

The Museum of Modern Art

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TWO AIDS-RELATED INSTALLATIONS BY GENERAL IDEA ARE ON VIEW FOR THE FIRST TIME IN NEW YORK AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Projects: General Idea
November 28, 1996–January 7, 1997

Two AIDS-related installations by the Toronto art collective General Idea are on view for the first time in New York in the *Projects* gallery at The Museum of Modern Art from November 28, 1996, to January 7, 1997.

The highly charged subject of AZT motivated the two spectacular installations featured in *Projects: General Idea*. AZT (Azydothymidine), licensed by the Food and Drug Administration in 1987, was the first antiviral compound to become available to AIDS patients. While not a cure, AZT had proven fairly successful in helping to retard the replication of the virus, despite high toxicity and terrible side effects. Controversy surrounding its lengthy approval process was compounded by the issue of availability to patients: its expense put it beyond the reach of many who wanted to pursue treatment.

One Day of AZT (1991) displays the daily dose of AZT (then five units) as five human-sized pills on the floor. *One Year of AZT* (1991) comprises three hundred and sixty-five sets of five smaller pills, one for each day of the year, arranged in monthly sequences along the walls. Made of fiberglass, styrene with vinyl, these pieces mimic their pharmaceutical counterparts with their aerodynamic design for smooth descent.

“Inducing a state of disembodied suspension, the numbing regularity and relentless repetition of the daily dose sets up a sad visual mantra that evocatively counts down the passing

months," remarks Lilian Tone, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Painting and Sculpture, who organized the exhibition. "An undercurrent of tension derives from the friction between formal elegance, with its aestheticizing denial of the pills' function, and the pervasive aura of foreboding."

General Idea, formed in 1968 by AA Bronson, Felix Partz, and Jorge Zontal, was dissolved due to the deaths of Zontal and Partz in 1994. During its twenty-six-year existence, General Idea created work marked by elusive meaning and poignant wit, employing a range of mediums to address both popular culture and mass media as well as the work of other artists such as Yves Klein, Piero Manzoni, and Marcel Duchamp. General Idea began AIDS-related projects in 1987, at a time when relatively few artworks dealt specifically with AIDS. One of these early works includes a reworking of Robert Indiana's famous logo LOVE, which General Idea refashioned to read AIDS.

In conjunction with *Projects: General Idea*, Bronson is designing a Web page about the exhibition for the Museum. Bronson will also read a statement as part of the Museum's "AIDS Awareness Day" on December 2, 1996, from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m. (See separate press release about "Aids Awareness Day.")

The *Projects* series is made possible by the Contemporary Exhibition Fund of The Museum of Modern Art, established with gifts from Lily Auchincloss, Agnes Gund and Daniel Shapiro, and Mr. and Mrs. Ronald S. Lauder; and grants from The Contemporary Arts Council and The Junior Associates of The Museum of Modern Art, and Susan G. Jacoby.

For more information or photographic materials, contact Uri Perrin, Department of Communications, The Museum of Modern Art, 212/708-9757. Visit our Web site at www.moma.org.