

KINO LORBER

Presents

HOBO CAMP FILMS & WOW DOCS (World of Wonder Productions, Inc)

Wojnarowicz F*ck You F*ggot F**ker

A film by Chris McKim

Produced by Chris McKim, Randy Barbato, Fenton Bailey, and WOW Docs

*WINNER! Special jury recognition at 2020 DOC NYC - Best Use of Archival Materials**

Official Selection - 2020 Tribeca Film Festival

Official Selection - 2020 HOT DOCS

U.S. | 2029 | 105 min | 1:85:1 | Color | English

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Synopsis:

*Wojnarowicz: F**k You F*ggot F**ker* is a fiery and urgent documentary portrait of downtown New York City artist, writer, photographer, and activist David Wojnarowicz. As New York City became the epicenter of the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s, Wojnarowicz weaponized his work and waged war against the establishment's indifference to the plague until his death from it in 1992 at the age of 37.

Exclusive access to his breathtaking body of work – including paintings, journals, and films – reveals how Wojnarowicz emptied his life into his art and activism. Rediscovered answering machine tape recordings and intimate recollections from Fran Lebowitz, Gracie Mansion, Peter Hujar, and other friends and family help present a stirring portrait of this fiercely political, unapologetically queer artist.

[David Wojnarowicz Biography and Works](#)**Chris McKim:**

Emmy award-winning filmmaker & TV producer Chris McKim graduated from Penn State University's film program in 1995. He soon hopped a train for New York City and began his career at Miramax Films where he worked till 2000, first as international marketing manager before moving to post-production. While there, he once hit Harvey Weinstein in the head with a door.

In 2001, he met Randy Barbato and Fenton Bailey of World of Wonder which was the start of countless creative adventures beginning with documenting the making of their scripted feature "Party Monster."

Chris was with former televangelist Tammy Faye Messner as she began chemotherapy while directing and producing "Tammy Faye: Death Defying" about her battle with cancer. He's bounced around the world with Big Freedia as showrunner and executive producer of the docuseries "Big Freedia Queen of Bounce," and for 4 years, he shared a cubicle with RuPaul, helping to create the ground-breaking juggernaut "RuPaul's Drag Race" as showrunner & executive producer of the first 4 seasons.

In 2016, he co-directed and produced the Emmy-winning documentary "Out of Iraq" which had a special screening at the United Nations hosted by US Ambassador Samantha Power. In addition to directing and producing the award-winning documentary "Freedia Got a Gun," which was selected for the 2020 Tribeca Film Festival and premiered on NBC's Peacock, he directed and produced the feature documentary *Wojnarowicz: F--k You F-ggot F--ker* about 80s artist, writer and activist David Wojnarowicz which was selected for the 2020 Tribeca Film Festival and Hot Docs.

Fenton Bailey & Randy Barbato – Directors/Producers, World of Wonder Co-Founders

For over twenty years, World of Wonder has introduced audiences to new worlds, talent and ideas that have consistently made people go wow. Programming highlights include: Emmy® Award winning "RuPaul's Drag Race" (VH1/Logo), "Million Dollar Listing" LA & NY (Bravo); award-winning films and documentaries including "Party Monster", "Mapplethorpe: Look at the Pictures," "Inside Deep Throat," "The Eyes of Tammy Faye," "Carrie Fisher's Wishful Drinking," "Monica in Black and White," and Emmy® Award winning "Out of Iraq." After creating a substantial digital footprint with its YouTube channel WOWPresents (1M+ subs), WOW formed its own SVOD digital platform with WOW Presents Plus, along with an award-winning blog, The

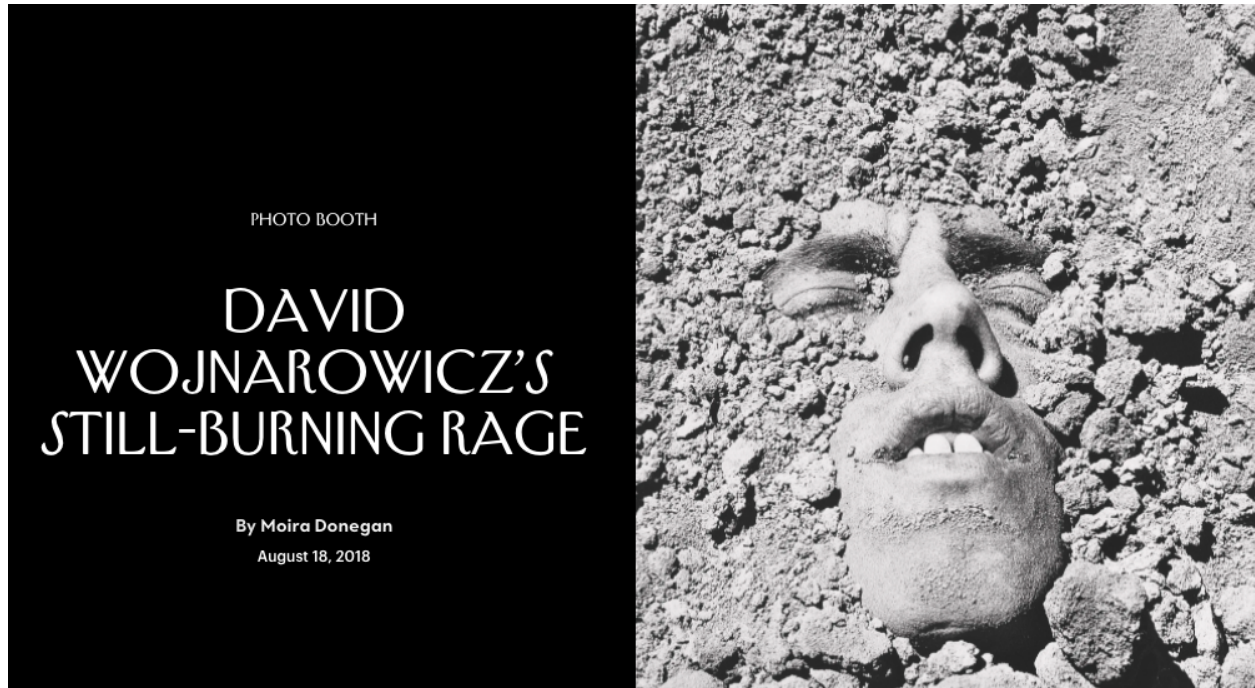
WOW Report. Turning the convention scene on its head, the bi-annual RuPaul's DragCon is the world's largest drag culture convention, welcoming over 100,000 attendees across LA and NYC.

Co-founders Randy Barbato and Fenton Bailey were honored with the IDA Pioneer Award in December 2014, celebrating exceptional achievement, leadership, and vision in the nonfiction and documentary community, named to Variety's Reality Leaders List in 2017, and chosen for the OUT100 list in 2018 for their trailblazing work in the LGBTQ+ community. World of Wonder was also selected for Realscreen's 2018 Global 100 list, which recognizes the top international non-fiction and unscripted production companies working in the industry today.

The New Yorker

By [Maira Donegan](#)
August 18, 2018

[David Wojnarowicz's Still-Burning Rage](#)



[“History Keeps Me Awake at Night,”](#) the Whitney Museum’s retrospective of the works of the artist, writer, and activist David Wojnarowicz, opens with a mask of the French poet Arthur Rimbaud. Wojnarowicz made the mask out of cardstock and a rubber band, using a famous photograph of the poet at the age of seventeen, and then took a series of photos of his friends wearing it around New York City in the late seventies. Rimbaud rides a densely graffitied subway train; Rimbaud tries to cross an avenue in rush-hour traffic; Rimbaud lies naked on a bed with his penis in one hand; Rimbaud poses with a syringe in his left arm, a bandanna used for a tourniquet. Wojnarowicz, whose artistic career spanned the late seventies to his death, from aids, in 1992, at thirty-seven, posed the Rimbaud portraits in spots around New York that were significant in his own life, primarily the places where he had hustled as a child prostitute in his teen years.

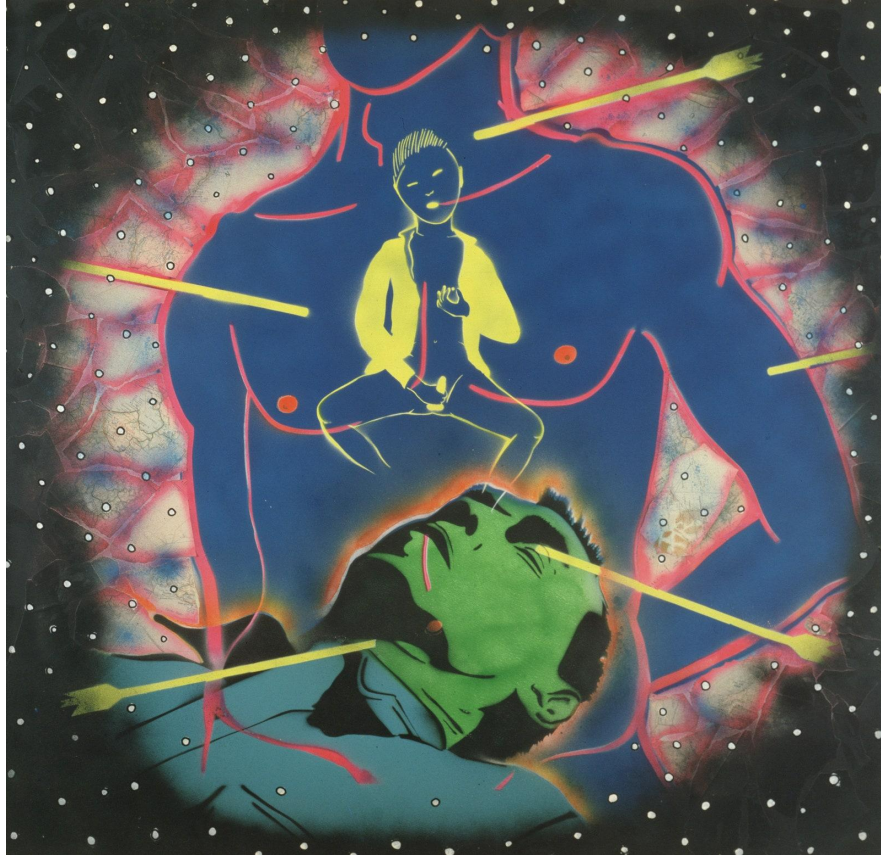
Wojnarowicz identified with Rimbaud when he took those photos, and in the twenty-six years since his death, he has become a Rimbaud-like figure: young, iconoclastic, gay, and gone too soon. In his early career, he stencilled graffiti on the abandoned buildings of the bankrupt city, scrawled poetry on the dirty walls of the Chelsea Piers, where he went to cruise for anonymous

sex, and wrote moving essays and diary entries that described the beauty he found in the parts of his life that made him an outcast: being gay, and being addicted to heroin.



"Self-Portrait of David Wojnarowicz (1954-1992)," 1983–84. Photograph by David Wojnarowicz and Tom Warren

What we know of Wojnarowicz's youth suggests that it was brutally painful. Holland Cotter, writing in the Times, says that the artist's account of his own early life was "romantically massaged but based in fact." What seems certain is that his parents abandoned him sometime shortly after their divorce, when he was two, leaving him to drift among a series of temporary homes, some of them abusive. He started turning tricks in his teens, and was injecting heroin soon after. His earliest work consists of paintings done on supermarket posters, stencils made of cardboard—materials that he could forage or steal.



"Peter Hujar Dreaming/Yukio Mishima: St. Sebastian," 1982.

New York was a different city then, more dangerous and less glamorous but also much cheaper, and in some ways more welcoming to the artistically ambitious. Through his art and his busboy job at the downtown dance club Danceteria, Wojnarowicz met established artists who became his professional champions; Nan Goldin, Zoe Leonard, Paul Thek, Luis Frangella, and Kiki Smith all became his good friends and helped him parlay his graffiti work into shows at downtown galleries. A place in a 1985 Whitney show followed. But Wojnarowicz's art did not develop power and pointedness until 1987, when his close friend, the portrait photographer [Peter Hujar](#), died, of aids, in St. Vincent's Hospital, in Greenwich Village.



"Arthur Rimbaud in New York," 1978-1979.

Twenty years Wojnarowicz's senior, Hujar had been a lover, a teacher, and a father figure. It was Hujar who had first taken Wojnarowicz's art seriously, Hujar who first encouraged him to try painting, Hujar who gave Wojnarowicz a place to stay, at his loft on Second Avenue, Hujar who chided him to give up heroin. The aids crisis was raging by then, and the gay community and downtown arts scene alike were being brutalized by the disease. Hujar died slowly, wasting away in the loft that he and Wojnarowicz had shared. In his diaries, Wojnarowicz describes Hujar's long illness and desperate attempts to cure himself. In one episode, Wojnarowicz writes that he accompanied Hujar to a clinic on Long Island, where they discover that a quack doctor is injecting aids patients with human feces.



"Untitled," 1987.

Wojnarowicz never recovered from the loss of Hujar; it would fill his art with defiance and moral outrage for the rest of his life. In one gallery, three black-and-white portraits of Hujar's body are mounted side by side, showing his face, hands, and feet. Wojnarowicz took the pictures moments after his friend died. Hujar had been handsome, with a strong chin, broad forehead, and sharp eyes. In the picture taken after his death, he is unrecognizable. He is so thin that his collarbone protrudes from the hospital gown like a drawer pull; his eyes are sunken and half open. It doesn't look like he's sleeping or in repose. It looks like he's in pain.

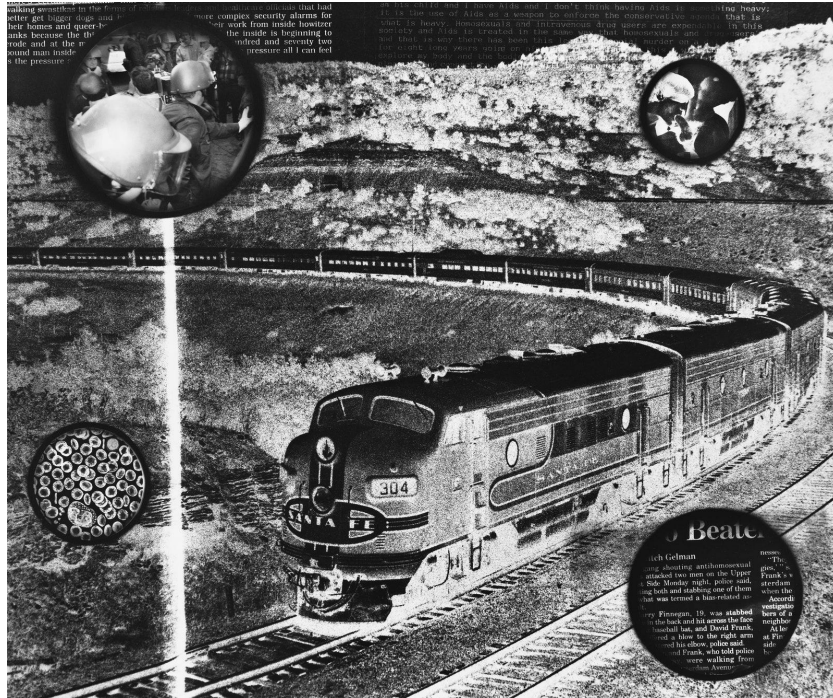


"Untitled," 1987.



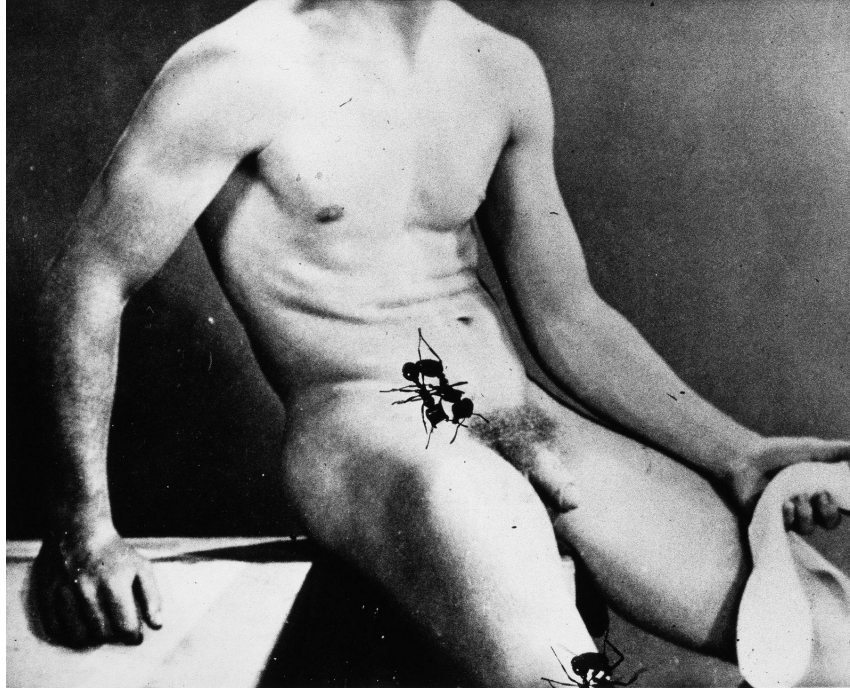
"Untitled," 1987.

Wojnarowicz received his own H.I.V. diagnosis in the spring of 1988, just a few months after Hujar died. The art that he made in the following years was furiously political. As the aids crisis burned on, he moved away from painting and focussed more on photography, collages, and writing. In one collage, a long locomotive winds through a vast American desert. That image is surrounded by inset circles where police in riot gear surge into a crowd, a distorted still from a porno shows a man performing oral sex, and an article details the stabbing of a nineteen-year-old gay man. In another, an aerial shot shows soldiers parachuting out of military planes above an inset picture of two men on a bed, having sex.



"Untitled," from the Sex Series (for Marion Scemama), 1989.

If the messaging of these works is not exactly subtle, neither were the politics of the aids crisis in the late eighties and early nineties. Wojnarowicz did not see the epidemic as a tragic accident of biology but as an act of willful, mendacious neglect by the American government. He had reason to feel this way. At the time, aids drugs were scarce, inconsistently effective, and expensive; most patients couldn't get access to them. (The antiretroviral cocktail that would make H.I.V. survivable long-term was not introduced until 1996.) In the meantime, misinformation about how H.I.V. was contracted spread widely, and fear of the disease ignited vicious public homophobia. During the time that Wojnarowicz was making this art, Republican lawmakers were calling for homosexuals to be quarantined, branded, and even killed. Much of Wojnarowicz's art from this period seems to be addressed directly to them, and its tone is combative, indicting, and angry. In one collage, Senator Jesse Helms is depicted as a poisonous spider, a swastika patterned on his back.



"Untitled" (Desire), from the Ant Series, 1988-1989.



"Untitled (Time and Money)," from the Ant Series, 1988-1989.

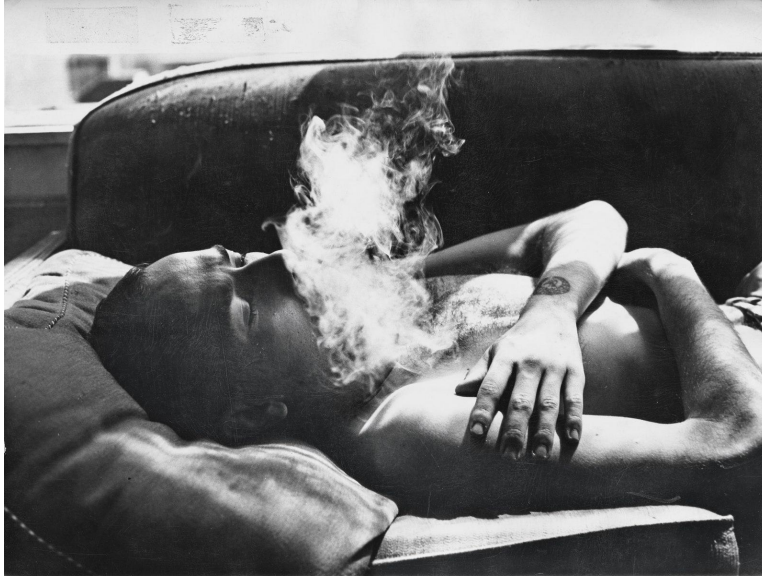
During Wojnarowicz's lifetime, his work was cited by the religious right as an example of the sort of art that should be denied funding from the National Endowment for the Arts. After the American Family Association used his work in a pamphlet that decried federal funding for homosexual art, Wojnarowicz sued them, and he won. At the Whitney, a typed statement that Wojnarowicz submitted for that lawsuit appears in a glass case, annotated by hand in red pen. At one point, Wojnarowicz describes himself as H.I.V.-positive, but then crosses out that

diagnosis, to insert “aids-symptomatic.” The controversy surrounding his work has not subsided since his death. As recently as 2010, the Catholic League, backed by Republican congressmen, objected to a part of a Wojnarowicz video that showed ants on a wooden crucifix. They led a successful campaign to censor his work from an exhibit at the National Portrait Gallery, in Washington, D.C.



"Something from Sleep II," 1987-1988.

Because Wojnarowicz was so vivid and uncompromising in his moral outrage, and because his writing about the injustices, bigotries, and abuses of power that led to his own death is so searingly lucid, it can be uncomfortable to admit that some of his artwork is not very good. His paintings, in particular, can be disappointing, drawing heavily on Frida Kahlo's magical realism and the pop-art sensibilities of artists such as Richard Hamilton and Keith Haring. It may be more accurate, and more fair, to judge him as a moral crusader, whose indictment of government indifference and hostility toward its most vulnerable groups resonates as urgently today as it did during his lifetime. There is a sense that he was working against time to depict the humanity of AIDS victims, to show the meaning of his own suffering to a country that didn't seem to care. One of his most famous works, a photograph taken less than a year before he died, is called "Untitled (Face in Dirt)." In it, Wojnarowicz lies in a shallow grave, his face just barely emerging from the dry, crumbling earth.



"Iolo Carew," 1980.

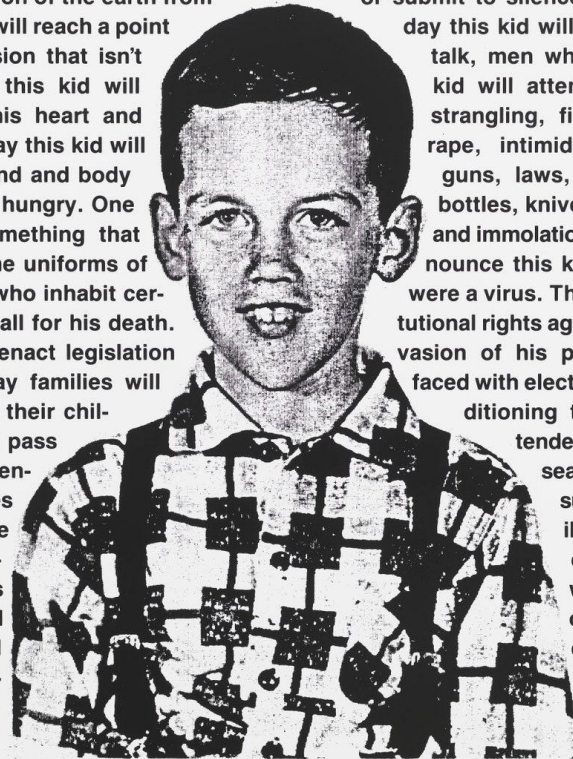
"History Keeps Me Awake At Night" arranges Wojnarowicz's work chronologically, but on my recent visit I made a mistake, and went through the galleries backward. I took in Wojnarowicz's later work first—the collages of photos with large blocks of angry, detailed text, the photos of Hujar's dead body, the photo collages showing solar systems, men with guns, and pornography. I moved through his midcareer work, and the portraits the Peter Hujar took of him—shirtless, smoking, and smiling, they're a rare image of the artist looking happy and at ease. I finished by looking at the art that Wojnarowicz made in the early eighties, which is joyful, playful, colorful, and imaginative. He worked in neons, with spray paint and found materials. A speaker mounted in a corner played the catchy, irreverent music that he recorded with his punk band, 3 Teens Kill 4. It was impossible, travelling in reverse through Wojnarowicz's foreshortened career, not to think of all the life that was taken from him.



"Autoportrait—New York," 1980.

One of Wojnarowicz's most famous works is the collage "Untitled (One day this kid . . .)," which features a childhood photo of Wojnarowicz superimposed against blocks of text. In the picture, the young Wojnarowicz is unmistakable: he has the same long forehead, the same pointed chin, the same gap between his front teeth. He is maybe nine. "One day this kid will get larger," it reads. "One day this kid will do something that causes men who wear the uniforms of priests and rabbis, men who inhabit certain stone buildings, to call for his death. One day politicians will enact legislation against this kid. One day families will give false information to their children and each child will pass that information down generationally to their families and that information will be designed to make existence intolerable for this kid." Then, later, something vital: "One day this kid will talk."

One day this kid will get larger. One day this kid will come to know something that causes a sensation equivalent to the separation of the earth from its axis. One day this kid will reach a point where he senses a division that isn't mathematical. One day this kid will feel something stir in his heart and throat and mouth. One day this kid will find something in his mind and body and soul that makes him hungry. One day this kid will do something that causes men who wear the uniforms of priests and rabbis, men who inhabit certain stone buildings, to call for his death. One day politicians will enact legislation against this kid. One day families will give false information to their children and each child will pass that information down generationally to their families and that information will be designed to make existence intolerable for this kid. One day this kid will begin to experience all this activity in his environment and that activi-



ty and information will compel him to commit suicide or submit to danger in hopes of being murdered or submit to silence and invisibility. Or one day this kid will talk. When he begins to talk, men who develop a fear of this kid will attempt to silence him with strangling, fists, prison, suffocation, rape, intimidation, drugging, ropes, guns, laws, menace, roving gangs, bottles, knives, religion, decapitation, and immolation by fire. Doctors will pronounce this kid curable as if his brain were a virus. This kid will lose his constitutional rights against the government's invasion of his privacy. This kid will be faced with electro-shock, drugs, and conditioning therapies in laboratories tended by psychologists and research scientists. He will be subject to loss of home, civil rights, jobs, and all conceivable freedoms. All this will begin to happen in one or two years when he discovers he desires to place his naked body on the naked body of another boy.

"Untitled (One day this kid . . .)," 1990-91

CREDITS

For Tom Rauffenbart and Jacqueline Wilson

Directed by Chris McKim

Produced by Fenton Bailey, Randy Barbato, Chris McKim

Edited by Dave Stanke

Music by 3 Teens Kill 4

Graphics Designed & Animated by Good Radar

Animation by Grant Nellessen

Additional Animation by Andrew Rose

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Assistant Camera Operator - Mike Capasso

Clearance - Leslie Clark

Voiceover by Joseph Jagos

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Music Provided By - 3 Teens Kill 4 – No Motive
5/4, Hold Up, Hunger, Hut Bean Song, Stay & Fight, Wind-Up Clock, Visitation
(3 Teens Kill 4 – No Motive is available through Dark Entries Records)

Additional Music By David Benjamin Steinberg

Archive Provided By:

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Collection of Ninah and Michael Lynne
David Wojnarowicz Papers, The Fales Library & Special Collections, New York University
"Democracy at Work", silkscreen print from "Your House is Mine" Book and poster project, 1988-1992,,
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Courtesy of the Estate and P.P.O.W Dust Tract II, 1990
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Fresh Air with Terry Gross excerpt provided by WHYY, Inc.
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Eric Kroll
F.I.L.M. Archives
Gelatin silver print, 16 x 20 inches (40.6 x 50.8 cm).
Courtesy, George Bush Presidential Library

Filming at exhibition David Wojnarowicz: History Keeps Me Awake at Night (July 13-Sept. 30, 2018) at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, N.Y. *Fire in the Belly: The Life & Times of David Wojnarowicz*

Getty Images

Historic Films

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