

## TRANSMISSIONS: Archiving HIV/AIDS, Melbourne 1979–2014



**TRANSMISSIONS** was an exhibition, mounted at the George Paton Gallery, University of Melbourne, in July 2014.

Consisting of artworks, manuscripts and other objects retrieved from private collections and public archives, it was timed to coincide with AIDS 2014 and was conceived as an archaeological dig offering material traces of the epidemic's cultural impact on one, and only one, of its affected communities in Melbourne: gay men.

TRANSMISSIONS coincided with the twentieth anniversary of the National Gallery of Australia's major exhibition *Don't Leave Me This Way: Art in the Age of AIDS* and featured a number of artworks by Melbourne artists that had featured in that show in 1994, several of them not having been seen in public since. There were posters, pamphlets and other health promotion material produced by the

Victorian AIDS Council from its earliest and most recent years of operation. There was also a collection of posters and other material produced by Melbourne ACT UP 1990–94.

Through its extensive program of free evening talks and hosted conversations held in the gallery itself, TRANSMISSIONS afforded further opportunities to reflect on the various and crucial roles of activism, art and design in containing the epidemic and supporting the communities most directly affected by it.

TRANSMISSIONS was a project initiated by the Community and Cultural Development Unit of the University of Melbourne in association with the George Paton Gallery, the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives and the University of Melbourne Archives. It was curated by Michael Graf and Russell Walsh.



**Pictured top:** TRANSMISSIONS, exhibition view. Photo: Rubie Bridie, courtesy George Paton Gallery; and **above:** Ted Gott, Curator, *Don't Leave Me This Way: Art in the Age of AIDS*, National Gallery of Australia, 1994, speaking at the launch of TRANSMISSIONS: Archiving HIV/AIDS, Melbourne 1979–2014, 2014. Photo courtesy Carl Willis.

## VITAL SIGNS – INTERPRETING THE ARCHIVE

**Vital Signs**, curated by Angela Bailey and Nick Henderson, featured the work of six contemporary artists – Marcus Bunyan, Penny Byrne, Ray Cook, Deborah Kelly, Peter Lambropoulos and Salote Tawale – who were given the opportunity to creatively interpret the collection of the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives (ALGA). Each of the artists engaged with different aspects of the collection to inform their work, considering themes such as social justice, activism and GLBTQI cultures.

The exhibition, held 9–26 July, was part of the Cultural Program for AIDS 2014 in Melbourne, and considered

the shared histories of the GLBTQI and HIV communities in a contemporary representation.

Robert Mitchell, President of The National Association of People with HIV Australia (NAPWHA) said NAPWHA was proud to be a supporter of this exhibition. 'As we mark thirty years of the HIV epidemic in this country, it is important to preserve our history so that we can truly understand the great changes that have occurred and shaped the response to HIV,' Robert said.

**Pictured right:** Marcus Bunyan, *Untitled* from the series 'Deep Water' 2014, Digital photograph on archival rag paper.





**Central and Vital over 30 years – pictured clockwise from top left:** Timothy Conigrave, Rob Lake, David Edler and Aldo Spina at an ACT UP rally in Sydney. Image courtesy of Positive Life NSW; Keith Harbour arrested on the steps of Parliament House in Melbourne during an ACT UP demonstration in 1990. Image courtesy Living Positive Victoria; and D-Day protesters at Flinders Street Station on 6 June 1991, when members of ACT UP staged radical protests across the country using the letter 'D' to represent the words deaths, drugs, delays and deadline. Image courtesy Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives.