

AIDS RIOT

AIDS CULTURAL ACTIVISM IN NEW YORK 1987-1994

Summary

The outbreak of the HIV virus in New York, over the course of the eighties provoked a large crisis that questioned society as a whole. The particular issues arising from this crisis had revealed the prejudices towards the gay communities, minority discrimination, the incapacity of the scientific community to respond appropriately to this epidemic, and the power of the media to impose the establishment's opinion. Through the lens of the AIDS crisis, the form, the content, and the purpose of dominant representations were put into question through an active form of contestation/resistance.

The book AIDS RIOT focuses on some activist counter-attack strategies coming from collaboratives such as Gran Fury, Group Material, Testing the Limits and General Idea. Each of these artists/collaboratives used various methodologies in reaction towards the "commemorative" or non existing representations of the disease, forging their own representation of it, registering its alternative history, providing information, and raising consciousness. Gran Fury collaborative used the *detournement* of advertising campaigns in the public spaces; General Idea put in evidence the viral circulation and medical presentation systems; Group Material used the exhibition as an artistic medium and a didactic device; Gregg Bordowitz with Testing the Limits collective used video as a medium to document emerging AIDS activism.

The title of this book refers to the New York art scene's internal polemical debate about the effectiveness of the means put in place by the art system to benefit a political cause. AIDS RIOT deals with the period when this question was the most acute, between 1987, which is marked by Act Up's exhibition *Let the Record Show...* in the New Museum, New York, and 1994, the year of the self-dissolution of Gran Fury, the collaborative born out of this manifestation.

This publication gathers, for the first time in French, a large amount of original documents, theoretical discourses in relation to the crisis, as well as the transcripts of new interviews with AA Bronson for General Idea, Julie Ault for Group Material, Donald Moffett /Marlene McCarty for Gran Fury, and Gregg Bordowitz for Testing the Limits collective (list to be confirmed).

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