

David Wojnarowicz
some day this will all be crumbling ruins
 The Modern Institute, Carlton Place
 5th June - 28th August 2026
 Preview: Thursday 4th June, 3 – 5pm

David was an abused kid, a teen run-away, and a former Times Square hustler who used art to recreate himself.

– Cynthia Carr, *Fire in the Belly: The Life and Times of David Wojnarowicz* (2014)

The piers located on the Hudson River waterfront of Lower West Side Manhattan were vital to David Wojnarowicz's friendships, politics, writing, sexual life and art practice – if they can be separated. Across the 70s and early 80s, these spaces were appropriated by the city's queer underground, becoming a popular cruising spot and space for creativity in dilapidated ruins of Manhattan's maritime industrial past. Homophobic legislation at a national and municipal level, aggressively enforced in the lead up to New York's World Fair (1964-65), along with the collapse of the harbour economy created the conditions for the occupation of these now emptied zones, not safe but somewhat further away from the gaze of the law.

After his parents' divorce, Wojnarowicz moved to New York City to live with his mother and siblings in the mid-1960s, escaping the physical and psychological abuse of his father, an alcoholic. At the close of the decade, both his siblings had left the apartment and he began spending less time at home with his troubled mother, often skipping school and hustling in Times Square. He finally left himself in 1971, aged 17 and spent two years on the streets and between halfway homes. He found himself in the edges of the city and the vacated ruins of the piers, attracted to the intertwined erotic charge and imaginative potential of their deteriorating forms. In 1973, he finished his high school diploma and developed his interest in poetry while continuing to draw and work in the city's bookshops. With New York as his creative base, he had sojourns to a farm in Plattsburgh, NY, San Francisco (visiting the legendary City Lights Bookstore) and Paris where his sister lived, eventually becoming embedded in the East Village art scene as the 70s came to a close.

The former Ward Line building on Pier 34 was of particular importance, initially offering a new space to experiment and share large-scale painted murals with close friends, including Mike Bidlo, Luis Frangella and Peter Hujar, in the early 80s. Following a full-scale occupation of the space by artists instigated by Wojnarowicz and Bidlo in summer 1983, it became a mainstay of the art scene, replete with artworks by Ruth Kligman, Luis Frangella and David Finn, documented by Hujar and Andreas Sterzing. For one of his contributions, Wojnarowicz threw seeds onto the debris and fallen plaster of its empty rooms, allowing grass to grow in the ruins. All of this activity didn't escape notice from the city authorities and it was demolished the following year.

Forms of memorial, collaboration and activism permeate the artworks and experimental films on display, made with Richard Kern, Marion Scemama and Ben Neill. The exhibition emphasises the close relationship between artists, clubs, abandoned spaces and creative output. Bidlo and Wojnarowicz wrote of their Pier 34 project, 'People who lived in this city for years said it was the first time they experienced fulfilment in terms of contact with the art scene and strangers. People shared supplies, energy, thoughts, even the surfaces to work with—crumbling walls of plaster, earth floor, metal walkways and hundreds of windowpanes—the work came out in rampages of raw energy.'

Fiona Anderson notes in *Cruising the Dead River* (2019), Wojnarowicz's work can serve 'as a guide to the erotic and creative reuses of the piers by queer New Yorkers in the years that preceded the HIV/AIDS epidemic'. *some day this will all be crumbling ruins* comprises a wide array of photography, sculpture, prints, moving image and paintings by Wojnarowicz, giving a sense of the cultural crosscurrents and political tensions in the New York of that time. It moves from his photographic series *Arthur Rimbaud*

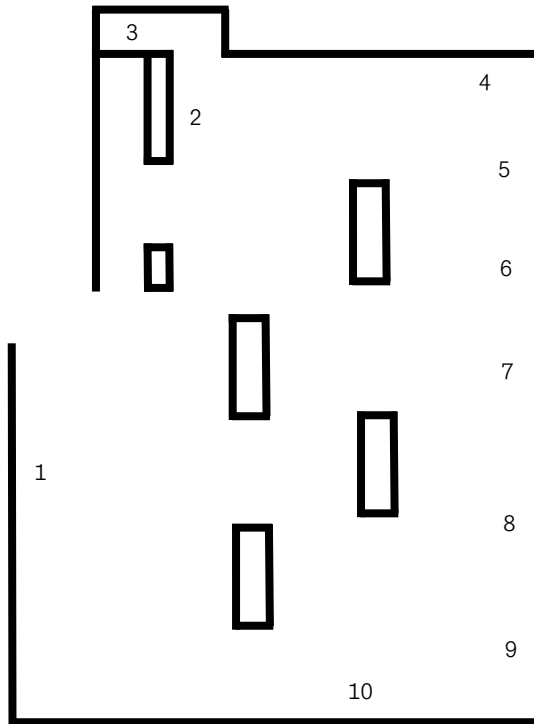
in *New York* (1978-79) to paintings and photographs made in the early 80s through to his deeply affecting pictures of Hujar, following his passing from AIDS in 1987.

Wojnarowicz himself died from AIDS related illness in 1992. He had met Hujar in 1981 and following a short love affair, they became close friends, with Wojnarowicz seeing Hujar as a mentor. The top floor of the exhibition features a room dedicated to their love, and includes two unfinished films by Wojnarowicz, both featuring sequences in memory of Hujar. Following Hujar's death, Wojnarowicz moved into his apartment, using the darkroom to produce his celebrated *Sex Series* (1988-89) and *Untitled (Buffalos)* (1988-89). His own diagnosis and the political inaction of first the Reagan (1981-1989) and then the Bush (1989-1993) regime on HIV, shifted Wojnarowicz's focus and he became a powerful AIDS activist. His works became more explicitly political too, they had to. In 1991, he created *Untitled (Face in Dirt)* while travelling in New Mexico, a vision of himself buried in the ground a year before he died.

The Modern Institute would like to thank P.P.O.W, The David Wojnarowicz Foundation and Honey Webster.

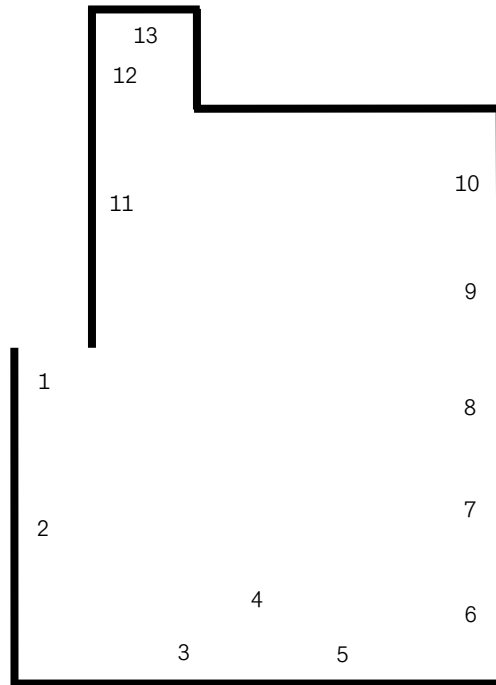
David Wojnarowicz (b. 1954 New Jersey, U.S., d. 1992 New York City, U.S.) was an artist, AIDS activist, filmmaker and writer. His work has been included in solo and group exhibitions at The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; The American Center, Paris, France; The Busan Museum of Modern Art, Korea; Centro Galego de Art Contemporanea, Santiago de Compostela, Spain; The Barbican Art Gallery, London; and the Museum Ludwig, Cologne. His life and work have been the subject of significant scholarly studies, including Cynthia Carr's *Fire in the Belly: The Life and Times of David Wojnarowicz* (2012) and Fiona Anderson's *Cruising the Dead River David Wojnarowicz and New York's Ruined Waterfront* (2019). Wojnarowicz has had retrospectives at the galleries of the Illinois State University (1990); the New Museum (1999) and the Whitney Museum of American Art (2018.) Wojnarowicz wrote two memoirs, including *Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration* (1991) and *Memories that Smell like Gasoline* (1992).

David Wojnarowicz
 some day this will all be crumbling ruins
 The Modern Institute, Carlton Place
 Ground floor



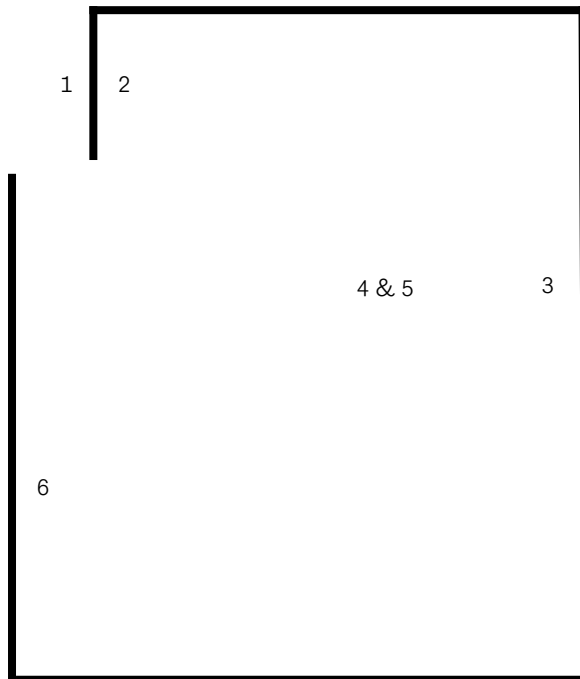
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|--|--|--|
| <p>1 David Wojnarowicz
 <i>Untitled (Face in Dirt)</i>, 1991 / 2018
 Pigmented ink print on Hahnemühle
 Photo Rag 308 gsm
 Image: 31.5 x 32.4 cm,
 12 3/8 x 12 3/4 in
 Print: 40.6 x 50.8 cm, 16 x 20 in</p> | <p>2 David Wojnarowicz
 <i>Untitled (One Day this Kid [German])</i>,
 1990/91
 Offset lithograph
 59.7 x 83.8 cm
 23 1/2 x 33 in</p> | <p>3 Andreas Sterzing
 <i>Something Possible Everywhere: Pier 34
 NYC 1983-84</i>, 2019
 Digital Slideshow
 Duration: 8 mins 30 secs</p> |
| <p>4 David Wojnarowicz
 <i>True Myth (Domino Sugar)</i>, 1983
 Silkscreen on supermarket poster
 86.2 x 63.5 cm
 34 x 25 in</p> | <p>5 David Wojnarowicz
 <i>Untitled (Arthur Rimbaud in Paris)</i>,
 1980 / 2023
 Pigmented ink print on Hahnemühle
 Photo Rag 308 gsm
 Print: 25.4 x 20.3 cm, 10 x 8 in
 Image: 15.6 x 10.8 cm, 6 1/8 x 4 1/4 in</p> | <p>6 David Wojnarowicz
 <i>Jean Genet Masturbating in Metteray
 Prison (London Broil)</i>, 1983
 Silkscreen on supermarket poster
 84.46 x 63.5 cm
 33 1/4 x 25 in</p> |
| <p>7 David Wojnarowicz
 <i>Untitled (Jean Pierre, Montgaillard)</i>,
 Aug 1980
 Colour photograph
 31.1 x 20.3 cm
 12 1/4 x 8 in</p> | <p>8 David Wojnarowicz
 <i>Untitled (Danceteria Polaroids)</i>, 1980
 36 polaroids
 58.4 x 161.3 cm,
 23 x 63 1/2 in framed</p> | <p>9 David Wojnarowicz
 <i>Untitled (Genet, after Brassai)</i>,
 1979/1989
 Lithograph
 88.9 x 120.7 cm
 35 x 47 1/2 in</p> |
| <p>10 David Wojnarowicz
 <i>Untitled (Viva Carlo)</i>, 1990
 Silkscreen on paper
 71.12 x 55.88 cm
 28 x 22 in</p> | | |

David Wojnarowicz
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 First floor



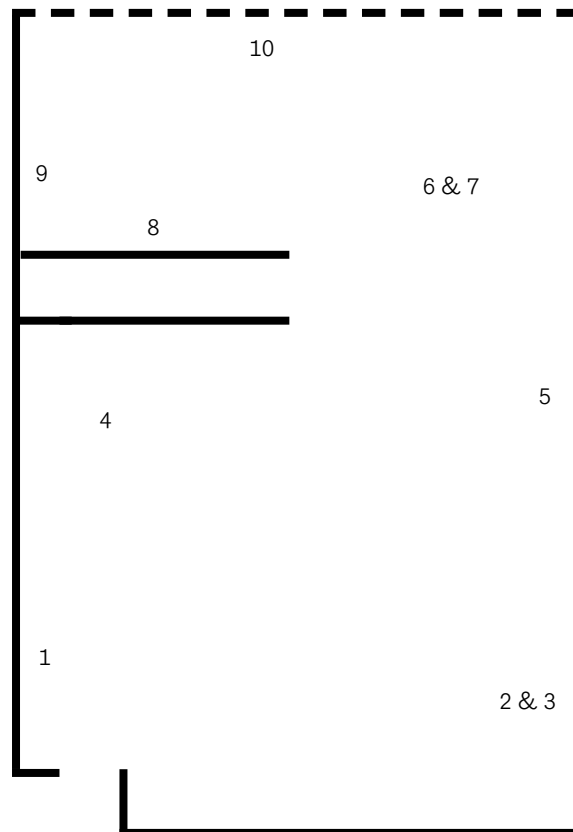
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|--|--|---|
| <p>1 Peter Hujar
 <i>Clarissa Darlymple's Dog, Kirsten</i>, 1984
 Vintage silver gelatin print
 Image: 38.7 x 38.7 cm, 15 1/4 x 15 1/4 in
 Print: 50.8 x 40.6 cm, 20 x 16 in
 Framed: 58.4 x 57.1 cm, 23 x 22 1/2 in</p> | <p>2 David Wojnarowicz
 <i>Untitled from Sex Series (for Marion Scemama)</i>, 1988-89
 8 gelatin silver prints
 Image 37.47 x 46.36 cm, 14 3/4 x 18 1/4 in
 Print 68.6 x 75.9 cm, 27 x 29 7/8 in</p> | <p>3 David Wojnarowicz
 <i>Untitled (Desire) from the Ant Series</i>, 1988-89
 Silver gelatin print
 27.9 x 35.6 cm
 11 x 14 in</p> |
| <p>4 David Wojnarowicz
 <i>Untitled (Map Wasp) from 'America: Heads of Family, Heads of State'</i>, 1991
 paper mache
 30.5 x 44.5 x 10.2 cm
 12 x 17 1/2 x 4 in</p> | <p>5 David Wojnarowicz
 <i>Untitled (Brian as St. Sebastian)</i>, c. 1979
 Black and white photograph
 20.3 x 25.4 cm
 8 x 10 in</p> | <p>6 David Wojnarowicz
 <i>Untitled (David and John Hall at Christadora)</i>, 1981
 Black and white photograph
 20.3 x 25.4 cm
 8 x 10 in</p> |
| <p>7 David Wojnarowicz
 <i>Good Morning America, Export News</i>, 1984
 Acrylic, spray and collage on paper
 134.6 x 190.5 cm
 53 x 75 in</p> | <p>8 David Wojnarowicz
 <i>Untitled (Blindfolded Nude)</i>, 1981
 Gelatin silver print
 Image: 20.3 x 20.3 cm, 8 x 8 in
 Print: 39.4 x 38.1 x 4.4 cm, 15 1/2 x 15 x 1 3/4 in</p> | <p>9 David Wojnarowicz
 <i>Quiet Valley El Salvador</i>, 1982
 Spraypaint on masonite
 121.9 x 121.9 cm
 48 x 48 in</p> |
| <p>10 David Wojnarowicz
 <i>Untitled (naked boy running)</i>, 1988
 Gelatin silver print
 Image: 17.8 x 24.1 cm, 7 x 9 1/2 in
 Print: 35.6 x 27.9 cm, 14 x 11 in</p> | <p>11 David Wojnarowicz
 <i>Camouflage</i>, 1987
 Signed and dated on front
 Spray paint on paper
 81.3 x 101.6 cm
 32 x 40 in</p> | <p>12 David Wojnarowicz
 <i>Untitled (hand and toad)</i>, 1988-89
 Silver print
 40.6 x 50.8 cm
 16 x 20 in</p> |
| <p>13 David Wojnarowicz
 <i>Untitled (photo of Kiki Smith's leg)</i>, 1989
 Photograph
 35.6 x 45.7 cm
 14 x 18 in</p> | <p>THE MODERN INSTITUTE/TOBY WEBSTER LTD
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David Wojnarowicz
 some day this will all be crumbling ruins
 The Modern Institute, Carlton Place
 Top floor



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|---|--|--|
| <p>1 David Wojnarowicz
 <i>Untitled (Peter in a Cornfield)</i>, c. 1980s
 Black and white lifetime print
 Image: 15.2 x 26 cm, 6 x 9 in
 Print: 20.3 x 25.4 cm, 8 x 10 in
 Frame: 34.3 x 41.9 cm, 13 1/2 x 16 1/2 in</p> | <p>2 David Wojnarowicz
 <i>Untitled ("Friendly Cow" for Peter Hujar)</i>, 1982
 colour photograph
 8.9 x 14 cm
 3 1/2 x 5 1/2 in</p> | <p>3 David Wojnarowicz
 <i>Untitled</i>, 1987 / 2024
 3 Pigmented ink prints
 Sheet: 40.6 x 50.8 cm, 16 x 20 in each
 Image: 26 x 37.5 cm, 10 1/4 x 14 3/4 in each</p> |
| <p>4 David Wojnarowicz
 <i>Unfinished film (with sequence in memory of Peter Hujar)</i>, c. 1987
 Edited by John Gartenburg for the Film Preservation Project of the Estate Project for Artists with AIDS
 Super 8 transferred to digital video, black-and-white, silent
 Duration 15 mins 30 sec</p> | <p>5 David Wojnarowicz
 <i>Unfinished film (sequence in memory of Peter Hujar)</i>, c. 1987
 Super 8 transferred to digital video, black-and-white, silent
 Duration 22 mins 2 sec</p> | <p>6 Peter Hujar
 <i>Untitled (David Wojnarowicz with cow mural)</i>, 1983
 Vintage gelatin silver print
 Image: 20 x 20 cm, 7 7/8 x 7 7/8 in
 Frame: 35.56 x 27.94 cm, 15.5 x 15.5 in</p> |

David Wojnarowicz
 some day this will all be crumbling ruins
 The Modern Institute, Carlton Place
 Basement



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|--|--|--|
| <p>1 Andreas Sterzing
 <i>Untitled (Burning Child) installation view, Gracie Mansion, 1984</i>
 Color photograph
 46.4 x 31 cm
 18 1/4 x 12 1/4 in</p> | <p>2 Sophie Breer
 <i>Wafe's Cockabunnies, 1981</i>
 Betamax video with sound
 Duration 14 mins 44 sec</p> | <p>3 Richard Kern
 <i>The Manhattan Love Suicides: Stray Dogs, 1985</i>
 Super 8 transferred to digital, black-and-white
 Duration: 9 mins 49 secs</p> |
| <p>4 David Wojnarowicz with Jesse Hultberg
 <i>Beautiful People, 1988</i>
 Super 8mm film on video, silent
 Duration 34 mins 57 sec</p> | <p>5 Andreas Sterzing
 <i>Untitled (David + Nest + Globe), 1989/2014</i>
 Pigment print on Hahnemühle photo rag satin paper
 60.96 x 81.28 cm
 24 x 32 in</p> | <p>6 David Wojnarowicz and Ben Neill
 <i>ITSOFOMO (In The Shadow of Forward Motion), 1991</i>
 Video transferred to digital video
 Duration 22 mins</p> |
| <p>7 David Wojnarowicz and Marion Scemama
 <i>When I Put My Hands on Your Body, 1989</i>
 Super 8 color on digital video with sound
 Duration 4 mins 28 sec</p> | <p>8 Andreas Sterzing
 <i>David Wojnarowicz (Silence=Death); New York, 1989/2025</i>
 Gelatin silver print
 Image: 57.1 x 44.5 cm, 22 1/2 x 17 1/2 in
 Print: 61 x 50.8 cm,
 24 x 20 in</p> | <p>9 Peter Hujar
 <i>Untitled (three part mural), 1983</i>
 Vintage gelatin silver print
 Image: 20 x 20 cm, 7 7/8 x 7 7/8 in
 Print: 35.6 x 27.9 cm, 14 x 11 in</p> |
| <p>10 Tim Greathouse
 <i>Untitled (pier shooting up mural), c. 1979</i>
 Gelatin silver print, mounted
 15.2 x 15.2 cm
 6 x 6 in</p> | <p>THE MODERN INSTITUTE/TOBY WEBSTER LTD
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