

YAWN is a sporadic newsletter which seeks to offer a critical look at our culture in all its forms. Responses and submissions from readers are welcome and encouraged, especially critical observations about cultural institutions and seldom challenged principles concerning culture. Anything sent may be considered for inclusion in a future issue without specific prior notification. YAWN strives to be a collective, mostly anonymous, exchange-driven effort. Responses of any kind will be met reciprocally in the following manner: the respondent will receive those materials appearing in the next bulk mailing. Subscriptions to YAWN are available for \$10 for 25 issues. YAWN is archived at http://yawn.detrinet.net/.

# YAWN

## Action for A DAY WITHOUT ART without Absence

**O**n the morning of December 1, 1991, at approximately 2:00 AM, the AGGRESSIVE SCHOOL OF CULTURAL WORKERS, IOWA CHAPTER, forced a temporary delay in opening the University of Iowa Museum of Art.

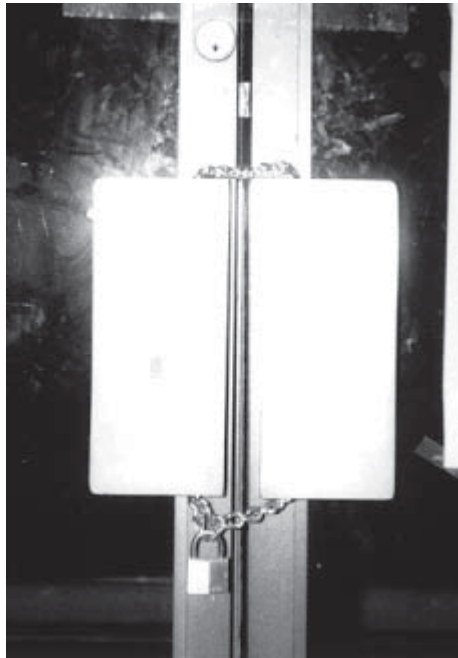
Using a length of strong chain and a steel padlock, the front doors to the museum were chained, and then locked shut. A text explaining the action was posted above and to either side of the chained door handles.

The gesture was symbolic, as well as practical.

As a symbolic act, it commented on the hypocrisy of AIDS commemorations that used art on a day the museum was supposedly observing as "A Day Without Art." In response, the ASCW-IA declared December 1 to be "A Day Without Museums."

As a practical act, it created a situation whereby anyone wishing to enter the museum to contemplate art on this day would have to forcibly enter by first cutting the chain. At the very least, those people entering the museum immediately after the cutting of the chain would be robbed momentarily of their complacency.

In addition to our action at the museum, the ASCW-IA also leafletted an exhibit in the neighboring Art Building entitled, "A Day Without Art Art



Show." Such an absurdity could not go unchallenged; our grievance was tersely stated and published as **YAWN** nº30, which was profusely distributed. In it, we declared December 1 to be "A Day Without Artists."

All responses to this action by the ASCW-IA were in hearsay form; none of the perpetrators remained at the scene after the lock and posters were in place. Apparently, the museum guards were perplexed and mildly panicked; a museum employee remarked that we had given them something to actually do. The chain and lock were removed without difficulty, and one report had Campus Security driving off with the objects as if they were suspects.

Attempts were made to turn the tables on both actions.

Members of the ASCW-IA were approached a few weeks later by an employee of the Museum of Art, asking for a photograph docu-

menting our action, "for the collection." Apparently our gesture only made sense to them as a work of art rather than a protest. This employee went on to offer the museum's services in helping to plan *next year's* ASCW-IA "Day Without Art" action. We listened politely but our patience was wearing thin at this attempt at recuperating our gesture.

**LOOK AT ME**

December 1, 1991  
**Day Without Museums**

**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 care 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 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 Museums and A Day Without Artists**.

**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 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 fitting 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 forcibly 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 unremitting tragedy of AIDS. This is our attempt to make this observance of A Day without Art felt conventionally 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.

*Lloyd Duane artistic output of the day*

*What a hypocrite!*

**YAWN**

SPORADIC CRITIQUE OF CULTURE  
December 1, 1991

**A Day Without Artists**

**General Statement**

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- 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 disappeared in the wake of the AIDS Memorial Quilt 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 no 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.

*Handwritten J is original to us Peoples of artists*

**YAWN**  
P.O. Box 227  
Iowa City IA  
52242

Cultural Workers in Support of YAWN  
Subboxes, 221 W. Senate St., Iowa City, IA 52245  
ASCW-IA, P.O. Box 142, Oakdale IA, 52511

ALL COPIES AND REPLICATIONS OF YAWN OR EXCEPTS THEREFROM IS PERMITTED AND ENCOURAGED

Handwritten text (reproduced at left) disparaging our "hypocrisy" and comparing the value of artists to basketball players, was added to a copy of **YAWN** nº30 and then copies of it were further distributed. Apparently it was "hypocritical" of us to point out the hypocrisy of those who would plan "A Day Without Art Art Show." This was difficult for us to understand.

In general, the "Day Without Art" action by the ASCW-IA was a limited success, in that it failed to attract a meaningful amount of attention from the public. We fell considerably short of our goal of having local press coverage of the un-chaining of the museum; and the only existing documentation (that we know of) is in our hands. We will use what we've learned from this situation and move forward.

[Nº, ASCW-IA

## Notes Toward Implementing a Discussion Over the Merits of Graffiti

Street scratchings and scrawlings have value beyond their immediate property reduction *value* (an attack on the physical property of the ruling class). Graffiti is outside of the commodity dominated culture industry. It exists as a true folk art, a true gust of creativity in a society that forces creativity down the channels of commodity consumption: the ideal of noble aesthetic: "good taste."

Graffiti is a mode of expression that stands outside of "art": it is not created to generate capital but to *express ideas and to undermine property values*. These factors qualify graffiti as important as well as alternative. ("Art" is so often confused as being "radical" or is confused as a "critique," when in fact it is *simply* propaganda designed to justify Capital and the State, no more no less). Graffiti is at odds with capital and is not limited to the "freedoms" of the "art world."

Do musical groups exist outside the confines of advertising?

Does the sound receive any attention, or

is it only accepted after the image has been considered? (Information transmitted through advertising to the sense registers.)

Graffiti as advertising medium (note 70s rock star enamored of european "political" slogans who used the medium to promote his 1974 LP). Yet, as in the case of a present new york rock ensemble who *also* use graffiti as an advertising medium, the use of "political" slogans to jar and stimulate the casual observer (read: target audience). Not every cloud of spray paint is spent on a trademarked logo or an identifying name (unlike the Philadelphia "alternative" group that can say nothing but their name on the walls of the city, reinforcing the division between producer and consumer (rock star and fan) (pointing them out specifically would only further *advertise* their "cau\$e").

Graffiti is the one medium of which we can be *sure*.

Your participation in this project is essential: 1) An interest in dialogue; 2) An interest in the application of these procedures.

[Grudgefuck, P.O. Box 13180, Jersey City NJ 07303 (1989)]

Wednesday, 1991, July  
Kansas

To Whom It May Concern;

*I have written you what I think is bad about the Art Strike: that the only damage it has done is to Artists. Its effect is the same as an "overstocked" rejection slip.*

*But don't forget to say what is good about the Art Strike. It is encouragingly in the Dadaist tradition: A call to action; a militant rejection of things as they are. An uprising by suppressed, unjustly used portions or factions against factions that do not belong in the positions of decision-making that they occupy.*

*The Art Strike's main weakness is that it is not an advance but a retreat. For one thing, it has failed to name its objectives and targets. What are its targets? Grant-giving organizations on any level, in-bred and frivolous and which pander to sensationalism. The business world which only looks down on Art. Politicians whose corruption is well-known and who feel safely out of reach of exposure. Critics who serve themselves and slander what is good. Editors who suppress the best Art they come across and publish what they think will forever muddle the picture.*

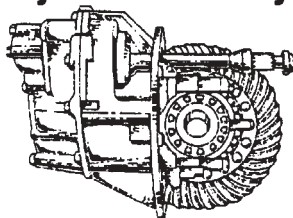
*The U.S. Post Office which is a parasite off the energies of struggling Artists. Worthless literary magazines. Fascism, Communism and all other "smelly little orthodoxies" whose only effect is to hinder expression of the truth. Insistence.*

*The struggle of the Artist will always be the same. No permanent gains can be made or should be sought in the Art Strike. "Permanent gains" will only become obstacles to future Artists. The aim of the Art Strike should be specific gains for the participating Artists: Increase in wages, exposure, fringe benefits. The call should be for intensification of activity, in some cases, with limited polemical aims. Exhibits, Be-ins, happenings, broadsides, parties, picnics, love-ins, hot dogs, watermelons, publicity, leaflets, Bible studies, benefits, church bazaars, garage sales.*

*Reinstate "PhotoStatic!" magazine. Change the name of the Art Strike newsletter from "Yawn" to "Insurgency" or "Ticked." Let freedom ring.*

Sincerely,  
Jimmy the Jumper  
(T. Hibbard, Wichita)

## Good Taste is the Chief Enemy of Creativity



**EATON**  
Axle & Brake Parts

- Go Go Go This is It This is It
- Improvisation is Better Than Planning
- Notice What You're Noticing
- Participate in the Creation of Ruins
- Operate Outside The Paradigm

# 1949

The Avant Garde is Obsolete  
\*THE MAP IS NOT THE TERRITORY  
YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN CENSORSHIP WORKS

### Cultural Workers in Support of YAWN

ASAC (United Kingdom), BM Senior, London WC1N 3XX, England  
Subspace, 221 W. Benton St., Iowa City IA 52246, USA  
The Stranger, P.O. Box 31848, Seattle WA 98103, USA  
Grudgefuck, P.O. Box 13180, Jersey City NJ 07303, USA  
T. Hibbard, P.O. Box 3831, Wichita KS 67203, USA

