a peer review panel at the National Endowment for the Arts for a modest grant to help with the cost of producing Upfront. However, Ronald Reagan's newly appointed NEA Chairman, Frank Hodsoll quickly made an unprecedented, public denunciation of the review panel's choice that had also included an award to the Heresies journal. The grant was "withdrawn." This occurrence, together with the de-funding of Franklin Furnace artist's space by the NEA following an exhibition by Carnival Knowledge at about the same time, predated the far more publicized "culture wars" of the early 1990s. I can not help speculate that because these events involved art "collectives," rather than individuals, the significance of this censorship appeared lass newsworthy and has faded from view. 1

PAD/D did indeed function in a strongly collective manner. That does not alter the fact that the contribution of specific individuals uniquely shaped the mission and structure of the group. Certainly, Barbara Moore and Mimi Smith, two members who remained singularly devoted to the PAD/D Archives, hold a special position in this respect. It was the contribution of Lucy R. Lippard however that, more than any other PAD/D member, shaped the overall character of the group.

III. Lucy Lippard & PAD/D

Lucy R. Lippard

Lippard's book chronicling the formation of Conceptual Art, Six years: the dematerialization of the art object, functioned as a "new testament" for a "post-Greenbergian" generation of artists who would reject the cool detachment of formalism. Charismatic and gifted with a ceaseless energy, Lippard was nevertheless a consensus builder. To myself and many others she also exemplified what cultural theorist Walter Benjamin termed the Author as Producer, that is, a bourgeois writer who rejects the "proper" journalistic position of distanced neutrality in favor of active partisanship with a struggle for social change. Needless to say, such overt blurring of roles between critic and activist, observer and participant is anathema to the imagined, aesthetic neutrality of established art history and art criticism and no doubt led to her being fired from the Village Voice in 1985 after four years. But it was Lippard's conspicuous support for art with political content that helped lay the foundation for the emergence of PAD/D. As word spread about her interests, initially via another postcard invitation for an exhibition she organized of Rasheed Araeen's work in London, the writer became a magnet for the highly dispersed and largely invisible multitude of artists who sought to combine their work with political and social activism. Inundated with slides, posters, flyers, manifestos and related materials Lippard understood that the artists who sent her documentation

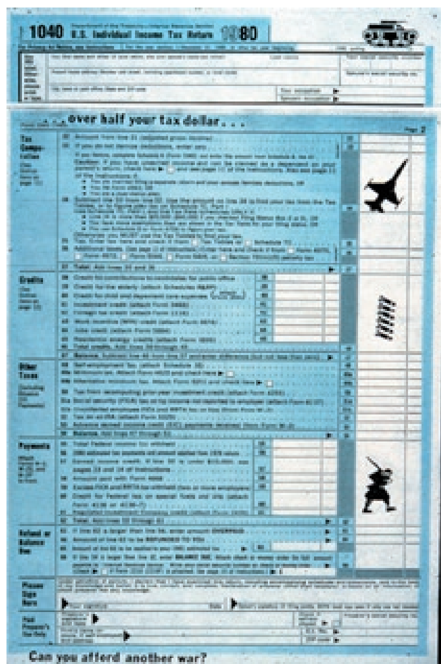
of their work were not only "invisible" to the art establishment, they were also unseen and isolated from each other as well. Logically, the concept of an active archive that could reverse this invisibility emerged out of these observations.

If Lippard's archival assets served as the growth medium for incubating PAD/D, it was the writer's presence at the Village Voice, a hip, weekly newspaper featuring progressive culture and journalism, which provided the heat. Her weekly column thrust into view not so much the group itself, but its mission of socially committed art activism. While Lippard provided outward visibility, it was the artist and activist Jerry Kearns who most strongly shaped the internal, administrative and political dimensions of the group. Kearns, humorously known within the group as the "commissar," came to PAD/D soon after it started while he was still active in Amiri Baraka's Anti-Imperialist Cultural Union as well as the Black United Front. A white, working class southerner, Kearns had also been part of an Art & Language/Fox Magazine splinter group known as Red Herring. In the pages of the two publications Red Herring produced the group called on artists to "learn from the masses," and develop a "proletarian culture" that was specific to North America, yet influenced by Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution. This analysis led Red Herring to virtually reject the art world. And while no official political line ever existed within PAD/D, this late, New Left social analysis certainly flavored the discourse of the group, especially during the first two years of 1980 to1982. At the same time, one can see the formation of internal, disciplinary structures that more closely resemble a political party than it did other, organized artists collectives including most notably Group Material, PAD/Ds closest, artistic "relative" so to speak. Meanwhile, Lippard and Kearns also collaborated on lectures and writings as well as a performance piece entitled "My Place, Your Place, Our Place," in which they examined the genesis of their own political identities, a strong indication that Lippard's feminist politics was affecting and changing more orthodox ideological leanings.

IV. Four PAD/D Public Actions

Largely unknown are the numerous collective art projects PAD/D produced during its six-year tenure. Typically edged in a critical yet ironic humor, these primarily public works avoid what Fredric Jameson calls the "flattened affect" of post-modernist pastiche. What follows are four of PAD/D's projects including "Death and Taxes", "No More Witch-Hunts", "Image War on the Pentagon" and "Not For Sale: A Project Against Gentrification." Notably, each one privileged public performance and ephemeral work over art objects.

"Death and Taxes," April, 1981:


1040 U.S. Individual Income Tax Return 1980
over half your tax dollar . . .
Can you afford another war?

Micki McGee's individual taxpayer form intervention for PAD/D's Death andTaxes, project at banks and libraries in various locations of NYC, 1981.

"Death &Taxes" (D&T) began as an open invitation for artists anywhere in NYC to produce public works protesting the use of federal taxes for military instead of social programs. Artists were asked to document what they did and send this to Gallery 345, a small not for profit space located just downstairs from the PAD/D office on Lafayette Street. Approximately twenty artists responded to the call, placing their work in subways, armories, public toilets and banks. Examples of works produced for "Death and Taxes" include one thousand IRS 1040A tax forms gathered up, "altered" and then put them back into circulation at banks and Post Offices in downtown Manhattan by Micki McGee. The artist printed over top of the government document her own public service agit-prop art that read in part: "53 ¢ of every tax dollar goes to military and defense budgets... over half your tax dollar... ". The boxes normally used for reporting income were filled-in already with graphic images of a fighter jet dropping bombs and a soldier marching. On a second page another line of type informs the citizen, "How would your life be different if your taxes went to... " Followed by a series of choices that include "public transportation instead of aircraft carriers" and "the arts and humanities instead of war debts." The latter text was punctuated by a wheel chair bound figure.

Other D&T projects included anti-military propaganda printed directly onto dollar bills that were then re-circulated; Lynn Hugh's graphic stickers attached to public pay-phones alerting the caller that the 2% federal tax on telephone calls goes to the military; and Alain Resnais film, Hiroshima Mon Amour projected onto the 26th street armory by Tim Rollins from his apartment located across the street. Rollins describes reactions as ranging from "... sidewalk cheers to rotten fruit thrown at the window." And PAD/D member Michael Anderson was arrested after tossing a fabricated, human "dummy" onto the bayonet of a World War One memorial at another armory location. After spending a night in prison, Anderson later appeared in Brooklyn Criminal Court and was discharged.

These informational interventions were joined by a fifty-foot high T-Rex skeleton made of pink-vinyl sewn to camouflage netting labeled "Can't Afford to Live? Too Alive to Die?" Conceived by PAD/D artists team of Pitrone and Masaryk, "Skeletal Estates" was located in an abandoned city lot on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Passersby were asked to invest in, "the very best in underground living" and offered "fool-proof protection from "intelligent" missiles as well as Con Ed and NY telephone." Anne Pitrone was herself the instigator of the D&T project first proposing it during one of the first PAD/D meetings. (Pitrone soon co-founded the feminist art collective Carnival Knowledge that used circus posters and a vernacular art approach to promote women's sexuality as well as to protest attacks on reproductive rights and sexual freedom.)

"Image War on the Pentagon," 1981:

Image War consisted of dozens of cardboard picket signs carried along by PAD/D members during a demonstration in Washington DC on May 3rd of 1981. On one side of these portable signs wordless, black and white cartoons revealed images of bombs, generals and rifles each crossed out with a dramatic red ‘X’. On the flip side of these placards were colorful images of investments public money could be used for, including: a loaf of bread, a glass of milk, a hammer, and a pair of human hands, one white and one black, clasped together. Fabricated in the studio of PAD/D member Mike Glier, Image War was designed for use in the massive march on the pentagon organized by the People’s Antiwar Mobilization that drew over 100,000 people to protest budget cuts and US involvement in El Salvador and Nicaragua.

“No More Witch Hunts,” 1981:
In 1981 the Reagan administration passed new and sweeping anti-terrorist laws giving the government expanded powers of surveillance over U.S. citizens. Many understood these so-called anti-terrorist laws as a thinly disguised legal justification for spying on domestic supporters of the FMLN (Farabundo Marti National Liberation), a Salvadorian-based insurrectionary organization opposed to the U.S.-backed regime of Jose Napoleon Duarte. “No More Witch Hunts” brought together religious activists, a local progressive union, legal activists, and artists. Group Material members performed a mocking, military-influenced disco dance outfitted in hybrid “uniforms” that grafted together standard General Issue camouflage with the bright red colors of the FMLN. Such reflexive and playful use of visual signifiers marked the increasing experimentation and confidence of a new “political art” that was consciously distancing itself from the banners and murals of the past.

“Not For Sale: A Project Against Displacement,” 1983 & 1984:
One of the more ambitious projects the group sponsored grew out of a reading started in 1981 by member’s Jim Murray , Michael Anderson and myself. For a year, the PAD/D Reading Group met to discuss essays by Bertolt Brecht, Theodore Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, George Lukacs as well as C.L.R. James and Antonio Negri. Eventually, the group arrived at a point of frustration with theory apart from practice. The outcome was a project about the encroaching gentrification of the Lower East Side, the neighborhood where many of the PAD/D Reading Group members resided. The transformation from a reading group

to an activist group was completed with the choosing of a new identity: the PAD/D, Not For Sale Committee: as in The Lower East Side is not for sale.

The first Not For Sale (NFS) project was housed in El Bohio, the same community center that "PAD" was initially headquartered in four years earlier. With a small stipend from the parent group, the NFS Committee constructed temporary walls and installed a massive exhibition of two hundred art works. Punk bands, guerrilla theater and activist rabble-rousers accompanied the opening while throughout the night, teams of stencil artists took to the streets armed with spray paint and anti-gentrification imagery. Additional video and cabaret presentations took place at the Millennium Film Theater and neighborhood "art bars" including the Wow Cafe and Limbo Lounge. Most of the artistic entries however were disappointingly unrelated to the issue of economic and cultural displacement and some venues and their audience belonged to the same East Village Art Scene that many of us understood to be part of the process of gentrification itself. When New York Times arts reviewer Grace Glueck included news of our event in a piece entitled Pioneering in New Territories, needless to say we were dismayed (See: The New York Times: June 26, 1983.) As PAD/D: NFS member Janet Koenig stated: the Lower East Side was becoming Off-Off West Broadway.

In the months that followed the NFS Committee reflected on the contradictions the exhibition had generated. We re-thought our strategy and decided to produce a more tactical and flexible project for the coming year. The new project entitled: "Art for the Evicted: A Project Against Displacement," began as a call for artists to produce twenty copies of an anti-gentrification poster that the NFS Committee pledged to paste and re-paste in neighborhood streets during the coming months. The group then overlaid still another layer of critique by selecting four outdoor locations in which to focus the poster campaign while at the same time christening these "street galleries" with fictional appellations directly mocking the East Village Art Scene itself. The four, ersatz galleries included: The Discount Salon, Another Gallery, The Leona Helmsley Gallery that was located on a derelict building overlooking Tompkins Square Park that the Helmsleys later turned into million dollar condos, and most prophetically The Guggenheim Downtown. The Later was sited at Avenue A and 10th Street long before Thomas Krens opened a branch of the Guggenheim museum in SoHo. The group also produced its own exhibition poster. Silk-screened at the Lower East Side Print Shop it was designed by PAD/D NFS member Janet Koenig in collaboration with the entire group and depicted a beat-up suitcase stamped with four travel stickers, one for each, fictive NFS street gallery. For example, The Guggenheim Downtown sported a logo of a thick machine screw turned on its head, Another Gallery was rendered in graffiti style and the Leona Helmsley Gallery was elegant, befitting the "queen of mean" who had not yet served time for tax evasion.

Not For Sale street poster by Michael Anderson memorializing Orchidia, a popular and inexpensive local restaurant serving Italian and Ukrainian food that was forced to close due to an overnight rent hike of 500% in 1984.

The second NFS project opened at The Guggenheim Downtown on Saturday April 28th, 1984 and included local housing activists urging passersby to join the struggle against displacement. As promised, the NFS posters went up in the street every week until late May when we prematurely ran out of replacements.

The late cultural critic Craig Owens championed the NFS project in an essay for Art in America. One of the few examples in which PAD/D's work was discussed in art circles, Owens described PAD/D's project as serving to "mobilize resistance against, the political and economic interests which East Village art serves... " (Craig Owens, Commentary: The Problem with Puerilism in Art in America, Summer 1984.)

V. PAD/D's Legacy

PAD/D remained in existence for almost eight years. By the mid to late 1980s, with more and more time taken up by the business of running the organization, many members began to feel PAD/D's artistic mission and perhaps also its political mission were becoming eclipsed by its own institutional dynamic. Meanwhile, a prudent form of "Political Art" had begun to find its way into the museums and art galleries in New York. With fewer and fewer new members joining the group and many unwilling to commit to the multitude of tasks carved out by an earlier enthusiasm, the once robust organization that was PAD/D now languished. The group produced its last newsletter in 1987 and technically its 501 (C) 3 status remained in effect as late as 1988, yet PAD/D's auspicious mission, for reasons both internal and external, had ceased to be viable.

All this time however, the PAD/D Archive Committee intrepidly continued working on the extensive repository of political art. Consisting primarily of Barbara Moore and Mimi Smith, they catalogued and cross-referenced hundreds of entries by hand on standard index cards. In 1989, The PAD/D Archive originally conceived as a form of counter-cultural activism in which models of politically engaged art -making would be circulated like a tactical toolbox finally found its lasting institutional home in the Museum of Modern Art Library. One of Clive Philpot's last acts before resigning from MoMA, the irony was not lost on former PAD/D members. In 1988 Deborah Wye, the Museum's Curator of Prints, organized an impressive survey of "political art" entitled Committed To Print in which the PAD/D Archives played a key research role. Nevertheless, the vast majority of work documented in the PAD/D Archives remains invisible today and forms the cultural equivalent of cosmic Dark Matter: that unknown, unseen material that constitutes the majority of actual universe. And this obscurity remains so, despite the contemporary art world's paying of lip service to "political correctness." With almost two thousand entries spanning the

Former office of PAD/D at the "Peace Building," the A.J. Muste Foundation Lower Manhattan. Seen here dwarfed by mega-poster in 2005.

years 1979 to 1988 and including performance art, guerrilla actions, street posters, gallery based political art, as well as plans for an international art strike in 1969, the PAD/D Archive is a significant resource for a new generation currently rediscovering artistic collectivism. And if PAD/D was the focal point of the 1980's New York activist art scene that included such organizations as Group Material, Artists for Nuclear Disarmament, Art Against Apartheid, Carnival Knowledge and Artists Call Against US Intervention in Central America, it also led to the formation of REPOhistory. In fact, not only was REPOhistory co-founded by several former PAD/D members, including Janet Koenig, the late Ed Eisenberg, Lucy R. Lippard, and myself, and thus benefited from PAD/D's organizational and networking know-how, but REPOhistory also inherited PAD/D's Lafayette Street office space.

But as an activist organization can we say that PAD/D was a failure? Certainly as a means of repelling gentrification or of establishing an alternative realm of artistic practice it did not succeed. Yet the emergence of tactical media and new forms of collectivism over the past ten years suggest the possibility of establishing a counter-hegemonic, cultural sphere is not a linear process, just as the historical re-construction of groups such as PAD/D is part of a re-mapping that ultimately leads to questions about the nature of creative, political resistance itself.

Meanwhile, aspects of the political imagination of PAD/D remains visible today in such projects as Groups and Spaces and Nettime, as well as similar on and off-line networks dedicated to linking disassociated pockets of creative experimentation and resistance. As cultural producers are increasingly forced to choose between affirming the power of global capitalism or exploring new as well as old alternatives to it, PAD/D's legacy may become one history lesson necessary for survival.

CODA:

In the summer of 2003 I picked up a copy of the collected writings of Craig Owens entitled, Beyond Recognition Representation, Power, and Culture published by the University of California Press in 1992. 2* Owen's premature death in 1990 from complications due to AIDS left behind a series of influential essays spread amongst the journals October, Artforum and Art in America. As artists are prone to do I flipped to the index page and looked for an entry on Political Art Documentation and Distribution . I was surprised to discover that PAD/D does not appear in the California University book. (Although curiously PAD/D's name appears in the index!) Nowhere in the book does it indicate that Owen's writings were altered for this collection and after some checking all I can say is the omission occurred late in the production process. But regardless of the reason for the omission, the same effect is achieved. One of the few published references to this 80's activist art collective has slipped off into the shadows. And yet, one cannot help

East Village '84

Commentary: The Problem with Puerilism

TITLE DEED
SECOND AVE.

RENT $250.

With 1 Wine Bar $500.
With 2 Boutiques 675.
With 3 Gourmet Shops 950.
With 4 Galleries 1100.
With CO-OPS $1400.

If a landlord owns ALL the buildings on a block, the rent is Doubled on Unrenovated Units in those buildings.

Ownes essay as it originally appeared in Art in America remarked on this project in which he wrote, "Artists can, however, work within the community to call attention to, and mobilize the political and economic interests East Village art serves (as the artists affiliated with PADD, who are responsible for the illustrations accompanying this text, have done)."

economy first became visible. (Without Warhol, the above analysis of the avant-garde would not have been possible.) By destroying the avant-garde's pretense to autonomy, Warhol has left subsequent "avant-gardes" two alternatives: either they openly acknowledge their economic role—the alternative pursued by the East Village "avant-garde"—or they actively work to dislodge an entrenched, institutionalized avant-garde production model.

If Warhol exposed the implication of the avant-garde in cultural economy in general, the East Village demonstrates the implication of that economy in broader social and political processes. For this expansion of the market also participates in the ongoing "Manhattanization" of New York—the uprooting and displacement, by a coalition of city politicians (headed by the mayor) and real-estate speculators, of the city's subcultural populations, and their replacement with a young, upwardly mobile professional class. Artists are not, of course, responsible for "gentrification"; they are often its victims, as the closing of any number of East Village galleries, forced out of the area by rents they helped to inflate, will sooner or later demonstrate. Artists can, however, work within the community to call attention to, and mobilize resistance against, the political and economic interests which East Village art serves.

The East Village is not only a local phenomenon, but also a global symptom. Exhibitions of East Village art have been mounted as far afield as Amsterdam; its reception in the European and, now, the American art press has been ecstatic. An all too familiar reaction to the increasing homogenization, standardization, rigidification of contemporary social life, this reception is yet another manifestation of what Jacques Attali describes as our "anxious search for lost differences within a logic from which difference itself has been excluded."[4] Searching for lost difference has become the primary activity of the contemporary avant-garde. But as it seeks out and develops more and more resistant areas of social life for mass-cultural consumption, the avant-garde only intensifies the condition it attempts to alleviate. The appropriation of the forms whereby subcultures resist assimilation is part of, rather than an antidote to, the general leveling of real sexual, regional, and cultural differences and their replacement with the culture industry's artificial, mass-produced, generic signifiers for "Difference"—in the present instance, the empty diversity and puerilism of the East Village "avant-garde."

NOTES

1. See Thomas Crow, "Modernism and Mass Culture in the Visual Arts," in *Modernism and Modernity*, ed. Buchloh, Guilbaut, and Solkin (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983), 215–64. Although I would argue with Crow's tendency to treat the modernist avant-garde as a resistant subculture, the following treatment of culture-industry-subcultural relations is indebted to his.

2. Hall and Jefferson, eds., *Resistance through Rituals* (London: 1976), 13. Also cited in Crow, "Modernism and Mass Culture," 259.

3. Crow, "Modernism and Mass Culture," 252. For a more complex analysis of these mechanisms, Crow's entire section VIII (251–55) should be consulted.

4. Jacques Attali, "Introduction to *Bruits*," *Social Text* 7 (Spring/Summer 1983), 7.

And as it appears in his book of collected writings sans any mention of PAD/D:

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REPRESENTATION, POWER, AND CULTURE
CRAIG OWENS

but speculate: Would the publisher have been so slipshod if the illustrations were by individual artists with some degree of visibility among dealers, collectors and museums rather than a group with a collective identity making impermanent, public art? ■

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An overview of the holdings in the PAD/D Archive can be found at:
http://www.moma.org/research/library/library_faq.html#padd

The PAD/D membership and their affiliations included:

Lucy R. Lippard: the Art Workers Coalition or AWC , Heresies, Ad Hoc Women Artists; Jerry Kearns, Elizabeth Kulas: Red-Herring and Amiri Braraka's Anti-Imperialist Cultural Union; Barbara Moore: Fluxus; Janet Koenig, Julie Ault, Herb Perr and the late Irving Wexler: Artists Meeting for Cultural Change or AMCC ; Mike Gleir: Colab; Arlene Goldbard and Don Adams: Alliance for Cultural Democracy, ACD; Jim Murray: Cultural Correspondence ; Rudolph Baranik: Angry Arts; Jerri Allyn: The Women's Building; Seth Tobacman: World War 3 Illustrated; muralists Eva Cockcroft and Keith Christensen; Tim Rollins, Julie Ault and Doug Ashford: Group Material; Anne Pitrone Carnival Knowledge as well as Mimi Smith, Edward Eisenberg, Vanalyne Greene, Micki McGee, Nancy Linn, Sharon Gilbert, Richard Mayer, Margia Kramer, Charles Fredric, Rae Lange, Randy Wade, Joan Giannecchini, Stan Kaplan and the author, Gregory Sholette.
A selective PAD/D bibliography:

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1 1983: Catherine Lord "The President's Man: The Arts Endowment under Frank Hodsoll," Afterimage, 10:7.

2 Beyond Recognition Representation, Power, and Culture (Edited by Scott Bryson, Barbara Kruger, Lynne Tillman, and Jane Weinstock. Introduction by Simon Watney.) The University of California Press, 1992)

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