

# UP AGAINST the WALL

ART,  
ACTIVISM,  
AND THE  
AIDS  
POSTER



True  
Love.

If you care for each other, protect each other. Use a latex condom every time.  
It's not 100% protection against AIDS—only doing without sex and IV  
drugs entirely does that—but it cuts your risk considerably. For more infor-  
mation, call the AIDS hotline in Northern California at 1-800-367-2437,  
or in Southern California at 1-800-922-2437.

**AIDS.**  
It's Up To You.

State of California AIDS Education Campaign

TRAVELING EXHIBITION SERVICE



INTERNATIONAL  
ARTS AND ARTISTS



1. Landsforeningen Mot AIDS, *AIDS: A Global Threat, A Local Answer*, 1992, 65" x 50" x 25 9/16", Image courtesy of the Department of Rare Books, Special Collections, and Preservation, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester.

# UP AGAINST the WALL

## ART, ACTIVISM, AND THE AIDS POSTER

**U**p Against the Wall: Art, Activism, and the AIDS Poster is the traveling version of the first major exhibition devoted to the University of Rochester's collection of HIV/AIDS-related posters.

Donated by collector, physician, and medical historian, Dr. Edward C. Atwater, and part of the collections of the University of Rochester Libraries' Department of Rare Book, Special Collections, and Preservation, these posters document the broad range of efforts to educate and inform people around the world about this devastating disease.


The collection, the largest of its kind in the world, includes over 8000 posters from 130 countries in over 75 languages, and dates from 1982 to the present. The posters show how social, religious, civic, activist, art, health, and humanitarian organizations have addressed the controversial, often contested, terrain of the HIV/AIDS pandemic within the public realm.

Up Against the Wall was originally exhibited at the University of Rochester's Memorial Art Gallery from March 6, to June 19, 2022 and included a range of public programs that explored the intersection of art and public health.

# AIDS is over, right?

(or maybe, you should read the fine print)

One in four people who become infected with HIV is under the age of 20. In 1997, 55% of Americans wrongly believed they could become infected by sharing a glass of water, up from 48% in '91. **Ignorance is bliss.** 29% of Americans living with HIV have no health insurance. ADAP (AIDS Drug Assistance Program) is bankrupt in over half of the 50 states, which means that they cannot provide access to the protease cocktail. The protease cocktail costs \$16,000 per year per person. **Ignorance is bliss.** Unprotected sex is the main risk behavior amongst teenagers, accounting for 55% of reported HIV infections in young men, and 37% in young women, as of 1996. While 95% of Americans believe that public schools should provide HIV prevention education, frank discussion of sexuality and condoms in the classroom is still virtually taboo. **Ignorance is bliss.** Last year, 41% of Americans wrongly believed they could contract HIV from a public toilet, up from 34% in '91. **Ignorance is bliss.** AIDS deaths are down. Transmission is up. More people are living with AIDS. Nearly half of HIV+ people undergoing triple-combination therapy have developed resistance, rendering the drugs useless. **Ignorance is bliss.** One person is infected with HIV in the US every 13 minutes. **Ignorance is bliss.** 33 Americans are infected every day due to lack of access to needle-exchange programs. 66% of Americans approve of needle-exchange programs, yet the government has maintained the ban on funding for needle-exchange. **Ignorance is bliss.** More than 40% of AIDS cases worldwide are among women. 16,000 people become infected with HIV every day. By the year 2000, there will be more than 40 million people living with HIV/AIDS worldwide. **AIDS is over, right?**

DAY WITHOUT ART  December 1, 1998

the tenth international day of action and mourning in response to the AIDS crisis

A project of Visual AIDS: 526 west 26th street no. 510, ny, ny 10001 usa • phone 212.627.9855 • fax 212.627.9815 • e-mail: visAIDS@aol.com • Supporters of Visual AIDS in 1998: Con Edison, The Debs Foundation, The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, The Elton John AIDS Foundation, The Estate Project for Artists with AIDS, The Robert D. Farber Foundation, The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, The Mary J. Hutchins Foundation, Materials for the Arts, The National Endowment for the Arts, Individual donors and all DAY WITHOUT ART participants. With thanks to APICHA, The Door, Lower East Side Harm Reduction Center, People With AIDS Health Group, School's Out: The Naming Project, and SLAAAP! Digital Pre-Press/Production: Katz Digital Technologies Inc. (NY) Printing: Louis Sherman & Co.

2. Visual AIDS, *AIDS Is Over, Right?* (Series: *Day without Art*), 1998, 89" x 60" x 35", Image courtesy of the Department of Rare Books, Special Collections, and Preservation, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester.



KEITH HARING

The Keith Haring Altarpiece: An AIDS Memorial Chapel Project  
Grace Cathedral, San Francisco



3. The McGraw Foundation Benefiting AIDS Charities (Designer: Keith Haring), *The Keith Haring Altarpiece: An AIDS Memorial Chapel Project*, no date, 28" x 62" x 11", Image courtesy of the Department of Rare Books, Special Collections, and Preservation, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester.



4. AIDeS, *An AIDS Patient Doesn't Pay His Debts* (translated from French) from the *No to the New Ghetto Series*, no date, 60" x 40" 23 10/16", Image courtesy of the Department of Rare Books, Special Collections, and Preservation, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester.



5. West Virginia State Department of Health, *Another Myth Down the Drain*, 1988, Medium, 56" x 43" x 22", Image Courtesy of the Department of Rare Books, Special Collections, and Preservation, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester.

# TRAVELING EXHIBITION

The traveling version of *Up Against the Wall: Art, Activism, and the AIDS Poster* illustrates to a broad audience that “AIDS affects everyone” and through the use of language and imagery, shows how messaging and information around HIV is shared to different groups, audiences, and people throughout the world. The use of empathy, fear, science, statistics, sexuality, style, hygiene, culture, and humor, among other mechanisms, illustrate the broad range of creative communication tools mobilized through the medium of the AIDS poster.

Featuring sixty-five of the most visually arresting and socially meaningful examples of evocative and important posters, *Up Against the Wall* allows viewers to reflect on and consider the history and culture around the global AIDS crisis. The exhibition also helps viewers understand how these posters serve as ground-breaking communication tools, expressions of passion, humanity, and creativity.

6. United Colors of Benetton (Designers: Tibor Kalman and Olivero Toscani), *The Death of David Kirby*, 1992, 92" x 58" x 36 4/16". Image courtesy of the Department of Rare Books, Special Collections, and Preservation, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester.



UNITED COLORS  
OF BENETTON.

# CUIDE·SE TAKE CARE FAIS GAFFE



ABIA-Associação Brasileira Interdisciplinar de AIDS / Grupo pela VIDDA

Focusing on the wide range of key messages shared through these posters through visual methods from adapting the work of famous artists to adopting the provocative aesthetics of mainstream advertising, the AIDS poster has served as a vehicle for interpretation and sharing key information to audiences all over the world, from high schools to bath houses, to community clinics and bus stops. Posters from various countries expose different national responses to HIV/AIDS over time. Australia, France, Brazil, Haiti, Senegal, Thailand, Canada, and the United States, among other countries, are included.

Text panels will be devoted to stories that are especially relevant to the posters on view. The exhibit will include how messages have been shared to groups of all kinds across the world, depending on countless needs, social norms, and cultural practices.

Potential public programming and outreach include scholarly symposia; lectures and events that engage artists, families, and local communities; community-led docent tours with real-life HIV/AIDS experiences; community poster competitions; summits and panel discussions, film series; and community collaborations, among other forms of public outreach and engagement. Creative and educational resources are available. The curator of the collection and other potential speakers may be scheduled for programming and events.

7. Grupo pela Vidua Image by Michelangelo Buonarroti, Fresco: Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Take Care*, no date, 62.5" x 91.5" x 24 10/16", Image courtesy of the Department of Rare Books, Special Collections, and Preservation, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester.

I HAVE AIDS  
Please hug me



I can't make you sick

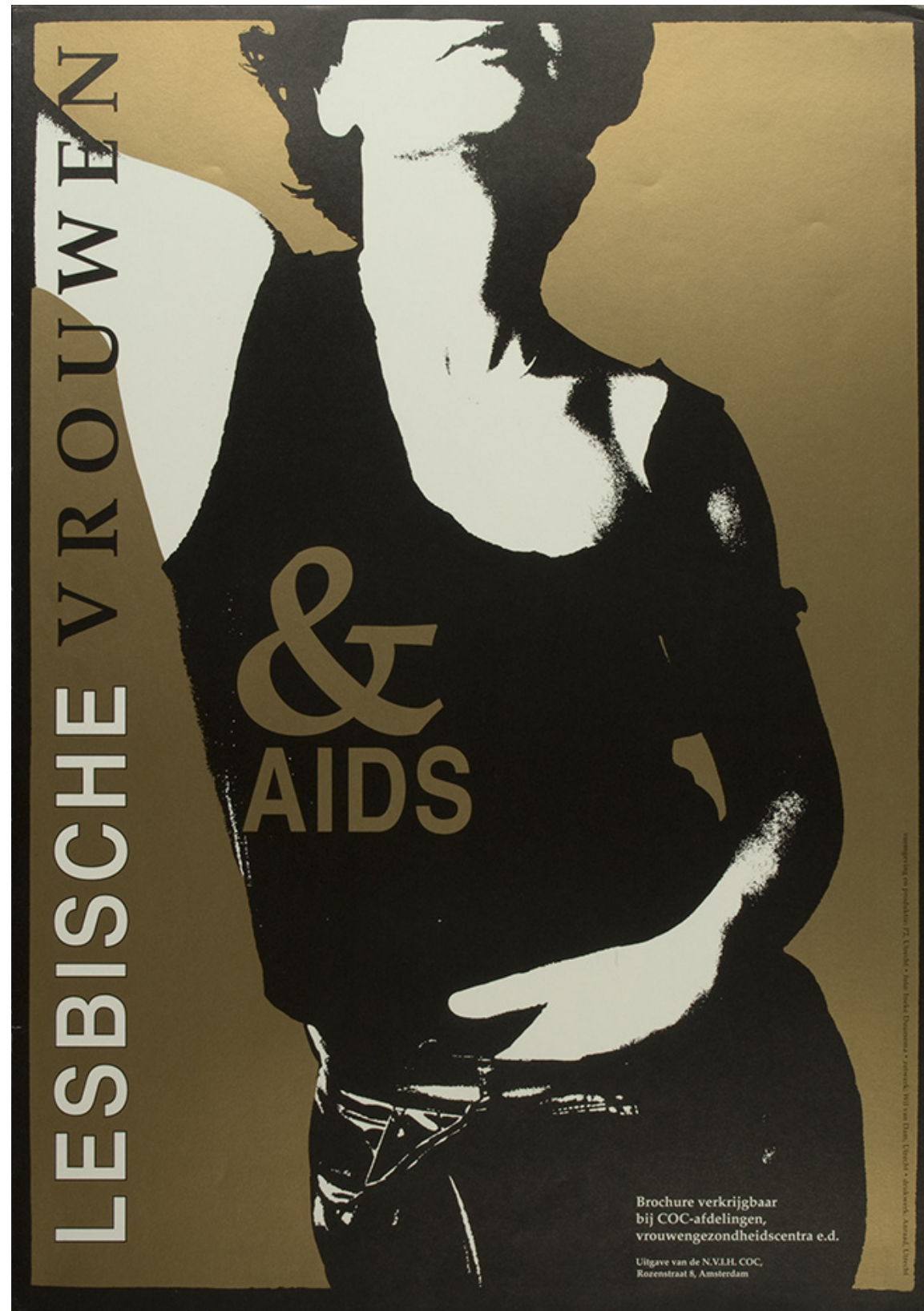
AIDS HOT LINE FOR KIDS  
CENTER FOR ATTITUDINAL HEALING  
19 MAIN ST., TIBURON, CA 94920, (415) 435-5022

8. Center for Attitudinal Healing, *I Have AIDS. Please Hug Me*, 1987, 38" x 28" x 14 15/16". Image courtesy of the Department of Rare Books, Special Collections, and Preservation, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester.

LOVE <sup>+</sup> AIDS PEOPLE



9. Shoshin Society/Painting: Tanzio da Varallo, *Love AIDS People*, 1988, 62" x 42" x 24 7/16". Image courtesy of the Department of Rare Books, Special Collections, and Preservation, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester.



10. COC Nederland, *Lesbians & AIDS* (translated from dutch), 1991, 60" x 42" x 23 10/16", Image courtesy of the Department of Rare Books, Special Collections, and Preservation, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester.



11. Australia Department of Community Services and Health, *Condoman Says: Don't Be Shame, Be Game. Protect Yourself*, 1991, 42" x 28" x 16 9/16", Image courtesy of the Department of Rare Books, Special Collections, and Preservation, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester.



25¢

*“Lucky Stiffs Mean Fewer Troubles!”*



“Condoms have been shown to be an effective disease-preventing precaution when used in a regularly scheduled program of oral anal hygiene and professional care.”

*Watch for “Lucky Stiff” machines at area bars and clubs.*

ALL PROCEEDS BENEFIT THE JOHN LOCKE FUND OF THE PHILADELPHIA AIDS TASK FORCE.

## ACCESS TO THE COLLECTION

The entire collection has been digitized and is available at <https://aep.lib.rochester.edu/> and venues are encouraged to provide access to the collection via a kiosk in the gallery space.

## EXHIBITION BOOK/CATALOG

A fully illustrated book of the same title was released in 2021 by RIT Press and serves both as a stand-alone book and an evergreen exhibition catalog and can be made available for sale at the exhibition venue. This beautifully illustrated book was conceived to complement, not duplicate, the university’s searchable website of the entire collection. Priced to be accessible to a broad audience, the book features rich images of posters from the collection as well as contextual essays.

12. Philadelphia AIDS Task Force, *Lucky Stiffs Mean Fewer Troubles!*, no date, 41” x 51” x 16 2/16”, Image courtesy of the Department of Rare Books, Special Collections, and Preservation, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester.



FRONT State of California AIDS Education Campaign, *True Love Series: AIDS: It's Up To You*, no date, 64" x 49" x 25 3/16", Image courtesy of the Department of Rare Books, Special Collections, and Preservation, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester."

BACK General Idea (after Robert Indiana's "Love" Design), *AIDS*, 1987, 80" X 80" X 31 8/16", Image courtesy of the Department of Rare Books, Special Collections, and Preservation, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester.

## EXHIBITION SPECIFICATIONS

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### Number of Works

50 posters

### Lender

Special Collections, River Campus Libraries, Rochester University

### Requirements

Moderate Security;  
2500 - 3500 square feet

### Participation Fee

Please inquire

### Publication

For more information contact  
[projectmanager@artsandartists.org](mailto:projectmanager@artsandartists.org)

### Shipping

IA&A makes all arrangements;  
exhibitors pay outgoing shipping  
costs within the contiguous US

### Booking Period

12 weeks

### Tour

January 2026 - January 2030

### Contact

[TravelingExhibitions@ArtsandArtists.org](mailto:TravelingExhibitions@ArtsandArtists.org)  
9 Hillyer Court NW  
Washington, DC 20008  
202.338.0680  
[ArtsandArtists.org](http://ArtsandArtists.org)