



**CMAC**

Centre for Media and Alternative Communication



**MEXICO  
CITY**

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## MAKE ART/STOP AIDS

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Make Art/Stop AIDS is an international network of scholars, artists, and activists committed to ending the global AIDS epidemic. Building on theorist Douglas Crimp's famous 1987 pronouncement "[A]rt does have the power to save lives" MAKE ART/STOP AIDS asserts that artists are essential to anti-AIDS efforts.

Artists are master communicators. Artists are able to shape transformative insights and possibilities that literally redirect how people think and act. Moreover, the arts carry enormous potential as tools of education and information sharing.

MAKE ART/STOP AIDS seeks to capitalize on the vast potential of the arts by:

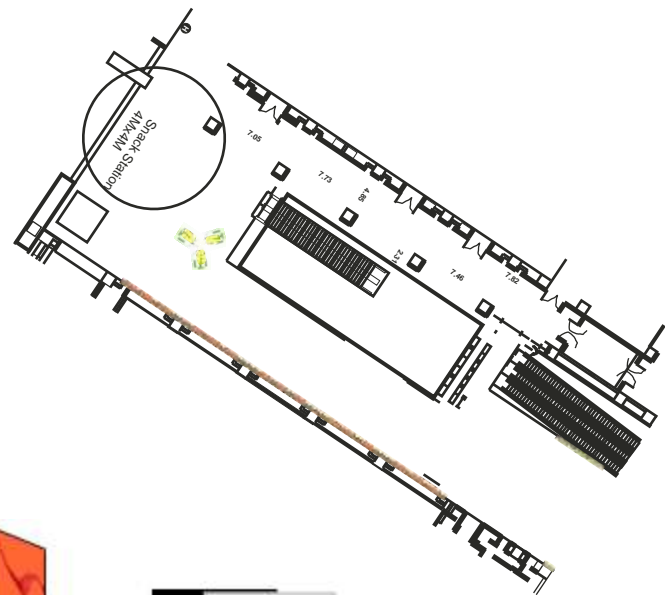
- 1) advancing an awareness and appreciation for the power of art to address crisis, and
- 2) establishing artists as key partners in AIDS interventions around the world.

We are grateful to our major funders: The Ford Foundation, UNAIDS, UNESCO, Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, UC-Mexus, Motomex/Bajaj, and UCLA.

MAKE ART/STOP AIDS is a project of the Art|Global Health Center at UCLA.

MA/SA made a highly visible argument for the importance of art in the fight against HIV/AIDS at the International AIDS Conference 08, Mexico City. Historias Positivas and ArtMoves, two portable exhibitions, were situated in the main lobby of the Conference venue.





# Artmoves



Is individual change more likely to occur in response to a formal lecture or a gripping artistic encounter? And if you want to enhance the transformative power of art, is it better to present it in a staid museum or on a lively street corner?

In India, as in many other parts of the world, the answers to both questions are clear. Art is our most powerful tool for transformation, and it is most effective where it is most easily accessible. Take it to the streets on a Bajaj autorickshaw.

ArtMoves, devised by the Center for Media and Alternative Communication in New Delhi, along with the Art|Global Health Center at UCLA, in California, seeks to increase knowledge, change attitudes, and shift behaviors around the AIDS epidemic by setting up mobile, street-level encounters with activist works of art.

A dress made entirely of condoms, from Brazil. A human body constructed of hanging pill bottles, from the United States. Flip-flops that tell you how to put on a condom, from India. A photographic record of protestors wearing HIV-positive t-shirts, from South Africa. And many more. All these images possess the power to intervene directly in our thought processes, shifting the way we think about the epidemic and, potentially, how we behave.

ArtMoves is supported by a grant from the Ford Foundation and by in-kind contributions from Motomex/Bajaj in Mexico.







I know it is my obligation to fight discrimination, against me and against the upcoming generation. This is why I give a face and a heart to AIDS. I want people to see that we are all equal, that we should not be judged or discriminated against, and that everyone should be informed.

-Margarita "Magos" Dionisi





It is very important for me to be public about my HIV status, because I am not just a number, and I'm not falling apart. I'm a passionate man, committed to what I do. And passion is a lifestyle. It's what keeps me going.

-Octavio Valente



The first time I dressed as a woman I felt I was another person. My gestures no longer provoked laughter. I don't care any longer about the way others react. No matter what I do, I am a person who matters.

-Ilsa Aguilar





I am a bold fighting woman. When I negotiate with authorities at the hospital I often tell them: either you stick to your word or I'll sue you. That is what gives me strength, fighting for the rights of people living with HIV.

-Silvia Carmona

## HISTORIAS POSITIVAS

Fourteen HIV-positive people, all citizens of Mexico, illuminate the landscape of their lives through stories and photographs. That's the simple premise of Historias Positivas, which is co-sponsored by Letra S in Mexico City and the Art|Global Health Center at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).

Historias Positivas is directed by South African photographer Gideon Mendel, one of the foremost chroniclers of the global AIDS epidemic, working alongside Alejandro Brito Lemus, an accomplished AIDS activist and writer who is the director of Letra S. The goal is to demonstrate how stories are changing in this corner of Latin America, where many lives have been prolonged by advanced drug therapies and where oppressive stigma is maybe, just maybe, beginning to lift.

Facing Gideon Mendel's camera, and picking up their own, the participants reveal themselves as strong men and women, as creative forces, and as agents for change.



Historias Positivas is supported by grants from UC Mexus and the Ford Foundation.





In the future, I hope to create a shelter for people affected by the epidemic who have no relatives or are rejected by them. I want to leave a trace, just as the leaders of the Mexican Revolution did, with the hope that my life would serve as an inspiration for others

-Flor Nájera

My favorite singer is Eugenia León. In one of her songs she sings, "God made me unlucky but I am not in the mood for that." With this I mean to say that I'm still alive, that I can love and give pleasure, because although happiness is not forever, neither are sadness and depression.

-Roberto Marmolejo

The years I have spent living with HIV have taught me to be more humble, respectful and humane. My greatest satisfaction now is to help other people get medical care. We who live with HIV do not ask for special privileges, only that our rights be respected.

-Alejandro Albino





I have decided to show my face in this project to convey that I work, that I have a sexual and affective life, that I am a son, and that I contribute to the betterment of our community. I have weaknesses, but also strengths. I am not an alien. I do not want any privileges. I just want my rights to be respected.

-Eduardo de la Paz



Being sound and healthy helps me to encourage people: "Don't give up so easily. Just think, you also can be as healthy as I am." There are people who have died from ignorance, from having a fatalistic attitude, from not taking HIV just as a new step and opportunity in life. These people have to be told that there's still a long road to go, that they have many years ahead of them.

-Salvador Ibarra Gómez



The impact of the exhibitions went beyond Mexico. It reached people from others parts of the world.

-Alejandro Brito Lemus



I don't pretend to be an example. All I want is to open people's eyes, because anyone can be in this situation.

-René Ornelas



When I learned I had HIV, I thought that all feelings and emotions and doors would now be closed to me. After a while, I learned that HIV is only one part of me, that I have no reason to fall to pieces, that I have many other life options.

-Ilian Reyes





Each of our actions leaves a mark,  
sometimes on ourselves, sometimes on others.  
If I can influence at least one person to  
change his or her perspective about HIV, then  
I also will have left my mark.

-Martín Zúñiga

All these years of living with the virus have taught me to become  
more mature and to work on my feelings. Among my future  
plans, I want to enter the university, study chemistry, and then  
teach.

-Ramón García Segura

Once the initial fears and symptoms were past, I became aware of  
deficiencies in the available medical services. This “discovery”  
turned me into an activist, which means something more than distributing  
condoms. We have to re-educate ourselves in the knowledge of our  
fundamental rights. It was at this moment that I realized all the potential  
I have as a woman. My life is a continuous learning experience. I feel  
fulfilled.

-Magda Padilla





## MAKE ART/STOP AIDS

MAKE ART/STOP AIDS is directed by UCLA Associate Professor David Gere. Letra S, directed by Alejandro Brito Lemus, is primary collaborator and on-site implementer of Historias Positivas. ArtMoves has been created in collaboration with Parthiv Shah's Centre for Media and Alternative Communication in New Delhi, India. Autorickshaws are provided courtesy of Bajaj-Motomex in Mexico. Major funding for Historias Positivas is provided by UC Mexus. The Ford Foundation supports both exhibitions.

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The XVII International AIDS Conference involved an estimated 22,000 people engaged in the global response to AIDS. Over 175 countries were represented at the Conference.