

PS1

MoMA PS1 PRESENTS THE FIRST MAJOR EXHIBITION OF NEW YORK-BASED ARTIST, WRITER, AND ACTIVIST GREGG BORDOWITZ

LONG ISLAND CITY, New York, May 10, 2021— MoMA PS1 presents *Gregg Bordowitz: I Wanna Be Well*, the first comprehensive overview of the New York artist's prodigious and influential career, on view from May 13 to October 11, 2021. Born in Brooklyn and raised primarily in Queens, Gregg Bordowitz (American, b. 1964) has been living with HIV for more than half of his adult life, and transformed his art practice in the mid-1980s in response to the AIDS public health crisis. Working with New York's ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) and several video collectives that he co-founded, he organized and documented protests against government inaction, advocating for health education and harm reduction. During this time, Bordowitz created remarkable video portraits of himself and others living with the disease, often using his "personal history as a way to tell a story shared by many."

I Wanna Be Well surveys 30 years of Bordowitz's practice alongside the coalitions of activists, artists, writers, thinkers, and friends who have shaped his life—and among whom he continues to find sustenance. The relationship between art and activism is critical to Bordowitz's sustained investigations of identity, illness, and desire. While developing a visual language in his collaborative works capable of communicating harm-reduction models to a broad public, he made videos and television broadcasts that juxtaposed performance documentation, archival footage, role play, and recordings of protest demonstrations, drawing influence from feminist conceptual art.

Named after a 1977 Ramones song, *I Wanna Be Well* raises broad questions about how we define health, community, and care in the context of the urgency of the continuing AIDS epidemic and COVID-19 pandemic. In a new large-scale sculpture created on-site for the PS1 exhibition, Bordowitz explores parallels between COVID-19 and aspects of the enormous loss and resilience experienced by many communities affected by AIDS. Modeled on Vienna's *Pestsäule* (Plague Column), which commemorates those lost to the Great Plague in 1679, Bordowitz's sculpture integrates historic religious iconography with contemporary protest symbols, speaking to the uprisings for racial justice that gripped the world last summer after the murder of George Floyd, and advocacy demanding health equity in the treatment of COVID-19.

Long active as a poet, writer, and teacher, Bordowitz has more recently engaged in live and recorded performances that explore the nexus of religious, sexual, political, and cultural identities with which he affiliates. The exhibition features these performances alongside his foundational videos and films, as well as drawings, poems, sculptures, ephemera, and works by artist friends. Tracing the artist's own experiences and evolving views in tandem with the development of AIDS activism around the world, *I Wanna Be Well* draws connections between Bordowitz's intimate depictions of living with AIDS and the continuing global AIDS crisis.

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I Wanna Be Well will feature the fourth iteration of the artist's performance-lecture *Some Styles of Masculinity*, a three-part event in which Bordowitz explores the concept of masculinity and its entanglement with ethnicity, sexuality, religion, humor, and national identity. The exhibition is accompanied by a free publication featuring a collection of pandemic-inspired haikus that Bordowitz has written over the past year, available at Artbook @ MoMA PS1 and online at mo.ma/haiku.

Gregg Bordowitz: I Wanna Be Well was organized by the Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery, Reed College. The exhibition is curated by Stephanie Snyder and organized at MoMA PS1 by Peter Eleey, former Chief Curator, with Josephine Graf, Assistant Curator.

The exhibition was previously presented at the Art Institute of Chicago, where it was organized by Robyn Farrell and Solveig Nelson.

PROGRAMS

Some Styles of Masculinity
September 17, 18, and 19

Some Styles of Masculinity, Gregg Bordowitz's three-part performance lecture, explores archetypes of masculinity that have been formative to the artist's own coming-of-age: the rock star, the rabbi, and the comedian. In each of the performances, Bordowitz inhabits a number of unstable conjugations of religious, ethnic, and diasporic identities, at the intersection of gender and sexuality.

Bordowitz adopts the persona of a stand-up comedian as what he terms a "ready-made form," noting that "artists feel like failed comedians—at least this artist does." Yet *Some Styles of Masculinity* is purposely "not-funny," as Bordowitz explains. "Any laughter is purely accidental. My performances disturb, upset, and resist the pressures to conform and align genders and ethnicities within a fascist phantasy of American nationalism."

Some Styles of Masculinity draws inspiration from cultural theorist Stuart Hall's book *Fateful Triangle: Race, Ethnicity and Nation*, a study of the interrelated effects of multiple identity claims. The book features lectures delivered by Hall in the 1980s, but it was first published as Bordowitz was developing the performances in 2017. Initially developed as part of *Trigger: Gender as a Tool and a Weapon* (2017) at the New Museum, the performance is now in its fourth iteration and continues to shift with enactment.

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HARM REDUCTION IS NOT A METAPHOR: Living in the 21st Century with Drugs, Intimacy, and Activism

Alongside the exhibitions *Niki de Saint Phalle: Structures for Life* and *Gregg Bordowitz: I Wanna Be Well*, Visual AIDS and the What Would an HIV Doula Do? collective offer a zine resource guide to encourage the proliferation of harm reduction practices for our time. Available for visitors in PS1's Homeroom space and for download at mo.ma/homeroom, the publication includes personal stories, interviews, and conversation-generating questions exploring 21st century harm reduction practices by and for communities impacted by unjust healthcare systems, punitive drug laws, and other forms of oppression.

SPONSORSHIP

Support for MoMA PS1's presentation of *Gregg Bordowitz: I Wanna Be Well* generously provided by the Tom Slaughter Exhibition Fund and the PS1 Trustee Annual Fund.

Special thanks to Video Data Bank at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

ABOUT MoMA PS1

MoMA PS1 champions art and artists at the intersection of the social, cultural, and political issues of their time. Providing audiences with the agency to ask questions, access to knowledge, and a forum for public debate, PS1 has offered insight into artists' diverse worldviews for more than 40 years. Founded in 1976 by Alanna Heiss, the institution was a defining force in the alternative space movement in New York City, transforming a nineteenth century public schoolhouse in Long Island City into a site for artistic experimentation and creativity. PS1 has been a member of New York City's Cultural Institutions Group (CIG) since 1982 and affiliated with The Museum of Modern Art since 2000.

Hours: MoMA PS1 is open from 12:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., Thursday through Saturday, 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., Sunday and Monday. Closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.

Admission: \$10 suggested admission; \$5 for students and senior citizens; free for New York City residents and MoMA members. Free admission for NYC residents is made possible by The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation. Entry is by advance timed ticket only and capacity is limited. Tickets must be reserved online at mo.ma/ps1tickets.

Visitor Guide: Discover even more from PS1 with the Bloomberg Connects app. Read wall text, hear directly from artists, and uncover the building's history with this multimedia visitor guide. This digital experience is made possible through the support of Bloomberg Philanthropies.

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MoMA PS1
22-25 Jackson Ave
Long Island City, NY 11101

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Directions: MoMA PS1 is located at 22-25 Jackson Avenue at 46th Ave in Long Island City, Queens, across the Queensboro Bridge from midtown Manhattan. Traveling by subway, take the E, M, or 7 to Court Sq; or the G to Court Sq or 21 St-Van Alst. By bus, take the Q67 to Jackson and 46th Ave or the B62 to 46th Ave.

Information: For general inquiries, call (718) 784-2084 or visit moma.org/ps1.

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