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Divided States of America

In the 1960s and '70s, the United States was anything but united. Deep social divisions, mass protests, and calls for revolutionary change roiled the country—and artists were at the forefront of this upheaval. Indeed, many artists were also activists, agitating for civil rights, workers' rights, and an end to the Vietnam War. They fought for equality and the abolition of repressive political, economic, and industrial regimes. Their art, too, confronted systems of power. Emory Douglas championed “Power to the People” and the Black Panther Party in his bracing designs for mass media; Alfonso Ossorio dismantled and reimagined the artifacts of colonial power; Lee Lozano, Melvin Edwards, and Sam Gilliam made artworks whose very forms suggest power dynamics of struggle, containment, liberation, and release.

This crucible of art and unrest reflected a nation in turmoil, the effects of which are still felt today—whether in the extreme polarization of American society, or in the promise of new countercultures to come.

417 **Transparency in Architecture and Beyond**

The glass and steel facade of the United Nations Secretariat Building in New York—a fragment of which occupies the center of this gallery—embodied the ideal of a transparent architecture. The image of the glazed UN tower as it rose on the east edge of Manhattan in 1950 was also meant to communicate the aspirations of a transparent institution, an intergovernmental organization that would be guided by ethical principles and unafraid to “expose” its inner workings.

Architects and artists engaged with the aesthetic potentials and symbolic pitfalls of transparency throughout the twentieth century. Acutely aware of the loss of privacy that glass buildings brought about, many of them investigated the sense of voyeurism and the threat of all-encompassing surveillance of the individual. Others mobilized the multiple meanings of transparency, often using it as metaphor to uncover hidden power structures and demand accountability from institutions—from privately owned museums to multinational corporations.

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Marta Minujín's MINUCODE

MINUCODE—a blend of the artist's name and the word “code”—was commissioned by the Center for Inter-American Relations (now the Americas Society) in New York in 1968. Interested in exploring the social codes of the arts, business, fashion, and politics, Minujín decided she would host four cocktail parties attended by people working in those fields. She enlisted participants via newspaper advertisements, which described the work as a “social environment” and included a precise yet playful questionnaire inviting responders to categorize themselves according to their occupation and interests.

Minujín received over one thousand replies, from which guest lists were created. The parties took place over four consecutive nights at the CIAR, where participants were filmed and then invited back a few days later to see the films projected onto the walls of the gallery. Transforming the space into an immersive architecture of moving images, Minujín later reflected, “I wanted them to see themselves ‘backward,’ to observe their own behaviors, to watch their own social interactions.”

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Body on the Line

This gallery brings together works by an international group of women artists from the late 1960s to the early 1980s, an incredibly rich period in the history of the struggle for women's rights around the world. These artists engaged with feminism and femininity by drawing on personal histories or staking positions on social issues. Some took a distinctly conceptual approach in establishing the ground for the intermingling of art and politics or in offering a feminist critique of the traditional boundaries of gender in their societies. Others communicated the experiences of women in more sensuous or intuitive ways. "I always feel the painting come from my soul," declared the artist Kamala Ibrahim Ishag. Her evocative painting of a commune of women undergoing a supernatural transformation anchors this wide-ranging ensemble of works by women who have inspired myriad artists after them.