

# Mousse Magazine

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## ART CLUB2000 at Artists Space, New York

Formed in 1992, the fabled collective ART CLUB2000 (AC2K) provocatively articulated eminent crises in youth and artistic identities within the neoliberal post-recession economy that epitomized 1990s New York. Under the guidance of the mercurial art dealer Colin de Land, who hosted the group's debut exhibition in 1993 at American Fine Arts, Co., the members, all Cooper Union students, conceived of their collaboration as an opportunity to parody and critique the dispassionate Generation X attitudes that were celebrated in commercial culture and advertising of the time. Overtly employing their own youth, they began at a time when the New York art world was eager for the voices and images of emerging-artist-personae. After receiving press coverage for their first exhibition, ART CLUB2000 became the group's official name and simultaneously set the terms of its own demise with the promise to disband at the turn of the millennium. The group would produce an exhibition for each of the next seven summers at American Fine Arts, Co., as well as participating in solo and group exhibitions at institutions across the US and abroad.

AC2K stated its intention to create "something that was interesting or visually compelling, something that might confuse or dismay; something not retrograde; something that would examine the condition of its own production; to make visible or obvious that which is latent in culture." The group's collaborative working principles frustrated any single approach to making art, and its exhibitions became restive adaptations that employed a multiplicity of wildly mutable aesthetic and critical tactics—both in their range of mediums (photography, video, performance, sculpture, journalism, wall painting) and in their diverse artistic genres (documentary, installation art, appropriation, media and architectural intervention, and others). AC2K's impulse to experiment in response to its immediate conditions compelled the group to engage topics that today register as among the most urgent for artists: the intersection of emerging identity positions and radical political movements, the desire for bohemia and artistic freedom amidst precarious dependency on low-wage jobs, the corrosive and inescapable effects of gentrification, and its accompanying marketization of culture, institutions, and their publics. Questioning the orthodoxy of even its most significant artistic influences—such as Group Material, Andrea Fraser, and the group's former teacher Hans Haacke—AC2K sought to reclaim a sense of self-determination at every turn, interrogating the subjects, methodologies, and exhibition strategies that had come to define, and perhaps even stall, the potential of critical artistic practice.

While AC2K's prominent and adversarial position was central to the landscape of American art in the 1990s, its work has remained largely unavailable to contemporary audiences. Now, twenty years since disbanding, we can much more clearly see AC2K as visionary in its inventive unlayering of the received conventions of art production, challenging the exhibition form in new ways with each project. Bringing the full arc of AC2K together for the first time, *Selected Works 1992-1999* reveals a combative practice that swerved between comical, sincere, and caustic—through probing insolence, intense research, and a prismatic approach to its chosen topics of concern.