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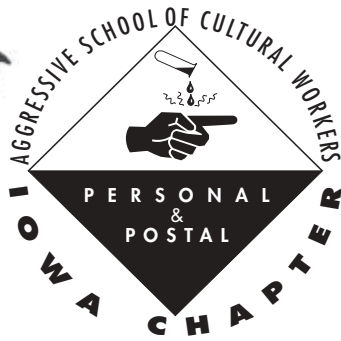
## A Day Without Artists

### General Statement

- ▼ What started as a sincere observance of the absence from the cultural community of all the artists who have died of AIDS has now degenerated into a hollow gesture repeated ad nauseam every year into an unthinking ritual that no one would dare **not** to observe. Once again, artists have responded to a crisis with a simulacrum—a pseudo-absence—and have reduced all legitimate concern we might have for PWAs (persons with AIDS) and those who are HIV-positive to mere appreciation of a futile esthetic gesture.
- ▼ December 1st has therefore become a day without absence: the absence of thousands of artists, and the absence of what they would have continued to create. By having a day without art without absence, we are in fact having nothing at all.
- ▼ It is for these reasons that the Aggressive School of Cultural Workers, Iowa Chapter, has declared December 1, 1991, to be **A Day Without Artists** and **A Day Without Museums**.

### Day Without Art Exhibition

- ▼ What the Day Without Art Exhibition memorializes is the empty space left by all artists who had died of AIDS. How then can its organizers have the audacity to try to fill up this space with more art created specifically for a day without art? Public awareness of AIDS has already risen dramatically in the wake of Magic Johnson's announcement that he is HIV-positive, so we cannot conclude that raising public awareness is an important goal of this exhibit. Let's recognize this exhibit for what it is: a cynical career move riding on the backs of every artist who has died of AIDS. The organizers of the Day Without Art Exhibition are trying to give their work a politically correct cachet while simultaneously padding their resumes.
- ▼ Furthermore, an art exhibit in commemoration of AIDS victims and the creative vacuum caused by those now departed amounts to little more than a denial of their deaths.
- ▼ To have left the walls of the Checkered Space empty and blank would have been a much more fitting testimonial to the loss of all persons, artists and non-artists alike, taken by AIDS. We must feel the pain of their absence.



December 1, 1991  
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**University of Iowa Museum of Art**

- ▼ The Aggressive School of Cultural Workers, Iowa Chapter, has decided that this year it is time to act up in the face of the University Museum's token observances of A Day Without Art.
- ▼ It is not enough to cloak some boring old pictures with a piece of black cloth, or to pin up some pathetic participatory statements, while at the same time continue with business as usual. We single out this museum as a matter of local practicality, but this action is directed at all institutions that have made and are making similar empty gestures in this observance.
- ▼ Art museums and similar institutions have already become nothing more than mausoleums for dead art. In this sense, the Gregorian chants which are to be sung in the museum today serve as a fittingly ironic testimony to the "service" the museum offers to this community as a reliquary for sacred objects of the past.
- ▼ It is for these reasons that we have locked the doors of the Museum of Art. These chains are not intended to actually stop anyone from getting into the museum. Rather, they create a situation where entry must be forceably obtained, and where gathering at this museum cannot be done without confronting the reality we have created. Business as usual cannot be permitted in light of the unrelenting tragedy of AIDS. This is our attempt to make this observance of A Day without Art felt confrontationally and to spur reconsideration and debate as to what really constitutes an appropriate response to this crisis.
- ▼ Like the chains on these doors, the chains of silence surrounding the AIDS epidemic must be broken. For too long this silence has kept AIDS and its victims in the closet, afraid to admit they have the disease or that they carry it, and afraid to speak out on their own behalf.