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CONTACT: Emily Smith, Executive Director
804.643.1708 or esmith@1708gallery.org

A FIRE IN MY BELLY David Wojnarowicz **January 7 - February 12, 2011**

1708 Gallery will be screening David Wojnarowicz's film, *A Fire in My Belly*, from January 7 through February 12, 2011. The film will run on a continuous loop during regular gallery hours, Monday through Friday 11-5 and Saturday 11-4.

On November 30, 2010, under pressure from political and religious groups, the National Portrait Gallery, a member organization of the Smithsonian Institute, removed *A Fire in My Belly* from the exhibition, "Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire in American Portraiture."

This decision has been criticized by the arts community, from museums and galleries to foundations like the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and professional organizations like the Association of Art Museum Directors. In response to this censorship, 1708 Gallery joins an international group of arts organizations in protesting the removal of Wojnarowicz's film by screening *A Fire in My Belly*.

Wojnarowicz was a prominent artist and activist in the New York art world of the 1980s. He worked across many disciplines, including painting, photography and performance, and he often combined media. *A Fire in My Belly*, a montage of footage shot in Mexico, represents the artist's rage and sorrow surrounding the death of a lover to AIDS, his own H.I.V. status, and what he perceived as a wide-spread lack of empathy and support for the devastating disease.

The portion of the film that drew ire is an 11-second segment that depicts ants crawling over a crucifix. From an official statement from P.P.O.W. Gallery, which represents Wojnarowicz's estate, comes the following comment: In a 1989 interview Wojnarowicz spoke about the role of animals as symbolic imagery in his work, stating, "Animals allow us to view certain things that we wouldn't allow ourselves to see in regard to human activity. In the Mexican photographs with the coins and the clock and the gun and the Christ figure and all that, I used the ants as a metaphor for society because the social structure of the ant world is parallel to ours."

The screening of *A Fire in My Belly* will take place in a specially-designated area at 1708 Gallery. Also on view will be *Matthew Friday: The Liberty of Empire*, a site-specific installation that uses writings, ideas and philosophies of Thomas Jefferson as the foundation for a study of how contemporary society views the role of history.

For more information about David Wojnarowicz and *A Fire in My Belly*, please visit www.ppowgallery.com and for a full list of participating organizations, please see www.hideseek.org.

1708 Gallery is a non-profit arts organization committed to presenting exceptional new art. 1708 Gallery is committed to providing opportunities for artistic innovation for emerging and established artists and to expanding the understanding and appreciation of new art for the public.

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