



Collectives In Atomised Time

Doug Ashford
+
Naeem Mohaiemen

Collectives In Atomised Time

Doug Ashford
+
Naeem Mohaiemen



Peripheries Without Centre

Ramon Parramon, IDENSITAT

Through everyday activities, the temporary use of public space creates many different forms of occupation in the form of artefacts, activities or actions planned from a critical perspective of the system. Some of these forms are regulated and therefore happen through repeated and clearly institutional models; others do so outside rules, limiting them to shorter-term projections. A third way looks for existing gaps or intermediate spaces in which new activities and uses and alternative approaches can grow by making use of the system's own mechanisms. From a cultural perspective, and specifically from the artistic point of view, projects emerge to add innovations through a search for previously unarticulated activities. The environment and social context leads to a conception of the organisation of cultural space as an area that depends on social activity; but this social activity can be rethought and revamped by reinventing cultural activity. Driven by this desire to push for changes in the environment of cultural production by occupying existing gaps, a number of people, associations and collectives have worked from different positions, in many cases distant from the production centres with their consolidated hegemony.

The dominant cultural line talks of the blurring of the notion of the periphery, looking to the democratisation of new technologies, the ease of moving from one

place to another, the border-less world of capital, or the disappearance of certain referents that made up the centre of culture. Nevertheless, we have to keep talking of cultural peripheries, because – due to questions of territorial location, the presence of the media and the legitimisation of artistic practices – some activities, programs and projects move in this environment at a fixed distance from the centre. Not just one centre, but several different centres distributed throughout the territory, which tend to follow uniform or unidirectional approaches.

Reducing the distance between the centre and the periphery at the level of cultural production has been one of the goals pursued by IDENSITAT, an artistic project that links the role of art in public space to revamping cultural policies in order to create fresh mechanisms to mediate between artistic production, different sectors in society and the public resources managed by different administrations.

When Naeem Mohaiemen started collecting notes regarding collective practices in response to political crises, we thought this would be a way to enrich some of the goals pursued by IDENSITAT. The subject matter itself is based on research around national security panic in the United States and Europe, along with their sudden visibility in the public fear sphere. The situation of shifted global realities after 2001 led to many people being detained through their perceived race or religion markers. The lack of transparency, the irregularities, and the constant stoking

of fear are questions tackled in all the work done by Visible Collective between 2004-2006. From a different period, Group Material has used the mechanisms of contemporary art to raise questions about the manipulation of political power to create and maintain a state of globalised panic.

There is a danger when the mechanisms of art incorporate deliberate political investigations. This danger goes back to the ability of art (and its institutions) to convert images and concepts into commercial fetishes, at the expense of the original goals. The conversation between Naeem Mohaiemen and Doug Ashford spans some of the questions derived from seeing art as a political praxis. A conversation that starts raising questions on the lines between art, journalism and activism. The distance in time that separates the work by the two collectives, Group Material and Visible Collective, lends context to an open and ongoing debate on contemporary artistic practice.

Maintaining one's independence to reach a higher intellectual level and forge a critical capacity able to transform the system itself is a way of swimming against the current. Chin-Tao Wu[1] has analysed the gradual privatisation of the arts in the UK and the US in the 1990s as giant corporations used the free market to conquer art spaces at the expense of public institutions. Creating alternatives that involve collective organisation is one of the possible ways forward. Collectives form from shared affinities or are thrown together by socio-political situations.

Interdisciplinary collectives, or perhaps we could say undisciplined collectives, offer a multifaceted dimension to political activity expressly related to artistic practice.

Collectivisation of artistic practice is not a new strategy; it has been in place since the start of the 20th century[2]. It has been a tactic used to put the individualisation of the artist and the subjectivisation of art in a state of crisis in order to introduce a kind of organised practice with clearly political objectives. Later on, and still true now, came the construction of the social space as an artistic practice, which incorporated grassroots work as an explicit process of artistic work in both form and content.

Group Material, which worked from 1981-1996, and Visible Collective, which worked for a much shorter period of 2004-2006, catalysed some of these attitudes. The length of time that separates them is overcome through the dialogue they maintain. A dialogue that centres on key points of the collective experience with a bearing on the public sphere, through subjects that are often peripheral to the habits of more established artistic practices.

[1] Chin-Tao Wu. *Privatising Culture: Corporate Art Interventions since the 1980s*. London, New York. Verso Books, 2002.

[2] To expand, see: Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette, editors. *Collectivism after Modernism: the Art of Social Imagination after 1945*. Minneapolis, London. University of Minnesota Press, 2007

Group Material

Doug Ashford, 1981-96

Julie Ault, 1979-96

Thomas Eggerer, 1995-96

Felix Gonzalez-Torres, 1988-91

Jochen Klein, 1995-96

Mundy McLaughlin, 1979-86

Karen Ramspacher, 1989-91

Tim Rollins, 1979-87

Visible Collective

Naeem Mohaiemen

Ibrahim Quraishi

Anandaroop Roy

Jee-Yun Ha

Donna Golden

Aimara Lin

Vivek Bald

Kristofer Dan-Bergman

JT Nimoy

Sehban Zaidi

Anjali Malhotra

Aziz Huq

Sarah Olson



TIMELINE
THE CONSTITUTION
INTERVIEW AND CONTROL

GROUP
MATER

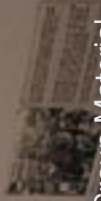
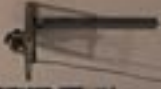


1980

1982



1984



Group Material

A request for \$635,000 made by Dr. Jim Curran from the NIH annual budget to study the new "gay cancer" is denied.

The Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) is founded in New York City. GMHC is a grass roots organization of volunteers which seeks to provide information and support services through its buddy program, education, counseling, legal services and advocacy for people with AIDS.

In October, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), in Atlanta, initiates the reporting of Kaposi's sarcoma and PCP (Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia) nationwide.

AIDS, as an acronym for Acquired immune deficiency syndrome, replaces earlier namings of the syndrome: GRID (Gay Related Immune Deficiency); CAID (Community Acquired Immune Deficiency); AID (Acquired Immune Deficiency).

This year's Reagan Budget calls for the slashing of at least 1,000 grants from the National Institute of Health (NIH), the federal agency that conducts research and prevention of this new epidemic.

"Homosexual Plague Spreads New Victims" is the title of an article in the August 1981 *Newsweek* magazine. The piece is inspired by news from the National Cancer Institute describing growing evidence that hemophiliacs are showing AIDS-related symptoms. The article reports, "The homosexual plague has started spreading over into the general population."

1982

The first *Wall Street Journal* article on AIDS is printed only after 23 heterosexual men and women are diagnosed with the disease.

San Francisco holds a candlelight march, one of the earliest mass demonstrations of outrage at the lack of response by medical and governmental agencies to the progression of AIDS.









1981



MENEXCO

1997

BY THE MOUNTAIN (MOUNTAIN)



GROUP
MATERIAL

AMERICANA

1900s



1910s



1940s
WE DON'T HAVE
ANY MORE
AND THEY DON'T
HAVE ANY MORE
AND THEY DON'T
HAVE ANY MORE



0

...





Visible Collective



J. ALI, New York (P
Casta (Turkey) | **MUSTAFI, ABU J**

Musson (Israel) | **MAZZI AL NAJJAR**

NAME UNAVAILABLE, 40, Akron, Ohio (P
Florida (P

NAME UNAVAILABLE

NAME UNAVAILABLE, 30s, Tex

NAME UNAVAILABLE, 30s, Tex

NAME UNAVAILABLE, 30s, Tex

NAME UNAVAILABLE, 30s, Tex

NAME UNAVAILABLE, 30s, Tex

NAME UNAVAILABLE, 30s, Tex

NAME UNAVAILABLE, 30s, Tex

NAME UNAVAILABLE, 30s, Tex

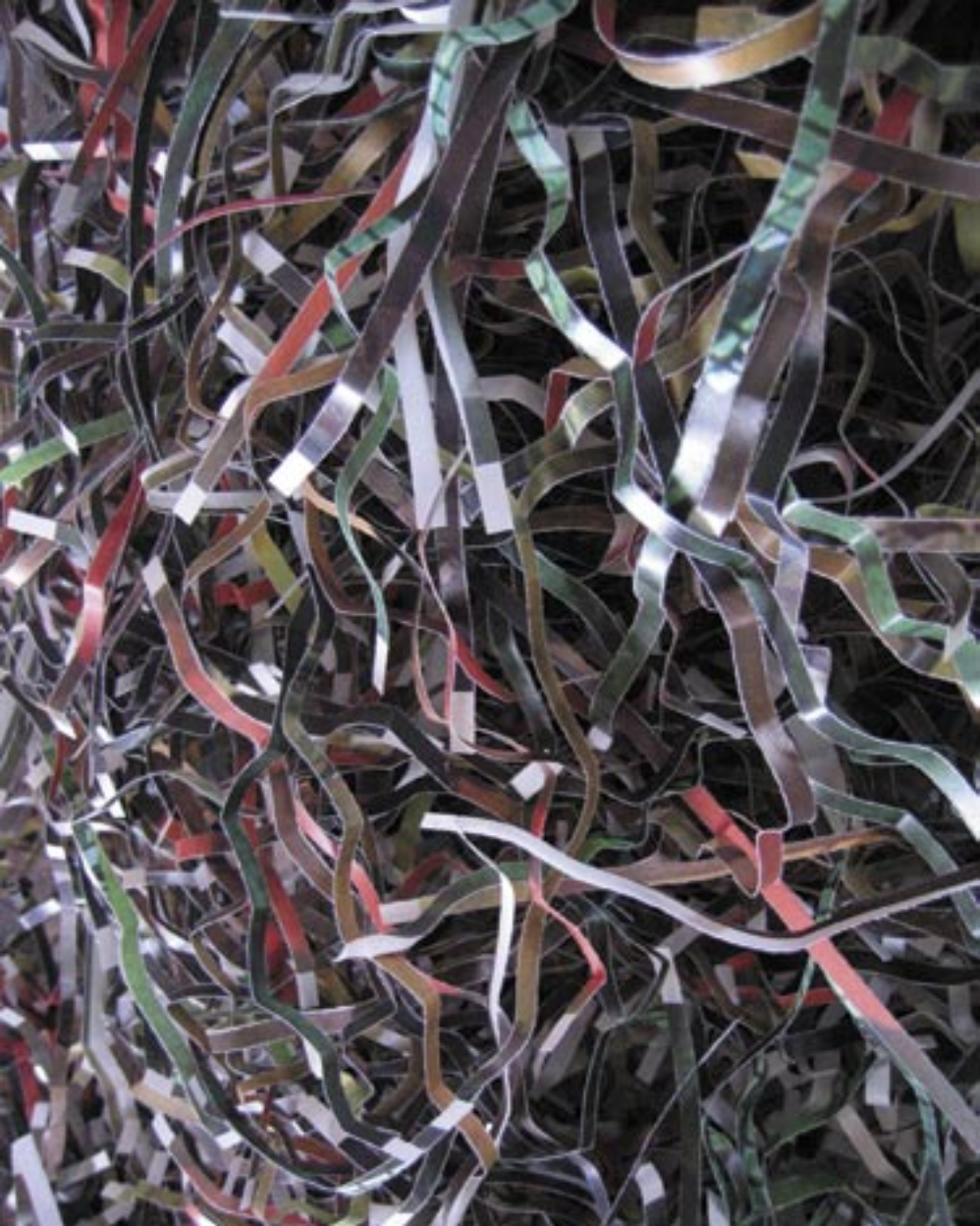
NAME UNAVAILABLE, 30s, Tex

NAME UNAVAILABLE, 30s, Tex

NAME UNAVAILABLE, 30s, Tex

NAME UNAVAILABLE, 30s, Tex

NAME UNAVAILABLE, 30s, Tex



AUGUST 2004

ACLU of Northern California files Freedom Of Information requests with the FBI and local Joint Terrorism Task Forces seeking documents related to the questioning of American Muslims, as well as any surveillance of political and religious activity. This follows newspaper reports of an aggressive surveillance plan focused on Muslims and mosques.



...clean floor on the stoop and plastered the window

... door with

Noorani took a long pause and avoided

... have been possible in other countries,

country

... this flag, I have love for this

... country because I have made myself in this

... the meaning



Group Material (images)

Timeline, A Chronicle of US Intervention in Central and Latin America, P.S.1 The Institute for Art and Urban Resources, Queens, NY; January- March, 1984. (organized for Artists Call against US Intervention in Central America.)

AIDS Timeline, fragment from Shift magazine. (Organized as a collaborative project for DAY WITHOUT ART 1990 by Visual AIDS and the following publications: Afterimage, Art & Auction, Art in America, Art New England, Artforum, Arts, Contemporanea, High Performance, October and Shift).

Democracy Wall Boston, The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, October, 1993 - January 1994. (organized for "In and Out of Place").

Democracy, Education, The Dia Art Foundation, New York, September 1988-January 1989. (see *Democracy; A Project by Group Material*, Bay Press, 1991)

AIDS Timeline, Matrix Gallery, University Art Museum, University of California at Berkeley, November 1989-January 1990.

Democracy, AIDS: A Case Study, The Dia Art Foundation, New York, September 1988-January 1989.

Americana, The Whitney Museum (organized for the Whitney Biennial).

Democracy, Election, The Dia Art Foundation, New York, September 1988-January 1989.

Visible Collective (images)

Casual Fresh American Style, window installation, Queens Museum of Art, New York, 2004 (part of group show “Fatal Love: South Asian American Art Now”).

Prudent Juris, or How To Really Read The Law, mixed media installation, UC Irvine Art Gallery, Irvine, 2006.

Nahnu Wahaad but Really Are We One?, mixed media, Queens Museum of Art, New York, 2004

It's Safe To Open Your Eyes Now, Part 3, mixed media, shredded Abu Ghraib photos, Project Row House, Houston, 2006.

When An Interpreter Could Not Be Found, digital print, series of 45 projections, Liverpool FACT Museum, Liverpool, 2005.

American Gothic, print installation, Project Row House, Houston, 2006.

It's About Who You Know & Who You Hang With, mixed media, UC Irvine Gallery, Irvine, 2006.

Patriot Story, digital video, Whitney Biennial, New York, 2006.

Doug's Brooklyn kitchen

Naeem: Doug, we've had many conversations about the future of politically engaged "art". The debates around art & politics & reportage & agitprop & poetics. My feeling is that the specific reality within which our Visible Collective project formed, operated, and ended, were very specific to the 00's. Even the way in which we almost became commodified within a category of "collective art practices" is specific to an over-heated market. The context within which Group Material worked was different, and the results were also...

Doug: I'll get into Group Material as we progress. But first, can you spell out the context for Visible Collective. How did you form, what were you reacting to? I get the sense from earlier things you said, this idea of the "accidental" collective.

Naeem: The collective originated from a film that I was working on with Ibrahim Quraishi (Compagnie Faim De Siecle), Jawad Metni (Pinhole Pictures) and Donna Golden (video artist). A linear narrative about a man who was incarcerated after 9/11. But after showing

it at the **Against Empire** film festival, we felt that the process of festivals, where you wait until ten short films screen before you can get into a discussion (and by then people had walked off to the open bar) was too linear and one dimensional. From all our various practices, we wanted to integrate our research, unused fragments, confusing questions, and protest rally tactics that informed this particular politics. So we started expanding the project into a series of installations, text prints and sound pieces, and our circle kept expanding and adding more friends.

Kristofer Dan-Bergman (photographer), Aimara Lin (Not In Our Name national coordinator), Anandaroop Roy (cartographer), Anjali Malhotra and Sehban Zaidi (both filmmakers), Sarah Olson (San Francisco radio producer), Vivek Bald (underground DJ), Jee-yun Ha (sculptor), list goes on... We had two supportive curators, Jaishri Abhichandani and Prerana Reddy, at the Queens Museum.

People would join and do a little project, and then go back to what they were doing. It was super informal. Lacking a structure, we tried to coalesce into one group, which is where the name Visible Collective came from.

Doug: Well, Group Material was founded in 1979 as an antidote to the mercantilist nightmare of the gallery system, which although only a fraction of its current scale, was totally a social distortion. Group Material wanted to create a context for art that could be part of the ongoing, dynamic and changing contribution to the urban fabric. We were bringing artifacts, documentary material, and store-bought objects into exhibitions, crashing boundaries between “high” and “low” culture. The group worked collaboratively internally but also created a context for larger collaborations based on the specificity of site and time. We were always trying to get the museum to represent a larger, more diverse vision of culture.

Naeem: Then in 1983 the work you did with Artists Call was specifically responding to the crisis in Latin America. And Group Material was later working within the context of the AIDS crisis, among many other issues, as we were responding to the post 2001 security panic.

Doug: Mentality of panic, man! The dominant interests that were maintaining the totality of panic- all of you were reacting to that. There is a relationship between that totality of panic and the contemporary

museum institutional nightmare that we are in right now. And it relates also, I think intimately, to our own doubts about what social collectives or what social production means to our constituencies now. Because social production within the art world has become so instrumentalized, as we discussed with the Public Address project[1], it allows dominant institutions to put on the cloak of political responsibility without even doing anything. They could have a hundred shows, and it wouldn't accomplish anything as long as they are unwilling to see how their own productions of meaning fits into a newly armored city open only to a heavily policed creative class

Naeem: But Doug, shouldn't an institution respond to your critique: Well what more do you want from us? You're not happy if we don't talk politics, and then we curate political art, you're not happy with that either!

Doug: Yes I know I am a bit skeptical. I do get a little bit concerned over the historicization of social practices, you know. There were, in the 1980s, older artists, and older managers of institutions (gallerists, directors, and board members of museums), who insisted that politics not just be a spectacle defined for already existing art audiences. You have to put your

money where your mouth is in relation to an anti war movement, to a pro-labor movement, to a “US out of El Salvador” movement- which was the Iraq conflict for that era.

Naeem: Well how does that translate for the museum? How does the museum put its money where its mouth is?

Doug: It allows there to be work going just beyond the image and the exhibition. Allow work that instigates direct politics to happen within the museum walls and in other sites. Also, help in decentralizing the practices of artist themselves, because remember there is also a politics to our productions on a local level– in real estate, in studio workings, in health insurance, etc. Meaning that we are also sequestered– even if we are collectivized– we are sequestered into ideas of what it means to make work that is dissociated from audiences as implicated in the culture they make for themselves. I’m also part of the audience that is made utilitarian and instrumental in terms of delivering a message of artists working FOR museums and FOR audiences, every one in their own box. That ends up being ungenerous to everyone involved.

Naeem: That's a dynamic that is also tied up in forms. There are forms/practices we can choose to work in that are much harder to convert into a commercial location. I don't make such claims for either Visible Collective or my solo practice, because it didn't/doesn't come from that intention. But I know others, such as 16 Beaver, have, as part of their practice, sought and found forms that are harder to appropriate.

Doug: Well don't get stuck in thinking of certain forms as more or less- you know- impervious and self defined. I have acted on social practices modeled from the endless inclusions seen in a painting. You could be an abstract painter and still be politically invested, no? I don't mean just because of your activity- you could be invested in terms of how you make those pictures, the aesthetic decision you make.

But we know what factor stops all this- it's the scariest thing in the room. The ongoing need for mediagenic discourse founded in market fundamentalism, to keep aesthetics out of radical democratic practices.

Naeem: The market is something that intervenes fairly directly. But we were dealing with slightly different internal issues. We had grassroots activists like Aimara Lin, and lawyers like Aziz Huq. And there was a time when some members consciously decided their time was better spent marching outside INS or pursuing lawsuits on behalf of post-9/11 detainees, than visual production about the same subjects within museum walls.

So there was (maybe?) some estrangement from the perceived ethereality of political art practice, and we also frayed as a Collective because not everyone was invested in the museum space. And even those of us who were invested could not make a strong argument for why others should continue to be so.

Doug: Yes of course, the museum has its own social capital, which seems more and more corporate every day– but why not work to change it? Much of this contradiction was discussed in the “Who Cares” project I organized with Creative Time in New York[2]. There is a connection between the liberating estrangement produced in collective practice, where we learn we are more than ourselves - and the investment of artists in aesthetic production - however separated

from institutions of social change that production may seem. I have been looking recently for new definitions of aesthetics that might model resistance in a new way, or in a very old way like in a painting.

Naeem: Wait, Doug are you that estranged at this point?

Doug: Well, it's ironic that I would be estranged at the time at which I actually have the connections to be able to create differences within institutions. Maybe it's a good time to be invested in re-thinking the "good community" of art profits and endless war from the standpoint of intimate speculation. Pictures are good at that! It seems to me that people who I empathize with are these days rarely involved with the institutional matrix and consumption frenzy of the New York art world.

Naeem: Or the culture of the world art market.

Doug: Maybe it's even the world art market. I don't know because I don't fly so much anymore. But it means that institutions, by definition, are on a kind of rollercoaster of production in which there's little space for the contemplative, for the

question of developmental politics that might lead to popular fronts, for the question of divergent artistic methodologies, the question of subaltern audiences that are yet undefined and don't fit into any of these nice identity-based packages that were developed so conveniently for our paying consumption.

Naeem: E.g., the “muslim artist” ...

Doug: Yes, in that specificity it can be seen that convenient fictional categories of cultural value, although ridiculous, are real buttresses to the institutions committed to the oppression.

Naeem: The only way I can respond to that is through satire. But that's a personal transition from when we, back in 2004, deliberately, identified ourselves as Muslim artists and activists, because we felt the power in saying “we” and “Muslim” and “collective” and all that. In 2003, putting Arabic within the museum wall seemed like a defiant gesture. But within five short years, that whole thing has become fetishized. So many banal, momentary *frisson* works featuring hijabi women. A toothless and ahistorical moment. When Lil Kim poses in a hijab-bikini combo, what other path remains to mine that exhausted metaphor/icon?

But, let's go back to what happened when we had a heterogeneous group in Visible- artists, lawyers, activists. There was always that question: "What is the point of installing work for three weeks in this gallery, I can think of better use of my time..."

Doug: And they were right to ask that question. Did you have an answer for them?

Naeem: Well, the first project of Visible was at Queens Museum of Art[3], and that museum is very unusual and different. Because of its location (deep inside Queens, hard to get to) it gets a much more diverse audience, in particular an immigrant audience- and that influenced our work, the question of audience, Later as the project expanded and traveled, it reacted to newer settings, and the work became more ambiguous. And that certainly made some in the Collective, coming from a direct action tradition, more uncomfortable.

When we installed "Driving While Black Becomes Flying While Brown," Aimara Lin was worried that the work would be interpreted as saying that African Americans should also be profiled. Of course the work was about the absurdity of racial profiling, period, but

it wasn't spelled out in large ALL CAPS letters, as is traditional within protest politics. This is when the "why do this" question started emerging.

Doug: But that's someone arguing over the complexity of the politics of representation. I mean if your work caused a group of people in the museum to have a set of positively alienated responses about what it meant to do racial profiling, than that's great. Even if it happened within the group of people who were producing the work, well then they have to rethink their senses of expectation and ideas, feelings, affect about race. That is one of the goals of art production.

But there's a different issue we referred to earlier. Which is people finding that the institutional setting for work has complicated ideological formations that suffocate the politics. Which is that increasingly art institutions as more and more open to radical politics seem farther and farther away from speaking to real constituencies in any real languages. Museums seem so interested in everything but always so far away from anything. I remember you told me that the Collective felt that the workings of the art world were problematic.

Naeem: I think we started getting a little uncomfortable with the “popularity” of the project. Getting invited to show in various venues, but repeating the same work, at the beginning it’s quite gratifying. And then you start wondering, what are we doing with these representations? And why us, why so many times? Are we becoming “safe” dissent?

Doug: I just want to say these are the conversations that have been happening in the imaginations of artists since the enlightenment. Isn’t that why, in the 18th century, we got so invested in the sublime? It was because the sublime acted as a way to focus philosophical expectation, in the sense that it was something eternal that we couldn’t measure, or refigure or re-represent. This unmeasurable moment could be a gauge for social experience too! That lack of stability would always exist as a moment of dissensus, of where we never come to an agreed and stable place but still live together.

Naeem: ...agreement on the meaning of a work?

Doug: Yeah, or the lack of meaning that art has to life. When artists work together we can ask “What do we have to do to realize that art brings life back to

life?” And so that instability of meaning becomes a political thing, because it then produces antagonistic responses between people in other groups. “Dude, the eternal is god.” “No, no, the eternal is nature.” and so on...you know what I’m saying.

I see art as the beginning of democratic discourse: a discourse that upends certainty and is upsetting to those whose power depends on absolutes.

Naeem: “I know which side I’m on”. The clarity of positions people yearn for.

Doug: And this is what my students sometimes don’t get. They look at those 18th century discussions about beauty, and they feel that they are rigid, class based, eliminating conversations that end up falling into a kind of mysticism led by priestly interpreters, which have no relationship to social practice or social production. And they are right that art may have been carried away from social production due to the histories of 1950’s formalist art criticism. What I’m trying to add in there is, if we want to have discussions about how art takes on meaning, we have to accept that interpretation itself is a politics.

But wait, Naeem, when the Visible Collective was going on, there was a point when you told me that collaborators did not want to stay as involved because the museum was a “waste of time”, ok?

Naeem: There was a specific moment...Liverpool FACT Museum was doing a retrospective of Atlas Group’s body of work, and Walid Raad generously invited us to present something in the “Media Lounge” of FACT. Aimara and others were gathering research material for the piece, and she disappeared for four days right before it was due.

So finally I reached her, and the first thing she told me was, “I just got out of jail.” “Why? What were you doing?” Of course she was in DC protesting the war, and this was a contingent that tried to get near the White House and got arrested. Then she paused and said, “This is what I need to be spending my time on right now.” That did my head in a bit, because I started wondering, well should I be doing what I’m doing?

At a distance of some time, I feel that there was a point at which physically protesting the Bush war became its own theatrical exercise without end because obviously the administration was just...well nothing

would ever change their mind. They are going to be sitting in Florida geriatric lawn chairs two decades from now, still arguing that this was the good war (like McNamara...). But, she felt that going and putting her body on the lawn- or wherever she put it- was much more useful than an art show.

And especially when we started showing in Europe, because people felt that the theatre of war is America, the decision makers are American. So that's where critique work needs to be done. In some ways, the most popular impulse is reflexive anti-American politics on European soil. You are not exactly going against dominant trends to critique Bush in Europe.

I remember one hilarious moment, when one Collective member emailed me: "We're showing in Finland? What exactly is this going to do?" The further away the project went geographically, the more individuals were saying, "What are we doing? What are we doing in..."

Doug: Finland... two countries away from Norway, they decide the Nobel Prize. You could make an event that would make the Nobel community say, "Hmm, maybe we should give the peace prize to someone from Bangladesh..."

Naeem: Ha ha, yes very funny, Doug. They did give the Nobel to Dr. Yunus in 2006...but I can safely say Visible Collective had no link to that.

Doug: Let's talk about political artists who tactically use the museum venue. They see art institutions as not having any real interest and value in and of themselves, but as tools to maintain the legitimacy and validity of their work. They give them tenure, academic credentials, ways to make their lives continue. I have tactical artist friends who don't go to the museums. You know, I go to the Met [Metropolitan Museum of Art] every Friday if I can.

Naeem: I don't go the Met though.

Doug: Well that's fine, I guess. And maybe you see the museum as only a tactical extension of the street.

Naeem: No, not entirely, it's only the Met in particular, it's stuck in my head as an ossified institution. I know that's just my own hang-up, I am sure reality is very different. I go to other museums, don't worry.

Doug: Yeah, I mean, my body and emotional life is invested in what aesthetic and political transference

can accomplish and has accomplished for humanness and for me. I am reminded of this by art. Not often with contemporary art. So what's my point? My point is that, for this friend of yours to say, "Look, the museum is not a correct instrument. We are going to play this out on different terrain..."

Naeem: ...on the streets

Doug: On the streets. I mean theoretically we could argue with her. We could say protest politics have their own limitations. Then we could also point out that your ideas about the museum as a private and regulated institution are a little bit naive- which we should add to the beginning of our conversation.

Naeem: Trevor Paglen talks about protest politics having their own aesthetic, and failing or succeeding by that aesthetic.

Doug: Look, the museum is like all public institutions. It's a cultural bank, it has habitus, it has all these effects, it has people affecting them and is in turn effecting others. And to give it up, to say, "Oh, its bourgeois" is sort of, a naive way of allowing it to continue to be bourgeois.

I mean, for me this is the thing about the collective that is really valuable. It is that working with others allows you to have an effective and emotional realization of what it means to not accept the given context of knowledge that you are working under. There is nothing more transgressive than a friend. It is as simple as that. Friendship and affinity give us the capacity to invent new languages.

The word interdisciplinary doesn't really quite cover it. The word de-professionalization kind of covers it. And that is, in a world which is increasingly based on the organization of service economies- spectacular economies, information economies- we all end up seeing both our own intellect, right, and its labor relationship to institutions very narrowly. We know these people because our ideas are their profits. You know them. People who review South Asian films for HBO to see how effective they are. You know, them, they work for Time Warner. I know people like this- they're my ex-students. They occupy very singular niches in the information industry from which they design my consumption, right? And collaboration can mean that you're with people who are saying "Why are you doing that?" Like that friend of yours says, "Why are you involved in this museum, Naeem?"

Naeem: I don't know that I ever answered that question. Still working it out in my head and my work.

Doug: Well you know my romanticism about the commune: the old days when art and life almost became the same thing. Today I am also more scared of collaboration as part of the instrumentalization of art, using it as branding, social capital and so forth.

For me the collaboration with Group Material was beautiful: it was an exchange of intention with Julie Ault, and Felix Gonzales Torres, and with others who were involved in the early years. Because our work wasn't based in a modification of the possibilities of intention, of artistic intention, because of the ever present idea of other people

Just get sixteen freshman students together and ask them: "What does it mean to make work in a museum?" and they will answer you: "Its fucked up, you are designing experiences for corporate parties" What was a site for social critique has been turned into a kind of unbending factory for social capital, with the artists as an interior decorator for power.

This is why I make, I always try to make, the point about de-professionalization becoming possible through collectivization. And I try to remind them of the histories of radical dis-recognition that artists have provided.

Naeem: Or temporary collectives. For Visible, there were two of us working together, and then more and more people joined. And we said well, we can't have an endless list of people on the wall...

Doug: ...it would be like a professional affiliation.

Naeem: At that point it was going to be ten different people. And then we said, ok, lets call it Visible Collective. And of course, if we had thought that it would last beyond that one show at Queens Museum of Art, we might have sat around and thought up a more expansive name. Making visible the invisible Muslim underclass in post 9/11 America, bla bla- It's a pretty simplistic political equation. It just shows you how impromptu the whole thing was.

Doug: Group Material was also not so pre-planned. There was an original group that was very large. I was a senior at Cooper, and I was going to their projects,

and trying to attend meetings because of work that I had done while I was in school. And also because I had been organizing in a Union at a very young age, as a welder for Macy's, and I was interested in certain kinds of art work that proposed a coalescing of the idea of the values of a labor movement with the values of aesthetic investigation that modernity provided. So, I was just a very typical communist avant-gardist with an underpaying job. It was very wonderful.

The point is, that original configuration of Group material was very large and fell apart after the first year over a number of issues. There were a group of artists who wanted the program to be very particular and specific in relationship to the idea of a feminist program within the research of aesthetic and social production. There were others who saw it as a kind of stepping-stone to careers.

Naeem: Well having a career in the arts can help all this. People can end up funding projects, and having a greater independent voice. Andy Warhol had one ultimate career, and the Warhol Foundation funds a lot of good work now, including political work.

Doug: Sometime in the early 80's, after an artist talk, Barbara Kruger was critically asked why she had “sold out” by joining Mary Boone gallery. It was a perfect moment because Barbara could remind the questioner that not all artists have the luxuries of either trust funds or tenure to be able to manage a career. Our relation to the means of production is real, right? We really can starve! But at the same time, that doesn't excuse others from using that same argument to do things that are opportunistic and instrumentalized. The proof is not in the discourse around the work, the proof is in the work. The point I'm trying to make is that I don't care so much any more what you call it- I care what it does to enunciate life...

But many folks back then left the artworld when the economic stakes became so high. The capitalization of our labor was and still is hard to bear. And the notion that one has to constantly be involved in spectacle management- watching your career and modeling relationships in relation to an idea of success designed by others- it's just too much for some of us.

Naeem: Oh, we had a very different experience. Visible Collective become a gilded cage for us, where it felt at one point that we had become this “Muslim artist”

symbol/icon, who should keep working exclusively on post 9/11 trajectories.

Doug: But that's because you did organize your work around that subject. It was issue oriented. It was a temporary collective.

Naeem: We were sliding into the politics of "I am", which worried me...

Doug: Right, and those politics are valuable politics at certain times. It's tactical and important and works at certain times.

Naeem: But it also begins suffocating within a short period.

Doug: If shifting allegiances are what's going to create the possibility for democracy within cultural institutions, why not the market? Because the market is what does that. Markets create shifting allegiances in value. All of a sudden, everybody wants a Prius, you know what I mean? And before that, everybody wanted the Humvee. And here's two completely different moments, aesthetically, culturally, economically.

Naeem: But if we used the market like you suggest, what would we make it make everyone want?

Doug: I'm not saying do or do not use the market as an effect in making work. But I bring up the question over and over again of what market fundamentalism really does, whether through the "new beauty" moment, the Republicans' automatic democracy, or even the capitulation of a developer like Richard Florida, who says, well, you can't get outside the market!

Well just because you can't get outside the market, doesn't mean you have to be in the market without having spirited dissidence. A rhetorical question that I am trying to figure out– why the idea of democracy is now linked so much only to the ideas of the diversity that can provided by rationalism. Because that diversity and its idea of flexible consensus is the same as we knew it in the Reagan era- a controlled nightmare.

Naeem: But within that diversity, you can be in your niche, and then participate in the market on your terms. I'm being realpolitik about it. I don't have any illusions that anyone is going to dismantle capitalism within my lifetime. So we need to make some sort of

truce/accomodation with it, and find our safe space within or alongside the market.

Doug: Sure.

Naeem: Since it's here, should I spend my energy on symbolic action against capitalism– symbolic actions that won't lead to the utopian endgame– or should I participate. Well, I personally decided to participate, in my art and life. And, you know, try to get things done that, actually, even the market can fund. You know, it is possible to tell stories around political moments that inform us, even within the market.

That's how Visible was possible, because it was a funded project. Not directly, but through the institutions that supported it. And those institutions had corporate donors. They would have to- those are the existing funding matrices.

Doug: I'm still devoted to an idea of displacing capital with aesthetics. Modern aesthetics in particular. As Habermas says, the unfinished modern project presents you with a model of subjectivity in saying we imagine a different world in our art. And the solution might be found even in Bataille's sacrificial economies.

And the idea is, isn't there a way we can imagine together? Why do these things always have to exist as a sort of compromising relationship to dominant culture through individuality and the false autonomy of art? I know the theories of subculture, how things then get changed and so forth. I've experienced it, I mean, the idea of Group Material's critique of the museum in the beginning seemed so unpalatable to many people—the NEA held up our first grant because we painted the walls red.

Naeem: You're joking surely?

Doug: For us, the idea of red walls were, very symbolically, very simply, very perfect: “we are rejecting the neutral color of white.” We didn't say red stands for anything. We didn't say red stands for the dictatorship of the proletariat. We didn't say that red stands for the passion of the open heart.

Naeem: Well, what did they think it stood for?

Doug: The NEA thought it stood for left centered labor politics. Sure.

Naeem: This was sometime in the 1980s?

Doug: In 1983 I believe it was.

Naeem: Ok, because now, no one would think that...not when Che is on Soho hipster tees. Red is just a color baby.

Doug: Yes, the politics of culture has changed, sure. But on a different level, what I am trying to point out is that these days, the way ideology works without such clashes... you barely know now when you're interpolating the agendas of power! That's why marxists called it false consciousness. As Felix used to say: You don't know what you could have with that cracker, when you're eating the body of Christ. You don't know that you could think of it differently. You don't know that if you asked for jam on your cracker, you would either be a total rebel, right- an infidel- or a schizophrenic!

Naeem: You mean when you have the wafer in your mouth in church? That's what you're calling the cracker? You're cracking me up!

Doug: See what I'm saying? The schisms within existing beliefs about what makes us human are hard to see- I always have felt that revealing them,

revealing the ideologies in life, is part and parcel of what we are supposed to do as artists. This is what Caravaggio did- what Watteau did.... And in this art world today it doesn't seem to be very important for many to be thinking of how false and limiting the new definitions of human nature have become. In a way the denaturalizing of a limiting authority is always in artwork- it may be my age and my relationship to new technologies, but it seems that so much art these days is always designed to fit well. Why does contemporary art seem to fit so well into the way things already are?

Take Ranciere, he is clearly brilliant but why is he foregrounded today? Why does he fit well enough now to be an **Art Forum** cover but never before? Remember everything in culture happens for a reason. These days I am remembering Marshall Berman[4] who was a good and early friend to Group Material and always asked us to see how culture is used to create larger social realities for people. It is very vogue now to declare the worlds of aesthetics and power as impermeable and as I have said before, this is very convenient for the economic determinists on both sides of the aisle.

It's curious to me the way that the market makes ideas fit so well that in fact it distorts humanity- and at the same time prevents affective beauty from ever finding a space we can use on a daily basis. But I am envious of those who can maintain critical practices that are viable in the market regardless of its overarching distortions. I've never found a place in figuring out how to make publicity culture really work, personally there was always a block there. It might be psycho dynamic on my part- I've never been comfortable with it.

Naeem: You were worried about keeping your “purity” intact?

Doug: No, it wasn't even politically cogent. It was more psycho-dynamic. It was more like, “We're pretending. We don't belong here. I don't belong here in this museum opening, because I don't know these folks” “These are not my people.” A lot of it has to do, I think, with anxiety over class cultures. A lot of is very self-conscious so yes in a way about “purity”. But don't you ever have this feeling? You're sort of sitting with people and they start a conversation about something like Hotels in Paris or luxury cars or something, and I really cannot pretend I know what they're talking about...

Naeem: I actually get more class conscious in Dhaka than New York

Doug: Well, I'm the child of educators and civil servants who had a certain amount of radical politics in relationship to the civil rights movement in the 60's and the parallel anti-war movement. My father was an academic who refused to work for the State Department, my mother marched on Washington and organized for tenants' rights. But none of this was ever discussed in terms of class in real terms. It wasn't class politics per se because my parents were part of a middle class ethical rebellion, it was sort of traditional 1950's American progressive liberalism. Sadly this was a huge movement you know that is these days hard to see. They thought the world would change.

Naeem: That's interesting, I had always assumed you came from a blue-collar background because of the way you identify yourself now. Did you have a blue-collar job, is that why?

Doug: Maybe its because I always worked. I worked in movie theatres. As a mover. I worked as a welder for many years where I tried to unionize and learned

a lot. So that's where my blue collar identification comes from. But isn't that why we call it class consciousness? I also see consciousness as cultural. In the 70's as a teenager there was an idea of a mass cultural identification with a subjectivity based in constantly flexible difference. It was the culture of such heterogeneity that became an obsession for people like me.

Naeem: There's also the romance of the working class always.

Doug: I'm committed to romance matching up with reality! Look, we're getting too much into the autobiographical now...

Naeem: Oh, I sometimes look to auto and bio for inspiration.

Doug: No we need to move away from this. Let's go back to our earlier discussion- that just because a collective is temporary does not mean that it is a failure. The idea of something being provisional, based on contingency, is actually one of the definitions of community politics for me. The idea of communities of concern, groups of people who come together

around particular problems, that is where community politics started. And the idea that your one-issue politics is never going to coalesce into a popular front is something that has caused the American left to despair from the get go.

I think it's important for those of us who were involved, in a sense, trying to represent activist aesthetic work, to put those politics behind us and to not say, "look, you're not part of a larger movement, so there's no point." Single-issue politics do not bother me. They have been completely effective in creating changes in American consciousness. I've seen that.

Naeem: But when they're short term and they end, do you feel, "Oh, we should have gone on longer"?

Doug: No! Not at all. And you know there's this romantic moment that I've brought up over and over again, which is with Artists Call, which was a finite project. Jon Hendricks of Guerilla Art Action Group said, "Fine, we raised a lot of money, we have a lot of institutional weight, now its time to stop." And it's not "failure" to stop, rather, you're letting other people pick up this thing from another view point. It's not like the idea goes away. It's not like all of a sudden you wake

up in the morning and there's no Empire. You know what I mean? The hierarchy of power is pretty big, so there's lots of work to do.

Naeem: And actually you can make space for others to do work. Because sometimes if you are the artist collective that everyone keeps calling whenever they either want a Muslim, or an activist-artist, or someone doing work around 9/11 on the panel, you're actually blocking others. You become your own mini pop-art assembly line.

Doug: There's this mistake about democracy, a weird fantasy that it only functions as total consensus. And we don't have to get overly theoretical to know that actually democracy was developed to allow antagonism and difference and conflict to all live at the same time in a social body. There is no existing totalizing representation of people or of will that is not crushing to imagination. There is no holy moment that somehow translates all my experiences. There is no singular pulse of America. And I know that every day people get up and say, "You're the Muslim, no I'm the Muslim. You're the bad Muslim, and I'm the good Muslim", etc, etc. And these are actually conversations- popular, ongoing, antagonistic

discourse over the value of people's lives. This is what art can remind us.

So maybe, so what if the collective retires? Maybe that's a good thing! We can take the discourse somewhere else. For me a discursive act is by definition beautiful- it is both represented by parliamentary politics, and aesthetic judgment: a great enlightenment project.

Group Material based much of our rhetoric on this idea of the forum. We wanted the exhibition to be like the comparison of ideas in a socio-political exchange. We wanted the museum to be a conversation. Hopefully that will then signal other institutions that they too should open up to the idea of these shifting moments and definitions and identities and call in other people.

Now perhaps a problem is that artist have become the experts in representing dialogue in museums only- so dialogue does not have to take part in the rest of life. "Oh, ok, that group there, they represent that, so we can go to them." I remember this after AIDS Timeline, a lot of museums wanted it who had remained silent during the worst part of the crisis.

Naeem: There are by now a lot of people doing intense, immersive work around the topics that Visible was exploring. At that time we were desperate for source material, visual material, research. And now there is so much material out- in art, film, books, newspapers. The epoch has shifted quickly in a good way. I remember coming back to New York this spring, after being in Bangladesh for a year, and almost falling off my bike when I saw the giant film poster for **Rendition**. You can remember a very recent time when no one even wanted to breathe the word “extraordinary rendition.” But by now that policy has been so thoroughly discredited that it’s become mainstream to oppose it.

In 2003, I was going through my 20th obsessive viewing of **Donnie Darko**. And now Jake Gyllenhal is in a Hollywood film about rendition. It just...the ground has moved. That MBA term: paradigm shift. So there’s a tremendous amount of work out there now. Trevor Paglen with *Torture Taxi*. Hasan Elahi with *Tracking Transience*. Chitra Ganesh & Mariam Ghani’s *Index Of The Disappeared*. Coco Fusco’s *Operation Atropos*. Even Steve Kurtz/Critical Art Ensemble won an acquittal. I remember when that was the 9/11 case everyone was protesting against.

There is still a need to keep talking about all this, to keep making work about it, and a lot of people are doing that. But the sense of isolation that we all had in 2002-04- that no one is talking about this, probably similar to what you felt about the AIDS crisis in the 1980s- that feeling has lessened.

Doug: The objective conditions that produced your project have changed.

Naeem: It shows even in how self-definitions have shifted. In our initial (more) naive stage, we described ourselves as, “a group of Muslim activist-artists.” It’s an awkward and politically problematic construction. And of course as people joined the group, they challenged it: “Is this really necessary? Why?”

Walid Raad punctured a lot of these identity-based constructions when I met him. Media Farzin wrote a review in **Bidoun** where she described our work as creating “enforced unity”. The so-called united Muslim “ummah”. Those concepts started falling apart once you examine the incredible fractures of race, class, power, politics.

At the end, the biggest thing for us, working as a collaborative group, was that we made work that we would not have made otherwise. Working on my own, I tend to be more certain about things. When we were in a group we were anything but certain. But precisely because of those dissonances, we also couldn't keep it going forever...

Doug: It's why we're slow when we collectivize. We're very slow.

Naeem: And it's interesting to talk collective in the age of non-physicality. At the beginning, we were spending time together, but soon we started doing email-based collaboration. And then people said, should we have meetings, even though physically we're not in the same place. Sarah Olson was in San Francisco. Vivek was in the American Studies program at NYU, buried under his thesis. Sehban moved back to Pakistan after the Queens Museum opening. I was in Bangladesh researching a new project. I started wondering what it meant that all our work was being done by e-mail. Is the collective then real or a construct? We'd meet infrequently and suddenly there would be an invitation to go and do something in Finland.

I think that was the time when we started saying, “Ok, maybe it’s time to move on.” Because the cycle of invitations have their own logic, beyond the group’s natural life, forcing it to continue. Like the Energizer bunny. Boom, boom, boom...

We were all together at the beginning, a big motley crew, everyone from different worlds. Vivek Bald is the unsung hero of New York’s Asian Underground movement. He took Mutiny from a photocopied fundraiser for his film into this giant movement of Asian Underground music in New York (with DJ Rekha). Anandaroop Roy is this amazing self-taught cartographer, and we were working at 3rd-i, which was a monthly screening of South Asian independent films. Which is also how I first worked with Prerana Reddy, who ended up being our co-curator for the first Visible Collective project. Kristofer Dan-Bergman—who produces commercial photography projects, and here he was photographing detainees in our satire of Gap jeans ads. The link to Kristofer is through Timmy Aziz, a Bangladeshi architect based in New York. Aimara Lin, whom we first met when she was giving this fiery speech outside a Not In Our Name protest rally outside Immigration Naturalization Service offices in San Francisco. I remember photographing her and

thinking “whoa she’s fierce” And then we ran into each other at the anti-Republican National Convention protests and I said “You’re the girl outside INS!”

The point is not a litany of cross connections. Point is we worked together because we were friends. It was a productive and specific moment, and then we moved on. This group could only get together in a city like New York...

Doug: New York forces you to get together, to work well with others...



[1] During Public Address, organized by Gregory Sholette and others as part of Danish Arts Council project in New York.

[2] Who Cares. Pasternak, A. and Ashford, D., essayists; Creative Time: New York ; 2006

[3] Curated by Jaishri Abhichandani and Prerana Reddy as part of Fatal Love: South Asian American Art Now

[4] All That is Solid Melts Into Air, Marshall Berman; 1982

DISAPPEARED In america

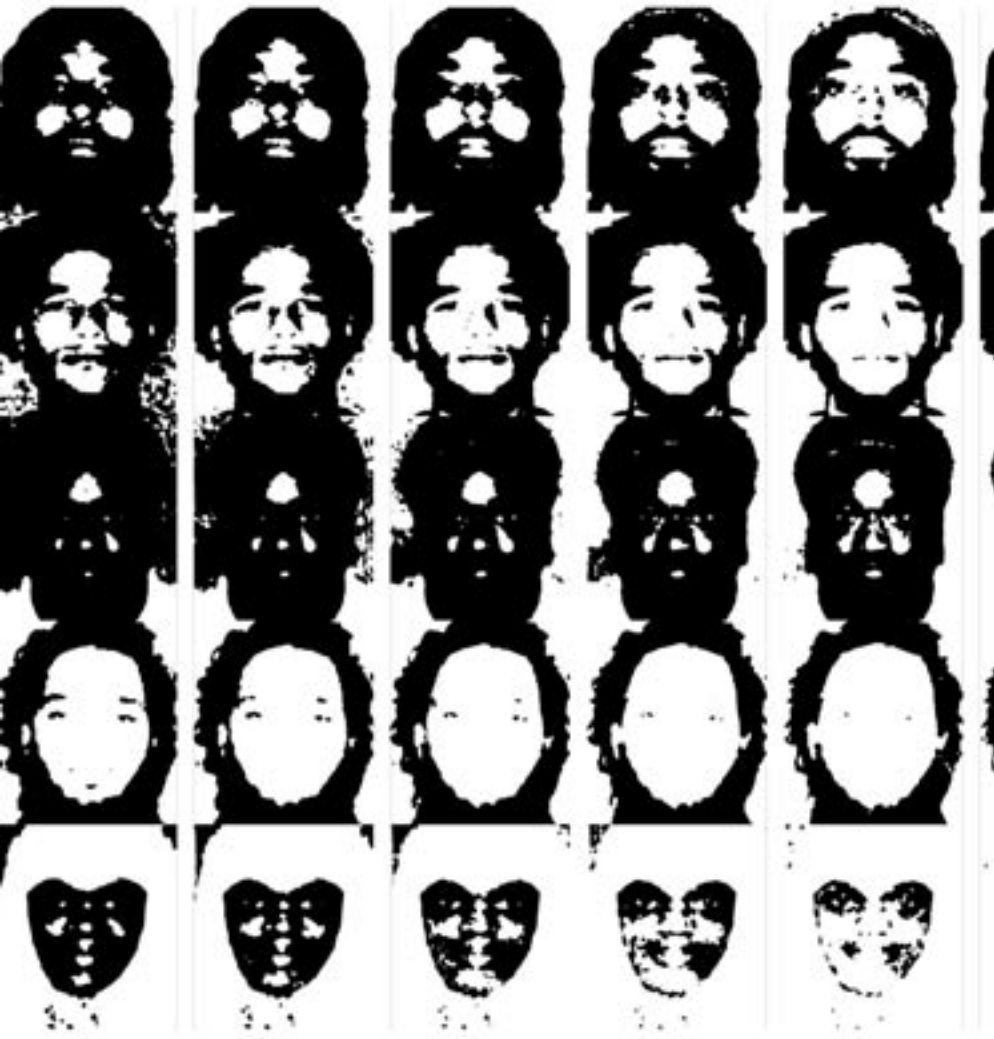
PROJECTS VIDEOS **TIMELINE** NAMES PRESS US CONTACT

Flash | HTML

June 2003

DOJ Inspector General Glenn Fine testifies on detention and treatment of Sept. 11 detainees that some detainees suffered serious rights vi





below, who also went for immigrants in "Alien Nation"), "super predators" and the "full moon
tion as an indicator of whether the "wogs" are here to roll an honest burrito or blow up
" Eldridge Cleaver's "severe new restrictions" evoke DHS' "no fly" lists: "I was not to go
or I would be sent back to prison." During the Washington DC sniper case, NRO Online e
of War vet African-Americans are 70% of the US Muslim population, and the fastest g

• Egypt Unnamed Facility • Gereshk Forward Operating Base • Ghost Prisons • Guantanamo • Haripur • Hilla Military Compound • India Block (unlabeled sub-section) • Indonesia Unnamed Facility • Jalalabad Holding Facility • Jordan Unnamed Facility • Kandahar Airport • Kandahar Prison Center (Camp Slappy) • Khost Unnamed Facility • Koga • Kohat • Lazough Unnamed Facility • Mazrah Torah Prison (Ashraf Camp) • Mercury Forward Operating Base • Mihail • Mosul Airport Camp • Mulhaqal-Mazra • Mustansiriya University Student Dorm • Pakistan Unnamed Facility • Palace of Conferences Opposite Al-Rasheed Hotel • Unnamed Facility • Romanian Unnamed Facility • Uday Hussein Presidential Palace • Arabia Unnamed Facility • Serbia Transportation Depot • Syria Unnamed Facility • Talil Air Force Base • Thailand Unnamed Facility • Tikrit Elementary School • Uday Hussein Horse Stables • Um-Qasr • Uzbekistan Unnamed Facility • Um-Qasr • Uday Hussein Horse Stables • Tikrit Elementary School • Thailand Unnamed

“You can’t trust them,” one [immigration] officer says. I’m prepared to bet he is from Brooklyn. There is no response from the other one. He is not angry, just sad that I now work in his country.

“You just can’t trust them,” the first one repeats, shaking his wrist to loosen his heavy watch. The one sitting down now raises his weary eyes [to look at me].

“Did you, the first time you went to America, intend to come back?”

“Wait a minute,” I say, “did you get a visa when you first went to the moon?”

Fuck the moon, tell me about Vietnam. Just how precise were your plans there?

And did you when you went to Panama the first time know that you’d come back, guns blazing, a century later?”

Maybe I did say all of this, and it was fear that I saw in the officer’s eyes when in response to my shrug he slowly turned the pages of my passport and stamped it.



State of Emergency

by Steven Meisel

We contacted Meisel's agency about his idea of doing a photo shoot. I may as they suggest our names and immediately filed under "nutty Danish cartoon promoter" life. We wanted to use the work somehow, somewhere. But it was already so over the top I don't know what we could have done to improve.

© 2005 P.F.S. All rights reserved.



Visible Collective (images)

Things pile up, database+flash animation, Liverpool FACT Museum, Liverpool, 2005.

Driving While Black Becomes Flying While Brown, digital print, Yerba Buena Center for Arts, San Francisco, 2006.

It's Safe To Open Your Eyes Now, Part 1, digital print+spray paint, Yerba Buena Center for Arts, San Francisco, 2006.

It's About Who You Know & Who You Hang With, text excerpt from Amitava Kumar, UC Irvine Gallery, Irvine, 2006.

I wanna be a supermodel, have my latte spilling as I get frisked, email request loop, online project, 2006.

Lingering 20, digital video, Queens Museum of Art, New York, 2004.

From: Rajiv Dabhadkar
Subject: Breach of Privacy !
Date: March 5, 2005 3:32 AM EST

Just wondering how come my name is listed in the site.. when I am alive and featured in teh recent article on computerworld.com. Could u please explain regards, Rajiv Dabhadkar
ALIVE and Rocking in India

From: Rajiv Dabhadkar
Subject: Breach of Privacy !
Date: March 5, 2005 4:26:31 AM EST

I would like to check the credibility of the database of names that you have in your site. And your method of authenticating the same before puttign information online. I have found reference to my name in the database. And would like to communicate my dislike towards the same. I am the founder of an organization of software technology workers in America and though in India presently to work build the organization basics, I'd very much like to arrive in the US. However, am also in communication with individuals in Washington DC , and hence finding my name amongst those dissappeared IN America is most humiliating. As a reference, I have been featured in the LATEST issue of Computer World (print as well as online) <http://www.computerworld.com> and will further the stake to my credibility via documenting emails to those concerned within North America. Looking forward to having my name removed from the database and an early response Hurt deeply
Rajiv Dabhadkar
currently in Bombay (India)

From: Visible Collective
Subject: Re: Breach of Privacy !
Date: March 5, 2005 9:17:46 AM EST

Hi Rajiv

The list of names came from Migration Policy Institute's list of men detained since 9/11. Most likely it is another Rajiv. Have you ever been to the US? If not, it is obviously someone else as it lists their place of domicile in the US as well.

-Naeem on behalf of Visible Collective

From: Visible Collective
Subject: Re: Breach of Privacy !
Date: March 5, 2005 10:25:05 AM EST

Mr. Rajiv

It is obviously someone else with the same name as this person is listed as being 32 years old, and living in New Jersey prior to detention. If you have never been to US, it is obviously not you. By the way, your name is not so uncommon so entirely feasible that there is someone else with same name. The source for all names in the database is a report by MPI:

America's Challenge: Domestic Security, Civil Liberties, and National Unity After September 11

Migration Policy Institute, 1400 16th Street NW, Suite 300, Washington DC 20036

From: Rajiv Dabhadkar

Subject: Re: I am ALIVE

Date: March 5, 2005 11:38:48 AM EST

No..I havent been detained ever. I arrived back here with my own free will. Could i receive the contact person at the Migration Policy Institute. I'd like to recify this at source. Your effort will allow me to set a right course in life.

regards

Rajiv

From: Visible Collective

Subject: Re: Breach of Privacy !

Date: March 5, 2005 11:45:19 AM EST

Hi Rajiv

The phone # was listed in the other e-mail I sent. If they take you off, let me know and we will take it off our website as well. But just to be clear, we are not for any closed borders. We are a group of artists and activists who have been doing public art interventions around post 9/11 detention and profiling. The list is part of a lightbox and wall print we created for a meditation on the enormity of the security panic led civil liberties breakdown. If anything, we are trying to start conversations that would make these sorts of profiling unacceptable. Our project would never be "used" to keep anyone out, the opposite in fact (if anything).

From: Rajiv Dabhadkar

Subject: Re: Breach of Privacy !

Date: March 5, 2005 12:03:51 PM EST

Sir;

Would you mind doing a search under my name on google.com

"Rajiv Dabhadkar"

The 9/11 incident has not only affected me..not this immigration related thing again. I wanted a resolve, I began <http://www.nostops.org>

I Need to find the email address of the final point of contact...

Could u please help..

Rajiv

From: Visible Collective

Subject: Re: Breach of Privacy !

Date: March 5, 2005 6:03:48 PM EST

Hello Rajiv, We did some research and now understand how your name is on the list. USA TODAY ran a story "Tech Workers Feel The Heat" (10/17/01) where your case was mentioned: *Rajiv Dabhadkar was three blocks from his New Jersey home on Oct. 2 when police motioned his car to the side of the road. Dabhadkar, a computer programmer from India here on an H-1B visa, was handcuffed and held in jail for several hours. When released, he was fined \$250 for an unpaid parking ticket. Though authorities gave him no reason for the seemingly harsh treatment, Dabhadkar speculates he was hassled because of his ethnicity. "I'm completely shaken."....Before his arrest, Dabhadkar worked for 2 years on short-term projects for several firms, including Merrill Lynch and AT&T. He says office relations became more strained as economic woes mounted. Co-workers started leaving him "out of the loop" on decisions. "They treated me as though I was non-existent because I wasn't American," he says....The heightened security and anxiety have taken an emotional toll on workers like Dabhadkar, who has lived in the USA for 10 years, has a family and is looking for work. "What should I do?" he asks. "I'm at my wits' end."*

There is also a photo of you, so it seems it was with your permission. When MPI was compiling list of people who were detained after 9/11, your name made it on the list based on this. But just to be clear, our project opposes these arbitrary detentions. So the purpose of including you in the project is a positive, not a negative.

From: Rajiv Dabhadkar

Subject: Apologies from me !

Date: March 20, 2005 5:16:41 AM EST

Respected Sir;

I apologise for having written a few emails to you in bad taste. You were absolutely right in your approach of the web site, and with the events following in my personal life here.. a reference made on gogle.com was actually a reference made by me in my own personal life.. and it was traumatic... just that my mind chose to relive the bad memories ..! And I got uncomfortable at wrote those emails to you. Please accept my apologies .. I was being too self-centric in my feelings..! Deep regards and with sincerity

Rajiv Dabhadkar

From: Visible Collective

Subject: Re: Apologies from me !

Date: March 20, 2005 10:15 AM EST

Hi Rajiv

That is ok, no need for apology. But I am thinking maybe we should discuss the whole experience in wider context in public. You being tech-savvy were able to find the website, the other people who were caught in this unfair crackdown don't even know about any other recourses or representations of their names in media they may or may not want. Perhaps we can have an e-mail conversation, which could become an essay in the future.

From: Rajiv Dabhadkar

Subject: Request for response

Date: November 17, 2005 12:57:20 AM EST

Sir;

We have had communicated earlier....

I wish to clear my name of those detained in America..

Who should i contact .i am in India presently... and with a choice..

From: Rajiv Dabhadkar

Subject: Re: Request for response

Date: November 18, 2005 12:18:18 AM EST

I'd very much like to meet up with you. I am in Bombay.What are u involved with wrt the project?? Rajiv

Rajiv Dabhadkar's emails to info@disappearedinamerica.org were reprinted in *Rethinking Marxism* with his permission

IDENSITAT is an art project that aims to offer mechanisms to help authors articulate creative proposals in the field of public space in relation to the site or territory. IDENSITAT sets itself up as a networked production and research space, based in the field of art, exploration of new forms of involvement and interaction in the social space. The set of activities it promotes is defined by project promotion, based on the combination between open calls for projects and invitations, with the aim of promoting proposals for specific contexts; educational actions to detect local groups with which to work on the crossover between these projects and some of their activities; and documentary projects that function as works carried out in other contexts.

The set of activities is promoted through specific actions, along with exhibition formats, publications, debates and workshops. IDENSITAT was set up in Calaf in 1999. Following the third edition (2005-06), it was joined by the town of Manresa. For this edition, the territorial network has been expanded with the development of projects in Mataró, in collaboration with Can Xalant, Centre for Creation and Contemporary Thought, and in the Priorat area, through the Priorat Art Centre.

IDENSITAT07 Locals | Visitors

The fourth edition of IDENSITAT, which bears the heading of Locals | Visitors, gathers together the production projects carried out in each of the towns and areas taking part (Calaf, Manresa, Mataró and the county of Priorat), along with documentary projects carried out in other towns. Following the exhibitions in these areas in the provinces of Barcelona and Tarragona (Spain), some projects have become production activities, such as the publication of this book, which forms part of the project Disappeared in America, by Visible Collective.

Author: Doug Ashford, Naeem Mohaiemen

Cover Image: Fred Askew

Published by: IDENSITAT Contemporary Art Association

Director: Ramon Parramon

General coordinator: Oriol Fontdevila

Publication coordinator: Llorenç Bonet

Translation: Lacorreccional

Transcription: Sonia Finley

Project selection board: Santiago Cirugeda | Amanda Cuesta | Alicia Murria | Ramon Parramon | Lorenzo Romito

Educational actions: Quim Moya | Eva Quintana

Exhibition: Núria Parés

With the backing of: Ajuntament de Calaf | Ajuntament de Manresa | Generalitat de Catalunya. Departament de Cultura i Mitjans de Comunicació | Diputació de Barcelona. Xarxa de Municipis

Production of specific projects in Mataró and Priorat: Can Xalant. Centre de Producció i Pensament Contemporani de Mataró | Priorat Centre d'Art

disappearedinamerica.org

shobak.org

idensitat.org

