



University at Buffalo
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Downloadable poster: http://contrary.info/art_law_patriotact.pdf

Art, Law and the Patriot Act
**UB Symposium Confronts Issues of Civil Liberties
and Academic Freedom in the Age of the Patriot Act**

BUFFALO, N.Y. – The passage and implementation of the USA PATRIOT ACT carries with it implications for the work of scholars, researchers and other cultural workers in the United States. In the past several years, numerous people working in academia and the arts have found themselves at the center of legal battles about the validity and intentions of their work, including University at Buffalo (UB) Professor of Art Steven Kurtz.

Art, Law and the Patriot Act will be an evening symposium bringing together representatives from the fields of art, law, history, science and economics to offer perspectives on the issues surrounding the recent investigation of Professor Kurtz, founding member of the internationally renowned Critical Art Ensemble (CAE), as well as consider the broader implications the Act has for people living in the United States.

Art, Law and the Patriot Act will take place on Wednesday, April 13 from 6:00 – 9:00pm in the Center for the Arts Screening Room 112 on UB's North Campus. This event is free and open to the public.

Since May 2004, Professor Kurtz has been the subject of a highly publicized federal investigation involving his possession of bacterial agents and lab equipment. The investigation of Kurtz and his colleagues began on May 11, 2004 when Kurtz awoke to find his wife, Hope, dead of cardiac arrest. After emergency workers arrived, they discovered what they considered to be suspicious items and called the FBI.

Invoking a 1989 bio-terrorism law and the Patriot Act, which grants the federal government unprecedented search-and-seizure powers, federal agents detained Kurtz for 22 hours, searched his home for two days and confiscated his research materials. Within days, the Commissioner of Public Health for New York State had tested samples from Kurtz's home and announced that the residence presented no public safety threat. Several members of the UB community were also questioned, investigated and issued subpoenas as part of the legal suit. Since this time, charges have been downgraded to mail fraud, but these charges still carry long-term imprisonment penalties.

SYMPOSIUM PANELISTS:

Steve Barnes is a founding member of CAE, a collective of tactical media practitioners whose focus has been on the explorations of the intersections between art, critical theory, technology and political activism. As a panelist on the *Art, Law and the Patriot Act* symposium, Barnes will represent the events of the case as they have occurred and talk about the details of which Kurtz has been advised by legal counsel not to discuss.

Maria Fernandez is Assistant Professor in the Department of the History of Art at Cornell University whose interests center on electronic media history and theory, postcolonial studies, Latin American studies and the intersections of these fields. Professor Fernandez will discuss research she has performed into related cultural practices as they connect with the case.

Phillip Thurtle is an Assistant Professor in Sociology and Anthropology at Carleton University and a Visiting Professor in the Comparative History of Ideas Program at the University of Washington. Thurtle's research has focused on the relationship between technology, art and science. Thurtle will base his presentation on bio-terrorism and its relationship to art.

Sharon Hayes is an artist living in New York City whose work investigates questions of authorship, brainwashing and collective historical memory in an attempt to provoke an examination of the present political moment. Hayes will discuss the condition of contemporary cultural practice given the current political climate.

Kevin Jon Heller is a legal scholar specializing in domestic and international criminal law and legal theory. Heller will offer a legal perspective on the case, as well as address specific concerns related to crime control in a post-9/11 situation.

Paul Zarembka, Professor of Economics at UB, specializes in Marxist theory, labor history and economic development. Professor Zarembka will talk about the impact of 9/11 policies on UB faculty and staff.

Jeanne-Noel Mahoney, the Executive Director of the Western Regional Office of the New York Civil Liberties Union, will discuss the implications the outcome of this case could have on future cultural production and academic work.

BENEFIT AUCTION:

Just a few days later, an auction expected to raise at least a six-figure sum to benefit the Critical Art Ensemble Defense Fund is scheduled to take place on Sunday, April 17 at Paula Cooper Gallery in New York. The auction has attracted donations from some of the biggest names in the contemporary art world, including Richard Serra, Cindy Sherman, Alexis Rockman, Rubin Ortiz Torres, Hans Haacke, Kiki Smith, Chris Burden, and a great many others. (See <http://caedefensefund.org> for full details.)

BENEFIT PERFORMANCE AND PARTY!

On Wednesday April 20, D.J. Spooky and other special guests will be performing at Soundlab as a benefit for the Critical Art Ensemble Defense Fund. Tickets are \$10 and doors open at 9:00PM. Attendees must be over 18 years of age. Soundlab is located at 110 Pearl Street (See: www.bigorbitgallery.org for more information.)

The symposium *Art, Law and the Patriot Act* is co-organized by professors and students from UB's Departments of Art and Media Study and University at Buffalo Art Galleries. Co-sponsors of the event include the College of Arts and Sciences, Baldy Center for Law & Social Policy, University at Buffalo Art Galleries, Department of English and The Edward H. Butler Chair, Institute for Research and Education on Women and Gender, Graduate Student Association, Department of Art GSA, Department of Media Study GSA, Department of English GSA, Department of History GSA, Department of Biological Sciences GSA, Department of American Studies GSA, Department of Art and Department of Media Study.