adrian piper reflections

1967 - 1987
acknowledgements

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adrian piper: reflections 1967-1987

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The Alternative Museum is pleased to present this retrospective exhibition by Adrian Piper. The works in this exhibit span twenty years, and testify to the remarkable intelligence and commitment of this artist. Early works in this show reflect her involvement with conceptual art in the late 1960's and early 1970's, and her contribution to its development. Adrian Piper's pursuit of abstract thought, use of herself as an art object, and sociological investigations link her to other conceptual artists such as Sol Lewitt, Vito Acconci, and Hans Haacke. In the most recent works in the exhibition, she has returned to making drawings, incorporating in them many of the elements she has developed throughout her life's work.

The prevailing issue in Adrian Piper's work is the relationship of the self to the other. She generally expresses this concern through works of self-investigation or self-transformation, which relate to real-life political events, in which she explores the relation of the self to the other on a global scale. Her self-investigation pieces have continually led to new works of self-transformation, which have led to further self-investigations. Sometimes Adrian Piper refers to her autobiographic self; at other times she refers to "the self" in more universal terms.

In her early self-investigation pieces, Piper moved away from the material art object as commodity to create conceptual artworks from her own perceptions. The *Hypothesis* series (1968-1969) and *Food for the Spirit* (1971) were examples of these self-inquiries in which she precisely recorded and analyzed her activities and surroundings at given times, giving confirmation to her own reality. After the U.S. invasion of Cambodia, Kent State and Jackson State, and the beginnings of the women's movement, Adrian Piper moved even farther away from the material art object. Using herself as her subject, she took her art into the streets in the first of the self-transformation pieces. Many women artists have used self-transformation in their art;
Eleanor Antin, Jill Kroesen and Cindy Sherman are just a few. Women are good at self-transformation as most perform this task every morning with clothes and makeup, hiding defects and creating an image to present to the world. Adrian Piper's self-transformations do not, however, hide her, but serve to make her more transparent to us. They reflect her inner convictions and her intentions.

Adrian Piper's *Catalysis* series [1971] were experiments in xenophobia, fear of the foreign or strange. In these unannounced street performances, she grotesquely transformed herself to elicit reactions from her unsuspecting "Viewers," her fellow pedestrians and subway passengers. In her *Untitled Performance at Max's Kansas City*, a demonstration of her desire for autonomy, she wore a blind fold, earplugs, gloves, and noseplugs in a symbolic attempt to avoid being co-opted into the art consciousness of the day. In time, these self-transformations consolidated into a single art persona, the *Mythic Being*, who appeared in many of her works from 1972-1981. The *Mythic Being* self-transformation, a young, angry, third world male, allowed Piper to investigate the male 'other' in her own personality; as well as to experience society's indifferent or fearful reactions to this type of individual, and act out resulting feelings of alienation and hostility.

From 1978-1980, she created the autobiographical *Political Self-Portraits Nos. 1, 2, and 3*, which incorporated Piper's own difficult experiences as a mixed race child learning to operate between her Black Harlem neighborhood and the private, mostly White school she was sent to by her parents. She describes her confused identity in *Political Self-Portrait No. 2*, "...I would never simply say [I was] Black because I felt silly and as though I was co-opting something, i.e., the Black Experience, which I haven't had. I've had the Gray Experience."

Piper had also in the late 1970's and early 1980's, created a number of performance art works and large scale installation pieces in which she assumed the position of the other as viewer. In the installation pieces,
which have political content, Piper's self transformations are present as disembodied, sometimes ironic, voices on audio tape. It is important to remember that these self-transformations are not like theatrical roles: the viewer must remain aware of the artist behind the persona. Even when Adrian Piper assumes the persona of an apathetic [Art for the Artworld Surface Pattern, 1976], or racist other [Four Intruders Plus Alarm Systems, 1980], irony affirms our sense of the real content of the works. Piper also uses self-transformation as self-affirmation, as in Self-Portrait Exaggerating My Negroid Features [1981] a drawing in which she enhances those physical characteristics that reflect her Black ancestry, challenging the viewer to see those traits in her. The work also reflects her decision to proudly claim her Black cultural heritage. Subsequent investigations of her cultural heritage became subject matter for new works.

Her performance Funk Lessons, focused on the fact that most of the major achievements of Black culture have been appropriated by White artists and musicians who have given little or no credit to their sources. Culturally inaccessible to most Whites, funk music and dancing are among the few Black art forms not yet appropriated, and were used by Piper in Funk Lessons to conduct experiments in overcoming xenophobia. Utilizing her real life experiences as a teacher and musicologist, she engaged the audience in funk dancing as a communal means of self-transcendence.

Adrian Piper also examines the self/other relationship in terms of assimilation, asking how society can integrate without either the self or the other being consumed in the process. She asks how we can avoid the "Gray Experience". A Tale of Avarice and Poverty (1985) is the narrative history of two branches of a Black family, with members of one branch passing for White. The piece tells of the pain alienation caused by unacknowledged kinship. The self and the other, here the same, separate and come to fear each other because of artificial social barriers. In Portrait (1983), Piper links unacknowledged kinship on a global scale to the threat of nuclear holo-
The text for this piece states, "We do not know ourselves very well. Often we feel assaulted by unacceptable thoughts and impulses, and move to suppress them; or shamed by unacceptable physical features and work to remove them; or threatened by others' unacceptable behavior or appearance, and so attack or reject them. We view these things as alien enemies, not as the familiar ingrained parts of ourselves they are. And so we are constantly moved to destroy and reconstitute ourselves in conformity with our truncated and distorted self image." Piper is not telling us that there are any ultimate solutions to the self/other dichotomies; these keep coming to us in different guises and situations. Her individual works may resolve or come to terms with specific aspects of the self/other relationship, but myriad other aspects then present themselves for investigation.

In her most recent works, the *Vanilla Nightmares* series, Piper makes drawings using selected *New York Times* pages, most of which feature articles on South African apartheid. She transforms these pages by adding to their original layouts figures arranged in confrontational, erotic, or subjugated poses. Although these drawings seem to be a departure from Adrian Piper's earlier works, relationships can be drawn. Is she using those objectively reported *New York Times* articles about "Constructive Engagement" with South Africa as another of her ironic voices? Is the *Mythic Being* included in the groups of figures, multiplied and resurfaced, appropriating the New York Times as his own media vehicle to speak for those rendered voiceless by South African censorship? Are those figures Adrian Piper's renderings of stereotypical fantasies others project onto her? In these new transformation pieces she continues her ongoing investigation of the rights and responsibilities of both the self and the other. Today, when political events echo the 1960's and the art world is taken up with neo-conceptualist commodities, artists as concerned and committed as Adrian Piper are needed more than ever.

Jane Farver
Curator
Adrian Piper has many selves: the musician, the dancer, the artist, the performer, the writer, the philosopher, and the teacher. These selves are, or were, potentially coexistent, and so, given the different directions in which they might separately have led, and given also her mixed racial background and her maturation in a feminist climate, it is hardly surprising that one of the first priorities for Adrian Piper was the establishment of her own social and artistic identity.

After her exposure to minimalism during her first years as an art student, and her consequent work in this manner, she moved, with the times, towards conceptual art. It would seem that while Piper's mind was fully engaged in the logic of such work, it did not in itself provide the means to fully engage with her experience, beyond the documentation of aspects of her life, as in the Hypothesis series.

Soon after graduating from art school Piper began to perform the Catalysis street performances, some of which, through abrasive and caricatured behavior, could be said to have involved questions of identity, as well as inter-personal relations. But more crucial for Adrian Piper was Food for the Spirit, a private "performance" begun in the following year, 1971, after commencing full-time study of philosophy. Food for the Spirit represents an interior voyage which led to a radical stripping away of her acquired identity. Indeed, she became so involved with abstract ideas through reading Kant's Critique of Pure Reason that she reached the point of needing to reassure herself that she existed at all. She confirmed her existence both by looking in the mirror, and by recording her image on film and her voice on tape. Talking to Myself is the title of her illuminating autobiographical book of 1974 which discusses this period of her life.¹

In 1972, the year after this intense, definitive experience, Adrian Piper experimented with an alternative identity, a male alter-ego that she termed the Mythic Being. A narrative work of 1974, entitled I/You (Her)² graphically represents the transformation of the sweet, girlish Piper, who could pass for White, into the disturbing image of a Black man, with afro, moustache, and shades. The visual progression also underscores the evolving text about the painful disintegration of a friendship, while epitomizing the polarities of male and female, passivity and assertiveness, Black and White, with which Piper was grappling.

The Mythic Being is intended to represent a character as offensive as those that were created in the Catalysis performances, with the crucial difference that he specifically introduces the topic of race into Piper's work. Furthermore, he is not just an eccentric or marginal figure in society, but a representative of the youthful, potentially-aggressive, non-White male underclass.

In 1975 during her first full year in the doctoral program in philosophy at Harvard, Piper made a series of posters in which the Mythic Being became her mouthpiece. The presentation of herself as a slim young Black or Hispanic man accents the philosophical monologue on identity A 109 (Kant); the interpersonal narrative Let's Talk and, in particular, It, Doesn't Matter, in which the now macho figure takes command of the situation. Finally, in this sequence of works, the Mythic Being is identified with a White person's negative image of blacks in Embody Everything You Most Hate and Fear.

While the Mythic Being was to emerge again later, notably in the multi-layered performance It's Just Art in 1980, which was an over-rich amalgam of past and future elements of Piper's work, the conclusion of the Mythic Being poster works, and her first “self imposed hibernation from the art

world" in 1976 and 1977, mark a point after which her concerns bifurcate into the exploration of a more strictly biographical self-identity on the one hand, and an interest in the identities of the viewers of her work on the other.

The separating out of Piper's identity in her art work is epitomized by Political Self-Portrait, numbers 1, 2 and 3; Race, Sex and Class, 1978 1980, in which she presents memories of some of the key childhood incidents that helped to establish three crucial aspects of her understanding of who she was. These verbal descriptions of Piper's own experiences are coupled with personal images, but have a more than personal resonance; the factual presentation suggests the attainment of self-understanding and a clear identity. Self-Portrait Exaggerating My Negroid Features, made a year later, in 1981, does not contradict this conclusion, since it seems simply to be confirming and exploring the identity that Piper had established for herself.

In the period after she finished her philosophical course work at Harvard, and after her "hibernation", one of Piper's first works to be exhibited in 1977 was an environmental installation: Art for the Artworld Surface Pattern. This is also the first work to deal directly with the viewer, without the interposition of the artist herself. The work was preceded by the poster This is not the Documentation of a Performance, a few months earlier, in which Piper altered the slogan on one of the placards carried by people protesting eviction of Hispanic families in a photograph, so that it read: "This is not a Performance". In Art for the Artworld Surface Pattern the internal walls of the rectangular environment were papered with press photos and captions from newspapers, representing recent international, and particularly Third World, disasters and injustices, which were then overlaid by the stenciled legend, in red, which stated that these were "Not a

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Performance". But the final element in the environment is Piper's voice greeting the spectator with a first-person monologue representing the thoughts of an informed art world visitor momentarily struggling to understand the purpose of the work, then growing increasingly annoyed with its political content, and eventually letting their liberal veneer fall away as they complain about the lack of art, and the intrusion of real life into the art sanctum. After denigrating the artist for upsetting their equilibrium and their expectations, the "visitor" concludes with a strained defense of their own basic attitudes.

Art for the Artworld Surface Pattern was a very effective means for presenting political content to an art world audience, as well as an attempt to expose and change viewers attitudes via images and words both printed and spoken in a circumscribed constructed space. This means was further refined in the following year, 1978, in Aspects of the Liberal Dilemma. In this white painted environment a single photograph of Black South Africans, moving forward and looking directly and assuredly at the viewer, is placed on the wall behind reflective glass, with lights set up so as to illuminate the face of the viewer and cause it to be clearly reflected in the glass covering the photograph. The simplicity of this arrangement is brilliant. While the viewer considers the photograph and their reflected image a tape of Piper's voice is also heard in the space. In this work, rather than assuming the first person singular again, Piper adopts the guise and tone of a lecturer or guide addressing the visitor. In this role she assumes the intelligence and seriousness of the viewer, and suggests an even tone what their expectations might be; how they might react to the work; and what the work might be understood to include. Then she raises questions about the nature of the work and the artist's intention, before finally needling the viewer with more questions about themselves and their understanding of the work.

The principal thrust of the monologue in Aspects of the Liberal Dilemma is not so much the question of race, in spite of the image of Black South
Africans that is presented to the spectator, it is rather the preconceptions and perceptions of the viewer. At one point, however, the questioner does ask what the image means, why it is made up of Black people, and why the image is confrontational. The inability of the viewer to scrutinize the image without alternately scrutinizing their own features, a process underlined by the switching back and forth of the questioner, has been beautifully engineered by Piper.

*Aspects of the Liberal Dilemma* was shown again in 1980. On this occasion Piper produced a four page pamphlet entitled: *Where's the Art?*, which, through the juxtaposition of a repeated image of Vietnamese boat people with a few phrases, once again puts words into the mouths of viewers. This time the work demonstrates the viewer's momentary concern with the content of the piece before their impatience breaks through: "Is this all? Where's the art?"

Piper's creation of environmental installations took another step forward in 1980 when she exhibited *Four Intruders Plus Alarm Systems*. A small curved space was created which contained four enlarged images of the heads of Black men. The dark space was illuminated solely by lights installed behind the eyes of each image. Funk music and lyrics were relayed into the space, while the viewer had the opportunity of using headsets to listen to spoken words on different tapes. Each of the tapes portrays a different White response, or "alarm system", to the images. They range from totally disassociated and disapproving, through hip empathizer and paternalist/maternalist liberal, to outright racist, all talking calmly and apparently reasonably and focusing either on the art or the Blacks or both.

By exposing viewers of *Four Intruders Plus Alarm Systems* to responses which might coincide in part or wholly with their own, or with those of their friends or acquaintances, Piper tries once more to undermine racist atti-

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tudes. While one could consider the four monologues as a form of pre-emptive strike against the likely responses of viewers, the simple act of publicly articulating these attitudes in a reasonable tone is what is so devastattingly effective.

During the next two years Piper completed her Ph.D. dissertation, took a second self-imposed "hibernation" from the art world, and moved to California. She also worked out a new strategy for achieving her ends, which incorporated her musical, dance, and teaching interests. From 1982 Piper staged collaborative performances with groups of people sometimes quite large groups for whom she would provide *Funk Lessons*, encouraging them to "Get down and party. Together."

Piper had introduced Funk music into her work in 1972 with the Aretha Franklin *Catalysis* performance, in 1976 with the performance *Some Reflective Surfaces* and in 1980 in the installation *Four Intruders Plus Defense Systems* and in the performance *It's Just Art*, in which she also danced. In Funk Lessons she took on the role of teacher, even to the point of using chalk and board, and explained steps and movements, as well as the origins and character of Funk music. Through this procedure, and through the unifying activity of dance, Piper's aim was to "restructure peo-
ple's social identities, by making accessible to them a common medium of communication Funk music and dance", which are some of the "last artifacts of Black culture that are identifiably Black" and have not been appropriated or assimilated into White culture. In other words Piper had moved from a critical mode of operating against racism to a creatively subversive one.

Some issues, even those that involve racism, such as voting rights for Blacks in the Southern United States or the right of self determination for the Blacks of Southern Africa, seem to peak in the public mind (via the media), and then recede from wide public consciousness, particularly when something can be said to have been done about them. Unfortunately racism is often so unfocussed and pervasive that it cannot be tied to another issue and thereby attracts the fleeting attention of the public. While Piper will sometimes allude to specific issues in her work, whether homelessness or apartheid or refugees or nuclear disaster, in the end her principal political stand is against this apparently timeless poison of racism, which is both a personal and a socio-political issue.

Given Adrian Piper's academic achievements, and her position in the art world, she mixes professionally with various White elites, and given that she is often not known to be of mixed descent, she is consequently a potentially silent witness to the discreet racism of the bourgeoisie. (As El Haji Malik El Shabazz [Malcolm X] and Dick Gregory, amongst others, have said, sometimes the overt racial prejudice of some White Southerners might almost be said to be preferable to the politeness and covert racism of Northern Whites.) One of Piper's recent strategies to deal with those who make racist remarks when they assume themselves to be in homogeneous groups, is to present the person responsible for the offense with a calling card, as part of her reactive guerrilla "performance": My Calling [Card] #1.

1986. The card informs the recipient that Adrian Margaret Smith Piper is Black, and politely regrets any discomfort her presence is causing, just as she assumes that the recipient regrets the discomfort that their racism is causing her!

This calling card demonstrates that Adrian Piper does not seal off her life from her art—though, it should also be plain that neither does she seal off her art from her life. Her art can be specifically autobiographical, ranging from the intensity of *Food for the Spirit* 1971 to the *Self Portrait Exaggerating my Negroid Features* 1981, but it can also illuminate those inhumane forces that impinge upon her life and the lives of others, ranging from *Aspects of the Liberal Dilemma* 1978 to *Portrait 1983* which portrays the human race as almost intrinsically self-destructive.

Adrian Piper, by virtue of her background and experience, and by virtue of her academic and artistic achievement, stands at the fulcrum of our society. Her hard-won identity and the relevance and intelligence of her dual contributions are almost paradigmatic of those that are needed to further social and artistic progress.

Clive Phillpot
1st March 1987
1. **Michael Sternschein**, 1967  Oil paint, canvas, cardboard 18x36 inches
2. **Untitled Drawing**, 1967  Paper, pencil 6x9 inches
3. **Untitled Three-Part Painting**, 1968  Wood, canvas, primer, pencil 36x36 inches
1. Utah-Manhattan Transfer #1, 1968  Map collage  18x18 inches
2. Hypothesis, Situation #19, 1969-70  Photo-text-chart collage  12x34 inches
Untitled Performance for Max's Kansas City, 1970  Street performance, Max's Kansas City, New York City
Photo credit: Rosemary Mayer
   New York City.  Photo credit: Rosemary Mayer

YOU HURT ME, AND BETRAYED MY TRUST, AND FOR THAT I WILL NEVER FORGIVE YOU. IN FACT, I WOULD LIKE NOTHING BETTER THAN THAT YOU SEE YOURSELF AS I DO, WITH THE CONTEMPT THAT I DO. BECAUSE OF YOU, THERE IS A SADNESS IN ME, A SUSPICIOUSNESS TOWARDS YOU IN ALL YOUR GUISES, ALL YOUR APPEARANCES. BECAUSE OF YOU, I WITHOLD MY FEELINGS, FOR I COULD NEVER TRUST YOU NOT TO TREAD ALL OVER THEM.

NOW I HAVE LEARNED TO THRIVE ON IT, I MUST, IN ORDER TO PROTECT MYSELF, AND THUS I ALIENATE YOU IN TURN. OUR PREVIOUS RELATIONSHIP CAN NEVER AGAIN BE A POINT OF CONTACT BETWEEN US. I PERCEIVE THAT NOW, YOU ARE NO MORE CAPABLE OF TRUSTING ME THAN I AM OF TRUSTING YOU, AND I CRY FOR OUR MUTUAL IMPROVEMENT: THAT, AT LEAST, WE CAN SHARE.

But you took me off guard once, and it was very painful. I will never give you the opportunity to do that again. My defenses have solidified; there's nothing I can do. It sickens me to realize that I have grown incapable of overcoming the distance between us. I hate you for doing this to me, and myself for allowing it to happen.

1. **The Mythic Being I/You (Her) #3, 1974**
   Page work: Photo, ink and tempera paint. 5x7 inches each.
2. **The Mythic Being I/You (Her) #7, 1974**
3. **The Mythic Being I/You (Her) #10, 1974**
The Mythic Being
1. Getting Back #2 1975
2. Getting Back #3 1975
3. Getting Back #5 1975

Street performance, Cambridge Commons
Cambridge, Massachusetts. Photo Credit: James Gutman
1. It Doesn't Matter #1 1975
   Photo amd oil crayon 8x10 inches
2. It Doesn't Matter #2 1975
   Photo amd oil crayon 8x10 inches
3. It Doesn't Matter #3 1975
   Photo amd oil crayon 8x10 inches
   (poster image original)
I embody everything you most hate and fear.
1. *Art for the Artworld Surface Pattern*, 1977  *Installation: Bounded environment, lightbulb, wallpaper, audiotape  5x5x7 feet*

2. *Art for the Artworld Surface Pattern*, 1977  *Detail of installation*
flying

Adrian Piper

1. One of my two most treasured recurrent dreams, with variations:

I spring from the ground, executing high leaps, tour jetes, turns, somersaults, twists, and twirls. I float effortlessly through these figures, can stay suspended in the air for as long as I like. My ballet and modern dance teacher, Miss Copeland, watches transfixed. I run and leap, flapping my arms, and take off. At first I am flying close to the ground, and often land without wanting to. But by running faster, leaping further, and flapping harder I eventually ascend higher and higher, far above the people below me, who are watching, marveling, trying to catch me by the feet and drag me down. I soar above them, twisting, dipping, gliding, leaving them in the distance. This part is not effortless, and not without anxiety. I have to work hard to stay sufficiently far above them so that they cannot get at me. It takes skillful maneuvering and energetic flapping to keep them at bay, but I manage it. Eventually I relax into my ability to stay afloat above them, even leave them behind completely, as long as I concentrate. Alight on the roof of a building to rest and decide where to fly next, realizing that I must stay on the move, ahead of them, so they won’t catch up with me and drag me to the ground. I try to avoid landing on the sidewalk; I try always to take off from an elevated perch—a rooftop, the top of a lamppost or tree or truck, the ledge of a mountain or skyscraper. Sometimes I take off from a perch that is so very high that it knots my stomach and takes my breath away to look down and see how far away the ground is. It’s the view from an airplane on a cloudless day, but without windows, cabin, or seatbelt, and with even greater detail in what I see below me: sometimes mountain ranges, or plains, or city buildings; sometimes turbulent sea shores, or oceans with giant cresting waves and no land in sight. I feel dizzy with fear of being up so high, and doubt my ability to navigate over these dangerous, distant, alien landscapes. But if I do not spring off my perch and into the air they’ll catch up with me, capture me, and drag me down. So I take a deep breath, jump, flap my arms vigorously and catch a wind current! I’m still a bit
dizzy because of the height, but I’m firmly sailing, soaring aloft, confidently navigating a dangerous and solitary journey, which I come to love and crave. I can do it. I’ve escaped.

Sometimes I can’t escape, because I’m flying around the ceiling of a room in an apartment on a high floor, and can’t get out the window because it’s only open at the bottom and if I dip down to fly out the bottom half of the window they’ll catch me, and the window is stuck at the top. So I kick at the top pane of glass with my shoe and shatter it, and dart out through the jagged hole, into the open air, among the tenements and skyscrapers. I land lightly on a rooftop, see them coming, and, without thinking, duck into the stairwell. I run! I run! leap/float swiftly down endless flights of stairs, taking each flight with a single jump. I duck into the basement, turning and twisting down innumerable labyrinthine passages, gray cement rooms poorly lighted, searching for a window or an exit, hiding stilly in a corner or behind a wall when I feel them close by. It occurs to me that it was not a good idea to re-enter a building in the first place. I see a high, sunny basement window on the opposite wall of a cluttered storeroom. I hold my breath, run, and dive for the window before they can get to me. I feel their hands closing around my ankles, but the velocity of my body as I hurtle through the window is too strong for them. I feel the glass crash around me as I emerge outdoors again, now spinning, twisting, bounding off the sidewalk into the cool night air. I flap my arms gently and float effortlessly above the streetlamps, to the treetops. This time I’ve really made it. I am invisible, disembodied, pure sexual desire, and the night holds no fears for me. Its spirits, indoors and out, are my old friends, and we coil through, around, and alongside people, objects, and one another, exuberantly, shamelessly, knowingly.

2. Abstraction:

Abstraction is flying. Abstracting is ascending to higher and higher levels of conceptual generalization; soaring back and forth, reflectively circling around above the specificity and immediacy of things and events in
space and time, from a perspective that embeds them in a conceptual framework of increasing breadth and depth, a framework without horizon, ceiling, or basement; a framework composed of increasingly comprehensive concepts that generalize over increasingly comprehensive classes of things, organize them relative to one another, unify them into a coherent tapestry, a dizzying object of contemplation the details of which stun one into panic by their connectedness, significance, and vividness.

Abstraction is also flight. It is freedom from the immediate spatio-temporal constraints of the moment; freedom to plan the future, recall the past, comprehend the present from a reflective perspective that incorporates all three; freedom from the immediate boundaries of concrete subjectivity, freedom to imagine the possible and transport oneself into it; freedom to survey the real as a resource for embodying the possible; freedom to detach the realized object from oneself more and more fully as a self-contained entity, fully determined by its contextual properties and relations, and consider it from afar, as new grist for the mill of the possible. Abstraction is freedom from the socially prescribed and consensually accepted; freedom to violate in imagination the constraints of public practice, to play with conventions, or to indulge them. Abstraction is a solitary journey through the conceptual universe, with no anchors, no cues, no signposts, no maps, no foundations to cling to. Abstraction makes one love material objects all the more.

3. Two flights:

3a. Abstraction from materiality, 1967-72:

Early on, I was dazzled by ideas, but intuited them dimly and confusedly; artmaking was engrossing, but muddied and distorted by my restless intellectual meddling in the creations of sensory intuition. I could heed neither intellect nor intuition because both were tangled and inchoate. My adolescent adventures separated, clarified, and coordinated both.
Up to 1967 I was drawing, sculpting in clay and cardboard, and doing representational painting, often monochromatic, with a real object embedded in the canvas at the appropriate representational location. I had started to attend the School of Visual Arts in 1966, and to see exhibits in New York and read art magazines. I started to distinguish subject matter from formal concerns, and to explore the latter. I thought about perspective, about objects receding and protruding in space, and about the representation of these versus the reality of them versus the reality of their representation (Michael Sternschein).

I took a first step by ascending to the level of abstract three-dimensional objects, stripped of all subject matter and features extraneous to my preoccupation. It was very difficult to abandon specific subject matter in order to work on these issues further, because I love to draw the process of penetrating the meaning of the object, the product that appropriates it. But I had learned by then to respect the demands of my intellect. I stopped representing immediate objects and circumstances, but have continued to reflect them. My work during this period was very strictly minimalist. All aesthetic decisions were dictated by my exploration of perspectival spatio-temporality. I thought further about the space perspective defines, and in which objects protrude and recede (Untitled Drawing).

I made another small hop, this time to the level of abstract thought about space, time, and the objects within it; their materiality, concreteness, their infinite divisibility and variability, their indefinite serial progression through stages; their status as instances of abstract concepts. Sol LeWitt’s work and writings offered me the tools and encouragement to pursue this line, against the disapproval of some of my teachers at SVA. I began to carve up humble, dusty, austere objects on grids and maps, vary their properties and relations, and line them up sequentially (Untitled Three-Part Painting). I stopped attending school, but occasionally brought in photos to show my teachers. I worked furiously, constantly, and hermetically.
For me the great leap intellectually was to abandon three-dimensional constructed objects altogether as tools of investigation. Concrete pieces of paper—typing paper, graph paper, maps, and photographs, and audio tapes, would do just as well. However, this was easier psychologically than the decision to abandon representational subject matter had been, because constructing three-dimensional objects cost a lot of money, took a lot of energy, and progressed far too slowly relative to my thought processes about them in any case. But marks on paper or sound tape could also refer: concretely to themselves, or to the surface they existed on, or to the conditions under which they were perceived; abstractly to absent objects, events, or locations; to non-perceptual objects, such as space, time, and numbers; to general concepts expressive of the possible and the abstract, rather than the actual and concrete [Utah—Manhattan Transfer]. Reality could be rearranged, relocated, varied, shot through with metaphysics. I was drunk on intellectual construction, theory, abstract structure; swooping and swerving crazily through uncharted sky.

From that distance, all three-dimensional objects, found or constructed, sentient or inanimate, myself or others, were noumena: enigmatic entities assigned meaning by the encompassing conceptual framework within which they are embedded. I utilized those objects and media that most fully embodied my conceptual concerns [a principle to which I still adhere]. I experimented with my own object-hood, transforming it sculpturally as I had other objects, took it into the street, confronted others with the end products, and watched the effects on my social relations [the Catalysis series]. I traumatized myself, burned out, and began to withdraw from the artworld into the external world. The political upheavals of 1970 Kent State, Nixon’s invasion of Cambodia, the student revolts, the women’s movement, and others’ responses to my perceived social, political, and gender identity braked my flight a bit, reflecting back onto me, enclosing me in my subjectivity, shocking me back into my skin [see Talking to Myself: The Ongoing Autobiography of an Art
Object, Bonomo or Spillemaeckers edition]. I struggled to transcend both [the early Mythic Being/Village Voice series]. It didn’t work. I plun-
metted back to earth, where I landed with a jolt.

3b. Abstraction from identity, 1972 present:

In 1969, I wrote an essay called “Hypothesis” which was to be reprint-
ed in the “Conceptual Art and Conceptual Aspects” exhibit catalogue. It was about space and time as forms of perception, and provided the concep-
tual underpinning for the Situation series I was working on at that time. My best friend, the late Phillip Zohn, who studied philosophy, strongly suggested to me that if I was going to pursue this line of thought, I should get serious and read Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason. I did, and immediately became obsessed [in a way I had not with Wittgenstein]. In 1970 I enrolled at the City College of New York with a major in Philosophy and minor in Medieval and Renaissance Musicology. I took almost every course listed in the Philosophy Department catalogue.

In academia, the interpersonal ramifications of my social and political identity began to close in on me even further. Feminism made intolera-
ble my college boyfriend’s derisive condescension about my “weirdo” art. Another time he said, You won’t have any trouble getting accepted to graduate schools; a black woman can go anywhere these days, even if she looks like you. One of my college philosophy professors, upon see-
ing a discussion of my artwork in the Village Voice, said, That’s not art. Who [or perhaps it was Whom] do you think you’re fooling? Later he defaced with obscenities a poster advertising a feminist speaker. Another one lost his temper and yelled at me for questioning his views. A third began his ethics course with a speech about why women should not fight for equal rights. In graduate school, I had a reputation for partying hard. A fellow student once complemented me on my English. Another accused me of being flirtatious when I trounced him in argument. I learned about no-holds-barred academic one-up-manship, and about the politics of deference [without ever managing to master
either]. I made some close, enduring friendships. I met a few very modest individuals with intimidating, overpowering intellects; and many intimidating, overpowering individuals with very modest intellects.

Some of my artwork during this period [the later *Mythic Being* performance and poster pieces] reflected the ongoing initiation into interpersonal confrontation, political alienation, failures of communication, rejection, ostracism, and mutual manipulation I had been experiencing in my social relations. But as my philosophical training began to take effect, it purified the imagery in my artwork of excess theoretical baggage and offered me a new kind of reflective conceptual tool. The work began to make political sense of my anger, my confusion, and my past in an intelligible vocabulary and simplified form that had previously eluded me (*Three Political Self-Portraits*). It began to reflect the politically retrograde stereotypical responses I was experiencing as objects of contemplation and humor (*Art for the Artworld Surface Pattern*). I was absorbing a lot philosophically: practising, exercising, tooling up for another flight, this one to be honed by intellectual discipline and rigor. It was hard. There were constraints and rules—valid and important ones—that had to be mastered and separated from the blinders, taboos, and perfunctory rituals. One step forward, two steps back; a running leap into the air, a tug on the chain, tripped up, stumbling, grounded again, a hop forward, two hops back, tug to heel, start again on higher ground. At the end of graduate school, I was poised to fly, itching to take off.

My first academic job nailed my feet to the ground. A senior colleague invited me to breakfast, apparently in order to explain to me at length how women’s sanitary napkins had ruined the plumbing in his apartment building. Another invited me to dinner, where I listened to him and his guests deplore the worthlessness and vulgarity of black working class music. A third, a WASP, joked about the plethora of Jews to be found in the university vicinity. His wife, also an academic (and WASP), dismissed my worries about sexism with the comment that I was just too refined to deal with it successfully. A fourth, a married metaphysi-
cian, made sexual overtures to me in my office, remarking casually that he was a moral cretin. A fifth accused me of insulting him when I presumed to criticize his views. Yet a sixth incited the male graduate students to boycott my courses, by publicly airing his view that I was a man-hating closet lesbian who befriended only effeminate men. A seventh wrote me an official letter reproving me for not deferring to his criticisms of my work. His five-year-old son asked loudly at dinner, Why isn’t Adrian married? An eighth advised me to have children, and, when I demurred, commented that it stood to reason, because I was very self-centered, and also probably worried that my children would turn out much darker than I was. This is a partial list.

I marveled that such people could be so smart in their respective fields, yet so very provincial and tasteless in all other areas of life. As elitists each of whom violated all of my elitist assumptions about the “intellectual aristocracy,” i.e. the implicit connection between education and courtesy, cultivation, sensitivity, integrity, honesty, etc., they fascinated and repelled me. I tried to, but couldn’t crack the fears, fantasies and stereotypes they projected onto me (Four Intruders Plus Alarm Systems), the walls of mistrust and suspicion they erected between us (Vanilla Nightmares): mistrust of my motives, my self-presentation, my equilibrium; suspicion that I was trying to use them, guilt-trip them, take advantage of affirmative action policies by identifying myself as black. They forced me to see what they saw:

I am the racist’s nightmare, the obscenity of miscegenation. I am a reminder that segregation is impotent; a living embodiment of sexual desire that penetrates racial barriers and reproduces itself. I am the alien interloper, the invisible spy in the perfect disguise who slipped past the barricades in an unguarded moment. I am the reality of successful infiltration that ridicules the ideal of assimilation (Funk Lessons). I represent the loathsome possibility that everyone is “tainted” by black ancestry: If someone can look and sound like me and still be black, who is unimpeachably white?
Some of those, both black and white, who later become my friends, upon first meeting, peer closely at my face and figure, listen carefully to my idiolect and habits of speech, searching for the telltale stereotypical feature to reassure them. Finding none, they make some up: “Ah,” they say, “but of course your hair is wavy...,” or: “Perhaps a certain flair of the nostrils...,” or: “But the way you dance is unmistakable. [Self-Portrait Exaggerating My Negroid Features]. Or they find out my identity later, after we’ve become friends, and go through a period of cognitive dissonance, a bout of mild perceptual disorientation, before our friendship dissolves these preconceptions.

Blacks who look and sound like me bring out racism in those who want to believe they have transcended it, racism expressed in a virulent desire to examine, to pry, to fantasize; in a compulsion to impose the stereotype even at the cost of good manners. We are unwilling witnesses to the forms racism takes when racists believe there are no black people present [My Calling (Card) #1]. We don’t like what we see. It humiliates us to be forced to observe the hostile underside of the system of norms to which we have been so thoroughly acculturated. Sometimes what we observe hurts so much that we want more than anything else to disappear, disembody, disinherit ourselves and our consciousness from our black identity. And then we pass for white, and lie to our children about who we are, who they are, and why they have no relatives [A Tale of Avarice and Poverty]. Some southern historians have estimated that the actual proportion of Americans of black ancestry is not 10%, but closer to 15% or 20%. But of course many of them don’t know they are black. And we don’t know it, either.

Each of these responses—fear, fantasy, mistrust, suspicion, anger, confusion, ignorance obstructs my self-transcendence, my ability to lose myself temporarily in the other, in the world, in abstract ideas. These are the barriers my art practice reflects, because they are the ones that keep me grounded. Unlike materiality, I can’t transcend these barri-
ers solely through the intellectual act of ascending to higher conceptual levels and reflecting on them from a distance. I am no longer drunk on abstract theory, because the sobering facts press in on my daily life too insistently. To be sure, it helps to try to understand philosophically these “moral cretins” (many of whom in fact work in moral philosophy), make sense of their behavior, locate them as test cases within the larger framework of my research in meta-ethics, and develop a sense of humor about them, some feeling of compassion for them. Doing philosophy disciplines my urge to fly, improves my sense of direction, and enables me to soar, for a time, above the moral cretins. But it doesn’t change their behavior, or the behavior of more readily identifiable (because less highly educated) others like them. So they always bring me down again eventually. And there is no escape: I know I will find such individuals in every institution in this society. However, academic philosophy also contains some of the very finest individuals I have ever met, whose personal integrity I admire and whose intellects I respect. I engage with those I respect as professional colleagues, but vigilantly ready to flee from attack by the moral cretins. So partly by my own choice, partly by accidents of my birth and position in society, I am cornered, hemmed in, somewhere in the basement of the building, preparing to crash my way out. My art practice is a reflecting mirror of light and darkness, a high sunny window that holds out to me the promise of release into the night.

Adrian Piper
February 1987
Washington, D.C.
Aspects of the Liberal Dilemma, 1978
Installation: Photo under glass, audio tape, lighting
Installation detail: photo under glass, 18x18 inches. Photo credit: David Auertbach, National Geographic
My folks had to send me away to camp when I was five because they both had to work. I was a short, chubby, and very shy child who didn’t want to leave my parents. The camp was a boarding school in the mountains. I always felt left out and alone. My best friend was a boy named Karl, who was sixteen and came from a wealthy family. He played soccer and baseball, and we would spend hours together. Karl was very kind and understanding, and he always helped me when I was feeling down.

When I was ten, my parents decided to send me to a prep school. I was very nervous and scared, but I was also excited to meet new people. The school was very expensive, and my parents were not sure they could afford it. But they decided to take the risk because they wanted me to have a better future. I was placed in a boarding school, and I was very happy there. I made many friends, and I was able to focus on my studies.

In my senior year, I was accepted to Harvard University. I was very excited to be there, but I was also very nervous. I was the only person of color in my class, and I felt very lonely and isolated. I had to work very hard to get good grades and to make new friends. I was also very proud of my heritage, and I wanted to share it with my classmates.

One day, I was invited to a party at the home of a wealthy family. I was very excited, but I was also nervous. I didn’t know what to expect. When I arrived, I was surprised to see that the house was decorated with African art. I was very impressed, and I felt very proud of my heritage. I spent the evening talking to the family and their guests. I was able to share my culture and my heritage with them, and I was very happy.

In the end, I was very proud of my decision to go to Harvard. I was able to make new friends and to learn more about myself. I also learned to be more confident and to stand up for myself.

Political Self-Portrait #2 (race), 1978 Poster 24x36 inches
For a long time I didn’t realize we were poor at all. We lived in that part of Brooklyn called Park Slope. Still, there were lots of parks and houses that had once been mansions but had then been converted into hotels or funeral homes. When I was young, I was also, Rome didn’t start loitering in the bears’ library. My building had a newsroom, until I was 18. After that I got seen very quickly. Around the same time, the girls in school started wearing what from Parisian and coats from Donatello’s. I saw how their clothes and shoes were, and how big their particles bigger than my whole building. I hadn’t noticed it before because I hadn’t determined who was popular before, before I had been smart and noticed good taste even if you were. Nobody paid much attention where they bought their clothes, or how many servants they had. It was difficult, but because I only called, my parents could buy up a lot of this. My mother had a very good, steady job as a secretary at Brooklyn College, and my father had a very unlikely real estate law practice in Harlem, where people paid him for defending them against undecorous landlords by sending his shirts or clothing things to his car. All parents spent all their money on me. They put me through twelve years of New School (a fancy private prep school). They gave me ballet and modern dance lessons at Columbia University. I took piano lessons first from a neighbor, and later from a teacher at Julliard. I got art lessons from the Museum of Modern Art and the Art Students’ League. I even got a coat from Donatello’s. Although my mother not only took me on shopping trips only to places like Macy’s or Gimbel’s, I dressed as well as anyone else in the class and was invited to all the parties and had lots of circle friends. But I became ashamed to invite people over. I still have my boyfriend pick me up because I lived so far away and my neighborhood and everyone in it seemed so alien and uninteresting to me. Rich kids didn’t invite me. I would have stood on the street and any children under the age of 12 had a big apartment in a large building with an elevator and a doorman, at least an evening. The final blow came when I was eleven. I had been seen coming home by my housemate all day to small parties at popular kids in my class had. So I had started noticing all the advertised vacant apartments on Fifth Avenue, Park Avenue, and Central Park South and went home from visiting my friends who lived there. And even my husband’s friends in the neighborhood. We moved to Fifth Avenue because we do sit and never will have that kind of money. I realized that $1 didn’t please her at first. I thought she was just in a bad mood the way she always was so well. I asked her for new clothes, and that was the way because she just didn’t want me to have them. But when I brought it up again, carefully a few days later, she said that I really didn’t understand. She explained very patiently and carefully that we lived where we did because we had to, not because we wanted to. She explained about Daddy’s decision to leave his career and get paid in apple pie and embroidered shirts when he got paid at all, and how many weeks of a secretary’s salary got from Donatello’s, we earned. I became very depressed. Reality began to become very different after that. I started becoming more and more estranged from my school friends. I felt that I would never be able to keep up with these economically and was almost relieved to drop out of the race. I realized that all my friends had made a world which I had never in fact had access to. It didn’t occur to me to think that I had tried so hard to emulate them, to dress as well as they did, to want stretching rather than junior mints, and to spend time at home listening to classical music and reading novels rather than going to school parties. I found that I didn’t miss those parties at all. I spent a lot of my free time at the libraries and museums. I became reflective and tried to keep a journal. In 1960 I began to understand the computer and start writing my parents’ names on my work. I had to educate myself, and the formal knowledge that I had developed. Those resources became a refuge for me now. I learned to be self-sufficient, and to revel in my solitude. But this time my self-image had become too strongly affected and formed by my school associations, and formed by the complexities of my total environment. I still have these I can’t afford to satisfy except by giving into detritus: I shall, and then feel simultaneously guilty and frustrated for having them. My standard of living seems so excessive for an artist and an academic, even though I know I would find any more barren and depressing. I have an unrealistic of the political and economic reality of the artist’s life, and the red revolution which was due to the red revolution, I watch with detached surprise as I sink further into the morass of the realization of my desires at the same time as I defend the idea of material alienation. And my radical political sentiments seem cheap for the sake of comparison.
It's Just Art #15. 1980  Mixed media performance: Film, dance, slides, audio; The Western Front, Vancouver, B.C.
Four Intruders Plus Alarm Systems, 1960

1. Detail of the installation: Silkscreen lightboxes #3 and #4 18x24 inches each.
2. Installation: bounded environment, four silkscreened light boxes, four audio monologues, audio music soundtrack. 6 feet high, 5 feet in diameter. Collection of the Wexner Center for the Visual Arts, Ohio State University.
Self-Portrait Exaggerating My Negroid Features, 1981  Pencil and paper  9x12 inches
All sentient species are biologically programmed to attack alien enemies. Some species are programmed to attack their own members as alien enemies. Rats, for example, will attack, kill or even cannibalize one another under conditions of overcrowding and deprivation. But human beings are more unique still. Only human beings are capable of self-destruction, of suicide, of acts that have our own self-obliteration as a conscious purpose.

Human beings must view themselves as alien enemies to be able to do this. They must believe that if they allow this alien enemy to exist, it will destroy them. And so to avoid destroying themselves they destroy themselves.

We can see why this might be so. We do not know ourselves very well. Often we feel assailed by unacceptable thoughts and impulses, and move to suppress them; or shamed by unacceptable physical features, and work to remove them; or threatened by others’ unacceptable behavior or appearance, and so attack or reject them. We view these things as alien enemies, not as the familiar ingrained parts of ourselves they are. And so we are constantly moved to destroy and reconstitute ourselves in conformity with our truncated and distorted self-image.

In all these cases, and others like them, we fail to recognize that we are destroying ourselves. And so our centrally motivating urge to self-destruction itself goes unrecognized. Perhaps we would not recognize this particular facet of ourselves if it stared us in the face.
A Tale of Avarice and Poverty. 1985. Photo 24 x 36 inches and six pages of text, 8 1/2 x 11 inches each.
Vanilla Nightmares #8, 1986. Charcoal drawing on newspaper. 14x22 inches
Dear Friend,

I am black.

I am sure you did not realize this when you made/laughed at/agreed with that racist remark. In the past, I have attempted to alert white people to my racial identity in advance. Unfortunately, this invariably cause them to react to me as pushy, manipulative, or socially inappropriate. Therefore, my policy is to assume that white people do not make these remarks, even when they believe there are no black people present, and to distribute this card when they do.

I regret any discomfort my presence is causing you, just as I am sure you regret the discomfort your racism is causing me.

Sincerely yours,
Adrian Margaret Smith Piper
chronology

1948  Born September 20 at Sydenham Hospital, Harlem, only child of Daniel Robert and Olive Xavier Smith Piper.
1951  Taught to draw by maternal grandmother Margaret Norris Smith, a former high school teacher, who lives with family.
1952  Enters Riverside Church Nursery and Sunday School.
1953  Writes and illustrates own stories. Spends summer at Camp Good Hope on Cape Cod, Massachusetts.
1954  Enters first grade at New Lincoln School in Manhattan on a scholarship. Spends summer (and every summer thereafter through 1962) at Camp Bass Lake Farm in Altmar, New York.
1956  Begins ballet and piano lessons. Reads Herman Wouk’s Marjorie Morningstar.
1957  Takes art classes at the Museum of Modern Art after school.
1958  Fifth grade teacher, Miss Modiano, asks parents if Piper is aware that she is colored. Sells comic book collection.
1959  Receives art lessons from paternal grandmother, Beatrix Downs Piper McCleary, a former grammar school teacher.
1962  Joins SNCC. Family moves from Harlem to Riverside Drive, leaving bachelor maternal uncle, Martin Smith, who also lived with family, in Harlem apartment, where he becomes a recluse. Maternal grandmother dies. Joins Puerto Rican gang. Teaches self to play the guitar. Participates in drawing groups with model at various locations in Manhattan.
1965  Does psychedelic drawings and paintings, writes poetry. Leaves home, works as a discotheque dancer at the Ginza and Entre Nous nightclubs. Meets Phillip Zohn.
1966  Graduates from New Lincoln School. Enters the School of Visual Arts. Studies yoga with Swami Satchidananda (through 1971). Goes to NYC art galleries, subscribes to Art News and Artforum, attends films by Andy Warhol, the Kuchar brothers, happenings by Robert Rauschenberg, Simone Forti Whitman, and Marcel Duchamp at SVA.
1967  Begins summer courses at the City College of New York. Meets Rosemary Mayer and Vito Acconci. Stops attending classes at SVA. Reads Robbe-Grillet, Beckett,


1971 Hears about Hans Haacke’s Guggenheim show. Fasts, isolates self, does yoga while writing paper on Kant. Produces *Food for the Spirit* private loft performance. Starts women’s group with Rosemary Mayer, Donna Dennis, Randa Haines, Grace Murphy, others. Receptionist, clerk, and switchboard operator at the Animal Medical Center (through 1974).


1974 Graduates from CCNY summa, Phi Beta Kappa, etc. Awarded Danforth and Ford Foundation graduate fellowships. Moves to Cambridge, Massachusetts. Begins doctoral program in philosophy at Harvard University.

1975 Performs later *Mythic Being* streetworks in Cambridge and produces posters.

1976 Performs *Some Reflective Surfaces* at Whitney Museum. Finishes course work at Harvard. Teaching assistant for courses taught by John Rawls and Ronald Dworkin.
1977  Awarded Harvard Sheldon Traveling Fellowship to spend the academic year in Berlin and Heidelberg working on Kant and Hegel. Passport and belongings stolen in Musee d’Art Moderne while constructing Art for the Artworld Surface Pattern for the Paris Biennale. In Heidelberg, participates in student resistance to Altstadtstudentenheimsanierung, studies and writes all day, drinks beer all evening, goes dancing most of the night.

1978  Flies from Cambridge to Paris for four days to see Paris—Moscow exhibit at Beaubourg. Premieres Aspects of the Liberal Dilemma at Artists Space. First philosophy article published, “Utility, Publicity, and Manipulation.”

1979  Awarded first full grant NEA Visual Artists’ Fellowship. Moves to Ann Arbor, Michigan. Begins tenure-track Assistant Professorship in Philosophy at the University of Michigan.


1984  Reluctantly returns to the University of Michigan.


This chronology was created solely by Adrian Piper and is presented as part of her artistic work.
adrian margaret smith piper

Born September 20, 1948 in New York City.
Lives in Washington, D.C.

EDUCATIONAL RECORD
1966-69 School of Visual Arts, New York, N.Y.AA. (Fine Arts)
1970-74 City College of New York, New York, N.Y.BA. (Philosophy)
1977-78 University of Heidelberg, Heidelberg, West Germany—translated portions of Kant’s Reflexionen zur Moralischen Phiosphie; audited courses on Kant, Hegel, and Marx
1981 Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass Ph.D. (Philosophy)

ONE WOMAN EXHIBITIONS
1969 Three Untitled Projects [postal], 0 to 9 Press, New York, N.Y.
1971 One Man (sic), One Work, New York Cultural Center, New York, N.Y.
1976 Adrian Piper, Gallery One, Montclair State College, Montclair, N.J.
1980 Adrian Piper at Matrix 56, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Conn. in conjunction with Adrian Piper, Real Artways, Hartford, Conn.
1981 Adrian Piper, And/or, Seattle, Wa.

GROUP EXHIBITIONS
1969 Number Seven, Paula Cooper Gallery, New York, N.Y.
    Language III, Dwan Gallery, New York, NY
    557,087, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, Wa. (traveling)
    Concept Art, Stadisches Museum, Leverkusen, West Germany
    Groups, School of Visual Arts Gallery, New York, N.Y.
    Plans and Projects as Art, Kunsthalle

    Berne, Berne, Switzerland
1970 995,000, Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, B.C.
    Conceptual Art and Conceptual Aspects, New York Cultural Center, New York, NY
    Art in the Mind, Allen Museum, Oberlin, Ohio
    Information, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY
    Language IV, Dwan Gallery, New York, NY
1971 26 Contemporary Women Artists, Larry Aldrich Museum, Ridgefield, Conn.
    Paris Biennale, Paris, France
1972 Art Without Limits, Memorial Art Gallery, Rochester, NY
    Communications, Inhibodress Gallery, NSW, Australia
1973 Thought: Structures, Pace College Gallery, New York, NY
    Nine New York Artists, Hartwick College, Oneonta, NY
    Artforms, Abstract Activities, Ideas, Pomona College, Claremont, Ca.
    c.7,500, California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, Ca.
    In Her Own Image, Samuel S. Fleischer Art Memorial, Philadelphia, Pa.
1975 Bodyworks, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Ill.
    Word Works II, San Jose State University Art Gallery, San Jose, Ca.
    Eleven in New York, Women’s Interart Center, New York, NY
    Lives, The Fine Arts Building, New York, NY
1976-77 SELF-IMPOSED HIBERNATION FROM THE ART WORLD
1977 Paris Biennale, Paris, France
The Sense of the Self: From Self-Portrait to Auto-biography, Newberger Museum, Purchase, N.Y.
1978 Untitled Exhibition, Artists’ Space, New York, N.Y.
1979 Eventworks, Massachusetts College of Art, Boston, Mass.
   Both Sides Now, Artemesia Gallery, Chicago, Ill.
   Art of Conscience, Wright Gallery, Dayton, Ohio [traveling]
   The Gender Show, Group Material, New York, N.Y.
   The Page as Alternative Space, Franklin Furnace, New York, N.Y.
   Oppositions, And/Or, Seattle, Wa.
1982-83 SELFIMPOSED HIBERNATION FROM THE ART WORLD
   Art at Ground Zero: Artist’s Statements on Nuclear War, University of Michigan Residential College, Ann Arbor, Mich.
   The Black and White Show, Kenkeleba Gallery, New York, N.Y.
   Language, Drama, Source, and Vision, The New Museum, New York, MY
   Disarming Images: Artists’ Statements Against Nuclear War, Newburger Museum, Purchase, MY [traveling]
1984 A Decade of New Art, Artists’ Space, New York, N.Y.
1985 Tradition and Conflict, The Studio
   Museum in Harlem, New York, N.Y.
   Kunst mit Eigen-Sinn, Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna, Austria
   The Art of Memory/The Loss of History, The New Museum, New York, MY

PERFORMANCES
1968 Meat Into Meat, Loft Performance, New York, N.Y.
1970 Untitled, Max’s Kansas City, New York, N.Y. Streetworks, New York, N.Y.
1970-71 Catalysis Series, Streets of New York, N.Y.
1971 Streetworks II, New York, N.Y.
   Food for the Spirit, Private Loft Performance, New York, N.Y.
1971-73 Untitled Streetworks, Streets of New York, N.Y.
1972 Two Untitled Streetworks, Rochester, NY.
1973 Untitled Streetwork, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI.
   Being Mythic on the Street, for Adrian Piper: The Mythic Being,” in Other Than Art’s Sake, a film by Peter Kennedy
1977 Danke(sehr)schon, Kurfürstendamm, West Berlin, West Germany
1978 Collegium Academicum Freischrei, Hauptstrasse, Heidelberg, West Germany
1980 Its Just Art, Allen Memorial Museum, Oberlin, Ohio
   Its Just Art, Contemporary Art Institute of Detroit, Detroit, Mich.
   Its Just Art, Wright Gallery, Dayton, Ohio
1981 Its Just Art, The Western Front, Vancouver, B.C.
   Its Just Art, And/Or, Seattle, Wa.
   Its Just Art, Artists’ Space, New York, N.Y.
   Its Just Art, Penn State University, University Park, Pa.
   Funk Lessons, Walker Art Center and
the Minneapolis College of Art and Design, Minneapolis, Minn. Funk Lessons, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, Ca.

1984 Funk Lessons, San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, Ca.
Funk Lessons, California Institute of Art, Los Angeles, Ca.

1985 Funk Lessons (videotape), “What’s Cooking VI,” Center for Music Experiment, University of California at San Diego, La Jolla, Ca.

1986 My Calling (Card) #1, Dinner/Cocktail Party Guerilla Performance
My Calling (Card) #2, Disco/Bar Guerilla Performance (Part II of Het Luv)

FELLOWSHIPS IN ART
1979 NEA Visual Artists’ Fellowship
1982 NEA Visual Artists’ Fellowship

CRITICAL REVIEWS
Perreault, John, “Art,” The Village Voice, March 27, 1969, 15-17
Perreault, John, “Art,” The Village Voice, May 1, 1969, 14-16
Perreault, John, “Art,” The Village Voice, June 5, 1969, 1618
Perreault, John, “Art,” The Village Voice, November 20,1969.34
Plagens, Peter, “557,086,” Artforum (November 1969), 67
Perreault, John, “Art,” The Village Voice, April 29, 1971, 31
Lippard, Lucy, “Catalysis: An Interview With Adrian Piper,” NYU Drama Review (March 1972), 76-78

Mayer, Rosemary, “Performance and Experience,” Arts (December 1972), 3336
Perreault, John, “Art,” The Village Voice, February 8, 1973. 28
Crichton, Fennela, “London Newsletter,” Art International XVIII, 6 (Summer 1974), 42
DeAK, Edit, “Pencil Moustache Makes Up,” Art-Rite 1112 (Winter 1975)
Frank, Peter, “Performance Diary,” Soho Weekly News, April 1, 1976, 18
Goldberg, Roselee, “Public Performance, Private Memory” [with Laurie Anderson, Julia Heyward, and Adrian Piper], Studio International 192, 1982 (JulyAugust 1976), 1923
Lippard, Lucy, From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women’s Art [New York, N.Y.: ER Dutton, 1976]
Howell, John, “Exegesis of the Phenomenon of Written Art by Women,” Art-Rite 14 (Winter 1976-77)
Frank, Peter, “The Self and Others,” The Village Voice, November 27, 1978, 102
Litten, Laura, “Both Sides Now,” New Art Examiner (April 1979), 13-14
Hanson, Bernard, “Matrix Art Engages


Kohn, Barbara, "Piper in Performance," *Dialogue* (September-October 1980), 9-10


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