TIM ROLLINS AND K.O.S.

A look at Tim Rollins and K.O.S.

WHO WAS TIM ROLLINS?

Timothy Williams Rollins was born in Pittsfield, Maine on June 10, 1955. He was raised by working-class parents Carlton Rollins, a factory worker, and Charlotte Imogen Hussey, a hospital secretary.

His interest in the arts began at a young age when he took on a part time job to collect comic books and books by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau.

His early investment in comic books allowed him to move into the world of art. He sold his collection to attend a newly created art program at the University of Maine, from which, in 1975, he received his associate's degree.

Rollins had a strong interest in the artist Joseph Kosuth, after reading his essay *Art After Philosophy.* Kosuth said that the art component of art is not located in the object itself, but in the idea or concept of the artwork. Rollins felt a connection with this type of philosophy.

The artist Tim Rollins with members of his collaborative educational program Kids of Survival.
Credit: Christina Thomson, The New York Times

Women's Strike for Peace and Equality, New York City, Aug. 26, 1970.
Eugene Gordon—The New York Historical Society / Getty Images

John Ahearn and Rigoberto Torres
Woman with Pink Shirt, c.1985
Plaster cast
20 x 16.5 x 8 inches
The Bronx Museum of the Arts Permanent Collection
Gift of Krasdale Foods, Inc.
2014.2.4

- Rollins arrives in NYC and attends School of Visual Arts in 1970s.
- Country was still reeling from the war in Vietnam, and the battle for equal rights for all was being fought.
- Emerging from this era of social reform was a new generation of artists who refused to conform to the norms of the past.
- The East Village and the South Bronx became a center for these creators to reinvent the art scene.
- Artists began involving community members in their art pieces, projects were conducted in public spaces rather than private art spaces.
- Artists John Ahearn and Rigoberto Torres shared a commitment to represent their communities, transforming the everyday individual into monumental pieces.

- **1979: Rollins and his friends founded the artists' collective *Group Material* . The collective was active through 1996.**

- **The group mounted exhibitions and public projects on themes surrounding social issues, culture, and politics.**

- **The collective created over 50 projects during its period, one of which was the AIDS Timeline.**

Show And Tell: A Chronicle Of Group Material
Edited by Julie Ault, with essays by Doug Ashford, Julie Ault, Sabrina Locks, and Tim Rollins.

https://www.fourcornersbooks.co.uk/books/show-and-tell-a-chronicle-of-group-material/

Installation view, detail:
https://bampfa.org/program/group-material-matrix-132

AIDS Timeline : November 1989 through January 1990

- A mixed media installation held at the Berkley University Art Museum MATRIX Gallery.

- Exhibition reconstructed the history of AIDS looking through a cultural and political lens, and the government's lack of action.

- Exhibit consists of art objects and cultural artifacts including images/text from media, government, and activists.


- https://whitney.org/collection/works/7750

Who Burned the Bronx? PBS Film "Decade of Fire" Investigates 1970s Fires That Displaced Thousands

Redlined, A Legacy of Housing Discrimination

- **1981: at the age of twenty-six, Rollins was recruited by George Gallego, principal of Intermediate School 52 in the South Bronx.**

- **South Bronx at this time was described as a war zone; high crime plagued the streets, a scene of burned out buildings and the smell of ash and decay hung in the air.**

- **South Bronx in the 1970s: Manhattan was being gentrified and 100,000 citizens were being pushed into the South Bronx. These neighborhoods began to be targeted by government policies based on race.**

- **Red lining: A system that started in the 1930s. Black and brown neighborhoods were considered high risk, and were identified on maps with a red line. Banks and insurance companies would refuse loans to citizens in these outlined zones.**

"To dare to make history when you are young, when you are a minority, when you are working, or nonworking class, when you are voiceless in society, takes courage. Where we came from, just surviving is 'making history.' So many others, in the same situations, have not survived, physically, psychologically, spiritually, or socially. We were making our own history. We weren't going to accept history as something given to us."
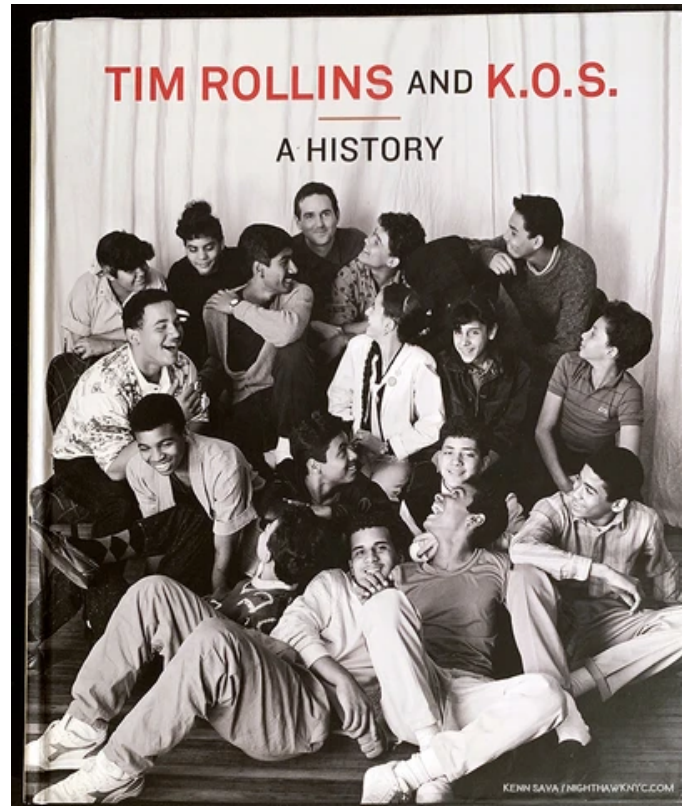
- At Intermediate School 52, Rollins was charged with developing a curriculum which blended art, writing, and reading for students who were labeled "at risk".

- On the first day of class Rollins said: "Today we are going to make art, but we are also going to make history."

- A process that the group called "jammin" began to take shape: Rollins or one of the students would read out loud from a selected text, while other students drew in response to the text, relating the material to what was happening in their own lives.

- Tim Rollins and K.O.S.: A History, *edited by Ian Berry, The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum at Skidmore College, MIT Press, 2009. Cover photograph by Lisa Kahane © 1987.*

Animal Farm: New World Order
© Tim Rollins and K.O.S. Courtesythe artistsand LehmannMaupin, New York and Hong Kong

- Rollins was only planning on staying at the school for two weeks.

- During the first drawing session, Rollins asked students to make the best drawing they've ever made in their life, while drawing to loud music. After the drawing session, students saw the excellence of their own work, and asked Rollins if he would stay.

- Rollins created the Art and Knowledge Workshop, where he would teach art every day for one hour: students had exams, were graded and evaluated. Art was incorporated into their reading and writing lessons.

- Kids of Survival (K.O.S.): during one jammin' session, as Rollins read aloud from George Orwell's *1984.* One student began drawing directly onto the pages of the first edition book. At first, Rollins was furious, but this feeling quickly dissipated as he saw the artwork and the powerful imagery created.

Tim Rollins and K.O.S.
The Bricks, 1982/83

- 1982: Rollins and his students removed bricks from abandoned, burned buildings, created paintings directly onto the bricks, illustrating a narrative of the destruction that was brought upon the neighborhood.

http://daviddeitcher.com/project/the-other-way/

Tim Rollins and K.O.S. *Dracula (after Bram Stoker),* 1983, acrylic on book pages mounted on canvas, irregular, approx. 108 x 144 inches, collection of the artists

- K.O.S. eventually outgrew the limits of the classroom. The group rented a space in a community center five blocks away from the school through an $8,000 grant from The National Endowment for the Arts.

- K.O.S. members worked on their homework and made art during their time in the after -school program.

- 1987: travelling workshop was created to spread the creative process beyond the boundaries of the South Bronx.

- 1994: Rollins and K.O.S. moved to a studio in Chelsea, NYC. The project reached national and international audiences.

Installation view of *Amerika (after Franz Kafka),* 1984-85, in Tim Rollins and K.O.S.: A History, Tang Teaching Museum, 2009

https://tang.skidmore.edu/exhibitions/112-tim-rollins-and-k-o-s-a-history

Tim Rollins and K.O.S.
Invisible Man (after Ralph Ellison), 1999
Matte acrylic on book pages mounted on canvas
60 x 60 inches
Collection of Dr. Rushton E. Patterson, Jr.

The first line in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* is "I am an invisible man".
Rollins states that when you make, when you create, you are no longer invisible. You exist. I M. I AM.

Day One

- **In 1998, Tim Rollins came to the University at Albany Art Museum and conducted a three-day workshop with students from four area junior and senior high schools**

- **the students created a work "in public," using Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as their point of departure.**

Day Two: London actor David Acton guided the group's creative process through a series of activities, including acting out scenes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

The students began painting flowers with fruit juices and watercolors.

Day Three: through the democratic process of voting, the students selected which flowers were to be included in the final installation, and Rollins completed the project by mounting the flowers onto the text.

Final Installation: 24 flowers selected by the students are mounted to the text.
These works were gifted by Tim Rollins to the Collections at the University at Albany Art Museum.

Installation image of the exhibition Tim Rollins and K.O.S. (November 2018-May 2019 in the UAM Collections Study Space

Tim Rollins and K.O.S., June 2016, Lehmann Maupin Gallery (left to right), Logan Swedick, Rick Savinon, Robert Branch, Tim Rollins, Angel Abreu, Jorge Abreu Photo Credit: Aileen Painter

https://www.angelabreu.com/tim-rollins-and-k-o-s-assorted-work-exhibitions-/1

- **Tim Rollins passed away suddenly in 2017.**

- **Tim Rollins and K.O.S. were included in multiple solo and group exhibitons nationally and internationally and are included in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; among many others.**

- **After Tim Rollins passed away, many of the founding members decided to continue Rollins's legacy and formed Studio K.O.S.**

- **K.O.S - CURRENT MEMBERS: Angel Abreu, born Philadelphia, PA 1974; Nelson Savinon, born New York, NY 1971; Jorge Abreu, born New York, NY 1979; Robert Branch, born New York, NY 1977; Ala Ebtekar, born Berkeley, CA 1978; Nelson Montes, born New York, NY 1972; Login Swedick, born Albany, NY 1994; Benjamin Volta, born Abington, PA 1979**

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