

THEMAIL

4 JUNE 29, 1990 CITY PAPER

Attack's Tactics

IN RESPONSE TO THE COVER story "The Urge to Merge" (6/8), Art Attack wishes to clarify our position on collaboration as well as correct some inaccuracies.

For correction: Group Material was never a guest in the home of Lynn McCary and to our knowledge was not a participant in the Ritz Hotel Project of 1983. The "pushiness" attributed to them is incorrect.

For clarification: We do not collaborate out of insecurity or the need for reinforcement. Rather, we choose to challenge ourselves with this most difficult way of working. We are therefore disappointed to read the quote from Ned Rifkin, chief curator of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (if he is indeed quoted correctly): "Often I find artists' groups detrimental to the individual artist...artists need critical mass and self-consciously get together for reinforcement." For a curator of such stature this statement is at best misinformed.

While such weaknesses may be true for some artists it is surely the exception and it is irresponsible to make a blanket statement about such a variable mode of working. As noted in the article, collaboration has a strong history in the visual arts, not to mention dance, performance, theater, and music, including the frequent combination of all.

Art Attack has achieved much more support both critically and financially in Europe than in our own backyard. This is no surprise to us, as collaboration is a staple in the European communities. Our European hosts and counterparts are continuously amused to hear that collaboration is virtually unknown, misunderstood, and/or almost impossible to fund in America. We imagine that in time, American curators will look longingly at Europe and "discover" the concepts behind collaborative work. When this happens, let us not forget it is not always the artists who create the "movements" but the curators and the critics.

It is apparent to us in this climate of conservatism in America that the arts in the 1990s will be sure to produce more collaboration. Artists are among society's most incisive inquisitors. To represent these changing times, artists must experiment with ideas that are bound to threaten someone's status quo. What ideas should be portrayed or how ideas for portrayal should be arrived at remain the prerogative of the artist(s). Collaboration is as valid a mode of inquiry as any.

**Alberto Gaitan
Lynn McCary**

*On behalf of Art Attack
New York/Washington, D.C.*