

THE IMPACT OF AIDS ON THE ARTISTIC COMMUNITY

Fran Lebowitz

The New York Times

September 13, 1987

1. The Impact of AIDS on the Artistic Community is that when a 36-year-old writer is asked on a network news show about the Impact of AIDS on the Artistic Community particularly in regard to the Well-Known Preponderance of Homosexuals in the Arts she replies that if you removed all of the homosexuals and homosexual influence from what is generally regarded as American culture you would be pretty much left with "Let's Make a Deal."

The interviewer's lack of response compels her to conclude that he has no idea what she is talking about and she realizes that soon many of those who do know what she is talking about will be what is generally regarded as dead.

2. The Impact of AIDS on the Artistic Community is that on New Year's Eve Day a 36-year-old writer takes a 31-year-old photographer to get a chest X-ray and listens to him say with what can only be described as a certain guarded hope, "Maybe I just have lung cancer."

3. The Impact of AIDS on the Artistic Community is that a 36-year-old writer has a telephone conversation with a dying 41-year-old book editor whom even the most practiced verbal assassin has called the last of the Southern gentlemen and hears him say in a hoarse whisper, "I'm sorry but I just hate old people. I look at them and think, 'Why don't you die?' "

4. The Impact of AIDS on the Artistic Community is that an aspiring little avant-garde movie director approaches a fairly famous actor in a restaurant and attempts to make social hay out of the fact that they met at Antonio's and will undoubtedly see each other at Charles's and Antonio's and Charles's are not parties and Antonio's and Charles's are not bars and Antonio's and Charles's are not summerhouses in chic Tuscan towns – Antonio's and Charles's are funerals.

5. The Impact of AIDS on the Artistic Community is that a 36-year-old writer is on the telephone with a 38-year-old art director making arrangements to go together the following morning to the funeral of a 27-year-old architect and the art director says to the writer, "If you get there first sit near the front where we usually sit and save me the seat on the aisle."

6. The Impact of AIDS on the Artistic Community is that a 24-year-old ballet dancer is in the hospital for 10 days following an emergency appendectomy and nobody goes to visit him because everyone is really busy and after all he's not dying or anything.

7. The Impact of AIDS on the Artistic Community is that a 36-year-old writer takes time out at a memorial service for the world's preeminent makeup artist and a man worth any number of interesting new painters to get angry because the makeup artist's best friend and eulogist uses a story that she has for years been hoarding for her book which she can't write anymore anyway unless she writes it as a historical novel because it's about a world that in the last few years has disappeared almost entirely.

8. The Impact of AIDS on the Artistic Community is that a 36-year-old writer runs into a 34-year-old painter at a party and the painter says to the writer that he is just back from Los Angeles and he says with some surprise that he had a really good time there and he asks why does she think that happened and says it's because New York is so boring now that Los Angeles is fun in comparison and that's true and it's one reason but the real reason is that they don't know the people who are dying there.

9. The Impact of AIDS on the Artistic Community is that a 36-year-old writer has dinner every night for 11 nights in a row with the same 32-year-old musician while he waits for his biopsy to come back because luckily for her she is the only one he trusts enough to tell.

10. The Impact of AIDS on the Artistic Community is that a 36-year-old writer trying to make plans to go out of town flips through her appointment book and hears herself say, "Well, I have a funeral on Tuesday, lunch with my editor on Wednesday, a memorial service on Thursday, so I guess I could come on Friday, unless, of course, Robert dies."

11. The Impact of AIDS on the Artistic Community is that when the world's most famous artist dies of complications following surgery at the age of 61 it doesn't seem like he really died at all – it seems like he got off easy.

12. The Impact of AIDS on the Artistic Community is that at a rather grand dinner held at a venerable New York cultural institution and catered by a company famous for the beauty of its waiters a 39-year-old painter remarks to a 36-year-old writer that the company in question doesn't seem to employ as many really handsome boys as it used to and the writer replies, "Well, it doesn't always pay to be popular."