

JOHN FEKNER

JUST JOHN ... AND SO ON



RETROSPECTIVE / TOURING EXHIBITION PROPOSAL

John Fekner (1950, New York) is considered one of the most “well-known-unknown” american artists that were part of the vibrant scene in New York in the late 1970s and in the 1980s. He exhibited with Don Leicht, Keith Haring, David Wojnarowicz, Jenny Holzer and others.

Fekner began writing poetry as a teenager, and his first outdoor graffiti in 1968 was the words *Itchycoo Park*, the title of the music hit by the band Small Faces. From then until the beginning of the 1980s he anonymously carried out guerrilla graffiti actions called *Warning Signs* across the five boroughs of New York City, creating over 300 conceptual works. Since 1977 he has been working with hand-made stencils, which is why he is considered a pioneer of stenciling within the urban art movement. Whether individually or collaboratively, Fekner never limited his work to a single art form. He rather engaged in various disciplines, freely crossing between poetry, music, painting, street actions, and digital videos, while the content of the works centers on issues of humanistic concern; raising awareness of the indigenous peoples who were displaced from the New York area, environmental problems, media control and a society driven by greed, consumption and instant gratification.

Fekner's art disciplines crossing his multidisciplinary approach also influencing New York scene through 60 years of his opus with some recent urban interventions. Although Fekner's artistic work has at times been extremely public, media-savvy and technological-driven, he has managed to keep a low profile, which allows him to keep his vision resolute and independent, thus the title of the exhibition *Just John ... And So On*.

Stenciling

Stenciling is a method of creating reproducible patterns by applying paint through cut-out areas of a template onto surfaces beneath. The open sections, called "islands", allow paint to pass through, while "bridges" maintain the stencil's structural integrity.

Fekner's Approach

Fekner's approach to stenciling is innovative as he was the first artist to use it the streets. Regarding typography and style he used a traditional



(from left to right) John Fekner, Jenny Holzer, David Wojnarowicz, Keith Haring and Michael Smith; *Urban Pulses Archive* Feknerja courtesy of John Fekner's Research Archive Feknerja /courtesy of John Fekner's Research Archive

letter style that mimicked official and military typography, creating an authoritative appearance while maintaining anonymity. He used bright colors against white backgrounds for maximum visibility. He created site-specific installations and executed works rapidly at night. Sometimes using his car with an open hood as camouflage, and repeated messages for greater impact. Strategically he placed messages where they would have the most impact. Fekner's stencils functioned like captions, identifying or categorizing conditions in urban environments. His work was intentionally temporary - some pieces prompted immediate action (like the removal of abandoned cars), while others gradually became integrated into the urban landscape, adding layers of urban archaeology. Beginning in 1977, Fekner involved

neighborhood teenagers in his nightly operations, making community collaboration an essential aspect of his practice. Under the umbrella term Queensites, he developed projects to engage local communities in his environmental messaging.

Decay

In the 1970s and 1980s, Fekner created over 300 environmental stencil works across New York City, with the *Decay* series becoming his most recognizable activist campaign. He used stark, simple words and strategically placed them on the deteriorating city infrastructure. Through projects like *Decay*, *Industrial Fossil*, and *Broken Promises*, he sought to force city officials and local communities to acknowledge and address accumulated urban neglect. Some of his inscriptions were also utilized as a backdrop by the US Presidential Candidate Ronald Reagan during his election campaign.



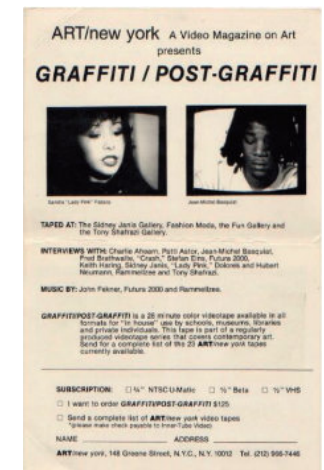
Fashion 时髦 Moda МОДА

In 1979 Fekner visits Fashion 时髦 Moda МОДА a storefront for experimental art and cultural exchange, and an outpost for showcasing graffiti art, breakdancing and rapping to the wider public. In the window of Fashion Moda, Fekner creates an installation with a TV set, a stenciled logo and a statement in both English and Spanish in 1980. Over the next two

years, he reconfigures and updates the window with projects relating to the local community.

Pollution

In connection with the urban decay projects, Fekner was also involved in group activist actions near toxic dumps and polluted areas. His Warning Signs project was focused on raising public awareness about areas affected by irresponsible disposal and storage of chemical waste. He strategically placed messages in locations where pollutants threatened public health, using simple yet powerful texts to bring the public's attention. He wanted the public to put pressure on those in charge to take responsibility and carry out the necessary environmental remediation.



John Fekner Highway Indian Project 1979

The Highway Indians project provided local residents with information that might not be known concerning a community's past. We have completely covered our landscape as well as the Indigenous Peoples connection with it. Today they are still fighting broken treaties with the American government over land rights that were granted and signed as treaties beginning in 1778. *The Highway Indians* projects were meant to be suggestive of the horrendous manner in which industries were just concerned with their own progress; without regard to the detrimental aspects of what they were doing, not only to the First Americans, but the impact to our natural resources and environment.

EXHIBITION IMAGE

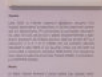
JOHN FEKNER

SAMO JOHN ... IN TAKO NAPREJ
JUST JOHN ... AND SO ON

ŠABLONIRANJE STENCILING

John Fekner is one of the most influential and innovative stencil artists in New York. Since the late 1960s, he has been creating stencils for his art, which are now part of the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art. His work is characterized by its bold, graphic style and its focus on social and political issues.

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Stenciling is a technique that involves creating a stencil from a piece of material, such as paper or cardboard, and then using it to transfer ink or paint onto a surface. This technique has been used for centuries, but it was not until the 1960s that it became a popular form of artistic expression. John Fekner is one of the most prominent stencil artists of this era, and his work has inspired many other artists to explore this technique.

Fekner's stencil work is characterized by its bold, graphic style and its focus on social and political issues. He often uses stencils to create large-scale murals in public spaces, which have become a part of the urban landscape of New York City.

One of the most famous of Fekner's stencils is the 'Fekner's Approach' stencil, which depicts a man in a suit and hat walking towards the viewer. This stencil has been used in many different contexts, and it has become a symbol of Fekner's art.

Fekner's stencil work is not only a form of artistic expression, but it is also a form of social and political activism. He uses his stencils to draw attention to issues that he feels are important, and he often uses his work to challenge the status quo.

Fekner's stencil work is a testament to the power of this technique as a form of artistic expression. It is a technique that has been used for centuries, but it was not until the 1960s that it became a popular form of artistic expression. John Fekner is one of the most prominent stencil artists of this era, and his work has inspired many other artists to explore this technique.

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YOUR SPACE HAS BEEN INVADIED

Your Space Has Been Invaded

Steel plate, marker on wall, in collaboration with Don Leicht 1982



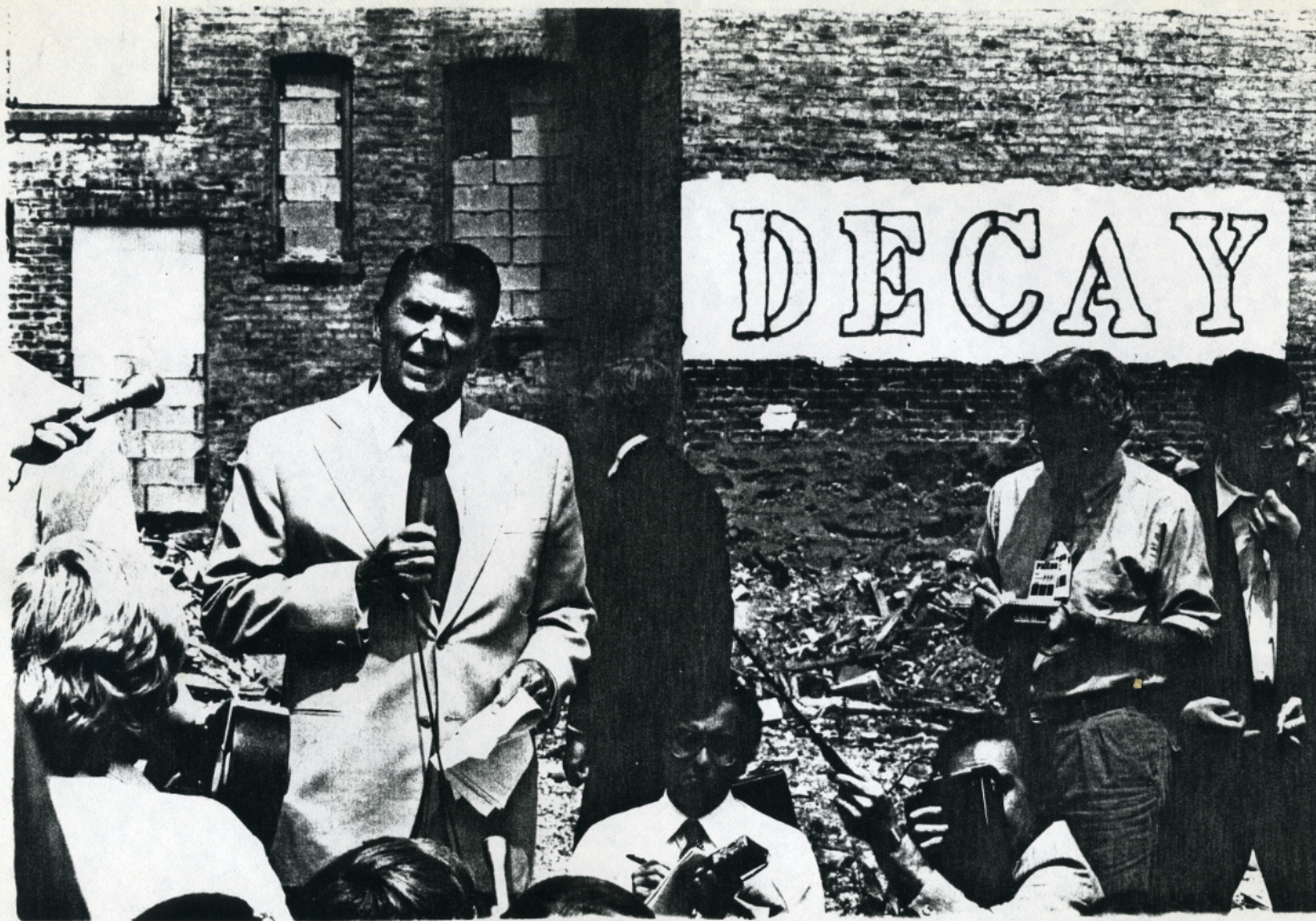
Decay
Primer paint on butcher paper, 2010

Decay Abandoned
Wallprint, Queens, New York, ZDA / USA, 1978

The Gasolinic Era
Wallprint, Queens, New York, ZDA / USA, 1983

Another 4 Years (Edit/Elect08)
Video ©1984/2008

FASHION 时髦 MODA МОДА



Fashion 时髦 Moda МОДА

Flyer for Fashion 时髦 Moda МОДА, 1980, on the photo the Presidential Candidate Ronald Reagan in the South Bronx. Foto / Photo: © Associated Press / Dave Pickoff*



The Gasolinic Era
Wallprint, Queens, New York, ZDA / USA, 1983

Interview with John Fekner, Ed Sayago, Dave Santaniello, Dave Lella
Steve Grivas (moderator at his pirate radio station basement, Jackson Heights, New York)

Industrial Fossil
Wallprint, Queens, New York, ZDA / USA, 1978



Broken Promises
South Bronx, New York, USA, 1980



Broken Promises
Wallprint, South Bronx, New York, ZDA / USA, 1980



We Overfeed Our Heroes Until They Explode
Stencil, 1984

We the People
Stencil, 2010

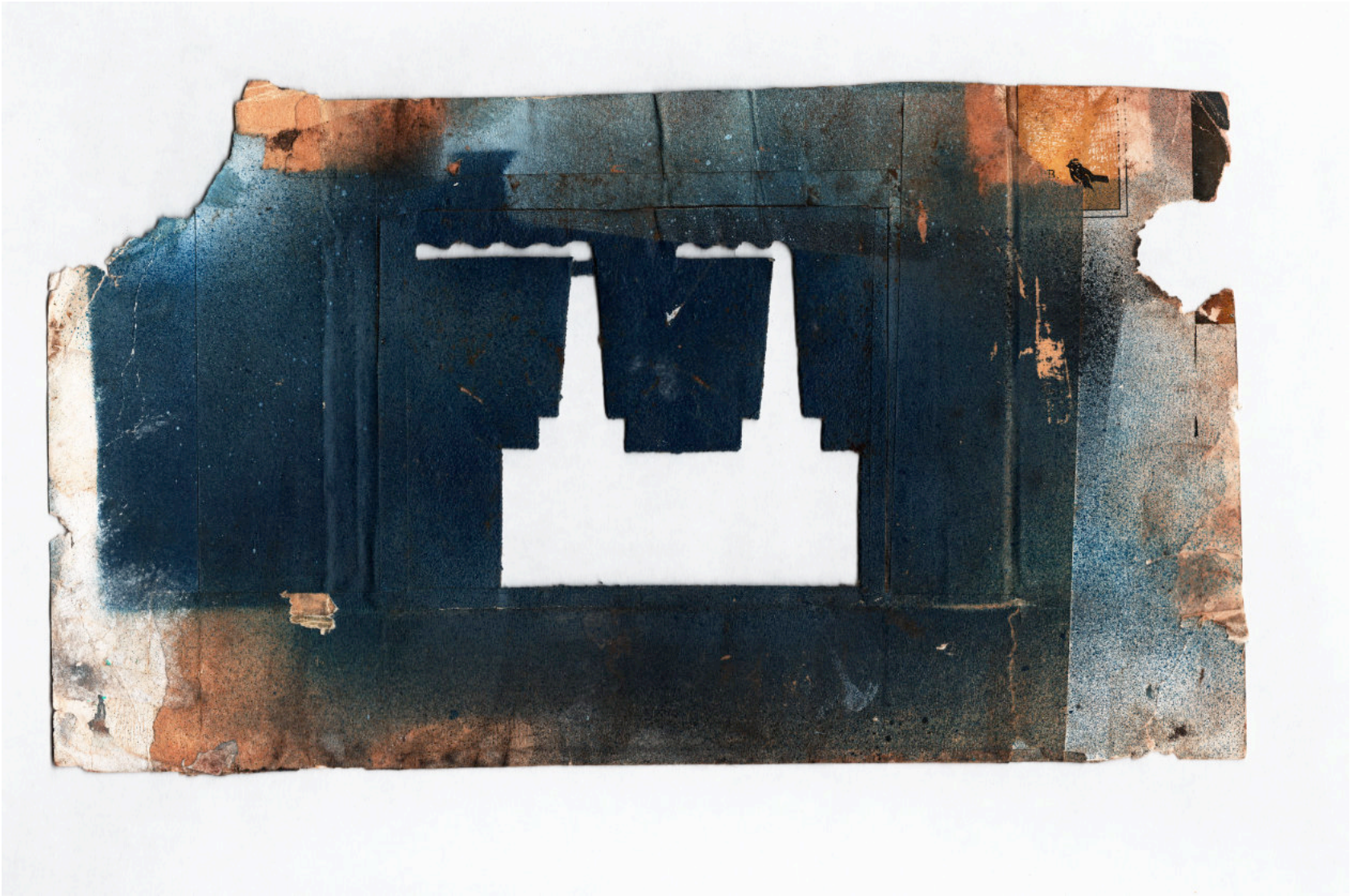
Aftermath
Stencil, 1985

Factory
Stencil, 1985

Factories
Stencil, 2015



We Overfeed Our Heroes Until They Explode
Stencil, 1984



Factory
Stencil, 1985



Who Cares Indians Were Here
Wallprint, Besedilo pesmi / song lyrics, 1980



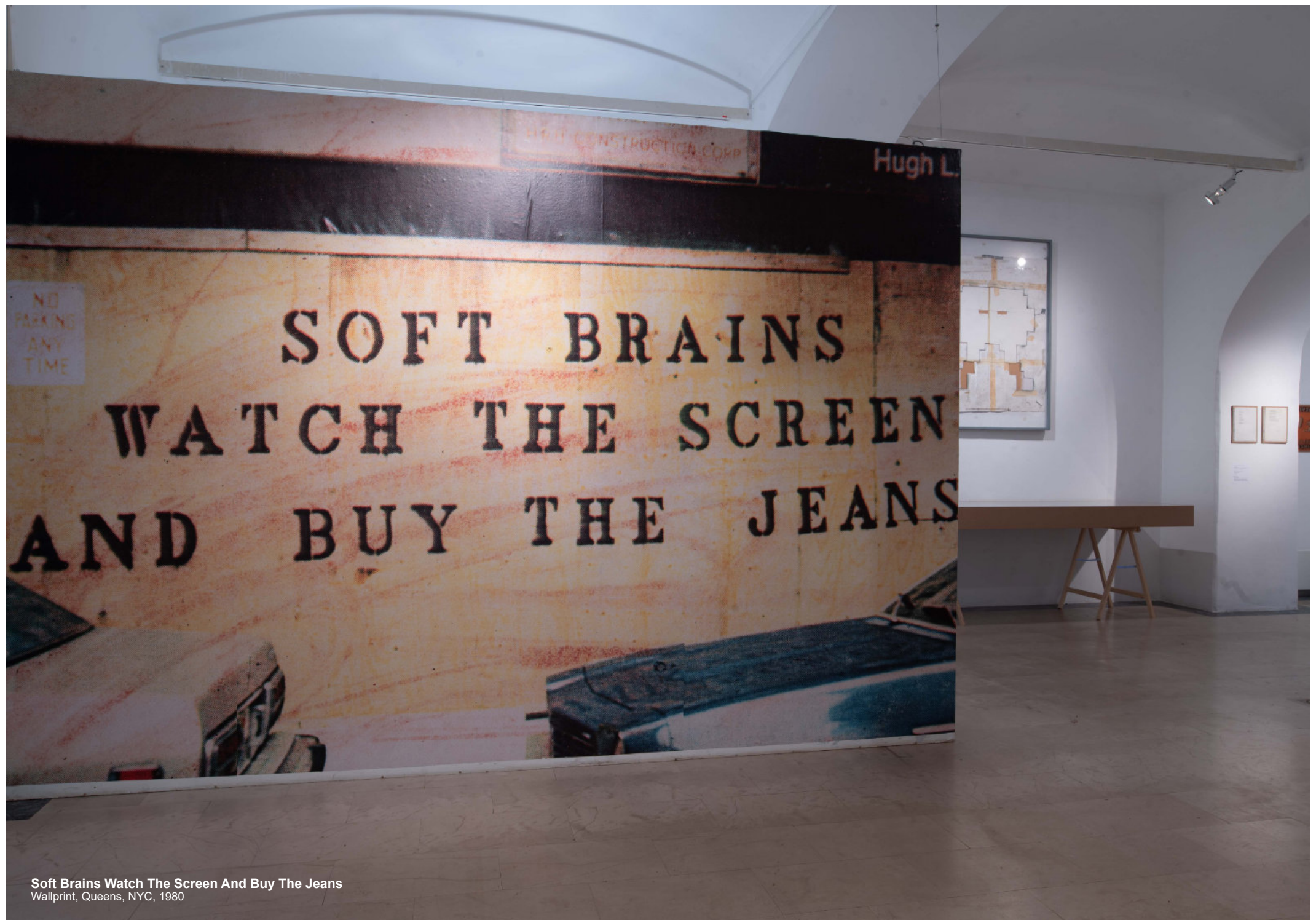
Untitled (Danger Live Artists)

collaboration with Don Leicht / aluminium x-ray plate for medical report, spraypaint, 30 x 23 cm, 1980/2013

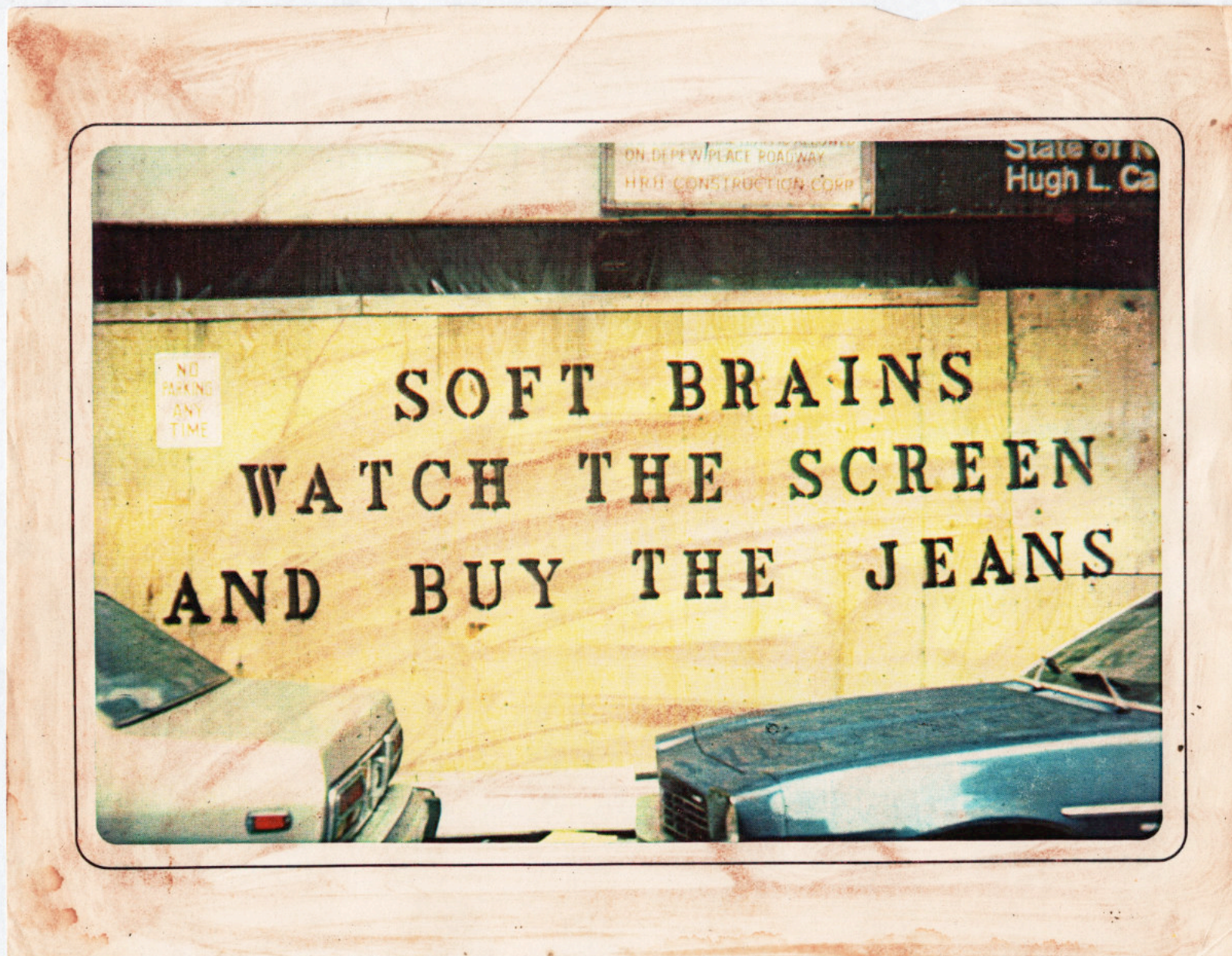
John Fekner (1950, known" american a late 1970s and in the Wojnarowicz, Jenny ager, and his first title of the music hi the 1980s he anon Signs across the fiv works. Since 1977 he is considered a er individually or c He rather en



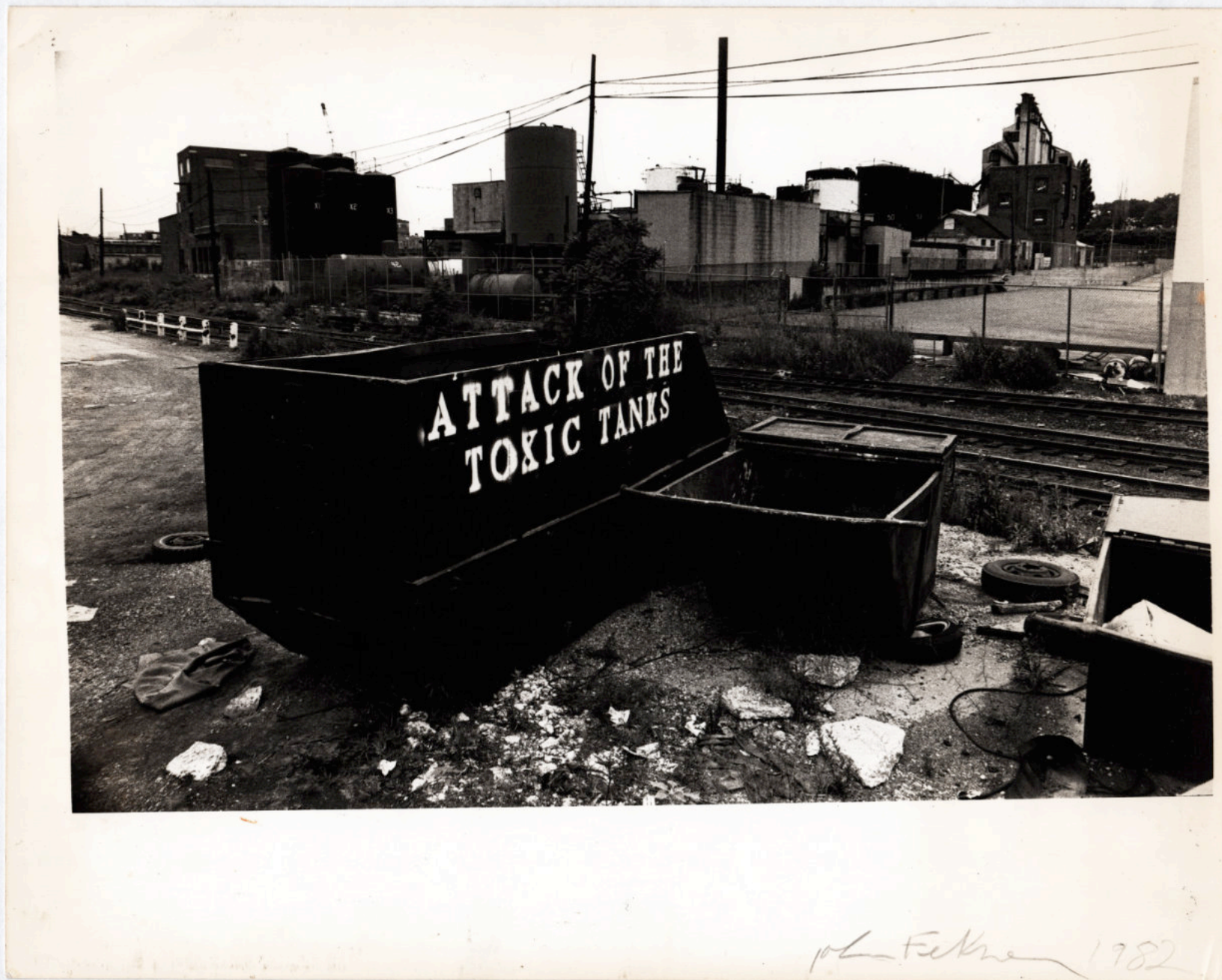
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Soft Brains Watch The Screen And Buy The Jeans
Wallprint, Queens, NYC, 1980



Soft Brains Watch The Screen And Buy The Jeans
Vintage colour photocopy, Queens, NYC, 1980



Attack of the Toxic Tanks
Vintage silver-gelatin print
Maspeth, New York, ZDA / USA, 1983



Space Invader
Cardboard, acrylic color, framed, 64 x 94 x 5,5 cm, 2013

Is This the Future
Computer print, 1985

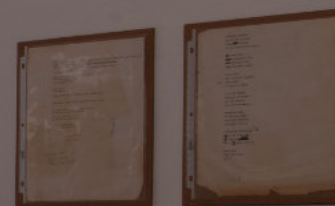
Greed
Computer print, 1985





Is This the Future
Computer print, 1985

Greed
Computer print, 1985



Rua Vidiot?
Overhead transparencies, 1983

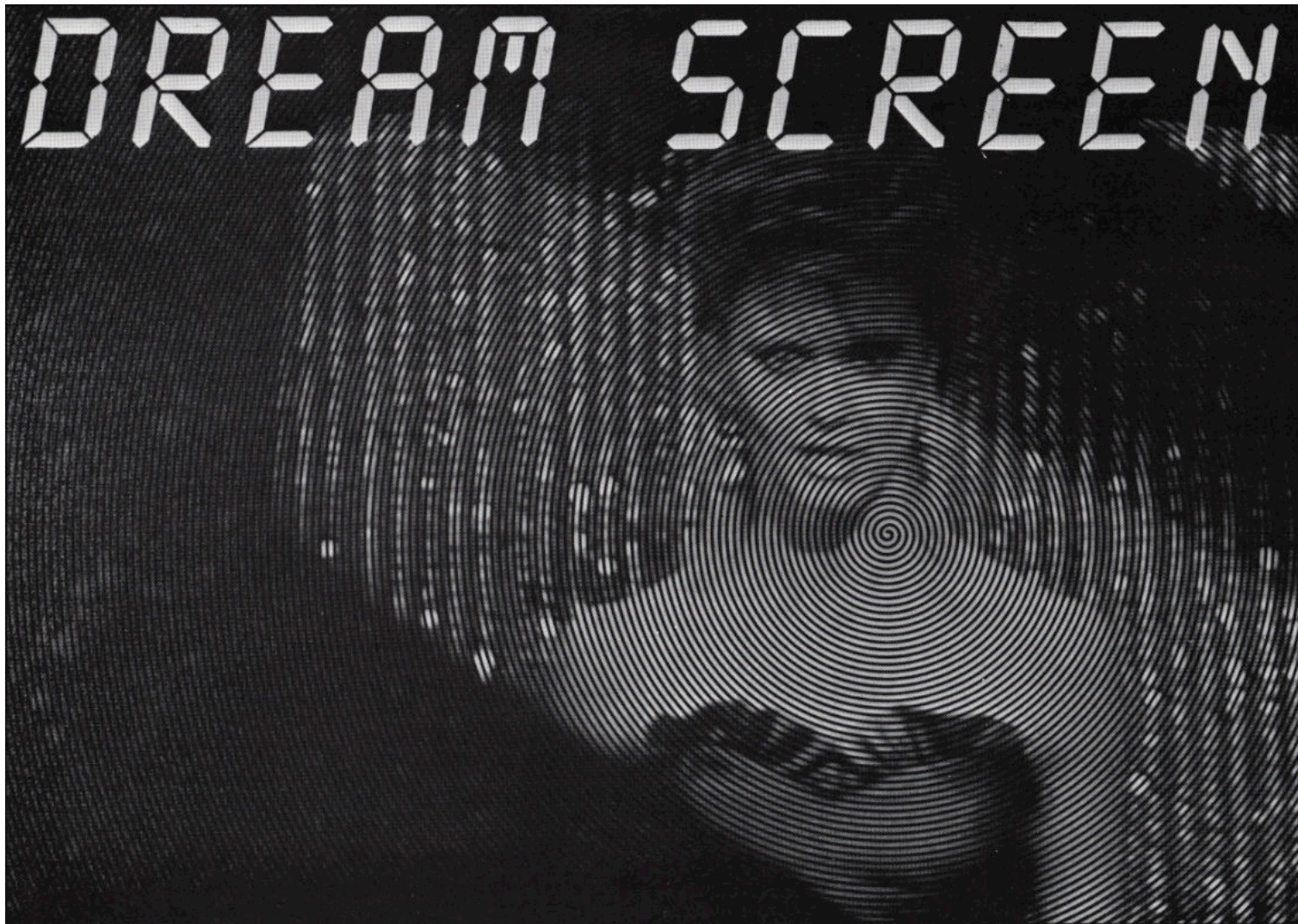
Beauty's Only Screen Deep
Overhead transparencies, 1983



Rua Vidiot?
Overhead transparencies, 1983

Beauty's Only Screen Deep
Overhead transparencies, 1983

Dream Screen
Overhead transparencies, 1983



Dream Screen
Overhead transparencies, 1983



Toxic Junkie

Wallprint, Manhattan, New York, ZDA / USA, 1983

In conjunction with Lorraine O'Grady's curated group exhibition The Black and White Show at Kenkeleba House.

Toxic Waste From A to Z (Coming After You and Me)

Video from Teledon information provider system, video, 1981

Fear

Amiga computer graphics, animated still, Video, 1992

TOXIC WASTE FROM A TO Z COMING AFTER YOU AND ME

ALDICARB	HEPTACHLOR
ALDRIN	HEXACHLOROBENZENE
ALUMINUM PHOSPHIDE	HEXACHLORO-1, 3-BUTADIENE
AMMONIUM PICRATE	LEPTOPHOS
ARSENIC ACID	MERCURY FULMINATE
BARIUM CYANIDE	NICKEL CARBONYL
BENZIDINE	NICKEL CYANIDE
BIS (CHLOROMETHYL) ETHER	NITROGLYCERINE
CALCIUM CYANIDE	PCB POLYCHLORINATED BIPHENYLS
CARBON DISULFIDE	PENTACHLOROPHENOL
CARBON TETRACHLORIDE	PHENOLICS
CESIUM	PHOSGENE
C-56-	PHthalATES
HEXACHLOROCYCLOPENTADIENE	PLUTONIUM
CHLORODANE	POTASSIUM CYANIDE
CHLOROFORM	POTASSIUM SILVER CYANIDE
COPPER CYANIDES	SILVER CYANIDE
CYANOGEN	SODIUM AZIDE
CYANOGEN CHLORIDE	SODIUM CYANIDE
DIBROMOCHLOROPROPANE	STRONTIUM 89
DICHLOROBENZENE	TETRANITROMETHANE
DDT	THORIUM
DIELDRIN	TRICHLOROETHYLENE (TCE)
DIMETHYLSULFOXIDE	TOLUENE
ENDOSULFAN	TOXAPHENE
ENDRIN	TRICHLOROETHANE
FLUORIDE	TRITIUM
	2,4,-D
	2,4,5-T
	2-3-7-8 tetrachlorodibenzopara-dioxin
	URANIUM
	VINYLE CHLORIDE
	XYLENE
	ZINCCYANIDE
	ZIRCONIUM

pub. Feb/Mar 81



Acid Rainbow

Spraypaint on found painting, 64 x 94 x 5,5 cm, 1985

Home Sweet Home in the Nuclear Age. Part 1

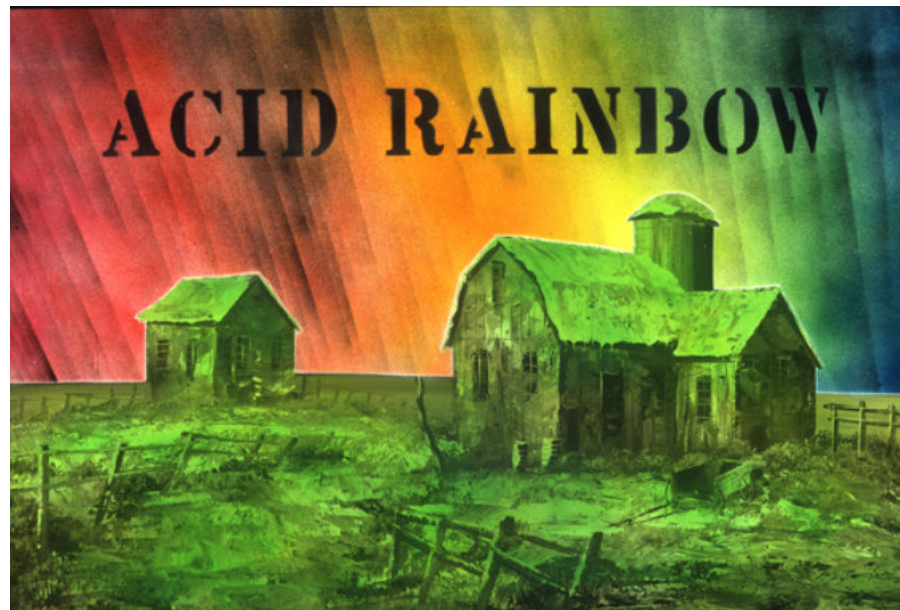
Spraypaint, tar and rope on found plaster object, 25,5 x 33 cm, 1982

X Americana X

Spraypaint on found painting, 41 x 49 x 8 cm, 1985

Aftermath

Spraypaint on found painting, 44 x 49 x 8 cm, 1985



Acid Rainbow
Spraypaint on found painting, 64 x 94 x 5,5 cm, 1985

DEGRADED

QUEENSITES

DEGRADED

girls **C** CONCRETE
fast **M** ASPHALT
D JACK HAMMERS
C TRAFFIC LIGHTS
M TOLL BOOTHS
D CAR EXHAUST
Everybody **C** PLANNED OBSCULENCE

girls **C** THRUWAY
fast **M** DETOUR
D SINGLE LANE
C WHITE LINE
M EXIT RAMP
D PAY TICKET
Everybody **C** JUNK FOOD **D** QUARTER MILE

girls **C** FLAT TIRES
fast **M** GRID LOCKS
D TRAILER TRUCKS
C TOLL PLAZAS
M BILLBOARDS
D BOTTLENECKS
Everybody **C** GREYHOUND BUSES

chorus john WHO CARES
INDIAN WERE HERE
WE'RE HERE
everybody WE GOT JOBS NOW

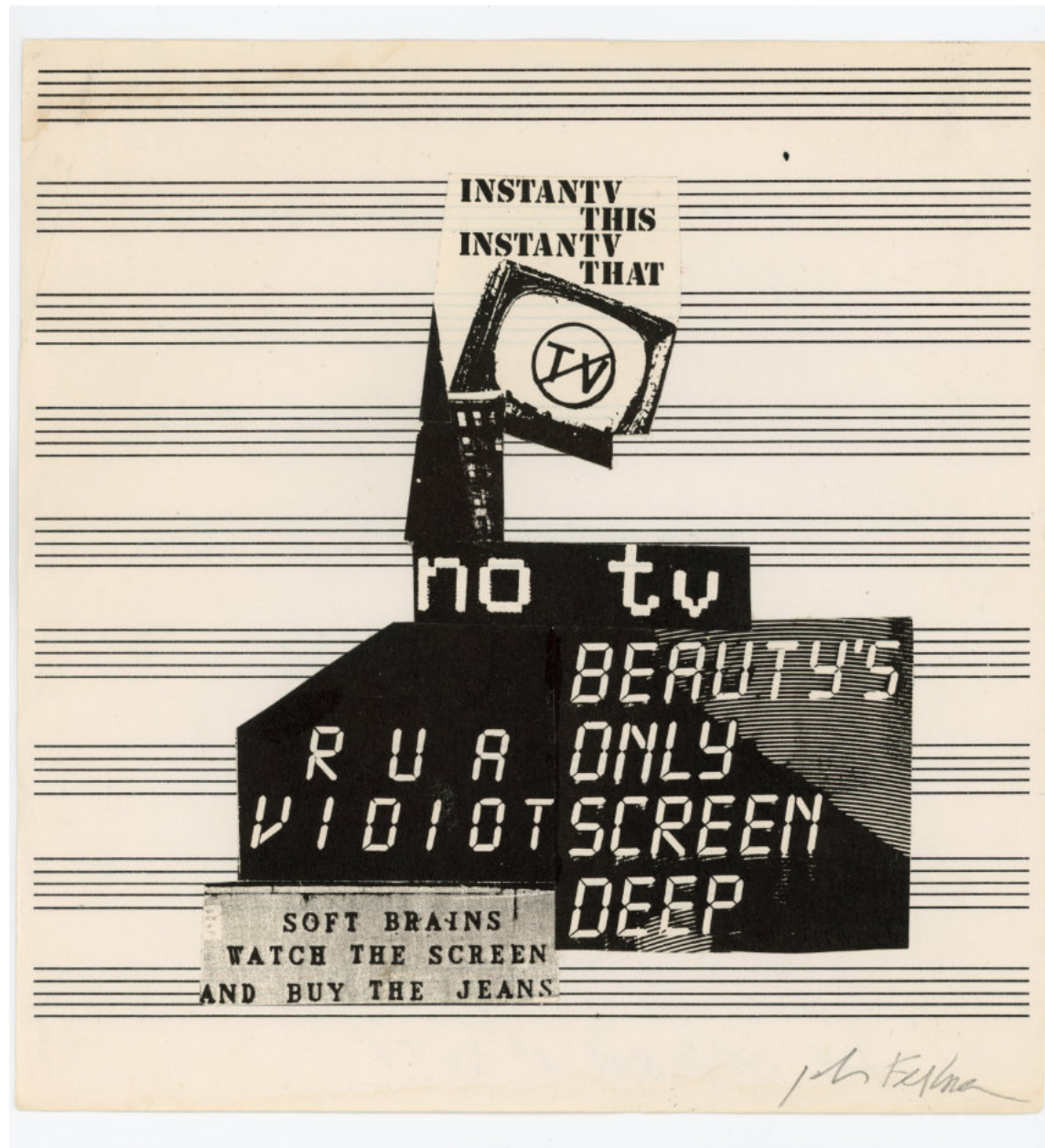


words and music:
©1980 john fechner

MY AD IS NO AD BAND
participants:

dave lella
dave santaniello
lou simpson
diane pavone
maria katsaros
steve grivas
fred baca
lorraine lucas
lou forgione
cara gilhooley

*TAKE
Two
WITHOUT GOING BACK
Too Short Octan
take 3*



NO TV
Collage on a music sheet, 1986

NEON STRASSE
DEMON STRASSE
DEMON STREET
DEMON STRIKE
DEMONSTRATE



Demon Strasse

Lyrics by John Fekner includes storyboard graphic by Jimmy "Get Lost" Recchione, 1986



Concrete People
LP, 1986

Rockpool newsletter, John Fekner City Squad,
advertisement for the release of the record
Front cover graphics by Andrew Ruhren, 1986





DECAY
Spray paint on abandoned car, Queens, New York, 1981

VIDEOS LINKS

INTERVIEW 1981 VIDEO

MUSIC VIDEO

EXHIBITION FULL WALKTHROUGH

REQUIREMENTS

Basics:

- Shipping artworks
- Insurance for artworks
- Artist Fee
- Curators Fees
- Accommodation and Travel for Three
- Translation

Printing needed:

- Wallpaper photo prints (we could also possibly print, frame, large scale photos instead of all wall prints)
- Promotional Material (Posters, Window Stickers, Flyers)
- Possible catalogue (not mandatory)

Tech needed:

- Three Overhead projectors
- Three Televisions (older models 80s' & 90s')
- One Projector
- One Record Player, + speakers
- Four Media players

Display:

- Two flat display cases

***Other Fekner work could be included, i.e., artwork, ephemera, artist's books, etc.**

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JOHN FEKNER

<https://johnfekner.com>



Galerija | Match Gallery

