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GLEN JOHNSON

Art and Culture

Tim Miller had an ambiguous place in *The American Century*, a huge installation of “Art and Culture” that filled New York’s Whitney Museum of American Art during 1999 and 2000. The exhibition’s curators recognized the importance of the solo performance art of the century’s final decades, but they registered ambivalence about how to place Tim Miller, one of the founders and most successful practitioners of this vibrant contemporary form. Tim Miller’s contribution to the American century was represented by a two-minute video loop of the “get hard” litany from *My Queer Body* (1992), in which a naked Tim exhorts his penis—unsuccessfully, as scripted—to rise to a sexual political gesture. Tim Miller performed nonstop on video, but not in the exhibition area devoted to “Video and Performance.” Instead, he appeared inside a curious tunnel-shaped enclosure jutting out at an angle from the back wall of the museum’s second floor and labeled “The Culture Wars.” The tunnel provided good artistic company, including Robert Mapplethorpe’s “Man in a Polyester Suit,” a Dona Ann McAdams photo of Annie Sprinkle, and an excerpt from Marlon Riggs’s documentary *Tongues Untied*. But it also included footage of Patrick J. Buchanan exhorting the 1992 Republican National Convention to fight “a cultural war,” as well as a

news photo of homophobic demonstrators affiliated with the Reverend Fred Phelps and his “God Hates Fags” crusade. Within *The American Century*, among the artworks but not quite of them, Tim Miller in the tunnel became part of a “cultural site.”

Falling back on the archaic distinction between art and culture that other parts of its exhibition countered, the Whitney Museum's segregation and labeling of Tim Miller's work in many ways epitomizes his career within the contentious America of recent decades. The museum's signage implied a need to shield young museumgoers from an artist dealing with homosexuality and known for performing naked, though this explanation was hardly consistent with the ample supply of genitalia and other sexual content on view in open exhibition areas. Skittishness was understandable in a political environment where museums, like Tim Miller and other “controversial” (meaning gay) artists, had been targeted in the name of “family values.” Beyond timidity, the Whitney's enclosure reflected uncertainty about the role of activism in art. RoseLee Goldberg wrote in the *American Century* exhibition catalog that “many artists reclaimed performance as a mechanism for grassroots activism, and in the hands of Tim Miller or the late David Wojnarowicz, . . . it became the most effective means to publicize political and social issues.” Although the exhibition was able to do some justice to feminist performers, for the most part it bracketed activist performance as a “mechanism” or “means” to goals outside the realm of art. Contemporary solo performers who were displayed outside the tunnel—from Meredith Monk, Laurie Anderson, and Bruce Nauman to Matthew Barney—were those whose accomplishments could be addressed in more purely aesthetic terms.

1001 Beds defines Tim Miller's place as a citizen artist in the contemporary United States through a wide range of his writings, including performance scripts, essays, interviews, and journal entries. For a quarter-century, Miller has worked at the intersection of performance, politics, and identity, using his personal experience to focus

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entertaining but pointed explorations of life as a gay American man, part of a community both assertive and beleaguered in a deeply homophobic and increasingly divided political culture. The result is a distinctive body of work of unique value. Taking advantage of the quick responsiveness and portability of solo performance, Miller has brought current issues to audiences throughout the United States as well as in Europe, Australia, and Japan. His political interventions have ranged from a performance at a hospital vigil during the AIDS funding crisis to demonstrations outside national political conventions, into the twenty-first century, when he has been the only theater artist regularly touring work dealing with immigration and “gay marriage” issues. As a teacher and as founder and curator of performance venues, he has been a central figure in the growth of performance art and the exploration of its potentials, both artistic and political. His visibility and success as an activist artist led to his being targeted by the radical Right during the 1990s, a culture-wars episode whose effects shadow the arts in America to this day. Taken together, the writings collected here constitute a professional autobiography of this activist artist, one of the creators of a crucial contemporary art form and a tireless advocate for the American dream of political equality for all citizens.

Politics and Performance

When Tim Miller arrived in New York at the age of nineteen as an apprentice postmodern dancer, his political awareness and his professional ambitions were intense but still largely separate. His interest in American politics arose precociously: growing up in Whittier, California, hometown of Richard Nixon, he assumed that he too would someday be president. But his growing awareness of himself as a gay man in a homophobic nation channeled his aspirations away from elective office and toward oppositional politics and the activist community. His move from California to New York in 1978 was shadowed by the growth of right-wing conservatism and propelled

by the political murder in San Francisco of Harvey Milk, the nation's first openly gay elected official. After two years spent tentatively exploring his artistic vocation and activist issues in the neighborhoods of Manhattan's Lower East Side, the young dancer was "fueled and challenged" toward a new form of activist performance by the 1980 election to the presidency of Ronald Reagan. Reagan had been governor of California during Miller's childhood, and the triumph of the Right's agendas fronted by Reagan presented "a crisis period for artists, a crisis that has not abated since." In his first major solo work, *Postwar* of 1982, Miller staged a scene where he was beaten up by a dancer in a Reagan mask. His opposition to Reaganism soon came to focus on the president's silence as AIDS devastated the gay male community, leading Miller to the militant ACT UP (the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) movement, whose participatory ethos and confrontational tactics became, as he told Steven Durland in the 1991 interview printed here, "the single most influential thing in my life."

The stylized battle with Reagan in *Postwar* was transformed into the activist performer's real confrontation with power. The confrontation became even sharper as President Reagan's willful neglect of the AIDS crisis was followed by the overt homophobia of the first Bush administration, which launched an agenda to intimidate the arts community and silence activist performers including Tim Miller. In 1992, Miller demonstrated with ACT UP outside the Republican National Convention in Houston, while Reagan protege Buchanan added "culture war" to the national vocabulary. The Republican defeat that year by Bill Clinton renewed progressive hopes, which were reflected also by Miller's anticipatory celebration in *My Queer Body* of the inauguration of a black lesbian president. But the culture war continued. A dozen years after Buchanan's speech, with the Right again in control of the federal government, the struggle for equal rights for gay and lesbian Americans had moved to marriage license bureaus and immigration offices—and to the performance spaces where Miller's *Us* pushed for national legal acknowledgment of gay relationships, even as President George W. Bush called for

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Tim-Reagan dance from *Postwar*, 1982. Photo © Paula Court.

expanding the homophobic Defense of Marriage Act (signed by Clinton) into a constitutional amendment.

Since the 1980s, Miller's work has emphasized a participatory ethos that invites his audience—sitting in a theater, collaborating in a performance workshop, or demonstrating before a federal building, a public hospital, a marriage bureau—to use the space of performance both to raise awareness and to empower change. In his theatrical works this notion regularly takes him—sometimes naked—into the audience. The melding into performance of personal experience, bodily self-assertion, a communal ideal, and political goals characterizes the selections collected in *1001 Beds*. His belief in the power of performance to effect change infuses these essays, manifestoes, journal entries, transcriptions of performance pieces, and the full text of *Us*, his funny and furious work addressing the official homophobia of U.S. immigration policies and laws that deny gay partners any of

the rights granted heterosexual couples. Discrimination against gay families became the main focus of Miller's work years before the U.S. Supreme Court's overturning of sodomy laws in 2003 reenergized gay communities and moved to the forefront of national discussion the legal status of same-sex couples. His 1999 work *Glory Box* first addressed the dilemma of Miller and his Australian partner, Alistair McCartney, who face separation or exile from the United States unless these laws are reformed. Characteristically, personal experience developed into activism as Miller and McCartney joined with other binational couples to publicize and lobby. More than any previous Miller work, *Us* became part of a comprehensive activist strategy inside theaters and outside.

As he has done for two decades, Tim Miller in *Us* deploys his personal experience as a touchstone for addressing social issues, mixing "juicy autobiographical bits" with passionate and humorous insights into both the pleasures of gay life and the "nasty injustices that queer folk face." The material in *1001 Beds* gives insight into his process of turning myriad experiences and memories into narratives that are then crafted into essays and performance pieces. The arrangement of the selections follows Miller's professional trajectory, from performance pieces in the early 1980s that focused on the power and politics of the nuclear family and of relationships with lovers, through the overtly political works fueled by Miller's street activism and urging audiences to confront with him the daily injustices of gay people's lives. In both form and content, *1001 Beds* represents the hallmarks of Miller's work. Episodic and at times fragmentary, the material weaves Miller's own stories with those of friends, lovers, colleagues, and students while it addresses questions of social justice for gay men, lesbians, and other members of the diverse communities that make up the United States. The selections in this book overlap and revisit particular stories and events to present Miller as a vital American cultural figure.

These works exemplify Tim Miller's love of language and word-play, such as his puns on *writes*, civil *rights*, and the marriage *rites*

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that are so much a part of contemporary political discourse as well as of Miller's performances and essays. The range of works included here also highlights the deep engagement with American history and culture that runs through Miller's work and underlies his critique of American politics. Miller's desire to "figure out all this America stuff" informs his work from the early *Postwar*, which traced the Miller family's history through social changes and the nuclear threat of post-World War II America, through the text of *Democracy in America*, the multimedia ensemble piece he created for the 1984 Next Wave Festival at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, to the joyous yet bittersweet role that Miller's love of American musical theater plays in *Us*. He has lent his voice, his body, and his art to the growing assertiveness of gay men and lesbians, part of a profound continuing social change empowering women and ethnic, sexual, and cultural minorities. Miller's fascination with American identity, his own and that of the country at large, provides for greater understanding of his anger at a federal government that has almost always come down on the homophobic side of issues involving the lives of its gay citizens. *1001 Beds* reveals how firmly this artist's idealism is rooted in American values and the American dream, lending poignancy to *Us*, where he faces forced exile from what *Glory Box* calls "my pathetic, frustrating, hate-filled, when-will-we-grow-up, annoying and ever beloved country."

Since 1979, Miller has helped to define the genre of solo performance as a "quintessentially American art." He cofounded two of the most important American venues for alternative performances, Performance Space 122 in New York and Highways Performance Space in Santa Monica, California. These venues are dedicated to the transformative potential of performance, showcasing innovative solo performers and training and supporting emerging artists, experimental theater and dance troupes, and socially conscious art. Founded in 1979 by Charlie Moulton, Charles Dennis, Peter Rose, and Tim Miller, PS 122 is housed in a former public school in New York's East Village, historically an immigrant and working-class

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neighborhood that has attracted young artists and radical thinkers. It has been a central force in the burgeoning of the East Village as a site for cultural and performance venues. At PS 122 in 1980, Miller organized "Men Together," the first festival of gay male performance art in the United States. After returning to the West Coast, Miller cofounded Highways in 1989 with Linda Frye Burnham, serving as its artistic director throughout the 1990s. At Highways in particular, he developed the gay men's performance workshops that both built community and fueled Miller's own works, eventually expanding to venues throughout the United States as well as in Britain. Both PS 122 and Highways have tapped into the divergent artistic energies specific to their local communities—the experimental volatility of New York's downtown arts scene and Los Angeles's community-based, politicized arts movements. PS 122 and Highways have physically actualized Miller's aspirations for community building through performance.

Tim Miller's performing life has spanned four continents but has always centered on these two artistic homes, one within sight of the East River and the other blocks from the Pacific Ocean. Both his art and his activism share this bicoastal dimension. When he arrived in New York in 1978 after a year's detour to the University of Washington, the nineteen-year-old dancer brought with him notions formed by feminist performance in his native Los Angeles—"the personal, the small, the healing"—as well as scars from the murder of his first political idol, the gay San Francisco supervisor Harvey Milk. In New York Miller intended to study dance with Merce Cunningham, but what he found there was not what he expected. As Miller puts it, at that time the New York art world affected "postmodern cool"—"images without politics, gesture without social action." Miller soon "got myself into trouble" by publicly criticizing established gay artists like Cunningham and Robert Wilson for political apathy around gay issues. But he found alternative inspiration in the emerging downtown scene and artists like Spalding Gray and the Wooster Group, for whom art was inextricably personal and political. Enthusiastically

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embracing that scene, Miller within a few years had become the “golden boy” of New York performance art. As he recalls in the essay-interview “Professional Autobiography,” accolades and international success came quickly—too quickly, he later came to believe, though his high profile gave him the opportunity to experiment widely with the content and form of solo, duo, and ensemble performances. When Miller came to rethink his approach to performance in the wake of dissatisfaction with the large-scale, elaborate, and poorly received *Democracy in America*, the elements were in place for a new synthesis that has marked his career ever since. Moving back to California in 1986, he brought with him the verbal exuberance and virtuosity of movement he had honed in New York, and in Los Angeles he reconnected with the art of “social context, coming from cultural communities, . . . where the artist is also a social creature . . . and a social activist.”

The earliest writings in *1001 Beds* are permeated with the young performer’s concern that his developing art should be socially aware, artistically gratifying, accessible, and critically successful. As he moved into more explicitly political works, these tensions coalesced for him into two key principles: that “performance is by nature a social act, a public act,” and that the strongest element of his work is its personal specificity, his own “strange cosmology which begins to take life on stage, dynamically and passionately.” Back in Los Angeles, Miller worked among community-focused artists who defined themselves as citizen activists. This included street activism: as he says in “Professional Autobiography,” artists who dealt with homelessness or AIDS “better also be functional” in trying to resolve those crises. Miller joined ACT UP, an organization of individuals putting their bodies on the line against the inaction of government and the medical establishment in the AIDS pandemic. ACT UP’s tactics forced attention on the stories of those lost to an epidemic not yet even publicly mentioned by the country’s president. Miller joined in protests and in organizing demonstrations in Los Angeles and throughout the United States. Of these actions, two were especially

important to him. The weeklong vigil in 1989 at the Los Angeles County Hospital demanding an AIDS ward was, as Miller notes, a case where activists achieved direct tangible success, even at the cost of being roughed up by police. Equally important, if less clearly successful, was the "Art Attack" mock-arrest of the Los Angeles Federal Building in 1990 during which demonstrators protested attempts by right-wingers in government to suppress artistic expression; Miller was among the twenty-eight who were arrested for real. When on tour outside of Los Angeles, Miller connected with local ACT UP chapters, which became his primary national community.

Miller's ACT UP-inspired performances showed not only increased militancy but also a more explicit, joyous exploration of the male body and sexuality. The nature of these late 1980s works gave Miller a high profile and brought him into the sights of a concerted attack, spearheaded by the congressional Right led by Senator Jesse Helms and with the connivance of the Bush administration, on artists dealing provocatively with sexuality. Government-sanctioned repression initially focused on visual artists, including Robert Mapplethorpe and Andres Serrano, and on the museums that showed their works, resulting in canceled exhibitions, lawsuits, and a chilling effect on institutions once bold enough to showcase innovative and controversial art.

The most protracted high-profile case of censorship occurred at the National Endowment for the Arts. A decade and a half after it began, the "NEA Four" episode still provides the label with which Miller is most frequently identified. In 1990, after moving successfully through the NEA's established peer-review process, in which a committee of artists selects projects for funding based on their merits, performance grants to Tim Miller, Holly Hughes, John Fleck, and Karen Finley were killed by the chair of the NEA, Bush appointee John Frohnmayr. Three of the NEA Four artists were gay or lesbian, and all four dealt with sexual themes. A subsequent lawsuit brought to light what had been obvious from the start: that Frohnmayr acted in direct response to pressure from the Bush White

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House, thereby violating the independence from political interference guaranteed by the NEA's charter. Miller's earlier anger at the Reagan administration over AIDS was matched by his outrage toward the Bush government for violating the mission of the NEA, the American spirit of freedom of expression, and his own rights as a citizen artist. In his defiant July 4, 1990, "Artist's Declaration of Independence," President Bush became "King George," reincarnating the monarch whose earlier infringement of Americans' rights inspired the 1776 Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution.

Though always an enthusiastic provocateur, Miller did not choose his designated role in the culture war. He engaged it with customary intensity, but his part was uncharacteristically reactive and symbolic. Useful as notoriety can sometimes be, it inevitably oversimplifies and limits an artist. Once targeted, Miller could anticipate protesters outside, and spies inside, any theater, as well as garbled or false reports of his performances. In the environment generated by right-wing smear tactics, no less a personage than Robert Brustein, founding director of Yale Repertory and American Repertory Theatres, wrote in the *New Republic* that Tim Miller "proudly displayed his erect organ" onstage. Brustein had never seen Miller perform. When I questioned him about this falsehood, which is at best a gross caricature of the "get hard" verbal litany in *My Queer Body* (the same segment later chosen by the Whitney Museum to represent Miller's work), Brustein replied that he had "read it somewhere." In such a cultural climate, Tim Miller quickly came to regard the NEA fracas as a distraction from more important work.

In his comments on the culture war, Miller has consistently observed that, stressful and constricting as the attacks were on established artists like himself, the most pernicious effect was on young performers and the institutions providing opportunities for their work to be seen. This was no facile observation: throughout his career, Miller has devoted major portions of his time and energy to training and encouraging young artists and to promoting venues

where their work can be seen. In the 1990s, while regularly under political attack, Miller channeled additional energy into his teaching. Beyond long- and short-term university positions, he conducted performance workshops for apprentice actors, academics, theater professionals, seminarians, and, especially, gay men who may or may not aspire to artistic careers. Expanding techniques honed as artistic director of Highways to other venues on three continents, his gay men's workshops ranged from one-day affairs, typically held at spaces where Miller was performing in the evenings, to more extended undertakings that eventuated in public performances created by workshop members. The workshops were symbiotic with Miller's own performances: beginning with *My Queer Body* and extending to *Us*, many of Miller's stories took shape from exercises he did alongside workshop participants.

In the 1990s, harassment by the homophobic Right was a fact of professional life for Tim Miller, even as the political climate shifted with the election of Bill Clinton. Like many artists, Miller worked for the Clinton ticket. He was slated to perform at a 1992 Clinton fundraiser for the gay community, but his appearance was quashed out of fear that the notoriety of the NEA Four case would be used to attack the candidate. Although Miller continued to support Clinton, that bit of shiftiness proved to be prophetic. Following the 1992 election, the NEA Four's lawsuit was settled, in effect awarding them the grants withheld by Frohnmayer. The matter did not end there, however, because the Clinton Justice Department unaccountably appealed a circuit court ruling that struck down the congressional "decency" clause that had been used against the artists. In 1998, the United States Supreme Court reversed that ruling, 8-1 (both Clinton appointees in the majority), and "decency" remains the law of the land, delimiting projects that can receive government funding. Making the "indecent" label stick was President Clinton's ironic parting gift to the NEA Four.

For all the caricaturing and sensationalizing that the culture war engendered, Miller's work is profoundly rooted in American ideals

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of freedom, equality, justice—and decency. He can be excused a touch of egotism in calling himself “a Jimmy Stewart–type queer persona,” since—as with the U.S. senator played by Stewart in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*—the combination of idealism and anger voiced in Miller’s works is fueled by repeated betrayal of those ideals. As early as 1984, Jacki Appel noted that Miller differs from most of his contemporaries in that his characteristic mode is indignation rather than irony. Indignation is the mirror image of hope, and both are products of idealism. Often angry, Miller’s writings are expressions of a hopeful activist determination to realize American ideals. *Us*, whose complete script appears in this book, expresses his demand for the simple right to marry his Australian-born partner and settle with him into the life of an American family. While Miller’s works have expounded the pleasures and dangers of gay sex and the male body, they have also highlighted the sweetness and vulnerability of love. This last characteristic gives *Us* added potency in the current struggle to define marriage in the United States, appealing to Americans both within and beyond the gay and lesbian community.

Of all the national political events in Tim Miller’s lifetime, the election of 2000 was the most directly relevant to him, because Democratic candidate Al Gore endorsed the cause for which Miller had been working for years: immigration rights for same-sex couples. The defeat of Gore (at the hands of the same Supreme Court that had upheld the “decency” clause against the NEA Four) contributed to the more determined activism that infuses the text of *Us* and surrounds its performances. Miller has been able to celebrate some victories—most notably, performing *Us* in Austin on the day in 2003 when the Supreme Court overturned Texas’s sodomy law. But eighteen months later, anti-“gay marriage” referenda were used in eleven states to bring out votes to keep the Bush administration in power. Eight of the eleven successful referenda also banned civil unions for gay and lesbian couples. The simple goal of full equality remains elusive, so in *1001 Beds*, which concludes this collection of his writings, Tim Miller looks forward to another twenty years taking

his activist performances to audiences throughout the United States and the world.

The Shape of a Career

This book's comprehensive picture of Tim Miller as artist, teacher, and citizen activist counters the lingering effects of culture-war rhetoric that ignores the range of his activities and oversimplifies his art. The ongoing American culture war is fundamentally about access—about whose stories get heard fully and in their integrity. The notoriety that the Whitney Museum's *American Century* exhibit emphasized underlines the importance of understanding Miller as more than a “cultural site”—the need to see him as a creative artist at the intersection of performance, activism, and gay identity. National politics, gay issues, activist performance, and—holding all together—the experience of an American gay man trying to make a life, a community, and a family in a culture still legally and officially homophobic—that matrix defines Tim Miller's artistic career and this book.

The five sections of *1001 Beds* are topical and roughly chronological. An essay from 1999, “Memory and Facing the Future,” serves as prologue. All of the book's selections demonstrate the belief stated in “Memory and Facing the Future,” that writing one's story is “a fierce act of imagining the future.” The material that follows—from performances, interviews in which he discusses his creative process, essays on pedagogy, and selections from his journals—resonates with his power to use the personal and particular to speak to the communal: “I perform stories of who I have been in order to imagine who I might become—who we might become.”

The opening section, “New York Years,” recounts the period between 1978 and 1986, during which Tim Miller discovered his art form and developed his distinctive voice. Arriving in New York City at the age of nineteen, he soon was drawn to the emerging forms of performance in the downtown theater scene. This section includes

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material Miller introduced at PS 122, the venue he cofounded in 1979 and the site in 1980 of both his first full-evening solo performance, *Pretty Boy/Big Bldg/Grand Mal*, and the first-ever festival of gay male performance, "Men Together," which he curated. His skills in improvisation and interacting with an audience were fostered by a series of Monday-night informal performing events started on his twenty-second birthday in September 1980. Among the selections, "Performance N.Y.C." is a 1981 riff on themes from Miller's earliest pieces. "Floor It!" a short performance work, conveys the anarchic creative spirit of the early years at PS 122.

Over the next four years, while Miller was developing solo and small-scale collaborative works, he also created a series of ambitious, large-scale multimedia works for choreographed ensembles: *Postwar* (1982; an earlier version was called *Survival Tactic*), *Cost of Living* (1983), and the grant-supported and relatively lavishly budgeted *Democracy in America* (1984). A spin-off from *Democracy in America* was a short book by the same title, produced in collaboration with photographer Dona Ann McAdams, who would photograph almost every subsequent Miller work. This section includes fourteen "stories" from Miller's and McAdams's book. Poorly received (Miller himself refers to it as a "mess"), *Democracy in America* caused Miller to rethink how he conceived his art and what he wanted it to accomplish, leading him to hone the more intimate solo and duo performance style that he had developed at PS 122.

An important example was *Live Boys*, created in March 1981 with Miller's partner, dancer John Bernd, following their initial collaboration for the "Men Together" gay performance festival the previous November. *Live Boys* continues their complicated love story, which concluded in a final episode performed in August 1981, though it resonates through Miller's subsequent solo work, particularly *Naked Breath* (1994). *Live Boys* is also the first theater piece to refer to AIDS, more than a year before the disease was identified and named: for that reason, David Gere has written, this work "cries out to be reconjured and seen anew." In the three *Live Boys* episodes, Miller and

Bernd chronicled the joys and conflicts and, finally, the dissolution of their relationship. In the wake of Miller's dissatisfaction with *Democracy in America*, the solo works and *Live Boys* provided the models for subsequent work. The first fruit was *Buddy Systems* (1985), which combined solo segments and collaboration with Douglas Sadownick, who became Tim Miller's lover and collaborator in various ways for more than a dozen years. The "New York Years" section includes two excerpts from *Buddy Systems*, which premiered in California shortly before Miller and Sadownick relocated to Los Angeles and marks the conclusion of his nine years in New York.

During his time in New York, Tim Miller was involved in a range of activist movements—anti-nuclear and anti-gentrification demonstrations, the People's Convention during the 1980 Democratic National Convention, and agitation for gay liberation. These involvements paralleled his performing activities but remained largely separate from them. Goal-driven political activities, including gay rights, are mostly absent from his performance works of the time. As an organizing principle, politics is found during this period almost exclusively in Miller's large-scale works, where it takes the form of a generalized Left-populist idealism. Gay experience was, of course, the essence of Miller's and Bernd's *Live Boys* series as well as of Miller's and Sadownick's *Buddy Systems*. Still, the focus in both collaborative works is personal politics: the give and take of relationships, issues of commitment. Miller had not yet found an integrating principle to bring together his personal experience as a gay man, his political ideals, his activist impulses, and his performing art.

That step is recounted in the second section of *1001 Beds*, "Activism," which focuses mainly on the later 1980s. That half-decade crystallized Miller's sense of himself as an activist-artist and of performance as an ideal vehicle to promote social goals. Two factors were enormously influential in redirecting his thinking and activity. First was his return to Los Angeles in 1986, where he immersed himself in a multicultural performing environment, joining with Linda Frye Burnham in 1989 to found Highways Performance Space. The

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second, overwhelming factor was the AIDS crisis and, in particular, Miller's involvement in ACT UP. From a somewhat tentative, though excited, initial contact with ACT UP in 1987, Miller progressed from raising money to organizing several high-profile actions. One of these, the "Art Attack" protest at the Los Angeles Federal Building in 1990, provides the background for Miller's "Civil Disobedience Weekend," which is printed here. The "Activism" section also includes materials from various sources that depict Tim Miller's political commitments and his thinking about the role of performance art in promoting social change. The section opens with "Professional Autobiography," an interview-essay from 1990 in which Miller recounts the influence of the politically sophisticated, ethnically diverse, and historically informed Los Angeles performing scene and details his philosophical and ideological approach to performance, finding his voice as "a politicized gay activist, gay cultural person, AIDS activist, American citizen." Entries from Miller's journals recount his involvement in ACT UP over a seven-year period, a topic further developed in a 1990 interview with Linda Frye Burnham. A more directly personal note is struck in Miller's account of his and Douglas Sadowick's first AIDS tests in 1990.

Not included here is "Preaching to the Converted," which Tim Miller wrote in 1995 in collaboration with David Román. This important essay provides a theoretical, historically based rationale for "work that is explicitly directed toward a queer audience and performed in a community-based or queer-friendly venue." "Preaching to the Converted" also provides the authors' thoughts on matters such as the importance of Protestant preaching as a precursor for American performance art. "Preaching to the Converted" was published in *Theater Journal* (1995) and reprinted in *The Queerest Art: Essays on Lesbian and Gay Theater* (2002), listed in the bibliography.

Demonstrations such as the "Art Attack" and performances such as "Civil Disobedience Weekend" gave Tim Miller the high visibility that led directly to the 1990 NEA Four episode. The "Culture War" section of *1001 Beds* prints materials from the NEA Four battles and

related skirmishes. The "Artist's Statement" from Tim Miller's grant application to the National Endowment for the Arts is accompanied by excerpts from his deposition in the lawsuit that followed the politically motivated rejection of his and three other recommended grants. The deposition reveals, among other things, that an Endowment staffer, anticipating what might happen given the Bush administration's politicization of the NEA, attempted to have the statement rewritten. The quashing of grants came just before America's Independence Day, an irony that Miller seized on in his July 4, 1990, "Artist's Declaration of Independence" against "King George" Bush. His perspective one year into the subsequent eight-year episode is provided by a 1991 interview with Steven Durland, originally done as part of an "Offensive Plays" feature in the journal *The Drama Review*. And two unpublished "Supreme Court Reports" from 1998 recount Miller's reaction to oral arguments and the final decision in the NEA Four case, which affirmed the congressional "decency" clause. Beyond the specific NEA case, the essay "The Battle of Chattanooga" gives a sense of what it is like to be targeted for harassment by extremists both inside and outside the government. This essay riffs on Miller's interest in the Civil War, as he takes a side trip to the battleground outside Chattanooga and faces an uncivil protest against his work outside the theater where he is performing.

Selections in "The Teacher" show Tim Miller's increased commitment to gay male performance as a means of self-discovery and community expression in the midst of the culture war. "Embodied Pedagogy," a 1998 essay published here for the first time, provides details of Miller's workshop methods as well as what he wants these undertakings to accomplish for participants. This essay focuses mainly on Miller's work with apprentice actors, such as his students in the MFA program at UCLA. The workshops specifically for gay men highlight a central theme of all his work, that self-acceptance, including acceptance of one's body, must underlie self-assertion and political awareness. That theme is key to "Suck, Spit, Chew, Swallow," an extended essay that brings together all elements of his pedagogy in recounting

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a two-week intensive workshop in Birmingham, England, that eventuated in a public performance.

Miller's vocation as teacher and mentor has been influenced by his religious sense, which is often manifested in his teaching practices. From the start of his performing career, Miller regarded religion as one of his key subjects: the word *faith* appears in the earliest-dated item in this volume, "Performance N.Y.C." For Miller, religious commitment characteristically points toward social action. A particularly intense period of religious thinking for Miller came in 1989 and 1990, through his association with the activist Episcopal priest Malcolm Boyd. The most visible manifestation of this renewed spiritual engagement was a pair of performance sermons during Easter season at an Episcopal parish in Santa Monica. Miller wrote about this experience in "Jesus and the Queer Performance Artist," which incorporates material from the performance sermons. This essay ties Tim Miller's religious consciousness both to childhood influences (always a powerful force in his work) and to meditation on Jesus as a model activist performer. Although its emphasis is on individual spirituality and commitment, the essay also indirectly anticipates the debates that have increasingly roiled church institutions in subsequent years, concerning gay ordination, blessing of unions, and other matters related to homosexuality and religion. In the mid-1990s and again in 2005, Miller taught performance courses for seminarians at the Claremont School of Theology. In recent years, his specific church-focused activities have declined in number, but his sense of teaching as a mission has remained.

Us

The turn of the millennium brought a national political focus on "gay marriage"—that phrase serving as shorthand for a range of issues involving legal status and legal protections for same-sex relationships. This discussion accelerated and became increasingly politicized following the 2003 U.S. Supreme Court decision overturning

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sodomy laws, subsequent court rulings concerning same-sex marriages, thousands of gay wedding ceremonies, President George W. Bush's advocacy of a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage, and attempts to foment a voter backlash in the run-up to the 2004 elections. As he has been for two decades, Tim Miller is in the vanguard of activism. Characteristically, his commitment derives from a mixture of principle, patriotism, and personal experience. Miller's relationship with the Australian writer Alistair McCartney, which began in 1994, plunged them into the labyrinth of U.S. immigration policy, a particularly aggressive manifestation of government hostility toward same-sex relationships. For more than a half-dozen years, Miller and McCartney have lived in the trigger-sights of a policy that would force them to leave the United States in order to preserve their relationship. With characteristic vigor, Miller threw his energy into the issue, demonstrating, lobbying, exhorting, and making common cause with hundreds of binational couples facing deportation. As AIDS did in works of the 1980s and early 1990s, the immigration issue became the starting point for major performances: *Glory Box* (1999) and *Us* (2003). The latter forms the centerpiece of this concluding section of *1001 Beds*. It is accompanied by an interview with John Gentile, which in discussing the composition and structure of *Us* provides Miller's most extended account of his working methods. This concluding section is introduced by "Oklahoma!" which celebrates the Supreme Court decision and introduces Miller's love of American musical theater that is central to *Us*. Following is the script of *Carnal Garage*, a 1997 collaboration with Alistair McCartney. Recounting the nervous exhilaration of their developing love, *Carnal Garage* makes a trilogy with the other partner works printed in this book, *Live Boys* and *Buddy Systems*. It ends with a metaphorical marriage ritual, anticipating *Us* and its extended creative statement on the dilemmas of relationships in the contemporary United States. Also included is "Tokyo Tim," from 2003, which recounts his first performances in Asia.

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The book concludes with the essay that provides its title. “1001 Beds” considers the physical and personal toll of a life spent as a traveling performer activist, then explains why the effort is worthwhile, indeed imperative, for Tim Miller. The essay ends with an expression of confidence that this peripatetic life performing, teaching, and pushing for change has had, and is having, positive effects on the body politic.

To reach the figure of 1001 beds slept in, Miller anticipates another two decades of performing on the road. In his forties, his career is dynamic and ongoing. The materials that conclude this book nevertheless can be seen as a culmination—perhaps something of a full circle—for the themes and directions charted throughout. The punning title of *Us* brings together in one syllable the personal, community, and national political strands that interweave Tim Miller’s work from its beginnings, as well as the contents of this book: *Us* as a committed relationship, *Us* as the community of gay men and lesbians, *Us* as the American nation. There is pathos in the fact that the personal, artistic, and political integrity of his voice is reciprocated by Miller’s homeland with grinding slowness at best. *Us* is an angry work, which is consistent with his political focus, since indignation flows from frustrated idealism and provides the energy for activism. His anger never stands alone: as often before in Miller’s works, (almost) the last word of *Us* is “hope.” But it is a fragile hope that remains in unresolved tension with the performance’s simple question to our country: “What’s wrong with Us?” For now, the task is simply making room for these American families to exist. Nevertheless, if the prospect of a gay-positive America seems, despite everything, less remote than it did when Tim Miller began performing a quarter-century ago, he can—and justifiably does—claim some of the credit. As he writes in “Memory and Facing the Future”: “I have always used the memories of things passed to rewrite the ending of what is to come.” In the process he has created a vital body of work that points directions toward a more just future.

