

# Politics in the Air, a Freedom Free-for-All Comes to Town



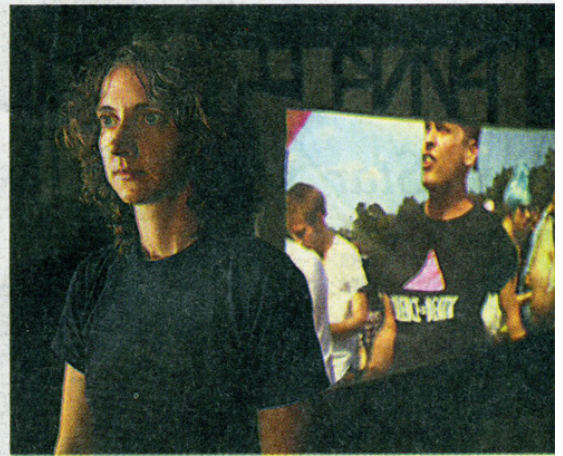
PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHESTER HIGGINS JR./THE NEW YORK TIMES

featuring trash left by government agents at Steven Kurtz's house after his arrest.

assistance and Stokely  
l's speech at the 1967  
obilization to End the  
nam" in New York.  
nactments of both  
which Mr. Tribe has  
rith actors as speak  
a "live" local audi-  
ar in the show on film.  
mic projections make  
rt of the listening

crowd. And the speeches, al-  
though 40 years old, have a start-  
ling pertinence to politics now.  
Chris Sollars's film "C Red  
Blue J" documents major  
changes in his family's history as  
he moved back and forth be-  
tween a "normal" suburban  
childhood and a fraught adult-  
hood that finds him with a born-  
again Christian father, a right-

wing sister and a mother who  
lives with a female lover. The  
film opens with Mr. Sollars in  
bed, as if he would rather sleep  
through the familial confusion  
that follows, which he sets  
against the background of the  
2004 election campaign and the  
Iraq war.  
But he also keeps exhorting  
himself to wake up and do some-



Sharon Hayes at the armory with her video "Revolutionary Love 1 & 2: I Am Your Worst Fear, I Am Your Best Fantasy"

## ONLINE: AUDIO SLIDE SHOW

The curator Nato Thompson describes the events leading up to the "Democracy in America" exhibition at the Armory:

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thing. And he does. He looks hard at his past, talks frankly with his family and tries to accept that, for better or worse, and whether he likes it or not, all involved are now free to be what they always wanted to be.

Free to be what they want to be is also the goal of the dozens of performers in Sharon Hayes's wonderful videotaped performance piece, "Revolutionary Love 1 & 2: I Am Your Worst Fear, I Am Your Best Fantasy." The piece, which was performed and filmed twice — outdoors at the Democratic National Convention in Denver and at the Republican convention in St. Paul — consists of a kind of choral reading of a text Ms. Hayes wrote, a strange kind of love letter.

The readers in both cases are members of the gay, lesbian and transgendered populations of their respective cities. The text, which incorporates gay liberation material from the 1970s, seems to be addressed to a potential lover, single or collective, gender unspecified, but a lover with power — a United States president, maybe, or a political party or the American people.

The tone of the writing is by turns amorous, anguished, exasperated and defiant. The writer would like to persuade the lover to see reality in a new way, to see that division between them doesn't have to exist, that mutual love is possible, and an offer is being made. And if the offer is rejected? So be it.

The writer's voice is in fact many voices, all saying the same words, loudly and clearly, as one voice: "An army of lovers cannot



A portion of "5 Propaganda Speakers' Corner," a video by Paul Ramirez Jonas.

lose." And, as Ms. Hayes's astonishingly intelligent piece asserts, it is at the convention everywhere else, and here it stay.

It is, of course, quite a different militia from the one envisioned by the Armory's builders, that suggests that enormous cultural changes have taken place. To which the artist-activist the show would respond: "It's not enough." Democracy — freedom, equality, that — still has a long way to go.

To help push it further, Creative Time has scheduled a series of evening panel discussions and talks at the Armory which should help bring the hall to life. On Wednesday Guerrilla Girls will scrutinize the ethics of the quasi-democracy known as the art world. And Thursday night will be devoted to an "open rant," which means, I gather, that you early, pull up a lectern (tho several to choose from, all designed) and stump for ever mad dream you dream