



PORTLAND INSTITUTE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART  
224 NW 13TH AVE #305 PORTLAND ORE 97209

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## **Portland Responds to Wojnarowicz Censorship**

*Film screening and public discussion on art and censorship*

### **Panel Discussion**

**Organized by PICA and hosted by Museum of Contemporary Craft/PNCA**

**When:** December 17th, Doors at 6pm, panel at 6:15pm

**Where:** The Lab @ Museum of Contemporary Craft, 724 NW Davis St, Portland

**FREE and open to the public**

### **Participating Institutions and Individuals (PICA.ORG to be updated with new partners)**

Kristan Kennedy, Portland Institute for Contemporary Art

Stephanie Snyder, Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Gallery, Reed College

Namita Wiggers, Museum of Contemporary Craft

Matthew Stadler, Publication Studio

Todd Tubutis, Blue Sky Gallery

Portland State University Art Galleries

Charles Voorhies Fine Art Library, Pacific Northwest College of Art

Doug Blandy, University of Oregon Arts and Administration Program

Ramsey Mc Phillips

### **David Wojnarowicz: A Fire in My Belly**

**When:** On view now through Friday, February 11, 2011.

Monday – Friday, 10am – 5pm

**Where:** PICA Resource Room, 224 NW 13<sup>th</sup> Ave, #305, Portland, OR

**In response to the Smithsonian’s censorship of an artwork by the late David Wojnarowicz, PICA will convene a panel discussion on art and censorship with a coalition of local art institutions and individuals.**

On November 30, 2010, the National Portrait Gallery removed David Wojnarowicz’s video *A Fire In My Belly* from the exhibition *Hide/Seek: Difference And Desire in American Portraiture* in response to Bill Donohue, President of the Catholic League, incoming House Speaker John Boehner, and Majority Leader Eric Cantor’s declaration that the video is a form of “hate speech.” The Smithsonian was wrong to dignify these slanderous accusations and this manufactured outrage.

In life, Wojnarowicz was a victim of bigotry and sustained campaigns by the religious right to revoke funding for the arts during the 'Culture Wars' of the late 80s and early 90s. His art—and *A Fire in My Belly*, in particular—dealt eloquently and powerfully with the issues of being an openly gay man in America, and the harsh realities of living with HIV/AIDS. Wojnarowicz died in 1992 of AIDS-related complications.

In solidarity with a growing number of organizations and artists across the country, PICA and the participating local institutions will also each screen *A Fire in My Belly* at their respective spaces and will provide a selection of books and related materials for the public to learn about the controversy and the life and work of Wojnarowicz.

*Thank you to the Estate of David Wojnarowicz and P.P.O.W. Gallery, New York, for making the video available for screening.*

*Special thanks to Julia Haas, Jonathan D. Katz, and Alison Maurer for coordinating [Hideseek.org](http://Hideseek.org) and the national effort to draw attention to the issue.*

### **About David Wojnarowicz**

Wojnarowicz (pronounced voy-nah-ROH-vitch) worked in many media, often mixing them together, to produce an art that was distinguished by its rage and its spirit of personal longing. His paintings, photographs, installations, performances and writings railed against the status quo as they also mourned death. He dealt not only with AIDS, but with many other issues, both public and private.

Mr. Wojnarowicz gained the national spotlight in 1989, when the National Endowment for the Arts decided to rescind money for a catalogue to an exhibition about AIDS because of an essay in which he attacked various public figures. The endowment reversed itself. It also supported a 10-year retrospective of his work that was organized at the University Galleries of Illinois State University in Normal, Ill., which included a catalogue that reproduced the essay. Mr. Wojnarowicz was in the news again after the American Family Association of Tupelo, Miss., an anti-pornography lobbying group, and its leader, the Rev. Donald E. Wildmon, issued a pamphlet criticizing the endowment. The pamphlet included photographs cropped from works by Mr. Wojnarowicz that included sexual images. The artist sued the organization for misrepresenting him and damaging his reputation. In 1990, a Federal District Court judge in New York ruled in his favor and ordered that the organization publish and distribute a correction. Mr. Wojnarowicz was the only artist to challenge Mr. Wildmon in court.

An abused child and a teen-age street hustler, Mr. Wojnarowicz made much of his personal history in the social margins in his art and writings. He was born in Red Bank,

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N.J., ran away from home, lived on the streets, and eventually graduated from the High School of Music and Art in Manhattan. One of many artists of his generation to achieve recognition in the boom-and-bust East Village art scene of the early 80's, Mr. Wojnarowicz was first known for stenciling images of burning houses and falling figures onto the sides of buildings. He typified the approach of artists from the East Village who felt free to explore various media, to mix high and low art. The death from AIDS of his friend Peter Hujar, the photographer, in 1987, and the diagnosis in 1988 of his own illness, prompted Mr. Wojnarowicz to bear witness in his art to the disease and its social and psychological impact.

### **About Portland Institute for Contemporary Art (PICA)**

Since 1995, PICA has built a citywide platform for the creation and discovery of contemporary art, through artist residencies and commissions, talks and workshops, and the annual Time-Based Art Festival.

### **For Publicity Images**

Images of Wojnarowicz' work are available online through his gallery, P.P.O.W. here: [http://ppowgallery.com/selected\\_work.php?artist=14](http://ppowgallery.com/selected_work.php?artist=14)

You can also download a copy of Wojnarowicz' *Untitled (One Day This Kid...)* to print and distribute. <http://ppowgallery.com/onedaythiskid/>