

NYC 1993
EXPERIMENTAL JET SET,
TRASH AND NO STAR





NEW MUSEUM, NEW YORK

2013

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TIMELINE

Claire Lehmann

DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

"NYC 1993: Experimental Jet Set, Trash and No Star" is one of the first exhibitions to look back at the art of the 1990s. The exhibition focuses on one year, reconstructing a particular historical moment in the form of a synchronic portrait of the New York art world. It is particularly relevant as there is a persistence of issues and concerns in the intertwined spheres of art and politics that are equally vital today.

In 1993, the New Museum was located at 583 Broadway, only a few blocks from its new Bowery location. Although the exhibition space was smaller, the curatorial programming was ambitious and international in scope. The exhibitions presented that year focused on a range of timely subjects and included an impressive, intergenerational roster of artists. "Skin Deep" explored the complexities of racial identity and formal experimentation. "In Transit" captured the increasingly global perspective of the contemporary artist and the gradual shift from local to international concerns. Artists like Byron Kim, Gabriel Orozco, Nari Ward, Jack Whitten, and Andrea Zittel all showed remarkable works at the New Museum that year and we are proud to show these artists, and in some cases these works, again twenty years later.

1993 was also the year when a new generation of young artists made their mark on both the local and international art world. At the time, I was a curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art and was part of the curatorial team who organized that year's iteration of the museum's Biennial exhibition. The 1993 Whitney Biennial is remembered as the most controversial and critically reviled editions of the show, considered an affront by many—the chief art critic for the *New York Times* began his review by declaring, "I hate this show." "NYC 1993" takes place after a long and gradual critical reassessment of the 1993 Whitney Biennial and in an art world where some of that exhibition's young participants, including

Matthew Barney, Glenn Ligon, Sue Williams, and others, have become some of the most successful and admired artists of their generation. As a museum director, it has been gratifying to watch a younger generation of curators engage historically with the ideas and works we speculatively explored in that show.

The New York art world as a whole has changed radically over the past twenty years. The recession following Black Friday in 1989 caused a sharp downturn of the art market by 1993, and the heady days of the 1980s concluded with a thud. But a new chapter was already dawning—one where new and multiple voices were being heard, where new media and social practices were expanding, where art relied on a new kind of capital, where new kinds of values were elevated and the canon, once again, redefined. "Community" began to include a global village, but in New York, a much smaller landscape of galleries populated SoHo, the East Village scene shrank dramatically, and Chelsea, the current center of art commerce, had not yet been born. A smaller community of artists, dealers, collectors, and critics came together, and this exhibition focuses on the notable works made during this year of transition. The curators have done a remarkable job in capturing the layers of complexity that existed in 1993, bringing together artists who were already established figures at that time, some who were just beginning to make their mark, and others whose contributions have, in many cases, been unfairly forgotten. The exhibition does not attempt a definitive history of 1993 but instead describes a history that was already contested at the time and will continue to transform and rewrite itself into the future.

I would like to thank Massimiliano Gioni, Associate Director and Director of Exhibitions, for initiating this exhibition and for his unique vision in reimagining a complex historical moment. I would also like to thank the other members of the curatorial team, Gary Carrion-Murayari, Curator, Jenny Moore, Associate Curator, and Margot Norton, Assistant Curator, all of whom made an equally important contribution to all aspects of the exhibition.

As with all exhibitions at the Museum, this project is the result of an incredible amount of effort from individuals in every department. "NYC 1993" is a particularly

impressive undertaking as it is the first exhibition to incorporate all of the Museum's exhibition floors, the space at 231 Bowery, and a variety of interstitial spaces throughout the building. I would like to thank Joshua Edwards, Director of Exhibitions Management, and his team, Bobby Ives, Associate Registrar, Walsh Hansen, Chief Preparator, Kelsey Womack, Exhibitions Assistant, and Victoria Manning, Associate Registrar, who managed such a complex installation with tremendous hard work, creativity, and good humor. I would also like to thank Karen Wong, Deputy Director and Director of External Affairs, and Regan Grusy, Associate Director and Director of Institutional Advancement, as well as their respective teams, for all of their work in making this exhibition possible.

This catalogue provides a unique approach to capturing the artistic perspectives and intellectual concerns of 1993. It pairs key historical essays with new texts by young writers who examine the historical legacy of the year. This catalogue also contains a timeline of historical events compiled by scholar Claire Lehmann, which demonstrates the range of political, social, and cultural contributions and changes over the course of one pivotal year. I would like to thank the curators, as well as Megan Heuer, Research Associate/Scholar in Residence, and Ethan Swan, Education Associate, for their insightful texts, as well as the authors and publishers who allowed us to reprint their earlier texts. I am also grateful to Sarah Stephenson, Editor and Publications Coordinator, for carefully editing and managing this publication, and to Purtill Family Business for their wonderful catalogue design.

This exhibition would not have been possible without the generous support of the Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation as well as Martin and Rebecca Eisenberg, the Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso para el Arte, and the Robert Mapplethorpe Photography Fund. In addition, I would like to thank Massimo De Carlo, Ronald and Frayda Feldman, Gio Marconi, Marc Payot and Hauser & Wirth, Andrea Rosen, and David Zwirner for their extraordinary support.

We deeply appreciate the cooperation of all of the institutions and individual lenders who have lent works to the show—many of which have not been on view in New York since 1993. I would also like to thank all of

the galleries who assisted in the research and planning of the exhibition, often digging deep into the archives of individual artists to find works that even the artists had almost forgotten.

Most importantly, we applaud all of the participating artists. Each of these individuals uniquely grappled with and captured the social, political, and cultural forces of their moment, and the work they have produced is perhaps the best tool we have for understanding our recent past. We are continually inspired by their vision and by the way they continue to shape our cultural history.

—Lisa Phillips



Patricia Cronin, *Girls*, 1993

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MARCH 7

Experts report that President Clinton will likely fill the record number of judge vacancies not by ideological preference, but with an eye toward diversity.

MARCH 8

The Nigerian musician Fela Kuti, an outspoken dissident, is arrested and charged with murder despite lack of evidence in an apparent act of government harassment.

MTV's irreverent animated television series *Beavis and Butt-Head* premieres.

Patricia Cronin
b. 1963 Beverly, MA

Girls, 1993
Twenty-four Polaroid photographs

Boys, 1993
Twenty-four Polaroid photographs

Collection David and Monica Zwirner

Girls and *Boys* were first exhibited in "Coming to Power: 25 Years of Sexually X-plicit Art by Women," an exhibition co-curated by Cronin and fellow artist Ellen Cantor at David Zwirner in 1993. Cronin and Cantor were interested in images that expressed a fuller idea of female sexuality than those dominating culture and society at the time, which mainly consisted of objectified images of women and were often produced by men. The work presented in "Coming to Power" included painting, sculpture, photography, and performance by women of different generations, ethnicities, and sexual orientation, tracing a history of potent sexual art by women for women.

Girls and *Boys* capture the sexual act from the perspective of the participants, a point of view from within the erotic space rather than from an objectified place of observation. Cronin's Polaroids incorporate transgressive elements such as bondage props as well as images of cultural and political figures such as Madonna and George H. W. Bush. Cronin has also been making erotic watercolors at the time that depicted the artist and her partner, in extreme close-up and larger-than-life scale, in a range of intimate acts, both tender and highly sexual. In contradiction to much of the lesbian pornography in circulation (made by straight men for straight men), Cronin's images give agency to the sexualized female as cultural and visual producer, speaking to larger questions regarding queer, lesbian, or feminist positions within society.