

# ARTFORUM



View of "Militant Eroticism," 2015.

CHICAGO

## "Militant Eroticism"

ICEBERG PROJECTS

7714 N Sheridan Road

May 30–June 27, 2015

ART+ Positive, an art action group first organized in New York in 1989 to combat homophobia in public policy and art censorship, displays a timeline of their exhibitions and demonstrations for this show.

Ray Navarro's installation of photographs, *Equipped (assisted by Zoe Leonard)*, 1990, is here presented for the first time since its exhibition twenty-five years ago on the occasion of Navarro's AIDS-related death. This triptych of black-and-white photographs might have been exercises in laissez-faire, Duchampian literalism, if not for the charged erotic phrases captioning each image. A wheelchair with a placard reading "HOT BUTT" is bent forward, and a walker lying on its side and a disused cane are labeled "STUDWALK" and "THIRD LEG" respectively, wistfully lacing mobility equipment for disabled bodies with innuendo. Frames the color of pert pink skin indicate a tenderness toward the missing figures.

Alongside Navarro's piece and a wall installation by David Wojnarowicz, artifacts of protest show the concurrent threats of decimation that the AIDS epidemic and art censorship represented throughout the '80s and '90s. George Bush and Jesse Helms are called out—one poster juxtaposes a reproduction of Robert Mapplethorpe's *Self Portrait with Whip*, 1978, with the slogan "Helms is a pain in the ass." ART+ Positive's activism, particularly in works such as Lola Flash's explicit photographs also on display, lays claim to visibility and validity for sexual practices broadly defined that refuse to disappear due to disease or legislation. These stakes are no less relevant today as the progression of LGBT identities into the mainstream still often dispenses with any account of the sex by which those lives are differentiated from the norm.

— Matt Morris