

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

People With AIDS Coalition 1985 Police Harassment 1969 Oscar Wilde 1891 Supreme Court 1986 Harvey Milk 1977 March on Washington 1987 Stonewall Rebellion 1969

The billboard is site and date specific. It is in commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion, and is located in the same square as the original Stonewall Bar. In 1969, in response to a New York City Police policy of harassment of the patrons of gay bars, gay men in the Stonewall Bar decided to fight back during a raid on the evening of June 27th. This incident ignited the modern Gay and Lesbian movement. From that date on, a silent and invisible community decided to claim its civil and human rights. This work should function as an architectural reference and as an affirmation of the ongoing struggle.

The dates, names, and places are significant from a personal and public point of view. For example, the billboard refers to 1895, the year Oscar Wilde decided to stay in London to face prosecution on charges of homosexuality. In the print the dates are all the same as in the billboard, except for Oscar Wilde's. In the print the date is 1891 instead of 1895. The 1891 date refers to a photograph of Oscar Wilde in the prime of his life, happy and flamboyant. My intention was not to replicate the image of the billboard in a different medium. This print, which will support the entire project, is meant as a more private and personal object. Other dates and references refer to the more positive historical events such as the 1977 election of Harvey Milk as a Supervisor for the City of San Francisco, the 1985 formation of the PWA Coalition in response to calculated government inaction to the AIDS crisis, and the 1987 Gay and Lesbian March on Washington (one of the largest Civil Rights marches ever held).

The letters running across the lower part of the billboard suggest a long caption, capable of sustaining the projection of many images. The size of the letters is rather small for such a large space. This is not an ad; I don't expect it to be readable while speeding down Seventh Avenue to the Holland Tunnel. I hope the public will stop for an instant to reflect on the real and abstract relationships of the different dates.

The billboard will be up during the Gay and Lesbian March in late June.

Félix González-Torres
New York City, 1989