A note on the Core Tenets: The main priority of the Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation is fostering and facilitating individuals' direct experiences with the work, in keeping with Gonzalez-Torres's primary intention. The Foundation also provides language around the structure and nature of the works, following the type and forms of language developed by Gonzalez-Torres that has been provided to owners and exhibitors on an ongoing basis. One of the ways the Foundation provides access to such language is through a format referred to as the 'Core Tenets,' which describe works/bodies of works that have specific, yet sometimes open-ended parameters.

CORE TENETS FOR FELIX GONZALEZ-TORRES'S PORTRAIT WORKS

While each body of work follows its own set of tenets, Gonzalez-Torres's practice includes purposeful variations, within a body of work and between bodies of work. With the knowledge of his likely foreshortened life, Gonzalez-Torres distinctly strove to create an oeuvre to be considered in its totality, in all its variations, in order to foster engagement, questioning, and ongoing complexity. It may be compelling to compare how the Core Tenets for different works/bodies of work differ and align with one another.

The 'Works' section of the Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation website helps demonstrate how the Core Tenets play out in different installations of the same work and across bodies of works. This section of the website is structured to provide a comprehensive overview of the artist's oeuvre, as well as in-depth illustrations/depictions of each work from varying installations.

A specific note on portraits: Portraits are the only works in Felix Gonzalez-Torres's oeuvre that were made with the involvement of the initial owner.[1] In the process of making each portrait, Gonzalez-Torres asked the subject to provide a list of events/dates which they considered formative. Gonzalez-Torres deliberated extensively on the provided content before proceeding to select, edit (e.g. reword and/or renumber), remove provided events/dates, contribute additional events/dates, and arrange a sequence/choose the ordering of the events/dates, thereby determining the initial version of the portrait.[2]

Each of the portrait works is a unique artwork.

It is integral that the portrait works have the capacity to change over time.[3]

The owner has the right to make a new version of a portrait at any time, including each time they manifest the work.[4]

The owner has the right to choose to manifest the work at any time.[5]

The owner, or an authorized borrower, has the right and responsibility to reflect on the following core tenets when exhibiting the work:

> The owner has the exclusive right to choose to lend the work. In doing so, the owner is thereby extending to an authorized borrower for the term of the loan the rights and responsibilities to make decisions about installing the work, within the borrower's interpretation of the specific, yet open-ended parameters of the work.[6] [7]
>
> When lending a portrait work, whereas certain rights are automatically extended, the owner must choose whether or not to extend to the borrower the right to make a version of the portrait within the specific, yet open-ended parameters of the work. If the right to make a version is loaned, then

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the borrower makes all decisions around that particular version, which may include; removing provided events/dates, contributing additional events/dates, and arranging a sequence/choosing the ordering of the events/dates, thereby determining the version of the portrait.[8]

The portrait works are installed directly on the wall(s)[9] at what would be considered "frieze" height, in a modest but readable scale, in a continuous horizontal line(s) at/along the perimeter of a given space.[10] [11]

The typeface of the text for all portrait works is Trump Medieval Bold Italic.

The color of the text, and in some cases the optional band of background color, is specified in the *Certificate of Authenticity and Ownership* for each portrait work.[12]

Gonzalez-Torres considered a recording of every version of each portrait to be conceptually important. New versions of a portrait work do not eliminate any other version of that work.

Each portrait work can exist in more than one place at a time without impugning the work's uniqueness; the uniqueness of the work is linked to ownership.

Each authorized manifestation of a portrait work is the work and should be referred to only as the work.

The possibility for the works to be manifested with ease is an ongoing intention of the portrait works.

While the rights of ownership transfer from one owner to the next owner, the title of a portrait work always remains the same as specified in the original caption.

Decisions about a particular manifestation of the work may shift each time the work is installed, and potentially throughout each manifestation.[13]

Gonzalez-Torres utilized each element of the artwork's caption as a vehicle for conceptual information; if and when one chooses to use captions, and the title,[14] date, medium and/or dimensions are listed, each element of the caption remains consistent regardless of any given manifestation or how the work may change throughout a manifestation.[15] [16]

Portrait works are accompanied by Certificates of Authenticity and Ownership.[17]

In furtherance of its educational mission, the Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation is available to be in dialogue about the Core Tenets and provide further information

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[1] There was one additional artwork in another body of work that was made in dialogue with the initial owner. [FGTF# GF1992-009]

[2] The portrait subjects provided events/dates to Gonzalez-Torres in a range of formats, and he engaged with the material provided in various ways. There are throughlines that can be discerned in the formats of the initial versions of each portrait work (e.g. in the initial version of each portrait, the events/dates took the form of one or a few words followed by a numerical year [in almost all cases]). That said, in his process of creating the initial versions of portrait works, in addition to adding completely new events/dates and ultimately sequencing all of the events/dates, Gonzalez-Torres's treatment of what was provided included: shortening provided events/dates into one or two words; lengthening provided events/dates; keeping provided events/dates verbatim; eliminating

provided events/dates; and choosing completely different language and/or dates to represent what was provided. The varied strategies Gonzalez-Torres employed across the initial versions of portrait works suggests that he sought to impart both a complex questioning of how a subject might be represented, and to evoke how one might continue to create future versions of portrait works. (See also footnote 3.)

[3] A 1994 letter from Gonzalez-Torres to the subject of one particular portrait work illuminates aspects of the conceptual importance of the portrait works' ongoing capacity for change: "We are *not* what we think we are, but rather a compilation of texts. A compilation of histories, past, present, and future, always, always, shifting, adding, subtracting, gaining. These portraits are an attempt at dealing with the theoretical and limited aspects of portraiture. We are as much a product of the invention of TV as we are the product of our parents, and domestic environments, historical events and accidents, and the social forces that have shaped the so-called 'public' life. [...] Public life is private life. In our culture we live in a network of interrelations. As Lenin said: everything is related to everything. And why so many dates of a time in which you were not even born yet? When you were born you already came into a world that was pretty much decided and organized for you: your language, the language you first learned, and the other languages you later learned. The names of things, of cities, the history of our humanity and our atrocities, the inventions, the viruses, the ways of loving, religion, etc. In other words: when we look at a photo of how we look like it's only that — how we look, and not *what* we are, that is a history too complex to 'represent.' That is one of the reasons why these pieces can, and should, be altered to reflect in the future the fluctuations of 'personal' and/or 'public' developments." [Felix Gonzalez-Torres, letter to Robert Vifian, December 3, 1994. Reproduced in: *Felix Gonzalez-Torres*, edited by Julie Ault. Gottingen, Germany: Steidldangin, 2006: 170-171].

[4] Each version of a portrait may include multiple texts and/or installations.

[5] The portrait works exist regardless of whether they are physically manifest.

[6] Prior to and throughout the duration of any manifestation, the owner or authorized borrower must ensure that a structure is in place that allows for thoughtful and ongoing decision-making.

[7] While portrait works have the capacity to be loaned with relative ease, in his lifetime Gonzalez-Torres established a precedent of prioritizing exhibitions that fostered complex understandings of the works.

[8] The version of the portrait used to manifest the work may shift depending on the decisions made about the entries included for a particular manifestation and may continue to shift in the process of preparing for installation and during the process of installation, as entries may be added, removed, and/or reordered to achieve a desired format in the architecture of the space (e.g. for the text to span all the walls or a particular wall in a given space).

[9] The medium is specified as 'paint on wall;' alternative methods of applying a portrait work directly to the wall have been used.

[10] Decisions regarding the installation of a portrait in situ may be influenced and/or directed by the architecture and conditions of a given space. While typically "frieze height" may be described as just below the point where the wall meets the ceiling, the interpretation of "frieze height" may vary in response to the scale of the architecture. Accordingly, the size of the text may shift relative to what is considered "modest but readable" at a given height. The form/concept of a "frieze" is also a guideline for other aspects of installation. Depending on the length of a version of a portrait, a priority may be that the portrait span the entire width of a wall or encircle a space/span multiple walls (while the spacing between characters, the spacing of the events/dates, the spacing between entries, and the size of the text are consistent throughout each installation, they may be finessed accordingly).

[11] Decisions made when installing a portrait in situ constitute a significant contribution to the content of a particular manifestation of a portrait.

[12] In some cases, the color of the text and the optional band of background color is specified as "to the owner's choosing."

[13] When exhibiting the work in a public institution, exhibitors benefit from developing an understanding of the nature of the work in advance of the exhibition and creating a system that allows for the institution to consider and reconsider decisions both before and throughout the course of an installation.

[14] The purposeful punctuation of the title includes both the placement of quotation marks around the word "Untitled" and the fact that the parenthetical portion of the title is placed outside of the quotation marks.

[15] Gonzalez-Torres let exhibitors decide whether or not to include artwork captions on the walls of an exhibition, or elsewhere. (In his lifetime, Gonzalez-Torres accommodated certain institutions' stylistic standards of only listing parts of an artwork's caption [e.g. just the title and date; or just the title, date, and medium].)

[16] Gonzalez-Torres typically chose not to include descriptive or interpretive information on wall labels/texts. Should an exhibitor choose to include descriptive or interpretive wall labels/texts – or if including such information is part of an exhibitor's standard

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protocol – it is suggested that the full artwork caption also be present. In such cases, ideally the caption is displayed on a separate label, or with a separation from any descriptive or interpretive information. (In this way, the language and structure that Gonzalez-Torres chose for the caption can be reflected upon both alongside and independently from text generated by an exhibitor.)

[17] Gonzalez-Torres intended for the Certificates of Authenticity and Ownership for portrait works to be issued anew in the name of the current owner for as long as possible.

COMPLETE LIST OF CAPTIONS FOR GONZALEZ-TORRES'S PORTRAIT WORKS:

"Untitled", 1989
Paint on wall
Dimensions vary with installation

"Untitled" (Portrait of the Wongs), 1991
Paint on wall
Dimensions vary with installation

"Untitled" (Portrait of Michael Jenkins), 1991
Paint on wall
Dimensions vary with installation

"Untitled" (Portrait of Julie Ault), 1991
Paint on wall
Dimensions vary with installation

"Untitled" (Portrait of the Stillpasses), 1991
Paint on wall
Dimensions vary with installation

"Untitled" (Portrait of Jennifer Flay), 1992
Paint on wall
Dimensions vary with installation

"Untitled" (Portrait of Andrea Rosen), 1992
Paint on wall
Dimensions vary with installation

"Untitled" (Portrait of Elaine Dannheisser), 1993
Paint on wall
Dimensions vary with installation

"Untitled" (Portrait of Ingvild Goetz), 1993
Paint on wall
Dimensions vary with installation

"Untitled" (Portrait of the Magoons), 1993
Paint on wall
Dimensions vary with installation

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"Untitled" (Portrait of Robert Vifian), 1993
Paint on wall
Dimensions vary with installation

"Untitled" (Portrait of Austrian Airlines), 1993
Medium varies with installation
Dimensions vary with installation

"Untitled" (Portrait of the Rosenbergs), 1994
Paint on wall
Dimensions vary with installation

"Untitled" (Portrait of MOCA), 1994
Paint on wall
Dimensions vary with installation

"Untitled" (Portrait of Cincinnati Art Museum), 1994
Paint on wall
Dimensions vary with installation

"Untitled" (Portrait of the Fabric Workshop, a gift to Kippy), 1994
Paint on wall
Dimensions vary with installation

PURPOSEFUL VARIATIONS WITHIN THE BODY OF PORTRAIT WORKS:
The work below follows the Core Tenets for Portrait Works with the exception of the variation described here:

"Untitled" (Portrait of Austrian Airlines), 1993
Medium varies with installation
Dimensions vary with installation

"Untitled" (Portrait of Austrian Airlines) is the only portrait work which has a "medium that varies with installation" (as described in the caption for the work). This work may be manifest as either a portrait work or a billboard work.

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