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Chapter 35

SUZANNE LACY AND LESLIE LABOWITZ

FEMINIST MEDIA STRATEGIES FOR POLITICAL PERFORMANCE

IT WAS VIOLENCE – in the media and in society – that gave birth to feminist media art. By 1977 feminists had brought the subject of sexual violence into cultural dialogue. At the same time, an increased social permissiveness allowed more obviously violent and pornographic imagery to “leak” into the dominant culture through media. Across the country women formed groups to protest snuff films, one of the most shocking manifestations of glamorized violence. These groups did not focus on direct services to victims, as did rape centers formed earlier, but on the social effects of popular imagery. A natural liaison developed between activists who criticized violent images and artists who worked to expand their audience base with critical issues.



Figure 35.1 Suzanne Lacy and Leslie Labowitz, artists, from *Three Weeks in May*, Los Angeles, 1978.

Each day the red stain spread further. The “rape” marked occurrences reported in the newspaper were represented by red markings represented unreported rapes. The map sat next to an identical one that was not.

This performance focused attention on a series of thirty events. Performance art provided media coverage. In one particularly powerful performance on myths of rape, men’s role could be seen as provided a ritual exorcism. Other artists, self-defense instructors, activists, and future collaborative possibilities.

In 1978 we formed Ariadne: a performance art collective. Through Ariadne, we addressed governmental politics, women’s roles in popular culture. Through Ariadne, we created a performance applicable to a wide range of contexts. Through Ariadne’s existence, we produced a performance using news media, and pornography as a performance and conceptual art idea.



Figure 35.1 Suzanne Lacy and Leslie Labowitz, with assistance from the Women's Building and its artists, from *Three Weeks in May*, Los Angeles, 1977.

Each day the red stain spread further over the bright yellow map of Los Angeles. One red-stamped "rape" marked occurrences reported to the police department; around each of these, nine fainter markings represented unreported sexual assaults. Installed in the City Hall Mall, the twenty-five-foot map sat next to an identical one that listed where victims and their families could go for help.

This performance focused attention on the pervasiveness of sexual assault through a city-wide series of thirty events. Performances, speak-outs, art exhibits and demonstrations were amplified by media coverage. In one particularly striking series of street performances, Leslie Labowitz focused on myths of rape, men's role conditioning, and self-defense. Lacy's performance *She Who Would Fly* provided a ritual exorcism. Other artists included Barbara Smith, Cheri Gaulke, Anne Gauden, Melissa Hoffman and Laurel Klick. *Three Weeks* brought together normally disparate groups — including artists, self-defense instructors, activists and city officials — in a temporary community that suggested future collaborative possibilities.

In 1978 we formed Ariadne: A Social Art Network, an exchange between women in the arts, governmental politics, women's politics, and media. The focus was sex-violent images in popular culture. Through Ariadne we developed a media strategy for performance artists, one applicable to a wide range of experiences, expertise and needs. For the three years of Ariadne's existence, we produced seven major public performance events dealing with advertising, news media, and pornography. From its inception, our work together combined performance and conceptual art ideas with feminist theory, community organizing techniques,

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media analysis, and activist strategies. The first of these was *Three Weeks in May* (1977), a performance that laid the groundwork for a form we called the public informational campaign. Two other works followed quickly on its heels, each one developing our ideas about one-time media events (*Record Companies Drag Their Feet*, August 1977; *In Mourning and In Rage*, December 1977). In 1978 Ariadne took on San Francisco's Tenderloin district (*Take Back the Night*) and Las Vegas (*From Reverence to Rape to Respect*) with works that exercised but did not radically transform the strategies. In 1979 we worked independently of each other with core groups of women on two artworks that extended over long periods (*Making It Safe* and *The Incest Awareness Project*) in order to accomplish more than we could with a one-time media event. After Ariadne disbanded in 1980, we continued to use these media strategies in our individual performances.

In the past several years, activists among the Right and Left alike have become more sophisticated about obtaining media coverage, and corporations such as Mobil Oil have gone to great lengths to improve their public image through media manipulation. To the uninitiated, media intervention may appear overwhelming, a result in part of the mystification that surrounds mass communications. Although such work is time-consuming and often chaotic (you compete with the unexpected for coverage), it is possible to learn certain basics of media strategy and, more important, to learn how to think creatively about media art. The following ideas on the application of such strategies to performance art should be taken as points of departure — not recipes — for artists who want to make media performances.

If you're considering media actions . . .

The first and most important question to ask is whether or not media coverage is even appropriate for your artwork (action). If so, what kind is most suited to your goals? The seductive power of publicity can overshadow the goals of social change, particularly among artists who have not had much direct political experience. We who understand so well the potential impact of images tend to forget that our particular artwork, placed before a mass audience, might not necessarily be the most effective way to evoke a change in viewers' attitudes, much less provoke them to responsible action on behalf of our issue. However, some performances need to be in the media by virtue of their subject matter and goals. For example, in the history of West Coast media artwork, feminist and otherwise, the most politically and aesthetically potent works have been those that critiqued or parodied media coverage itself; those that commented upon conventions maintained by the media (such as elections and economic forecasting); or those that addressed an issue of direct concern to a mass audience.

If you feel your issues as well as your art ideas demand a mass media format, clarify your goals to help decide what kinds of communication forms to use. Media can serve as an extended voice for politically powerless people and can, as well, be part of a networking effort that brings together various groups with an awareness of shared concerns. It can also be used to reveal information about oppression to a larger audience. However, you might find that posting a handbill, passing out leaflets door to door, holding a meeting, organizing a participatory ritual or a street theatre piece, or planning a potluck may be better ways to reach your audience. One form of communication is not necessarily better for artists than another; it all depends on what you want to accomplish.

Though the media would like to make "stars" out of a selected few, art for the media in the service of political goals is generally a collaborative effort. Artists who enter the political arena are advised to include political activists in their planning. Organizations that work with

the same issues you will address can be resources for your project. In the case of Violence Against Women (WAVAW) Media (WAVPM) provided us with ongoing community organizing that

To understand how media operate doesn't matter what you think the game) is to get them to play it you highly valuable commodity that is products, ideas, attitudes and imagination we can hope for is a kind of guerrilla

In your own community, learn the printed press. Who owns them are the politics of the owners and information about the points of view gleaned from observation of their want coverage.

A reporter in New Orleans on standing of a seventh grader — or spend very little time deciphering formats, in particular, it's important to present new or countercultural

Never transgress the self-image of documentary journalists. Whether do! Recently I was orchestrating a release helium balloons. Before giving to capture the effect of all the balloons the women were too spread out for looked at me in horror. "I can't tie them together for a stronger visual

As you begin to look more closely responses and states of desire will making process — how the message and content — you will be able to ment of visual media in your daily you pierce the manner in which meaning your own meaning.

How are the images, narrative advertising, for example, how a response and/or fascination, dull an appropriate response to women about the proper treatment of women and action? Pay as much attention promising between, on the one hand and the public and, on the other,

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the same issues you will address can provide an analytical framework, information, and often resources for your project. In the case of antiviolence feminist performance, Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) and Women Against Violence and Pornography in the Media (WAVPM) provided us with a larger social context for our performances and the ongoing community organizing that would extend our effectiveness.

To understand how media operates, observe it – with detachment – and be pragmatic. It doesn't matter what you think the media *should* cover, the object of the game (and it is a game) is to get them to play it your way. Mass media time is not a public service; it is a highly valuable commodity that is purchased by corporations and individuals who promote products, ideas, attitudes and images. The stakes of this game are high, and as artists the best we can hope for is a kind of guerrilla foray into that system.

In your own community, learn everything you can about radio and television stations and the printed press. Who owns them? Are they local residents or part of a large network? What are the politics of the owners and managers, and how accessible are they to the public? Information about the points of view of news assignment editors and reporters, which can be gleaned from observation of their work, is invaluable in knowing who to approach when you want coverage.

A reporter in New Orleans once told me their news items had to be geared to the understanding of a seventh grader – or was it a seven-year-old? Reporters and their editors will spend very little time deciphering complicated messages; when you are depending upon news formats, in particular, it's important to be simple and clear. (This isn't the easiest thing to do; presenting new or countercultural ideas can't depend upon tried and true conventions.)

Never transgress the self-image of objectivity shared almost universally by reporters and documentary journalists. Whether you believe in this professional stance or not, act as if you do! Recently I was orchestrating a performance of 150 older women who were about to release helium balloons. Before giving the signal I asked a photojournalist if he would be able to capture the effect of all the balloons as they flew out of the women's hands. When he said the women were too spread out for that, I asked, "Should I group them closer together?" He looked at me in horror. "I can't tell you what to do!" I quickly agreed with him, then grouped them together for a stronger visual effect.

As you begin to look more closely at the media, its effectiveness in generating emotional responses and states of desire will become apparent. Once you have demystified the image-making process – how the messages one gets depend upon the arrangement of color, form, and content – you will be able to respond more objectively and critically to the bombardment of visual media in your daily life. Sensitivity to this is important for your analysis; once you pierce the manner in which meaning is conveyed through media, you can begin to generate your own meaning.

How are the images, narratives, and forms supportive of ideology? In the case of violent advertising, for example, how are colors, shapes, and sounds employed to seduce sexual response and/or fascination, dulling normal reactions to violence and establishing violation as an appropriate response to women? How do such attitudes tie into existing cultural mythology about the proper treatment of women? Which images instill passivity and which inspire participation and action? Pay as much attention to the form of your message as to its content, compromising between, on the one hand, the best way to capture the attention of both reporters and the public and, on the other, a newer way to educate people through participatory, rather

than authoritarian, communication. This isn't a simple matter, because there are few examples of this use of media. Our notion of what is suitable for television and newspapers is often shaped by the very forms that have manipulated our consciousness for so long. To introduce a more complex social analysis we need to defy certain conventions of news coverage.

For example, using the most obvious ideas and simplistic techniques of advertising may make coverage of your events more likely, but you may inadvertently generate meaning beyond your intentions, meaning directly at cross purposes to your goals. Graphics designer Sheila de Bretteville first called our attention to this issue by pointing out the coercive nature of billboard advertising. Because it is geared to split-second comprehension, it doesn't allow for design formats that reveal several points of view simultaneously, that share layered and complicated information about more complex subjects, and that allow participation from its viewers. In media performance, as well, the most convincing images with the most impact need to be monitored for implicit attitudes toward audiences: can viewers participate with the images and information, or are they being preached to and commanded?

Information about current events in the media is generally disconnected from potential analysis or action on the part of the viewers. Reporters discussing sexual violence, for example, present it as an unsolvable aberration of human nature and explain it in ways that mystify rather than promote understanding. In the case of the Hillside Strangler, for example, reporters keenly scrutinized the particular background of each victim, speculated wildly upon the history of the killer (speculations which were disturbingly similar to social mythology about men, women and sex), and never made the connections between these and other forms of sexual violence. Such connections, of course, are the basis for forming a political analysis. The questions we should have been asking were: How are these killings similar to the other mass-murders of women? How are these murders related to entertainment violence? To our attitudes about the innate nature of male sexuality? To our expectations about women as victims? Even, how does sexual violence relate to the status of the economy?

Finally, monitor your own response to media imagery to determine which images and ideas motivate you. Only when you are objective about your own conditioning can you walk the line between images that reveal important information and images that overwhelm their viewers. During the airing and public controversy of "The Day After," a fictionalized television broadcast with graphic depictions of the horrors of nuclear holocaust, many activists criticized such imagery as inducing passivity. At what point do people throw up their hands in despair rather than take to the streets or the legislatures? Be aware of this point when creating images about problems that weigh heavily upon the lives of your viewers. You want to motivate people, not dull them further.

How to do a media performance

To create an effective media performance, you first need to ask yourselves three questions:

What is the problem? When communicating through the media, time is of the essence. The subtleties of your analysis simply won't be respected or recorded, and you must take great care to present your information in the clearest, most coherent fashion. The *art* is in making it compelling; the *politics* is in making it clear. To do this, you must first clarify your issue.

What is your goal? Simply getting people to see your art is not enough when you are working with serious and confrontational issues. What do you want to have happen as a result of your media campaign or event? This, perhaps the most difficult part of your analysis, needs to embody your best and most realistic projections. (Try not to fall into the self-delusory artist's stance about the "tremendous but unidentifiable impact" of your work!)

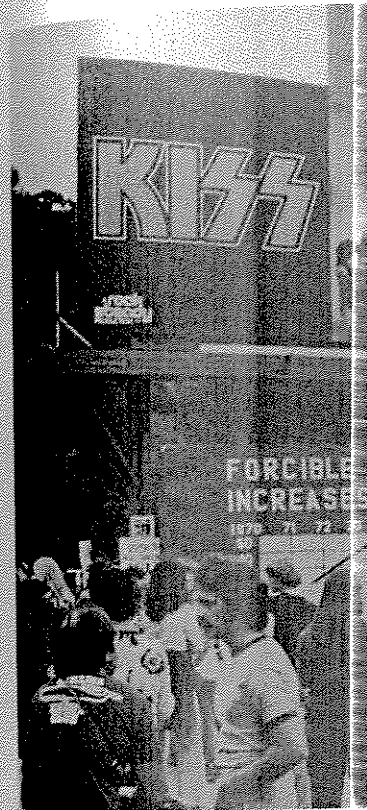


Figure 35.2 Leslie Labowitz in collaboration with the National Organization for Women. (1977)

How do you bring attention to a Women (WAVAW), Leslie Labowitz. A parody of the recording industry, this performance used the rock group KISS, along with a group of moguls – portrayed by women dressed in "office" and began to count their "attention" to no avail. The performance was titled, "Don't Support Violence."

Covered by all major television networks and the entertainment industry, the event was broadcast on Atlantic and Electra for their use. The performance was not only powerful as a one-woman show, but also as a collaboration with a

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Figure 35.2 Leslie Labowitz in collaboration with Women Against Violence Against Women and the National Organization for Women, *Record Companies Drag Their Feet*, Los Angeles, 1977.

How do you bring attention to a national boycott? Working with Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW), Leslie Labowitz designed a performance specifically for television news coverage. A parody of the recording industry's greed, which enables it to ignore the effects of its violent advertising on women's lives, this performance was held on Sunset Boulevard, the symbolic heart of the industry. A mock executive's office was set up under a huge billboard for the latest album by the rock group KISS, along with a counter-billboard announcing rape statistics. Three record company moguls – portrayed by women dressed as roosters – arrived in a gold Cadillac, strutted into their "office" and began to count their "blood money." Women pleaded against, and protested their exploitation to no avail. The performance ended when twenty women draped the set with a banner that read, "Don't Support Violence – Boycott!"

Covered by all major television stations in the city and by *Variety*, a trade journal for the entertainment industry, the event launched a successful campaign against the record companies Warner, Atlantic and Electra for their use of violated images of women in their advertising. This performance was not only powerful as a one-time media event, but it also provides one example of how artists can collaborate effectively with an activist organization.



Figure 35.3 Suzanne Lacy and Leslie Labowitz, with assistance from Biba Lowe, *In Mourning and In Rage*, Los Angeles, 1977.

Ten seven-foot-tall, heavily veiled women stepped silently from a hearse. As reporters announced to cameras, "We are at City Hall to witness a dramatic commemoration for the ten victims of the Hillside Strangler," the women in black delivered an unexpected message. They did not simply grieve but attacked the sensationalized media coverage that contributes to the climate of violence against women. One at a time, the actresses broke their ominous silence to link these murders with *all* forms of sexual violence (an analysis missing from the media) and to demand concrete solutions.

City council members promised support to activists, Holly Near sang "Fight Back" (written especially for the performance), and news programs across the state carried reports of the performance and its activist message. *In Mourning and In Rage* was perhaps our most compelling example of a one-time media performance, staged as a guerrilla intervention to the conventions of sex crime reportage. Follow-up talk show appearances and activities by local rape hot line advocates created a much broader discussion of the issues than could be covered at the performance itself.

Who is your audience? Once you have chosen a media form you have chosen is not children on the eleven o'clock news in a small community like Watts. In the *Los Angeles Times*, depending on the subject and how would you like to

Our media artworks fell into a national campaign. The first is a choreographed to control the content cannot take the place of person-to-term media education, but they s or point of view about an issue fo an overall strategy to influence p depth information people will ne

The public informational camp Several different kinds of media a period of time. More than a one-ti nize a constituency. During such p *It's Safe*, and *The Incest Awareness Pr* casts, and feature articles with ac street performances, lectures, de campaign as a conceptual perform show appearances as mini-perform ance art as well as the issues.

When you are staging a media

- The coordinating committee At least one member of this the visual images, and assist will be captured by an exciti in your group; other times clichés accumulated from p and original ones come up. women, for example, many have accrued negative coun their continued existence i ence response. For instanc of mourners as old, powerf tall figures angrily demand
- To get the press to cover issues they think are curr they don't feel the topic h or risk; and on an other predicting what an assign easy). It is important to what is newsworthy and

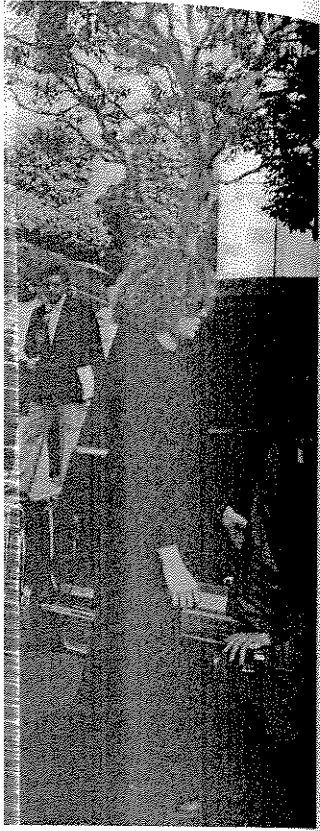
Who is your audience? Once you clarify who you want to reach, you may decide that the media form you have chosen is not appropriate to that audience. You probably won't reach children on the eleven o'clock news or working people on middle-of-the-afternoon talk shows. In a small community like Watts, California, word-of-mouth could be more effective than the *Los Angeles Times*, depending on your message. What does your audience already know about the topic at hand, and what do you want them to know? What is their attitude on the subject and how would you like to see them respond to your event?

Our media artworks fell into two categories: the media event and the public informational campaign. The first is a one-time event designed specifically for TV newscasts, choreographed to control the content as it is distributed through the media. These events cannot take the place of person-to-person contact through community organizing or long-term media education, but they serve as a very exciting and useful way to identify an issue or point of view about an issue for a large audience. A successful media event is one part of an overall strategy to influence public opinion, but it needs to be followed up with the in-depth information people will need to make knowledgeable choices.

The public informational campaign, a term used by public relations people, can do just that. Several different kinds of media coverage about a specific issue are placed over an extended period of time. More than a one-time media event, this kind of campaign can educate and organize a constituency. During such projects (*Three Weeks in May*, *Reverence to Rape to Respect*, *Making It Safe*, and *The Incest Awareness Project*) we reinforced radio interviews, talk shows, TV newscasts, and feature articles with activities that put us in direct contact with the public, such as street performances, lectures, demonstrations, and art exhibitions. Conceiving of the entire campaign as a conceptual performance, we paired art with informative events, designed talk show appearances as mini-performances, and used media opportunities to talk about performance art as well as the issues.

When you are staging a media event:

- The coordinating committee of your group should select the key images and the message. At least one member of this committee should be an artist who can design a format, create the visual images, and assist in the artistic production. Sometimes everyone's imagination will be captured by an exciting image that is evoked automatically or created by an individual in your group; other times a brainstorming session is needed. Your first images may be clichés accumulated from popular culture. Keep exploring your consciousness until strong and original ones come up. If you need a push, look at mythological images; in the case of women, for example, many images reflect positive expressions of power, even though they have accrued negative connotations in this culture. These images need to be reclaimed, and their continued existence in our collective mythology indicates a potentially strong audience response. For instance, *In Mourning and In Rage* took this culture's trivialized images of mourners as old, powerless women and transformed them into commanding seven-foot-tall figures angrily demanding an end to violence against women.
- To get the press to cover your event, establish its timeliness. Reporters come out for issues they think are current and topical; relate to news items already given airplay (if they don't feel the topic has burned out); have an element of sensationalism, high drama, or risk; and on an otherwise slow news day, have a "human interest" angle (although predicting what an assignment editor will deem to be humanly interesting is not always easy). It is important to determine whether your performance will fit preconceptions of what is newsworthy and at the same time maintain its integrity as art and as political



Milla Lowe, *In Mourning and*

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action. For example, the media's dramatization of the Hillside Strangler murders ensured coverage of our memorial performance by major local newscasters at the time. As a result we were asked to appear on TV talk shows to discuss our alternatives to the media's highly sensationalized coverage of the murders.

- Don't fall into the trap of creating media gimmickry. Superficial images that don't go deep into the cultural symbols of society have less impact, particularly when compared to sophisticated and high-impact commercial images. News reporters react negatively to cute tricks aimed at obtaining coverage; they may manipulate, but they don't like to be manipulated. Events designed to express gut-level feelings and real community concerns do not come across as manipulation.
- Avoid overworked images. Activists fall into their own conventions, which may have the opposite effect than desired. For example, picket lines may establish such preconceptions in the mind of viewers that your meaning would be overlooked.
- Do your best to control the media's interpretation of your information, particularly when it is counter to prevailing attitudes. The press release, which will frame the media's perception of your planned action, is an art form in itself. It must be written simply, with enticing descriptions of visual opportunities and a clear political perspective on the issue. It should also include names of participating government officials and celebrities, if there are any, and give the impression that this will be the most important event of the day. Once your event is assigned to a reporter, that person becomes the next key in making sure your message remains relatively undistorted. To prepare for your contact with reporters, analyze television newscasts in your area: find out who the reporters are, how much time is allotted to your kind of issue, and, most important, how news footage is edited. How long is the average news slot? Does the newscaster stand in front of the image while describing the action? What is the ratio of visual-to-verbal information? Design your event to fit the normal newscast format in order to control its coverage as much as possible.
- Arrange the time of day, the day of the week, and the location to suit reporters' schedules. In Los Angeles, Tuesday or Wednesday morning (when news is usually slow) is considered the best time to call a press conference. Weekend news has already broken, and there is a better chance of getting on the evening news the same day. A strategic location will have effective "visuals" or provide a good background, be familiar to reporters, and have electrical outlets, parking, and other facilities. For example, Los Angeles City Hall was chosen as the site for *In Mourning and In Rage* because we were presenting demands to members of the city council, in session at that hour; we also knew the media would be likely to cover the session that day.
- Keep your event under twenty minutes and provide at least one high-impact visual image that is emblematic of your message. Both words and images should be easy to understand; anything ambiguous should be clarified by a speech during the performance or by a simply worded press release. The performance should be confined to a limited area so that the camera can frame the whole set without losing information. Sequences should be clear, logically connected, and few in number.
- Have one director for the performance and another for the reporters. Since the performers in these events are usually not professionals, an artist should supportively guide them through the piece and control the timing. The media director should greet reporters as they arrive, sign them in, hand out press kits and press statements (explaining the symbolism of each image), and give shot sheets (which break down the event's sequences) to the camera people. This director is also responsible for keeping reporters at the site for the entire event. Don't give out interviews or explicit information before the event.

Figure 35.4 Leslie Labowitz, Nancy Angelo Project, cosponsored by Ariadne and the

The Incest Awareness Project's goal was to create positive images of women moving beyond the development of prevention and recovery programs.

The year-long event included a performance by women who had experienced incest. In Nancy Angelo's *Equal Time and Incest*, which women who had been incest victims presented a raising session. Afterward, an experiential and recovery components — conceptualization and Lesbian Community Service Center referral service, counselling, a support group still in existence.

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rials and celebrities, if there
ortant event of the day. Once
he next key in making sure
your contact with reporters,
porters are, how much time
news footage is edited. How
nt of the image while describ-
on? Design your event to fit
as much as possible.

ion to suit reporters' sched-
en news is usually slow) is
nd news has already broken,
s the same day. A strategic
nd, be familiar to reporters,
example, Los Angeles City
because we were presenting
ur; we also knew the media

one high-impact visual image
es should be easy to under-
aring the performance or by
onfined to a limited area so
ormation. Sequences should

orters. Since the performers
id supportively guide them
or should greet reporters as
statements (explaining the
down the event's sequences)
leeping reporters at the site
nformation before the event

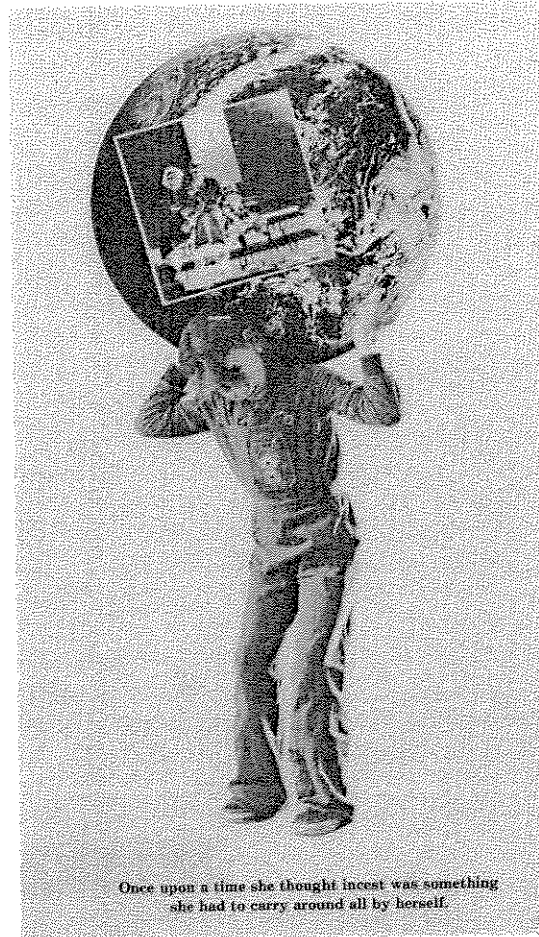


Figure 35.4 Leslie Labowitz, Nancy Angelo, and Nancy Taylor, Coordinators, *The Incest Awareness Project*, cosponsored by Ariadne and the Gay and Lesbian Community Service Center, 1979–1981.

The Incest Awareness Project's goal was to break the silence that surrounded the subject of incest, create positive images of women moving out of victimization, and effect social change through the development of prevention and recovery programs.

The year-long event included *Bedtime Stories*, an exhibition of performance and static artwork by women who had experienced incest; art therapy workshops for children; and a media campaign. In Nancy Angelo's *Equal Time and Equal Space*, the audience sat in a circle with video monitors, from which women who had been incest victims spoke to each other as if they were in a consciousness-raising session. Afterward, an experienced counsellor led the audience in a discussion. The prevention and recovery components — conceptualized by members of the art project with members of the Gay and Lesbian Community Service Center, and carried out by counsellors there — included a telephone referral service, counselling, a speakers bureau, and self-help groups. Many of these programs are still in existence.

is over, and brief everyone involved not to give out information but to direct all questions to the media director. Reporters love to "get the scoop" and leave for their next assignment.

[The project *Rape is Everyone's Concern* serves as an example of these strategies.] Las Vegas, glitter capital of the United States – with its high incidence of violent rape and its global image as the epitome of female objectification – was the perfect setting for a performance demonstrating the continuum between idolization and degradation of women. Modeled on *Three Weeks in May*, this campaign/performance created an exchange between women in Las Vegas and Los Angeles.

Ten days of events – including a talk by Margo St. James (founder of the prostitute's union COYOTE), an exchange exhibition on violence sponsored by women of Los Angeles and Las Vegas, a performance brought from Los Angeles by the Feminist Art Workers, and other collaborations between artists, humanist scholars, and women from the community – broke down the myth that Las Vegas has few rapes because sex is so available. Performances (by Suzanne Lacy, Kathy Kauffman, Nancy Buchanan and Leslie Labowitz) were held in galleries and on the streets. Two billboards, coverage in the local media, and a half-hour PBS documentary on rape created broad public exposure for the performance.

When you are planning a public informational campaign:

- Form a media committee to think through strategy; determine the overall image, build relationships with the press, develop press kits and write releases. The press kit should contain a general description, a schedule of events, background information on your issues and the people involved in your effort, press releases for each event, and photos and story-angle suggestions for feature articles. This information packet is sent out to contacts in the media, government, and community six weeks before the project begins. Separate releases are sent out several days before each individual event to news desks at local television and radio stations and newspapers.
- Follow up the press release with phone calls on the day of an important action. If coverage is still not confirmed, ask to speak to the station manager. Persist until you know at least two news teams are coming out. If they don't show up, reconsider your strategy and then make complaints to stations by phone or letter. In certain smaller communities, however, it is more effective to continue to alert reporters before and after the event rather than make complaints. One significant advantage of long-term campaigns is that media interest will build as people become more aware of your activities. In a sense you are developing your own history and context, something reporters look for.
- Develop a permanent log of media contacts: which reporters have covered past events and which reporters, feature writers, programs and columns you would like to involve in your project. Keep accurate records of your communications with media people to build trust and to plan your media strategy in a systematic manner. One person, or two in close communication, should be in charge of this.
- Choose individuals for media appearances who are accessible by phone, articulate, well informed, and who think quickly when confronted by reporters. Moderators have many ways of steering a dialogue in their own, often uninformed, direction. Your representative must know how to control the situation. Ask the moderator before the show what questions will be discussed, and prepare your answers accordingly. Some interviewers even like you to suggest questions to them, but be cautious as some take offense at such a

suggestion. Rehearse to prepare points you want to get across; ask every question to your advantage.

- Go in pairs to media presentations. You have the opportunity to train members of the audience publicly from one's experience with a popular cause, and those who have been trained by training each other you can also empower each other.

Your final steps are to document the performance, and to have performance artists in general analyze the success of your own performance. Museums and cable stations provide an opportunity to broadcast your performance in university broadcast departments. Consider a frequent release or sell their work if there are copyright restrictions.

Evaluating the results is your final step. Coverage is not an unqualified success if it does not stand the message it actually conveyed. Were you spoken, but the slant given was not the general appearance of your image? What action did you inspire? What changes were needed, either in the community or in your attitudes can only be projected and are always evolving.

Media work has three ultimate goals: first, to support the established social order; second, to organize and activate viewers (to do this); third, to create art that challenges the social order, to help viewers see the world in a new relation to it. Long after reports are truncated due either to our inefficiency or our aspirations through art will continue. We must be fast on our feet, ready to move on when we can no longer

information but to direct all questions "cooperatively" and leave for their next

of these strategies.] Las Vegas, a site of violent rape and its global impact, is the perfect setting for a performance of women. Modeled on the exchange between women in Las

es (founder of the prostitute's union, led by women of Los Angeles and the Feminist Art Workers, and other women from the community — access is so available. Performances by Labowitz) were held in galleries, media, and a half-hour PBS documentary.

to define the overall image, build press releases. The press kit should contain information on your issues for each event, and photos and a packet is sent out to contacts before the project begins. Separate contact to news desks at local tele-

is an important action. If coverage is sparse, persist until you know at least one, reconsider your strategy and contact certain smaller communities, reporters before and after the event. The long-term campaigns is that of your activities. In a sense you are the reporters look for.

Reporters have covered past events and means you would like to involve negotiations with media people to a certain manner. One person, or two

is available by phone, articulate, well-organized reporters. Moderators have many options, direction. Your representative should appear before the show what questions. Some interviewers even disagreeably. Some take offense at such a

suggestion. Rehearse to prepare for negative as well as positive situations, decide which points you want to get across in the time allotted, and experiment with ways of turning every question to your advantage.

Go in pairs to media presentations whenever possible, and see each appearance as an opportunity to train members of your group to speak out. It takes courage to speak publicly from one's experience as a woman, a minority or a supporter of a not-yet-popular cause, and those who do it need emotional support from the group. Moreover, by training each other you not only avoid the media's tendency to create stars, but you also empower each other.

Your final steps are to document and evaluate your artwork. Documentation, an essential tool for performance artists in general, takes on greater implications in media art. You can use it to analyze the success of your own strategies and to demonstrate approaches to others. Some museums and cable stations provide free to low-cost public access to equipment, and students in university broadcast departments will often record events for you. News stations will frequently release or sell their clips if you provide them with a blank videotape, although there are copyright restrictions on the use of this material.

Evaluating the results is your most important post-performance activity. Simply getting coverage is not an unqualified sign of your success; analyze the coverage and try to understand the message it actually communicated to its audience — not just the actual words that were spoken, but the slant given by the reporter's attitudes, the camera's focus, and the general appearance of your images. What makes it successful as art? As political action? What action did you inspire? What new perspectives did you reveal? Is there follow up needed, either in the community or in the media? Although the long-term effects on people's attitudes can only be projected, attempt to make these projections to keep your strategy evolving.

Media work has three ultimate purposes: first, to interrupt the incessant flow of images that supports the established social order with alternative ways of thinking and acting; second, to organize and activate viewers (media is not the only, nor necessarily most effective, way to do this); third, to create artful and original imagery that follows in the tradition of fine art, to help viewers see the world in a new way and learn something about themselves in relation to it. Long after reporters have lost interest in media art, long after our access is truncated due either to our effectiveness or lack thereof, our power to crystallize collective aspirations through art will continue, with or without television. As guerrilla media artists we must be fast on our feet, responding to the vicissitudes of media coverage, and ready to move on when we can no longer see the social change resulting from our efforts there.