
1939 TV is broadcast from the World’s Fair in New York.

1945 First atomic bomb, named “Little Boy,” is dropped on Hiroshima by the United States.

1954 Supreme Court ruling on Brown v. Board of Education declares racial segregation in schools existing in twenty-one states unconstitutional.

1955 Disneyland opens in Anaheim, California, drawing one million visitors within the first six months.

1957 born in Güaimaro, Cuba, the third of what would eventually be four children

1959 Ross Laycock born on March 5.

1961 Bay of Pigs: CIA-supported counter-revolutionary Cuban exile force storms the beaches of Cuba, a military move approved by President Kennedy ending in failure.

1963 John F. Kennedy assassinated.

1964 Dad bought me a set of watercolors and gave me my first cat

1964 Civil Rights Act to prevent and counter discrimination is passed by the 88th Congress.

1965 Johnson administration creates the National Endowment for the Arts.

1968 May: student protests, massive demonstrations against the Vietnam War, and workers’ strikes in Paris comprise a widespread social movement.

1969 Gay and lesbian patrons of the Stonewall Inn rebel against harassment by the New York City police.
1971 sent to Spain with my sister Gloria, then went to Puerto Rico to live with my uncle.

1972 Watergate: burglars, connected to the Nixon re-election campaign, break into the Democratic Party’s National Committee office at the Watergate Hotel in Washington, DC, and are arrested, leading to the scandal that ends in the resignation of Richard Nixon.

1975 United States pulls its remaining troops out of Vietnam.

1975 VCR is first introduced in the United States.

1976 Gloria and I moved to our own apartment – small, but full of sunlight.

1976 met my friend Mario.

1976 Gonzalez-Torres graduates from Colegio San Jorge; studies at the Universidad de Puerto Rico.

1977 Death penalty is reinstated in the United States after ten-year moratorium.

1978 met Jeff in Puerto Rico.

1978 Gonzalez-Torres makes ephemeral installations “Wrapped” and “Society,” in the Plaza Antonia Martínez with Universidad de Puerto Rico classmates, Rosa Balsera and José Pérez Mesa.

1979 moved to New York City.

1979 Personal tape player, the Walkman, is invented.

1979 White Night Riots: gay community in San Francisco protests the announcement of Dan White’s lenient sentence, based on the “Twinkie defense,” for assassinating openly gay city supervisor, Harvey Milk, and Mayor George Moscone.

1979 returned to Cuba to see my parents after an eight-year separation.

1980 Ronald Reagan is elected president.

1980 CNN, the world’s first twenty-four hour cable news channel, begins broadcasting.

1980 Gonzalez-Torres publishes first printed art page consisting of images and text, titled “Contaminación ambient / mental” in August 24, 1980 El Nuevo Día.

1980 “Just Say No” slogan is coined by Nancy Reagan for the war on drugs.
1980 met Luis at the beach
1981 parents escaped Cuba during Mariel boat lift, my brother Mario and sister Mayda escaped with them
1981 IBM introduces the personal computer.
1981 Surveillance for AIDS begins at Center for Disease Control following recognition of the first cases of unexplained severe immunosuppression and resulting opportunistic illnesses.
1983 received BFA from Pratt Institute
1983 Ross at the Boybar
1984 Reagan is re-elected to a second term as president.
1985 The phrase “safer sex” is coined to describe sex using protection from sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS, and pregnancy.
1985 Reagan visits Bitburg Cemetery to honor American GIs. When he is told no American soldiers are buried there and that it is dedicated to members of the Nazi SS, he replies that the German soldiers “were victims, just as surely as the victims of the concentration camps.”
1985 Jeff gave me Pebbles and Biko, two Lilac Point Siamese cats – hardly able to support myself, and now with two cats to feed, only Jeff
1985 first trip to Europe, first summer with Ross
1986 summer in Venice, studied Venetian painting and architecture
1986 blue kitchen, blue flowers in Toronto – a real home for the first time in so long, so long, Ross is here
1986 Supreme Court ruling on Bowers, Attorney General of Georgia v. Hardwick et al. upholds state laws banning consensual sex between adults of the same gender.
1986 Oliver North, a marine lieutenant colonel on the National Security Council staff, is indicted as the White House official most directly involved in secretly aiding the Nicaraguan Contras by selling arms to Iran, and diverting proceeds to the Contras.
1986 Mother died of leukemia

1987 received MFA from the International Center of Photography and New York University


1987 600,000 people march in the Second National March on Washington, DC, for lesbian and gay rights.

1987 Gonzalez-Torres makes first puzzle pieces using images of crowds from newspapers.

1987 Black Monday: on October 19 the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 508.32 points and closed at a record-breaking low of 1,738.40 points, documented as the worst stock market crash in history.

1987 Gonzalez-Torres is adjunct art instructor at New York University until 1989 and again in 1992; teaches course titled Social Landscape.

1987 Senator Jesse Helms introduces an amendment to prevent the federal government from financing any AIDS education or prevention materials that “promote or encourage, directly or indirectly, homosexual sexual activities.” The Senate passes the Helms Amendment by a vote of 94 to 2.

1987 joined Group Material


1988 Gonzalez-Torres exhibits at the Rastovski Gallery, New York.


1988 Gonzalez-Torres begins making bloodwork pieces, derived from test results of t-cell counts (a type of white blood cell) that indicate weakening of the immune system due to HIV.

1988 National Rifle Association opposes a seven-day waiting period to buy a pistol, as proposed by the Brady bill, and attempts to kill the legislation.

1988 Gonzalez-Torres receives fellowship awards from Art Matters, Cintas Foundation, and Gordon Matta-Clark Foundation.

1988 ABC News journalist Ted Koppel interviews Austrian President Kurt Waldheim after the Waldheim Commission learns that, contrary to his prior claims, Waldheim had been aware of and participated in World War II crimes and atrocities.

1988 Group Material produces Democracy, four roundtable discussions, exhibitions, and town meetings at the Dia Art Foundation, New York.

1989 AIDS Timeline is organized by Group Material for the Berkeley Art Museum, University of California.

1989 Gonzalez-Torres receives fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts.

1989 Savings and loan bailout: legislation is enacted to bail out the S&L crisis and create the Resolution Trust Corporation.

1989 Gonzalez-Torres and Louise Lawler collaborate on “Untitled” (Beautiful), a stack piece using a news image of the Trident II missile spiraling out of control.

1989 Gonzalez-Torres makes “Untitled” (Loverboy), the first of eight curtain pieces.

1989 Works by Andres Serrano, including Piss Christ, 1987, are shown at the Virginia Museum of Art in Richmond, with support from the National Endowment for the Arts. Subsequently Donald Wildmon of the American Family Association launches a campaign against government funding for the arts.

1989 fall of the Berlin Wall

1989 On Gay Pride Day Gonzalez-Torres, Ross Laycock, and friends march by his first billboard at Sheridan Square, “Untitled”. This is one of the last of the last black-and-white dateline works as Gonzalez-Torres shifts from datelines that show “public in public” to making portrait pieces that show “private in public.”

1989 Exxon Valdez tanker crashes in Alaska and produces largest oil spill disaster in U.S. history. Exxon is indicted on five criminal counts.

1990 B-2 stealth bomber has much-heralded test flight with disappointing results.

1990 Gonzalez Torres teaches at California Institute of the Arts, Valencia. His courses are AIDS and Its Representations and Social Landscape.

1990 Dennis Barrie, director of Cincinnati Contemporary Art Center, is tried and acquitted for obscenity after presenting the exhibition Robert Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Moment.

1990 Gonzalez-Torres makes first candy piece "Untitled" (Fortune Cookie Corner).

1990 Myriam died

1990 moved to L.A. with Ross (already very sick), Harry the dog, Biko, and Pebbles, the Ravenswood, Rossmore, golden hours, Ann and Chris by the pool, magic hour, rented a red car, money for the first time, no more waiting on tables, Golden Girls, great students at CalArts, Millie and Catherine, went back to Madrid after almost twenty years – sweet revenge

1990 Desert Storm: Iraqi Republican Guard invades Kuwait, and the United States response, Operation Desert Shield, is launched to free Kuwait and deter invasion of its oil-rich neighbor, Saudi Arabia.

1990 Gonzalez-Torres makes the stack piece "Untitled" (Death By Gun), using pictures of all the people killed by hand guns in the U.S. in one week, derived from an article in TIME magazine.

1990 Gonzalez-Torres selects visual material for Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures, edited by Russell Ferguson, Martha Gever, Trinh T. Minh-ha, and Cornel West.

1990 silver ocean in San Francisco

1990 Every Week There is Something Different, four-part project by Gonzalez-Torres at Andrea Rosen Gallery.
1991 went back to L.A., hospitalized for ten days

1991 Julie moved from Brooklyn to Manhattan

1991 “Untitled”: a wooden box Gonzalez-Torres fills over time with photographs, papers, writings, magazines, and other objects, which is privately owned and specified never to be shown publicly.

1991 Gonzalez-Torres begins photographing Ross Laycock’s letters, with “Untitled” (Lover’s Letter), and making puzzle pieces from magnifications of the correspondence.

1991 “Untitled” (March 5th) #2 is first piece using light bulbs.

1991 “Untitled” (Lover Boys): corner of silver cellophane wrapped candies, ideal weight: 355 pounds, the combined weight of Gonzalez-Torres and Ross Laycock.

1991 Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas is accused by Professor Anita Hill of sexual misconduct when she worked for him ten years earlier. Hearings are held and Thomas is confirmed by the Senate vote 52 to 48.

1991 A videotape of black motorist Rodney King being beaten by four white Los Angeles police officers makes national headlines.

1991 Gonzalez-Torres exhibits at the Whitney Biennial as an individual artist and as member of Group Material.

1991 Cash Prize, series of four advertisements in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, organized by Group Material for In Public.

1991 Soviet Union disintegrates into fifteen separate countries, thereby ending the Cold War. Its collapse is publicized by the West as a triumph of democracy and capitalism over socialism.

1992 Jeff died of AIDS

1992 President Clinton – hope, twelve years of trickle-down economics came to an end

1992 the forces of hate and ignorance are alive and well in Oregon and Colorado, among other places

1992 Colorado’s Amendment 2, which excludes lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals from existing laws that prohibit discrimination, is approved by voters. In 1996 the U.S. Supreme Court determines that the amendment is unconstitutional, by a vote of 6 to 3, with Justices Scalia, Rehnquist, and Thomas dissenting.

1992 “Untitled”, an image of Gonzalez-Torres’s empty bed, is installed in twenty-four billboard spaces around the city, a project for the Museum of Modern Art.
1. “Untitled” (America), 1994
15-watt light bulbs, waterproof extension cords, waterproof rubber sockets
Overall dimensions vary with installation
Twelve parts: 65 1/2 ft. in length with 24 1/2 ft. of extra cord each
Installation view at Schindler House, Los Angeles, for In Between Art & Architecture at MAK Center for Art and Architecture, Los Angeles, 2001

2. “Untitled” (Revenge), 1991
Light-blue candies individually wrapped in cellophane, endless supply
Ideal weight: 325 lb.

3. “Untitled” (Loverboy), 1989
Blue sheer fabric and metal rod
Dimensions vary with installation
View of the artist installing the work for Felix Gonzalez-Torres: Traveling at The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, 1994

Billboard
Dimensions vary with installation
Installation in Graz for America Nowhere at Grazer Kunsthalle, Graz, 1992

5. “Untitled” (Placebo – Landscape – for Roni), 1993
Candies individually wrapped in gold cellophane, endless supply
Ideal weight: 1,200 lb.
Installation view of Felix Gonzalez-Torres: Traveling at The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 1994


1992 started to collect George Nelson clocks and furniture

1993 moved to 24th Street

1993 Sam Nunn is such a sissy, peace might be possible in the Middle East


1993 Final stack piece, “Untitled” (Passport #II), composed of pamphlets with images of sky, clouds, and birds.

1993 Gonzalez-Torres finishes “Untitled” (Portrait of Ingrid Goetz), which he says “embodies a very clear system of what constitutes a ‘portrait.’”

1993 Gonzalez-Torres produces “Untitled” (Placebo – Landscape – for Roni), gold wrapped candies, last of the candy pieces.

1994 Canada, the United States, and Mexico launch the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and form the world’s largest free trade area.

1994 Traveling, an exhibition of Gonzalez-Torres at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; and the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago.

1994 “Untitled” (America) is the last of twenty-four light string pieces made over two years, which Gonzalez-Torres calls “my own history of light.”


1996 January 9, Gonzalez-Torres dies of AIDS in Miami.

1996 New protease-blocking drugs are shown effective in combating AIDS. Protease inhibitors interrupt a key step in the chemical sequence by which HIV replicates and are touted as the means by which HIV can become a "manageable disease." The FDA licenses indinavir, ritonavir, saquinavir, and amprenavir based on short term clinical data.

1996 Yasser Arafat is elected president in the first Palestinian elections. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians vote in the election, endorsing Arafat and his peace policies.

1997 Sprengel Museum Hannover mounts exhibition of Gonzalez-Torres’s work and publishes a catalogue raisonné.

1999 Y2K: hype about impending millennial doom creates paranoia resulting in billions of dollars spent on Y2K computer software upgrade.

2000 Supreme Court rules 5 to 4 on George W. Bush, et al. v. Albert Gore, Jr., et al., to put a stop to the Florida ballot recount, resulting in Bush becoming president.

2000 Hillary Rodham Clinton is elected U.S. senator in New York.

2003 The Art Institute of Chicago and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art purchase Gonzalez-Torres’s self-portrait, "Untitled", 1989. As co-owners they share the right to make changes to the portrait.

2003 U.S. forces invade Iraq without authorization of the United Nations Security Council. The war is waged by the Bush administration with the allegation that Saddam Hussein possesses weapons of mass destruction. No such weapons were found and in 2004 the CIA released a report stating Hussein had not been an imminent threat.