

Public Disclosures of Private Realities

HIV/AIDS and the Domestic Archive

Stephen Vider

ABSTRACT: *AIDS at Home: Art and Everyday Activism*, presented at the Museum of the City of New York from May to October 2017, aimed to complement and complicate popular narratives about the history of HIV/AIDS by examining how HIV/AIDS played out in the everyday lives of diverse communities in New York. The exhibition placed works of art alongside documentary photography, film, and archival materials in unique ways to ask visitors to rethink what counts as activism and to reconsider home as a crucial political space. This paper reflects on the ways the curator sought to activate the domestic archive—the everyday ephemera and affects of illness, care-taking, and family life.

KEY WORDS: LGBTQ history, HIV/AIDS, domesticity, activism, archives

The photograph, “Kachin and Michael at Michael’s Apartment,” was originally taken in 1987 as part of a book project by photojournalist Susan Kuklin. Over the course of a year, Kuklin followed a team of volunteers from the Buddy Program, a pioneering caregiving program operated by Gay Men’s Health Crisis (GMHC) from 1983 to the early 2000s. The program was started by GMHC in New York in response to an urgent need for caregiving for people living with AIDS and was quickly replicated in cities across the country, including Boston; Los Angeles; Cleveland; Washington, DC; Atlanta; Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Greensboro, North Carolina; Mobile, Alabama; and Topeka, Kansas, to name only a handful. The proliferation of volunteer caregiving programs for people with AIDS speaks both to the success of the model as well as the dire need they aimed to address: throughout the United States, cases of HIV/AIDS multiplied exponentially yet local, state, and federal governments were slow to respond. In this photograph, Kuklin captures a moment between a volunteer, Kachin, and, in the language of GMHC, her client, Michael. The photograph is remarkable not only for the sense of emotional intimacy between Kachin and Michael but also their physical intimacy. Scientific knowledge about HIV had expanded, but stigma against people

THE PUBLIC HISTORIAN, Vol. 41, No. 2, pp. 163–189 (May 2019). ISSN: 0272-3433, electronic ISSN 1533-8576. © 2019 by The Regents of the University of California and the National Council on Public History. All rights reserved. Please direct all requests for permission to photocopy or reproduce article content through the University of California Press’s Reprints and Permissions web page, <https://www.ucpress.edu/journals/reprints-permissions>. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/tph.2019.41.2.163>.



Susan Kuklin, *Kachin and Michael at Michael's Apartment*, 1987. (Courtesy of the photographer)

with HIV/AIDS and fear of transmission continued, even among healthcare providers.¹

The context of HIV/AIDS could be easily lost, if not for a single detail: Michael is wearing a black t-shirt featuring the image of a pink triangle and the text, "Silence=Death." The Silence=Death image was created in 1986 by a collective of six activist-artists in New York City, where it was first printed on posters wheat-pasted on construction barriers. Within a year, it came to be associated with the direct action group ACT UP, founded in March 1987. Indeed, the Silence=Death image was made familiar through photographs and news footage of ACT UP protests, first in New York, and later across the United States.² The sight of Michael wearing an ACT UP t-shirt at home, in bed, challenges us to

¹ Susan Kuklin, *Fighting Back: What Some People Are Doing About AIDS* (New York: Putnam, 1988). On the history of GMHC and volunteer responses to HIV/AIDS in New York, see Susan Maizel Chambré, *Fighting for Our Lives: New York's AIDS Community and the Politics of Disease* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006). On the history of HIV/AIDS in the US more generally, see especially Jennifer Brier, *Infectious Ideas: U.S. Political Responses to the AIDS Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009) and the recent roundtable discussion, "HIV/AIDS and U.S. History," *Journal of American History* 104, no. 2 (September 2017): 431–60.

² On the history of the Silence=Death Collective and image see Avram Finkelstein, *After Silence: A History of AIDS Through Its Images* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017). On the circulation of AIDS posters, see Tara Burk, "Radical Distribution: AIDS Cultural Activism in New York City, 1986–1992," *Space and Culture* 18, no. 4 (November 2015): 436–49.

rethink the boundaries of HIV/AIDS activism: what happens when activism and the activist go home?

This was one of the primary questions raised for visitors of *AIDS at Home: Art and Everyday Activism*, an exhibition I curated at the Museum of the City of New York (MCNY) in 2017.³ Kuklin's photograph of Kachin and Michael was prominently featured alongside four other photographs from her project never before exhibited in a museum or gallery. Since the mid-2000s, diverse filmmakers and curators have contributed to what Ted Kerr has called "the AIDS Crisis Re-visitation"—a range of works and exhibitions looking back on responses to HIV/AIDS in the 1980s and early '90s.⁴ These works have tended to focus on public protest and public representation, aligning the politics of AIDS with a politics of visibility. Kuklin's photograph of Kachin and Michael was emblematic of the intervention *AIDS at Home* aimed to make: recentering domestic space as a primary site in the ongoing history of HIV/AIDS and healthcare more broadly.

This essay reports on the process of curating *AIDS at Home* in order to consider why public histories of HIV/AIDS in the last ten years have largely overlooked everyday private life as a locus of healthcare activism, and why a reorientation to home in histories of HIV/AIDS and activism matters for audiences in the present. A focus on domestic space shifts popular and academic understandings of the impact of and response to HIV/AIDS and reshapes conceptions of what constitutes activism, what constitutes healthcare, and how public scholars uncover and tell those histories.

More broadly the essay considers how historians, curators, and archivists can uncover, activate, and preserve what I am calling the "domestic archive." Archives and museums have long worked to preserve and display material domestic culture. In the 1920s and '30s, for example, art museums in the United States increasingly began designing American period rooms—reconstructing or reproducing historic rooms to arrange decorative art in the style of their place and time.⁵ The preservation of historic houses as museums dates back further, to the 1850s, with the movement to preserve George Washington's plantation home, Mount Vernon.⁶

3 The exhibition was curated under the guidance of curatorial director Sarah M. Henry, in collaboration with exhibition designer Marissa Martonyi and curatorial assistant Becky Laughner.

4 Theodore (Ted) Kerr, "AIDS 1969: HIV, History, and Race," *Drain* 13, no. 2 (2016), <http://drainmag.com/aids-1969-hiv-history-and-race/>.

5 On the history of period rooms in the US, see Dianne H. Pilgrim, "Inherited from the Past: The American Period Room," *American Art Journal* 10, no. 1 (May 1978): 5–23; and Neil Harris, "Period Rooms and the American Art Museum," *Winterthur Portfolio* 46, no. 2/3 (Summer/Autumn 2012): 117–38.

6 On the origins of historic house museums, see Patricia West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999). On heteronormativity and queer public history in house museums, see Alison Oram, "Going on an Outing: The Historic House and Queer Public History," *Rethinking History* 15, no. 2 (June 2011): 189–207; Alison Oram, "Sexuality in Heterotopia: Time, Space and Love Between Women in the Historic House," *Women's History Review* 21, no. 4 (September 2012): 533–51; and Joshua G. Adair, "House Museums or Walk-In Closets? The (Non) Representation of Gay Men in the Museums They

Still, the domestic archive is not only an archive of the home's objects and architecture, but also its practices, relationships, and affects—the ephemeral and embodied as well as the material. Homemaking might, in this sense, be understood like gender in terms of performance—scripted onto space and the body but not stable: domestic norms are constantly made and remade through imperfect, and sometimes subversive, repetition.⁷ To uncover these more ordinary, private, and transitory expressions of domestic performance, scholars must turn back to the archives for artifacts of social history—letters, diaries, organizational records, personal photographs, and home movies. Yet these materials are not often ordered or identified in finding aids in terms of domestic life. Rather, finding the domestic in the archive often entails reading for the everyday.

The domestic archive can be particularly challenging to uncover for groups that rejected, dramatically rewrote, or simply failed to conform to dominant domestic scripts, precisely because their home lives were often unrecognized at the time as properly “domestic” at all. Whose domestic life gets represented, saved, and preserved is already a reflection of social capital and legibility. For many queer people, surviving family members often failed, or chose not, to preserve the material ephemera of their everyday domestic lives. Since the 1970s and '80s, the rise of LGBT archives and special collections has helped to counteract this archival bias, yet many LGBT collections privilege white gay men, who have been more likely to be in leadership positions and have typically had more social and economic resources than women, queer people of color, and transgender people. Uncovering the domestic archive then also means remaining aware of the absences in institutional and community archives, and looking beyond formal collections, to reach out and work with individuals where archives don't yet exist.⁸ I present *AIDS at Home* as a potential model for future exhibitions and projects that seek to work with communities to tell their stories, highlighting the domestic archive as an overlooked source for understanding the ways individuals shape and understand their everyday lives in the face of oppression and marginalization.

Called Home,” in *Gender, Sexuality, and Museums: A Routledge Reader*, ed. Amy K. Levin (New York: Routledge, 2010).

⁷ On performance and everyday life, see especially Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959); and Robin Bernstein, “Dances with Things: Material Culture and the Performance of Race,” *Social Text* 27, no. 4 101 (December 2009), 67–94. On gender, performance, and subversive repetition, see Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (December 1988): 519–31. On the archive and the ephemeral, see Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), especially chapter 1.

⁸ On challenges of collecting and exhibiting diverse LGBT histories, see Don Romesburg, “Presenting the Queer Past: A Case for the GLBT History Museum,” *Radical History Review* 120 (Fall 2014): 131–44; and Kwame Holmes, “What’s the Tea: Gossip and the Production of Black Gay Social History,” *Radical History Review* 122 (May 2015): 55–69.

Recentring Home and Care

AIDS at Home initially emerged out of the larger approach and questions of my ongoing research on queer domesticities. My forthcoming book, *Queer Belongings: Gender, Sexuality, and the American Home After World War II*, examines how domestic practices and ideals shaped LGBT relationships and politics in the United States from 1945 to the present. Following World War II, government officials, mental health experts, and popular media depicted the marital, reproductive household as a unique source of personal and national stability, casting suspicion on those who deviated from the male breadwinner/female homemaker ideal.⁹ Far from simply rejecting such discourses, LGBT people elaborated new domestic styles and intimacies as a primary means of negotiating their relationship to post-war sexual and gender norms. *Queer Belongings* traces these alternative forms of home life both to reveal the place of the home in LGBT history and to better understand the persistent power of domesticity in shaping American culture and politics more broadly. From the 1940s through the present, domestic space became increasingly central in LGBT politics as a means of demonstrating and interrogating the place of LGBT people in their communities and the nation. These queer adaptations and interrogations encompass a range of domestic forms, from debates around gay and lesbian marriage in the 1950s to LGBT homeless shelters in the 1970s to group residences for LGBT seniors today.¹⁰

This project joins a small but growing body of scholarship looking at the historical intersections of queer life, family, and home.¹¹ Nevertheless the history of homemaking has been, and remains, largely absent in histories of LGBT life, culture, and politics. The long absence of home in queer historiography stems from a larger tendency in LGBT history—and histories of social and political activism more broadly—to prioritize public and commercial spaces over private ones as the major sites of LGBT community and political formation. In his foundational 1983 book, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, John D’Emilio, for example,

9 On the American family after World War II, see especially Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988) and Robert Self, *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2013).

10 Stephen Vider, *Queer Belongings: Gender, Sexuality, and the American Home After World War II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, forthcoming). See also Stephen Vider, “Lesbian and Gay Marriage and Romantic Adjustment in the 1950s and 1960s United States,” *Gender & History* 29, no. 3 (November 2017), 693–715; “‘The Ultimate Extension of Gay Community’: Communal Living and Gay Liberation in the 1970s,” *Gender & History* 27, no. 3 (November 2015), 865–81; and “‘Oh Hell, May, Why Don’t You People Have a Cookbook?’: Camp Humor and Gay Domesticity,” *American Quarterly* 65, no. 4 (December 2013): 877–904.

11 See for example Daniel Winunwe Rivers, *Radical Relations: Lesbian Mothers, Gay Fathers, and Their Children in the United States Since World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Heather Murray, *Not in This Family: Gays and the Meaning of Kinship in Postwar North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Matt Cook, *Queer Domesticities: Homosexuality and Home Life in Twentieth-Century London* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); and Lauren Jae Gutterman, “Another Enemy Within: Lesbian Wives, or the Hidden Threat to the Nuclear Family in Post-war America,” *Gender & History* 24, no. 2 (August 2012): 475–501.

specifically situated the emergence of gay bars as the most important precondition for the development of gay social and political identity in the postwar period.¹² The tendency to discount private space, in opposition to public space, stems from the origins of LGBT history in the larger visibility politics of gay liberation. Throughout the 1970s, many LGBT activists did, in fact, build on feminist theory to argue for the social and political significance of home as a space to resist and reshape gender, sexual, racial, and class norms, for example, through the creation of lesbian and gay communes. (D’Emilio himself has written about how the Gay Academic Union—the first LGBT academic group—held many of its early meetings in his New York City apartment.¹³) At the same time, gay liberation groups, gay media, as well as later gay and lesbian rights groups increasingly emphasized public visibility and assembly as the crucial means of combatting LGBT oppression—as the popular slogan framed it, “Out of the closet, into the streets.” Activists and historians of LGBT life since then have tended to reiterate uncritically a traditional “separate spheres” ideology: the home is presented as a safe, static, and lonely space removed from public life, labor, and politics.¹⁴

Feminist scholars have long questioned readings of the home as removed from the public world of politics and labor. Dolores Hayden, for example, examines the work of “material feminists” of the nineteenth century—women who sought to reimagine what the home should and could be, in its architecture as well as its affiliations. bell hooks uses the term “homeplace” to capture the ways African American women turned the home into a haven and site of resistance against racial oppression. And Alice Kessler-Harris’s essay on labor history, “Treating the Male as ‘Other,’” considers the continuities between the household and the world outside.¹⁵ More recently, Teresa Anne Murphy has used the term “domestic citizenship” to understand how late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women writers made claims for the political significance of domesticity centered on motherhood and

¹² John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940–1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

¹³ John D’Emilio, “Still Radical After All These Years: Remembering *Out of the Closets*,” in *The World Turned: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 48.

¹⁴ On the discourse of separate spheres, see especially Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: “Woman’s Sphere” in New England, 1780–1835* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977); Mary P. Ryan, *The Empire of the Mother: American Writing about Domesticity, 1830 to 1860* (New York: Haworth Press, 1982); and Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

¹⁵ Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981); bell hooks, “homeplace: a site of resistance,” reprinted in *Housing and Dwelling: Perspectives on Modern Domestic Architecture*, ed. Barbara Miller Lane (London/New York: Routledge, 2006), 68–72; Alice Kessler-Harris, “Treating the Male As ‘Other’: Redefining the Parameters of Labor History,” *Labor History* 34, no. 2–3 (Spring–Summer 1993): 190–204. See also Linda K. Kerber, “Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman’s Place: The Rhetoric of Women’s History,” *Journal of American History* 75, no. 1 (June 1988): 9–39, and Eileen Boris, *Home to Work: Motherhood and the Politics of Industrial Homework in the United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

marriage.¹⁶ *Queer Belongings* builds on this work to argue for the continued and expanding significance of domesticity as a mode and measure of belonging at multiple scales—the intimate, the communal, and the national. Domestic citizenship, as I frame it in my project, is the political meaning attached to domestic ideals and practices—the rights, benefits, obligations, and recognition associated with normative homemaking.

The social and political stakes of domestic citizenship in the late twentieth century became especially clear in responses to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The earliest cases of AIDS were diagnosed among gay men and typically blamed on promiscuity or the so-called “gay lifestyle,” sexual and social patterns that deviated from the norms of heterosexuality, reproduction, and monogamy—precisely those norms tied to middle-class domesticity.¹⁷ Many early television and cinematic representations of HIV/AIDS specifically sought to reintegrate people with AIDS into the heterosexual family, often through the image of the good gay son, as in the 1985 TV movie *An Early Frost*, or the 1993 film *Philadelphia*.¹⁸ These portrayals suggested that belonging within the family constitutes belonging within the nation. Other films, television representations, books, and plays specifically sought to make claims for alternative forms of family, or at least to complicate or complement the heterosexual reproductive family, for example the 1986 film *Parting Glances* or the 1994 musical *Rent*. Christopher Capozzola has also shown how the AIDS Memorial Quilt, first displayed on the National Mall in 1987, engaged with traditional American domestic practices and new conservative discourses of family values.¹⁹ And yet today, home as an emotional and analytic frame has largely disappeared from public representations and discussions of HIV/AIDS.

The ongoing elision of home in histories of HIV/AIDS stems from a similar splitting of public and private life in histories of LGBT activism. Recent documentaries on HIV/AIDS such as *United in Anger* (2012) or *How to Survive a Plague* (2012) prioritize direct action groups like ACT UP, which emerged six years after AIDS was first identified. Direct action and public protest are presented as the core movers in HIV/AIDS activism, and although these stories are crucial, they can also obscure the impact of responses that were less visible. This tendency to prioritize direct action and protest over more private responses—particularly caregiving—in fact reflects a longstanding, intracommunal debate about the social and political strategies activists should take in response to HIV/AIDS. Novelist Larry Kramer, for

16 Teresa Anne Murphy, *Citizenship and the Origins of Women's History in the United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

17 On cultural discourses around AIDS in the US, see Douglas Crimp, “How to Have Promiscuity in an Epidemic,” *October* 43 (Winter 1987): 237–71.

18 On early television and film representations of HIV/AIDS, see Paula A. Treichler, *How to Have Theory in an Epidemic: Cultural Chronicles of AIDS* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999) and Robert J. Corber, “Nationalizing the Gay Body: AIDS and Sentimental Pedagogy in *Philadelphia*,” *American Literary History* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 107–33.

19 Christopher Capozzola, “A Very American Epidemic: Memory Politics and Identity Politics in the AIDS Memorial Quilt, 1985–1993,” *Radical History Review* 82, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 91–109.

example, pushed for the creation of ACT UP largely by denigrating the work of GMHC as timid and inadequate, even though Kramer himself had been a key founder of GMHC. In Kramer's autobiographical play *The Normal Heart*, Kramer's stand-in Ned Weeks puts it this way: "I thought I was starting with a bunch of Ralph Naders and Green Berets, and . . . almost in front of my eyes they turn into a bunch of nurses' aides."²⁰ Kramer distinctly decries caregiving work as feminine, calling instead for more assertive, public, and presumably masculine action.

This splitting between the "timid" activism of early AIDS responses and later "militant" responses can be seen even in some of the best scholarship on HIV/AIDS. Deborah Gould's 2009 book *Moving Politics*, for example, examines the emotional structures of ACT UP New York in the late 1980s. Gould provides a nuanced frame for conceiving how social movements harness and transform affect and emotion, particularly how ACT UP transformed grief into anger and action. Gould, however, largely disregards the work of the social service organizations and caretaking strategies that emerged before and continued through the rise of ACT UP, and in many cases, still operate today.²¹ The tendency to disregard care as labor stems from a more general tendency to dismiss labor that happens in private as genuine work.²²

Recent exhibitions on art and activism in response to HIV/AIDS have also tended to reiterate this public/private divide. *AIDS in New York: The First Five Years* (New-York Historical Society, 2013); *Why We Fight: Remembering AIDS Activism* (New York Public Library, 2013–14); and *Art AIDS America* (Tacoma Art Museum, Washington; Bronx Museum of Art, New York; Zuckerman Museum, Kennesaw, Georgia; and Alphawood Gallery, Chicago, Illinois, 2015–17) have tended to place an emphasis on public protest, public health, medical interventions, public representations, and the art world.²³ An important exception is the exhibition *Everyday* (Visual AIDS/La Mama Galleria, 2016), curated by Jean Carlomusto, Alexandra Juhasz, and Hugh Ryan. Through a range of artworks, *Everyday* specifically sought to examine the meanings of daily routine for people living with HIV/AIDS.

AIDS at Home aimed to re-present the landscape of HIV/AIDS, art, activism, and healthcare; explore how HIV/AIDS has played out in domestic space; and examine how HIV/AIDS altered experiences and conceptions of home and family for LGBT

²⁰ Larry Kramer, *Reports from the Holocaust: The Making of an AIDS Activist* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989) and *The Normal Heart and the Destiny of Me: Two Plays* (New York: Grove Press, 2014), 71.

²¹ Deborah B. Gould, *Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT UP's Fight Against AIDS* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

²² On home care and labor, see especially Eileen Boris and Jennifer Klein, *Caring for America: Home Health Workers in the Shadow of the Welfare State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

²³ For catalogs, see Jean Ashton, *AIDS in New York: The First Five Years* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 2015) and Jonathan Katz and Rock Hushka, *Art AIDS America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press 2015). See also Hugh Ryan's important critique of *AIDS in New York*, "How to Whitewash a Plague," *New York Times*, August 3, 2013; and Ted Kerr's interview with protestors of *Art AIDS America*, "Erasing Black AIDS History," *The New Inquiry*, January 1, 2016, <https://thenewinquiry.com/erasing-black-aids-histories>.

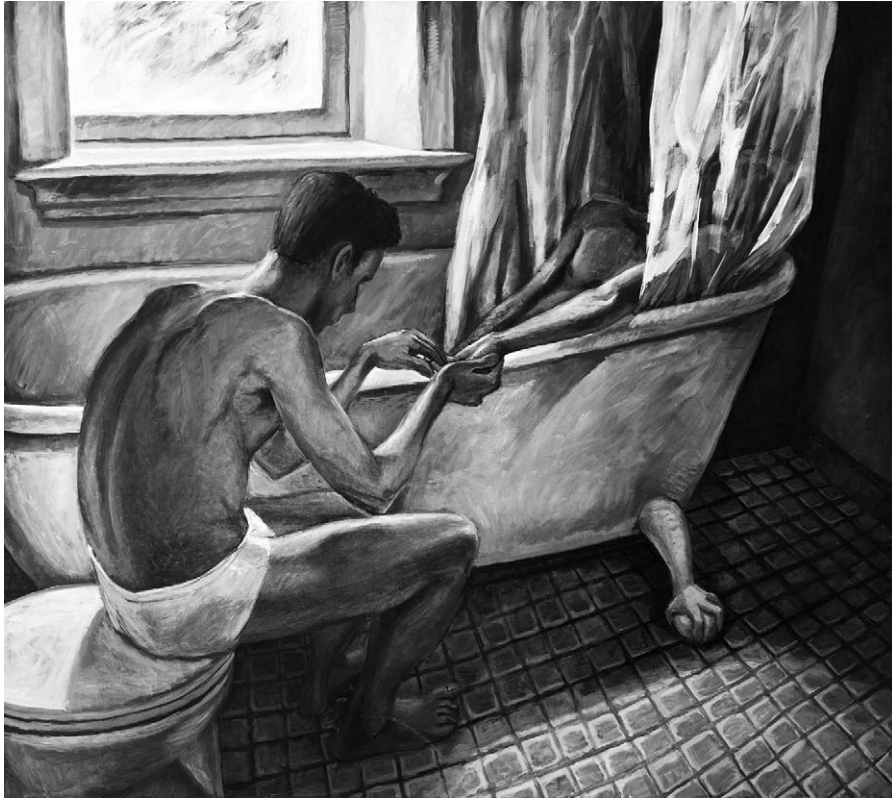
people and other communities impacted by HIV/AIDS. As I began to develop the exhibition, there were several decisions that were ultimately key to the exhibition's arc. The first decision was to include artwork alongside archival material. Place-based and multidisciplinary museums like the MCNY can be particularly suited to blurring the line between history and art exhibitions.²⁴ Many exhibits at the MCNY, such as *New York at Its Core*, a three gallery, four-hundred-year history of New York City, integrate works of visual and decorative art as historic artifacts to tell the social and political history of both the city's communities and its built environment. Other exhibits, such as *Gay Gotham: Art and Underground Culture in New York* (2016–17), or *Art in the Open: Fifty Years of Public Art in New York* (2017–18), mixed artwork with archival materials to highlight the cultural history of the city and the people behind it. Even with these precedents, however, artwork still played a unique role in *AIDS at Home*. Archival documents from organizations such as GMHC could provide important details about responses to HIV/AIDS, but artwork became an essential means of evoking the history of emotional experiences of HIV/AIDS and capturing day-to-day and repeated practices of caregiving.

One artist whose work was central for me in thinking about how art might figure into a history exhibition was Hugh Steers. The large painting *Bath Curtain* was one of two works by Steers that was ultimately included in *AIDS at Home*. Drawing inspiration from American figurative painters such as Edward Hopper and French post-impressionists, Steers' work, painted at the height of the AIDS epidemic, focused almost exclusively on gay men in domestic settings, often in caregiving relationships. In the gallery, the figures in the painting appeared essentially life-size, drawing the viewer into the private space of the bathroom. Steers' work captured the social history of HIV/AIDS—it conveyed the affective and material worlds of HIV/AIDS, and why domestic space was central to those experiences.²⁵ The work of over twenty artists was eventually included in the exhibition, representing a range of media (painting, photography, fiber arts, drawings, and sculpture) and a range of personal backgrounds and experiences. Some of the artists were well-known and represented by galleries, such as David Wojnarowicz and Nan Goldin, but many others were less well-known outside of New York.

The second decision was to move thematically rather than strictly chronologically. The exhibition was divided into three room-like sections: caretaking, housing, and family. Part I, "Caretaking," focused on the variety of caregiving relationships that emerged out of the HIV/AIDS epidemic—caregiving among partners and friends, as well as volunteers. That included, for example, work by

24 On art and history in multidisciplinary/place-based museums, see Rebecca Bush, "The Art Museum Does History?: Building Connections and Relevancy within Multidisciplinary Museums," in *Art and Public History: Approaches, Opportunities, and Challenges*, ed. Rebecca Bush and K. Tawny Paul (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 99–116.

25 Cynthia Carr, Dale Peck, and James Smalls, *Hugh Steers: The Complete Paintings, 1983–1994* (New York: Visual AIDS, 2015).



Hugh Steers, *Bath Curtain*, 1992. (Alexander Gray Associates and the Estate of Hugh Steers)

Hugh Steers, Susan Kuklin's photographs of the Buddy Program, as well as materials from the organization God's Love We Deliver, the first group in New York City to provide meals to people living with HIV/AIDS who were homebound.

Part II, "Housing," focused on activism in response to rising rates of homelessness among people with HIV and the experiences of people who lived in supportive housing. That included, for example, photographs of a protest by the ACT UP Housing Committee at Trump Tower (which gained new meaning during my research after the 2016 presidential election), as well as architectural plans for the first supportive residence constructed by the nonprofit advocacy and service organization Housing Works.²⁶ It also included artwork by artists reflecting on their own experiences living in supportive housing, including work

²⁶ On HIV/AIDS housing activism, see Tamar Carroll, *Mobilizing New York: AIDS, Antipoverty, and Feminist Activism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015) and *Housing Works History*, an online exhibition created by Gavin Browning (www.housingworkshistory.com). *Housing Works History* was also featured on a digital display in *AIDS at Home*. On the Trump Tower protest, see Stephen Vider, "Surrender Donald: A Queer Call to Action Since 1989," *Slate*, December 1, 2016, http://www.slate.com/blogs/outward/2016/12/01/an_act_up_protest_of_donald_trump_in_1989_shows_how_queers_recognized_his.html.



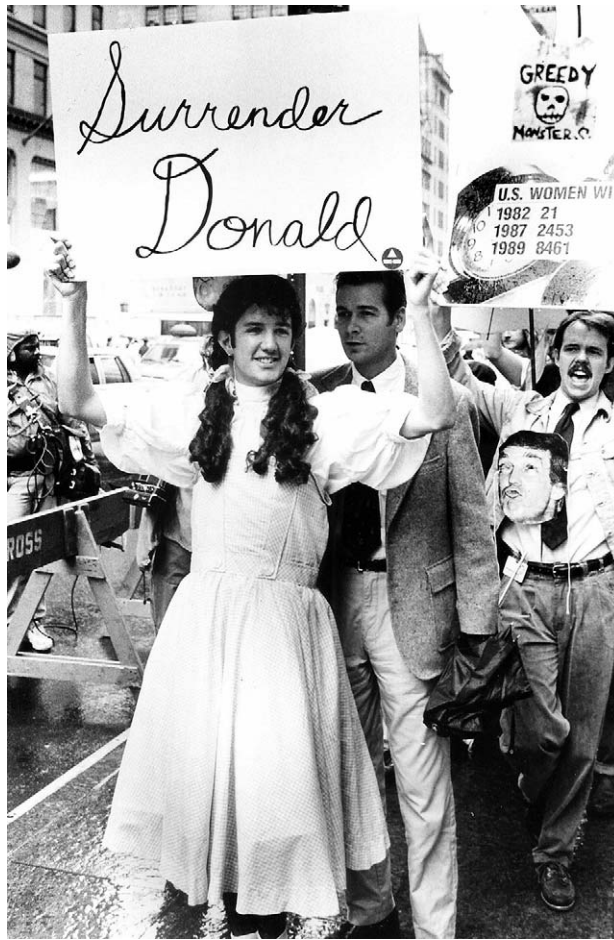
View of “Caretaking” section, *AIDS at Home*. (Photograph by Brad Farwell, courtesy of MCNY)

by transgender activist and artist Chloe Dzubilo and gay African American artist Frederick Weston.

Part III, “Family,” explored the various ways that HIV/AIDS led activists and artists to rethink and redefine what family meant. That included, for example, documents related to the 1986 legal case of Miguel Braschi. Braschi had lived for ten years with his partner, Leslie Blanchard, but when Blanchard died from complications related to AIDS, the landlord tried to evict Braschi, whose name was not on the lease. Braschi sued and the case resulted in a major reinterpretation of New York City rent law that would recognize gay couples as functional families.²⁷ The section also highlighted chosen families, for example, Luna Luis Ortiz’s photographs from the 1990s of his friends at the Neutral Zone, an LGBTQ youth space near the Christopher Street Piers.

The final section of the exhibition, titled “HIV/AIDS at Home Today,” reflected another choice—the exhibition would not have an end date. Each section of the exhibition moved towards the present, but the final section was intended to highlight how HIV/AIDS is experienced today, particularly how a sense that the epidemic is over can lead to continuing stigma. This section of the exhibition included *A Place in the City*, a short film I codirected with Nate Lavey for the exhibition,

²⁷ On *Braschi v. Stahl and Associates*, see Carlos A. Ball, *From the Closet to the Courtroom: Five LGBT Rights Lawsuits That Have Changed Our Nation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2010).



Lee Snider, Ronny Viggiani at ACT UP Housing Committee demonstration at Trump Tower, New York, October 31, 1989. (Estate of Lee Snider)

following three activists and artists working on HIV/AIDS today, focusing on the same three themes—caretaking, housing, and family.²⁸

My own research on home as a built environment also led me to think about the affects and emotions people experience in domestic space—the ways home elicits and contains intimacy and feeling.²⁹ The exhibition design, created in collaboration with the museum’s graphic and exhibition designer Marissa

²⁸ *A Place in the City* can be viewed online at <https://vimeo.com/303736782>.

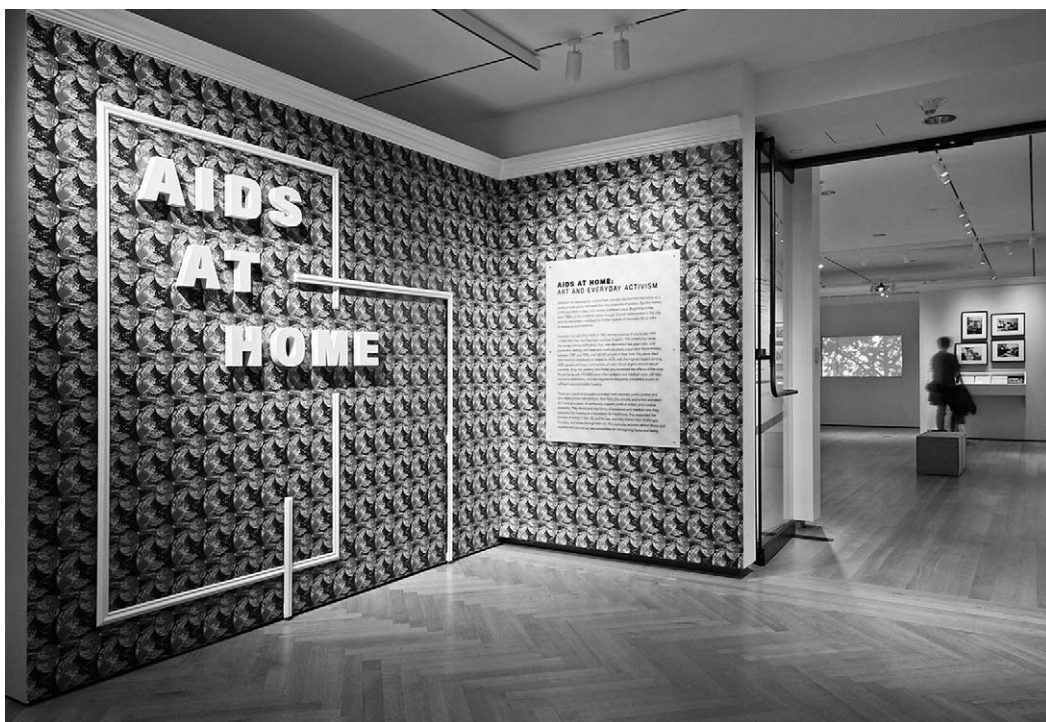
²⁹ Affect is conventionally distinguished from emotion as bodily sensation rather than a psychological experience—the embodied sensation of feelings before they can be consciously recognized or narrated. On affect, emotion, and feeling, see especially Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Jennifer Doyle, *Hold It Against Me: Difficulty and Emotion in Contemporary Art* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013); and Gould, *Moving Politics*.



View of “Housing” section, *AIDS at Home*. (Photograph by Brad Farwell, courtesy of MCNY)



View of “Family” section, *AIDS at Home*. (Photograph by Brad Farwell, courtesy of MCNY)



View of *AIDS at Home* introduction wall, with Avram Finkelstein, *Peace Through Chemistry*, wallpaper adapted from *Worker's Apartment*, 2013. (Photograph by Brad Farwell, courtesy of MCNY)

Martonyi, was intentionally evocative of domestic spaces. We recognized that the material of an exhibition on HIV/AIDS could bring up strong feelings and memories for many visitors who had first-hand experiences living with or caring for someone with HIV/AIDS, as well as anyone who had experiences caring for someone or living with other serious illnesses. With this in mind, we hoped to create a home-like space within the museum, to help to make people feel more comfortable experiencing whatever emotions came up. We built internal walls, to allow visitors a sense of relative privacy at various points in the gallery, and we provided places to stop and sit throughout the exhibition. We were especially inspired by railroad apartments of the East Village—of the kind in which many artists of the 1980s lived—with windows leading into the next room. We also picked up design elements from some of the artwork. For example, the wall molding in Susan Kuklin's photograph of Michael and Kachin inspired ceiling moldings throughout the gallery as well as frame moldings on the title wall—broken to suggest something amiss. Finally, we worked with five artists to develop wallpapers for each room that would tie to the themes and stories of each section: for example, “Caretaking” was decorated by wallpaper by Carl George, who was close friends with painter Hugh Steers. These details came together to produce a deeply personal view of the history of HIV/AIDS. Working

on the exhibition was not only a process of curating a history but curating emotion as well.

The process of selecting works for the exhibition was also an act of community engagement—of cultivating what Michael Frisch has influentially called a “shared authority” between historians and the artists, activists, and community groups whose stories they seek to tell.³⁰ Over the course of a year, I visited nearly all of the living artists in the show, in their homes or their studios, to discuss the exhibition and to think with them about what works would connect best to its themes. I met with partners and siblings and friends. Those conversations also functioned as informal oral histories, which resulted in a selection of work and the writing of wall texts that stayed very close to the experiences of the people represented. I felt a particular responsibility to amplify the voices of people whose stories had been less heard in histories and narratives of HIV/AIDS: not only white gay men whose experiences are most closely associated with HIV/AIDS, but also people of color, women, transgender people, and people who had experienced homelessness. I worked especially with Visual AIDS, a thirty-year-old organization that works to preserve the legacy of artists lost to AIDS and to support artists living with HIV/AIDS today. In many cases Visual AIDS made the first introductions, helping me to gain the confidence and trust of artists in the exhibition.

This engaged process of curating the exhibition, I later realized, reflected the history I was tracking. In many cases, the relative privacy of the home—and the continuing shame, silence, and stigma around HIV—was precisely what had kept this work and these stories out of public sight for so long. Much of the artwork and video in the show had rarely if ever been displayed in an exhibition. Some of the photographs existed only as negatives and test prints, many of the artists were not represented by commercial galleries, and many of the organizations had no formal archives, in large part because they were still in operation. All of the materials from Housing Works and God’s Love We Deliver, for example, came from their offices. There were also personal elements in the more “public” histories that were difficult to uncover. Although Miguel Braschi’s eviction case, for example, has been widely discussed and documented, there are no published photographs of Braschi himself. Hoping to center Miguel Braschi more directly, I eventually tracked down his sister, who shared her photographs and stories of Miguel with me. In many cases, artists felt a sense of urgency about sharing these works and stories. Photographer Gail Thacker approached me after an event at the museum for *Gay Gotham* and said simply that she had some work she needed to show me. I visited with Thacker a week later and selected two items to include in the exhibition—a strip of photographs she took in a photo booth with her friend, the photographer and artist Mark Morrisroe, and a portrait she took just a few years later of Morrisroe in bed, shortly

³⁰ Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1990) and “Commentary: Sharing Authority: Oral History and the Collaborative Process,” *The Oral History Review* 30, no. 1 (Winter-Spring 2003): 111–13.



Gail Thacker, *Mark Morrisroe in Bed*, 1989. (Courtesy of the artist)

before his death. Morrisroe, known for his punk style, took his own Polaroid photographs documenting the effects of HIV/AIDS on his body. Thacker's photograph is subtler, gentler, and more elusive: Morrisroe peers at her from beneath and behind a blanket, bringing the viewer into an intimate moment between friends.

The experiences of visiting with artists and activists, and our conversations, brought home for me how deeply personal the stories I was hoping to share were, and the incredible trust that all these artists and activists, friends and family, were putting in me to tell their stories. It also helped me see how little space there is in public and in most people's everyday lives to talk about illness, loss, and grief—how the silence and silencing around HIV, health, and healthcare more broadly continues. Home protects, but it also hides. Here, I want to turn to think more about the connections between home, privacy, and the public, and how these connections relate to art and the archive.

Privacy and Counterpublics

The work of the exhibition, to reveal personal and private experience, places it in line with a longer history of AIDS activism and art that specifically sought to bridge

the divide between the public and private. In 1989, photographer Nan Goldin curated the exhibition *Witnesses: Against Our Vanishing* at Artists Space in downtown Manhattan—one of the earliest group art shows about AIDS. The accompanying catalog included an essay by writer and artist David Wojnarowicz, at the time thirty-five years old and living with AIDS. Wojnarowicz reflected in the essay:

To make the *private* into something *public* is an action that has terrific repercussions in the pre-invented world. The government has the job of maintaining the day to day illusion of the ONE TRIBE NATION. Each public disclosure of a private reality becomes something of a magnet that can attract others with a similar frame of reference; thus each public disclosure of a fragment of private reality serves as a dismantling tool against the illusion of ONE TRIBE NATION; it lifts the curtains for a brief peek and reveals the possible existence of literally millions of tribes, the term GENERAL PUBLIC disintegrates.³¹

Wojnarowicz used the term “pre-invented world” here and in other writings to invoke a sense of an inherited reality—the vision of normal American life that circulated in popular culture and public life. Wojnarowicz saw instead how an artist’s or activist’s public revelation of their private experience could essentially disrupt and make space for those whose experiences did not align with the “general public.” Wojnarowicz’s conception of a ONE TRIBE NATION and GENERAL PUBLIC came at a moment of heightened censorship. The year 1989 was a turning point in the culture wars of the 1980s, as politicians like Jesse Helms began pushing for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to withdraw funding from controversial works—including *The Perfect Moment*, a traveling exhibition of the work of photographer Robert Mapplethorpe. In fact, Wojnarowicz’s criticism of Helms, among others, in the essay led the NEA to revoke a \$10,000 grant to Artists Space.³²

Wojnarowicz’s call for artwork that might reveal “literally millions of tribes” suggests the creation of communities of feeling akin to a counterpublic—an alternative civic and social network.³³ For Wojnarowicz, public expressions of private experience disrupted a sense of American uniformity. Grief for Wojnarowicz was key. Instead of private memorial services, he called for activists to drive to

31 David Wojnarowicz, “Post Cards from America: X-Rays from Hell,” in *Witnesses: Against Our Vanishing*, ed. Nan Goldin (New York: Artists Space, 1989), 10–11.

32 On the controversy around *Witnesses*, see Dustin Kidd, *Legislating Creativity: The Intersections of Art and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 81–106. On art and the 1980s/90s Culture Wars and censorship more broadly, see Brian Wallis, Marianne Weems, and Philip Yenawine, eds., *Art Matters: How the Culture Wars Changed America* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).

33 The term “counterpublic” was coined by feminist scholar Rita Felski in *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), and elaborated by Nancy Fraser in “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 56–80. On queer counterpublics, see Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, “Sex in Public,” *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 2 (Winter 1998): 547–66.

Washington, DC, and throw the bodies of their loved ones on the steps of the White House. By the early 1990s, political funerals would indeed become a major mode of ACT UP resistance.³⁴ But Wojnarowicz also pointed to the simple power of representations to counter the norm. He continued, “I find that when I witness diverse representations of ‘Reality’ on a gallery wall or in a book or a movie or in the spoken word or performance, that the more diverse the representations, the more I feel there is room in the environment for my existence; that not the entire environment is hostile.” Wojnarowicz’s essay itself performs this kind of public revelation of private realities: the essay begins with an extended anecdote that takes place at his kitchen table. A friend comes over for an unexpected visit, and then sits down to ask, “What is left of life?” Wojnarowicz describes the papers and pill bottles on the table. His essay models the very unveiling he hopes can happen, located here in his home.³⁵

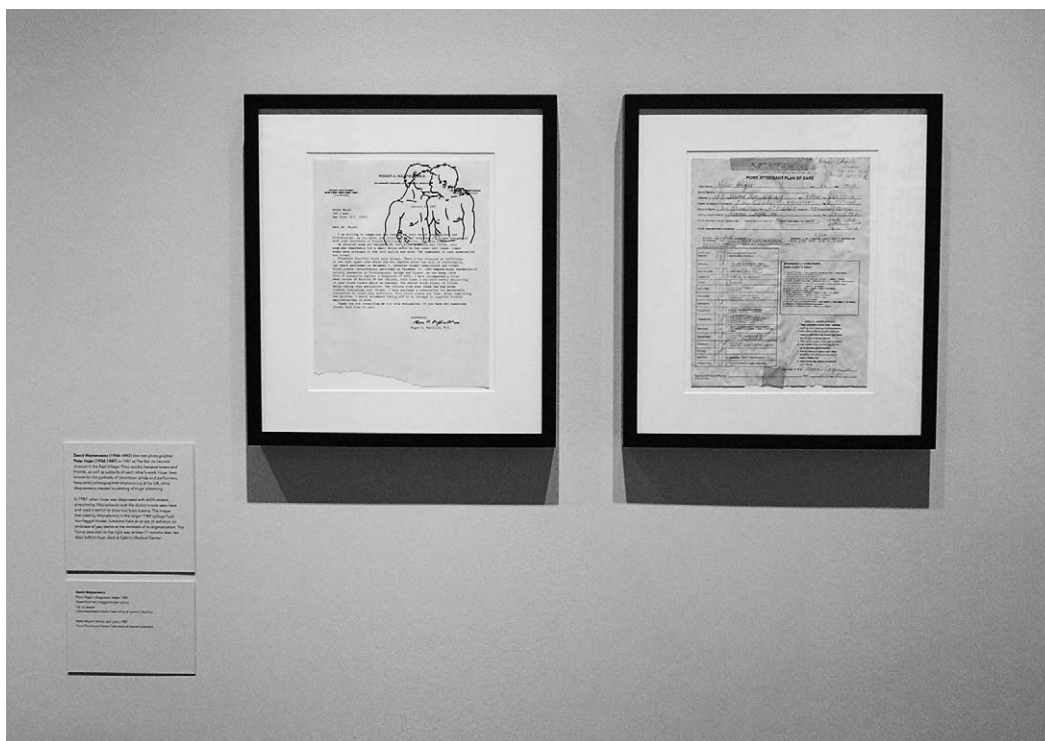
At the same time, I want to complicate Wojnarowicz’s rendering of the private and public by pointing to the instability of those categories. The domestic is not naturally or imminently private; rather it is a stage of performance, variably private and public. Scholar Susan Gal has described the public/private divide not as a simple binary but fractal: the public-private divide reproduces itself within itself. Gal gives the example of a house: when you are standing at the door, the yard is public, and the inside is private. But once you enter a house, the living room is public, but the bedroom is private. You go into the bedroom, perhaps to put down your coat—now the bedroom is public, but the closet is private.³⁶ Reading home as fractal reveals the performative or strategic dimensions of domesticity as a site that is neither perfectly private or public, but porous. When we recognize home as porous, what appear at first “private” acts or private realities can be more easily seen for their political meanings.

In *AIDS at Home*, the political dimensions of the domestic were made visible from the start. The exhibition opened with two documents from Wojnarowicz’s collection at Fales Library and Special Collections at New York University, which together brought visitors into the domestic life Wojnarowicz shared with his friend and lover, photographer Peter Hujar. The first document was the letter Hujar received from his doctor in early 1987 to tell him he had tested positive for AIDS. Wojnarowicz took the letter and drew a stencil of two men kissing on top of it. The stencil image, which Wojnarowicz previously used in a work titled, “Fuck You Faggot Fucker,” is transformative, turning the letter into a work of art and signaling defiance in the face of illness. The stencil acts as a labor of caregiving in itself—reaffirming same-sex male desire and sexuality and love at the moment of its

34 On political funerals, see Lauren DeLand, “Live Fast, Die Young, Leave a Useful Corpse: The Terrible Utility of David Wojnarowicz,” *Performance Research* 19, no. 1 (2014): 33–40. See also Douglas Crimp, “Mourning and Militancy,” *October* 51 (Winter 1989): 3–18.

35 Wojnarowicz, “Post Cards from America,” 10, 8.

36 Susan Gal, “A Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction,” *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 13, no. 1 (May 2002): 77–95.



David Wojnarowicz, Peter Hujar's diagnostic letter, 1987, paired with Peter Hujar's Plan of Care, 1987. (David Wojnarowicz Papers, Fales Library & Special Collections, New York University, reproduced by permission of the Estate of David Wojnarowicz. Installation photograph courtesy of MCNY)

stigmatization. The second document from Wojnarowicz's papers was Hujar's home care plan from the last few weeks of his life, less than a year later. The plan evokes a visceral sense of Hujar's body, detailing daily care needs: bathing, toileting, medication, walking, safety supervision. It asks the visitor to relate to the artist as a person, through the body. It also reveals the name of the home-care nurse, reminding visitors once again of the invisible and often forgotten labor of care.³⁷ In *AIDS at Home*, the two documents were framed side by side in precisely the same fashion, in an attempt to level the divide between art and personal archive. Art as an act of caregiving matters as much as material care. Placing the letter, from January 1987, next to the home care plan, from November that same year, also hinted at Hujar's rapid decline, and invited visitors to consider time as a crucial element in the exhibition. Together, the two pieces from Hujar's archive push towards a more expansive understanding of healthcare, one that moves beyond medicine to take interpersonal relationships into account.

³⁷ On Hujar and Wojnarowicz's relationship, see Cynthia Carr, *Fire in the Belly: The Life and Times of David Wojnarowicz* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012).

The pairing of these two works at the opening of the exhibition also provided viewers a key to how the exhibition worked overall: by making the domestic archive visible. The exhibition aimed to unpack and activate the materials, relationships, affects, and emotions of everyday domestic life in the context of illness. Even more than the objects, the domestic archive should be understood in terms of the feelings it carries and evokes. That is to say, the domestic archive is not only a material archive, but in Ann Cvetkovitch's phrase, an archive of feelings—an archive of grief, loss, trauma, isolation, as well as intimacy, community, joy, and love.³⁸

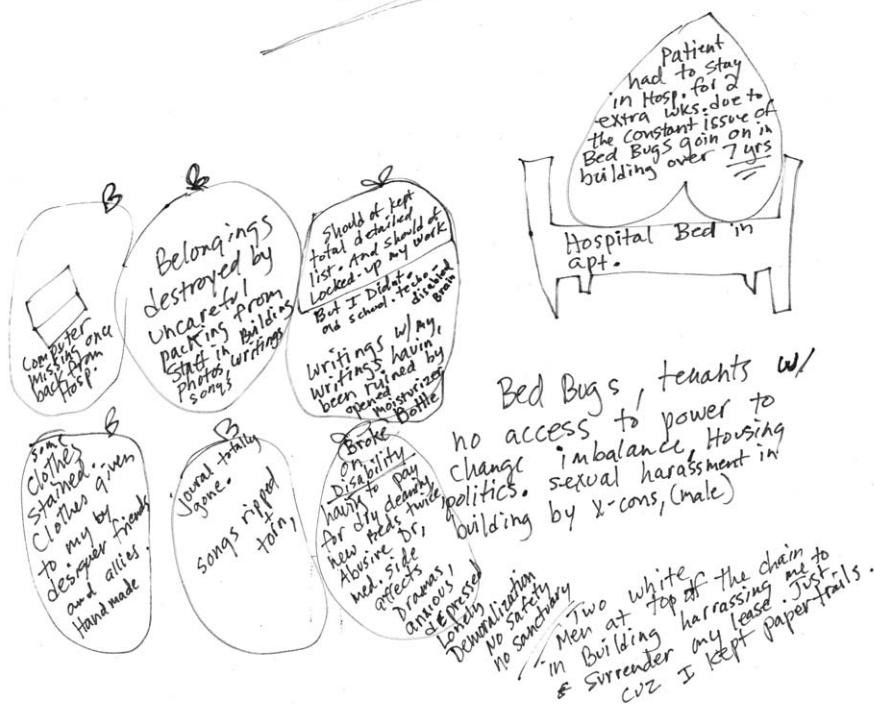
AIDS at Home activated this domestic archive in several key ways. One was through the prominent display of representational works, including paintings, photographs, and sculptures—which together repeatedly returned to and elevated domestic spaces as sites of care, family, and resilience. One of the three works in the exhibition by artist and activist Chloe Dzubilo, for example, chronicled her experience as a transwoman with HIV living in city-funded supportive housing, and the challenges she encountered, including bed bugs, lost or stolen belongings, and sexual violence. The cartoon-like drawing centers on an item of furniture, a hospital bed in Dzubilo's apartment, suggesting the ways illness can blur the boundary between domestic space and medical space. The exhibition also included a drawing of Dzubilo's daily medications, created by her partner T De Long. Here the exhibition again troubled the boundary between art and archive: the drawing was, in fact, created as a guide to help De Long keep track of Dzubilo's medications; it was hung inside a cabinet in Dzubilo's apartment.

Video was also an essential element in the exhibition. Camcorders first became commercially available in the 1980s and allowed activist filmmakers to document spaces and experiences that were often underrepresented in mainstream media. One crucial example of this was the work by Juanita Mohammed Szczepanski. Szczepanski started as a filmmaker in the collective WAVE—Women's AIDS Video Enterprise, founded in 1989 by then-graduate student Alexandra Juhasz.³⁹ Szczepanski was soon after hired by GMHC's media department to produce videos for the organization's *Living With AIDS* public access TV program. Many of Szczepanski's films focused on caregiving and the nontraditional families that HIV/AIDS spurred. "Two Men and a Baby" originally aired in 1993 and focused on a gay African American couple, Ray and Tyrone, who adopted Eric, the son of Ray's sister, who was born HIV positive. The film has the feeling of a home video, which masks the art of its construction. The original video files at the New York Public Library include footage Szczepanski took of the social worker who helped Ray and Tyrone formalize the adoption—though this material is not included in the final

³⁸ Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

³⁹ Alexandra Juhasz, *AIDS TV: Identity, Community, and Alternative Video* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995). See also Juhasz's recent reflections, "A Political Sense of Being at Home with HIV and Video," *Drain Magazine* 13, no. 2 (2016), <http://drainmag.com/a-political-sense-of-being-at-home-with-hiv-and-video/>.

Lost SO much out in the 80s,
 90s. ^{2000s} scattered site housing contracts
 over w/ all apt. for people w/ HIV/AIDS
 in the L.E. Side. - Loisada.
 Health crisis.
 Bed Bugs in building funded
 for People w/ AIDS. For
 Seven fuckin' years. I could've
 sued. Chose battles.



Chloe Dzubilo, *HIV Housing*, c. 2008. (Chloe Dzubilo Papers, Fales Library & Special Collections, New York University. Estate of Chloe Dzubilo)

film. If the film skirts over the formal, bureaucratic mechanisms by which families are recognized, it does so in service of a larger goal—to make the queer family relatable and ordinary.

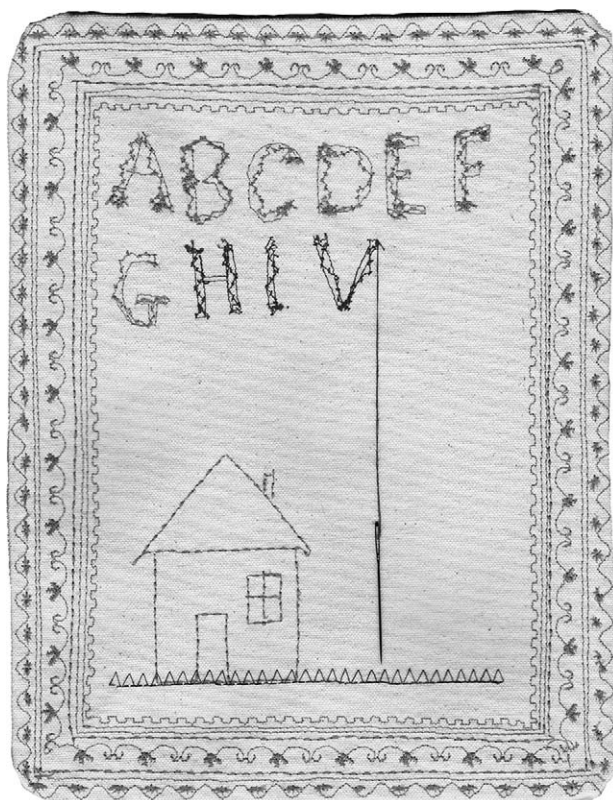
A second way *AIDS at Home* activated the domestic archive was by juxtaposing archival materials with representational images. In the case of the buddy program, for example, I paired Susan Kuklin's photographs of Buddy Team 7 with documents from the files of Team 7, archived at the New York Public Library. If the photographs bring us into the feeling and space of the Buddy Program—Kachin and Michael on Michael's bed, Michael's nightstand—then the documents bring us into



Kia LaBeija, *The First Ten Years*, 2014, with home video of her mother, Kwan Bennett, 1997, filmed by Kenn Michael. (Reproduced by permission of the artist. Installation photograph courtesy of MCNY)

the more mundane, repeated, and often challenging experience of being a caregiver. The minutes from one meeting, for example, revealed the discussions of the team members, while a timesheet showed how many hours volunteers worked in a single month as well as their diverse professional backgrounds—teacher, nurse, hairdresser, actress. The documents alongside the photographs helped to expand visitors' conceptions of who counts as an activist.

Another artist featured in the exhibition, Kia LaBeija, reflects in her work on her own experiences as a young woman of color born with HIV, and on the loss of her mother, Kwan Bennett, to HIV/AIDS-related illness when LaBeija was only fourteen. LaBeija composed *The First Ten Years* (2014) on the ten-year anniversary of her mother's death: she emptied out her mother's dresser and put on her mother's wedding dress. In the exhibition, I paired the photograph with a video recently uncovered and digitized by LaBeija's brother: a video message from Bennett to her sister about the family's new apartment. At the end of the message, Bennett opens a garment bag to show off her wedding dress. This juxtaposition demonstrates how



Jeffrey Scott Wilson, *HIV Sampler*, 2013. (Courtesy of the artist)

historical ephemera from a personal archive can complement and expand on the world and experience of a work of art. LaBeija's work is so much about her mother's absence, and yet the video makes her mother present.

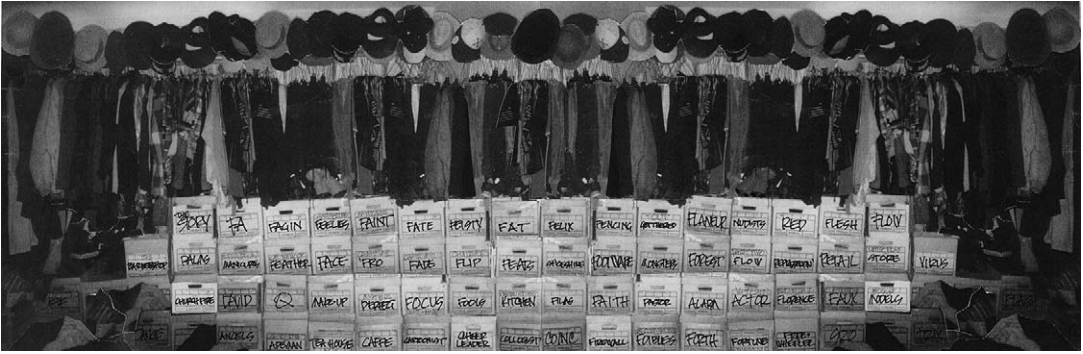
A third way the exhibition engaged the domestic archive was through the display of works of fiber art that play upon traditional domestic craft. Jeffrey Scott Wilson's *HIV Sampler* (2013), for example, remakes a traditional needlepoint sampler, where new learners practice their letters and forms (Wilson himself learned needlepoint from his grandmother). The house is a repeated image in conventional needlepoint, but here that image and text is interrupted—ABCDEFGHIV—with the needle left hanging. This play with domestic craft also appears in Hunter Reynolds's work, *Quilt of Names* (1992), where Reynolds takes photographs of the AIDS Memorial Quilt and threads them together, bringing the AIDS Memorial Quilt down to a domestic and personal scale.

The exhibition's final and major intervention into the history and art of HIV/AIDS was the way it prioritized works that transform personal or archival materials into art—as Wojnarowicz did with Hujar's diagnosis letter. Examples of these transformative works appeared in every section of the exhibition, moving from the 1980s and '90s to the present. The largest work in the exhibition, and the work



Lori Grinker, Detail from *Six Days from Forty*, 2015/2017. (Courtesy of the artist and Nailya Alexander Gallery. Installation photograph courtesy of MCNY)

that best represents this transformative approach, was Lori Grinker's installation *Six Days from Forty*, which occupied a small room at the center of the gallery. The installation reflected on Lori's relationship with her brother, Marc Grinker, a law professor who died from complications related to AIDS in 1996. The installation was planned as a separate space within the gallery. Visitors were invited to sit down on a bench, to sit with Lori in the role of caregiver. The installation was composed of three parts. On one wall appeared a grid of nine photographs, printed on metal, of materials from Lori and Marc's personal archive (a photograph of Marc and Lori as teenagers, Marc's medical records and letters from his doctor, notes for a paper Marc was preparing on antigay discrimination). These were mounted above and alongside cases displaying three books, including the diary where Lori kept a record of her conversations with Marc in his apartment during the last weeks of his life. That diary was in turn the basis for a short video hanging on the adjoining wall: visitors heard Lori's voice speaking to Marc but only saw his reply, written out, in Lori's handwriting. The final component of the installation was an additional video, projected onto a screen of the shadow of the tree outside Marc's window as the light changes and the leaves rustle. The installation brings us into Marc's domestic space, but it again reminds us that home is as much an affective space as a material one. *Six Days from Forty* is about the archive of objects and feelings we are left with when we lose someone.



Frederick Weston, *Searching and Fearless Moral Inventory*, 2015. (Courtesy of the artist)

Grinker’s installation also raises a key question about what makes the domestic archive different from other kinds of archives, and what makes the home different from other spaces. The answer Grinker’s work suggests is accumulation—of objects, of feeling, of memory. The term “accumulation” may bring to mind Marx’s concept of capital accumulation, yet the value of the domestic archive resists commodification. Rather the value of the domestic remains distinctly, stubbornly personal; to attempt to convey the meaning of the domestic archive is to invite new modes of intimacy, new forms of social connection. This motif of accumulation ran throughout *AIDS at Home* but was most visible in Frederick Weston’s *Searching and Fearless Moral Inventory* (2015). The photcollage depicts the boxes in Weston’s apartment—boxes accumulated and kept over many years of unstable housing—and each is marked with a label connected to Weston’s life and identity (actor, flaneur, feisty, virus). Hanging above these are Weston’s clothing. The image invites us into Weston’s home, and into his life, but it does so precisely through accumulation and multiplicity. Weston’s inventory, like the domestic archive, is at once contained and uncontainable.

Curating the domestic archive ultimately requires more than simply displaying domestic life. Rather, tracing the history of everyday domestic life calls on curators to attend to affect and relationality—to look for, highlight, and analyze emotion and intimacy, both as they were experienced in the past and as they play out in the present for visitors.⁴⁰ In another recent exhibit, *Imagining Home* (2015–2018) at the Baltimore Museum of Art, curators drew together representations and material culture from the collection focusing on home as a site of identity-making, belonging, rest, and movement, with objects ranging from a Central Asian prayer rug to a modern toaster and images from Walter Henry William’s 1952 painting *A Quick Nap*, depicting a young African American girl on her family’s fire escape, to Susan Harbage Page’s photographs documenting temporary shelters of undocumented

⁴⁰ For a related discussion of interpretation of domestic objects in historic house museums, see Kim Christensen, “Ideas Versus Things: The Balancing Act of Interpreting Historic House Museums,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 17, no. 2 (2011): 153–68.

immigrants on the Mexico/Texas border. The curators also integrated various forms of community engagement. For “Home Stories,” community members were invited to keep a reproduction of a work from the exhibition in their own homes for four months, and then reflect on what the work came to mean for them. A series of local artists were also invited to curate community-based installations in the adjoining gallery. One of these installations, *Queer Interiors*, created by Rahne Alexander and Jaimes Mayhew, similarly sought to make LGBT private life public. A small quilt hung upon the wall and served as a screen for projections of videos and photographs shared by community members; visitors were also invited to sit upon a large oversized bed. At the same time, the installation was suffused with references to the history of HIV/AIDS in queer culture: the quilt itself subtly reimagined the AIDS Memorial Quilt, while the pillows and bedspread referenced work by Félix González-Torres and AA Bronson.⁴¹ Both *Imagining Home* and *Queer Interiors* drew upon emotion as a resource for connecting visitors to art and history and for leading visitors to think about the meanings of home and community in their own lives.

Museums and archives may also work to reconsider the value of the domestic and the everyday in their collecting. College, university, community, and library collections have already begun to archive and preserve more artifacts of everyday LGBT life, including photograph albums and home movies.⁴² Yet libraries and special collections can still be more proactive in inviting and pursuing archival materials from LGBT people, particularly trans people and LGBT people of color. Oral history projects could also seek to document the domestic spaces of their interview participants and to establish contact between individuals and special collections for future acquisition and preservation.⁴³ In the case of *AIDS at Home*, I worked to place the MCNY’s curator of photography in touch with several photographers in the exhibition, to add their work to the museum’s permanent collection.

⁴¹ *Imagining Home*, curated by Gamynne Guillotte and Oliver Shell, was on view at the Baltimore Museum of Art from October 2015 to October 2018. On *Queer Interiors*, see Cara Ober, “Two Transgender Artists on the Importance of Queering Home,” *Hyperallergic*, May 10, 2017, <https://hyperallergic.com/378017/two-transgender-artists-on-the-importance-of-queering-home/>. Other recent exhibits on domesticity include *Women House*, National Museum of Women in the Arts (2018); *Homebodies*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2013); and *Home—So Different, So Appealing*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art/Museum of Fine Arts Houston (2017–2018).

⁴² See for example Anne Clark and Geoffrey Wexler, “Queer Collections Appear: Oregon’s Wedding Album,” *Museums & Social Issues* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 115–24, and Stacia Kuceyeski, “The Gay Ohio History Initiative as a Model for Collecting Institutions,” *Museums & Social Issues* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 125–32. Erin Baucom also discusses how archives can make existing LGBT collections more discoverable in “An Exploration into Archival Descriptions of LGBTQ Materials,” *The American Archivist* 81, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2018): 65–83.

⁴³ For an example of a project that combines queer oral history and photography to capture everyday life, see Rebecka Taves Sheffield, “The Bedside Table Archives: Archive Intervention and Lesbian Intimate Domestic Culture,” *Radical History Review* 120 (Fall 2014): 108–20.

Curating the domestic archive ultimately undoes our conceptualizations of domesticity itself and can also lead us to rethink where, how, and when history happens. Histories of HIV/AIDS are often written through the lens of medical progress—the first cases of AIDS diagnosed, the underlying virus discovered, new treatments made available. This is a compelling narrative because it is a narrative of change. Reorienting the history of HIV/AIDS to the history of home focuses our attention on narratives of continuity: to the day-to-day acts of caregiving and family-making, the need for home, and the ongoing impact of stigma and silence. These are private realities that have never disappeared and still need activating.

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Stephen Vider is a visiting assistant professor at Bryn Mawr College. His forthcoming book, *Queer Belongings: Gender, Sexuality, and the American Home After World War II* (University of Chicago Press), traces how American conceptions of the home have shaped LGBT relationships and politics from 1945 to the present. From 2015 to 2017, he was an Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow at the Museum of the City of New York, where he curated the exhibition *AIDS at Home: Art and Everyday Activism*. He was also co-curator, with Donald Albrecht, of *Gay Gotham: Art and Underground Culture in New York* (2016–2017) and co-author of an accompanying book, a Lambda Literary Award finalist. His writing has appeared in *Gender & History*, *American Quarterly*, *Transition*, *Time*, *Slate*, and *Smithsonian.com*, as well as several edited volumes. He will start as Assistant Professor of History and Director of the Public History Initiative at Cornell University in Fall 2019.

Thank you to all of the artists and activists whose work was featured in *AIDS at Home*; the Museum of the City of New York, especially Sarah M. Henry, Donald Albrecht, Whitney Donhauser, Lilly Tuttle, Marissa Martonyi, Becky Laughner, Miranda Hambro, Todd Ludlam, Sarah Seidman, and Nate Lavey; Joanne Meyerowitz for giving me the opportunity to present an early version of this article for the Yale Research Initiative on the History of Sexualities; David S. Byers, for reading earlier drafts of this article; Ted Kerr, Wanda Hernandez-Parks, and Kia LaBeija for their inspiring work; the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, who supported my fellowship at the MCNY; and the Calamus Foundation and other funders of the exhibition. I also thank the editors and anonymous readers for their generous and insightful feedback.