

THE STATUS OF THE POLITICAL IN CONTEMPORARY ART AND CULTURE

# KLARTEXT!

A SERIES OF DISCUSSIONS WITH INTERNATIONAL ARTISTS, ACTIVISTS, CURATORS AND THEORETICIANS  
KÜNSTLERHAUS BETHANIEN AND VOLKSBÜHNE AM ROSA-LUXEMBURG-PLATZ, BERLIN  
14-16 JANUARY 2005 — WWW.KLARTEXT-KONFERENZ.DE

**Brian Holmes**

## **Statement**

Transparency & Exodus: On political process in the mediated democracies

Aesthetic display is an important part of contemporary protest. Its forms can be traced back to the development of certain strands of post-vanguard art. But the heart of the relation between art and grassroots politics is the notion of process, conceived as a generative matrix at work on the level of everyday life, involving catalytic artifacts, more-or-less conscious group interactions and the unpredictable singularity of the event. What are the relations between this kind of political process and the mediations of civil society in the contemporary democracies? How to escape the self-referential legitimacy of capitalist governance? How to break through the false transparency of social relations? Artists have to ask these questions with respect to their own participation in formal institutions. But more importantly, they have to conceive their interventions with respect to the human "material" constituted by diverse and highly self-reflexive social movements. Could the most important contribution of process-based groups be the distribution of a capacity to appear in public space, intervene and then disappear again, abandoning identifiable forms as soon as they become objects of manipulation? What is the value and the operative force of an ultimately mythical notion like exodus?