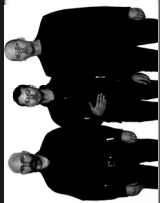


ULTRA-RED An Archive Of Silence



30"

- 1 A Time To Feel
- 2 Can You Feel (What Time Is) It?
- 3 An Archive Of Feelings, 1987 to 1992
- 4 4'33" (United In Feeling, April 23, 2006)
- 5 4'33" (Arrest Record #1, County USC Hospital, May 22, 2004)
- 6 4'33" (Arrest Record #2, Moscone Center, May 16, 2004)
- 7 4'33" (Arrest Record #3, Capitol, June 1, 2004)
- 8 4'33" (Death. D2K, August 15, 2000)
- 9 4'33" (Bienestar, East Los Angeles, March 15, 2005)
- 10 A Time To Hear
- 11 A Time To Remember
- 12 An Epidemic Of Silence (4'33")

Annotations on the archive.

An Archive Of Feelings, 1987 to 1992. *Testing the Limits* (87), *Seize Control of the FDA* (88), *Target City Hall* (89), *Stop the Church* (90), and *Voices from the Front* (92). Extracting audio from the archive of AIDS activist and ACT UP New York videos, Ultra-red contemplates to what extent those sounds can stand-in for missing recordings of our own contemporaneous experiences in AIDS activism? Attending the videotaped sounds, we note that some of the chants were the same (replace "Reagan" for "Bush"), some of the affinity group actions were the same and some of the demands were the same. Of course, there's no way to verify that an appropriation of video from other actions would accurately render unrecorded events. All Ultra-red can do is suture the video into our own memories of demonstration, arrest, and release. Sonically, the trouble is that audio on activist video suffers from monaural recording equipment. Without the stereophonic registration of spatial phenomenon, the recordings lacks orientation, positionality or movement. Acoustic space is signified at its most rudimentary level: volume and density as indexes of affect.

2'23"

"I had applied to be in the music section of the WPA [in 1940], but they refused to admit me because they said that I was not a musician. I said, 'Well, what am I? I work with sounds and percussion instruments and so forth.' And they said, 'You could be a recreation leader.' So I was employed in the recreation department, and that may have been the birth of the silent piece [4'33"], because my first assignment in the recreation department was to go to a hospital in San Francisco and entertain the children of the visitors. But I was not allowed to make any sound while I was doing it, for fear that it would disturb the patients. So I thought up games involving movement around the rooms and counting, etc., dealing with some kind of rhythm in space."

John Cage in conversation with Peter Gena, "After Antiquity," in *A John Cage Reader*, ed. Peter Gena and Jonathan Brent (New York: Peters, 1982), 169-70.

"AIDS does not exist apart from the practices that conceptualize it, represent it, and respond to it. We know AIDS only in and through those practices"

Douglas Crimp, "AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism," in *AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism*, ed. Douglas Crimp (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1988), 3.

"... AIDS ... has offered the country an opportunity to forge a new American language to engage in a fresh conversation on race that has the potential to close the [racial] chasm. For much of the past twenty years, however, the epidemic has had the opposite effect.... In the absence of a new language, the much richer, more vital, and continuing story of race in the post-civil rights era has been obscured. That perhaps, more than any callous disregard for human life, has kept the contours of this very public disease secret."

Jacob Levenson, *The Secret Epidemic: The Story of AIDS and Black America* (New York: Anchor Books, 2004), 275-76.

Ultra-red has developed a methodology: a fixation on recordings. There is only a record. If our political actions are the result of reflecting on the record, can politics be possible where no record exists?

This is the dilemma: at this precise time in our AIDS activism, there are only surrogate recordings. What audio records that do exist are either embedded in the image-as-evidence of video or, records of someone else's pain or pleasure. This is the archive from which we begin to build the record.

1'40"



30”

An Archive Of Silence

ULTRA-RED

Further annotations on the archive.

Arrest Records: 500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles, 5/22/90; Moscone Center, San Francisco, 6/20/90; US Capitol Grounds, Washington, DC, 10/04/91. “I may not have any audio recordings, but for some reason I kept

the official Notice to Appear tickets issued by the arresting police agencies on each occasion. The Notice dated May 22, 1990 commemorates my first ACT UP arrest following an over-night vigil at the County USC Hospital. The highpoint of ACT UP’s activism in Los Angeles, the protest forced the County to open an AIDS clinic at the Hospital most Americans would recognize as the image of General Hospital. ACT UP member Larry Day served as the driving force behind the protests. A person living with AIDS and client of County Hospital, Day provided most of the research on the Board of County Supervisors’ intransigence in ear-marking money for an AIDS ward. For Day, the stone-wall-ing by the County Supervisors indicated the extent to which officials remained in denial about the scope of the epidemic among Los Angelenos reliant upon the public health system. Eventually, the combined actions of ACT UP and local health care advocates forced the Supervisors to dedicate the necessary funds for establishing an AIDS ward. However, Day passed away before its opening. The Notice to Appear compels me to return to the site of that struggle. If I’m going to return to County USC Hospital for this purpose, with microphone in hand, I owe it to Day to invoke his name and his history. Perhaps in that invocation I may retrieve some sort of trace echoes of that day in 1990. To do so, I would need an especially sensitive microphone. I would also need to calculate the exact density of a waveform after fourteen years of decay. What conditions would require me to modify such calculations: the temperature of each day that passed between May 20, 1990 and the present? What about the conflagration that followed the trial of the officers accused of torturing Rodney King? I might need to consider the impact of vibrations from the Northridge earthquake of 1994? Then there are the daily vibrations from buses, helicopters, sirens, passing jets, construction, the nearby train tracks, passing trucks, low-riders with their booming bass, motorcycles, the daily waves of people streaming in and out of County’s doors, footsteps, voices, cries and the calls of the nearby street vendor. Suppose I was capable of making the necessary calculations. Suppose there did exist recording equipment sensitive enough to excavate the sounds of voices from fourteen years ago. Suppose the equipment was able to encode the frequencies onto digital audiotape, giving us a record of that exact event and my participation in it. Suppose all these things, the question remains whether I would be able to recognize those sounds as the trace index of what it is I remember of that day. Would I even recognize Larry’s voice amidst the digital noise -- noise which signifies my experiences with the pandemic today.”

2’23”

Can You Feel (What Time Is) It? 1986 to 1993. Released in 1986 on Chicago’s Trax label, “Can you feel it?” by Larry “Mr. Fingers” Heard served as a manifesto for the House nation. One of the track’s numerous mixes featured vocals by soul singer Robert Owens, another tracked six minutes of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I have a dream” speech. A third mix, with the voice of Chuck Roberts, proselytized for House music’s psycho-acoustic ergonomic zone. Ultra-red offer a four minutes and thirty-three seconds version, where the voices of Owens, King and Roberts have been displaced by that of Diamanda Galas (*Vena Cava*, 1993). Feeling saturates the skin at the sound of Galas’s lamentations. Her voice incorporated the rage and horror from living through one loss after another. Galas interrogates us while deaf to our reply. We’re shattered. We are no more than a glitch in the room’s acoustics. We are a stain on the tape, privy to an inaccessible space. Her question is her brother’s, Philip-Dimitri Galas, who died amidst an AIDS-induced delirium in 1986.

Silence, 2000 to 2006. With microphone in hand, Ultra-red began performing John Cage’s “4’33” of silence. Whether performed *in situ* or in the museum, “4’33” requires a robust discipline: in Paulo Freire’s words, “the discipline of silence.” The equation, Silence=Death compels us to fill the silence with voices. However, silence is itself a voice: an object that conditions our interventions whether they be screams of lamentation, rage and its pleasures, or some other action pieced from our current affective state. The rote stagings of moral outrage have proven to be insufficient. If silence equals death, then either death no longer terrifies us, or silence yields to something other than a moral basis for political action to end the AIDS crisis. As AIDS increasingly becomes an epidemic of the poor, then we must confront poverty as the permanent crisis of capital. AIDS is the secret real in that crisis. Articulating silence secures a new criticality.

1’40”