

ARTIST'S STATEMENT
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THE CONCEPT

The plague, virus and alienation are the seeds of my work and the integrity of the image. Symbols of birth, illness and the celebrations of life dominate the sensual surfaces of the work luring the viewer into their own struggle about sexuality, social morality and disease. The issue is AIDS.

My interest in the concept of social virus, sexuality and punishment developed in response to the deaths of many friends, but most inspirational was the recent diagnosis of my own brother. The sudden realization of what was inside of his body made me feel warmth and fear simultaneously. I wanted to hold him and be reassured by his aliveness and yet I was troubled by his touch and his illness. I was shocked by the struggle within myself, my own feelings of fear and disgust. I was not prepared for that emotional response. Later I realized that some of my reaction stemmed from the intimacy that is shared between a brother and sister. We are born of the same sperm and egg, our Mother and Father; we share the same blood that harbors this insidious disease. And I know that my brother's death will forever change the architecture of my family.

THE IMAGE

The pain and emotional conflict that I experienced in relationship to my brother's AIDS has inspired me to explore imagery addressing illness, cancer and virus from both a personal and political view. The painted or rendered areas of the work tend to express the introspective, the interior body, the fluid source. The painted surfaces are very thick with glaze, deep and murky in color to evoke a sensual and dark mood. The photographic images explore the social/political aspect of AIDS through the altered news images that I create. The intention of my work is to provoke the viewer into questioning their feelings and to re-evaluate the social and moral dilemma that we as a society face not only in reference to AIDS, but in the face of a myriad of cultural illnesses.

THE REACTION

Through the years since the first rumor alluding to this mysterious disease I, like many Gays and Lesbians in this country not only have had to cope with the disease but also with the hateful homophobic backlash that has occurred. I came out in New York City in 1982. My adult life as a lesbian has been plagued by AIDS, and I quickly became aware of how hated Gay people are in this society. My euphoric coming out feelings were crushed under our cultural indifference to the deaths of hundreds and now thousands of Gay men.

If a bunch of freckled faced white children were mysteriously afflicted with an incurable disease I bet a cure would have been found long ago. It is only recently with the movement of AIDS into the "mainstream" has society begun to show signs of interest and caring.

ARTISTS SPACE AIDS FORUM PROPOSAL

In this proposal I will attempt to best describe the installation for the AIDS Forum space; in detail and as visually defined as possible.

THE FLOOR

The floor is tiled with green and white marble tiles in a pattern that resembles a checkerboard. Various words pertaining to AIDS are sandblasted onto the green tiles, one word per square. The visual aspect of the text is crucial in this installation because of the strong reference to print journalism that it evokes. For most Americans their only relationship to, and knowledge of AIDS is through various news and media related sources, often times it is the newspaper. The conceptual impact of the text relates to the Catholic church. Through my experience with the language of AIDS I began to see a relationship between the words of the church and the text of AIDS. When we as a society discuss AIDS words like blood, flesh, passion, plague, miracle, sin, wrath, morality, family, sex, virgin, celibacy and cleanliness are used. These words rang in my ear as a young Catholic girl and it was recently that the connection became clear.

The image of text on marble also brings forth some very strong symbolic associations for people. A common place to experience this image is in a cemetery, the resting place for the dead; including people who have died of AIDS. The text and marble make reference to history through antiquities and ancient ruins and is very visible throughout the architecture of the Catholic church.

THE ROOM

The viewer is encouraged to walk on the floor to explore the space and read the sandblasted text. On the two side walls are gold plated and mirrored bathroom shelving units, one mounted on each wall, with a matching round towel rack and white towel. A gold plated Greek Orthodox malegros of the sacred heart is mounted above each shelving unit.

The bathroom is designed to evoke those conflicting feelings of sex and cleanliness. To remind the viewer of that morning after image as they wash up and attempt to clean themselves of the night before. The mirror shelving unit will reflect back the image of the viewer symbolizing the need for each of us to search within ourselves about our true feelings and prejudices concerning people with AIDS. On each shelving unit a stack of business cards (see example included) will be placed for the viewer to take with and keep. The cards will have an image and a factual/ statistical text about AIDS. For example **In the world 71% of the people with AIDS are straight; How did this become a Gay disease?**

On the back wall a small video monitor is placed on a white classical pillar. The taped image is silent, bearing no sound it symbolizes the silence surrounding the AIDS issue. In contrast the visual image is a repeating video loop, taped from a television mass of a Catholic priest preparing the host for communion; the ritual that symbolizes the drinking of blood and the eating of flesh.