

DISBAND Press Release

Active in the downtown art scene in Manhattan from 1978-82, the members of DISBAND screamed, shouted, sang, and stomped through the heyday of New York City's new- and no-wave scenes, blurring the line between performance art and live music. Members included Barbara Ess, Ilona Granet, Donna Henes, Daile Kaplan, Barbara Kruger, Ingrid Sischy, Diane Torr and Martha Wilson. Mirroring the chaos and temporality of that time, the band sang such songs as "The End," "Five More Years," "Every Day Same Old Way," "Get Rebel," "Sad," "Iran-y" and "DOW." They also addressed their status as women through songs such as "Girls' Bill of Rights," "Hey Baby," "Fashions" and "Look at My Dick."

DISBAND has performed in many New York venues, such as PS1, the Kitchen, the Mudd Club, TR3, and nationally at such venues as Hallwalls, LAICA and Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art. In 1980 DISBAND toured Italy with Laurie Anderson, Chris Burden, and others.

HISTORY OF DISBAND 1978-1982, by Martha Wilson in collaboration with band members Ilona Granet, Donna Henes, Ingrid Sischy and Diane Torr:

My friend Marvin Taylor, founder of the Downtown Collection at NYU, said "Everybody was in three bands." This was certainly true for the very first members of DISBAND, Daile Kaplan and Barbara Ess (except Martha Wilson). Daile was also in Rhys Chatham's band, the Gynecologists, and Barbara Ess was in Glenn Branca's band, Static, as well as founding her own all-girl band, Y-Pants. Other bands around in the late 70s were the Theoretical Girls, Bush Tetras, James White and the Blacks, Tone Death, Con Iced, A-Band, Daily Life, the Idiot Orchestra, the Diplomat Samurai Band, the Love of Life Orchestra. Bands played at the Mudd Club, Tr3, AREA, CBGBs, Tonic. But they all knew how to play instruments and I didn't, so I called up artist girlfriends who were long on concept and short on skills, and DISBAND, the all-girl band of artists who couldn't play any instruments, was born.

In Franklin Furnace I had a loft that was big enough for wild and crazy rehearsals. Honestly, we didn't rehearse all that much—mostly we gossiped and ate dinner together. In the earliest meetings, I remember April Gornik and Ingrid Sischy sitting on the floor, taking it all in. April left but Ingrid stayed. Barbara Kruger wrote two wonderful songs, "The End" and "Fashions," before leaving around the summer of 1979. Then Diane, the dancer and outspoken activist, brought in fellow live-wire Ilona Granet, a ranter in her own right and singer for Con Iced, adding a dose of "silly" to the brew. The composition of the band stabilized for awhile with Ilona Granet; Donna Henes, known by all as the Urban Shaman; Ingrid Sischy, then-Editor of ARTFORUM; Diane Torr, and Martha Wilson, Founding Director of Franklin Furnace as its members, although you might not know that from looking at our press. My band name was Mickey Angelo or Lov Storey, and later when we became members of Ronald Reagan's cabinet for "DISBAND in the Dustbowl" at the Kitchen, Alexander M. Plague, Jr.; Ilona was variously Pinky or Pansy

I-Rock, and later, James Watts-a-Tree; Ingrid was Susan; Diane was mostly Dianatone; and Donna was happiest as Sorpresa Cheeka, the Hispanic troublemaker.

DISBAND was a big hit in feminist art circles. In 1980, we were invited to perform at the newly inaugurated Feminist Art Institute on Spring Street, and Lucy Lippard invited us to entertain guests at her 40th birthday party. Also in 1980, we were invited to perform in Italy as part of a performance art festival that included Laurie Anderson, Chris Burden, Julia Heyward, Paul McCarthy, and Richard Newton. In Florence, we did our hit song, "Look at My Dick," not knowing that every town in Italy has its own name for this appendage, so dicks are taken very seriously indeed. When we got to Rome, our performance had been cancelled. Then it was reinstated because we had already been paid. So Ilona (who later became famous for her guerrilla street signs) made poster-board signs for us bearing the legend, SCIOPERO, "On Strike" in Italian. Our performance was a strike, with chanting and singing. Yikes! The Italian public takes strikes even more seriously than they take dicks. The whole place erupted into arguments about whether we had the right to strike or not, with people lining up for microphone time with questions and vituperation. Was there even a translator? Thrilling! We later performed to enthusiastic crowds at a lesbian bar.

Diane, also a dancer, aikidoist and enthusiastic practitioner of Contact Improvisation (a form which was little known in Italy at that time) was invited to stay on in Rome to teach Contact Improvisation to dancers in the ballet school and in the independent dance community. DISBAND remained four members for its last two years, lining up a tour of England by corresponding with the ICA, Midland Group Nottingham, Basement in Newcastle, Third Eye in Glasgow, and MoMA in Oxford. Ilona flew on her own to London because she was in LA marrying her English friend. He sent her off with a one-way ticket and 70 Pounds to meet up with DISBAND. Customs found this unacceptable, and thought it odd that she could trust her friends to have her return ticket and money. How could she trust them? Well, they were going to perform together, we had a date! And of course we were getting paid! (The Immigration Investigation Team, in amazement, said even Jack Nicholson comes with working papers.) Who knew? Oy vey! She was deported, a policewoman marching her to the plane, and that was the end of DISBAND's tour of England.

Our last gig was for Art Across the Park, a New York park-based festival organized by Horace Brockington and Gylbert Coker. The performance was in the late afternoon in Van Cortland Park in the Bronx. There were four people in the band, and two people in the audience: Bob Roessler, fellow artist, friend and fan of DISBAND; and Bill Gordh, an artist who worked as Installer for Franklin Furnace. Donna said, "It's the end." I said, "NOOOOOOOOOOOOO!" But it was the end. DISBAND disbanded on August 15, 1982, and we had a picnic instead of a performance.

In 2008, thirty years after we originally formed, DISBAND was invited by Connie Butler to perform a reunion concert on the occasion of the "WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution" exhibition's opening at MoMA/P.S. 1 in Queens, New York. We discovered that our songs were just as relevant today as they were three decades ago! James Hoff,

co-founder of Primary Information, heard the songs on the DVD published for this occasion and invited DISBAND to prepare a CD of our songs. Heng-Gil Han, a curator who attended this performance, invited DISBAND to participate in the Incheon Women Artists' Biennale in Korea, in August, 2009. In August, 2011 we developed new songs at a residency at The MacDowell Colony in New Hampshire, USA.

Four artists, Ilona Granet, Donna Henes, Diane Torr and Martha Wilson, are continuing DISBAND's work, performing nationally and internationally as the all-girl conceptual art punk band of women artists who can't play any instruments. Ilona Granet and Martha Wilson have distinctive solo performance and exhibition careers; Donna Henes, the Urban Shaman, is author of several books and columns; and Diane Torr is internationally known for her Man for a Day workshops.

You may see DISBAND performing February 17, 2008 at MoMA/P.S. 1 for the opening of WACK! by clicking on the links to YouTube below.

Part 1: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aK3LNpv39BM&feature=related>

Part 2: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KwioqeILk74&feature=related>

Part 3: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0fO3vs6S1M&feature=related>

Part 4: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=63wEb5StaSU&feature=related>