Crimson Tide

Harvard University’s ACT UP History Lesson

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Members of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) turned activism into an art form. It’s fitting, then, that the Harvard Art Museum has gathered more than 70 posters, stickers and pieces of visual media from the group for an exhibition titled *ACT UP New York: Activism, Art, and the AIDS Crisis, 1987–1993*.

“ACT UP was able to distill incredibly complicated ideas into slogans, pictures and words,” says museum curator Helen Molesworth, noting that iconic slogans such as “Silence=Death” conveyed messages about homophobia, safe sex, government apathy and AIDS. She hopes the art underscores the idea that “in times of crisis, people tend to demand that their government serve them. That is one of our rights.”

The exhibit also includes the premiere of the ACT UP Oral History Project, a video suite of more than 100 interviews with ACT UP members (viewable at actuporalhistory.org).

In addition, Harvard has slated discussions and lectures on related topics such as stigma and denialism until early December, many of which will be posted online. For more info, visit harvardartmuseum.org.

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