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Preservation Of A Time-Based Media Installation : A Case Study of George Eastman House 1968 and 2008 Exhibitions, Conscience The Ultimate Weapon

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PRESERVATION OF A TIME-BASED MEDIA INSTALLATION:
A CASE STUDY OF GEORGE EASTMAN HOUSE 1968 AND 2008 EXHIBITIONS,
CONSCIENCE THE ULTIMATE WEAPON

by
Alice Carver-Kubik

A thesis presented to Ryerson University and George Eastman House in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Program of
Photographic Preservation and Collections Management

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2008

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Abstract

Preservation of a Time-based Media Installation: A Case Study of George Eastman House 1968 and 2008 Exhibitions, *Conscience the Ultimate Weapon*

Alice Carver-Kubik

Master of Arts, 2008

Photographic Preservation and Collections Management

Ryerson University, Toronto, Ontario in coordination with George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film, Rochester, New York

In July of 1968, George Eastman House opened *Conscience the Ultimate Weapon* (*Conscience*), an innovative audio-visual installation consisting of projected images dissolving from one to the next, accompanied by a synchronized soundtrack. Under the direction of Nathan Lyons, curator at George Eastman House from 1959 to 1969, the exhibition projected 780 photojournalistic images by Benedict J. Fernandez III, depicting protests and public demonstrations that affirmed political dissent throughout the United States during the 1960s. This provocative, political, and ultimately controversial exhibition was firmly grounded in the conflicts of the time. Further, it challenged the exhibition standards of an institution that was known primarily for the promotion of the photograph as fine art and the celebration of the photographic print. In 2008, George Eastman House created an interpretation of this historically important exhibition using modern technology within a contemporary social and political context.

Through a case study comparing the 1968 George Eastman House exhibition, *Conscience*, with the 2008 interpretation of *Conscience*, this paper will provide an analysis of the preservation issues surrounding these time-based media installations.

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Introduction

In July of 1968, George Eastman House opened *Conscience the Ultimate Weapon* (*Conscience*), an innovative audio-visual installation consisting of projected images dissolving from one to the next, accompanied by a synchronized soundtrack. Under the direction of Nathan Lyons, curator at George Eastman House from 1959 to 1969, the exhibition projected 780 photojournalistic images by Benedict J. Fernandez III, depicting protests and public demonstrations that affirmed political dissent throughout the United States during the 1960s. This provocative, political, and ultimately controversial exhibition was firmly grounded in the conflicts of the time. Further, it challenged the exhibition standards of an institution that was known primarily for the promotion of the photograph as fine art and the celebration of the photographic print.

Fernandez documented the American protest movement throughout the 1960s, taking a democratic approach to depicting the social and political movements of the time. He photographed protesters on both sides of the issues, such as the Civil Rights movement and the Vietnam War. For Fernandez, the photographs emphasized not just the issues of the time, but more directly, “an American’s right to dissent” as put forth in the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights to the American Constitution, which allows for freedom of speech, peaceful assembly, and the petitioning of government. Lyons acted as creative director; selecting images from Fernandez’s large body of work, he directed and sequenced a presentation of Fernandez’s images. Using slide projection, Lyons utilized ten slide projectors synchronized with four audio montages. The exhibition created an intense environmental experience.

The 1968 exhibition has an important history within George Eastman House. Before the exhibition was to open, it was drastically shortened in exhibition length from three months to one week. Due to the success of the exhibition, it was then extended to run for four months and traveled to several venues. It was finally pulled from circulation when Lyons resigned from his position at George Eastman House. The materials were never officially accessioned into the George Eastman House collection.

In March of 2008, George Eastman House revisited *Conscience* in recognition of the fortieth anniversary of this exhibition and of the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King and Senator Robert Kennedy, two important events that shaped the tumultuous year of 1968. The thinking behind creating an interpretation of such a politically charged exhibition was that, in showing this historically important work in a contemporary social and political context, the viewer would be asked to draw parallels between the events of 1968 and current events in the United States, grounding the viewer in

the conflicts of our times.¹ Using modern technology, the original 8-track audio was transferred into MP3s. The original slides were scanned to create digital images, many of which showed the effects of forty years of deterioration. Through a case study comparing the 1968 George Eastman House exhibition, *Conscience*, with the 2008 interpretation of *Conscience*, this paper will provide an analysis of the preservation issues surrounding these two time-based media² installations.

An important aspect to preserving and assessing a time-based media installation is to provide a written history. The first portion of this paper provides a detailed history and description of both exhibitions. The history of the 1968 exhibition situates *Conscience* as an important part of George Eastman House history and the early history of time-based media. The exhibition reflects the ways in which the burgeoning medium of time-based media was used in the 1960s, blurring the lines between communication and art. In addition, the use of time-based media for this exhibition also blurred the lines between curator and artist.

The analysis of the 1968 and 2008 *Conscience* exhibitions examines the difficulties of recreating this time-based media installation. It addresses the ephemeral nature of time-based media, the obsolescence of technology, and how changes in medium, space, content, and context affect the interpretation and experience of the exhibition. The analysis also addresses the role of the curator and the difficulties in taking creative control over another artist's or curator's work.



Image, 7-42 [self portrait of the photographer] Photograph courtesy of Benedict J. Fernandez III

¹ See wall text, Appendix E.

² Morten Søndergaard uses the term “real time” in his book *Get Real*. He defines it as art that is happening at the moment or, in “real time,” which includes video art, performance art, happenings, and radio. There is a strong emphasis on the use of technology by artists and art that explores the qualities of the medium itself. Much of time-based media art fits within this definition. For simplicity, however, I will continue to use the term “time-based media” when referring to work that relies on automated sequential projection, such as slide projection and video.

Literature Survey

Little is written about the preservation of time-based media installations. Although each installation will be different, time-based media installations have six common elements: technology, medium, context, content, space and experience. Comparing the 1968 and 2008 George Eastman House exhibitions, *Conscience the Ultimate Weapon (Conscience)*, proved to be quite a challenge. The curator, Nathan Lyons, used photojournalistic images by Benedict J. Fernandez III that were rooted in the context of 1960s protest. With these images he created a multimedia installation using slide projection synchronized with audio montages, which included popular music, speeches by political advocates, and taped interviews with protestors. The exhibition was an interactive, installation. Through changes in technology, medium, context, content, and space, the 1968 and 2008 exhibitions became two separate, but related, exhibition experiences, and each possessed its own character. In order to understand each exhibition and the difficulties in re-creating such a dynamic installation, it was necessary to have a firm understanding of the mediums, the contexts, and the content of the images and audio in each manifestation of *Conscience*.

In the essay, "Paradox in the Evolution of an Art Form: Great Expectations and the Making of History," in *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art*,³ Marita Sturken calls for the necessity of written histories of video art. Because of the rapid obsolescence of the technology and the deterioration of the videotape materials, early videotapes are no longer readable. Newer materials may also be subject to the same fate, therefore it is important to create a written facsimile in order to preserve the content of the piece. The idea of preserving an exhibition experience is still novel and very little is written on the subject, however, Sturken's point can be applied to the preservation of an exhibition experience. In constructing a written history of the 1968 *Conscience* exhibition, primary resources in the George Eastman House exhibition files and personal interviews with Benedict J. Fernandez III and Nathan Lyons were the most valuable resources. The *Conscience* exhibition file includes newspaper and journal articles, all correspondence related to the exhibition, installation photographs, diagrams and floor plans, and image sequence lists. Lyons and Fernandez each provided a detailed description of the exhibition. Lyons gave valuable insight into his choices in subject matter and exhibition format. Fernandez described his photographic process and the intentions behind his work. Each provided a discussion of the events related to the exhibition at George Eastman House and the events pictured in the images. In constructing a written history of the 2008 exhibition, I relied on my personal experience in helping to produce the exhibition and on the

³ Doug Hall, and Sally Jo Fifer, eds. *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art* (New York: Aperture, 1990).

guidance of Rick Hock, George Eastman House director of exhibitions and curator of the 2008 *Conscience* exhibition.

Understanding the context in which the images were taken was integral to relating the exhibition experience of the 1968 viewer. Arthur M. Schlesinger, an influential American historian, wrote extensively on the 1960s. Though his bias is clearly to the left, he provides great insight into the struggles of the decade. His book, *Violence: America in the sixties*⁴, was written in 1968 at the climax of the social violence in the decade. He pinpoints the assassinations of King and both Kennedy brothers as violent actions related to deep-rooted social issues. He also discusses the nature of violence in America through race riots, protests turned violent, and the Vietnam War. He upholds the importance of protest and the need for dissent in a democracy. He rejects violence as means toward democratic change. Lyons's intent of the 1968 exhibition was exactly this—non-violent solutions to social conflicts in the United States through peaceful protest. Walter Cronkite⁵ produced an audio review of the major events of the 1960s using archived CBS news programs. The clips described these events in detail, providing a solid understanding not only of the events, but also the sentiments contemporaneous viewers of the exhibition must have had to these events and how the exhibition might have affected viewers. Many of the images and audio in the exhibition reflect the events described by both Schlesinger and Cronkite.

The audio was an extremely important aspect of the exhibition, but is difficult to describe because I had only the edited audio from the 2008 exhibition and firsthand accounts of the 1968 exhibition in newspaper and journal reviews to reconstruct the contents of the audio. The essay "The Vietnam War and American Music"⁶ in the scholarly journal *Social Text* was helpful in drawing the connection between the contents of the audio and images. The author discussed musicians featured in the audio and their relationship to social conflict and protest in the U.S. Featuring primarily folk music by Phil Ochs, Pete Seeger, and Joan Baez, the exhibition maintained the spirit of protest through the use of this music, which was directly engaged in political dissent.

Further, the connection between the aural and visual contents, and the medium, technology, and installation format, was an important distinction to make. The multimedia format of the 1968 *Conscience* exhibition ran parallel to the burgeoning mediums of slide projection, video art, and the practice of installation art, but did not truly align with any of these art movements, as it is an amalgamation of contemporary art practices. This is further confused by the photojournalistic content of the exhibition. The exhibition catalogue for *Slideshow: projected images in contemporary art*

⁴ Arthur M. Schlesinger, *Violence: America in the sixties* (New York: American Library, 1968).

⁵ Walter Cronkite, *I Can Hear it Now: the Sixties*. Sony Music Entertainment Inc. P 1970 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

⁶ David James "The Vietnam War and American Music" *Social Text* No. 23 (Autumn-Winter, 1989).

curated by Darsie Alexander at the Baltimore Museum of Art is the only scholarly text on the use of slide projection in art.⁷ In 2005 the Baltimore Museum of Art presented *Slideshow*, examining artists' use of the slideshow as a creative and expressive medium. The exhibition highlighted artists spanning four decades from the 1960's-2000's, including Marcel Broodthaers, James Coleman, Jan Dibbets, Dan Graham, Louise Lawler, Helen Levitt, Ana Mendieta, Dennis Oppenheim, Nan Goldin, and Robert Smithson, among others. Essays written by Darsie Alexander, Charles Harrison, and Robert Storr discuss the vernacular origins of slide projection, the technology, its relationship to other mediums, its use by artists, and places the medium in the cultural and historical context of contemporary art. The rhetoric surrounding early slide projection in the catalog is very similar to the rhetoric surrounding early video art in *Illuminating Video*. Each medium was exploited by artists for the purpose of pushing against popular media and established notions of art, thus creating "anti-art." Much of the work in *Slideshow*, however, postdates *Conscience*. All of the work in the exhibition used color slide transparency and only a few pieces were accompanied by audio. The use of audio was not emphasized in the text.

Illuminating Video has six essays written on the history of the medium. The essay, "A Brief History of American Documentary Video" by Deidre Boyle discusses the use of video in the 1960s by underground video co-operatives looking to provide a counterculture alternative the negative portrayal of protest by mass media. Lyons seemed to be taking a very similar approach in *Conscience*, but using slide projection and audio. The exhibition catalog *Real Time + Art + Theory + Practice + History* also includes essays on the history of real time art. The authors' definition of real time includes video, but is extended to any art practice that happens at the moment or, in "real time," which also includes performance art, happenings, and radio. There is a strong emphasis on the use of technology by artists and art that explores the qualities of the medium itself. Much of time-based media art fits within this definition. Although slide projection is not included in this book, *Conscience* could be considered real time because of its sense of immediacy and the curatorial emphasis on the interactive exhibition experience as well as the images' relationship to early documentary video. The term "time-based media," however, is more direct and appropriate when referring work that relies on automated sequential projection, such as slide projection and video.

The mode of exhibition experience is as important as the subject in *Conscience*, thus tying to the practice of installation art. *Installation Art* by Michael Archer⁸ provides a discussion of installation works as being temporal, existing only as long as the installation is intact. The author

⁷ Darsie Alexander, *Slideshow: projected images in contemporary art* (Baltimore: Baltimore Museum of Art, 2005).

⁸ Michael Archer, *Installation Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994).

underscores the relationship between the medium, subject, and space in time-based media installation art and how the medium and subject are self-referential in having a direct relationship with the mass media.

In the analysis of the 2008 *Conscience*, it was important to understand how and why the exhibition context and content changed. Marita Sturken discusses collective memory, and the way in which collective cultural memory is produced in her book, *Tangled Memories*.⁹ She includes the Vietnam War and the AIDS epidemic as case studies to support her notion that memory and history are entangled. She asserts that shared cultural knowledge of history is produced through photographs and the re-representation of history through films, monuments, art, and literature, which are commodities that guide our understanding of past events in the present. She also states that our understanding of the past is continually shifting with the representation of the past in the present. Susan Sontag¹⁰ also discusses this phenomenon, but rejects the idea of collective memory and instead calls it collective instruction implying that the cultural forces of mass media, photography, art, literature, and film instruct us on how to re-create our memories of past events. There is, of course, a divide between those of us who were actually there to remember the events of the 1960s and those of us who were not and have to learn through history books and the representation of the events in popular culture. Their theories are nearly identical, but from the perspective of one who was not there to witness the 1960s and Vietnam, Sontag makes a valid point that memory is not knowledge but rather cultural conditioning. Sontag also provided a healthy discussion of the similarities differences between the United State's current conflict in Iraq and the Vietnam War.

The obsolescence of projection technology and the degradation and obsolescence of silver halide photographic media are also big factors in re-creating a time-based media installation. Bertrand Lavédrine is infinitely helpful in the deterioration issues and preservation of slide transparency film. *Slideshow* discusses the inherent physical problems of slides, such as fading and overheating, the physical characteristics of the medium, and the obsolescence of the technology.

Lastly, to understand each version of *Conscience*, it was important to address the role of the curator in each exhibition. Lyons effectively blurred the lines between curator and artists in the 1968 exhibition. Hock faced the challenge of presenting an exhibition that was grounded in the past in a new social and political context. In *Thinking About Exhibitions*,¹¹ a compilation of essays on curatorial concerns, Nathalie Heinich and Michael Pollak discuss the shifting role of the curator in the

⁹ Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

¹⁰ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003).

¹¹ Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson, Sandy Nairne, eds. *Thinking About Exhibitions* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

essay, "From Museum Curator to Exhibition Auteur: Inventing a singular position." They address issues of curatorial control over cultural material and the function of the curator. The authors contend that curators are taking the role of film director, or auteur, rather than the traditional curatorial role of the safeguarding, analysis, and presentation of cultural heritage.

The Multimedia Experience and the Projected Image in 1960's Art

The format of the exhibition, *Conscience the Ultimate Weapon (Conscience)*, was an interactive and experiential installation using time-based media, both visual and aural, by combining slide projection and audio montage. This exhibition format was a relatively new experience for viewers and is important to the interpretation of the exhibition. The format of the exhibition reflects such contemporary art movements of the 1960s, as slideshow, video, and installation art. Art practice in the 1960s saw a turn in how art was being made with the introduction of new media stemming from modern technology. The role of the artist was also shifting away from adhering to Modernist principles of making art for art's sake, which primarily focused on aesthetics and process. Artists were becoming politically and socially engaged, referencing and questioning the world by including issues of politics, economy, technology, popular culture, and mass media.

Projection, as a form of entertainment, began in 1640 with the invention of the magic lantern by Athanasius Kircher. At the turn of the last century the use of projection with a lantern and glass plate photographic slides was as a valuable educational tool. Slide projection presentations made views of the world and exotic places available to the public. The tool was also utilized by pioneer social documentary photographers, Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine, and others, to educate the public on the plight of the poor to spur social change. The use of the magic lantern persisted through to the twentieth century, when the motion picture was introduced. Kodak began marketing Kodachrome transparency film in 1935, and the Kodalide Projector in 1940. From the 1940s through to the 1960s, slide projection was used primarily for didactic and vernacular purposes. The use of slide projection as an expressive art form began in the late 1960s, picking up momentum and becoming more widely used in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. In 1960, Kodak introduced the Kodak Carousel, revolutionizing slide projection technology. This circular slide tray held eighty slides, ran automatically, and could be actuated by electronic dissolving units. This was a serious improvement over cumbersome straight slide trays and trays that held 140 slides and jammed easily.

The rhetoric surrounding early slide projection is very similar to the rhetoric surrounding early video art. Each medium was a burgeoning time-based media exploited by artists for creative expression. Time-based media art, stems from and engages in a dialogue with mass media. Time-based art began to take hold in the 1960s with the introduction of Sony's consumer video camera, the CV portapak, and Kodak's improvements to slide projection. As televisions entered nearly every American household, making mass media's impact on American culture greater, artists began

reflecting on postmodern theories of “simulation,” “hyperreal,”¹² and “loss of the real.” This gave rise to early video art participating in “real time” as opposed to the simulated reality of edited news programs.¹³

The artistic movements using time-based media primarily began in New York City. The intentions of artists using these new mediums varied. Some artists used video to provide an alternative to commercial media, revolting against the conservative corporation in an attempt to establish true free speech. This type of early documentary work, often called *guerrilla television*, *alternative TV*, and *street video*, among other titles, attempted to challenge television’s authority. The media often negatively portrayed current events, such as youth protests and rebellions. Artists were attempting to provide the media with counterculture’s viewpoint of the protest movement in the United States.¹⁴ Both video artists and artists using slide projection were also using the mediums as a form of avant-garde anti-art, pushing against the established notions of what constitutes “art” by museums and the commercial art world. Slideshow art and video art were most commonly presented outside of museums and galleries; artists opted to present their work in clubs, noncommercial spaces, and in private screening rooms.

The subcategories in which video art is now placed, such as documentary, media-concerned, image-processing, and narrative, did not exist in the 1960s and 70s when the medium was first being explored; therefore, the distinctions between art and information were not generally made by artists using the medium.¹⁵ The same can be said for the use of slide projection. Traditionally, slides were used for documentation, information, and in vernacular settings, such as to visually document three-dimensional art, as classroom and presentation didactics, and for family snapshots. Artists began using slides precisely because they were not an artistic medium. Artists were creating anti-art by appropriating the medium for expressive means, such as by making conceptual art, to document performance art, and as an expressive artistic format in itself.

Automated slide projection has a relationship with both still photography and film. Slides independently begin as still photographs, fragments sliced out of time and space. Slide projection

¹² The term “hyperreal” was coined by French theorist, Jean Baudrillard, who began writing in 1968 and whose postmodern writings and media theories greatly influenced postmodern art practices, particularly time-based art. The term hyperreal reflects on mass media practices where the media representation of a thing becomes more real than actual thing, leading to the loss of the real.

¹³ Andreas Brøgger, “Time To Get Real (Again): Software and Real Time Systems in Late 1960’s American Art,” in *Get Real: Real Time + Art + Theory + Practice + History*, ed. Morten Søndergaard (New York: George Braziller, Inc, 2005), 170.

¹⁴ Deidre Boyle, “A Brief History of American Documentary Video,” in *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art*, ed. Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer (New York: Aperture, 1990), 53.

¹⁵ Marita Sturken, “Paradox in the Evolution of an Art Form: Great Expectations and the Making of a History,” in *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art*, ed. Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer (New York: Aperture, 1990), 107.

reattaches and reconfigures these fragmentary moments in time to create a new reality defined by the structure of the carousel.¹⁶ Similar to film, the medium relies on sequential and moving images. However, in slide projection, the artist can choose to build upon each image with the next image in the sequence or to break the sequence and go in new directions.¹⁷ In addition, slide technology allows the projection to loop and dissolve images into one another continuously, providing no sense of beginning or end.

Time-based media art was a political medium because of its use by artists interested in changing and challenging the constructs of mass media and commercial art. The artist's ability to usurp time-based media, such as video and slide projection, and their changing role as the socially responsible, blurred the distinctions between art and communication.¹⁸

Inextricably tied to time-based media art is the practice of installation art. Typically, installation art explores the relationships among a number of elements, such as the interaction among things, their contexts, the spaces in which they exist, and the viewer. The works are intended to be interactive and experiential, placing emphasis on the viewer's experience of the work, the space, and the context in which the work is placed. The mode of experience is equally as important as the subject matter. Often, the mode of experience and subject matter reflect one another, allowing the artist to deliver a message in terms that draw upon the way in which the subject is represented to us in the mass media.¹⁹ The works tend to be temporal, with the relationships existing only as long as the installation remains intact within the space. Slide and video projection, as an art, can be experienced only as installation.

Another construction of time-based media is apparent in the relationship between music and projection in the late 1960's counterculture. This relationship began with the common thread of dissent toward mass media and the commercial art and music industries. It shifted to an amalgamation of experimental art using projection accompanied by aural montages. In his essay *The Vietnam War and American Music*, David James states that rock and roll and the Vietnam War were born at the same time and since the birth of rock music, it has become the arena of many kinds of dissent.²⁰ Musicians in the early 1960s were attempting to push away from the music industry and instead use music as a "weapon of cultural revolution."²¹ Folk, or folk-rock music, in the early to mid

¹⁶ Darsie Alexander, "Slideshow," in *Slideshow: projected images in contemporary art* (Baltimore: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 19.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁸ Deidre Boyle, "A Brief History of American Documentary Video," in *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art*, ed. Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer (New York: Aperture, 1990), 51.

¹⁹ Michael Archer, *Installation Art* (Smithsonian Washington DC: Institution Press, 1994), 80.

²⁰ David James "The Vietnam War and American Music" *Social Text* No. 23 (Autumn-Winter, 1989), 123.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 124.

'60s was an ideal vehicle of dissent because it grew from the beginnings of civil rights struggles and the utopian but politicized ideals of the 1930s from musicians like Woody Guthrie. The genre's social power was in its emphasis on lyrics and musicians' ability to create dual meanings through their words. Phil Ochs, Pete Seeger, Joan Baez, Joni Mitchell and Bob Dylan's early acoustic work epitomize the use of song as protest. Ochs said that the folksinger functioned as a "walking newspaper" in order to counterbalance the irresponsibility of the mass media by writing songs that made a point.²² Ochs statement reflects artists' use of video as an alternative to mass media.

Toward the end of the 1960s, clubs and music festivals were producing multimedia environments mixing experimental projection using light, film, video, and appropriated television images with soundtracks or live performances of electronic sounds, feedback, music, and spoken word.²³ The experience was often accompanied by the use of psychedelic drugs in order to enhance the experience. Folk music as protest was displaced by the popularity of rock music as representative of counterculture, shifting from lyrics of political dissent to lyrics emphasizing utopian ideals and drug experimentation. Emerging from these constructed multimedia environments was the rock and roll phenomena of acid rock, popularized by bands like Jefferson Airplane.²⁴

Slide and video artists began to incorporate audio into their installations as it became technologically easier to manage in the 1970s, '80s, and '90s. James Coleman is known for incorporating spoken narrative into his slide show installations. Robert Smithson synchronized images of Hotel Palenque in Mexico with an audio recording of an unscripted talk describing the Hotel. He first presented this in 1972 to a group of architecture students at the University of Utah. Nan Goldin began to show her seminal work, *Ballad of Sexual Dependency*, which was a continuing chronicle of her personal life, in 1979 as a slide projection performed at Frank Zappa's birthday party. In the early 1980s she arranged the work into a loose series and accompanied it with a rock opera, giving it a narrative voice and heightening the drama. She presented this ever evolving work, turning her private life public, at social gatherings and as a performance piece until its formal realization as a prerecorded slide show in 1985.²⁵

²² Ibid, 128

²³ Andrew Leyson, David Matless, George Revill, eds., *The Place of Music*, (New York: Guilford Press, 1998), http://books.google.com/books?id=q2Jt4r4pnf4C&pg=PA239&lpg=PA239&dq=human+be-ins&source=web&ots=nH70BDAH-U&sig=r_dEWu-eNiaXJ5hbnwwdFRWkN_ (accessed August 17, 2008), 222.

²⁴ Ibid, 229.

²⁵ Darsie Alexander, "Nan Goldin," in *Slideshow: projected images in contemporary art* (Baltimore: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 107-108.

Case Study

Part One

George Eastman House 1968 Exhibition, *Conscience the Ultimate Weapon*

The 1968 George Eastman House exhibition, *Conscience the Ultimate Weapon (Conscience)*, was an innovative time-based media slide projection installation exhibiting the work of Benedict J. Fernandez III. The exhibition was conceptualized and directed by George Eastman House curator, Nathan Lyons. The exhibition ran at George Eastman House from July 26 to October 15, 1968. It then traveled to several venues around the United States until 1969, when Lyons left to establish the Visual Studies Workshop. George Eastman House created an interpretation of the exhibition in 2008. The 1968 *Conscience* portion of the case study will discuss the work of Benedict Fernandez, and the curatorial work and vision of Nathan Lyons, and describe the concept, design, and experience of the exhibition in detail. The recreation of the 2008 *Conscience* exhibition will also be described in detail in the next chapter.

Benedict J. Fernandez III

The documentation of the American protest movement of the 1960s was one of Benedict J. Fernandez III's first major photojournalistic projects. Fernandez began working as a freelance photojournalist in the early 1960s, turning his hobby of photography into a career after being laid off from the Brooklyn Navy Yard in New York City. He worked on weekends for the Plaza Hotel, photographing special events and weddings, and during the week he photographed throughout the city. In the early 1960s, Fernandez met Alexey Brodovitch. Brodovitch established the Design Laboratory in New York where he taught both photography and graphic arts classes. The Design Laboratory was known as one of the most prestigious photography schools in the country, producing the well-known photographers Diane Arbus and Richard Avedon. Fernandez was given a scholarship to join Brodovitch's photography class. Once a week, Brodovitch would give each student an individualized assignment; its subject matter would ideally provoke new responses that avoided cliché or stylistic repetition.²⁶ Fernandez was charged with photographing a public protest in Union Square held by the Communists protesting against the United States occupation in Santo Domingo.

²⁶ Kerry William Percell, *Alexey Brodovitch* (New York: Phaidon, 2002), 117.



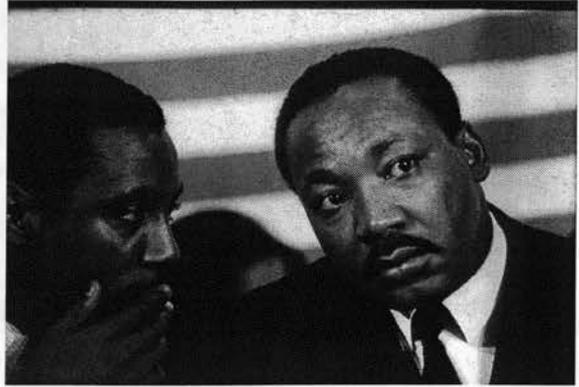
Image, 4-9 Photograph courtesy of Benedict J. Fernandez III

Tapping into the overwhelming social and political dissonance within the country, Fernandez recognized the importance of the protest phenomenon as concern over the war in Vietnam grew and the Civil Rights movement began to take form and expand. In addition to these larger issues, protests were occurring throughout the country on a number of issues of public concern, for example union workers rights. Fernandez's intent was not to be politically involved; he focused his interest on the act of protest as an expression of the First Amendment of the American Constitution, the right to dissent. In order to relay this notion, Fernandez democratically photographed each side of the protests he documented, representing both sides of each issue and providing a wide scope of images and subjects. For example, he photographed demonstrations that both supported and opposed the Vietnam War, and he followed both Dr. Martin Luther King, leader of the Black Civil Rights movement, and George Lincoln Rockwell, founder of the American National Socialist group, also known as the Neo Nazis. "One of the things that became a hallmark, which I don't agree with today, but I was steadfast in then, was I never got involved. I recorded the event. I was there to observe and to take pictures. I did not take sides,"²⁷ said Fernandez of his photographic approach. Though it was undiagnosed at the time, Fernandez has severe dyslexia. Therefore, as a freelance photojournalist he used a tape recorder to record the information he needed to accompany his photographs for publication.

²⁷ Benedict J. Fernandez III, interviewed by Alice Carver-Kubik, February 21, 2008.



Image, 2-32 [George Lincoln Rockwell]
Photograph courtesy of
Benedict J. Fernandez III



Image, 2-52 [Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.]
Photograph courtesy of
Benedict J. Fernandez III

Fernandez was not the only photographer photographing protest. Many iconic images of protest have come from this period. One particular photograph in the exhibition was taken while Fernandez was standing behind a row of police. Their guns, equipped with bayonets, were pointed directly at a group of student protesters. The young man in front, dressed in a turtleneck sweater, places a flower in the end of one of the police officer's guns. This image was published in the reviews for the *Conscience* exhibitions at the Addison Art Gallery and the Ithaca College Museum of Art. Bernie Boston's iconic photograph of this event entitled, *Flower Power*, shows the same scene a moment earlier as the boy is actively placing the flower in the gun. The image also differs from Fernandez's photograph because it was taken in profile, showing the police and protesters from a higher vantage point, looking down onto the situation. Photographs such as *Flower Power* have become more iconic, however, Fernandez's images capture the spirit of the protest movement completely and in its entirety. Although many of his images stand alone, their true resonance comes when they are seen as a body of work.



Image, 7-73 Photograph courtesy of Benedict J. Fernandez III

After *Conscience* and the publication of his book, *in opposition*,²⁸ Fernandez was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1969 and a National Endowment of the Arts grant in 1971/1972. In addition, Fernandez has also had a successful career as an educator and has played an important role in the international photographic community. He founded the Photo Film Workshop in New York City, which taught photography to underprivileged youth. He established the Photography Department at The New School in New York. He also created the FOCUS program, an international series of workshops and student exchange programs. Lastly, he conceptualized the Leica Medal of Excellence, a prestigious photographic award.

Nathan Lyons

Nathan Lyons is known for his curatorial work at George Eastman House in the 1960s and as an accomplished photographic artist. He is perhaps best known as an educator. Upon leaving George Eastman House in 1969, he established the Photographic Studies Workshop, now called the Visual Studies Workshop (VSW) in Rochester, New York. VSW was one of the first photographic and media arts schools of its kind in the United States.²⁹ He also co-founded the Society for Photographic Education (SPE) in 1963 and initiated the first meetings of Oracle, the annual gathering of photographic curators, in 1982.

Lyons is also an accomplished photographer, whose work has been in exhibitions and is in the permanent collections of many major institutions across the U.S., including the Museum of

²⁸ Benedict J. Fernandez, *in opposition*. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1968).

²⁹ Leroy F. Searle, "The photographs of Nathan Lyons concerning the power of the preposition," *Afterimage* (Jan-Feb, 2004). http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2479/is_4_31/ai_112986562 (June 5, 2008). Lyons built VSW, a photography graduate school, across the street from George Eastman House in an old woodworking factory. Each new class of students assisted in the remodeling of the space.

Modern Art in New York City; Center for Creative Photography in Tucson, Arizona; Amon Carter Museum in Fort Worth, Texas; International Center of Photography in New York City; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in California; and the Addison Gallery of American Art in Andover, Massachusetts. In his own work, he establishes a visual language through his imagery by constructing sequences and presenting them as diptychs, juxtaposing images of various signs and symbols that exist in the urban landscape and commenting on American society. He has published several books of his work, which include *Notions in Passing*,³⁰ *Riding 1st Class on the Titanic*,³¹ and *After 9/11*.³²

Although Lyons has had many accomplishments, the focus of this case study is Lyons's curatorial work at George Eastman House. Lyons was hired in 1957 as the Director of Information and Assistant Editor of *Image*, the George Eastman House journal. During his term, he also edited several scholarly books on photography, such as *Photographers on Photography*³³ and *Photography in the Twentieth Century*.³⁴ He began curating photography exhibitions in 1959 with the exhibition *Photography in the Twentieth Century*. He worked as Associate Director and Curator of Photography under then Director Beaumont Newhall from 1965 until 1969.

Judging from the exhibition records at George Eastman House, Lyons's curatorial work was focused on contemporary photographers, presenting their work in group or monographic shows. Photographers whose work he exhibited included Diane Arbus, Duane Michals, Frederick Sommer, Eikoh Hosoe, Harry Callahan, Aaron Siskind, Dave Heath, Marie Cosindas, Gerry Sharpe, Alice Andrews, Donald Blumberg, Rudolph Janu, Jerry Uelsmann, John Wood, Robert Heinecken, and Ray Metzker. The work of these photographers and the exhibitions he curated, sometimes simply called, *Contemporary Photographers I, II, III, IV*, or *Contemporary Photography Since 1950*, demonstrate a range of photographic genres from fine art to documentary work.

For some time, Lyons had been working on alternate ways of displaying documentary photographic work in an attempt to make a departure from the traditional exhibition display method of matted and framed photographs hung on the wall with didactic labels. In the early 1960s, he had been exploring slide projection as a way of presenting documentary photography. For Lyons, the immediacy of documentary photography did not lend itself well to traditional methods of exhibition. His first experiment using projection to display documentary photography was in the 1964 George

³⁰ Nathan Lyons, *Notions in Passing* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1974).

³¹ Nathan Lyons, *Riding 1st Class on the Titanic!* (Andover, Mass: Addison Gallery of American Art, 1999).

³² Nathan Lyons, *After 9/11* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

³³ Nathan Lyons ed., *Photographers on Photography: a critical anthology* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1966).

³⁴ Nathan Lyons ed., *Photography in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Horizon Press in collaboration with George Eastman House, Rochester, NY, 1967).

Eastman House exhibition called *A Dialogue with Solitude: Photographs by Dave Heath*, which ran from April 13 through June 10.

Heath began photographing for *A Dialogue with Solitude* in the 1950s and sequenced his photographs as a series in 1961. Although Heath's photographs are often categorized as documentary, they are also highly personal, reflecting his own lonely childhood. In his images he addresses the "impact that the powerful forces of isolation and community had on the human spirit."³⁵ Heath arranged his photographs in poetic sequences, creating a visual relationship between images. Taking a fine art approach to his photographs, he paired them with quotes from poets and philosophers, such as William Butler Yeats. This, along with the personal nature of his work, encourages the consideration of this series as encompassing both the art and documentary genres of photography.

The exhibition files at George Eastman House give no real documentation as to how the 1964 exhibition was presented other than a standard but descriptive press release. As an experiment, Lyons presented the exhibition as both a traditional exhibition and a slide presentation in order to see how the public would respond to each method of presentation. Fifty-five photographs, selected from Heath's forthcoming book of the same name,³⁶ were matted and framed. A slide projection, using the same material, "featured an automated slide program employing multiple projection and tape-recorded commentary entitled 'A Photographer's Commitment: Dave Heath' which projected all eighty-one photographs that appear in the book."³⁷ The projected version proved successful. Heath went on to teach at Ryerson University in Toronto, Ontario, embracing the presentation method of time-based media and projection in his own work and encouraged his students to do the same.³⁸

Shortly after the Heath exhibition, late in 1964 or early 1965, Lyons met Benedict J. Fernandez III. Lyons saw Fernandez's photographs as ideal for the projected environment. Impressed with the range of Fernandez's subject matter within the protest movement, Lyons felt the material could lead to a more ambitious exhibition using slide projection and audio, expanding on his notion that projection is the most appropriate way to present documentary and photojournalistic work. In addition, he took advantage of Fernandez's recorded interviews for the exhibition. Like Fernandez, Lyons also saw the world shifting and recognized Fernandez's documentation of protest

³⁵ Therese Mulligan, David Wooters, eds., *1000 Photo Icons* (New York: Taschen, 2002), 657.

³⁶ In 1965, Heath published the work as a book, which has become one of the most important photobooks of the decade. It was quickly sold out and went out of print, but was re-published as a collector's edition in 2000.

³⁷ George Eastman House, "'A Dialogue with Solitude' an Exhibition by Dave Heath to Open at The George Eastman House April 13, through June 10, 1964" news release, 1964.

³⁸ Nathan Lyons, interviewed by Alice Carver-Kubik February 25, 2008.

as important. He felt strongly that people needed to deal with the current social issues in the United States in a non-violent way—through protest.³⁹

Lyons titled the exhibition based on an image selected from Fernandez's work that depicted a group of women, one of whom is holding a large protest poster that reads, "Conscience the Ultimate Weapon." Lyons felt that this image, with the girl's slogan, encompassed the overarching sentiment, not only of the exhibition, but also the protest movement at large, as well as his focus on non-violent solutions and peaceful protest.



Image, 2-1 Photograph courtesy of Benedict J. Fernandez III

Sequencing of Images and Audio

Fernandez left about 14,000 negatives in Lyons's possession. According to Fernandez, he periodically brought negatives to Lyons over the course of the following few years. Lyons would ask Fernandez to cover certain kinds of events looking for a particular type of theme or image.⁴⁰ Lyons systematically sorted through the negatives and edited the contents down to about 780 images,⁴¹

³⁹ Nathan Lyons, interviewed by Alice Carver-Kubik February 25, 2008.

⁴⁰ Benedict J. Fernandez III, interviewed by Alice Carver-Kubik February 21, 2008. Although Lyons described it slightly differently saying that Fernandez left about 14,000 negatives seemingly at once and Fernandez seemed to remember leaving contact sheets rather than negatives, they both estimated about the same number of images.

⁴¹ The exact number of slides and slide carousels in the show varies from source to source. The press release announcing the original exhibition at George Eastman House and the press release announcing the exhibition at Moore College of Art both say there were 880 slides and eleven carousels. Another press release announcing that the exhibition will travel says there were 780 slides and ten carousels. It appears that in most cases, the later press release was used for newspaper articles announcing the show at various venues. In the archive, nine complete carousels were found. Slides from the first carousel were also found, showing that there were ten carousels. It is possible that the exhibition was edited down to ten carousels and 780 slides for the traveling exhibition; however, there is no evidence to support this notion. Therefore, I will contend that there were ten carousels and 780 slides in the exhibition.

which included a good representation of the range of protest subjects Fernandez covered. Positive slide transparencies were contact printed directly from the 35mm negatives and placed into aluminum and glass slide mounts. The best quality copies were saved for the exhibition, while Fernandez took the remaining slides for his personal files, which he stored in paper and plastic slide mounts.

Lyons sequenced the images by carefully juxtaposing and pairing Fernandez's images as he would his own photographic work in order to establish a visual language. Originally there were ten slide projectors and carousels. Nine of the carousels remained intact in the George Eastman House archive, preserving the original sequences of the exhibition. The first carousel was an introductory presentation. These slides had been removed from the carousel and placed in a box, losing the sequence. The remaining nine carousels made up the main exhibition, which appeared in three parts projected on three separate walls within the space. It is difficult to determine exactly which carousels made up which portion of the exhibition; however, when comparing the contents of the carousels to descriptions of the exhibition, carousels labeled two through seven most likely made up the first two sections and carousels eight through ten made up the last portion of the exhibition.

It appears that the sequencing of the images relied on repetition of images, and like images and events. When projected, the images appeared as diptychs and triptychs, creating juxtapositions that worked as political play of one position against another, and worked well visually and graphically. Judging from the sequences in each carousel, the events depicted are not necessarily presented in chronological order, but rather thematically with thematic repetition occurring in multiple carousels. The exception is the last three carousels that show the events of 1968; while Lyons was putting the exhibition together, Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated and shortly after, so was Senator Robert Kennedy. Fernandez covered both funerals, and submitted these images to Lyons, providing a dramatic culmination to the exhibition. The events included in the last three carousels are the King and Kennedy funerals, the Poor People's March, and Resurrection City.⁴²

The reoccurring themes throughout the first two portions of the exhibition include pro and anti Vietnam demonstrations, Civil Rights Demonstrations, Neo Nazi Demonstrations, draft card burning and those opposed to draft card burning, riots and police brutality, the New Politics Convention, and a neighborhood street cleaning project. Images of then recognizable politicians and political advocates, such as Dr. King, Senator Robert Kennedy, H. Rap Brown, Stokely Carmichael, George Lincoln Rockwell, Dr. Benjamin Spock, and Allen Ginsberg also repeatedly appear throughout the exhibition.⁴³

⁴² See Appendix A for examples of these images.

⁴³ Ibid

The slide presentation was coupled with an audio soundtrack comprised of popular songs that encompassed the spirit of protest, such as “The Times Are a-Changing” by Bob Dylan, as well as songs by Pete Seeger, Phil Ochs, and Joan Baez. It also included Fernandez’s recorded interviews with protesters, and recorded speeches given by politicians and political advocates of the time, such as excerpts from Malcolm X’s *The Ballot or the Bullet*, Dr. King’s speech, *I Have a Dream*,⁴⁴ and Ted Kennedy’s emotional eulogy for his brother, Robert Kennedy.⁴⁵

Technical Design

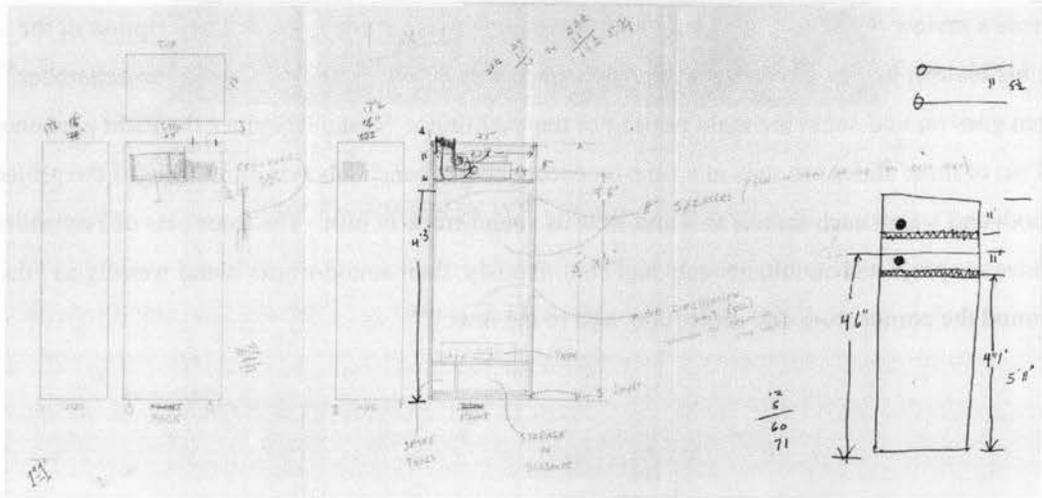
Though the vision for creating a projected environment was Nathan Lyons’s, Reginald Herron was the technical director for the project and was responsible for making it work. The exhibition had a total of four sections: an introductory exhibit and three portions of the main exhibit, using ten slide projectors, dissolving units that allowed the images to dissolve uniformly into the next image when desired, about 780 slides, and four synchronized audio units. The exhibition lasted about thirty minutes from beginning to end. The technical setup was relatively simple, yet required some ingenuity. A central booth was built within the main gallery space. The booth served dual purposes: to house the projectors and sound units in order to allow them to project onto three walls, and to partition off each of the three sections of the main exhibit. It is probable that Herron used “Piggyback” stands to stack the projectors in the booth in order to conserve space.⁴⁶ 8-track tape, a magnetic sound recording technology that had become commercially popular in the early 1960s, was used for the audio. The tape was housed in a cartridge that was designed so the tape could loop continuously. One of the biggest challenges was synchronizing the 8-track tape with the slide projection. A common technical problem with the tapes was they had a tendency to stretch over time

⁴⁴ The audio label in the 2008 *Conscience* exhibition identified this excerpt as King’s *I Have a Dream* speech. However, based on information in the online King Encyclopedia at http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/about_king/encyclopedia/trumpet_of_conscience.html, the speech is more likely King’s *A Christmas Sermon on Peace*. King was invited to give five lectures for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) as part of the Massey Lecture series. The Christmas Sermon was the last of these talks and was aired live. In it, he refers back to several of his classic speeches, including “*I have a Dream*.” In the excerpt featured in the 2008 *Conscience* exhibition, King states, “I am personally the victim of deferred dreams, of blasted hopes” and “I still have a dream. I have a dream that one day men will rise up and come to see that they are made to live together as brothers.” Both of these are in the King Encyclopedia as quotes from *A Christmas Sermon on Peace*. The inclusion of this oratory in the exhibition makes sense. Fernandez had been commissioned by the CBC to photograph King for a publication related to this same lecture series. Because the audio label identified the excerpt as *I Have A Dream*, I will continue to refer to this excerpt as King’s *I Have a Dream* speech.

⁴⁵ The original 8-track audio was transferred to MP3 format for the 2008 exhibition. The audio was edited down for the 2008 exhibition. I have not been able to hear the complete soundtrack to the 1968 exhibition, and therefore am not able to give a complete description. For more information on the exhibition audio, contact George Eastman House.

⁴⁶ An instruction booklet for the “‘Piggyback’ Stand for Two-Screen or Dissolve Projection with Two Kodak Carousel Projectors” was found in the archive file for the *Conscience* exhibition.

and with use, throwing the audio and slides out of sync. To resolve this problem, Herron solicited the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) for a specially designed 8-track tape that did not stretch. Herron used a simple graphite sensing device to trigger the audio when the projections began in each section. The NASA tape proved successful, as it did not stretch, thus keeping the audio synced with the slides projectors. Another inherent technical problem was the need to replace the light bulbs in the projectors and the heads on the tape decks. These difficulties were relatively minor. The overall technical design of the exhibition and Herron's ability to manipulate the slide and audio mediums produced the exhibition experience Lyons had desired.



[Drawing of the central tower] *Conscience* Exhibition File, George Eastman House

Exhibition Design

An understanding of the layout of the exhibition can be gained through the memories of Lyons, Fernandez, and those who experienced the exhibition firsthand, as well as through original newspaper and magazine articles, and installation shots. The layout of the space relied on the U-shape at one end of the gallery and a corridor that led into the gallery space. The exhibition was separated into four segments, with sound and light cues designed to move people along to the next section. In the corridor, Lyons presented a small introductory exhibit, setting the stage for the exhibition with an historic perspective of dissent by displaying the previous generation's leaders alongside historic social and political struggles. Mostly taken from photojournalistic sources, the images depicted scenes from prohibition marches, the Great Depression, images of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, WWII paraphernalia, a haunting image of Adolph Hitler, and in the end, an image of the

atomic bomb's mushroom cloud.⁴⁷ The audio played Bob Dylan singing, "The Times are A-Changing." A neon sign in the entryway read "Conscience;" its colored fluorescent light giving the space an eerie glow. When the music and slides ended and recycled, viewers would hear the next section begin, prompting them to enter the first portion of the main exhibit, which was dark except for the glow of the projections.

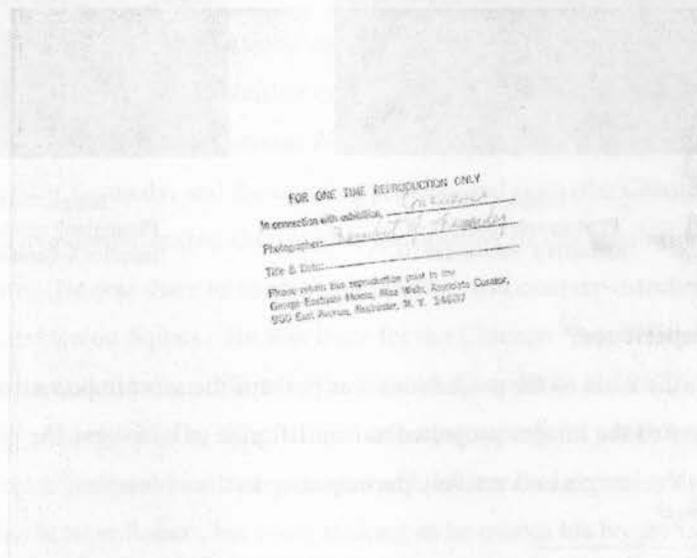
There were three parts to the main exhibit, projecting Fernandez's photographs in diptychs and triptychs onto three separate walls, with accompanying audio for each. The central tower blocked the view of the other two slide exhibits, allowing the viewer to experience the presentation at hand before being prompted along to the next portion. David Vestal, a photographer, critic, and educator, wrote a review of the exhibition in *Popular Photography* giving a detailed description of the show. In his review, he first discusses the introductory portion, or what he called the "antechamber," and then goes on to discuss the main portion of the exhibition. Vestal describes the main portion saying, "Two or three slides are seen at a time on each wall. A bench lets you sit in front of the projection booth and watch each screen area and hear its sound-track in turn. The three sets of Fernandez's slides are projected simultaneously and continuously, their sound-tracks blend weirdly as you go around the corner from one projection wall to the next."⁴⁸

⁴⁷ In 1955 Edward Steichen mounted the *Family of Man* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art. This exhibition showed mostly photojournalistic images from 68 countries by 273 photographers. The images were reproduced in differing sizes and hung in the space without attribution or contextual captions. The intent of the exhibition was to capture the shared human experience. The last image was a large, haunting photograph of the atomic bomb's mushroom cloud. Perhaps the mushroom cloud in *Conscience* is an homage to Steichen's *Family of Man* acknowledging the reality of Steichen's post WWII dystrophic view as represented by the atomic bomb.

⁴⁸ David Vestal, "Shows We've Seen," *Popular Photography*, January 1969, 77-84.



[Recto Photograph of the 1968 *Conscience* Exhibition]



[Verso Photograph of the 1968 *Conscience* Exhibition]

In some cases throughout the exhibition, images dissolved into the next image giving an effect of movement or an emotional pull, breaking up the patterning of the slide projector. Vestal puts forth that the sequencing of the images was like a picture-story, but not linear and that the

soundtrack's relationship to the images was not literal, but rather loosely topical.⁴⁹ Along with the prescribed audio, the viewer could hear the "click, click, click" of the projector changing slides. According to Vestal, the first wall had demonstrations, "be-ins,"⁵⁰ parades, and meetings. The second wall had various demonstrations while the last was devoted to Dr. King and Senator Kennedy as leaders and martyrs, as well as to non-violent actions including the Poor People's March on Washington.⁵¹



Image, 4-40
Photograph courtesy of
Benedict J. Fernandez III



Image, 4-41
Photograph courtesy of
Benedict J. Fernandez III

The Exhibition Experience

For Lyons, the scale of the projections was perhaps the most important aspect of the installation. He wanted the images projected to near life size so as to give the viewer the sense of being physically in the images and actively participating in the events as if they were occurring at that

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Andrew Leyson, David Matless, George Revill, eds., *The Place of Music*, (New York: Guilford Press, 1998), http://books.google.com/books?id=q2Jt4r4pnf4C&pg=PA239&lpg=PA239&dq=human+be-ins&source=web&ots=nH70BDAH-U&sig=r_dEWu-eNiaXJ5hbnwwdFRWkN_ (accessed August 17, 2008). A "Human Be-in" was a social happening in which a large group of people gathered to celebrate the ideals of the 1960's counterculture. The first be-in occurred in San Francisco at Golden Gate Park in 1967. The event drew over 25,000 people and included rock music, beat poet performances by Allen Ginsberg and Gary Snyder, and mass distribution of LSD, the popular psychotropic drug. The organizers were underground papers looking to promote a democratic social movement outside the major political parties. They utilized seers, visionaries, and gurus as political leaders. They questioned the government's social and political stance in regards to civil rights and the Vietnam War.

⁵¹ David Vestal, "Shows We've Seen," *Popular Photography*, January 1969, 77-84.

moment within the space. This created an active and participatory environment, as opposed to the more traditional, passive environment of reduced objects on the wall. The viewer was meant to explore the space, stopping in each section and then moving along. In a recent interview, Lyons stated that he believes this was the key component to arresting the viewer's attention.⁵² In an interview in 1968 with William D. Tammus, a writer for the Times-Union newspaper, upon the opening of the exhibition Lyons called it an, "Audio and visual counterpoint, 'hoping people will leave here thinking, not just reacting to something.'"⁵³ Tammus describes his experience of the exhibition as taking a tour through Fernandez's sensitive camera, not only seeing but becoming involved in the events that were happening throughout the nation.⁵⁴ A student at Purdue University described the exhibit saying, "It's real, like being in the park in Chicago during the demonstrations, or during the actions here last spring, all noise and people. The sounds of confusion. It's a collage of sensitivity."⁵⁵ A.D. Coleman, a notable photography critic, described his experience of the exhibition at the New York Shakespeare Festival Public Theater by saying "...participating (there's no better word for it) is very much like standing in the midst of a vast amorphous crowd. The eye is bombarded with signs and faces, works and looks glimpsed for brief seconds...I felt something within me splinter...and I almost began to cry."⁵⁶

Lyons's constructed environment created an emotional and dramatic effect using multilayered familiar sounds and visually familiar events. The 1968 viewer would have been keenly aware of the escalating opposition to the Vietnam War, the devastating assassinations of Dr. King and presidential hopeful Senator Kennedy, and the ongoing protests and riots (the Chicago Riot at the National Democratic Convention occurred shortly after the opening of this exhibition). Fernandez had captured these events. He was there to photograph marches and counter-marches down Fifth Avenue, Central Park, and Union Square. He was there for the Chicago New Politics Convention, various university protests, and the after-effects of the Newark Race Riots in 1967, all of which were presented in *Conscience*. Along with Dr. King's foreshadowing speech, in which he reflects upon the state of the United States' social problems, were images of his funeral. Likewise, along with Ted Kennedy's eulogy for his brother Robert, his voice shaking as he quotes his brother saying "There are those who look at things the way they are, and ask why... I dream of things that never were, and ask why not?" were images of Senator Kennedy's funeral. These events and voices were in the public

⁵² Nathan Lyons, interviewed by Alice Carver-Kubik, February 25, 2008.

⁵³ William D. Tammus, "Focused on Protest," *Times-Union*, Date unknown.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* In the beginning of Tammus's article he uses a poem by Theodore Roethke called "The Far Field" and refers back to the poem throughout the article. In the article he says, "...you not only see, but become involved in, those spirits that move "like monumental wind" through the nation, referring back to Roethke's poem.

⁵⁵ Kiki Hinze, "Intangible art bombards the eye and ear," *Purdue Exponent*, Date unknown.

⁵⁶ A.D. Coleman, "Latent Image," *The Village Voice*, December 19, 1968, 16-18.

consciousness and widely covered by popular media sources. The reviewer for the exhibition at the Addison Art Gallery described the last sequence of images as, “almost too much to take. It’s the culmination of days spent in front of television sets after Robert Kennedy’s and Dr. King’s assassinations pushed together for a few heart-breaking minutes. The faltering voice of Ted Kennedy eulogizing his brother. Joan Baez singing ‘The Battle Hymn of the Republic.’ Dr. King prophesying his own death.” This exhibition would have stood as a powerful reminder of the current state of the United States and prompted an emotional response and, as Lyons hoped, an active response to the political climate at the time.

The Intention of the Curator

Fernandez had little input into the creative aspects of developing the exhibition including image selection, sequencing, and the format of the exhibition as a time-based media installation. He believes that Lyons had acknowledged the social and political shifts within the United States and could have put together a group exhibition on the subject of dissent; however, Lyons saw his photographs and was impressed with the quality and scope of the work and instead chose to work with Fernandez. Through Fernandez’s images, Lyons gained a better understanding of the protest movement.⁵⁷ Fernandez had been exhibiting his photographs, but in a more traditional manner, in frames and arranged in gallery spaces; he had not considered exhibiting his photographs as a projected installation. He had also been publishing them as photojournalistic images in newspapers.

In addition, Fernandez was working on a book of his photographs with Da Capo Press titled, *in opposition*. He was heavily involved in this project with A.D. Coleman as his picture editor, leaving Lyons to edit the exhibition. Fernandez was interested to see that both Coleman and Lyons had selected many of the same or very similar images for the book and the exhibition. Though the exhibition had significantly more images, Lyons believes the way it was packaged made it accessible.

Although the George Eastman House press releases announced the exhibition as, “...based on the photographs by Benedict J. Fernandez”⁵⁸ and each review of the exhibition clearly recognized Fernandez as the photographer, many viewers thought the exhibition was a group show and were not immediately aware that it was the work of one photographer. This confusion was a result of the vast number of images shown, the format in which the exhibition was presented, and the fact that the exhibition provided no titles, dates, or attribution for the images or the audio. Supporting this notion, in his review, David Vestal commented that the individual photograph had little importance; rather

⁵⁷ Benedict J. Fernandez III, interviewed by Alice Carver-Kubik, February 21, 2008.

⁵⁸ George Eastman House, “Conscience—The Ultimate Weapon An Exhibition of the Photographs of Benedict J. Fernandez to Open at Eastman House, July 26, 1968, 8:30 p.m.” news release, 1968.

the cumulative effect of the show's sights and sounds was what counted.⁵⁹ Additionally, Fernandez said that his name was somehow cut off the posters, which also led to the confusion over attribution to the photographs.⁶⁰

There are some contradictions between the stated intent of the exhibition and the implied intent by the curator. Fernandez believed that Lyons upheld the integrity of his photographs. The intended subject of the exhibition was protest; therefore, each side of the protests were important and needed to be represented in the exhibition, which is apparent in the image selection. Although Lyons was never overtly political in his writing or in his own photographs, his work often commented on society in a political way, suggesting his engagement with contemporary political issues. In a recent interview, Fernandez referred to Lyons as a "political animal,"⁶¹ implying that Lyons was more overtly politically active and aware of the social and political environment in the United States than he let on. Whereas Fernandez was also politically aware, he emphasized his lack of political involvement and his role as an observer.⁶² In a review for the exhibition at Moore College based on an interview with Lyons, the writer states that "Lyons disclaims any propaganda intent, for or against the issues which have provoked dissent in the United States in the 1960s,"⁶³ which are represented in the exhibition. In the same interview Lyons states that his concern was not political but rather humanistic and he wanted viewers to understand "what are real human problems, both in communication and in cooperative kind of group cultural activity" (protest) rather than react specifically to Vietnam or Martin Luther King.⁶⁴ However, the press release advertised the exhibition as, "a multi-projection and sound presentation of contemporary social issues," thus highlighting the content of the images as documenting specific events, rather than images as representing protest as an expression of Constitutional rights.

The interview and the wording in the press release describing the exhibition are contradictory in approach. Is the focus of the exhibition the act of protest or the contemporary social issues? The events depicted in the images and audio had had a tremendous effect on the average American and were ingrained in the collective consciousness of most viewers at the time. Based on the reviews of the exhibition and interviews from viewers in newspapers articles about the exhibition, the emotional impact of the exhibition, particularly the last sequence, evoked responses dealing more with the current events in the United States, including the assassinations of King and Kennedy, and Civil Rights and the Vietnam War than the intended issue of simply, "protest." Considering the turbulence

⁵⁹ David Vestal, "Shows We've Seen," *Popular Photography*, January 1969, 77-84.

⁶⁰ The vintage poster used in the 2008 exhibition acknowledged Fernandez as the sole photographer.

⁶¹ Benedict J. Fernandez III, interviewed by Alice Carver-Kubik, February 21, 2008.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ William B. Collins, "Art College Imports Its Own Protest," *The Inquirer*, Friday, January 17, 1969.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

of 1968 in the United States and throughout the world, it would have been difficult for any viewer to look past Vietnam and Martin Luther King.

Controversy

The political nature of the exhibition and the turbulent climate of 1968 led to some questions as to whether the exhibition would be successful and, ultimately, a safe environment due to increasing violent uprisings during protests and the increasing number of race riots. Here again there is evidence of a contradiction between the intended purpose of the exhibition as being about protest and the perceived interpretation of the exhibition by viewers as well as the museum trustees. Like many other American cities in the 1960s, Rochester had been host to a violent three-day race riot spurred by police brutality in July of 1964.⁶⁵ Lyons was careful not to be reactive to concerns expressed by staff, community members, and the George Eastman House Board of Trustees. He contended that the exhibition was intended to be thought provoking rather than to cause disturbance. Nonetheless, about a day before the opening of the exhibition, Lyons was confronted by a member of the Board of Trustees who insisted that Lyons cancel the exhibition for fear that it might provoke another riot. The Board member persisted, saying that there was too much about violence in the exhibition and expressed concern over the word "weapon" in the title. The posters and press releases announcing the exhibition had already been sent out, and Lyons convinced him that it would be more detrimental to the organization to cancel the exhibition outright.

At the end of the conversation, it appeared that the main issue for the Board member was that there were too many images in the exhibition that were critical of napalm. Napalm has been used in warfare since WWII, and its use was heavily criticized during the Vietnam War. Napalm bombs were often air dropped from planes, indiscriminately harming enemy and civilian alike. Its adhesive properties cause the chemical to stick to the skin, causing death by immolation and asphyxiation, as well as third degree burns. There were only a few images in the exhibition that show protests against the use of napalm,⁶⁶ including an image of a man supporting a large sign that reads, "Napalm Burns People" and another image of a street performance showing a woman dressed as the Virgin Mary holding a sign that reads, "I am Mary my baby was Napalmed in Vietnam." As it turned out, the Trustee had worked on the development of napalm. Lyons conceded by shortening the exhibition to

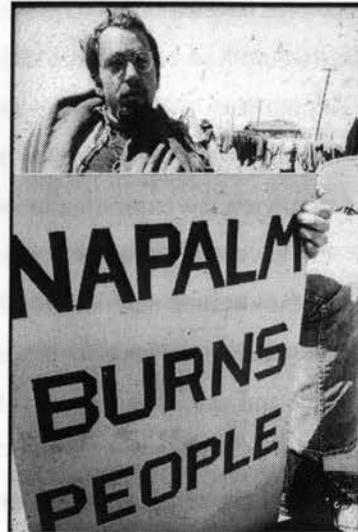
⁶⁵ According to a study done for the *American Sociological Review* called "Poverty, Segregation, and Race Riots 1960-1993," Rochester, NY has been privy to four race riots between 1960 to 1993.

⁶⁶ Nathan Lyons, interviewed by Alice Carver-Kubik, February 25, 2008.

one week and removing the words “the Ultimate Weapon” from the neon signage in the introductory portion of the exhibition, so that the neon just read “Conscience.”⁶⁷



Image, 2-25 Photograph
courtesy of Benedict J. Fernandez III



Image, 6-45 Photograph
courtesy of Benedict J. Fernandez III

Although he conceded, Lyons persisted that his intent by using the variety of protest situations photographed by Fernandez was to underscore the value of protest in a democracy and to distinguish the difference between a non-violent protest and a riot. However, due to the increasing number of protests turning into riots, as well as race riots sparking throughout the country during the mid 1960s, George Eastman House staff and Board members remained edge.⁶⁸ Before the show was to open in Rochester, the museum guards asked to be armed in case there was another riot. Lyons felt this was counter intuitive and that the presence of guns was more likely to provoke a riot, saying that he wanted people to deal with the issues at hand in a non-violent way.

Public Response and Success of the Exhibition

The first press release for the exhibition simply stated that the exhibition opened at George Eastman House on July 26, 1968 at 8:30 p.m. with no mention of a closing date. Ultimately, the exhibition proved to be widely successful. The public’s reaction and the media’s reaction were positive and enthusiastic. The museum put forth an audience survey in order to judge responses to

⁶⁷ The Board member’s name was not given by Lyons during the interview. I have chosen not to investigate the issue further out of respect for the before mentioned Board member.

⁶⁸ Nathan Lyons, interviewed by Alice Carver-Kubik, February 25, 2008.

the exhibition. The survey ran from August first through August 12, 1968. The questions asked the viewer: to discuss their over-all impression of the exhibition; describe how much time they spent looking at the pictures, how many pictures they thought they had seen; to recall specific impressions; how they responded to the method of presentation; if they would come back to see the exhibition again; if others would find value in the exhibition; if the exhibition maintained a specific viewpoint; for additional comments; and finally for personal data, such as age, education level, and city of residence.⁶⁹ The majority of responses to the survey came from college students in their early 20s who had stayed to view the exhibition in its entirety. Most said they would come back and that the exhibition would have value to others. Most viewers stated that the exhibition did have a specific point of view. Many agreed that the exhibition was addressing the social issues in the United States and several responded on the specific content of the images as being about Civil Rights/racism and Vietnam/violence and war. The responses to specific impressions span the content of the exhibition from images in the introductory portion, to images of Rockwell, King, Kennedy, pro and anti Vietnam, to more vague responses, such as “poverty,” “pathos,” and “hypocrisy.”⁷⁰

According to Lyons and the survey report, attendance at the museum skyrocketed during the *Conscience* exhibition, increasing 32.9 percent over the previous year.⁷¹ In addition, the exhibition received very positive press and positive reactions from visitors.⁷² As a result, the exhibition was extended another three months. A second press release stated that, “Due to public response the exhibition, ‘Conscience,’ will be extended until October 15, 1968.” Ultimately, the exhibition ran from July 26 through October 15, 1968 at George Eastman House. George Eastman House received support from the New York State Council on the Arts to travel the exhibition; it traveled to five other venues, including the New York Shakespeare Festival, Moore College of Art, the Ithaca College Museum, the Addison Gallery of American Art, and Purdue University.

In David Vestal’s review of the George Eastman House installation of the exhibition for *Popular Photography*, he called the exhibition “one of the most interesting exhibitions I’ve seen lately.”⁷³ A.D. Coleman reviewed the exhibition for the *Village Voice* while it was being shown at the New York Shakespeare Festival Public Theater;⁷⁴ Coleman stated that this is the first photographic exhibit that left him emotionally shaken and was the most experimental exhibition he’d

⁶⁹ *Conscience Survey* (Rochester, NY: George Eastman House, 1968). See Appendix C.

⁷⁰ “*Conscience*” Report (Rochester, NY: George Eastman House, 1968).

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Nathan Lyons, interviewed by Alice Carver-Kubik, February 25, 2008.

⁷³ David Vestal, “Shows We’ve Seen,” *Popular Photography*, January 1969, 77-84.

⁷⁴ Fernandez had been showing the exhibition at the Public Theater during intermissions. However, the intermissions were twenty minutes long but the exhibition was thirty minutes long, and people were missing the first portion of the second half of the plays. The theater manager, Joe Papp, instead had Fernandez run the show before and after the plays and on days when the theater was not presenting plays.

seen. He said, "...but it succeeds at everything it attempts. And, due to its extraordinary relevance, it stands as a painfully pure distillation of the essential mood of the American present."⁷⁵ Overall, reviewers were taken by both the contents of the exhibition as well as its presentation format. The reviewer for the exhibition at the Addison Art Gallery said, "Verbal press releases pale beside the seeing-touching-hearing reality which is not so much an exhibition as an encounter with the onrushing present... The experience is total—the artist has achieved a contact with the viewer that does not need explanation or interpretation."⁷⁶ The reviewer for the exhibition at the Ithaca College Museum of Art noted that as far as he or she knew it was the only audio-visual show of its kind in the country, calling the exhibition an "experimental" and "environmental experience."⁷⁷ Commenting on the prevalence of protests at universities, the newspaper review for the exhibition at the Moore College of Art began with, "While other colleges are wringing their hands over protest demonstrations, the Moore College of Art has imported one."⁷⁸

The exhibition was presented with slight differences at each venue due to the exhibition space available. George Eastman House required that each interested venue send floor plans so that the correct setup could be designed to fit their space and technical assistance could be given.⁷⁹ In a letter to Mr. Richard Nibeck at the National Endowment for the Arts, Department of AV Instruction, Lyons stated that the minimum throw based on their optics was 19 feet with screen area ranges from 8 ½ feet high x 8 ½ feet wide to 8 ½ feet high x 26 feet wide.⁸⁰ Any venue would have to have a space large enough to accommodate this projection size; it appears that it was important to Lyons that the exhibition be installed at each venue in a way that was similar to the way it was presented at George Eastman House.

⁷⁵ A.D. Coleman, "Latent Image," *The Village Voice*, December 19, 1968.

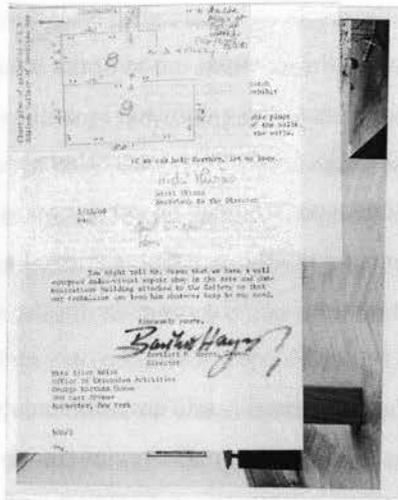
⁷⁶ Bernadine Coburn, "A Fearsome Exhibit at Addison Gallery," *Eagle Tribune*, Date unknown.

⁷⁷ "Exhibits Protest Photos," (Newspaper unknown), Monday March 10, 1969.

⁷⁸ William B. Collins, "Art College Imports Its Own Protest," *The Inquirer*, Friday January 17, 1969. The protest movement was largely initiated by students on campuses across the United States.

⁷⁹ Alice Wells to Mrs. Muriel Christinson, Krannert Art Museum. 7 January 1968. In correspondence between George Eastman House and many interested venues, Eastman House requests floor plans. In correspondence with Krannert Art Museum, Alice Wells, writing on behalf of George Eastman House, indicates that the rental fee is \$1500 plus the fee for the technical consultant who sets up the exhibition and asks for a floor plan. In addition, there are floor plans for the Moore Art Museum, Ithaca College Art Museum, and the Addison Gallery of Art, as well as what may be the George Eastman House floor plan.

⁸⁰ Nathan Lyons to Mr. Richard Nibeck, Assistant Executive Secretary NEA Department of AV Instruction, 12 September 1968. *Conscience the Ultimate Weapon* exhibition file, George Eastman House archive.



Addison Gallery of American Art
Floor plan, correspondence, and a gallery photograph found in the
Conscience exhibition file

Through reviews and correspondence, it is possible to gain an understanding of each manifestation of the exhibition. For example, in A.D. Coleman's review of the show at the Public Theater in New York, he states that the exhibition was designed for presentation in a single large room and was partitioned by black curtains into four sections, each containing a screen and one to three tall oblong boxes housing the equipment. Each section of the slides and soundtracks was projected simultaneously and independently.⁸¹ Purdue University made a black velvet enclosure to transform the library reading room into a gallery space in order to present the University's "first sound show art exhibit."⁸²

The original press release advertising the exhibition to travel announced that the exhibition was available for reservations during 1969 and 1970, indicating it would travel for two years. The exhibition was pulled from circulation seemingly early, before Christmas of 1969, which was shortly after Lyons left the Museum.⁸³ The exhibition material, including the slides and carousels, 8-track tapes, and neon sign, remained in the George Eastman House archive, but none of the materials were accessioned into the collection.

⁸¹ A.D. Coleman, "Latent Image," *The Village Voice*, December 19, 1968.

⁸² Kiki Hinze, "Intangible art bombards the eye and ear," *Purdue Exponent*, Date unknown.

⁸³ Harold Jones, Assistant Curator, George Eastman House to Mr. David M. Rogge, Protestant Chaplain, University Christian Foundation. 10 February 1970.

Case Study:

Part Two

George Eastman House 2008 Exhibition, *Conscience the Ultimate Weapon*

George Eastman House, under the curatorial guidance of Rick Hock, created an interpretation of the 1968 exhibition, *Conscience the Ultimate Weapon (Conscience)*, that ran from March 12 through June 1, 2008. The motivation behind revisiting the exhibition was to recognize the fortieth anniversary of the exhibition as well as to recognize the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Senator Robert Kennedy. Emphasis was placed on the importance of the original exhibition, in both content and format, as well as to urge the viewer to explore the relationship between the United State's conflicts of the 1960s and current U.S. conflicts.⁸⁴ Nathan Lyons and Benedict J. Fernandez III were both consulted in the exhibition process, lending insight and materials, and giving credibility to the exhibition.

Although the physical contents of the exhibition (carousels, slides, and audio tapes) were never accessioned into the George Eastman House collection, the materials were kept in the archive, including the original neon sign, which was carefully housed in inert archival materials to prevent damage.⁸⁵ In the 1968 *Conscience* exhibition files at George Eastman House, there is a checklist with a sequence order for each of the ten slide carousels. Unfortunately, the slides were identified with a numbering system that remains a mystery, as there are no corresponding numbers on the slides. However, nine of the slide carousels from the original exhibition remained intact in the archive, preserving the original sequences. Only the first carousel, which contained the introductory slide sequence showing an historic perspective of dissent from photojournalistic sources from the 1930s and 1940s was missing. These slides had been removed from the carousel and placed in a box. In order to preserve the sequence of each carousel while preparing the exhibition, Curatorial Associate Jamie Allen renumbered each slide with a new numbering system, placing the carousel number first followed by its number in the sequence. For example 2-10 would indicate carousel two, slide number ten.

In the original 1968 *Conscience* exhibition, ten Kodak Carousels were employed by George Eastman House, making it possible for the projections to rotate automatically and loop continuously. Since Kodak introduced the revolutionary Kodak Carousel in the 1960s, further advancements in projection have been made. The first digital projector was introduced in 1989, making it possible to

⁸⁴ See wall text, Appendix E.

⁸⁵ Both portions of the sign were saved, the word *Conscience* as well as the removed portion that read, *the Ultimate Weapon*.

connect a projector directly to a computer and project a digital image. Advancements in digital technology escalated, and by the early 1990s slide projection using the carousels and projectors that had been popular since the 1960s had drastically declined. Kodak discontinued production of slide projectors in 1994 as part of a larger transition away from producing silver halide photographic materials and analog equipment, increasing their focus on digital media. In addition to Kodak, the first years of the twenty-first century have seen most major photographic companies either fold entirely or curb their production of photographic materials, such as films, papers, and photographic equipment. This transition from traditional photographic media to digital media resulted in rendering traditional slide presentation nearly obsolete, making replacement bulbs and other necessities for analog projectors difficult to acquire. New digital light projectors are not only affordable, but also provide good quality images and the ability to project both still images and digital video.

For these reasons, Hock decided to transfer the original analog material to digital images and MP3s. The slides were scanned as 16-bit black and white JPEG images at 300 DPI.⁸⁶ Jamie M. Allen and I scanned the slides at George Eastman House, using a scanner capable of scanning slides individually or in batches. The slide scanner was lent to George Eastman House by the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), thanks to Professor Gunther Cartwright, who provided technical and intellectual assistance for the exhibition.

The aluminum and glass slide mounts showed significant deterioration, which in turn was affecting the slide transparencies. The aluminum was breaking down, giving off a black metallic dust and the glass, in many cases, had begun to weep, giving off crystalline deposits. When scanned, the images appeared extremely dirty, showing residue on the slide transparencies from the deteriorating mounts. With further research on slide deterioration, I found that glass slide mounts tend to reveal a host of problems. The glass causes overheating when the slide is projected, resulting in deformation of the transparency material, as well as condensation that causes the transparency to adhere to the glass or grow mold.⁸⁷ No mold was detected in the *Conscience* slides, but in some cases the slide transparency had adhered to the glass and a few slides had slight deformation.

Considering the amount of use these slides saw between 1968 and 1970, it is remarkable that there is so little deterioration of the slide material. Slide transparency film, particularly black and white transparencies, is a relatively stable photographic material. Ironically, the major stability factors surrounding slides have to do with projection. Slides cannot be projected for long periods of

⁸⁶ An MP3 is a digital audio encoding format. A JPEG is a digital image file format; the acronym stands for "Joint Photographic Experts Group," which is the name of the committee that created the standard. DPI stands for dots per inch; it represents the number of dots that can be placed in one linear inch, which refers to the resolution, or the amount of detail, in the image.

⁸⁷ Bertrand Lavédrine, *A Guide to the Preventive Conservation of Photograph Collections* (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2003), 56.

time because they tend to overheat and melt. Also, similar to most color photographic materials, color slide transparency film tends to experience light sensitivity, and in some cases, dark fading.⁸⁸ Bertrand Lavédrine suggests avoiding projecting original color slides and instead to make copy slides for exhibition purposes. He does not talk specifically about issues surrounding black and white transparencies, however, the major deterioration factor with black and white slide transparency films is deterioration of the triacetate film base.⁸⁹ In the case of the original slides made of Fernandez's work for *Conscience*, no base deterioration was apparent.

Two approaches were considered to remove the dirt from the images. The first was to remove the transparencies from the original mounts in order to clean the transparencies and then replace the mounts with paper or plastic mounts. The other was to digitally remove the dirt using Photoshop. However, neither option was cost or time effective. Therefore, each slide was scanned to an external hard drive and titled with its given carousel and sequence number.

As previously stated, Fernandez kept the duplicate slide transparencies that were not used for the original exhibition. These he placed in plastic and paper mounts and properly housed them in inert plastic slide sleeves. When notified of the problems the museum was having with the original slides, Fernandez lent his collection of slides to the museum allowing George Eastman House to scan them for the exhibition. Many clean duplicate slides were found in Fernandez's collection as well as copies of the introductory slides. Although many clean slides were scanned to replace the images from the damaged slides in aluminum and glass mounts, those that were not replaced still showed forty years of deterioration in the projection, which was noted in the text panel.

In addition, Fernandez's slides were organized in categories, chronologically and by event.⁹⁰ The organization of his slide collection gives context to the images, which previously had none other than the limited context of 1960's protest. Fernandez's collection of slides also included slides that were made but not used in the original exhibition, such as "Homosexuals Philadelphia," and "Protest Against Columbia Univ." providing an even larger scope of subject matter and further insight into Fernandez's work. His sense of organization underscores the difference in Fernandez's and Lyons's approaches to the content of the images. As a photojournalist, Fernandez's emphasis is on events, people, and places as reflected in his category labels, such as "Ginsberg at Women's House of

⁸⁸ Bertrand Lavédrine, *A Guide to the Preventive Conservation of Photograph Collections* (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2003), 163. Color slide film, like other chromogenic color materials (paper and film), is composed yellow, magenta and cyan azomethine dye. These dyes are inherently unstable are prone to chemical deterioration, causing the photograph to fade and the colors to shift; the dyes are light sensitive, but fading and color shifting can occur in dark storage as well.

⁸⁹ Bertrand Lavédrine, *A Guide to the Preventive Conservation of Photograph Collections* (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2003), 17.

⁹⁰ See Appendix D for a complete list of the contents of Fernandez's slide collection.

Detention 1964.” This approach is a very different from Lyons’s emphasis on image sequence and the exhibition experience.

The 8-track audiotape from the original *Conscience* exhibition also survived in working order, however 8-track technology became obsolete several decades ago. Therefore, the audio was transferred professionally to MP3 format and copied to an audio Compact Disc (CD). The audio CD and the external hard drive containing the scanned images were given to Bob Lau, a volunteer and friend of the museum, to reconstruct the exhibition digitally. Using a simple video-editing program Lau digitally synchronized the images and audio. He produced six separate Digital Video Discs (DVDs) for the exhibition.

Some changes to the original exhibition were made in order to adjust for changes in the physical exhibition space as well as cultural context. The original introductory slide presentation was omitted because the images, depicting dissent in the 1930s and 40s, were too far out of context and did not represent the work of the photographer, Fernandez. Instead, an exhibit was mounted that discussed the history of the original exhibition that displayed a case containing original newspaper clippings, press releases, a letter from the New York State Council on the Arts to Nathan Lyons, the original neon sign, the response survey, and survey report. Hock also had a new neon sign made that read *Conscience the Ultimate Weapon*, choosing to display the entire title of the show rather than the censored title. The sign hung in the introductory portion of the gallery along with the original exhibition poster and new didactic wall texts and labels.⁹¹ Separating the introductory portion and the main space was a temporary wall that sat about fifteen feet from the gallery door and came out about ten feet, creating a small space before entering the main room.

Lau’s reconstruction of the exhibition, under Hock’s direction, was largely based on the confines of the gallery space. The exhibition was in the Entrance Gallery at George Eastman House, which is smaller than the original exhibition space. The 1968 *Conscience* exhibition was designed so that each portion recycled immediately upon its completion, allowing for all for sections to run simultaneously. Each section was obscured from the viewer by the central projection tower, which partitioned off each section. Audio from the next section would cue the viewer to move along when the first section ended. This design also allowed for viewers to explore the space at their leisure, experiencing each portion for as long as they liked before moving on.

The size of Entrance Gallery made it difficult for each of the three main portions of the exhibition to be partitioned off like the original exhibition design. Instead, Lau made six DVDs to be projected as sequential diptychs on three walls in the space. The absence of the central tower and the ability to partition off the space in the 2008 *Conscience* exhibition meant that each of the three

⁹¹ See wall text, Appendix E.

portions had to be projected individually so that the viewer would have to wait through the entire first section before viewing the second section, and so on. Six digital slide projectors were mounted from the ceiling and connected to six DVD players stacked on top of a permanent false wall on the left hand side of the gallery. After the first section had run its cycle on the right hand wall, the second section would begin on the center wall, followed by the third on the left wall, with a short break before the first wall began to cycle again. The main gallery space is not perfectly square, but has a nook on the far end of the gallery, where a computer was installed showing, Fernandez's most recent photographs of protest.



2008 *Conscience the Ultimate Weapon* Installation
Photograph by author

Some editorial discretion was given to Lau in reconstructing the digital elements for the exhibition. In the 1968 exhibition files, there are no records or scripts that indicate where the dissolves were to happen or how many seconds each image was to be projected. The slide sequence sheets with the indiscernible slide number codes were the only “scripts” available. These did not indicate dissolves or in which portion of the exhibition each carousel was placed. Lau designed the 2008 exhibition so that each image projected for about twelve seconds before dissolving into the next image.

In addition, the design of the exhibition had to be readjusted in order to accommodate the smaller size of the exhibition space and the absence of the central partition. The central partition in the original exhibition allowed the viewer to move throughout the space, creating an active,

participatory experience. The removal of the partition meant that instead of the viewer moving around the space, the images had to move around the viewer creating a more stationary experience. Hock and Lau were unsure that the viewer would sit through the entire thirty minute exhibition. Therefore, the 2008 *Conscience* exhibition was shortened from thirty minutes to about twenty minutes. As a result, some content had to be removed and slightly re-sequenced. Most notably, images of the Neo Nazis were omitted on the basis that the images might not translate well to a contemporary audience. Hock was concerned that many people would not recognize the Neo Nazi emblem and the organization's leaders, making their opposition to the Civil Rights movement devoid of meaning. Images of events like the East Village NYC "sweep-in" and other specific events that may have struck a chord with a viewer in 1968, but not necessarily with a viewer in 2008, were also omitted due to cultural irrelevance to the average contemporary viewer. For the same reasons, images of the political advocates, such as H. Rap Brown, George Lincoln Rockwell, Dr. Benjamin Spock, and Stokely Carmichael, all of whom often appeared on television in 1968 but whose faces are now not recognizable to many viewers under the age of forty-five, were also either omitted or appeared less often. The intention was to maintain the spirit of an exhibition about protest and change, rather than focus on the public personalities of the 1960s.

In order to preserve the spirit of the original exhibition, the three main portions of the 2008 exhibition retained similar themes as the original. Section one played Bob Dylan's "The Time Are A Changing" with images of pro and anti Vietnam demonstrations, portraits of protesters, demonstrations by members of the Bread and Puppet Theater,⁹² and minor demonstrations, such as union protests. Section two offered a an audio montage beginning with Phil Och's "Draft Dodger Rag," sung by Pete Seeger, followed by interviews of protesters against the Vietnam War, people discussing burning their draft cards, samples of anti-war songs like Joni Mitchell covering Simon and Garfunkel's "Last Night I had the Strangest Dream," fragments of speeches by people speaking out against war, and ending with a portion of Malcolm X's famous speech *The Ballot or the Bullet*. The images depicted more pro and anti Vietnam War demonstrations as well as people burning draft cards, scenes of the after-effects of the Newark race riots, protests in the Washington Mall, anti communist marches featuring signs that read "Better Dead than Red" and "Bomb Red China," more portraits of protesters, police sporting guns and riot gear attempting to control protesters, Civil Rights demonstrations, and Allen Ginsberg supporting a sign reading "Pot is Fun."

⁹² The Bread and Puppet Theater was formed in New York City in the early 1960s. This politically engaged theater group was active in many anti Vietnam War protests in New York. The theater, now based in Vermont, is still active.



Image, 6-48 Photograph courtesy of Benedict J. Fernandez III

Section three was dedicated primarily to Robert Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King, Civil Rights demonstrations, and the Poor People's March, and Resurrection City. The audio began with Phil Ochs's "Power and Glory," followed by a portion of Dr. King's *I Have a Dream*, and Ted Kennedy's eulogy for his brother, Robert Kennedy. At the end of the third section, the exhibition recycled back to the first section with a title slide reading, *Conscience the Ultimate Weapon* while playing Bob Dylan's, "When the Ship Comes in" before beginning again. This song and title slide were a new addition to the 2008 exhibition, providing a break at the end before recycling, marking the end of the exhibition.



2008 *Conscience the Ultimate Weapon* Installation
Photograph by author

Analysis and Conclusion

By considering the George Eastman House 1968 exhibition, *Conscience the Ultimate Weapon* (*Conscience*), and the 2008 interpretation of the exhibition, it is possible to examine the preservation concerns in recreating this time-based media installation. Recreating an exhibition of this nature is a difficult venture. The preservation concerns of time-based media installation pieces are ephemeral, technological, physical, and contextual. Installations, such as *Conscience*, are intended to be participatory and experiential. The preservation concerns, therefore, are more subjective in relation to the ephemeral challenge of preserving the experience of a time-based media installation.

In addition, time-based media installations are heavily reliant upon emerging technologies that are constantly changing and becoming obsolete. The preservation of the technology used in a time-based media installation, if possible, is integral to maintaining the content of the piece; without the ability to read the original data, the content will be lost. The technology directs the aesthetics of the work as well as the content, which is inextricably linked to the context in which the work was made. With changes in technology and cultural contexts in which re-created exhibitions are presented, the viewer's experience of the installation and the meaning of the work are altered.

Inevitably, the role of the curator also needs to be addressed in considering the *Conscience* exhibitions. What was the role of the exhibition's original curator? In the interpretation of the original, is it enough to re-create an installation to the best of the curator's ability within the contextual framework of the original, or is it possible to effectively re-contextualize the work in a contemporary context?

Preserving the Experience

Time-based media installations are inherently temporal in nature. Installations are intended to be experiential, creating a relationship between the viewer, the space, and the work. The only way to understand a time-based media installation is to experience it; therefore, once the exhibition ends, it essentially ceases to exist. As with many early installations of this nature, directions or scripts were not made. In order to re-create the installation the curator must act as a detective by piecing together clues, such as primary resources including written descriptions and correspondence, photographic documentation of the installation, and any other bits that can be extrapolated from contemporary sources. Inevitably, there are gaps in information, forcing the curator to guess and ultimately alter the experience. Due to the ephemeral nature of time-based media installations, it becomes increasingly

more important to provide written histories of the works in order to preserve the installation experience.⁹³

In the construction of art installations, the configuration of the space and the placement of objects or in this case, projections, are integral to the viewer's experience. In the 1968 *Conscience* exhibition, the content of the exhibition coupled with the construction of the space provided the viewer with a contextual, emotional, and physical experience. By weaving together sounds and images of current events within the average viewer's realm of cultural awareness, the exhibition evoked emotional responses to the content of the exhibition. In the 1968 exhibition, the central tower required the viewer to explore and experience the physical space. The intention was to give the viewer the opportunity to actively participate in the exhibition space and in the content, thus becoming part of the act of dissent. The central partition was so integral to the exhibition experience that when the 1968 *Conscience* exhibition traveled, the curator required that the borrowing venue have a space large enough to partition off the four elements of the exhibition in order to create a similar effect to the George Eastman House installation.⁹⁴ The removal of this integral central partition in the 2008 exhibition caused changes in the viewers' experience of the exhibition. The absence of the tower created a passive, rather than active experience by having the viewer remain stationary as the images moved around the room.

Medium, Context, and Content

The 1968 *Conscience* exhibition was grounded in the technical and contextual elements of the 1960s through the curator's choice of medium and subject matter, making it a product of its time. The medium of slide projection as a burgeoning expressive format in the 1960s would have appeared to be both familiar and innovative to the viewer. The use of slide projection in vernacular settings, such as family snapshots projected in the home, or as didactic presentations in the classroom or office would have been a familiar experience to the average viewer. However, to most viewers the use of this medium in a museum would have appeared novel, thus pushing against the norms of exhibition presentation.

Though Lyons's use of slide projection may have been a novel approach within the museum it would not have been an uncomfortable experience for the viewer, but rather somewhat familiar.

⁹³ Marita Sturken, "Paradox in the Evolution of an Art Form: Great Expectations and the Making of a History" in *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art*, ed. Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer (New York: Aperture, 1990), 104. In this essay, Marita Sturken calls for the necessity of written histories for early video works because of the physical degradation of the tapes and obsolescence of technology. Written histories of time-based media installations are also necessary in order to give an account of the installation experience.

⁹⁴ George Eastman House *Conscience the Ultimate Weapon* exhibition files. George Eastman House archive. George Eastman House, Rochester, NY.

The photojournalistic subject matter coupled with the time-based media format of the exhibition created a discourse with contemporary news media, providing the viewer with the familiar experience of watching the news on television. Lyons's use of Fernandez's still photojournalistic images representing current events (protest), manipulated into an active audio-visual slide projection, created a dialog with the contemporary photojournalistic representation of similar subjects in the mass media.

His approach also created a dialogue with early documentary video artist's counterculture approach to representing protest. Like early video artists, Lyons was reflecting mainstream media by using photojournalistic images and audio of events familiar to his audience. He was taking a socially conscious role as curator by evoking an emotional and active response from his audience through the creation of an alternative to the presentation of current events by popular media sources. In this way, similar to video artists, he was portraying real events in real time from a countercultural standpoint. Therefore, like contemporaneous artists, he was blurring the lines between art and communication. Although the nature of the *Conscience* exhibition in both content and format ran parallel to the burgeoning mediums of slide projection, video art, and the practice of installation art, it does not always align precisely with any of these art movements, as it is an amalgamation of these contemporary art practices. By projecting the work in a museum and traveling the exhibition to art museums and galleries, Lyons was actively pushing against the established norms of how photography, particularly photojournalistic photography, was presented in museums and galleries. The result was an innovative and political exhibition and statement, which inevitably caused controversy within George Eastman House.

Changes in Content and Context

All images, particularly photojournalistic images, are temporal in their cultural contextual relevance. Most, if not all images are a product of the cultural context in which they are made, whether that context is within an artistic movement or a political movement. Therefore, the way a viewer interprets an image in the cultural context in which it was made differs from the way a viewer will interpret it forty years after it was made. The contents of the images in *Conscience*, despite the intention that the exhibition was to be about the First Amendment right to dissent, are specific to the 1960s in context—social and political protests for and against the Vietnam War and Civil Rights, and images of 1960's political leaders.

The change in cultural context between 1968 and 2008, in relation to the content of the *Conscience* exhibitions provides the viewer with a nostalgic experience in 2008, rather than the active experience of 1968. The images and audio have shifted from having a sense of newsworthy immediacy to being historic documents of the 1960's protest movement. By revisiting this material

in 2008, the interpretation and experience of the exhibition changed. This change goes beyond the mere passage of time to the way in which the average American remembers the events of the 1960s. In her book *Tangled Memories*, Marita Sturken discusses the notion of cultural collective memory, contending that memory and history are entangled. She asserts that shared cultural knowledge of history is produced through photographs and the re-representation of history through films, monuments, art, and literature, which are commodities that guide our understanding of past events in the present. She also states that our understanding of the past is continually shifting with the representation of the past in the present. In this way, the individual's memory of what actually happened is blurred with the interpretation of that event in popular culture, thus producing a shared cultural memory that is neither personal nor necessarily historically accurate.⁹⁵ In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag rejects the notion of collective memory, calling it instead "cultural instruction" by saying, "Photographs that everyone recognizes are now a consistent part of what a society chooses to think about. It calls these ideas 'memories,' and that is over the long run, a fiction. Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as collective memory—part of the same family of spurious notions as collective guilt. But there is collective instruction."⁹⁶

When considering the actual events of the 1960s compared with the representation of the 1960s by popular media, the media version dominates the average American's understanding of that decade, whether this representation is called collective memory or instruction. Popular culture and the turn of historic events tell us that Civil Rights and opposition to the Vietnam War won over the anti Civil Rights advocates and supporters of Vietnam. These now less popular perspectives to the issues of the 1960s have nearly disappeared from popular public discourse guided by the entertainment industries.⁹⁷ The removal of content from the 2008 *Conscience* exhibition in some ways reflects contemporary popular discourse on the 1960s. By removing images of the Neo Nazis, the historic record of their opposition to Civil Rights in the 1960s has been erased from the exhibition. By removing these images and the portraits of 1960's political advocates, the exhibition became a more generalized historic record, signaling a nostalgic response to the memory of the 1960s.

⁹⁵ Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: the Vietnam War, the Aids Epidemic and the Politics of Remember* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

⁹⁶ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 85.

⁹⁷ Note the distinction between historic discourse in history books and scholarship, and discourse by popular media. Here, I am suggesting that the popular notion of the 1960s is guided by the representation of the decade by the entertainment industries.

Changes in Medium

Medium, content and context are often inextricably linked in the experience of a time-based installation. The medium of slide projection drove the aesthetic quality of the exhibition and created a relationship between the content (protest) and the context (1960's photojournalistic representation of protest in the mass media).⁹⁸ In recreating a time-based media installation, one of the biggest challenges is overcoming the obsolescence of the original technology.⁹⁹ The initial appeal of time-based media in the 1960s was the medium's immediacy. It was never thought of or intended to be an archival medium, thus the materials were allowed to deteriorate and technology moved on.¹⁰⁰ While changes in medium are often inevitable, this change alters the interpretation and experience of the exhibition.

Changing the medium of the images for the 2008 *Conscience* exhibition from slide projection to digital projection and the audio from 8-track tape to MP3 was a necessity; however, the obsolescence of slide projection and the 8-track directly affects the viewer's experience. The medium-specific qualities of slide projection include the sound of the projector fan, the click of the slides as they progress through the carousel, and the ability to sequence, move, and continuously loop still images.¹⁰¹ In addition to this are the physical qualities of the slide as an object, which include both size and transparency.

In the 1960s, slides seemed to lack materiality. They were projected images, rather than framed objects hung on a wall. Projection removed borders and the sense of scale causing the images to exist as an experience of projected light and movement. The digital projector mimics the analog projector in its abilities to project images in a moving sequence and continuously loop the sequence, but it can only do so with the aid of computers and digital editing software. Digital projection is truly objectless removing the need for the physical photographic object, the slide. Therefore, it lacks the tangible qualities of the slide projector—the clicks and whirrs. However, complementary software adds the ability to combine image and sound, and more easily create effects, such as dissolves. This

⁹⁸ Marita Sturken, "Paradox in the Evolution of an Art Form: Great Expectations and the Making of a History," in *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art*, ed. Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer (New York: Aperture, 1990). In this essay, Sturken contends that medium and aesthetics are linked. She says of early video that, "In a medium heavily dependent on technology, these technical changes ultimately become aesthetic changes. Artists can only express something visually according to the limits of a given medium's technology."

⁹⁹ The technical transition from analog slide projection to digital projection is discussed in detail in the previous chapter, "George Eastman House 2008 Exhibition, *Conscience the Ultimate Weapon*."

¹⁰⁰ Marita Sturken, "Paradox in the Evolution of an Art Form: Great Expectations and the Making of a History" in *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art*, ed. Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer (New York: Aperture, 1990), 103.

¹⁰¹ Robert Storr, "Next Slide Please..." in *Slideshow: projected images in contemporary art*, ed. Darsie Alexander (Baltimore: Baltimore Museum of Art, 2005), 55.

eliminates the physical problems of jammed and melting slides, but adds a host of technological problems in dealing with computers and software.

This change in medium disconnects the relationship between medium, content, and aesthetics. The 2008 viewer would probably be familiar with the vernacular uses of slide projection, and would probably have experienced it first-hand. However, digital projection now dominates both vernacular and artistic uses of projection, making the experience of digital projection more familiar. Where slide projection would have struck a chord with a 1960's viewer as being a novel approach to displaying photographs in a museum exhibition, to a 2008 viewer, traditional slide projection would have seemed antiquated and thus, nostalgic. Hypothetically, if it were possible to present the 2008 exhibition using slides, it may have placed the content closer the context of 1968 by maintaining the relationship between media, content, and context. From an art historical perspective, the relationship of the original exhibition to early documentary video and the use of slide projection as an expressive medium in the 1960s is ruptured by the change in medium to digital projection; the notion of the exhibition's format as having been innovative can only be referenced through didactic texts. In essence, the use of digital media changes the visceral experience of the projection.

The obsolescence of technology was unavoidable. In 2008, George Eastman House was unable to present the exhibition as a slide projection, therefore, DVDs and digital light projectors were the appropriate media for the exhibition. However, DVDs are merely digital data storage devices and have relatively short life spans due to inherent deterioration of the discs as well as wear with use. In addition, with constant changes in technology, they too are subject to obsolescence unless time and care are taken to migrate the data continuously to new technological systems as they appear in order to continue to be able to read the data. Neither the CDs, DVDs, external hard drive, nor the original slides have yet been accessioned into the George Eastman House photograph collection. Eventually, the exhibition materials, both analog slides and the new digital surrogate images and audio, will disappear entirely with the continued deterioration of the slides and the potential loss of the ability to read the digital media.

The Role of the Curator

It is the curator who drives the experience and interpretation of a museum exhibition. The 1968 and 2008 *Conscience* exhibitions both bring up questions of the role of the curator. In an essay titled, "From Museum Curator to Exhibition Auteur: inventing a singular position"¹⁰² using the Pompidou as

¹⁰² Nathalie Heinich and Michael Pollak, "From Museum Curator to Exhibition Auteur: Invention a singular position" in *Thinking About Exhibition*, eds. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson, Sandy Nairne (New York: Routledge, 1996).

a model, Nathalie Heinich and Michel Pollak discuss a trend in French museums in which the role of the curator is shifting from the traditional role of the safeguarding, analysis, and presentation of cultural heritage to a role that resembles the function of a film director as the creative visionary, or auteur. Similar to film production, they contend that exhibitions have become productions as well with expanded budgets, sets, and production crews. In addition, the curator's position is to oversee the production and provide the creative guidelines of the exhibition.

Under this premise, it can be argued that Lyons's role in the *Conscience* exhibition moved beyond the traditional role of curator, to that of auteur—the creative visionary directing the exhibition production. The exhibition not only blurs the lines between art and communication, it also blurs the lines between curator and artist. In addition, although the intent of the photographer and perhaps the stated intention of the exhibition by the curator was to show protest as means to expressing First Amendment rights from the perspective of an objective observer, ultimately the social and political content cannot be ignored. Thus, the exhibition stood as a social and political statement that belonged more to curator than the photographer.

The intent of the 2008 exhibition was to create an interpretation of the 1968 *Conscience*, urging viewers to draw parallels between the events of the 1960s and current U.S. conflicts, resulting in a re-contextualization of the content.¹⁰³ Hock's approach fell somewhere between a traditional curatorial role and that of auteur; he created an interpretation of *Conscience* rather than an exact replica and situating it in a contemporary context while respecting the original intention of the exhibition. The 2008 exhibition coupled the original material with Fernandez's most recent work on the subject of protest, which was displayed separately in the gallery space. In speaking about his recent work, Fernandez commented that political demonstrations now are almost the same as they were in the 1960s. He believes there are some parallels between the 1960s and today. However, he has difficulty photographing current protest events because "Bush has gone beyond the pale."¹⁰⁴ Placing emphasis on his role as objective observer, he stated that when photographing in the 1960s with Johnson and Nixon as presidents, he could be objective, but he cannot be politically objective with President Bush. "I'm not objective. That is why I can't photograph it. If I had believed this way in the '60s I don't think I would have done anything any good." The change, he concludes, is not necessarily a shared cultural change saying, "It's definitely a change in me. I had a future then. I'm now being interviewed, so I must be old. And since I had a future then, I was optimistic that it could change. Now I've gone over it so many times. And now we're going through the same bullshit.

¹⁰³ See Wall Text, Appendix E.

¹⁰⁴ Benedict J. Fernandez III, interviewed by Alice Carver-Kubik, February 21, 2008.

That's why I can't function, because I had hope. I don't have it now."¹⁰⁵ This is the context in which the original exhibition content stands, demonstrating a shift from an atmosphere of optimism for change to an overwhelming sense of apathy. The parallels between the wars and civil rights movements of then and now express the viewpoints of the curator and artist. In comparing Fernandez's recent work to his work in the 1960s, what becomes more apparent are the contrasts as apathy pervades the popular response to the War in Iraq and current civil rights struggles.

Although both the Vietnam War and the War in Iraq evoke sentiments of patriotism and protest, the apathy towards the War in Iraq when compared to the active response to the Vietnam War exists for several reasons. The U.S. government has enacted no draft for the war in Iraq, and there is major censorship in media representation of the war by the government as well as censorship of public demonstrations against the war. The Vietnam War is commonly referred to as the living room war because major television networks aired the conflict on live television, and widely, though negatively, covered public protests. The similarities are the perceived questionable purposes for engaging in war in both conflicts, and the demographics of people serving in each war, primarily Black, Hispanic, and working class men and women. However, because the differences outweigh the similarities, the war in Iraq does not directly affect the average American. The major current civil rights struggle in the United States is the Queer civil rights movement. This movement resides mainly in legislative decisions rather than in public demonstrations, lacking a single political figurehead. This differs greatly from the dynamic Black Civil Rights movement led by Dr. King from which legislation was made as a result of mass public dissent. Forty years after the death of Dr. King and the passage of Civil Rights legislation in the U.S., many civil rights advocates consider there still to be issues of race inequality. For example, here is some question as to the events surrounding the devastation of Hurricane Katrina and the U.S. government's delayed response to the people of New Orleans.

Considering these contrasts, the question this exhibition more appropriately raises is what happened to public demonstrations of political dissent? This approach better aligns the 2008 exhibition with the intent of the original exhibition, the First Amendment right to dissent. This question would have placed the 2008 exhibition within the context of the original, maintaining the traditional role of the curator: to safeguard, analyze, and present cultural heritage. The creative license of the curator is broad and certainly subjective. Taking creative control over the content of another artist's work, or in the case of the 2008 *Conscience* exhibition, the creative work of another curator is challenging. However, it is not necessarily inappropriate. Within a continuously changing cultural context, images naturally change meaning, as discussed earlier. It is the curator's role to

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

understand how the meaning of images change, and to preserve the original context and intent of a work within the re-contextualization of that work through didactics.

Conclusion

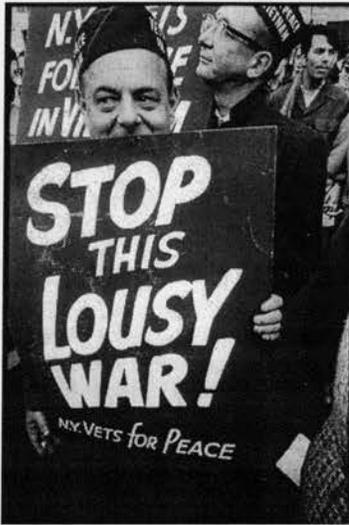
The 1968 *Conscience* exhibition was extremely innovative in both subject matter and format. Through providing a history of the exhibition, it is apparent that it is one of the earliest uses of time-based media installation and is an example of counterculture photojournalism in the 1960s, parallel to early street video. The exhibition is an important part of both the history of time-based media and George Eastman House. It also had great value for both the photographer and the curator. For Fernandez, the exhibition put him on the map as a freelance photojournalist leading to many professional successes. For Lyons, it was one of the last exhibitions he curated at George Eastman House before he moved on to establish the Visual Studies Workshop, which was one of the first photography schools to embrace time-based media, including projection.

Through the case study provided here comparing the medium, content, format, and context of the 1968 George Eastman House *Conscience* exhibition to the 2008 interpretation, this paper has addressed the challenges in preserving time-based media installations. In recreating time-based installations, it is important to address changes in technology and context and how these changes affect the experience of the installation. It is the role of the curator to situate the technology, aesthetics, and content within the original context of the work, to re-create the experience of the exhibition, and to address how the interpretation of the work changes with changing cultural contexts.

Appendix A: Images by Benedict J. Fernandez III in the 1968 Exhibition

Below are examples of the reoccurring themes throughout the exhibition and images included in the last portion of the exhibition dedicated to events of 1968.

Pro and anti Vietnam War protestors



Image, 4-3 Photograph courtesy of Benedict J. Fernandez III



Image, 4-23 Photograph courtesy of Benedict J. Fernandez III

Civil Rights and those opposed to Civil Rights



Image, 3-55 Photograph courtesy of Benedict J. Fernandez III

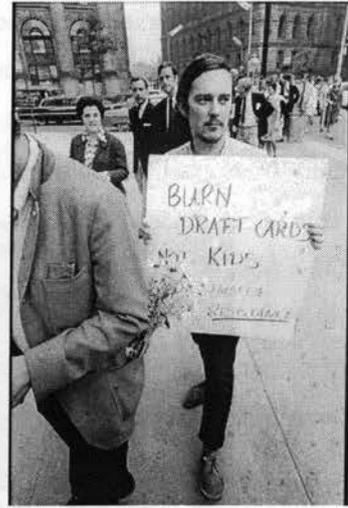


Image, 4-35 Photograph courtesy of Benedict J. Fernandez III

Draft card burning



Image, 7-1 Photograph courtesy of Benedict J. Fernandez III



Image, 7-9 Photograph courtesy of Benedict J. Fernandez III

After the Newark race riots



Image, 7-63 Photograph courtesy of Benedict J. Fernandez III



Image, 7-64 Photograph courtesy of Benedict J. Fernandez III

Riots and police brutality



Image, 7-67 Photograph courtesy of Benedict J. Fernandez III



Image, 8-74 Photograph courtesy of Benedict J. Fernandez III

Political activists: H. Rap Brown and Allen Ginsberg



Image, 5-53 Photograph courtesy of Benedict J. Fernandez III



Image, 6-39 Photograph courtesy of Benedict J. Fernandez III

Protests on minor social issues: teacher's rights and a union strike



Image, 4-46 Photograph courtesy of Benedict J. Fernandez III



Image, 7-26 Photograph courtesy of Benedict J. Fernandez III

The Poor People's March and Resurrection City

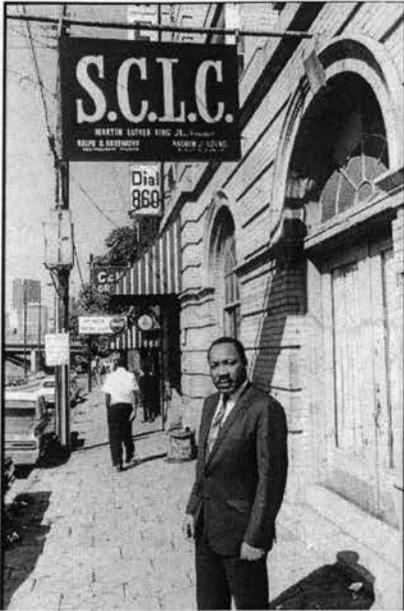


Image, 10-11 Photograph courtesy of Benedict J. Fernandez III



Image, 10-28 Photograph courtesy of Benedict J. Fernandez III

Dr. King



Image, 9-31 Photograph courtesy of Benedict J. Fernandez III



Image, 9-35 Photograph courtesy of Benedict J. Fernandez III



Image, 10-46 Photograph courtesy of Benedict J. Fernandez III



Image, 10-53 Photograph courtesy of Benedict J. Fernandez III

Senator Kennedy



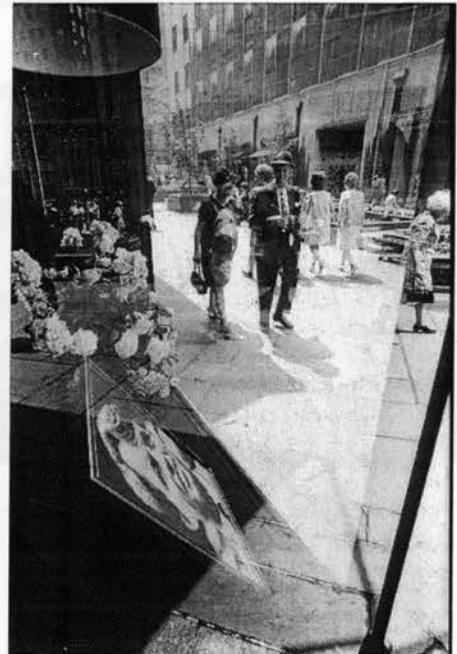
Image,10-62 Photograph courtesy of Benedict J. Fernandez III



Image,10-64 Photograph courtesy of Benedict J. Fernandez III



Image, 9-68 Photograph courtesy of Benedict J. Fernandez III



Image, 9-70 Photograph courtesy of Benedict J. Fernandez III

Appendix B: Benedict J. Fernandez III

The American protest movement of the 1960s was one of Benedict J. Fernandez III's first major photojournalistic works. He came to photography and to photographing protest through a series of fortunate circumstances and by basic survival. Fernandez grew up in Spanish Harlem in New York City, also known as East Harlem. Spanish Harlem is a sub-community within Harlem in New York and contains a large Puerto Rican population as well as a smaller Italian community. Fernandez lived on Lexington Avenue located on the dividing line between the Italian and Puerto Rican sides of the neighborhood. His Italian mother's family lived on the East side of Spanish Harlem in the Italian sector of the neighborhood, however his father's Puerto Rican heritage placed their home on the West side of the divide. Fernandez's early childhood begins to sound like the opening scenes of *West Side Story*; he was caught between his Italian and Puerto Rican roots and found it necessary to conform to these two identities and safely cross the neighborhood border, staying clear of the local street gangs, the East side Red Wings and the West side Dragons. Fernandez and the kids in his building formed their own gang, The Gladiators, as a way to form some autonomy from the local gangs. Fernandez had more obstacles to tackle, however. Undiagnosed until he was nearly fifty years old, Fernandez is severely dyslexic. Throughout his adolescence, he was fortunate enough to befriend individuals and teachers who could see his intellect despite his struggle with literacy, thus enabling him to graduate from high school.

He began taking photographs as a child; using his mother's Kodak box camera, he took portraits of his street gang friends. In high school he got a job at People's Lab as a delivery boy through a friend on the swim team. The People's Lab was the photo lab of choice for the underground homosexual community in Greenwich Village in the early 1950s. Fernandez was chosen to deliver the developed film and prints to their clientele because he could "keep his mouth shut," perhaps a benefit of his childhood experiences and his mother's familial connections.¹⁰⁶ Eventually he moved up in the Lab and learned how to process film and print photographs. He became interested in photography and bought an Argus C3, an inexpensive 35mm range finder camera, with money he saved working as a lifeguard. Passionate about his hobby, he photographed around New York City and spent hours in the closet he converted into a dark room. While working in the dark room, he listened to short wave radio and kept abreast of current events as the conflicts in

¹⁰⁶ On the Italian side of his family, his Grandfather was Al Capone's right hand man in Detroit. His Grandmother's brother worked with Lucky Luciano in New York. The two Italian families were joined through the marriage of his grandparents. This meant Fernandez could "keep his mouth shut." Fernandez was paid 50 cents an hour.

Vietnam began to escalate into war and the Civil Rights movement began to take form in the mid 1960s.

In the early 1960s, Fernandez took a job at Bethlehem Steel in Hoboken, New Jersey through his father. He then worked at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. In 1962, the United States discovered that the USSR was placing nuclear missiles in Cuba aimed at the United States. This led to thirteen-day tense show down of military power, which posed a real threat of nuclear war.¹⁰⁷ The armed forces began to prepare for conflict heavily, boosting production at the Navy Yard. After the close of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, the Brooklyn Navy Yard began to decrease production and eventually closed in 1966, which resulted in Fernandez losing his job. In 1963, when President Kennedy was killed, Fernandez was in the hospital having lost the tip of his thumb in a work related accident. Through this series of seemingly unfortunate events, Fernandez decided to take his hobby more seriously and develop a career as a photographer. His humble beginning as a photographer started in early 1963 when an acquaintance asked him to photograph a wedding at the Plaza Hotel in New York. He was nearly thrown out of the Plaza by the concierge, who was suspicious of him, questioning why he was taking picture. However, Fernandez's performance and professionalism landed him a job at the hotel as a photographer's assistant for weddings and special events. Working mostly weekends, Fernandez had the opportunity to photograph both The Beatles on their first U.S. tour and Queen Frederica of Greece while getting a few pointers from the "paparazzi."

Another stroke of luck and circumstance led Fernandez to Alexey Brodovich. Brodovich was a legendary graphic designer. Most known for his work with *Harper's Bazaar*, his innovative designs changed to look of fashion magazines. Brodovich also taught a photography class and a graphic arts class in New York called the Design Laboratory.¹⁰⁸ Fernandez bought front row tickets to see Flamenco Dancer, Jose Greco, with his father at Lewiston Stadium. As it turned out, front row seats were behind the lawn seats, placing them further from the stage than Fernandez had wanted. He gave his father his camera with the telephoto lens and then proceeded to the stage to photograph the performance. While photographing another photographer asked Fernandez if he had any extra film. Fernandez gladly lent him several rolls of 2 ¼ film. As it turned out, the gentleman was the official photographer for the Stadium and could have had Fernandez thrown out. Instead, grateful for the favor, he offered to take a look at Fernandez's portfolio. Impressed with what he saw, he introduced

¹⁰⁷Walter Cronkite, *I Can Hear it Now: The Sixties* Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

¹⁰⁸ Kerry William Percell, *Alexey Brodovich* (New York: Phaidon, 2002), 113. He began teaching the Laboratory in Philadelphia in 1933 at the Philadelphia Museum School of Industrial Art establishing it as one of the most prestigious design classes in America. He reestablished the Laboratory in New York in 1941 and taught until 1966 teaching two sections, one in design and the other in photography. A successful graphic designer he is most recognized for his magazine work for *Harper's Bazaar*.

Fernandez to Brodovich who offered Fernandez a scholarship to his Design Laboratory under the stipulation that he drive Brodovich to the Laboratory's weekly meetings at Richard Avedon's studio.

As a designer, Brodovich valued originality and immediacy in art and pushed his students to do the same. At the beginning of each session, the students would pass their work around the room and then Brodovich would critique, often harshly and with little praise in order to push his students further in their creative solutions. At the first meeting Fernandez attended, he proudly, though anonymously, presented his portfolio to the class first. Brodovich's initial response to the work was, "This portfolio is shit. This portfolio should be burned. Whoever belongs to this portfolio should quit and run away." Fernandez turned to him and said, "you son of a bitch. You gave me a scholarship, you're stuck with me." Fernandez continued to attend the weekly meetings and become acquainted with Brodovich's students, including Avedon, Lisette Model, and Diane Arbus as well as work as Brodovich's associate, thus honing his talent. Meanwhile Fernandez was working as a photographer at the Worlds Fair photographing the Boy Scouts and selling his images for a \$1 a piece to the boys. He also set up a free photography school called the Photo Film Workshop at the Public Theater through theater owner and friend, Joe Papp, with help from the School Art League. The Workshop serviced underprivileged youth.

Fernandez's introduction to photojournalism and photographing protest came through Brodovich. Brodovich set assignments for his students from with the subject matter would hopefully produce new ideas and responses.¹⁰⁹ In the early sixties¹¹⁰ Fernandez and Brodovich were working in Brodovich's studio, which overlooked Union Square in New York. Union Square historically is a place for social and political activism and public protest. On this particular day in May, the communists were staging a public protest for Lyndon B. Johnson to withdraw troops from Santo Domingo, capital of the Dominican Republic. Santo Domingo was engaged in a civil war in the early 1960s when communists within the country attempted to take over the government. Johnson deployed U.S. troops into Santo Domingo to protect American citizens in the country. The conflict turned into a four-month occupation of the country, engaging 22,000 United States soldiers.¹¹¹ Seeing the communist protest from the studio, Brodovich charged the Fernandez with the assignment of photographing the event.

Fernandez began traveling around the East coast and Midwest photographing political rallies and staged protests in what we now recognize as the protest movement. Leaving nearly every

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 117.

¹¹⁰ In my interview with Fernandez he remembered the protest occurring in May of 1964, however, Johnson intervened in the civil war in Santo Domingo in May of 1965. The Union Square protest against US intervention in Santo Domingo therefore probably occurred in 1965.

¹¹¹ Walter Cronkite, *I Can Hear it Now: The Sixties* Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

weekend, his wife Siiri was often frustrated and did not understand what he intended to do with his work. However, they both recognized that major social and political shifts were taking place and documenting these events was important. Following his instincts, Fernandez said to Siiri, "I know this is history happening and I have to photograph."¹¹²

Although the political issues were of interest to Fernandez, he was also interested in the act of protesting as an expression of the First Amendment, which gives Americans the right to dissent, also known as freedom of speech. He took a photojournalistic and democratic approach to his subject by photographing each side of any given political conflict equally. Fernandez said, "One of the things that became a hallmark, which I don't agree with today, but I was steadfast in then, was I never got involved. I recorded the event. I was there to observe and to take pictures. I did not take sides."¹¹³ His images depict protesters bearing signs supporting troops in Vietnam and insisting on ending the war, civil rights rallies and people standing in opposition to civil rights, among other things such as union rights and teachers rights. He also was friendly and acquainted with both George Lincoln Rockwell, founder and leader of the American National Socialist group, also commonly known as the Neo Nazis, and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., leader of the Black Civil Rights movement. He photographed each man intimately and to gain access to events held by each party. Fernandez was commissioned to photograph Dr. King by CBC for a publication called, *Trumpets of Conscience*.¹¹⁴ He photographed Dr. King first on April 15, 1967 during an anti-war march from Central Park to the United Nations in New York City where Dr. King was one of the leading participants and a speaker for the event. It wasn't until after the rally that he introduced himself to Dr. King. He wanted to get a true and clear image of Dr. King, "That's the way I function. I do not want to have the people perform for me. I want them to be what they are, and I observe, and I take pictures," said Fernandez.¹¹⁵ After this event Fernandez began to follow Dr. King more regularly, photographing him in public, and also privately in his home. Similarly Fernandez followed Rockwell attending many Neo Nazi events.

The National Socialist group in the United States was officially founded in 1959 by Rockwell. This highly publicized organization was relatively new and was legally allowed to persist based on First Amendment rights. Coining the phrase "White Power" as their slogan, they were a

¹¹² Benedict J. Fernandez III, interviewed by Alice Carver-Kubik, February 21, 2008.

¹¹³ Benedict J. Fernandez III, interviewed by Alice Carver-Kubik, February 21, 2008.

¹¹⁴ In November and December of 1967, King gave five lectures for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) Massey Lectures. Prior to King's assassination, a book was released titled, *Conscience for Change* through the CBC. In 1968, after King's death, the book was republished as *Trumpet of Conscience*, and include a forward by Coretta Scott King.

¹¹⁵ Benedict J. Fernandez III, interviewed by Alice Carver-Kubik, February 21, 2008.

major opponent to Dr. King and held numerous counter-demonstrations to Dr. King's civil rights rallies. During one such event, Fernandez walked in and had forgotten to take a flower out of his hair from photographing a protest earlier in the day. The Nazis' were resistant to letting him in, calling him "hippie" they became very threatening until Rockwell saw him and acknowledged he knew Fernandez. Fernandez also brought Diane Arbus to a rally and introduced her to some of the members so that she might photograph them.

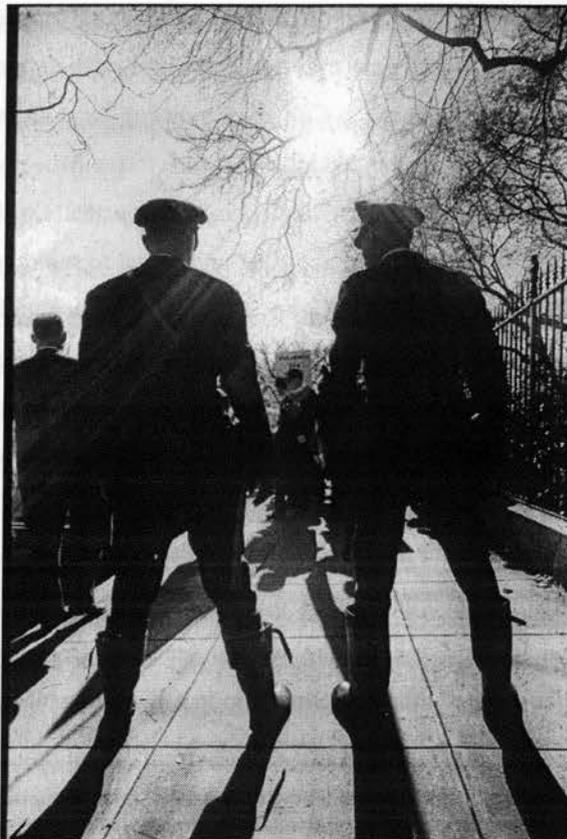
In 1965 and 1966 Fernandez began to make connections and show his portfolio to museum curators as well as to press agencies. On his way to Canada to visit his wife's relatives, he made an appointment to show his portfolio to Nathan Lyons at George Eastman House. Lyons, impressed with the contents of the portfolio, offered Fernandez an exhibition, which became *Conscience the Ultimate Weapon*. The title was abbreviated to *Conscience* during the course of the exhibition for political reasons within the museum. Fernandez took his work to the Museum of Modern Art and after failing to meet with John Szarkowski was able to show the portfolio to Edward Steichen who responded to his work with, "I've been waiting for you" and asked to see more photographs.¹¹⁶ Through this meeting he met Dorothea Lange, Aaron Siskind, and others and was invited to Steichen's 90th birthday party at the Plaza Hotel where Fernandez was still employed as a special events photographer. He brought his portfolio to Europe on a trip with Brodovich and showed it to Henri Cartier-Bresson who recommended him for Magnum. He became an associate, but was never given full membership due to personality conflicts with the head of the New York branch of Magnum. He became associated with a press agency through contacts at the New York Times. He was then referred to Da Capo press and had a book published titled, *in opposition*. After the success of *Conscience*, the publication of his book and the positive feedback from his photographs of Dr. King, Fernandez was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1969 and a National Endowment of the Arts grant in 1971/1972.

In addition, Fernandez has also had a successful career as an educator and has played an important role in the international photographic community. After he founded the Photo Film Workshop, he established the Photography Department at The New School in New York. He also created the FOCUS program, an international series of workshops and student exchange program. Lastly, he conceptualized the Leica Medal of Excellence, a prestigious photographic award.

His approach to photographing each side of a conflict and his ability to meld with each end of the social and political spectrum was possible for Fernandez because of his early childhood experiences. Fernandez is a survivor and a protester. Overcoming a major disability and achieving

¹¹⁶ Benedict J. Fernandez III, interviewed by Alice Carver-Kubik, February 21, 2008.

success as a photographer Fernandez said, “What’s important is not the problem, but the solution.” The book and the exhibition were a solution for him and a way for him to survive. “I was a protester. It was my intellectual forte but I could not do it by writing something—a speech. My speech is this book.”



Image, 5-5 Photograph courtesy of
Benedict J. Fernandez III

Appendix C: Conscience Survey

THE GEORGE EASTMAN HOUSE

900 EAST AVENUE ROCHESTER, N.Y. 14607

We would be interested in your response to the exhibition that you have just experienced. Would you briefly describe your over-all impression of the exhibition? _____

Approximately how much time did you spend looking at the pictures? _____

How many pictures do you think you have seen? 400 () ; 500 () ; 600 () ; 700 () ; 800 ()

What specific impressions do you recall? _____

How do you respond to this method of presentation? _____

Do you plan to come back and see the exhibition again? _____

Do you think others seeing this exhibition will find it of value? _____

Do you feel that the exhibition maintained a specific point of view? _____ Please
discuss _____

Other comments: _____

Personal data:

Your age: _____ Last level of schooling completed: _____

City of residence: _____

Appendix D: Events Listed in Order in Benedict J. Fernandez III's Archive

- Henry Street Settlement Strike
- Ginsberg at Women's House of Detention 1964
- Union Square 1965
- Chicago July 1966 (Neo Nazi)
- Int'l Arrivals Big Kennedy Airport "fly-in"
- Neo Nazi's at Robert Wagner Jr. High Dec. 1965
- Bread and Puppet Theater
- 5th Ave March
- Foley Sq. NYC
- April 15 Central Park (MLK, Protesters)
- April 20 1976 5th Ave-Central Park "Counter March to King"
- Washington DC
- Washington DC to the Pentagon
- Pentagon Demonstration Nov. 1967
- Newark Race4 Riots July 1967
- St. Patrick's Cathedral
- Central Park
- Times Square Protest
- East Village NYC "sweep-in"
- Teamster Strike at Gov. Rockefeller's office
- NYC Strike at Rockefeller Center
- Chicago Sept. 1967 New Politics Convention
- Father Grappy, Dick Gregory, Milwaukee
- New York City Hall TWV Strike
- Yale Univ. Black Power Demonstration
- Protest at Columbia Univ. Mathematics Bldg.
- Protest Against Columbia Univ.
- Bobby Kennedy Announces his candidacy for President at Congress Press Club
- Worlds Fair Montreal
- Homosexuals Philadelphia
- Robert Kennedy Funeral at St. Patrick's Cathedral
- Resurrection City Wash DC 1968
- King Funeral March Memphis, TN
- King Funeral Atlanta, GA

Appendix E: 2008 *Conscience the Ultimate Weapon* Wall Text

In the 1960s, America erupted into an expression of First Amendment rights. Taking signs and slogans to the streets, they organized and stood in opposition to the government and to one another. As the war in Vietnam and the Civil Rights movement escalated, so did tensions across the country. Ultimately these tensions exploded in 1968 with the assassinations of the country's most dynamic leaders, Dr. Martin Luther King and Senator Robert F. Kennedy.

Documenting what he calls "an American's right to dissent," photographer Benedict J. Fernandez closely followed the Protest Movement throughout the 1960s. Juxtaposing images of the Poor People's March with those of the Neo-Nazis and draft card burners with signs that read "Bomb Hanoi," Fernandez carefully portrays each side's opposition to one another thereby capturing the tumultuous spirit of the times.

Introducing the photographic work of Benedict J. Fernandez and beginning his long and impressive career, George Eastman House first mounted the exhibition, *Conscience the Ultimate Weapon* in 1968. Under the direction of then curator Nathan Lyons, the exhibition was a response to the events and emotions of the decade. A departure from more traditional exhibitions, this audio-visual slide presentation combined Fernandez's photographs of protest with popular music, such as Bob Dylan's "The Times are A-Changing," and recorded speeches by King and Kennedy. The result was a profound multi sensory experience. Though controversial at the time, this exhibition traveled to several venues from 1968-1970.

In recognition of the 40th anniversary of this exhibition and the assassinations of King and Kennedy, George Eastman House revisits *Conscience the Ultimate Weapon*. Using modern technology, the original 8-track audio has been transferred into MP3s. The original slides have been scanned to create digital images, many of which show the effects of 40 years of deterioration. Showing this historically important work in a contemporary social and political context serves as a reminder that history tends to repeat itself. As our country continues to grapple with civil liberties, foreign affairs, and human rights, the emotional and visual content of *Conscience* firmly grounds us in the conflicts of our times.

-Alice Carver-Kubik

Graduate Student, George Eastman House/Ryerson University Photographic Preservation and Collections Management program

George Eastman House wishes to thank Benedict and Siiri Fernandez, Bob Lau, Nathan Lyons, Gunther Cartwright, Reginald Herron, Jamie M. Allen, Alice Carver-Kubik, and Amanda Morrison for their hard work in support of this exhibition.

Artifact Labels

Original newspaper clippings

Conscience the Ultimate Weapon traveled from 1968-1970 drawing positive media attention in Rochester and across the country.

1968 press releases announcing the opening of *Conscience the Ultimate Weapon* and the extension of the exhibition for three months due to popular demand

Original poster from the 1968 George Eastman House exhibition *Conscience the Ultimate Weapon*

Letter from the New York State Council on the Arts to Nathan Lyons, curator of *Conscience the Ultimate Weapon*, congratulating him on the exhibition

Original neon sign exhibited in the 1968 exhibition

Only the word "Conscience" was exhibited. "The Ultimate Weapon" was considered too controversial and was removed as a result.

Report on *Conscience* exhibition

Based on a survey conducted from August 1-August 12, 1968 this report evaluated popular response to the exhibition.

Response survey from the 1986 exhibition

Please share your thoughts about this exhibition.

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