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Seminar with artists series  
Whitney Museum of American Art  
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*Please note that the following is only a partial transcript of the lecture. We are currently working to make the full transcript available.*

FGT: -- by more than 80 percent and the supply of low-income rental units have dropped dramatically as a result of demolition and conversion. But at the same time, during those get-tough-on-crime kind of [inaudible] years, we were busy expanding and building larger jails to house part of the American family. In New York state during this last decade, the prison space doubled at a cost of \$5 billion. Often, the state resorted to urban development corporation financing -- a corporation originally envisioned for housing poor people in city apartments, not in prisons. According to the *New York Times*, on September 15, 1992, the nation's incarcerated population swelled by nearly 130 percent. We have the highest rate of incarceration of any industrialized nation. In second place is South Africa, of course. According to the Census Bureau, mobile homes were the fastest-growing type of dwelling in the 1980s, as the cost of traditional houses soared beyond the reach of many. Nearly 16 million Americans -- about 1 in 16 -- now live in mobile homes. During the last decade, we witnessed the 1 percent of American households get richer. By 1989, that top 1 percent was worth more than the bottom 90 percent of Americans. In the last 15 years, the number of children living in poverty grew by 21 percent. In 1992, 7 percent of all infants and nearly 17 percent of all African American infants were born underweight -- the highest rate since 1978. According to the Children's Defense Fund, the number of children living in poverty grew by more than \$1 billion in the 1980s. The state with the highest child poverty rate is Mississippi, home state to the distinguished American Family Association. After the unfortunate -- but almost predictable -- L.A. riots of 1992, new levels of cynicism were established by the conservative demagogues when they blamed the social problems of the '60s and '70s for the violence. We must remember, in order to combat the right's revisionist re-reading of history, that those social programs of the '60s helped cut the poverty rate almost in half, and poverty among the elderly even more. That War on Poverty, as opposed to the war on the poor that the Reagan and Bush regimes waged through the 1980s, brought to many needy Americans medical care, food stamps, prenatal and infant care, free legal services, college tuition and guaranteed student loans that indeed many of us have used to forge a better life. Such poverty programs, according to a *New York Times* editorial May 6, 1992, brought the poverty rate down from 90 percent in 1964 to 11 percent in 1973. Since 1981, direct federal aid to cities had dropped by 60 percent, and in 1984, the Children's Defense Fund budget declared, "Each week, 211 American children died from poor maternal and child health and nutrition while we continue to subsidize tobacco growers by \$3.3 million a week." We now rank 20<sup>th</sup> among industrialized nations in preventing infant mortality, and when it comes to immunizing infants against polio, we now rank behind 16 other nations, including Mexico. March 5<sup>th</sup>, 1992. According to the Congressional Budget Office, an outsized 60 percent of the growth in after-tax income of all American families between 1977 and 1989 went to the wealthiest 660,000 families. At the same time, the American family [inaudible] in the middle of the income distribution saw its income edge up only 4 percent, and the bottom 40 percent of families had an actual decline in their income. According to Dr. Jennifer Howse, president of the March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation, in 1992, the proportion of pregnant women receiving no prenatal care or late care was now at 25 percent, the highest it had been in nearly 20 years. According to the Census Bureau, November 4, 1992, the number of Americans living in poverty soared in 1991 by 2.1 million, and the poverty rate rose for the second consecutive year to 14.2 percent, the highest since 1964. A family of four is classified as poor if it had a cash income of less than \$13,924 in 1991. The government sets the poverty line by using the Consumer Price Index to determine the cost of a minimally adequate diet and multiplying it by three, wrongly assuming that a household

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spends one-third of its budget on food and two-thirds can cover everything else. Today, just two necessities, food and housing, takes 85 per-- take approximately 85 percent of a typical poor family budget. Falling workers' wages and lower corporate taxes during the fabulous '80s swelled the ranks of millionaires. Corporate executive -- an average CEO earned as much as 41 factory workers or 38 teachers in 1960, but by 1988, that same CEO was earning as much as 93 factory workers or 72 teachers. According to the Census Bureau, after adjustment for inflation, the median household income had declined 5.1 percent since 1989 and the household purchasing power is lower now than in 1979. And even if you wanted to return to a welfare state, that will be rather difficult. We have successfully become the Savings and Loans bailout state. According to government figures, in 1992, we now spend six dollars on the Savings and Loans bailout per one dollar on welfare. In terms of cutback in social benefit, let's take New York City as a good example of the attack against urban centers launched in the past decade. According to a report issued by the late New York congressman Ted Weis, the percentage of New York City budget supported by federal funds decreased from 17.9 percent in 1991 to 9.3 percent in 1990. The cumulative loss in federal aid between 1981 and 1990, adjusted for inflation, was \$19 billion. The city government spent \$755 million in 1990 alone, simply to replace lost federal aid. The city estimated that those funds could have been spent instead to hire 3,000 more nurses, 3,700 schoolteachers, 2,800 more firefighters, and 2,800 police officers. In 1980, there were 30 soup kitchens in New York City; by 1989, there were 600. Conservatives have always seen the urban areas as a center of intellectual challenge, a magnet for immigrants, and a center of political ferment and agitation. One of the dangers of our technological explosion of information is that [inaudible] not guarantee an informed or literal public. We have an explosion of information bytes and at the same time an implosion of meaning. The statistic of economic decline of the so-called typical family or general public or the famous taxpayer -- whatever you want to call it -- means very little to most of us. One of the effects of the division of labor is the representation of facts and/or issues as completely unrelated, separated, isolated, independent of each other. Meaning is created mostly when we can relate our identity to a piece of information, and it's precisely this what the right has been so smart in understanding and using for their benefit. We haven't seen the religion industry and the conservative politicians getting to the debate for the need for more affordable housing or the need to establish some sort of gun control. Those vital issues take too long to explain, and the fundamentalist Christian businessmen have long ago recognized that, like for any other capitalist venture, that in order to survive and grow in a quote-unquote "free market environment," it has to deploy eye-catching advertisement and create fast product recognition. According to Pat Robertson, one of the leaders of the fundamentalist Christian business, abortion right is a dead political issue. But don't take his word for that. With the threat of communism, body snatchers, Martians, and/or Sandinist invasion now over and the evil empire a thing of the past, the need for a new product, a new product container, or new packages become urgent to this religion industry. The need to distort and step on the truth becomes more extreme. During the 1992 election and hate-mail campaign opposing the passing of the Equal Rights Amendment in the state of Iowa, Pat Robertson, in his very humanist Republican self, wrote -- and I quote: "The Equal Rights Amendment will lead women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism, and become lesbians." [laughter] This is all in one sentence. And after all, I question myself and I wonder if actually this will be beneficial for women. I don't really know the statistic for accidents in the practice of witchcraft or lesbianism, but I do know that according to the American Medical Association, that more women are injured each year in domestic violence than in muggings and car accidents combined. But misogyny is not enough to keep a sales campaign alive, to keep the faith alive. Enter now the profitable specter of the "homosexual agenda," quote-unquote. That's it for now. I'm tired of the placebo.

SPEAKER 1: [inaudible].

FGT: Yeah. Apparently, 1,400 pounds of silver can't --

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SPEAKER 1: What was the title of that?

FGT: “*Untitled*” (*Placebo*).

SPEAKER 1: [inaudible].

FGT: Placebo?

SPEAKER 1: I mean, [inaudible].

FGT: Okay, well, this is the last week of a project that I did at Andrea Rosen to which called -- was called *Every Week There Is Something Different*. And every week there was something different in the gallery -- three days, two days -- you could not even depend on a whole month to see something there. Every time you went to the gallery in that month, there was a new piece there. I'll never do something like that again, because it was just -- it was killing. So this is the last piece in the gallery that only was up for four days. And again, the viewer was supposed to take this away. At this point, I had someone very close to me, my boyfriend, die, and the idea of a placebo became more and more -- real -- a real issue. A placebo is not only that -- something that's used as a control method to prove the efficacy of a drug or something, but it's also something that makes you feel good. And the definition of placebo in Latin is to humor a patient, to please. And I wanted to make a piece that was actually about pleasing them, and this was it. It looks almost like a silver ocean, and that's what it's [inaudible] also, too -- and that time in the afternoon where the ocean just looks silver. And this was another piece that was there during that week, and this is called “*Untitled*” (*Chemo*).

SPEAKER 1: [inaudible]?

FGT: Chemo -- it comes from chemotherapy. And it has to do with demystifying the whole notion of chemo. I thought chemo was going to be really horrible; actually, chemo -- it worked fine for him. And going through chemo was almost going, like, through a membrane that I was very scared of, and then when I went -- when we went through that membrane, it was actually very beneficial, very beautiful. And it was also about creating a sculpture -- that it was, again, practical. It's just [inaudible] -- it's just [inaudible] curtain in the entrance of a gallery. And it became very interesting to see people walk in and make noise through the curtain, because then you have -- you knew who was in and who was out of the gallery, because every time you went through, you felt this thing through your body. And it's very sensual, it's very -- it's very erotic -- kind of feeling -- this sculpture. And again, it's just a beaded curtain. [inaudible]. It was there. And I saw the piece at a go-go dance club, and I said, Well, it's made. I'm just gonna redo it somewhere else. I think [inaudible]. Please bear with me. That was the first week of that gallery show, right? At that time I was doing the stacks and the candies. And then I had the third sho-- I had -- this is the show for that year. And like I said before, I like to reinvent myself. I like to find new narratives, new languages. And for that show, this is the first week. It's totally different from everything I had done before. And people were expecting already, like, to see more stacks and more candies, so when they went in, all they found was this beautifully installed, very serious photograph. It looked almost like the installation with the International Center of Photography. But things changed as the week went along. So people went in and said -- they thought, Wow, he lost it. This is totally, like, bizarre. And these are photographs of the -- taken from the Museum of Natural History. And that's -- that says -- that one -- that particular one says “historian.” It's one

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of the few times in which -- you know, this whole construction with natural history becomes very peculiar, because outside the museum are these titles of things that [inaudible] -- that, in this case, [inaudible] -- like "historian," "patriot," or "soldier," et cetera, et cetera. And inside, you have the -- the "wild people," so to speak. So I had all those photographs around the -- on the walls. There were 12 of them, beautifully represented. And then suddenly, the second week, this thing came in -- just appeared, like a flying saucer. And unannounced, a go-go dancer came in every day a few times [inaudible] and started dancing right there in front of this -- shaking his booty in front of these photographs. So the meaning of the photographs were kind of altered -- a little bit -- so to speak. When you had -- and suddenly all those -- suddenly all those words became very, quote-unquote, "homoerotic." You know, when you have "soldier," "patriot," "historian," and the go-go dancer shaking his stuff in front of all these photographs. And that -- that's how -- again, it's -- not a big science on this thing, it's about how meaning is constructed depending on the context. And I just wanted to make sure that -- make clear that this was not a spectacle. The performance was never announced. Sometimes it happened when there was no one in the gallery. He just came in with a Walkman, so it was totally about his own self-pleasure. He's a professional go-go dancer. He's a friend of mine. And he was -- there was no announcement of a performance or anything like that. And whoever was there had a chance to see him, and that was fine. All I wanted to do is, I want this to happen. And it did. It was not about, you know, creating any kind of spectacle or show or having people seeing this -- this thing happen. Again, this is another -- second beaded curtain I ever made. And this one is called *Blood*. And this is for an installation -- one I did which you enter through *Blood* and exit through *Chemo*. And again, it -- I wanted to make this second piece again, because -- I don't know, lately *Blood* has become very important, and how can one represent blood without actually doing something with red -- which I dislike so much -- I mean, with actual blood -- a photograph of blood or something that represents blood. And to me this was a -- kind of a beautiful and elegant way of dealing with blood -- and also in a very formalist way. It's a sculpture that you can -- you can go through. Not only -- some of my sculptures you can eat and suck and digest and take home with you and paint on it and tack it to the wall, but also to have a sculpture that you can actually go through. This is some of the light pieces. And I want to show the same light pieces in three forms. See, I'm getting bored now. That was -- those were installed by the art handlers at the gallery, so those were three forms that I thought were also very good. [inaudible] Okay, now, last three works. That's a publicity project I did for Austrian Airlines. (pauses) And this actually was a really tough project, because you have to do -- this is a -- one, two -- this is a three-panel billboard, but I had to do a piece that could work in a three-panel billboard or a 16-panel billboard -- which was a huge one -- or just one-panel billboard. So I decided to do a corporate ad-- a corporate historical portrait of the company. And this is a bad slide, because this is a really beautiful green -- so it's announcing Austrian Airlines in Vienna -- all around the city during the winter months, and the green makes it -- this green really jumps out, because everything's gray around it. So, I mean, when they asked me to do a publicity [inaudible], I said, Wow, that's really -- that's really bizarre, 'cause I never thought of myself as doing any kind of publicity, but then I thought it was so perverse, and so tough. I said, Okay, I'll try to do it. And it worked out fine. Actually, now I'm going to be doing their -- as an artist's book, I'm going to be doing their timetable, which is -- I think it's going to be one of the largest printed artists' books ever. And there's also going to be a practical print in this -- it's going to be a real timetable. There aren't going to be any tricks in it. And that's a portrait of my dad. That's his body weight in candies -- beautiful white mint candies. That's right after he died. And also, I -- that's also another way of doing portraits I have of people, and I ask them how much their weight, and then I buy a candy that they like -- they send me some samples -- and I say, Okay, let's get that much amount in -- that much weight in candies, and that's it. And again, this is -- this is, to me, a beautiful metaphor of the body -- a body that changes, a body that can be

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recreated, that even it might disappear, but you can always recreate it back. And it all has to do with the presence of this object that I name the body. It's almost like I'm renaming things, reinventing my own language, a language that has been given to me, that has placed me in a very particular position and I'm trying to rename certain objects that are very peculiar to me and very important to me. Those were not bats. That was actually upside down. And this is the last slide [inaudible]. That's for a show in Paris. And these are [inaudible] for *Arena*. And what in-- this piece in -- the purpose of this piece is just two people dancing underneath with a Walkman, and the viewers were actually performing, so they just came in, asked for a Walkman that had two headphones, and danced underneath this thing, and that was it -- that was the piece. And right on the left, there's a stack of booklets. It's called *Passport*. That -- I don't know, I feel very strange about that piece called *Arena*, with the dancing. In a way, also, I feel good, because it's about trying to put the viewer once more within these light pieces. Because the light pieces included the collector or the art handler or whatever, but not the -- not the viewers. And I always think that I owe a lot to my public, that I owe a lot to the viewer. And I wanted to create a beautiful place for them to dance, especially in Paris -- which is, to me, the city of lights, and it's such a romantic city. So that was the last -- that's the last work I've done in -- -- and that's it. Thank you for coming. (applause)

SPEAKER 1: We have time for questions -- any questions if there are [inaudible]. [inaudible] speak very loudly.

FGT: I'm sorry -- wait --

SPEAKER 2: [inaudible] you read -- you read [inaudible] history [inaudible]?

FGT: The thing I read? The information I read?

SPEAKER 2: Yeah.

FGT: What is the question? I'm sorry, I didn't --

SPEAKER 2: [inaudible] the gallery [inaudible] --

FGT: No. No. This is -- this is -- what I read now is basic-- usually what I do when I get asked to do a lecture about the work, I don't show any slides like I did here; I show slides of *Dynasty*, and then I read for 25 minutes or 20 minutes, just hardcore statistics. Because I refuse to do this kind of self-indulgent, narcissistic thing I did here today -- what I did again here today. [laughter] And I tell you, it feels really boring after a while. It's like, I want to go home and change my -- I don't know, become a restaurant chef. I mean, you do this thing for a couple -- three or four or five times, and you become -- at least I become totally bored about showing this -- I mean, showing the work and say, "I did this in 1989; then, in 1990, I made it bigger, and in 1991, I made it red; and after that, I made five, because it was really successful." [laughter] So when I go as a -- as an audience to see these kind of lectures and the artists just, you know, show their stuff, I always become very -- I don't know, I lose interest right away. So I read this -- this kind of information as an attempt at breaking the established role of what an artist is supposed to do when you get invited to talk about quote-unquote "your work." This is my work. What I read right here was a piece -- was an actual [inaudible] piece. And I read that again -- like I said before -- with photographs of *Dynasty*, the soap opera. But there was nothing in there in the gallery. There was a video there in the gallery -- it was called "*Untitled*" (*Self Portrait*) -- which included some of the

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dates and stuff like that, but nothing like this. This is a piece totally separate from that. But I decided to read it 'cause I had a stack that looked like a death note that was called "*Untitled*" (*Republican Years*). And not only was that *Republican Years* for here, but also *Republican Years* for Austria -- because the Republican party was in control there at that time, with Kurt Waldheim as the president.

SPEAKER 2: Thank you.

FGT: You're welcome.

SPEAKER 1: There's a question [inaudible].

SPEAKER 3: You said the album was completed when it was filled with photographs. How about the stacks and the candy? When is that complete? When it's first put in, or when it's completely consumed?

FGT: Oh God, that's a good question. I never thought -- I think -- I think both and in between. I think both and in between. I think what is put -- I mean, when it's put -- I mean, when it has -- because sometimes he has to have an "ideal" -- quote-unquote -- height or "ideal" weight. But -- and sometimes people freak out when they disappear. And I think when they disappear is the work. I think, Oh, that's great. I love the fact that it just disappeared.

SPEAKER 3: So it really doesn't have a start [inaudible].

FGT: No. No. It doesn't. It doesn't. But -- it doesn't have at all -- I mean, it's -- it's one of those strange situations which is hard to define what is it. 'Cause then somebody says as a joke, "Oh, well it's a certificate of authenticity." They say, "No, no. That's not a piece. That's just a certificate." But it could be both. It could be just what is installed, or it could be in between. My ideal -- the ideal situation for me is when it's been activated, when it's the middle, when people are taking it, when it's just going away, when it's going out there into the world. Because to me, that -- the most exciting part -- when it gets recontextualized in different places. It's great to see this work sometimes in an artist's home or in a studio or in a store. The strangest one I saw was in a toilet in Germany -- of this piece called *Death by Gun*, which has all these little photographs on how people got killed. And I went -- I was doing the show in this museum, and I went to the toilet and I closed the door. There was just my piece there. So I said, Wow. This is really something. 'Cause I never thought it could be such a -- a laxative [laughter] -- have that effect. But the workers said they loved it, because, you know, they had something to read when they were there waiting. [laughter]

SPEAKER 4: For some, art is for collecting. [inaudible] collect your art if it's disappearing as it stands?

FGT: Well, I don't know. Ask the collectors. They do. I mean, and I think that's very brave, because I think that -- I mean, I really think it's very brave. The first time I made one of those --

SPEAKER 4: [inaudible] --

FGT: Brave. Brave. On the part of them.

SPEAKER 4: Right. Right. [inaudible] --

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FGT: I mean -- the first time I showed one of these pieces, I just had to do it. It was a piece made out of fortune cookies. You know, I just had to do it -- something I needed to do, right? So I was in Toronto and my dealer called me up and he said, "How much should it be?" I said, "Oh, come on. Get out of here. No one's gonna buy that." And then it did sell. So for me, it was as much of a surprise as it is probably for you. So -- and it still is a surprise -- especially for people -- people that live with it. But the work can always be replenished. That's the beauty of it. It's almost like this -- something like this embedded metaphor in the work is just really beautiful. And to me, it's almost a safety device. It's like, when I'm no longer here, they'll have to worry about the work. The work can always be remade. I always -- it can always be replenished. And that's the way things is in life. You know, things that are very dear, that are very special -- they disappear. But on this -- this time -- this time, I can remake it. I can always replenish it.

SPEAKER 4: It's just -- a lot of the time, I mean, even from the very beginning -- sorry to interject -- that you felt that the role of the collector was really important, that it was about the collector being responsible for the mortality of the piece --

FGT: Well, I mean, the --

SPEAKER 4: -- the immortality of the piece.

FGT: I mean, a collector is also a person that exists out there -- has, you know, fears and desires and all that stuff. But sometimes, you know, when people ask me stuff like, "How does the public feels about it," I say, "Well, I am the public." You know? I feel this way. It's almost like we have this artificial separation between what a collector is, what a subway rider is, and what a banker is. I mean, he could be all the three things at once. And sometimes, when this piece is going to a -- a private home, I find that actually very -- very daring and -- and it excites me a lot, because it's a work that requires a lot of responsibility -- you know, a lot of -- a big commitment on the part of whoever owns it, whoever lives with it. And those people, I have a lot of respect. That's why I always insist, every time something gets reproduced, to say, you know, "collection of such-and-such," because I think some of these people are really -- are really amazing -- to get this stuff in their home, you know? I don't live with it -- with 500 pounds of candies in my house. I really don't. And some people do do that. And I think that's pretty amazing. Or the billboards, you know? I didn't show -- some -- yeah, I showed the billboards. Like, for example, the billboards are privately owned, but can only be shown in public. So the person -- the collector who's getting this piece is actually just helping to bring the work out. 'Cause if he or she wants to reproduce the work, they have to rent billboard spaces in public and put it up.

SPEAKER 4: Can I ask another question?

FGT: Yeah.

SPEAKER 4: Actually, I've found that you learn from it -- actually, I -- as you were reading the piece, I found it was very -- it [inaudible] very strong political statement. [inaudible] your artwork is quite abstract, essentially. And how do people -- like, [inaudible] -- 'cause I went to this without knowing who you are -- I mean, what is this all about? How --

FGT: That's a good reaction.

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SPEAKER 4: What?

FGT: That was a good reaction. Yeah.

SPEAKER 4: But now I have a -- you know, a sense -- a greater sensitivity -- you know, understanding what you're trying to do.

FGT: Well, I -- I think that -- I mean, some of the work is more didactic, and some of the work is more abstract or personal or -- or allegorical than others. I think that (sighs) -- in terms of politics, I think some of -- I mean, most of my work is attempts -- attempts to create some kind of change, either in the way we see the world, the way we expect forms to function, the way we expect it to function as an artist, as a public, as a viewer. But I think that after 15 years of so-called political art -- you know, saying "power to the people" -- very little have changed. So I think there's time for us in the cultural field to reinvent the means of addressing that viewer, and instead of saying, "You are bad, you are good; this is good, this is bad," I think I'm trying to reach a point in which I can include more of other issues that include -- that -- that are around politics, which is not just about being good or being bad, but it's also about a tra-- it's also about creating almost a device, a trap -- looking -- like, straight acting -- that kind of -- looking like -- looking like something else and then being inspired. For example, I just have been doing this -- I just did this -- last -- two years ago, did this beautiful photograph of flowers, right? And people said, "Oh, photographs of flowers." Yeah, but that photograph of flowers is a tombstone with two famous lesbians that are buried together, which is Alice B. Toklas and Gertrude Stein. Instead of writing, you know, "lesbians" and -- and that, it's better when you have this beautiful photograph and it seeps in and people say, "Oh, there's nothing wrong with that. It's just that." But it's about creating a collision. And sometimes, to create a collision, you have to use strategies that are not just totally confrontational. And sometimes the work is very didactic. For example, the "I don't remember" or the one in German, and sometimes the work is just totally about the form. 'Cause forms have a meaning. They have a very radical meaning, depending on the context. And the way this work is disseminated, I think, is a political statement about, you know, the aura of the work of art. I think. Well, I mean, maybe I'm not there yet, but I'm definitely trying. And I still -- I mean, sometimes it's abstract, but I like that. I like the fact that people say, "What the hell is this?" 'Cause that's -- that's how I get intrigued sometimes when I go into a gallery -- when I see something and say, "What the hell is this?" And then you disrupt the narrative. I'll never reme-- I'll never forget when I first saw Cady Noland's piece in the gallery at the time, which -- everyone was just making big, huge, you know, out-of-control paintings with grass and [inaudible] stuff, and I went into this little gallery in this village called Nature Morte and I see this little metal thing on the floor and I said -- I -- "Do you know what was going on?" I said, "There's there some construction going on here. What is it?" And I became very intrigued. And then all of these other connotations started coming up when I realized what it was, and the title of the piece, and all of that stuff. But the form was very attractive, first. I didn't need a statement on the wall telling me, "This work is new," you know -- or, "This work is about balance in America" -- or, "This work is about this and that." I -- the form -- the visual form attracted me first. And I think that's very important for -- to make some kind of work that attempts a political action. And I don't say political artwork; I say a work that attempts at some political action. I think the use of beauty is really necessary. I'm all for beauty. I'm a sucker for beauty. But beauty with -- beauty that has a purpose. And I think that -- you know, in the '60s and '70s, we did a lot of posters that says, "power to the people" with a clenched fist, and we still -- we still don't have -- are not there yet.



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SPEAKER 5: Your billboards seem to function in that same way. They're very, very beautiful images, and very evocative. But there's no text. There's no -- people just come upon them unawares, am I correct? And then -- are -- you left -- you leave the meaning open?

FGT: Right. Right. I mean, it's really about inclusion, because, I mean, a double empty bed in New York could mean so many things.

SPEAKER 5: Right.

FGT: The -- of all -- of all places -- *Wall Street Journal* did a survey on the street of how people felt about the billboard, and it was -- it was amazing, because it was everything from an ad for Macy's white bedsheet sale to a -- to a -- to an ad for a news -- for a movie that was about to come later. Well, they waited for three months, and no movie came. Some of that -- and that expectation is -- there -- the -- I mean, I'm playing with those expectations as a viewer. To me, it's really important, because it makes us see then what we expect as natural is not natural at all, but is totally cultural. And this work is about inclusion. It's about creating -- it's about creating a collision. And that's why, for example, the -- that billboard had no text -- had nothing. You could re-- you could -- you could project on it whatever you wanted. But my reading of the billboard was very specific. Which was about longing. And --

SPEAKER 5: Which was [inaudible]?

FGT: About longing.

SPEAKER 5: Oh.

FGT: And it was also about -- it was also about the bed as a contested space. Again, I mean, you could explain all these things and -- and you -- you could explain those things in the billboard and make it a goody-goody artwork and make it totally boring. I mean, you could s-- you could mention something about Georgia -- the Supreme Court ruling -- that was 1986 -- about -- the sodom-- the sodomy case, in which the Supreme Court said that some people were more equal than others -- in terms of our right for privacy -- for some of us to express our love. I mean, the Supreme Court in 1986 ruled in *Georgia v. Hardwick* that gay men had no right for privacy -- that the state had a -- had an interest in ruling what was going on in the private home of two grownup men, therefore totally eliminating any private sphere for gay men. And I would say, Well, let's just do it in public; it's the same thing. But in order -- instead of doing that, which would be very aggressive and will only bring in the already convinced, I'd rather say it in a way that is more -- almost, like insidious -- almost -- like, that it seeps in much more -- softer. That's my strategy. Maybe I failed, but that's what -- that was my attempt. Anything else?

SPEAKER 6: I know you said you get a little bored by hearing these stories, but I speak for everyone -- we were not bored.

FGT: Good.

SPEAKER 6: It was an absolutely -- we're glad you told all those stories. It was a fascinating evening, and I --

FGT: Thank you.

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SPEAKER 6: -- thank you very, very much.

FGT: Thanks for coming. [applause]