



*, Louise Lawler,
Adrian Piper and Cindy Sherman are
participating in an exhibition organized by
Janelle Reiring at Artists Space, September 23
to October 28, 1978.*

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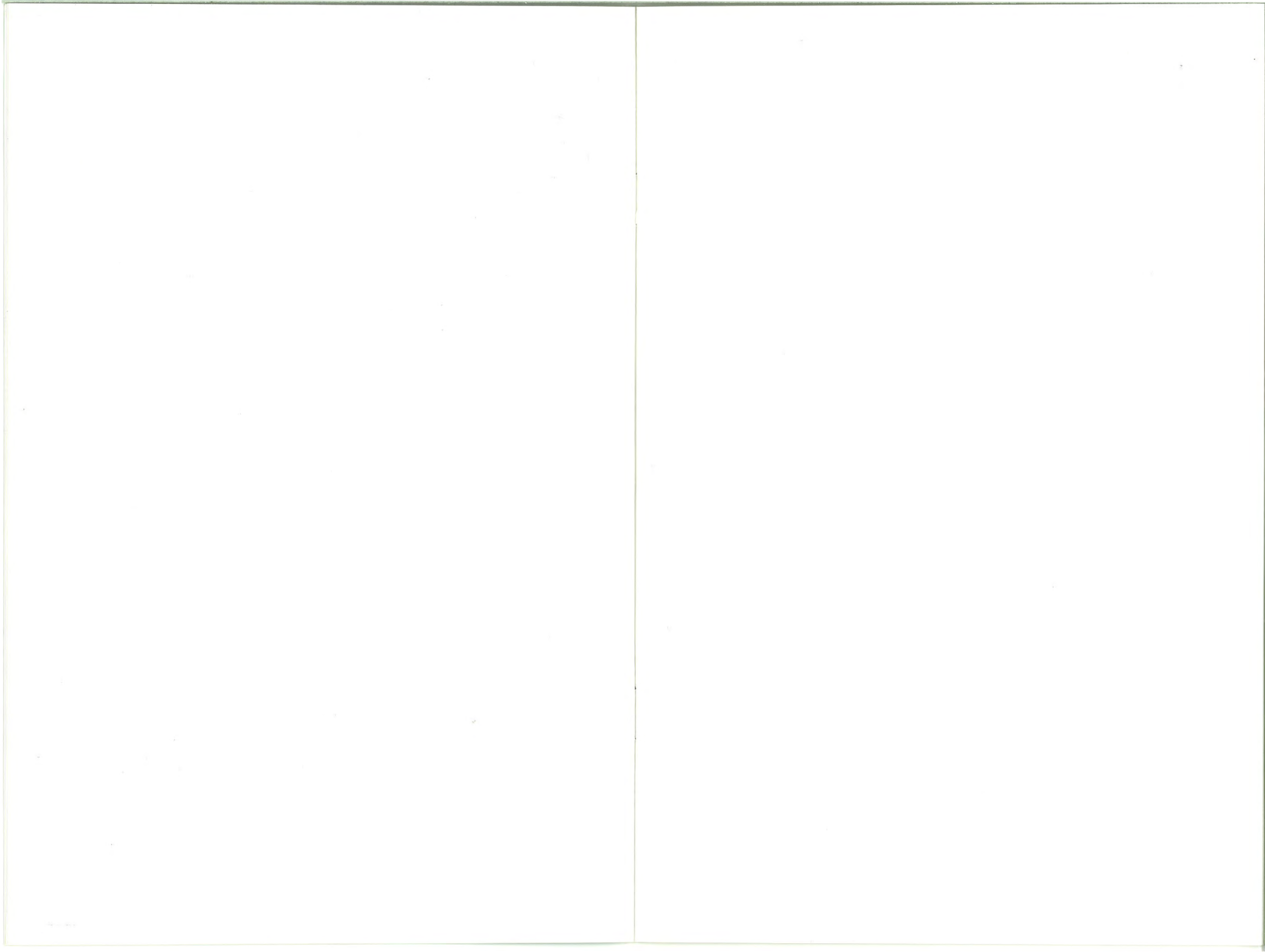
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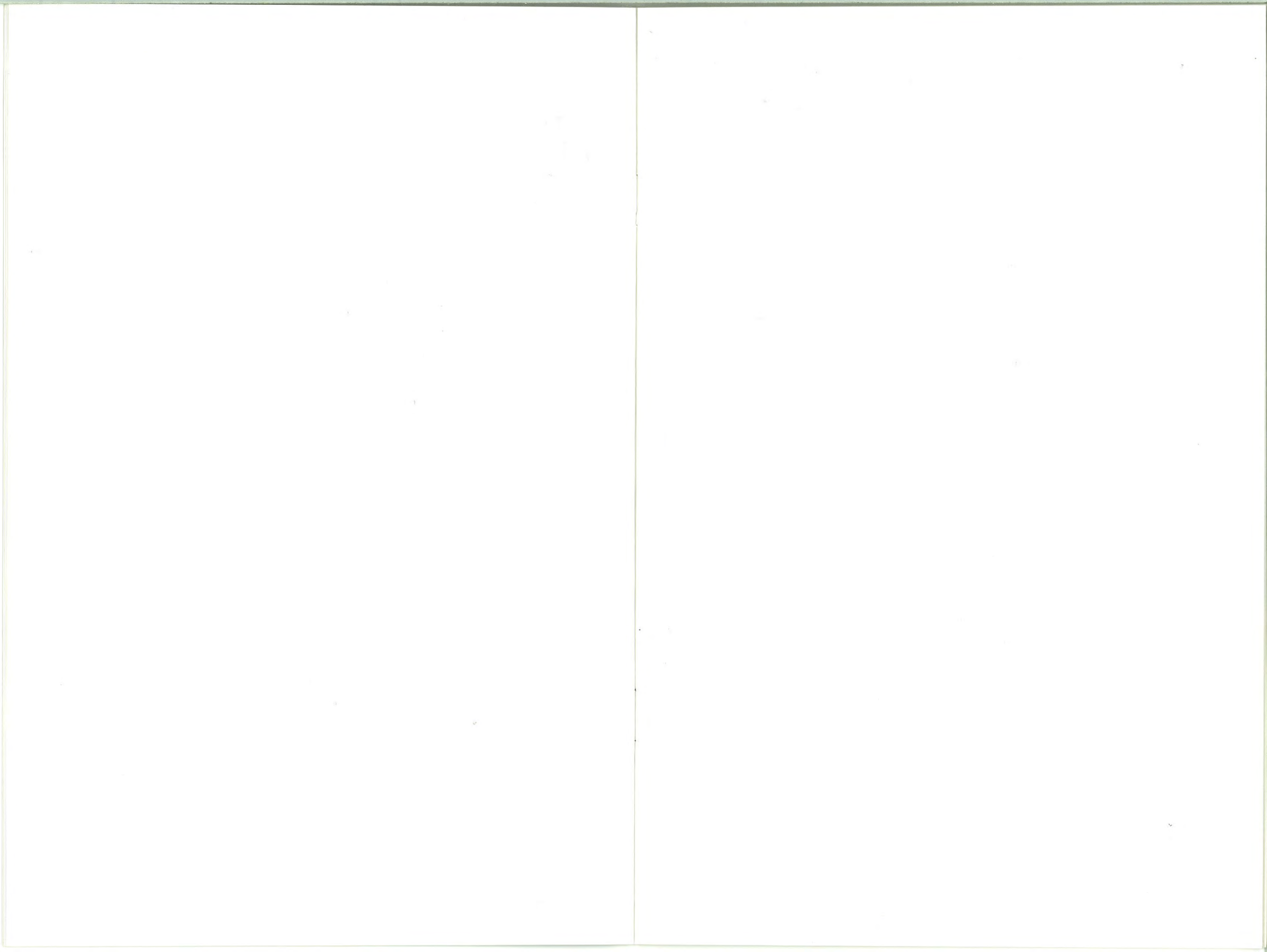
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I asked Christopher D'Arcangelo, Louise Lawler, Adrian Piper and Cindy Sherman to participate together in this exhibition because their work addresses the issue of how art is presented and, in turn, how it is seen. The methods they use to deal with this issue are diverse, and even their basic intentions for doing so are disparate, ranging from overtly political to unselfconsciously private. But each, in his or her way, underscores or circumvents the system that has developed to exhibit, market and interpret the artist's work. This implies maintaining a control over one's work that the artist has traditionally relinquished to the go-between—dealer, curator, critic, etc. These four artists have all presented work outside the customary exhibition parameters of galleries and museums. But I was also interested in how they would use the conventional context of a group exhibition at Artists Space, and that is the genesis of the present show. Hopefully, it will allow consideration of each artist's work while also creating an interesting group situation.

The premise of the exhibition somewhat limits my role as mediator between artist and viewer. I did not select, install nor explicate the work being shown. But I did select the artists and set up a specific context for their work, thus accepting responsibility for an exhibition that ultimately reflects my own notions of art, politics, etc. This involves a form of control over the work, how it is presented, and seen, in addition to the control exerted by the physical, economic and organizational aspects of Artists Space.

Janelle Reiring





Louise Lawler: Cover

What exactly
is the
aesthetic
content
of this work?



photo: National Geographic

Aspects of the Liberal Dilemma (detail)

Adrian Piper

Aspects of the Liberal Dilemma (taped monologue; August, 1978)
Adrian Piper

It doesn't matter who these people are. They're parts of a piece of art, which is part of an art exhibit, in an art gallery, in Soho, in New York City. This gallery is one of the best: progressive, daring, shows some of the most interesting and aesthetically innovative work around. You expect, and hope, that when you leave this gallery, your conception of what art can be will be altered, maybe even expanded, if only by the smallest fraction. You want to have an aesthetic experience: to be fulfilled, elevated, edified, irritated. You would like to have your criteria of good art confirmed, or disrupted, or violated, by the art you see here. You look forward to being challenged by this art to see things around you in an aesthetically heightened way. In short, you want something new and exciting to think about, and not to be bored or antagonized.

In looking at this picture, you carefully monitor any subliminal or undisciplined reactions you have to this image of assertive, aggressive, angry-looking blacks; they might be a part of the piece. In fact, all your reactions, all your thoughts about what you're now experiencing might be part of this piece. In this space, in this gallery, in front of this picture, you don't want to let your politics interfere with or deaden your aesthetic perceptions, but rather contribute to them: your political reactions are part of the art experience you are trying to have. So you try to be extra self conscious about all your responses in order to understand the piece better, in order to learn something new about art—or even better, in order to recognize, with satisfied boredom, what has already been done, and by whom, and when. This is your major interest right now: to understand, to identify, to *master* this work, to situate it specifically in the context of art as you know it; to be able to make an appropriate comment about it at the appropriate time.

How do the images in this picture relate to each other? How is the two-dimensionality of the picture plane treated? How are receding spaces signified? How are the tonal contrasts distributed across the picture plane? Does it matter? Are these

the right questions to ask about this work? Why use a photograph instead of really creating something original? Why was this picture chosen and not some other? Why do the people in the picture look so grim? What did the artist intend to convey? What's the connection between what you see and what you're hearing? Are you being preached to? Again? What is the speaker trying to express? What do these images mean? What's the significance of all the people in the photo being black? Of their looking angry or sullen? Of their shabbiness? Of your emotional and political distance from them? Is it aesthetic? What's the point of their all seeming to stare at you? Of your seeming to stare back at them? At their expressions, their eyes, their clothes? Why do you always seem to end up staring at your own reflection in the glass? At the expression on your face, in your eyes, around your mouth? Why do you feel embarrassed if someone else in the room sees you staring at yourself like this? Why do you immediately pretend to be looking at the people in the picture? You're not *really* looking at them. Why are you increasingly impatient with all these questions? And with the lack of information you seem to be getting in return? Is this supposed to be part of the piece too? What exactly is the aesthetic *content* of this work? What is it trying to tell you?

Cindy Sherman

