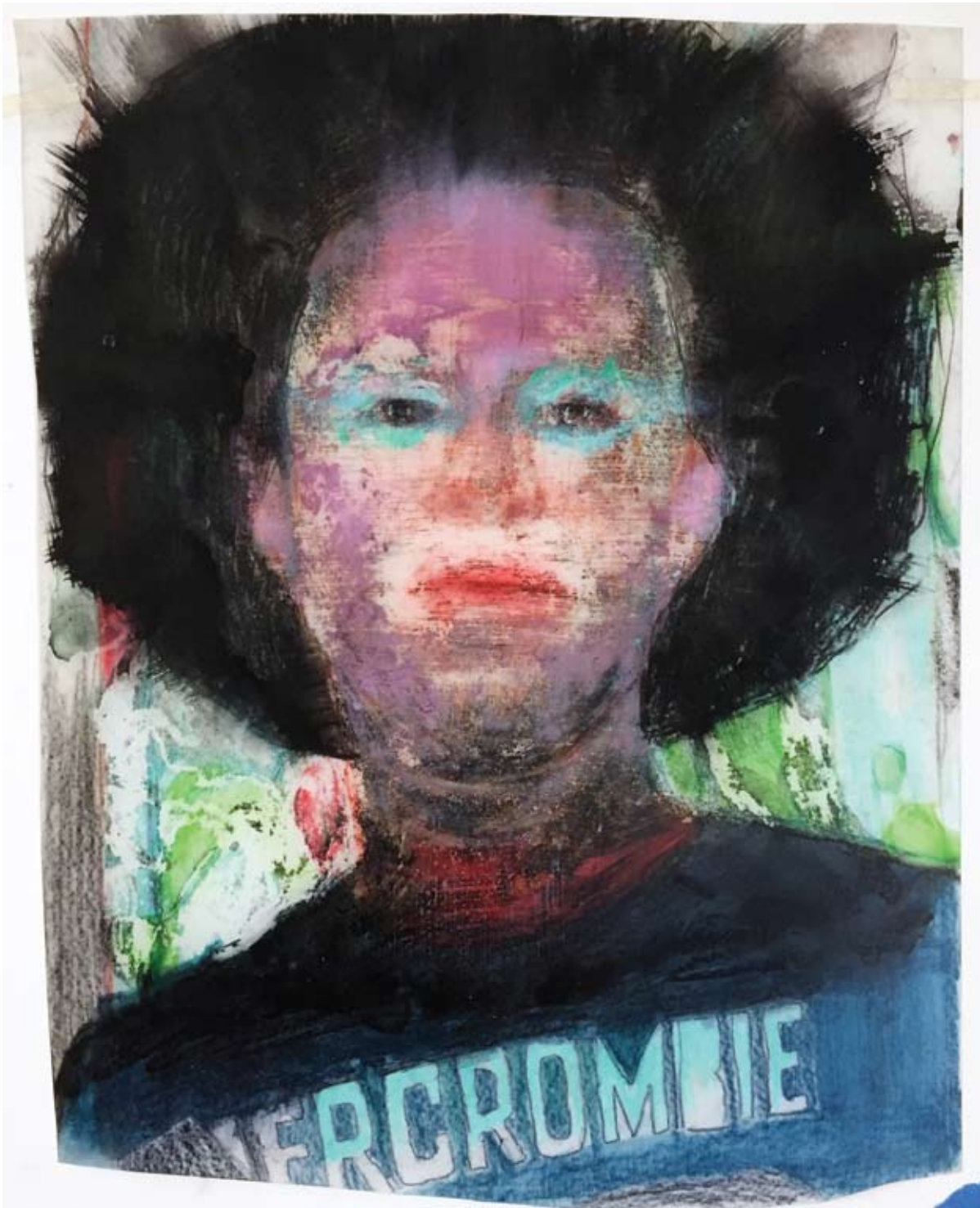


# The Archive

Spring 2017 | Issue 60



**LESLIE – LOHMAN MUSEUM**  
OF GAY AND LESBIAN ART



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**COVER:** Geoffrey Chadsey, head (abercrombie), 2014-2017, Watercolor pencil, crayon on mylar, 14 x 14 in. Copyright the artist. On view as part of *FOUND: Queer Archeology; Queer Abstraction*.

**About us:**

Created by our founders to preserve queer identity and build community, The Leslie-Lohman Museum aspires to reclaim scholarship from a queer perspective, provide training grounds for queer artists and cultural workers, while acting as a cultural hub for LGBTQ individuals and their communities.

*The Archive* is edited by Tom Saettel, and is mailed free of charge to Museum members. You can pick up your free copy at the museum.

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**The Leslie-Lohman Museum**

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Wednesday through Sunday 12:00-6:00pm

Thursday open late until 8:00pm Mondays, Tuesdays Closed



John Burton Harter, *Detail*, 1995, Oil on Board, 20 x 24 in.  
The John Burton Harter Foundation.



# FOUND:

## Queer Archaeology; Queer Abstraction

Avram Finkelstein



To be queer is to be an archaeologist. In order to find traces of ourselves in a world that prefers we be hidden, we excavate, sifting through our cultural landscape for ancestral signs, often-times as a matter of survival. With a nose for the trail, we channel the hunter-gatherer, burrowing in and in between. *Found* is a survey of artists who treat queer identity like an archaeological dig, and in their quest for evidence of a queer footprint, they snap twigs along the trail, mapping their way in the process.

For the artists in this exhibition, detritus, the archival, and the supernatural are queer turf to be explored. So is mark-making and its erasure, mess-making, and charting the periphery. Thrift, cryptography, affect, and the limitlessness of abstraction, all are queer, as are performance, metamorphosis, temporality, refusal, and the defining disposition of the late twentieth century, postmodernism. But now that we are well into the second decade of the twenty-first, with scholars still sweeping the dust away from the question of relational

Matt Lipps, *Untitled (Men)*, 2010, Chromogenic prints, Right-hand panel, 33 x 44 in. Courtesy the artist, Marc Selwyn Fine Art, Los Angeles, Jessica Silverman Gallery, San Francisco, and Josh Lilley Gallery, London UK.



Troy Michie, *Redlight*, 2014, Collage on paper, 11 x 8.5 in. Courtesy the artist.

aesthetics, queer artists have pulled up their stakes and moved on, prowling the sky, rocks, and trees of our material culture in search of more hospitable territory and the outlines of the queer commons ahead.

*Found* is an exhibition rooted in the chaos of practice, an artists' show. Artists love to get their hands in it, so be prepared to get dirt under your fingernails. And get ready to meander, because the artist's field of reference is far more capacious than that of the archeologist. Like the archaeologist, however, they know to stop push-

ing their shovels once it hits remains, and how eloquent the artifacts found can be.

*Found* begins with the inescapable stand-in for selfhood, the body, as reimagined by a group of artists intent on dismantling it. Geoffrey Chadsey (see Back Cover) layers conflicting pop fragments into portraits of the psychodynamic eddy we refer to as identity, with an anarchist's embrace of the dissonant, the terrible, the discarded, and the abandoned. His are not portraits of individuals real or imagined, but of the dark recesses of the American soul, unmoored mash-ups of gender, race, and class. Troy Michie invites us to linger on something very few people ever do, the sense of displacement found in the returned gaze of black gay male pornography subjects, which he tells us are distinctly different from the signals of desire found in their white gay counterparts. Jai Carillio offers an inverted vision of that whiteness—inside out, in fact—looking through the images of desire gay men have been fed since the 1940s to the implicit frailties those bodies actually represent. Robert Lucy (see Cover) collected junk shop ephemera on a relocation road trip, and it led to his shamanistic *Sheba*, a portrait of the terrors we have been told will be nurturing, in this case his own father, as embodied in a secondhand toy.

Long before commercial images ever existed, the job of making meaning of the body fell to centuries of Western European art. The second grouping of work in *Found* is about locating one's queer self within the canon of art history, a daunting task if your body is not cis male. And so, our re-coding of art history begins with Eve Fowler, who interprets the texts of early-twentieth-century lesbian writer Gertrude Stein—the woman who reinvented the English language—through the visual vernacular of the most reductive American style of commercial poster. LJ Roberts takes time to disassemble George Segal's notorious *Gay Liberation* monument. Karen Heagle stakes a claim in Egon Schiele, the artist incarcerated for pornographic portraiture and virtually drummed out of the art canon until the mid-twentieth century because of his transgressive autoeroticism. And Matt Lipps forages the entire history of Western European aesthetics from the pages of the now-defunct art publication *Horizon*, composing stand-up collages as luridly queer, post-industrial tableaux, documented through that anti-

quarian set of techniques and tools, film, developer, and fixative.

But it is Angela Dufresne who tackles the presumptive neutrality of maleness to the ground by rushing headlong at Gustave Courbet's *The Painter's Studio; A real allegory summing up seven years of my artistic and moral life*, re-rendered through incisive sampling into an un-calm cyber-classical counter-proposal that includes laptops, televisions, and metamorphosed sexuality, *The Real Allegory of My Artistic and Moral Life*. When juxtaposed against her identically scaled *Demonstration*, we see the gleam of her alternate set of propositions more fully illuminated, as a parallel classroom of conversely gendered pedagogies built on the ruins of the past, where metamorphosis is now utterly integral, and Courbet's nineteenth century "Realism" has been drowned by global warming.

The queer antidote to the mark-making art history is contingent upon will be found directly across the gallery, in a grouping of works concerned with negative mark-making—incision, refusal, and erasure, all gestures of counter-inscription—beginning with an image from Ken Gonzales-Day's *Erased Lynchings* series that reveals the terrors of America's shameful past by removing it from our field of vision altogether. In the hunt for a queer formalism, Carrie Yamaoka and Lucas Michael are equally concerned with the latency of images, but they are proposing its "absence" from radically different perspectives. Michael subsumes his own personhood under layers of sgraffitoed graphite texts that map the female doppelgängers in David Lynch's *Mulholland Drive*, passing the straight auteur's hallucination of female sexuality through his own queer gaze, and resituating gendered Hollywood meaning-making as the intrinsically queer abstraction it is. Yamaoka sees corporeal meaning as equally mutable and subjective, but she imagines it as emerging from the reverse side of a highly-articulated surface, as a black reflection of the viewer, the only interruption a simple fold in its surface that serves as a reminder of both temporality and of the hand of the artist.

The section of the show on detritus explores the generative potential of the things we discard, and hints at what is perhaps the queerest gesture of all, transformation. Sam Gordon reorganizes the sweepings from his studio floor with the devotion of an archivist, mixing the remains of his practice with

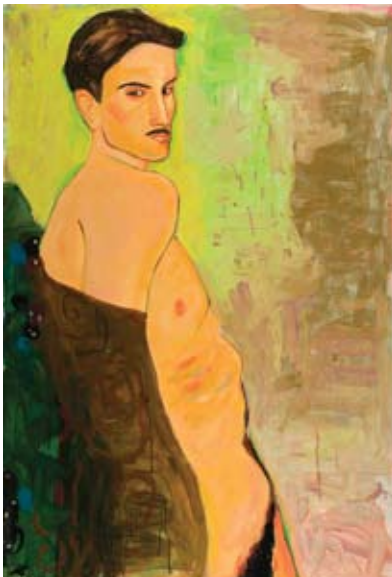


scraps of the world around him, and stringing perpetual waves of objects in flux into an ongoing, intimate *Bible of the Found*. Maika'i Tubbs takes the scientific evidence of inorganic ocean refuse forming into rock on the shores of Hawaii one step further, recasting his own plastic bags, food wrappers, junk mail, parking tickets, and cigarette butts as autobiographical, archival inevitabilities. Alyse Ronayne hybridizes self-tanners, luminescent paint, and hand-selected confetti into abstract breadcrumb trails of

Boris Torres, *Flower Shoes*, 2015, Fabric paint on cloth shoes, 11.5 x 4.25 x 3 in. (each shoe). Courtesy the artist



(above) Angela Dufresne, *The Real Allegory of My Artistic and Moral Life*, 2014, Oil on canvas, 84 x 132 in. Courtesy the artist.



(left) Karen Heagle, *Nude Self-Portrait (After Schiele)*, 2008, Acrylic and ink on paper, 60 x 44 in. Courtesy the artist.

parties gone by. Brian Christopher Glaser redirects hair product advertisements into waterfalls of whiteness and class. And Jacob Robichaux's collages draw our attention to magic props as fragmentary fetishes of illusion, concealment, revelation, and the promise of human touch, an aggregate metaphor for the queer dilemma. Each object has equal weight in his scatter-prints of power, control, and erotic potential.

The last grouping of artists in *Found* suggest meta-visions of the ways personal and social identity can be layered, and sometimes placed in conflict. Beirut-born Omar Mismar maps queer desire through social media, literally, in his *The Man Who Waited for a Kiss*, a stack of "newspapers" filled with pin-hole camera documentation of the simplest public display of same-sex affection, advertised through Craigslist, Grindr, and Scruff and sited near surveillance cameras. To finalize his ballet of scrutiny, Mismar invited one of the men who responded to the ad, a detective, to

curate the portfolio. Buzz Slutzky reaches back into the history of the world to make a personal point about the ways youth can be colonized as a form of cultural capital, through an installation centered around Justin Bieber's 2013 visit to the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, a commentary that recounts the terrors of the Holocaust in the satirical style of the Yiddish Theater tradition, inflected with heavy doses of self-deprecating Jewish ghetto humor. Boris Torres and Maia Cruz Palileo both share visions of migration that are saturated with affection; we are offered a glimpse of Greer Lankton, not through her work, but through treasured miniatures; and we peek inside Pamela Sneed's journal for proof that image and text are actually the same thing, when seen through the eyes of a poet.

If there is one unifying leitmotif in *Found*, one that hints most boldly at the expansion of queer turf, it is undoubtedly queer abstraction, capaciously defined as the alternatively sited body.



Ken Gonzales-Day, *The Wonder Gaze (St. James Park)*, 2006 (printed for LLM 2017), Digital exhibition print on vinyl. Courtesy the artist and Luis De Jesus Los Angeles.

By the early twentieth century, life drawing was a centuries-old foundational practice in Western European art traditions. The body was considered to be a universal framing device, even within the modernist traditions that would soon toss off its strictures. The body also serves as a frame for our relatively younger consideration of what queerness might mean, although semiotics enabled us to more quickly refuse its constraints. And so, to the extent that abstraction might be a rejection of corporeal meaning-making, even queer art practices rooted in representation reflect an inverse, or explosive, corporeality, and accordingly, carry the subtext of a re-invention of meaning. Abstraction appears throughout *Found* as a distinct and fertile point of pivot, for artists who have one foot in feminist critiques but are radically re-coding the corporeal and articulating a quintessentially queer hybrid of the vestigial remains of twentieth century art, abstraction, and postmodernism. *Found* advances the steadily accumulating evidence of a queer abstraction, as exhumed through a queer archeology.

The queering of abstraction carries particular weight during Trump's branded "return" to American "greatness," a moment

when the queer political dilemma is not at all academic, and this abstraction traces the outlines of the State of the Queer Union far more accurately than the queer assimilation that preceded it. If the "non-ideological" nature of abstractionism enabled it to fly under the radar during the McCarthy years—in spite of its having expressed the primal anxieties over what postwar social engagement looked like, and having masked the politics of the artists who made it—abstraction might be the only safe place for the queer body to *currently* reside, and it is worth exploring as a form of resistance. Perhaps it is also time to reread abstract expressionism as a site for queer resistance, since expression and self-determination are cousins, and self-determination will drive the activation of social spaces in what promises to be one of the most devoutly reactionary periods in our history.

*Found* is not a show of political art, but, as it happens, almost all of the work in it is political. Like it or not, to be queer is to be political. Those of us who fail to acknowledge this inescapable truth are simply not paying attention. Queer assimilation is a thing of the past, and it is the opposite of what is called for now. We need queer

expressionism, queer mess-making, queer dumpster-diving, queer decentering, and the affective kindnesses of queer abstraction. They will not be watching us over here, as we root around in the dirt, gathering clues from the past to help map our way to the future.

Dig we must. ■

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Avram Finkelstein is a founding member of the Silence=Death and Gran Fury collectives. He has work in the permanent collections of MoMA, The Whitney, The New Museum, and The Brooklyn Museum. He is featured in the artist oral history project at the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art, and his book for UC Press, *After Silence: A History of AIDS Through Its Images* is due out in November 2017.

# MEET GONZALO CASALS

## A Conversation with Tony Whitfield

**How would you describe the Leslie-Lohman Museum that you have become director of, and what do you see in it that excites you?**

I see an organization at a crossroads that recently transitioned to a museum, and is carrying the expertise and memory of having been a foundation, a gallery, a project of the two co-founders. The Museum has to decide how to move forward, and continue to grow and evolve in the way the communities that it represents are evolving, while at the same time continue to be rooted in its founding community.

Recently in talking to a board member, we agreed on the need to be clear that becoming a museum does not mean mimicking The Met and MoMA. We have the opportunity to define what a queer museum is and, in doing so, to redefine museum practice in the 21st century.

**When you say the communities, how do you even describe these communities at this point?**

We could go out on a two-day retreat with the board members and staff and come back with a definition for queerness and, in doing so, define what the Leslie-Lohman Museum should be about. I am more interested in approaching the definition of queerness as an ever-evolving process with the Museum engaging artists, scholars, and the various communities under the LGBTQI umbrella construct. It is about the process not the outcome.

**Has a transition happened from the LGBT Museum to the queer Museum?**

I don't think it's about transition; I think it's about expansion. This museum was founded by a generation that uses sex positivity as a way of rebellion, to define an identity, as a way of pride. There is a lot of we should continue to learn and celebrate about that generation of gay men and their leadership. The way forward for the Museum is to strengthen our roots in that movement. At the same time, we have a responsibility to the generations that came after them, and to better represent the different groups and interest in the community. It's not only about how you define queerness,



or LGBTQ, it's also about how each generation brings a different context to that definition.

If you look at the board and the staff, it is a sort of microcosm of the audience we serve. There is a different definition of queerness and vision for the Museum for each person you ask.

**It seems to me the community has exploded.**

I'm not sure it has exploded. The community was always big and diverse, but there were parts that were invisible or not getting attention. There was a

transgender community, but they were hiding, they were told it's not your turn yet. Queer people of color have been invisible and denied representation for a long time. I think that the explosion is more about the awareness of the rich complex identity dynamics that define the community at large.

**Do you think you are the first queer director of the Museum?**

I am not sure that this is important or not to define. I took this job, in part, because when I came to New York sixteen years ago from Argentina, I felt more connected to my Latino identity than my queerness,



even though I was always an out gay man. Recently, I have started to explore my identity in a more intersectional way. I started using “queer” as an identity myself, as a political point of view or stance. The Museum should also embrace and understand its role as a platform for a more nuanced understanding of the role of arts and culture to mirror our society.

**I remember the discussions and concerns when you came to El Museo del Barrio as someone from South America to work in that museum. Were there things that you learned about how to negotiate differences within a community?**

Totally! Both museums were founded in 1969 in the context of the Civil Rights Movement, and their histories are parallel. I came to El Museo in a moment that the organization was trying to balance the expectations of being a neighborhood-based community center and a museum with international reach in Museum Mile. They have expanded their mission from being a Puerto Rican institution to representing Latino and Latin America arts and culture. To this day, El Museo is trying to heal the wounds that process created. So I am very conscious of how Leslie-Lohman will continue to expand its reach while staying true to its core.

**How do you dissipate that tension?**

Most times, the tension is a little fictional; it's not a zero-sum game. There is enough Leslie-Lohman Museum for everyone. While I understand that there are newer generations that would like to embrace the word “queer” and would like the Museum to embrace it more, they have to understand that there are a lot of people around the Museum that cringe when they hear that word.

**I was very excited to see a shift in thinking behind the recent exhibition Expanded Visions, a far broader understanding of gay life, more about living full lives. There's been a transition since becoming a museum. The fixation on the intensely erotic male imagery was off-putting for a lot of people and artists, as if there was no room for work that didn't have a turgid penis in it.**

Since I started working at the Museum, I have been thinking a lot about Larry Kramer's book *Faggots*. His message to the sex-positive generation of the 70s was: You are not just a cock or a sexual person; we are brilliant creative smart beings. Kramer faced a lot of criticism. The community saw it as a way of censorship, of self-hate. The book was probably not the best way of communicating or trying to make people think beyond sexual expression and sexual liberation. I am trying to set up a tone for the Museum where stakeholders, old and new, feel free to give us feedback and let us know what is relevant to them. *Expanded Visions* is a way to exemplify our commitment to our past while exploring the future. It was great to see that everyone that came into the galleries during the opening week, in one way or another, saw themselves mirrored in the show.

**I can only imagine that one of your major challenges is simply the calendar. There is just so much you can do at any one point. And one of the things I found exciting is that you have a background in architecture and urban policy issues. What is the potential of that?**

When talking about being limited by calendar, one might think of the Museum as only a place for exhibitions. My idea of a museum goes much farther. The exhibitions are one of the programs, but there is potential for other programming. It's about creating experiences even outside the museum walls. I think it's about a mind shift that we are just about presenting work. To me it's about creating a cultural hub for a community, and the only way I know to do that is through arts and culture.

**Do you have visions for the Museum?**

I have four ideas that I think would inform our work moving forward. First, reclaim scholarship from a queer perspective. How many artist stories have been negated of their queerness? An example of this is when you look at the Mapplethorpe's, Warhol's, or Haring's in the Museum, you clearly see that these works can only be shown in a museum like ours. In other museums less queer versions are shown.

Simple as that.

Second, I want the Museum to be a training ground for queer arts administrators and curators, who at some point will move on to mainstream organizations and bring that perspective with them. And the same for artists, that we become a platform to their present work and hopefully they get to show their work elsewhere.

Third, The idea of the Museum as a mirror and a window where LGBTQ people see themselves reflected in a way that is empowering, that helps you connect with others, and makes you feel part of something larger than yourself. If you are not queer, we can become a window to the other, to understand and connect, and to build empathy.

Fourth, I am very interested in the aesthetics of social and political movements. In the fight for civil rights, gay people always connected to queer artists, to create change and move agendas forward. There is a lot to explore here. ■

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Tony Whitfield first wrote about Leslie-Lohman Gallery in 1980. In addition to showing his work there on numerous occasions, he has exhibited in solo and group exhibitions in the United States, France, Italy, Peru, and Japan, as well as published his art and writing in books, art publications, journals, and magazines while maintaining leadership positions in New York City's arts institutions.

# ART MUSEUM EDUCATORS AS LEVERS OF CHANGE

Kris Grey, Deputy Director for Education and Visitor Experience



Before we opened our doors to the public presenting our expanded spaces, the Leslie-Lohman Museum was already hard at work on an exciting new collaboration. On March 1, the Museum hosted a lively breakout session for the National Art Education Association's Museum Division Pre-Conference. The theme of this year's pre-conference was Diversity & Inclusion: Art Museum Educators as Levers of Change. The two-hour session, organized by the Leslie-Lohman Museum's Education department staff and hosted in our newly finished Fritz Lohman Gallery, *Public Programming at the Intersections* examined how exhibitions and related public programs can engage visitors around challenging issues at the intersections of race, class, sexuality, and gender. Museum staff collaborated with Alicia Boone, Associate Curator of Public Programs at Brooklyn Museum, and Danny Orendorff, Manager of Public and Community Engagement Programs at Museum of Arts and Design, to design and implement the event.

Session leaders shared their experiences in using public programs as platforms to shift the power dynamics around engagement and interpretation in museum institutions. Attendees heard case studies about non-hierarchical program structures and worked together to build a museum educator "tool kit" for negotiating growth, change, and transformation within longstanding institutional structures. Education Coordinator Em Miller facilitated the event and created an interactive document for all the attendees, linking suggested

readings, educational resources, and the content of the collaboratively created "tool kit" for their use in becoming levers of change at their home institutions.

The Leslie-Lohman Speakers Series presented three engaging events this spring, the first of which featured Fire Island Artist Residency Co-Founder and Director Chris Bogia, joined by four FIAR alumni, Travis Boyer (2011), Kris Grey (2012), Babirye Leilah Burns (2015), and Jesse Harrod (2016). Alumni recounted their time at FIAR, emphasizing direct community engagement with Cherry Grove residents and the professional development opportunities unique to the program.

Chitra Ganesh, whose work is on display in our Marion Pinto Gallery for the *Expanded Visions: Fifty Years of Collecting* exhibition, was the second speaker in our series. Ganesh demonstrated her artistic evolution set against shifting social conditions and social justice issues in the past few decades and delighted audience members with a preview of her latest work.

Lastly, we presented Susie Bright, author, editor, and contributor to the feminist magazine *On Our Backs*, to round out the Speakers Series this season.

Continuing our commitment to the literary arts, the Museum hosted the 29th Annual Lambda Literary Awards finalist readings in May, closely followed by the New York City book launch for *Queer Threads: Crafting Identity and Community*. Designed by Todd

Fire Island Artist Residency (FIAR) alumni, LLM Speakers Series, March 30, 2017. Photo: Da Ping Luo.

Artist Chitra Ganesh, LLM Speakers Series, April 13, 2017. Photo: Da Ping Luo.

Oldham and edited by John Chaich, the *Queer Threads* book features artwork, interviews, and an essay by Chaich, who curated the exhibition of the same name at the Museum in 2014. May events included a book party for Amanda LePore's newly released autobiography, *Doll Parts*.

Outside the walls of the Museum, we concluded the Queer Culture Lecture and Performance Series at The Fashion Institute of Technology with a lecture by Registrar Branden Wallace and with an incredible evening of performance transformations with Paul Soileau and his personae, Rebecca Havemeyer and CHRISTEENE.

Whether onsite at the Museum or beyond, you'll find updated information about programming on our website at [LeslieLohman.org](http://LeslieLohman.org). ■

Kris Grey is the Deputy Director for Education and Visitor Experience at the Leslie-Lohman Museum.

# PROJECT SPACE

## Spring/Summer

Rob Hugh Rosen, Deputy Director for Exhibitions



**All openings are Fridays 6-8pm, continuing Sat & Sun noon-6pm**

### April 21-23

Jessica Yatofsky, whose work is in the collection of the Leslie-Lohman Museum, exhibits new photographic works alongside images from her series, *I Heart Boy* (published 2011) and *I Heart Girl* (2015).

### May 5-7

Da Ping Luo joined Front Runners New York, an LGBTQ running club, in 2009 and became committed to documenting the club's contribution to the gay community. Through the club, everyday LGBTQ athletes discover identity, community, fitness, and family. Luo highlights a culture beyond the bars and parties that form the stereotypes of gay life. In addition to his own photography, Luo includes memorabilia from the archives of the club.

### May 19-21

Adrian Buckmaster presents *Lewd*, a visual story of friends and strangers who have helped the artist understand who he is, where he is, and why. All are photographed with a camera Buckmaster claims does not see gender.

### June 2-4

Adejoke Tugbiyele presents *Freedom Dance II*, a visual art exhibition and performance in collaboration with renowned musician Will Calhoun of the rock band *Living Colour*. Involving improvised and experimental movement and storytelling, the project seeks to express ideas that go beyond prevailing stereotypes of gender and sexual identity.

### June 16-18

Charles W. Leslie and Daniel Kitchen present a group of photographers all sharing the commonality of the nude male form as a subject to express their personal visions. The participating artists are: Ripp Bowman, JD Dragan, Alex Geana, Kim Hanson, Michael Harwood, Charles Hovland, Marc Martin, and Robert Zach.

### July 21-23

Carlos Gonzalez, using the genre of self-portraiture, mounts a testimonial to his father who came from Puerto Rico in the 1960s and worked as a dishwasher for decades before becoming a cook. The artist says the photographs in this presentation were "taken in New York and in the house in Puerto Rico that my dad bought after years of hard work!" ■



(top left) Jessica Yatofsky, *John*, from the series *I Heart Boy*, 2010, Digital chromogenic print, 10 x 10 in. Courtesy the artist.

(top right) Da Ping Luo, *Gay Games 9, Cleveland, OH*, 2014, Digital print, Variable dimensions. Courtesy the artist.

(center left) Adrian Buckmaster, *Con Artist*, 2011, Archival digital print on paper, 72 x 48 in. Courtesy the artist.

(center right) Adejoke Tugbiyele, *Heart (Performance costume)*, 2017, perforated metal, palm spines paint, wire, hardware cloth, and LED, 29 x 25 x 12 in. Courtesy the artist and Ethan Cohen Gallery.

(above left) Kim Hanson, *Tony*, 2016, (1/1), Archival digital print on paper, 19.5 X 15 in. Courtesy the artist.

(above right) Carlos Gonzalez, *The Dishwasher*, 2017, C-print on paper, 18 x 12 in. Courtesy the artist.

# CONNECTING HISTORY AND FUTURE

## Teen Programming at Leslie-Lohman Museum

Em Miller, Education Coordinator

“If we ignore our youth community members, we are doing a disservice to our broader community,” Deputy Director for Education and Visitor Experience Kris Grey reflects on the significance of inaugurating the teen programming at Leslie-Lohman Museum. Grey remarks, “Our goal is to use our platform to connect youth to queer history through visual art objects and culture in order to demonstrate possibilities for their future.”

The Museum’s first-ever teen program, a three-part series focusing on “Collecting, Preserving, and Storytelling,” is funded by an educational grant from the Arcus Foundation and comes at a time of transformation for the institution. With the recent expansion and addition of the Pinto Gallery and the welcoming of Museum Director Gonzalo Casals, LLM has an opportunity to develop programming for diverse audiences. Casals says, “Education has a great potential to grow at the Museum as we expand.” With this in mind, *Expanded Visions: Fifty Years of Collecting*, the historic show of the Museum’s permanent collection currently on view, traces the evolution of the institution amid decades of shifting social conditions and creates an exceptional impetus for connecting youth to queer history.

Although not uncommon for middle, high school, and college classes to tour, the Museum’s new teen program is a response to the growing need for youth-focused activities. In March, accompanied by their teacher, twenty students between the ages of 11-13 from a middle school in Brooklyn visited the Museum for a special program designed by the Leslie-Lohman Education team. For this group of students, part of the school’s Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) club, Leslie-Lohman Museum is the first art museum they have ever visited. In this three-visit pilot program, the teens are exploring LLM’s purposes and practices of collecting and preserving queer artwork, and discovering how queer history and fantasy is communicated through the storytelling of artists.

As part of the teen program, each visit to the Museum includes a theme-based tour, time for reflection and discussion, and hands-on activities in the Collections area. Branden Wallace, the Museum registrar, is enthusiastic about working with the group. “I am so honored to be a part of the education of teens here. When the students walk in, the museum changes. The energy is different; there is an excitement.” With his background



Youth community members ages 11-13 visit the Museum during our new teen programming initiative this spring, pictured here with Kris Grey. Photo: Riya Lerner.

in chemistry, Branden is especially equipped to connect with these students because they come from a math and science exploratory school. “To share my background in science with the teens is really fulfilling. I want them to see that knowledge of science can be useful when working in the arts because the two are closely related.”

The teens show incredible intelligence, maturity, and curiosity when visiting the Museum. They come with wisdom regarding gender, sexuality, and social justice beyond their years. Upon viewing Tim McMath’s “Sip-In” diorama, students exclaimed that targeting people based on stereotypes is not only wrong and inherently flawed, but also “totally unenforceable”, and that “gender is a social construction”. Some of the teens asked if the Museum’s collection included artwork focused on asexual experience. Kris Grey replied: “Often times queer experience gets reduced to the sexual or romantic. But, we know that queer experience is not only those things. The idea that queerness has only to do with the sexual allows people to censor our voices and erase the diversity of our stories—and to dismiss our cultural production as pornographic. Expressions of sex and sexuality are extremely important to our collection, and our collection includes a great diversity of experiences and representations: chosen family structures, activities, vulnerabilities, direct political engagement and activism—objects that reclaim history from a queer perspective. All of this history can help to create new genera-

tions of thinkers and leaders. It’s up to us to read artworks in many different ways.”

Charles Leslie happened to be viewing *Expanded Visions* on the afternoon of the first teen program and was touched to see the youth community members visiting the Museum. Charles told the teens that he wished there had been a program like theirs for him when he was young and assured them that, whatever struggles they face in their lives, to remember that they have a lot of people supporting them and backing them up. The teens had just learned about Charles, Fritz, and the history of the collection and were awestruck to meet the person who took action to establish this institution. This special moment between the Museum’s co-founder and queer youth amplified the important role educational programming will play in the future of the Leslie-Lohman Museum.

This pilot program will continue through the spring and be open to other youth groups in the fall.

To learn more or support the development of youth programming at the Museum, please contact Kris Grey at [kris@leslielohman.org](mailto:kris@leslielohman.org). ■

Em Miller is the Education Coordinator at Leslie-Lohman and the Programs & Communications Manager for Visual Thinking Strategies. She can be reached at [em@leslielohman.org](mailto:em@leslielohman.org).

# DISRUPTING STANDARDS

## Artist Features



The following Artist profiles explore the work of: Jessica Posner, James Yuki, and the Canadian art collective General Idea. Engaging with different media and constructs their work is connected by a common uncompromising desire to challenge and disrupt established cultural standards of beauty, desire, intimacy, and the female body.

# HIGHLY FUNCTIONAL

## The Work of Jessica Posner

Ilyn Wong

The phrase “butter face” is a derogatory term describing a person with a hot body but an ugly face—as in “everything but-her-face.” It plays on the slipperiness of language, and renders its target into something of a monster—dehumanized but still sexualized. The term also expresses a conflict of impulses toward a mismatching of parts, and uses humor to mask the unsettling conflict between desire and repulsion.

Through her sculptural and video works, artist Jessica Posner explores these contradictory feelings with political urgency. In June 2016, she presented a body of work titled *Highly Functional* at the Leslie-Lohman Museum’s Prince Street Project Space, which was mentioned in *BOMB* magazine as one of the year’s highlights. Her video, *Butter Body Politic*, was also recently shown at PULSE PLAY in Miami. In these works, the site of political resistance and cultural subversion is the body itself—bodies that she describes as “femme, fat, fragmented—shaped by lesbian feelings, feminist necessities, contingent realities, and cultural violence—bodies that function.”

Posner’s life-sized sculptures are made of women’s compression garments wrapped

around each other and onto broom handles, steel rods, and wooden planks. They are accessorized with objects such as edible houseplants, yoga blocks, silk stockings, bird’s nests, and decaying onions. These “bodies” take on ghostly forms that describe the garment’s hollowed functionality. They perform a kind of alchemy that is an extension of their maker. The sculptor and the sculpted switch positions, and all the bodies involved enter a cycle in which the forces that both literally and figuratively control and survey the female body are redistributed. They are no longer merely garments that promise to shrink waistlines and hide cellulite, but they have inherited the contours of the artist’s intentions and the movements of her feelings.

One of the sculptures, *Lot’s Wife*, is made of a pair of panties and a bra, stretched around a basketball-sized empty space where a rosemary plant is nestled. This “figure” is perched atop a fifty-pound bovine salt lick. The garments are treated with a heavy layer resin so that the material resembles that of an austere classical sculpture.

*Lot’s Wife* makes reference to a character from the Bible who is turned into a pillar

of salt when she defies the instructions of angels and looks back toward Sodom while fleeing. In the Bible, she is nameless, known only as the wife of her husband and an insubordinate woman. Posner borrows the stillness and silence of the Biblical figure, but gives her the urgency of a real-life woman, who lusts and loves, whose body is fleshy, messy, and smelly.

“The irony around all this very feminist work comes from the fact that I’ve always struggled with accepting my fleshy, fat body,” Posner says. “It took me thirty years to start showing my uncovered legs in the summer, because I didn’t want other people to notice that I was fat! This is ridiculous, as I’ve weighed between 200–270 pounds my entire adult life.”

(previous page) Jessica Posner, *Butter Body Politic (Butterface)*, 2014, Live performance at Panoply Performance Laboratory in Brooklyn, NY. Courtesy the artist.

(below left to right) Jessica Posner, *Juliette*, 2013–2016, Bras, aqua resin, steel, curtain rod, enamel, onion skins. Courtesy the artist.

Jessica Posner, *Showgirl (Detail)*, 2013–2016, Compression garments, live plant, soil, bird’s nest, broomstick, steel, butterfly wings, pigment, gypsum polymer, beaded appliqué, Ace bandage. Courtesy the artist.

Jessica Posner, *Lot’s Wife*, 2013–2016, Bra, panties, edible plant, dirt, salt, steel, aqua resin, fiberglass. Courtesy the artist.



She's been called "brave" for making this work, a term she feels particularly averse to. "I get it all the time from people I really respect, which is weird because I recognize that it's less about my bravery than it is about the fear of their bodies being seen in the way they are seeing mine."

Another comment she often hears is that she has a "pretty face," which is effectively short for "a fat girl with a pretty face"—the opposite of a "butter face." Posner draws from this backhanded compliment and counters it sardonically by titling this body of work, *Highly Functional*, which is also short for "damaged, but highly functional." To highlight someone's high functionality, the value of their usefulness, is also to suggest an implicit deficiency—a handicap, an addiction, a broken heart.

When discussing the *Butter Body Politic* video, Posner says she wanted to see what would happen if she made herself "100% butter body." The 11-minute video is a performance of her sculpting ten pounds of butter onto her face. It starts with her standing in a tight, nude bodysuit, her hair and face tastefully made-up. She then grabs large chunks of butter from a tray and proceeds to plaster them onto her face. At first her movements are gentle and her expression is almost one of delight. The act then slowly becomes sinister as she turns herself into a butter-faced monster.

Posner says that people get very emotional when watching this performance. "Little kids start laughing and then crying because it starts out silly and then gets scary. It begins as this one-liner joke, but quickly becomes a mirror of how we don't want to be seen." It is difficult to watch the video because it is both emotionally and viscerally disturbing. The butter clumps onto her skin and her hair, melts down onto her body and into her cleavage, and splatters onto the floor. In the same way as her assemblage sculptures seem to capture an intimate moment of love or conflict, this performance also feels private, as if we were watching someone indulge in a whole pint of ice cream while in bed, convinced that no one is looking. The work is poignant precisely because it refuses to present these private and vulnerable moments as obscene. As Sarah Ahmed writes, the "moment of queer pride is a refusal to be shamed by witnessing the other as being ashamed of you."

While *Butter Body Politic* is at times over-the-top and hilarious, it is also intensely brutal. The act of applying clumps of butter onto



Jessica Posner, *Butter Body Politic (Butterface)*, 2016, HD Video (Still), 10 mins. 40 sec. Courtesy the artist.

her face is simultaneously ritualistic, excessive, disgusting, and incredibly sexy. Through it, Posner has created a space in which our desires and our repulsions become fluid and intermingled. She makes us think about the mechanisms of judgment and about the shifting positions between surveyor/surveyed, image/projection, subject/object.

In light of recent political events and the sleuth of violent incidents, Posner's work is also a reminder of the "Guns vs. Butter" macro-economic model popular during World War II, in which a nation must weigh military and defense expenditures (guns) against social welfare and civilian needs (butter). In 1936, Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels infamously said, "Guns will make us powerful, butter will only make us fat."

"As a queer person, I think of queer bodies as butter bodies: slippery bodies that escape a solid form of definition. For me, queerness exists in this well-lubricated, fluid, difficult to grasp space in which we write and act on our own desires, possibilities, resilience, communities, and love." In Posner's work, butter is not only a metaphor for the body and its sustenance, it is a medium through which empathy and love is transmitted. Butter's contentiousness is that we both love and reject it.

"Perhaps identifying with butter is a way that I can claim allegiance to the bodies that have been lost to violence they were never meant to survive," she states. "What chance does a blob of butter stand against a loaded gun?" ■

Ilyn Wong is an artist and writer living and working in Brooklyn, NY, and Berlin, Germany. Her work and research investigates the intersection of history, memory, and fiction. She has an MFA from Parsons The New School for Design, and an MA in Art History from the University of Amsterdam. For more information about her and her work, visit [ilynwong.com](http://ilynwong.com).

Jessica Posner is a feminist artist and writer living and working in Syracuse, NY. *Highly Functional* was on view at the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art Prince Street Project Space, June 10-12, 2016. She exhibited her video *Butter Body Politic (Butterface)* at PULSE PLAY in Miami in October 2016, Queering Space at the Yale School of Art in October 2016, and NASTY WOMEN at the Knockdown Center in New York City in January 2017. Posner is currently producing an experimental dance film, *Butter Body Politic/Butter Body Spiritual*, for which she received a 2016 Individual Artist Commission from CNY Arts, a regional grant program of the New York State Council on the Arts. She teaches art and digital media at Colgate University. For more information about her and her work, visit [jessicaposner.com](http://jessicaposner.com).

# DISRUPTING BEAUTY WITH PHOTOGRAPHY

Yuki James

Frank Sivilli

The choice to become a photographer was clear for Yuki James. “I can’t draw for shit but I know how to compose an image.”

By using his complex and assertive vision to represent bodies that are traditionally under-represented in art and media, James gives viewers a glance into a parallel universe where traditional standards of beauty have been fully discarded.

James has a penchant for capturing subjects who disrupt mainstream or standardized ideals of beauty. “Initially it was literally just a matter of preference,” he explains. He’s driven by an appreciation and attraction to “otherness,” on large-scale display in his meticulously staged portraiture.

James’s work was recently featured in the Prince Street Project Space (Feb. 24-26, 2017.) The subjects of these works—all portraits—ranged all manner of age, ethnicity, and body shape. “I love finding beauty or elegance in unexpected and under-appreciated places. I feel a real sense of responsibility to listen to the positive reinforcement I’ve received and to continue to make people feel included and represented.”

Photographers face a doubly difficult task of having their work recognized in today’s world with social media paradigms shifting toward a greater use of photography and an ubiquity of ‘photographers,’ amateur or otherwise. Social media has become a powerful tool in the democratization of photography “and many forms of creativity and expression,” James contends. Finding visibility in the age of Instagram is a challenge that can stifle the creative process, but James sees things more positively. “It takes more to stand out, and thus the artist is challenged to hone their own voices and to figure out what makes them different. Social media doesn’t devalue or diminish any work just because said work is swimming in a more populated sea. The dust will always settle and the cream will always rise.”



Yuki James, *Cheeky + Nar*, 2016, Digital C-print, 34 x 26.5 in. Courtesy the artist.





(left) Yuki James, *Tawan*, 2016, Digital C-print, 28 x 34 in. Courtesy the artist.

(below) Yuki James, *Self-portrait*, 2015, Digital C-print, 27 x 34 in. Courtesy the artist.

James has seen several recent successes, including an upcoming ad campaign and a solo show, both of which will debut in May.

Recent successes have landed James among a wider audience of queer viewers, too. Some of his most striking and serious portraits have depicted queer and trans folk. They wear the severest of fashions or nothing at all, captured with intimate intensity in the bedrooms and bathrooms they inhabit. He says that the challenge of queer representation is a balancing act. “When I focus on queer subjects, it’s always about capturing a feeling, an emotion, a poignancy that anyone looking at the portrait can relate to.” His goal is to deflate phobia with representation. “When you see that someone hurts and loves and yearns the same way that you do—I think that’s how divides are made smaller.” ■

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 Frank Sivilli is an artist, writer, and editor based in Sunnyside, NY. He regularly reports on federal health care regulation, data privacy, and digital security.



# THE POWER OF THREE:

## A Look Back at General Idea

Shannon Leigh O’Neil

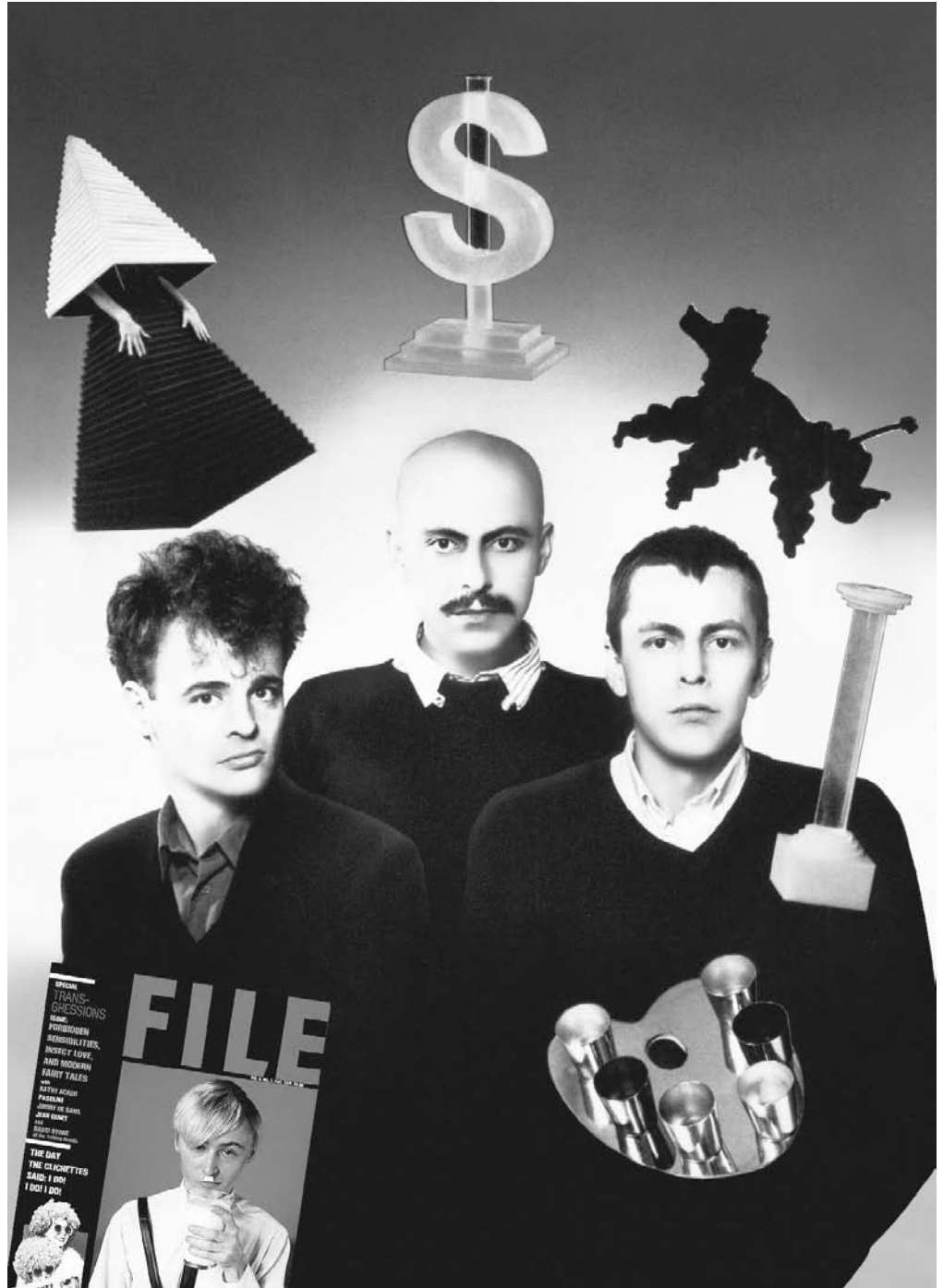
Before HIV/AIDS killed two of its three members, the Canadian art collective General Idea spent 25 prolific years living and creating together. Now, nearly another quarter-century later, Swiss publisher JRP Ringier has reissued the comprehensive monograph, *Haute Culture: General Idea—A Retrospective (1969–1994)*. Originally published in 2011, the book accompanied an exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario. With a cover featuring *Nazi Milk*—a confrontational photograph that merges the historically horrific with the sexually ironic—the pages within present an overview of GI’s influential oeuvre. In these tumultuous times, that oeuvre is becoming startlingly relevant again.

The group’s core comprised three gay-identified artists who met in Toronto in the late 1960s and took pseudonyms: AA Bronson, Felix Partz, and Jorge Zontal. Bronson later explained to documentary filmmaker Annette Mangaard how they were collectively dubbed by accident: “We did a piece, which we initially called *General Idea*... Then everybody started calling us General Idea.” Under the acquired moniker, the three went on to exhibit worldwide and make a disruptive impact on the international art scene.

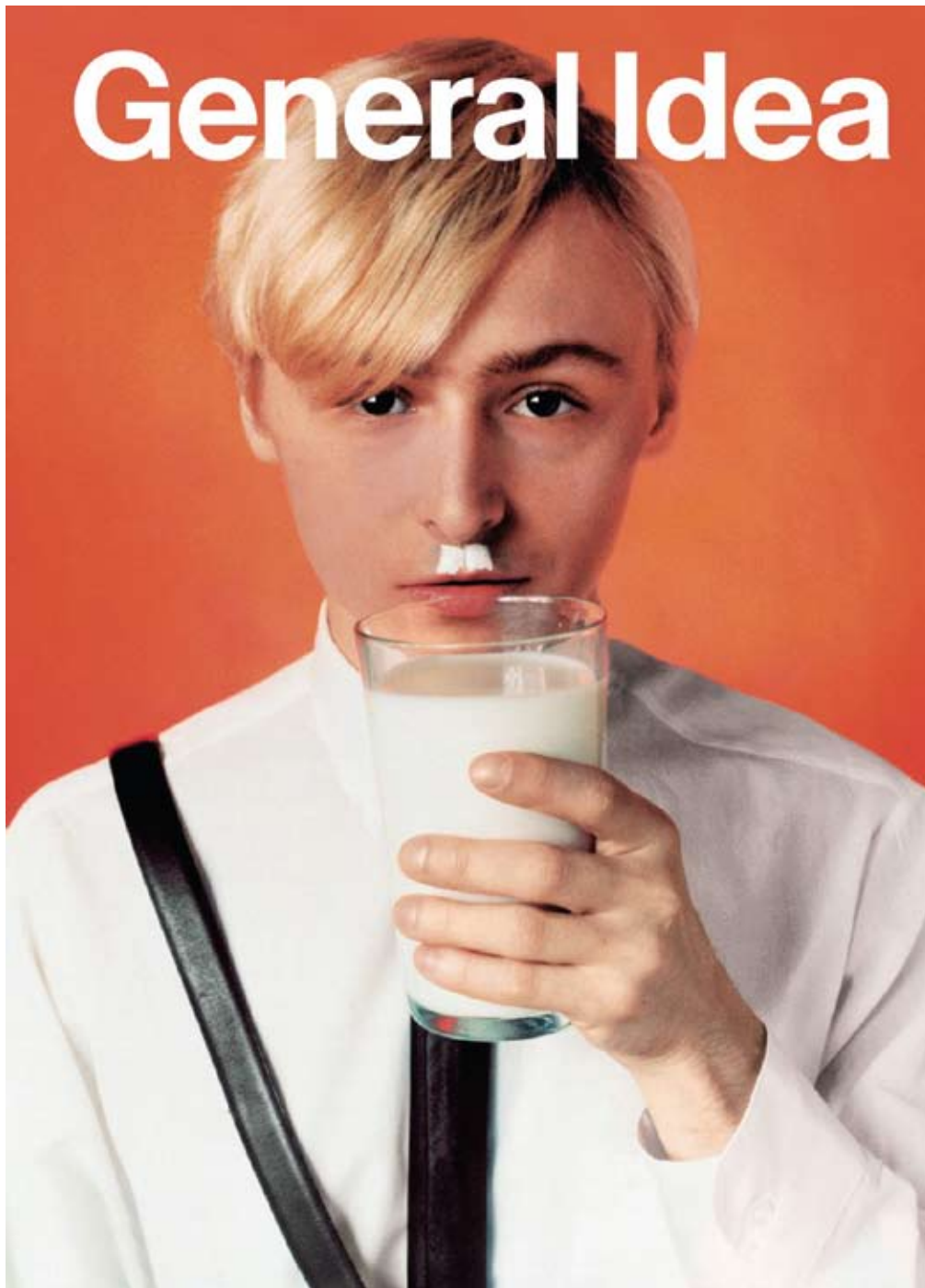
After experimentation with Fluxus-ish media, including street art, mail art, and works on paper, General Idea began doing installations and performance art in the early 70s. Riffing on the concept of objectified glamour—beauty pageants, in particular—the group staged multimedia events centered on a recurring character, Miss General Idea, a derisive distortion of Miss America.

The artists also ventured into publishing. In 1974 they founded Art Metropole, an international publisher, distributor, and archive of artists’ books and multiples. Two years earlier, they had launched *FILE Magazine*, a subversive and satirical appropriation of *LIFE Magazine*. *FILE* came out in limited editions until the late 80s. Critics such as Peter Gallo have since credited General Idea as progenitors of the queercore movement and punk zine subculture.

Also leading the Canadian queer-punk zeitgeist was *Rough Trade*, a New Wave band co-founded by Carole Pope and Kevan



General Idea, *Self-Portrait with Objects*, 1981-1982, Gelatin silver print, 14 x 11 in. Collection Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, Ottawa.



General Idea, *Nazi Milk*, 1979-1990, Chromogenic print, 28.5 x 21 in. Collection of General Idea, Toronto/Canada.

the early days," Pope recalls. "We were also involved in some of their performance pieces. They were involved in the concept and creation of four of our album covers, the most iconic being *Avoid Freud*." That album went platinum, despite (or perhaps because of) its explicitly lesbian and gay content.

By the early 80s, General Idea—now working in video and film in addition to public projects—had been included in numerous prestigious group exhibitions, such as the Biennale de Paris, and an important solo show at Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum. Grave new subject matter demanded the artists' attention at the height of their success: the emerging HIV/AIDS pandemic. In 1987 the group appropriated Robert Indiana's instantly recognizable *LOVE* image, changing the lettering to spell *AIDS*. It remains GI's best-known work. A major dual installation followed, *One Year of AZT/One Day of AZT*, displaying capsules of the controversial drug in various sizes and doses.

Zontal and Partz died from AIDS-related causes in 1994, leaving Bronson as the lone survivor. His solo work is concerned with trauma, loss, death, and healing. From 2004 to 2010, he served as the director of Printed Matter and founded the annual New York Book Fair. As an artist, healer, curator, and educator, he also works with other artists—for example, Peter Hobbs in the performance series *Invocation of the Queer Spirits*.

General Idea's vast multimedia output spanned three decades, and there's still much to discover through the GI lens. The trio left a body of work that not only anticipated cultural trends but also retained its relevance. In a new century, in the midst of a political nightmare—with President Trump's escalating threats to artistic expression and freedom of the press—contemporary artists might be asking themselves, "What would General Idea do?" ■

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Shannon Leigh O'Neil is a writer, editor, and researcher in New York. She graduated magna cum laude from City College of New York with a degree in art history.

# FIGURING QUEERNESS

## 2017 Whitney Biennial

Andrew Barron

In the 2017 Whitney Biennial, the first since the museum's move downtown, the body is everywhere present, even when it is not. This is perhaps less a conscious intent by the curators Christopher Y. Lew and Mia Locks—the majority of the show was compiled prior to the 2016 Presidential election—and more a reading of the exhibition induced by our current political crisis. Under the regime in which we find ourselves striving to survive, life for the most marginalized has become increasingly precarious. In this climate of white supremacist nationalism, non-normative bodies have been marked as threats to the social order. What does American art have to say in

this time of corporeal violence and political destitution?

With sixty-three participating artists, remarkably fewer than previous exhibitions, it is difficult to claim a definitive theme for this year's Biennial, opened to the public on March 17 and running through June 11. It functions primarily as brief glimpses into diverse, independent practices, with each floor partitioned to provide discrete spaces for considering individual artists' works. If the Biennial falters in its ability to put forward a cohesive artistic thesis on the state of affairs in this country, it nevertheless affords insight into, even reprieve from, our

hyper-anxious state by way of certain presentations. Queer life, in particular, is represented in manifold ways that touch upon and speak to the multiplicity of queerness.

Most conversations of the 2017 Biennial have been clouded in the by now well-rehearsed controversy over the inclusion of Dana Schutz's *Open Casket* (2016), which has sparked an outcry among artists and activists, most notably from Berlin-based artist Hannah Black, who, in an open letter penned to the curators, has called for the work's destruction. The painting depicts the body of Emmett Till, the black teen who at the age of fourteen, in 1955, was brutally



Lyle Ashton Harris, *Lyle, London*, 1992, 2015. Chromogenic print, 20.5 x 15 in. Collection of the artist; courtesy the artist.

Celeste Dupuy-Spencer, *Fall with Me for a Million Days (My Sweet Waterfall)*, 2016. Oil on canvas, 60 x 48 in. Private collection; courtesy the artist and Mier Gallery, Los Angeles.



murdered by two white men. Debates surrounding the ethicality of the painting and its subsequent call for removal—their validity notwithstanding—have inadvertently foreclosed engagements with other works in the Biennial from taking place. And yet, just a few galleries away from Schutz’s painting, there is a powerful installation by Lyle Ashton Harris that stands as an affirmation of queer black life in contrast to what has been called (in relation to *Open Casket*) the “spectacle of black death.”<sup>1</sup>

In a room set quietly apart from the main noise of the exhibition, a video transferred onto diaphanous silk panels separates a three-channel projection suspended from the ceiling and two smaller wall-bound video works. Together these compose Harris’s *Once (Now) Again* (2017), an arresting constellation of moments passed. The three elongated screens show images from the ongoing project, the *Ektachrome Archive*, a series of 35mm slides from the artist’s personal collection taken between 1986 and 1998. Spanning a period of tumultuous change in American culture that encompassed the deadliest years of the AIDS crisis, the slides, which include candid snapshots of lovers and friends, are set to the rhythmic music of Grace Jones (“This is my voice, my weapon of choice. This is life,” she declares in monotone). Elements of Harris’s archive have been exhibited elsewhere, but the experience of the installation here brings forth different affective responses. Enveloped in Harris’s world, if only partially, the flickering images resonate deeply, reminding us of the beauty in the everyday and the necessity in bearing witness.

The quotidian also operates centrally in Celeste Dupuy-Spencer’s paintings and works on paper. In Dupuy-Spencer’s seem-

ingly banal scenes of ordinary urban and rural life, the mundane is transfixed into something strange and extraordinary. In *It’s a Sports Bar But It Used to Be a Gay Bar* (2016), the peril of gentrification looms as gay ghosts of the past haunt the now-hetero establishment. Her cartoonishly rendered figures—such as the one featured in *Fall with Me for a Million Days (My Sweet Waterfall)*, a work that borrows its title from the lyrics of Jimi Hendrix—contain a layered humanity within their expressionist sketchiness, a tendency that rings both eerie and familiar.

Adjacent to the salon-style hanging of Dupuy-Spencer’s vignettes are Tala Madani’s totally queer paintings. There is, in fact, a conspicuous prevalence of painting in the Biennial. Many of those on view, including Dupuy-Spencer’s and Madani’s, are socially conscious and rich with connotations of queer sexuality, challenging that old art-world adage that painting is reactionary and apolitical. In her *Shitty Disco* (2016), Madani humorously portrays the human anus as a source of fluorescent light illuminating shadowed clubgoers. Her masterful application of paint creates a playful ambiguity of surface and depth that imbues the work with a scatological exuberance.

Carrie Moyer’s amorphous abstractions similarly make distinctions between foreground and background equivocal. A legend of sorts in lesbian activist circles, Moyer deploys a critically queer sensibility to the history of abstract painting, using glitter, sinuous shapes, and day-glo colors to subvert a masculinist format. This strategy is seductively realized in her *Swiss Bramble* from 2016.

Less spectacular, though no less substantive, are Ulrike Müller’s works on steel, all

Tala Madani, *Shitty Disco*, 2016. Oil on linen, 55 x 44 in. Courtesy the artist and Pilar Corrias Gallery, London.

Carrie Moyer, *Swiss Bramble*, 2016. Acrylic and glitter on canvas, 84 x 78 in. Collection of the artist; courtesy the artist and DC Moore Gallery, New York.

Ulrike Müller, *Some* (Installation view), 2017, Vitreous enamel on steel. Collection of the artist; courtesy Callicoon Fine Arts, New York.

titled *Some* and made this year. In images evocative of high modernism, yet decidedly more kittenish, paintings that double as sculptures question the modernist credo of medium specificity. These works extend outside the interior of the museum onto one of its observation decks, quietly calling the body to motion without summoning it.

On the whole, the Whitney Biennial feels less important than its supporters would like to claim. The notion that an institutional monolith as commercially embedded as the Whitney Museum can ever encapsulate all the vicissitudes of contemporary American art is largely a fallacy. One only has to look at the omission of the innumerable artists creating challenging and timely work for evidence of this. Still, for those of us seeking sustenance in these fascistic times, there is plenty on display that offers temporary intellectual and emotional nourishment. ■

<sup>1</sup> “Hannah Black’s Letter to the Whitney Biennial’s Curators: Dana Schutz painting ‘Must Go,’” e-flux conversations, <http://conversations.e-flux.com/t/hannah-blacks-letter-to-the-whitney-biennials-curators-dana-schutz-painting-must-go/6287>.

Andrew Barron is a PhD student in visual studies at the University at Buffalo, SUNY. His research focuses on American queer and feminist art since 1960.

# REMEMBERING GEORGE DUDLEY

Daniel J Sander



As the Leslie Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art has entered this year in a newly expanded space and with a newly appointed director, it seems an apt time to reflect on one significant moment and figure from the organization's past, George Dudley (August 18, 1951–February 3, 1993), who served as the first director of what was then the Leslie/Lohman Gay Art Foundation, Inc. This was in 1990, the same year that the United States federal government's National Endowment for the Arts vetoed grant proposals from four performance artists (the "NEA Four") based on their subject matter. Reforms to the NEA's grantmaking policies had already begun the year before with the exhibition of Andres Serrano's photograph, *Piss Christ*, and the cancellation of the posthumous Robert Mapplethorpe exhibition, *The Perfect Moment*. It comes as no surprise, then, that Museum co-founder, Charles Leslie, recalled that the Foundation only "received our non-profit status after three years of struggle with the federal government."

Dudley was building on work that had already begun by Leslie and his partner and Foundation co-founder, Fritz Lohman. The two had been collecting art by gay artists shown in their Soho loft and gallery since 1969. However, it was really Dudley's vision and mission to expand this collection into a proper research archive and resource for students, scholars, historians, artists, and the LGBTQ community at large. He kept working toward this goal right up until his premature death from AIDS-related complications

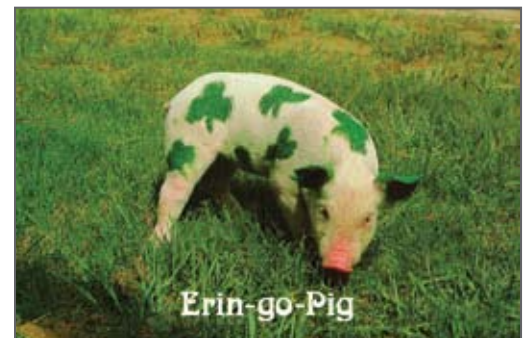
in 1993. Leslie recalls, "George, who could barely sit up but was incredibly lucid, was projecting exhibitions, listing people I had to call, printing I had to check on, artists I had to see". Dudley's legacy lives on to this day, as the Museum continues to acquire work through initiatives like the Hunter O'Hanian Diversity Acquisition Fund (named after the first director once the Foundation became a Museum) and to catalog and digitize the collection through a grant received from the Henry Luce Foundation.

example, in order to increase his revenue after moving to New York City, he founded and became president of The American Postcard Company. The success of this company was due in no small part to filling an untapped market. While most postcards had until then been primarily scenic in content, he capitalized on cards that were zany, campy, satirical, and political, combining original and found imagery with captions, thought bubbles, and dialogue. The company was so successful that he was even approached at



Dudley grew up on a ranch in Columbus, Georgia, and, by all accounts, retained his Southern accent and roots. Relatives owned a pig farm in Alabama across the Chattahoochee River from Georgia, and the animal—along with images of carriages, chickens, dogs, fish, gardens, gourds, horses, lawns, ponds, porches, rakes, tractors, and yards—would be a recurrent motif in his work. He once joked that the reason for this was that pigs were cheaper than models.

While Dudley was trained as an artist, with a BFA from the Cleveland Institute of Art and an MFA from the Maryland Institute's Graduate School of Painting, he was also blessed with a business acumen that would serve him well in combining his characteristic eye for the aesthetic with an intuition for sound investments and profitable enterprises. For



(top left) George Dudley portrait.  
(top right) George Dudley, *Blue Fish*, 1983, Color photograph, 16 x 20 in. Collection Leslie-Lohman Museum. Gift of the artist.  
(above) George Dudley, *Painted Pigs* series, Postcard, The American Postcard Company.

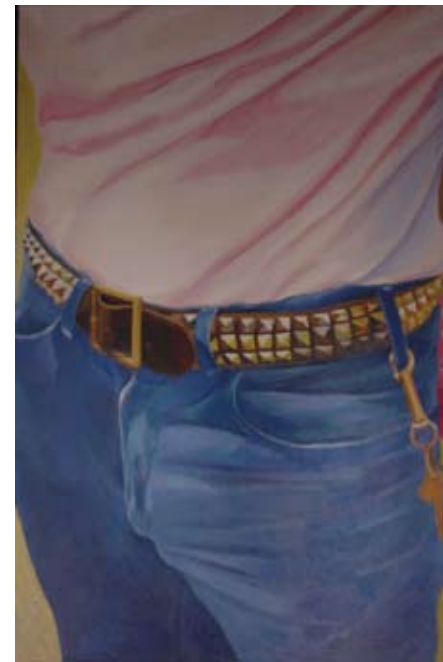
one point to make cards for the popular animated sitcom *The Simpsons*, an opportunity he later regretted having passed up.

Dudley used his dual skills as an artist and a businessman not only to support himself, but also to benefit philanthropy by supporting LGBTQ social services. To this end, he founded the Imperial Court of New York and its annual Night of a Thousand Gowns at the famed Waldorf Astoria in the mid-1980s. The one time he donned drag for the event, he did so as Lady Diddly Dudley. Resplendent in a Halston dress and with an orchid in her hair, the Lady was at once elegant and trashy, a bearded and decadent Southern belle, another nod to Dudley's heritage.

As mentioned, Dudley was not only a consummate collector and archivist, but he was also an accomplished artist in his own right. His work spans a remarkable range of media and themes, from pseudo-documentary photographs of gay pride parades and sex clubs, to complex photographic assemblages and collages, to watercolors and oil paintings, and to text-based screenprints. In one series of idiosyncratic works, he combined his skills as a painter and photographer, monochromatically painting the people, animals, and architecture of a particular place before photographing it.

Dudley's work can easily be located within the pantheon of modern and contemporary art, showing a particular affiliation with early Pop art. The fluid linework and soft coloring of his "torso series" of differently clothed midsections, for example, recall the likes of Andy Warhol and David Hockney in its whimsy. Similarly, his adoption of this style in his humorous, text-based works would not be out of place next to those of Ed Ruscha.

In other works, wherein up to a hundred photographs of a similar subject are laid out in grid formation, Dudley seems like a fore-



runner of Ari Versluis and Ellie Uytenbroek's quasi-sociological *Exactitudes* project. These works also recall a couple of significant moments in LGBTQ cultural history, indexing both the sexological pursuits of scientists like Magnus Hirschfeld and Alfred Kinsey in the early twentieth century and the subsequent adoption of what would become known as clone culture, documented in Hal Fischer's 1977 classic, *Gay Semiotics*.

The flourishing visibility documented by Fischer would soon come under attack, however, with the discovery of AIDS and the contested responses to it by activists, artists, and the government. As we enter an era that in many ways mirrors the resurgent conservatism of the 1980s and early 90s, we must remember people like George Dudley, who resisted cultural obliteration through his ar-

(left) George Dudley, *Uniform Club (Detail)*, 1985, Collage of color photographs, 46.5 x 39.5 in. Collection Leslie-Lohman Museum. Gift of the artist.  
 (right) George Dudley, *Keys on the Left*, 1976, Oil on canvas, 60 x 40 in. Collection Leslie-Lohman Museum. Gift of Norbert Sinski in memory of George Dudley.

tistic and business practices of making, collecting, and curating gay art—all with humor and style. The etymology of 'curate' refers to a spiritual guide, one who takes care of souls. Dudley took care of art that risked marginalization and exclusion due to its controversial content, and the Leslie Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art now takes care of an expanding archive that would not exist had it not been for his valiant efforts. ■

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 Daniel J Sander, PhD, is an independent artist and scholar whose creative and academic work concerns libidinal materialism and queer nihilism and has been exhibited, published, and performed internationally.



## In Memoriam Nicholas McCausland 1927–2017

Nicholas McCausland, 90, passed away April 12, 2017 in Austin, Texas where he had moved nine years ago to be close to his family. Nick and his life partner, Lynford Starr (1926-2005), were early and consistent supporters of Leslie-Lohman. Art he had acquired through Leslie-Lohman started coming back to the Museum before he died, and his family has donated additional art since Nick's passing, totaling twenty-eight pieces by seventeen different artists such as Ray Schulze, Delmas Howe, Paul Cadmus, Goh Mishima, and David Morgan.

Born in Gary, Indiana, Nick graduated from the University of California Berkley, and

received a master's degree from Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School of Public & International Affairs. He also served in the Army in Germany during WWII. He had a career in the State Department, with the US Foreign Service, in Pakistan, Uruguay, Chile, and Peru, leaving the department "before it left me" during one of the regular and vicious purges of gay people by the US government and military. He went on to a successful career with Manufacturers Hanover Trust as VP of Relations with Latin America and Spain. Upon retirement he was very active in the Rhinebeck Historical Society in Rhinebeck, New York. ■



Barbara Hammer, Still from *Double Strength*, 1978, 16mm film. Courtesy the artist.

# BARBARA HAMMER

## Evidentiary Bodies

Bringing together both known and previously unseen works of film and video, installations, works on paper, and material from her archive, this exhibition addresses critical themes that appear in Barbara Hammer's work, including lesbian representation, subjectivity and sexuality, intimacy and sensation, and conditions and maintenance of life and illness.

Curated by Staci Bu Shea and Carmel Curtis.

On view October 7, 2017 through January 28, 2018.

We thank The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts for their generous support of this exhibition.