

Wicked



VISUAL ART EXHIBITION

CURATED BY
Jonny Sopotiuik

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
SD Holman

Wicked

VISUAL ART EXHIBITION






Queer Arts Festival 2020

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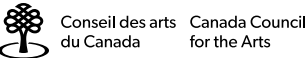
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Wicked

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The Queer Arts Festival takes place on the sovereign, unceded land of the xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), səlilwəta' ɬ (Tsleil-Waututh), and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) peoples. I ask you to join me in acknowledging the xwməθkwəy̓əm, səlilwəta' ɬ and Skwxwú7mesh communities, their elders both past and present, as well as future generations. QAF also acknowledges that it was founded upon exclusions and erasures of many Indigenous peoples, including those on whose land this institution is located. This acknowledgement demonstrates a commitment to continued work to dismantle the ongoing legacies of settler colonialism.

Wicked: Foreword

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR SD Holman

QAF *Wicked* reimagined identity politics, exposing the implications of homonormativity as erasure. This past decade has seen the mainstreaming of gay; sexual difference wins approval so long as it is palatable, marketable, and doesn't stray too far from bourgeois notions of taste and morality. The mainstream commodifies queer experience in the same breath as it pathologizes the queer body, adjudicating via medical and sociological interventions which anatomies and passions rank as authentic.

There's no place like home for the Wicked Witch of the West, green by devilment and through her magical aberrance. QAF 2020 forsook the yellow brick road that leads only to a man behind a curtain gentrifying our desires. Instead, QAF revelled in the quintessentially queer traditions of scandal and excess.

Wickedness is a myth invented by good people to account for the curious attractiveness of others.

— Oscar Wilde

QAF 2020 opened amidst a flowering of worldwide protests (finally) against racist police violence — violence primarily targeting Black and Indigenous people, often those with disabilities. If recent discourse around queer liberation has focused on inclusivity, it bears asking, what kind of society are we asking to be included in? Who of us is granted inclusion, and at what cost? And for those among us who have graduated from rejection to tolerance to mainstream acceptance... has that shifted allegiances?

These questions gained added urgency as the 2020 pandemic upended our experiences of public and private spaces. “The virus” suddenly means a very different virus than the one that has dominated queer consciousness for decades. The contrast between the public health responses to AIDS and coronavirus could not have been starker for those of us old enough to remember the last pandemic. It was astonishing and heartbreaking to see

how authorities were capable of mobilizing when they cared about the kinds of people who were dying. Meanwhile, the opioid epidemic raged unabated, killing significantly more people than COVID-19 here in BC yet garnering only a fraction of the resources and attention.

With widespread calls to *Stay the Fuck Home*, those who could comply found themselves ushered into the strange disembodiment of online living, while those who couldn’t comply risked contagion and increased violence. Sinophobia and violence against Asians went viral, with Vancouver declared the North American capital of Anti-Asian racism in 2021, the time of writing.

This is the context in which we had to reimagine QAF completely to make it happen at all. Social distancing measures changed our capacity to be queer together overnight. Many arts venues closed altogether, while others moved online, curating mediated and disembodied experiences. But who are we as queers, without our bodies?

So QAF 2020: *Wicked* manifested through the internet, mail and public art platforms.

While we had to postpone some programs, QAF remained steadfast in our commitment to artists, in the belief that art is essential. Interdisciplinary artist Alida Kinnie Starr’s *Two-Spirit Public Art Project* exhibited in transit shelters across Vancouver. The Flash Collective’s created video showed on the grunt gallery’s outdoor screen. We published an Art-Zine to reimagine the festival in a printed format, and mailed out Elektra KB’s limited edition genderless stateless passports.

Performances and talks debuted online for 11 days. Seeing how many queer artists were being shut down on the large mainstream platforms or harassed and threatened in comments sections, we built our own digital hub, free from censorship and trolls. During the 11 days of the festival, QAFonline.ca had attendees from all continents except Antarctica, and 50 different countries, including locations where viewers had to circumvent national censors. Highlights included choreographer Noam Gagnon’s raucously reimagined vulnerable Swan Song, **This Crazy Show**; Indigenous Burlesque with Virago Nation’s **Too Spirited; Uncensored**, the latest offering from non-

binary drag collective **The Darlings**; and **Jonny Sopotiuik**’s visual arts curation, which catalogue you are reading right now.

It was a pleasure to work with curator Jonny Sopotiuik. I’ve been following Jonny’s work with great interest since he first exhibited with us for QAF 2013, so I was immediately intrigued when Paul Wong suggested I consider engaging Jonny as a curator. Jonny proved to be a prescient choice for 2020, as his labor activist practice and social justice lens spoke particularly well to the pandemic’s culture of heightened capitalist disposability.

At a time when government-mandated closures for arts venues threw scores of artists out of work, I am proud to have found ways to keep QAF going and honour our contracts. The works collected in these pages brings you a broad range of perspectives, both conceptually and geographically, on the disorientations and dislocations that dominated the dawning of this peculiar pandemic era. I am curious to see how they will reflect on us in retrospect, decades into the future.

Keep Loving. Keep fighting
SD Holman, *Artistic Director*

Wicked

VISUAL ART EXHIBITION

CURATED BY Jonny Sopotiuik

Queer life is a reality of ongoing survival. From government and societal oppression, to family rejection and social isolation our memories and experiences have been defined and shaped by the structures that are designed to contain us.

Our identities and experiences are mediated. Living is a constant battle against and with these systems of containment.

Wicked brings together a multigenerational group of artists living and producing work across Canada and the United States as they explore the body, community, and architecture of homonormativity.

In 2020 we're learning to live through a new form of containment during a global health pandemic. Our long fight for recognition and the foundations of community infrastructures that we created to sustain us are being fundamentally questioned.

We're now asked to rethink how we build individual and collective responses to queer and trans trauma and erasure?

With new connections and intimacy now mediated by requirements to shelter in place, artists critically examine our communities' oppression and expose implications of complicity in the homonormative systems created to contain us.

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VISUAL ART EXHIBITION

CURATED BY Jonny Sopotiuik

Avram Finkelstein
Christopher Lacroix
Dayna Danger
Elektra KB
QAF Flash Collective (*Alex Gibson,
Avram Finkelstein, Chhaya Naran, Claire Love Wilson,
Jackson Wai Chung Tse, Jeff Hallbauer, Joshua Lam,
Kyla Yin, Shane Sable, Tajliya Jamal*)
Joseph Liatela
Kama La Mackerel
KUNST
Love Intersections
Michael Morris
Shawna Dempsey & Lorri Millan
Tom Hsu
Xandra Ibarra

The Translucent Body

Avram Finkelstein

Growing up in New York I spent many Sundays in museums with my father, and as young people frequently do, I quickly chose my favorite artists, most of them Dadaists. By the time I'd reached my teens, the conceptual and anti-art movements grounded in Dadaism were overtaking the Manhattan art scene, and my interest in the situationist critiques that were instrumental in the May 1968 French student strikes was deepening. In the aggregate, these interlocking schools of thought directly connected my leftist upbringing to my work as a young artist. The combined effect was so formative it finally led me to conclude that in spite of decades of avant-garde inquiry surrounding the commodification of art, art production was not likely to break free from the gravitational pull of valuation that increasingly

defined American culture. So during my senior year in art school, I decided that the only ethical response was to discontinue art-making altogether.

Within a decade, however — spurred by the political urgency of the early days of the AIDS pandemic in New York — I reinvigorated my practice in the form of collaborative cultural production, leading me to co-found the Silence=Death and Gran Fury collectives and focus solely on art in public spaces as a means to circumnavigate the institutional art settings I'd deliberately discarded. Before gentrification overpowered Manhattan and irreparably torqued its historical disposition as a parish for cultural experimentation these public spaces were messy, less uniformly corruptible, and generally evasive of the strictures of capitalism.

The same political underpinnings have remained a motivating principle in my practice to this day, but now that information technologies have caused permanent distortions in the way public spaces function, I've transitioned away from thinking of non-traditional art spaces as intrinsically more *public* and thereby more accessible, and have instead begun to focus on the ways they are *shared*, broadening my ideas about the nature of access. In particular, as I adapt to methodologies necessitated by a recent stroke, the manner in which every social space is accessible or restricted has become foregrounded, and I'm progressively interested in the *activation* of shared space as a means to explore the contours of access and map any vestigial generosities the word “public” implies. It is counterintuitive, but as I pivot back

from a collective to an individual practice, my conceptualization of shared space has led me to a sharpened analysis of what might have been “public” about my collective work in the first place.

My practice is an ongoing exploration of our social spaces, which I have come to think of as an “image commons.” By layering nineteenth century forms of mechanical reproduction over their contemporary counterparts — the ever-evolving forms of digital technology — I hope to re-imagine these shared spaces as an intricate ecosystem of narratives representing the fantasias of egalitarianism that connect the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and touch on the tensions between access and limitation, marking and erasure, identity and colonization, agency and refusal.



Plate 1: Fig. 1, Avram Finkelstein, *Untitled*, 1972, 2019, wool, cotton, and lurex, 126 x 78 inches, Commissioned by The Shed. Photography by Tahir Carl Karmali

During a recent residency, I was working on a jacquard woven portrait that transposed the nineteenth century technique for photo-reproduction, the Ben-Day dot pattern, into computer graphic forms used by contemporary loom technologies. The subject is an extreme magnification of a digitally manipulated iPhone photo of a friend, who was gender non-

conforming and later transitioned. The work addresses legibility and displacement, the conflicts surrounding the disclosure of what we consider to be public or private, and the gendered hierarchies with which representations of identity are expected to cohabitate. This work is an attempt to re-code prior imaginings of the body, and take jabs at corporeal meaning-making.



Plate 2: Fig. 2, Avram Finkelstein, *Silver War Storm*, 2019, graphite on paper, 80 x 60 Inches

While I was waiting for the first weaving test, I wondered if re-engaging with the digital source material through drawing might alter its relationship to the queer body. What I discovered startled me: these drawings — the first I'd attempted since recovering from the stroke — reflected an abstraction of corporeality I hadn't anticipated: my own. What began as gesture drawings of the Ben-Day dot foreground image,

holding large graphite sticks with both hands, evolved into a documentation of my attempt to render the background image with a fine-point mechanical pencil. My broad critique of representation had morphed into a war, or a dance, or a tenuous reacquaintance with my own disobedient body, raising an entirely different set of questions about corporeality as a system in flux than the one I had imagined.

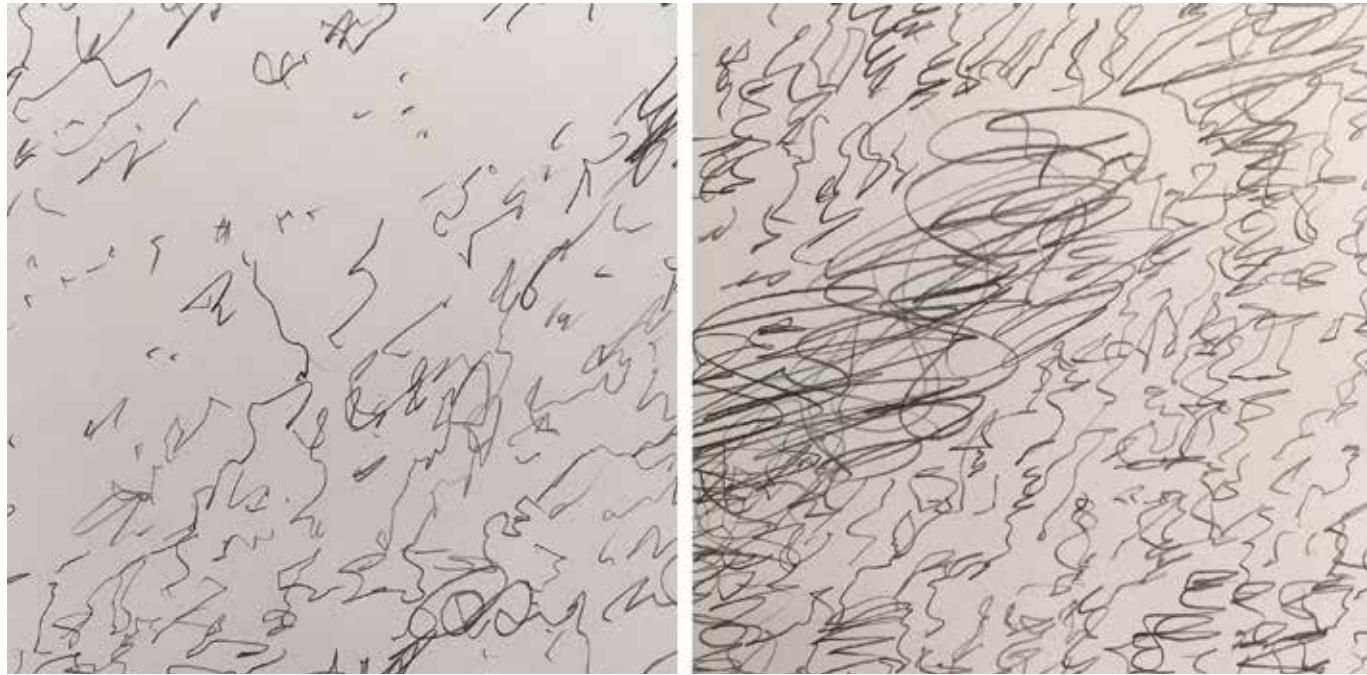


Plate 3: Fig. 3, Avram Finkelstein, *Silver War Storm*, 2019, graphite on paper, 80 x 60 inches

The arduous process is physically painful, and while the wildness of the gestural rendering added vivacity to the dot pattern, I was frustrated by my inability to capture detail. Having drawn all my life I was unprepared for the disruption of this skill. So I started drawing on top of ink-jet prints of the background of the jacquard image, a digital photograph of a silver-leaf surface that is enlarged to exaggerate its digital artifacts. I hoped it might act as a device through which my unsure hand could hide, but the wildness of the detailed strokes proved even more revealing than in the large gesture drawings. I started working without the safety net of the digital print, first as smaller

drawings on vellum, then larger drawings on paper, and eventually, in the form of a mural sketch, *Silver War Storm*. I traced, I used projections, I drew from observation, but there was no difference. My hand no longer belongs to me and it dictates its own language. My work has always been about the queer body. But my own queer body has never been as fully implicated as it currently is, due to an entirely unforeseen breakthrough which inadvertently opened doors in my practice.

America is no longer a country in the traditional sense. It is a digitized procession of symbols, archetypes, and codes, all of which articulate a vacillation between promise and cruelty. This fluctuation presents as a flexing of hegemonies, but it is too potent to be strictly described as the institutional effects of America's false pledge of abundance. I have come to believe this cultural turning point is not simply a digital translation of the power narratives that have defined Western hierarchies since the Enlightenment, redesigned for the hand-held content delivery devices that currently define our "image commons." What is being mapped within America's social spaces is more primordial, and signifies deeper dilemmas.

Having survived HIV/AIDS, I am now on my second pandemic, one that will — for generations to come — shade the meanings of capital, science, government, community, family, relationships, service, risk, pedagogy, art, work, travel, security, and home. As someone whose work-product documented the early moments of AIDS in New York City, I am now being asked whether

AIDS and COVID-19 are comparable pandemics. Since this question is germane to the feminist critiques that verbalize my point-of-view as a queer artist, I feel compelled to respond in a way both personal *and* political: The National Institutes of Health (NIH, the government agency tasked with disease research) was formed by an act of Congress in 1930 from the Hygienic Laboratory, which played a part in researching the 1918 flu pandemic. The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID, the part of the NIH that researches both AIDS and COVID-19) was constituted twenty-five years later, in 1955, three years after I was born. I was twenty-nine years old when the AIDS pandemic was officially noticed in America. NIAID was only twenty-six. So I am not only a member of a cohort that has witnessed two pandemics, I am an older sibling to them.

As a consequence, I have been forced to learn the intricacies of this subject, a subject I was attempting to transition away from in my work but am called on to again consider. And if I've learned anything it's that when we talk about pandemics we will inevitably be speaking about social memory, and in the wake of the death and suffering they cause, cultural mourning. We will be talking about historiography, and about histories constructed as they unfurl. Information technologies will necessitate a swifter transition from telling the story of this pandemic to its *story-telling*, which I would describe as a dense web of narratives. And ultimately, we will cease referring to our pandemic response as a healthcare crisis once it downshifts into a crisis of remembering.



Plate 4: Fig. 4, Avram Finkelstein, *1933/1984/2020*, (installation view), 2020, digital prints on Rolltex and voile, steel bars, steel cable, 96 x 96 inches each panel, total installation, 420 x 960, x 120 inches, Commissioned by Tinworks Art. Photography by Blair Speed

My most recent work, *1933/1984/2020* is a site-specific installation that contemplates the relationship between public health, economics, personal loss, lack of state preparedness, and the reflexive commercial responses of late-capitalism during the COVID-19 pandemic. The series of eight hanging works constitutes a volley of images — half digitally generated, half hand-drawn — designed to link societal cause and human effect, centrally articulated as two radically different responses to global economic strife in 1933: Germany's burning of the Reichstag, and America's New Deal. Four

political graphics act as prompts for four semi-transparent text drawings on voile, panels that are set in motion with little stimulation in a way that is signifying but also transient, and like the act of witnessing, present yet remote. By so doing I'm experimenting with the activation of social spaces through the use of relatively weightless materials "in dialogue" with the wind currents of the passing viewer, documenting both the performative responsibilities of spectatorship and the temporality of individual agency.

I am hunting for a vernacular that "enacts" witnessing as gestural, and renders memory as sculptural, as an "object" that casts a shadow. And I am exploring cultural production that represents the nature of recollection, positing public memorialization as a mode of erasure, even though memorials are presented as acts of cultural solidification. As artists frequently become tethered to their leitmotifs, my work has always revolved around gender, identity, agency, and social meaning. This moment of social crisis, however, has pulled me back to the realization that the "shared space" of mortality is a leitmotif for me as well. As an artist who survived the terrors of AIDS, my work continues to be steeped in the nature of witnessing, and the differences between cultural and personal memorialization.

And although I am moving further away from an intellectual rendering of corporeality that has its basis in theory, the following irony is not lost on me: I am involved in a process of reconnection, between my own body, my body of work, the body politic, and the mountain of bodies I have witnessed the loss of, which has always been vast, but is now too great for any accounting beyond generalization.

Artist Statement

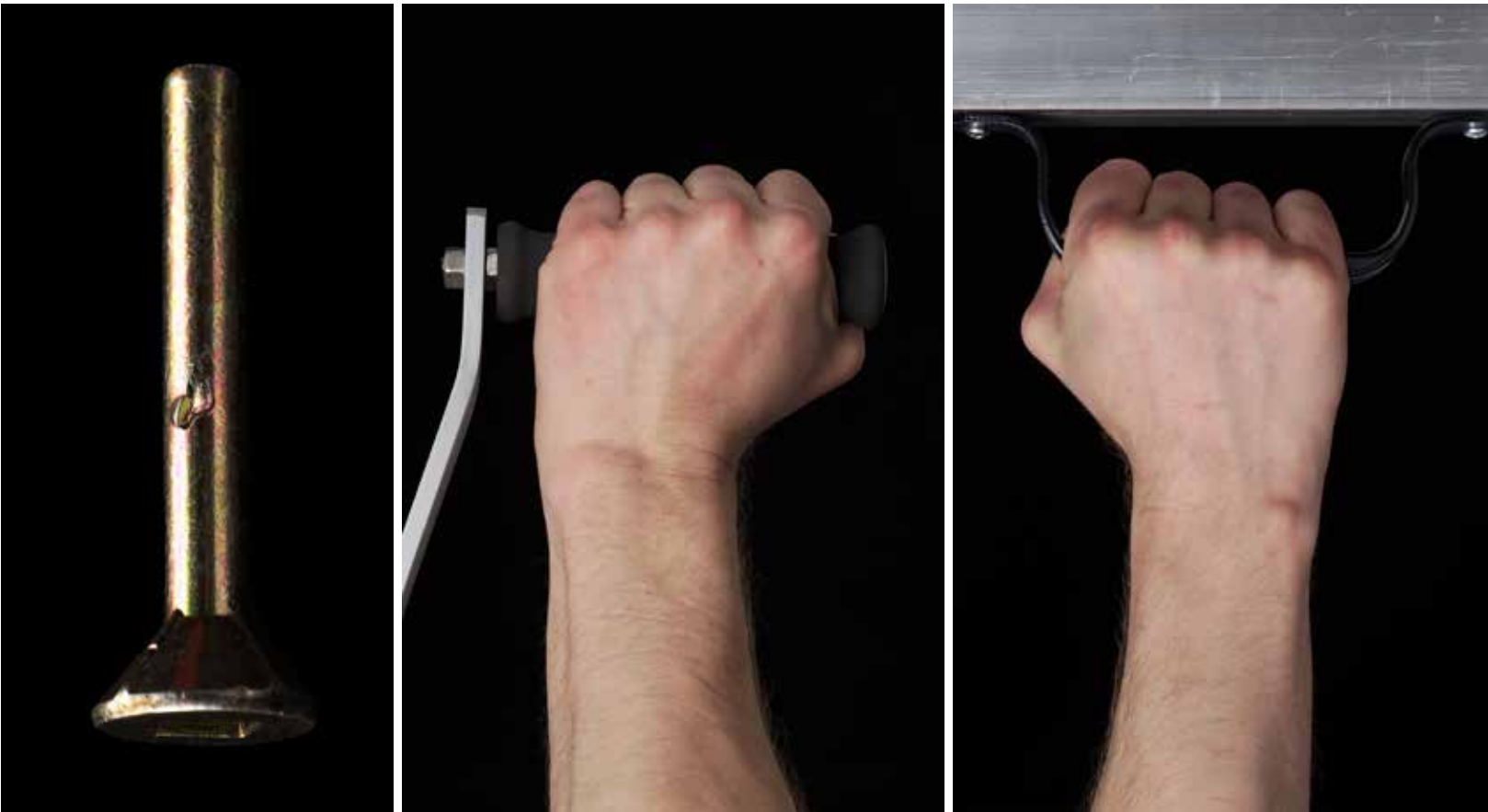
My practice re-imagines information technologies as an ecosystem of narratives bridging egalitarian fantasias about social spaces at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, exploring tensions between identity and colonization, access and limitation, agency and refusal. While waiting for fabrication tests for a recent commission, I started sketching my source material, a photo manipulated iPhone image of a transgendered friend — the first drawings I'd attempted since recovering from a stroke. I was surprised to find my hand no longer "belongs" to me, and dictates its own vernacular. These arduous gesture drawings, involving graphite held with both hands, evolved into detailed pencil renderings. The resulting mural-sized drawings document a reacquaintance with my disobedient body, raising questions that exceeded my explorations of gender representation, into personal inquiries about corporeality as a system in flux.

— Avram Finkelstein

Christopher Lacroix



Plates 5 - 12: Christopher Lacroix, *Perversions come in all sizes*, 2019, Sculpture & single channel video, 58 minutes and 21 seconds



Dayna Danger



Artist Statement

Perversions come in all size (2019) considers issues of shame, endurance, melodrama, and eroticism as they relate to queer subjectivity. The project centres around a machine custom-built for my body that I used to feed myself one cookie for every person I have had a sexual encounter with. The machine requires my body to be in a constant state of awkward tension when operated; either

pushing my weight back to crank the first conveyor belt or pedaling backwards to move the second conveyor belt towards my mouth. In borrowing aesthetics from gym equipment and fetish furniture, the machine suggests a blurring of the boundaries of indulgence and discipline, ecstatic deviance and self-flagellation.

— Christopher Lacroix



Plate 13: Dayna Danger, *Bad Girls Series: Goldilocks*, 2010, Photography, 60 x 40 inches



Plate 14: Dayna Danger, *Bad Girls Series: Red*, 2011, Photography, 60 x 40 inches

Facing Page:

Plate 15: Dayna Danger, *Bad Girls Series: Outlander*, 2011, Photography, 60 x 40 inches



Artist Statement

Bad Girls is inspired by scandalous and intriguing women throughout history. My catholic upbringing has impressed onto me the idea of an acceptable woman, what they act like, what they look like and how they are portrayed. By referencing the renaissance genre of history painting I create mythological and allegorical

images of women throughout history, but with a rebellious, sexual twist. These women fascinate me because their stories portray them as “bad girls”. These images ask the viewer the question “why are these specific women perceived to be ‘bad’, why is a woman owning her own sexuality considered a malfeasance?”

— Dayna Danger

Elektra KB



Plates 16–18: Elektra KB, C.A.T. *Stateless Genderless Passport*, 2019, Performance, sculpture, paper passports, letter press and gold foil printed on paper, stamp and ink pad. CAT — Cathara Autonomous Territory





Artist Statement

You are choosing to become a de facto global citizen by your own personal authority with the support of the Cathara Autonomous Territory as issuing source.

Be aware of other stateless citizens holders of the CAT passport, we are everywhere.

You are here therefore, liberated and are the sole ruler of your body in space.

Due to the rise of systems of oppression via the nation state, the rebels of the Theocratic Republic of Gaia — the Catharas — have created the Stateless Autonomous passport. With this document you renounce to any

Plates 19-20: Elektra KB, C.A.T. *Stateless Genderless Passport*, 2019, Performance, sculpture, paper passports, letter press and gold foil printed on paper, stamp and ink pad. CAT — Cathara Autonomous Territory

involuntary forced common identity imparted because of the nation state and commit to the erasure of imaginary lines forced upon humans in the world; through blood, war and genocide.

When you sign the Cathara Autonomous Territory passport, you declare yourself stateless. You abandon your alliance to: nation borders and gender borders, chauvinism, patriotism, and fascism. You declare that these concepts don't define the true existence of the individual and are not a marker for human value.

— Elektra KB



QAF Flash Collective



Plate 21: QAF Flash Collective

Facing page

Plate 22: QAF Flash Collective, 2020, Online workshop and video creation (projection), 1 minute and 12 seconds

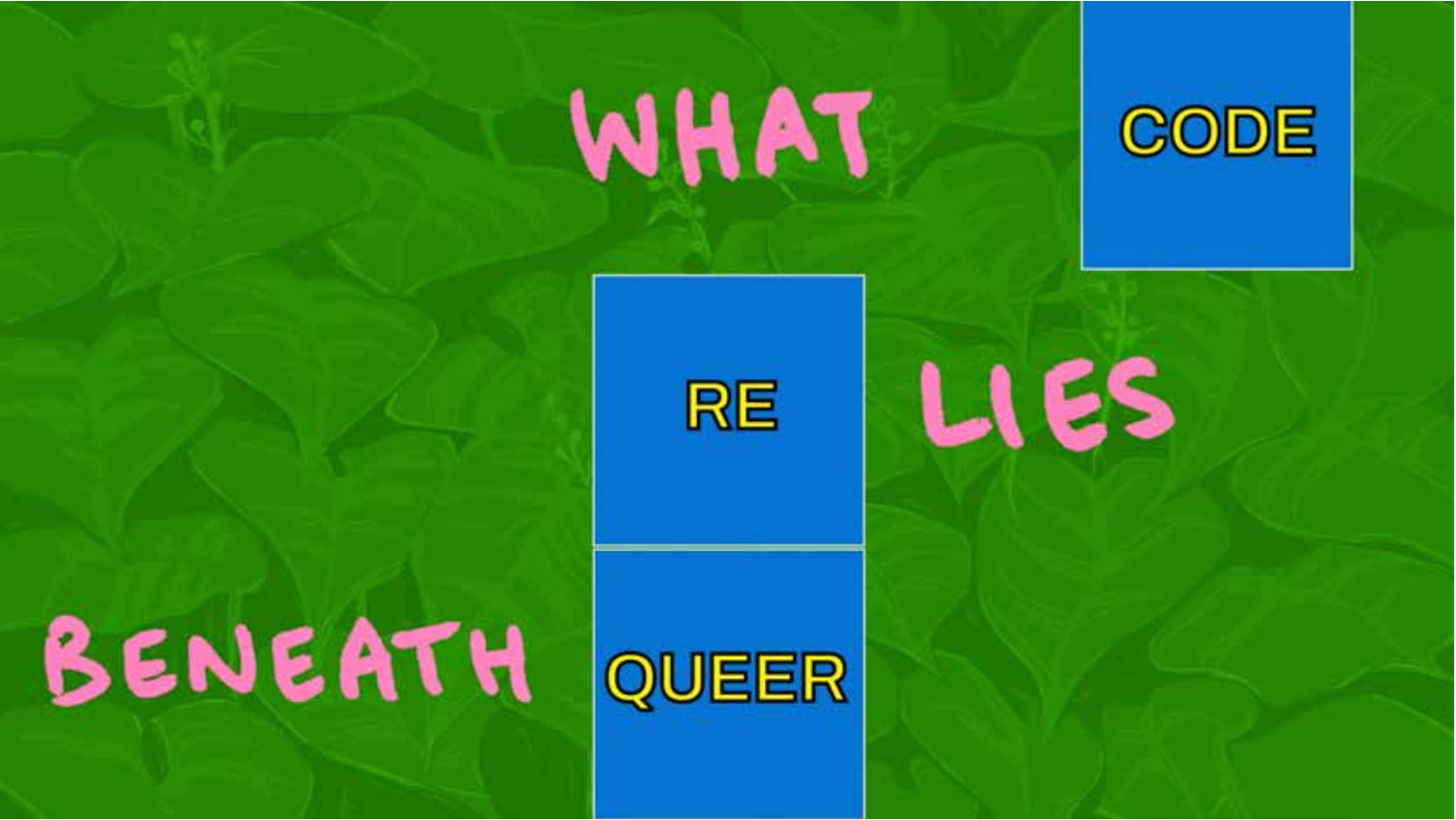
Artist Statement

Flash Collective

On the subject of PLACE, the Vancouver-centric *Flash Collective* promises a uniquely prescient opportunity: collaboration between the QAF and Finkelstein has been irrevocably altered by the COVID-19 pandemic and the marginalized artists the workshop aimed to serve are now grappling with the complexity of a post-pandemic future in real time.

Participating artists of the Flash Collective: Alex Gibson, Avram Finkelstein, Chhaya Naran, Claire Love Wilson, Jackson Wai Chung Tse, Jeff Hallbauer, Joshua Lam, Kyla Yin, Shane Sable, Tajliya Jamal

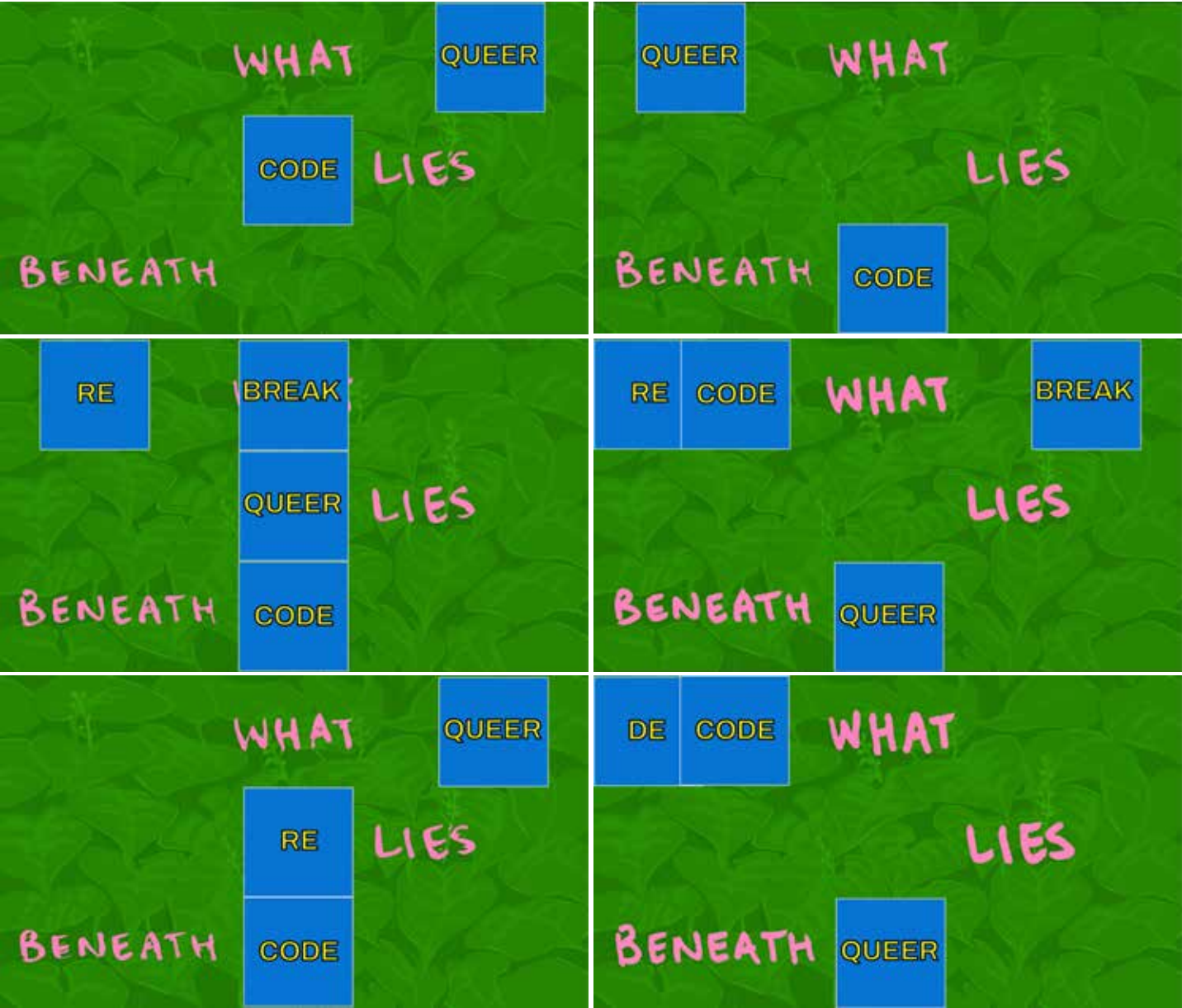
In July 2020, the Queer Arts Festival (QAF) supported a visual art exhibition curated by artist, activist, and community organizer Jonny Sopotniuk on the festival theme of *Wicked*. Sopotniuk’s curation included a single-day workshop for a group of emerging and early career local artists with New York-based artist and seminal HIV/AIDS activist Avram Finkelstein, known as a Flash Collective. Originating in his HIV/AIDS activism of the 1980s, Finkelstein’s Flash Collective is an experiment in political art-making wherein he leads a group of artists to answer the call to collective action. The artists form a collective of limited duration intent on producing a



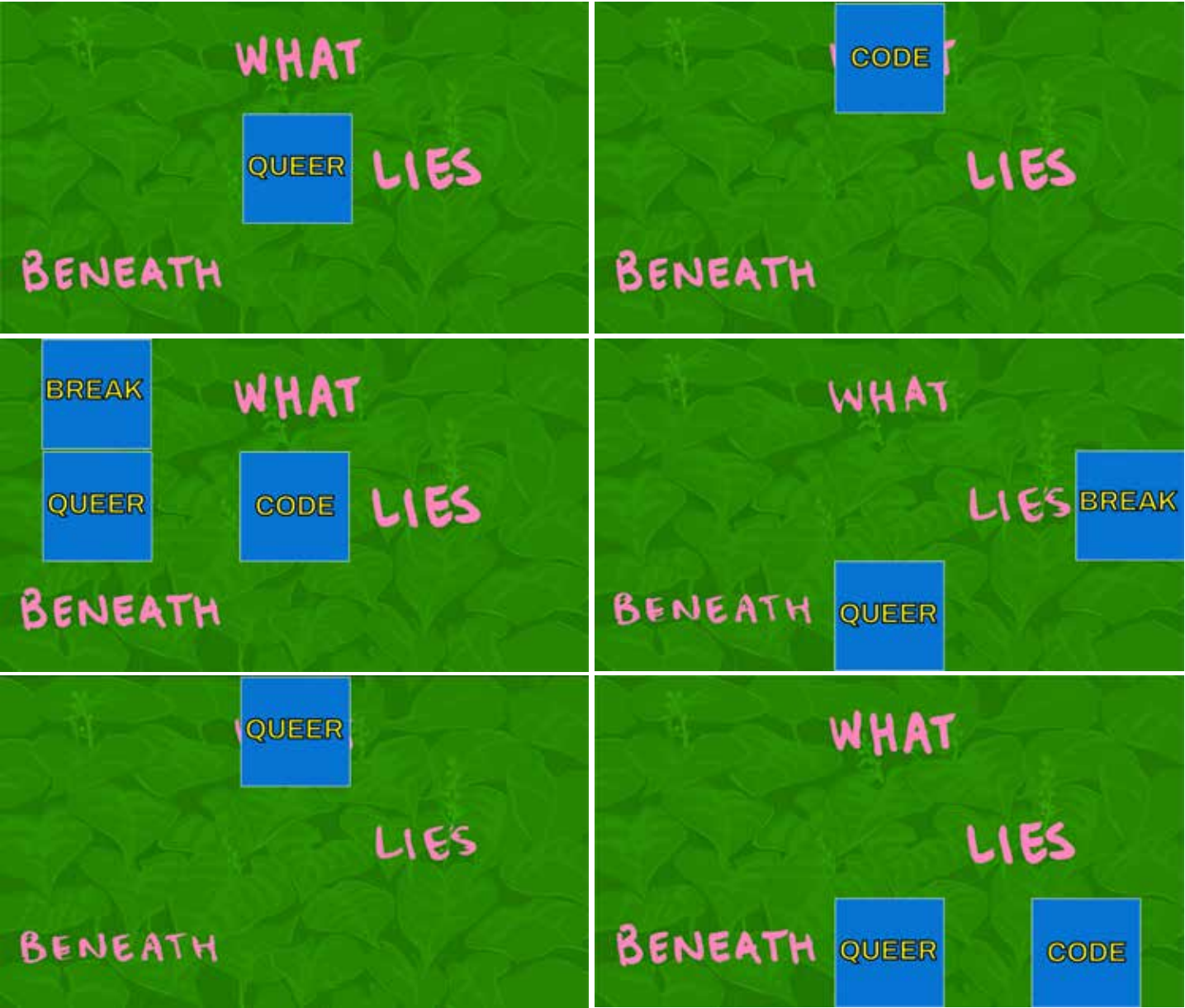
single intervention in a public space; a result-oriented exercise aimed at collective action by focusing on collective decision-making within a surgical and fast-paced format intended to cut directly to the point of the work: its content.

Prior to the festival on June 16, 2020, Finkelstein guided a group of 9 2SLGBTQ+ identified local artists through a pre-prescribed 6-hour Flash Collective workshop. As a short-term collective, participants imagined alternative models on activating social spaces through reflection on the history of queer activism — a dynamically charged

subject given the impact marginalized communities are experiencing under the pallor of the COVID-19 pandemic and the era of social distancing. The product of the workshop was negotiated by the collective with artist selection based on their unique contributions, including interest in or experience with activism, graphic design, photography, and animation. In his role as convenor, Finkelstein brought together the first ever online flash collective where artists could explore community and collaboration during a pandemic by producing a single intervention in public space.



Plates 23–28 (left to right): *QAF Flash Collective*, 2020,
Online workshop and video creation (projection),
1 minute and 12 seconds



Plates 29–34 (left to right): *QAF Flash Collective*, 2020,
Online workshop and video creation (projection),
1 minute and 12 seconds

Wicked

Shane Sable

2020 came in like a cleverly disguised curse, insidious in its glorious veneer of potential, and made all the more seductively sinister by whispers of an untimely global comeuppance. The virus.

I started the year like many — fresh and full of expectations for the coming months. Oh — the plans I had. The presumptions. I started my first day as a staff member with the Queer Arts Festival in early January, glowing with energy and intention. This was one step in a larger transformation I had planned for myself. Experience the professional life of being hired for my art. Spend my hours working with and supporting my artistic peers. Engage in land-based learning with a vigor I hadn't indulged since childhood. Gear up for another busy performing season with the other members of Virago Nation, an Indigenous burlesque collective.

In generosity and respect, I've referred to our time since March 2020 as The Great Hibernation. But over a year into our collective isolation, I understand why the experience might resonate for some more along the lines of Rapunzel walled into her tower, contact with the outside world reduced to a "safe" few, for better or for worse.

I felt bereft. Goodbye plans. Goodbye intentions. Everything I had hoped for myself and for my communities gone in the blink of an eye. Suddenly, being trapped in the city made me feel like the world wanted me to die of lack of self-sufficiency, of state-created calcification. The normally dull throbbing pain that is my longing for the lands to which I belong turned into a keen searing agony through my whole self. I grieved for the version of myself that I had imagined and planned to be. I said goodbye to

my imagined self that was going to learn to tan a bear hide that had been in my freezer for too long. I cried for that self at a sacred fire held in the Downtown Eastside. I had a pity party for my Virago self, who watched festival after festival cancel, postpone, or fold altogether. I sank into professional inertia staring down the black hole that swallowed my in-person talking circles, workshops, and critical dialogue events.

Then it started to happen. Intense isolation began to collapse in on itself, a tendril of new growth began to flower and we as a community found ways to be together. To be amongst one another. Out of the darkness of 6-ft social distancing, short-lived "safe 6" bubbles (just as ephemeral in metaphor as in practical application), and endless sanitization; the land reached out, beckoned, reciprocated my

longing to connect. The universe sent more opportunities than I could have ever participated in had they been held in person. I learned to tan hides in my apartment, I made my first fish leather and used it for an initial foray into moccasin making. Plant-based workshops and land-based choreography intensives created a network of activated artists, passing electricity betwixt one another and feeling the continuity of earth connecting each constellating star.

Virago Nation made our QAF debut with the "Too Spirited" show. It was our first digital offering. It was so invigorating — learning to execute a burlesque performance for an imagined audience, lines of sight condensed into the reflection of a camera lens, and imagining the joy of a future audience. Never have we reached so many people. Never before

had our art been witnessed across so many countries, and even continents. It was a gift, and we have carried the warmth and learnings of that show into new, unexpected offerings as a result.

When Jonny Sopotiuik invited me to join the *Flash Collective*, I was shocked. Thanks, in part, to the stigma associated with my chosen medium, I sometimes feel like my artistic contributions go unseen or my artistic potential is pigeonholed. The invitation to join other artists and community-makers to create a digital expression of queer voices caused me to consider my artistic self in a new light; one where the relationality of how I work was considered a leading strength; one where my tenure in burlesque was simply one expression of a multifaceted commitment to creative

community-building. I joined a new constellation of creativity, both in terms of medium and in terms of community.

The *Flash Collective*, facilitated by Avram Finkelstein, convened primarily over the course of just a few hours to address our call to action — to collaboratively co-create a digital short for display on the Mount Pleasant Community Board (run by the wonderful folks of grunt gallery) that would help bring anyone viewing it into a relationship with the queers who helped create it. The result of Jonny's insightful curation of participating artists, Avram's ease of facilitation and ability to create connection among strangers, and the wealth of skills offered by members of the group, was a mix of provocative words and phrases moving around an unseen board like the queerest

of all slide-puzzles. Though the piece has long since given over to newer works, I walk by now and look up, knowing in that moment that I am within a constellation of artists who helped make it with me, to every person who walked in my footsteps and looked up to see what was there, I am breathing the same air as I breathed each time I raised my voice within the collective in the same physics-defying way that the land underneath my feet is also the land I belong to, regardless of geographical manifestation.

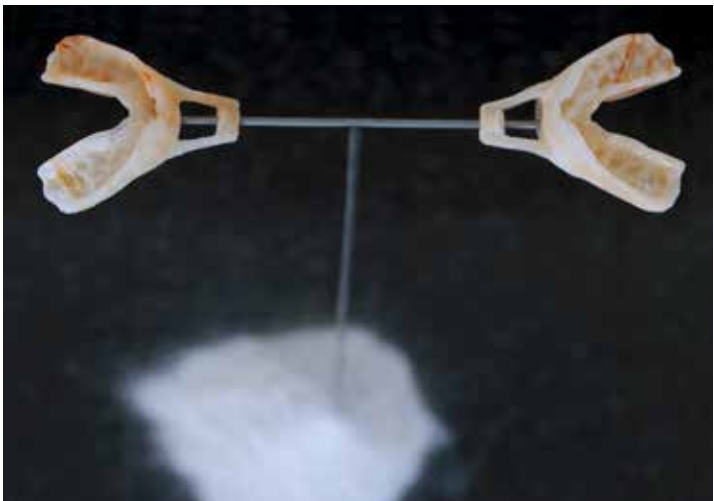
I grew in ways I didn't expect or imagine for myself. Working with Avram and the other members of the Flash Collective expanded my understanding of what was possible for artists, what new worlds we could build from here, if only we desire it. No deep soul-rending commitment

needed. No reduction of self or contribution for the sake of unity. Instead, the simple directive of community building. Of self-actualizing a community of creation. A macrocosm contained in the micro-gathering. We reminded one another and ourselves that speaking and being heard/ listened to is always a possibility.

The thing that wickedness never understands about curses is that they never work according to intent. Physical proximity has never determined the ability of people to come together, and thus the curse of isolation had in some ways the opposite effect.

We haven't yet reached the end, but at least we know we are creating now the world we'll step into once we collectively experience the bittersweet, curse-ending kiss of a vaccine needle.

Joseph Liatela



Plates 35–40: Joseph Liatela, *Untitled (Molecular Prosthesis)*, 2020, VCT Tile, masonite, singlets used by athletes, resin, marble powder, silicone, steel, powdered Viibryd, Vyvanse, & synthetic hormones, 120 x 108 x 84 inches

Kama La Mackerel





Spread (pages 36-38)

Plates 41-53: Kama La Mackerel, *Breaking the Promise of Tropical Emptiness: Trans Subjectivity in the Postcard*, 2019, Photographs, 41 x 29 inches

Artist Statement

My work aspires to articulate languages of decoloniality through inter-textual and inter-textural artistic practices.

My life's work emerges from a concern for justice and an imperative to heal from colonial pasts. I reimagine and reformulate languages of the self in order to offer "a countermemory, for the future" (Gordon). I explore ancestral loss — as the loss of bodies, histories, cultures, languages, genders, knowledge systems and spiritual practices — in order to rewrite the marginalized and silenced voice in contemporary contexts of global imperialism. I draw from the past to interrupt the present, and offer possibilities of being for future, as a "reacquisition of power to create one's own i-mage" (Philip).

The "i" in my work is multiple: it is an i that is descendant of Slaves and Indentured labour, it is an i that grew up on the plantation island of Mauritius, it is an i that is economically working-class but culturally middle-class, it is an i filled with queer desires, it is an i that crosses normative gender lines, it is an i that grew up in a half-Catholic and half-Hindu family, it is an i that is East-African, South-Asian and in the process of becoming Canadian... The i in my work refuses to be restricted by singularity, it *cannot* be: my voice is multiple, moving beyond and across definitions, a voice imbued in "complex personhood" (Gordon).

The i in my work, then, is not constrained by the boundaries of disciplinarity. I work across live performance, poetry, installations, textile and visual arts to speak multiple aesthetic and political voices that

enunciate a decolonial poetics. The voice in the body of my work expresses itself across different media and in the interstices between these media. These intermedia spaces provide the terrain for elaborating "strategies of selfhood — singular and communal — that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation" (Bhabha). Through an inter-disciplinary practice, I create a range of 'in-between' spaces and 'in-between' voices which offer a kaleidoscopic view of my subjectivities as they relate to space, time, history, and kinship: "this interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (Bhabha). I thus re-figure my own corporality as multiple, transgressing genres, locations, bodies, tongues, spaces and temporalities.

"Breaking the Promise of Tropical Emptiness: Trans Subjectivity in the Postcard" is a performance-based photography series where I call into question the dominating aesthetics of postcards as orientalist visual artifacts that have historically portrayed island spaces as "exotic" landscapes, devoid of local subjectivity. In this series, I disrupt the colonial postcard frame by positioning my queer and transgender body in the foreground of stereotypical postcard-like landscapes. "Breaking the Promise" also articulates a visual vocabulary with which to reclaim the scapes of my home/is/land and return my transgender body back to the land I had to flee in order to birth my queer femme self.

— Kama La Mackerel

Works cited:
Bhabha, Homi, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge (1994, 2006), Gordon, Avery
Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination, University of Minnesota Press (1997, 2008)
Philip, M. NourbeSe, *She Tries Her Tongue: her silence softly breaks*, Ragweed (1989, 1996)

To whom belongs the island body?

by Kama La Mackerel

colonial powers destroyed

people

lands

resources

cultures

colonial powers

also scythed

the languages

of love¹

1. All the poetry interweaved in this piece is from *ZOM-FAM*, Kama La Mackerel's debut poetry collection published by Metonymy Press (2020).

Postcards of places such as Mauritius and other island destinations exude a specific aesthetic: they are bright and colourful, they feature dreamy landscapes, golden sunsets, turquoise lagoons, tall mountains and endless stretches of sugar-cane fields that merge into the blue shades of the ocean. These “tropical havens” need to be sold to the tourist’s eye as a dream of exoticism, a promise of isolation, a return to a space of innocence, emptiness and “authentic” connection with nature. According to this colonialist logic, local subjecthood cannot be featured in these vibrant, glossy cardboard pieces that act as ambassadors to island spaces.

There is a long and persisting history of representations of island spaces framed as *terra nullius* — wild, empty spaces, in a pristine state of nature, to be exploited for transactional, colonial enterprises. This can be seen as early as the 16th century in Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516), where the island is used as an experimental space to imagine an idealized society built on the erasure of native islanders. Shakespeare uses the same trope in *The Tempest* (1611), where shipwrecked Prospero finds himself on a fictional Caribbean island where he performs “white magic” (i.e. modern science) in an attempt to “civilize” Caliban. Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), set on an island near Trinidad, remains one of the most seminal and popular literary works that explores the trope of the island as a space for encounters between the civilized Europeans and the wilderness. These narratives written at the time of significant European colonial expansion reflected the popular cultural and political imaginary of the time, which launched

an enduring aesthetic structure within which island spaces and native islanders would be understood, read, treated, represented and disposed of, throughout colonial history.²

In more contemporary contexts, we witness this trope in many instances, including in the forced displacement of Chagossians from their home island of Diego Garcia in late-1960s when the British leased out the island to the US who were strategically in need of a military base in the Indian Ocean. It is from the Diego Garcia military base that two invasions of Iraq were launched, along with countless missions across Asia, including the war on Afghanistan. Chagossians have been fighting for their right of return to their homeland for decades, to no avail. This area of the Indian Ocean was also declared a Marine Protected Area of the British Indian Ocean Territory in 2010, wielding “ecological concern” as an excuse to prevent Chagossians and their descendants from resettling in their home, even though close to 1,000 US troops and staff presently live on the military base. Ironically enough, island spaces have historically been used by international military powers to experiment with nuclear warfare. In 2019, the United Nations’ highest court, the International Court of Justice, ruled that the lease of Diego Garcia and the deportation of the Chagossians were illegal and that the UK must complete decolonization and return the Chagos to Mauritius as soon as possible. The UK and the US

2. I am indebted to Usha Rungoo, Assistant Professor of French and Literature at Purchase College, State University of New York, whose thoughtful reflection and engaging research, “The Island as Experiment,” has significantly contributed to my own thinking, research and creative process.

consider this verdict to be an advisory opinion and not a judgment, therefore will not abide by it.

These tropes of disposability with regards to island spaces and native islanders continue to permeate international geopolitics just as much a popular culture. This can be seen in shows such as *Survivor* (2020) and on billboard advertisements for all-inclusive holidays to island destinations. In 2020-21, at the height of a global pandemic, it is with the same colonial entitlement that thousands of Canadians traveled to island destinations on holidays, with no concerns for the safety of the local islander populations, in spite of a strong government travel advisory against international travel.

you walk fine lines

embroidered borders

boundaries

etched interstices

archipelagos & dwellings hemmed

into coastlines

of being, longing

belonging

Breaking the Promise of Topical Emptiness: trans subjectivity in the island postcard was a project first conceptualized and developed between 2015-17, and first publicly exhibited in 2019-20. The project emerged from my own concerns as I started traveling back home to Mauritius after having been away for more than a decade: my spirit has been craving the *island body*. After fleeing the island in an act of survival as a young adult, birthing my queer femme self first in India, then in Canada, I was bound to come back someday or another. If only to pour water on my ancestors' graves. If only to learn to love the poetry that lives in me.

I was taken aback by how little space I could take up on the island, unlike tourists or the white people who had settled there (even if more than 95% of the population is racialized). Significant portions of the island, particularly those steeped in nature including valleys, hills, forests and mountainsides are former domaines (i.e. colonial estates) that belonged to the white ruling class and have been passed on to the next generation, or sold to offshore stakeholders. Public beaches comprise less than 7% of the entire Mauritius coastline. I felt erasure from all sides. On the one hand, I felt small in my Blackness/Brownness, a native islander only allowed to take up conditional space in my homeland. On the other hand, my inability to physically or spiritually access ancestral lands felt like a deepening of colonial wounds.

Every time I saw a postcard of Mauritius, I saw my own invisibility being reflected back at me. I found it hard to believe that this colonial visual artefact had survived the test of time and was

still being mass-produced through exactly the same aesthetics: the island framed as *terra nullius*. If it so happens that a Mauritian body is featured in postcards, it only exists as an exotic prop, such as that of a racialized woman dancing the sega (the Mauritian folk dance) in a large skirt around a fire, where her face is unseen or blurred as the focus of the image remains her flowery costume with the backdrop of the sunset (which, for the record never happens in real life — if the sega dance actually happens at sunset around a fire, it only happens on resorts as a form of entertainment).

Breaking the Promise of Tropical Emptiness offered me a path to reclaim my power, my agency, and to re-inscribe my queer/trans, Black/Brown subjectivity back onto the nationalist space of the island. Alongside my

(emotionally distanced) father, and Nedine Moonsamy, a South-African scholar, novelist and photographer who also happens to be one of my oldest friends, I traveled the island, from coast-to-coast, from the seven-coloured earth of Chamarel to the Pamplemousses Botanical Garden, from the sugarcane fields of Flacq to the waterfalls of Black-River. I searched for stereotypical postcard-like landscapes in front of which I positioned my body in performance, a reclamation of the *island body* where I could birth myself anew, as a *zom-fam*, a trans femme islander. This work was a blessing: It brought to the fore my Mauritian, queer/trans subjectivity from the margins of the island, to take up space in the centre of the landscapes as a fully realized political subject, breaking the promise of tropical emptiness.

i take pleasure in being zom-fam

a man-woman being neither zom nor fam

yet being both zom & fam

navigating a middle passage between being & becoming

an interstice where migrant bodies like mine find their truth

an undefinable space that maps the cartography of my skin

a hyphen that holds & wraps my gendered experience

When *Breaking the Promise of Tropical Emptiness* was exhibited in 2019-20 (first at article in Montreal, then at the Art Gallery of Burlington, the Point of Order Gallery in Johannesburg and Queer Arts Festival in Vancouver), the work started taking on different levels of meaning. For sure, these visual encounters met their political goal of encouraging the viewer to consider the colonial implications of the ways in which island spaces are commodified, and how local subjecthood is uprooted by these utopic destination images. But once the work had moved off my 16-inch laptop screen to actually occupy space as immersive large-scale photography on a gallery wall, I started seeing other profound narratives embedded in this work.

The development of this project had coincided with a time when I was actively trying to find vocabularies to articulate my gender and sexuality to my family. We were trying to repair many years of fractured relationship. We grappled for words, for languages of love in which we could recognize, honour and hold each other. We failed, often, and we kept trying. This was also the time I had started developing what would later become my interdisciplinary solo performance and my debut poetry collection *ZOM-FAM* (Metonymy Press, 2020). As much as I had been working in poetry and performance to articulate decolonial and ancestral ways of being transgender through the body and voice, *Breaking the Promise of Tropical Emptiness* had become a quest to develop a visual

language, a vocabulary beyond words to honour the femme ancestries that live in me. I did not consciously realize it at the time, but this work became so much more than a political disruption: it became the conduit through which an ancestral, spiritual language would make itself manifest, in that space right between the queer body and the island.

there will be pain

deep pain

that will settle

like sediment in your marrow

that will calcify

like sandstone in your throat

that will fossilize

like mud on your tongue

And yet, at the time when *ZOM-FAM* was being published and when *Breaking the Promise of Tropical Emptiness* was being exhibited at QAF, Mauritius was experiencing what came to be known as the biggest ecological disaster of the island's history. In July 2020 the MV Wakashio, a Japanese-owned cargo sailing for Brazil under a Panamanian flag of convenience, ran aground the coral reefs on the south-eastern coast of Mauritius. Two weeks later, due to a lack of accountability and action from both local and international authorities, oil began to leak from the wrecked ship, which eventually broke in two. More than 1,000 tonnes of heavy oil was spilled into the lagoon, thereby impacting the entire south-eastern coastline that includes a Marine Protected Area designated as the Second Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. Over the weeks that followed the spill, entire ecosystems in wetlands, mangrove forests and the Blue Bay marine reserve were affected. More than 50 melon-head whales and dolphins washed up dead on the island's coast. For the inhabitants of the south-eastern coast of Mauritius (*the people of the sea*, as they are called) who had earned their livelihood thanks to the lagoon for generations, this signalled the end of their traditional way of life.

your body is home

your body is an island

your body is home

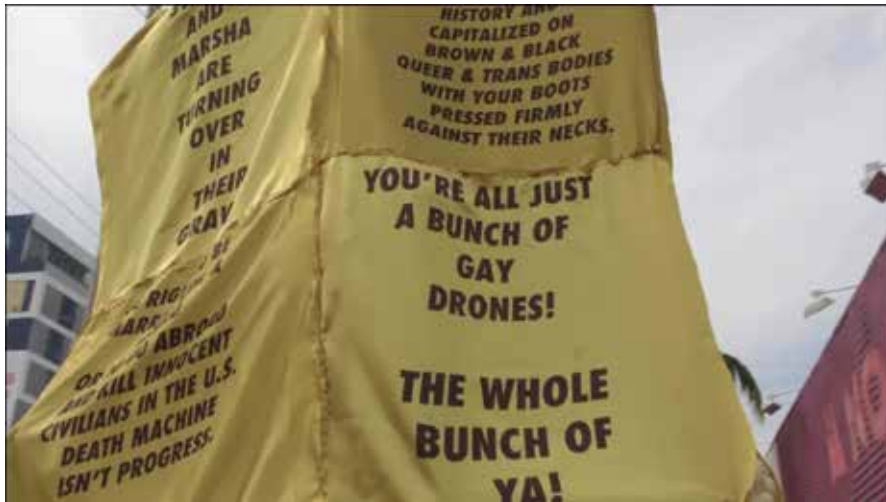
your body is the ocean

ZOM-FAM and *Breaking the Promise of Tropical Emptiness* now represent a body of work — and a core part of my identity and history — that live in the tension between expansion and erasure. On the one hand, this work is a remapping of the *island body*, a decolonial reclamation, an ancestral queer celebration. On the other, this work remains embedded in colonial grief, in the constant reminder that colonialism is still ongoing, albeit in different shapes and forms. My work then, as a queer/trans islander artist, can only speak to and against the colonial structures of power and representation.

But beyond the political necessity of expressing a decolonial voice, there is also joy. In this work (in all my work, really) there is an imperative to heal our hearts, to repair the body of the island, to soothe the spirit of the ocean. My stories, be they visual, performative or poetic, are an expression of ancestral forces being activated through the work of the imagination, so that we can reinvent ourselves, with purpose, so that we can reclaim the integrity of ourselves, so that we can leave a roadmap of the beauty and joy of living for the generations yet to come.

KUNST

Plates 54–56: KUNST, *Town Crier II*, 2019, Single channel video, 1 minute and 50 seconds. Digital video of Performance by Juan Luis Matos



Facing page

Plates 57–58: KUNST, *Character Study*, 2019, Single channel video, 1 minute and 50 seconds. Digital video of Performance by Juan Luis Matos

Plate 59: KUNST, *Object For Exchange*, 2019, Laser print on semi-gloss paper, 8.5 x 11 inches camera, Single channel video, 1 minute and 1 second



QUEER LIBERATION IS CLASS STRUGGLE.

LOOK AROUND YOU. **RIGHT NOW YOU ARE CAUGHT IN SOMEONE ELSE'S FANTASY.** YOU ARE CAUGHT UP IN A BOURGEOIS SPECTACLE MEANT TO AVERT OUR EYES. TO AVERT OUR EYES FROM THE FACT THAT **SINCE 2015 THERE HAVE BEEN MORE THAN 105 REPORTED UNLAWFUL MURDERS OF TRANS WOMEN.** TO AVERT OUR EYES FROM THE FACT THAT **STILL ACROSS MIAMI-DADE COUNTY HOMELESS SHELTERS LACK INTENTIONAL SPACE FOR LGBTQ+ PEOPLES.**

PEOPLE THINK WYNWOOD WAS "CREATED" BY TONY GOLDMAN, A WHITE MAN.

WYNWOOD IS A MODEL FOR VIOLENCE PERPETRATED AGAINST WORKING CLASS COMMUNITIES; AGAINST OUR COMMUNITIES!

RIGHT HERE AND RIGHT NOW **YOU** ARE "CELEBRATING" THE ENDURING LEGACY OF THE WORK DONE BY BLACK AND BROWN TRANS WOMEN AGAINST THE POLICE. WHAT WOULD THEY THINK OF THAT CELEBRATION TAKING PLACE IN A NEIGHBORHOOD LIKE THIS. A NEIGHBORHOOD THAT USES GENTRIFICATION AS A TOOL TO FEED THE POCKETS OF A SMALL HANDFUL OF PEOPLE.

THE VIOLENCE, OR AS THEY CALL IT "DEVELOPMENT," THAT TOOK PLACE HERE ERASED FROM THE LAND THE HISTORY OF A WORKING CLASS COMMUNITY OF COLOR. WHERE ARE THE HOMES OF THOSE PEOPLE? BENEATH WHICH BUSINESS' NOW DO THEIR MEMORIES LIE? UNDER PANTHER COFFEE? UNDER THE VICE NEWS OFFICE? UNDER YOUR FEET AS YOU DANCE TO PULSING MUSIC CONSUMING AND SPENDING YOUR QUEER DOLLARS TO LINE THE POCKETS OF BLOOD THIRSTY CAPITALISTS?

IT IS UP TO US COCKSUCKERS, ASS LICKERS, CUNT FUCKERS, SODOMITES, HOMOS, AND FILTHY FUCKING SINNERS TO **RESIST THE TEMPTATIONS OF DISGUSTING CONSUMERISM!** STOP GIVING YOUR DOLLARS AND OUR HISTORY OVER TO EVENT PLANNING AGENCIES AND COMPANIES!

GIVE THEM INSTEAD TO BLACK AND BROWN TRANS POOR PEOPLE!

GIVE THEM TO THE HOMELESS!

GIVE THEM TO COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS AND LAND TRUSTS.

GIVE THEM TO REPARATIONS.

THIS CELEBRATION IN THIS WAY IN THIS PLACE IS A TONE DEAF GESTURE.

THERE IS NOTHING ABOUT THE WYNWOOD THAT EXISTS TODAY TO BE PRIDEFUL ABOUT.

PRIDE IS AN ANTI-COP REBELLION AIMED AT MAKING LIBERATION ACCESSIBLE TO THOSE MOST DISENFRANCHISED IN OUR COMMUNITY. THIS MEANS REMOVAL OF THE STATE. ENFRANCHISEMENT OF BROWN AND BLACK WORKING CLASS COMMUNITIES. COALITIONAL SOLIDARITY BETWEEN WORKERS...

NONE OF THAT IS POSSIBLE THROUGH WYNWOOD PRIDE.



Plate 60: KUNST, *Ideological Impulse*, 2019, Performance for camera, Single channel video, 1 minute and 1 second



Plate 61: KUNST, *Character Study #1*, 2019, Performance for camera, Single channel video, 57 seconds



Plates 62–64: KUNST, *Character Study #2*, 2019, Performance for camera, Single channel video, 1 minute and 39 seconds

Artist Statement

TOWN CRIER is a series of site-specific performances enacted in public space wherein I perform the role of a town crier. Historically, the role of the crier was to deliver proclamations in a market or square on behalf of the royal court. They were elaborately dressed and utilized a handbell to underscore their deliverances. In my work, rather than delivering assertions on behalf of a royal court, I deliver my proclamations on behalf of the working class which I am a part of. In doing so in the spaces I select to leverage my presence against, I am focused on articulating these interventions in space as a way to disrupt the minutiae of capitalist ideologies that articulate our understandings of space and context within those locations.

— KUNST

Love Intersections



Plates 65–67: *Love Intersections, The Haunting of Huli jing*, 2020, Single Channel Video, 3 minutes 58 seconds. Courtesy of David Ng and Jen Sungshine in collaboration with Kendell Yan. Videography by Eric Sanderson.





Artist Statement

There is no creature quite as alluring and sinister as the 9-tailed fox spirit, the Huli jing. In Chinese mythology, the Huli jing is a well known mythological creature, most notable for its ability to acquire human form that is almost always in the image of a beautiful young woman. Today, the popular usage of the term “huli jing” is a pejorative word to describe women who are flirtatious and sexually liberated (similar to “slut”). It is important to point out that the nine-tailed fox spirit of which this term is derived from, is historically genderless (in its animal form) that only takes physical form (gendered) to lure mortals for their essence. The depiction of the fox spirit in historical texts and literature has evolved into a very cemented feminized

image in contemporary East Asian popular culture. Similar iterations can be found in Japan (Kitsune), Korea (Kumiho), Vietnam (Hồ Ly Tinh), and in the West (Succubus).

Through the eyes of the fox spirit, we fuse macabre and East Asian cultural mythos to highlight how a virus-like spread of anti-Asian racism is painfully experienced. What is it about the macabre and sci-fi horror that elicits unsettling feelings of discomfort and fear of infection? Like a mythic story, the virus is personified as a cultural phenomenon of our many realities. The fox spirit emerges from underground and transforms its animal form to human – and according to the origin of the mythical

Facing Page

Plate 68: *Love Intersections, The Haunting of Huli jing*, 2020, Single Channel Video, 3 minutes 58 seconds. Courtesy of David Ng and Jen Sungshine in collaboration with Kendell Yan. Videography by Eric Sanderson.

tale, its survival is contingent on accumulating essence through sexual intercourse with mortals, thereby prolonging its magical powers and eventual immortality.

This work was conceptualized prior to COVID-19, with production originally scheduled in March. We quickly realized during the quarantine that the context of the piece needed to transform, and mutate. Our initial idea on ‘bodies that transgress homonationalism’, now had different implications in the context of anti-Asian racism that emerged from COVID-19 related sinophobia, and has now shifted again with movements against anti-Black violence. This concept of interrogating how homonationalism upholds the colonial white supremacist nation-state has new implications, in light of the changing discourse of systemic racism, and the literal enforcement of biopolitics and racial capitalism by the nation-state. How do notions of “fear”, “discomfort” and “destabilization” that we invoke through this piece relate to public discourse today?

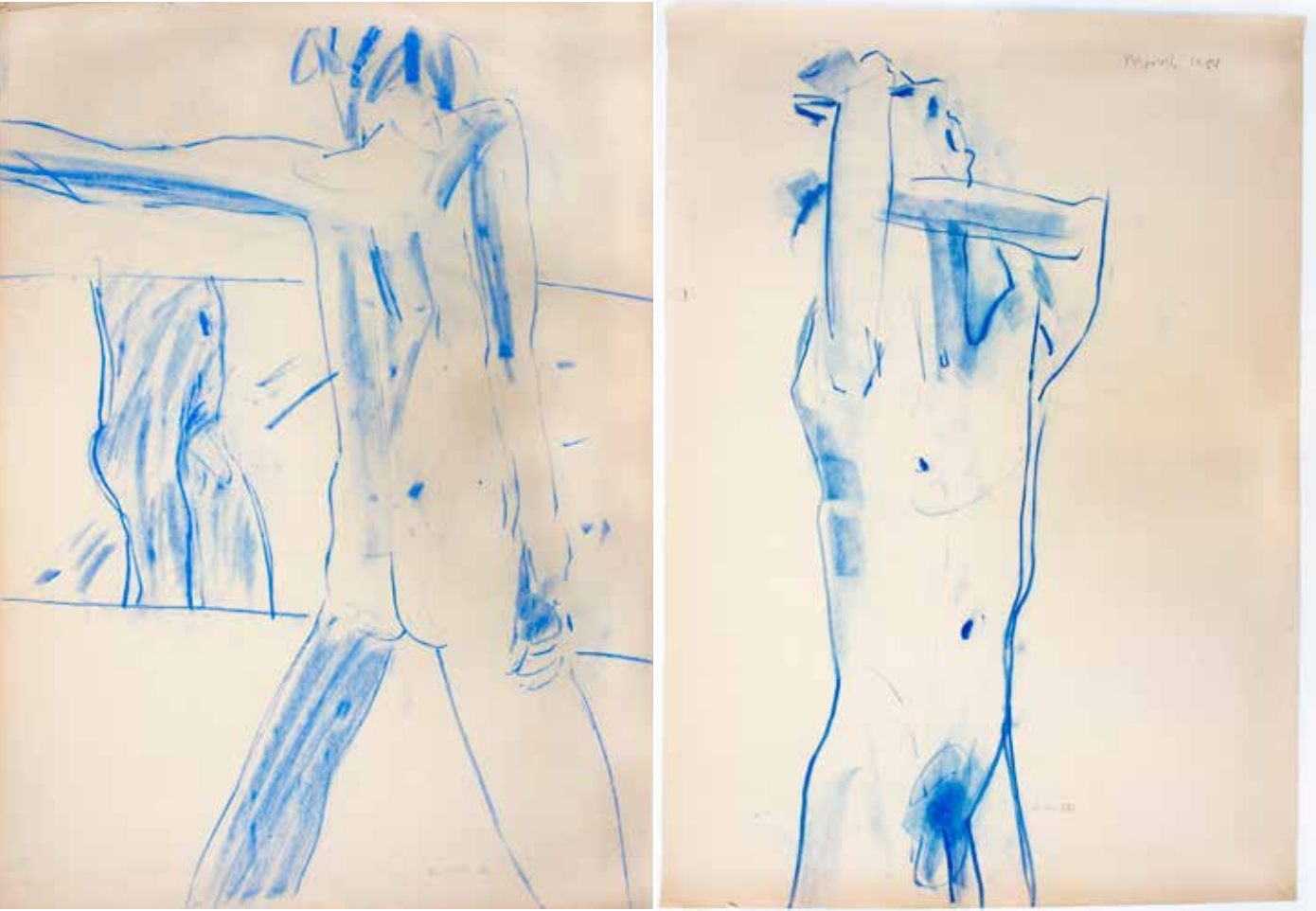
By evoking a sci-fi horror lens, we connect our own xenophobic fears towards the fox spirit, to place an immediate sense of fear that this entity is growing and looming above, under, and surrounding all around us. Visually, the virus-like creature spreads through the gradient of 3 thematic worlds: utopia, apocalypse, and dystopia — infecting and penetrating into the

very matter of each of the world’s reality, taking on the properties of everything it touches like the invasion of the body snatchers. In this state, it’s not just the physical bodies being replicated (fox to human), but thoughts, minds, DNA are all absorbed and mirrored. The evocation of fear through desolation and macabre reflects how (white) homonationalism is enforced by the nation-state to conform certain (racialized) bodies, genders and sexualities, into a productive “normative” citizen.

A key component in the potency of the fox spirit’s magical powers is memory loss. She enacts a kind of forgetting — serving both a protective shield around herself and her clan’s location and lair, and more importantly, what actually happened. The Huli jing’s potency and her magical powers threaten the colonial, homonational state, as well as the weaponized potential/power in forgetting and memory loss and what that does to our controlled/policed bodies. What exactly are the visceral and embodied tensions between the mechanisms of white homonormativity and the “deviant Other” that the Huli jing represents? What are the linkages between the emotional and spiritual vulnerabilities that are essential to the shifts towards broader social change in the queer community? What is the ultimate threat to the mechanisms of homonormativity — which includes whiteness — when assimilation is refused?

— Love Intersections

Michael Morris



Plates 69–76: Michael Morris, *Berlin boys from the Boyopolus series*, 1984, Sketch on paper, 12 x 18 inches. Collection of the artist





Plates 77-78: Michael Morris, *Berlin boys from the Boyopolus series*, 1984, Sketch on paper, 12 x 18 inches. Collection of the artist

Shawna Dempsey & Lorri Millan



Plates 79-80: Shawna Dempsey & Lorri Millan, *Homogeneity*, 1998, Video, 3 minutes 37 seconds

Artist Statement

In our self-created worlds, we have the freedom to make self-definitions, disrupting the images and lessons contained in all the stories and codes that have shaped us. By subverting and perverting accepted meanings, we attempt to re-tell tales truly. By making people laugh, we open them up to thinking differently. For us, art making is a means to perform our realities into existence. Using the metaphor of suburban architecture, “Homogeneity” archly critiques the desire for conformity within the/our queer community.

— Shawna Dempsey & Lorri Millan

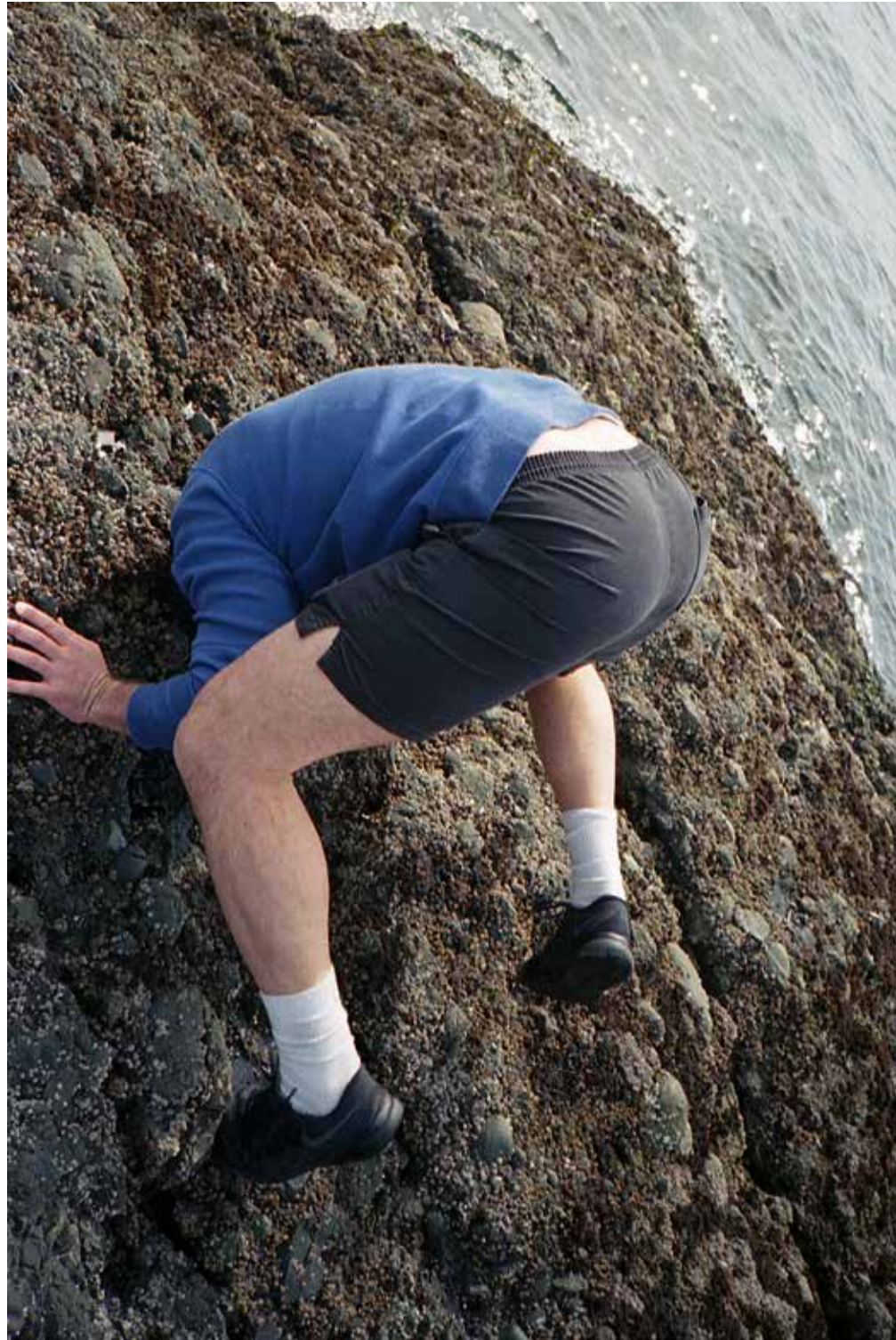


Plate 81: Tom Hsu,
Head in Rock, 2015,
Photography,
65 x 44 inches

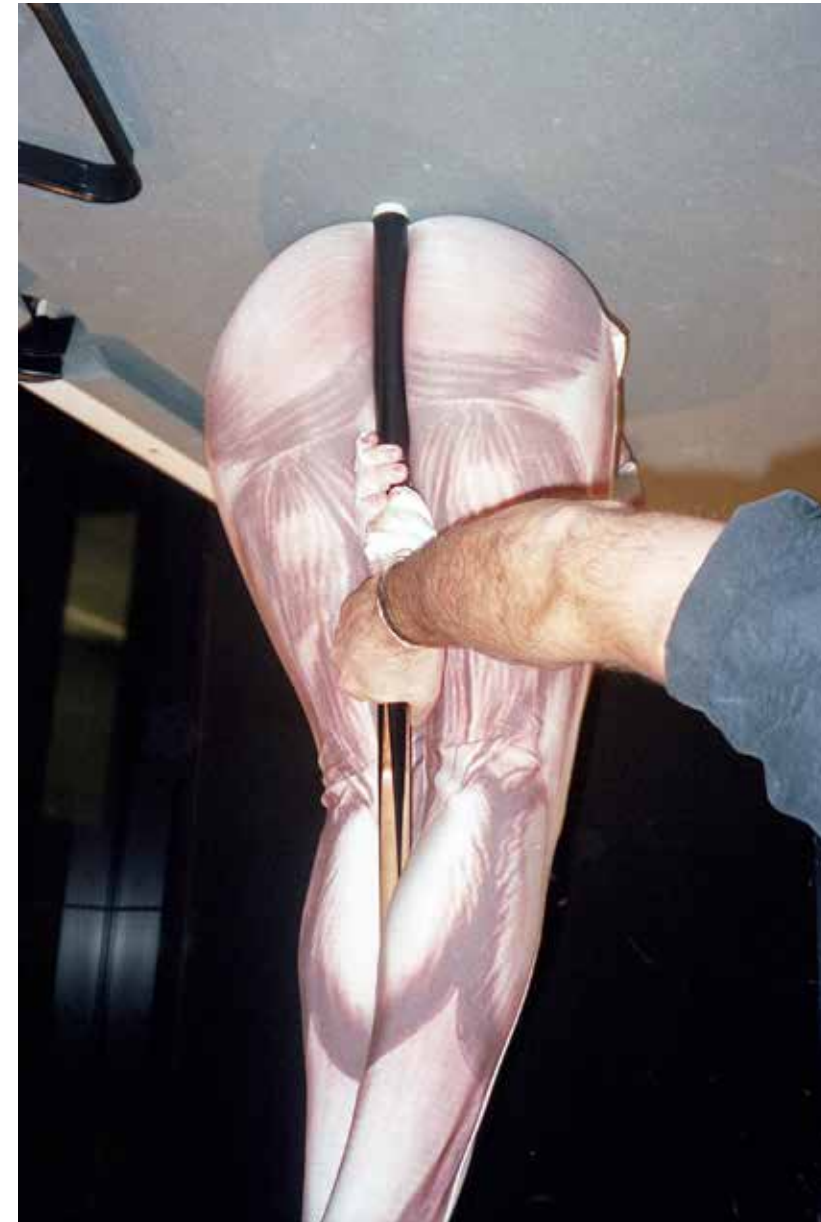


Plate 82: Tom Hsu, *Cue Holding*, 2019,
Photography, 20 x 14 inches

Artist Statement

The term wicked can signify something morally wrong or it could mean excellent. These two images of headless bodies play a role which searches for directions. The orientation of these images have been flipped to something not to the norm, that in itself can show something wicked in the way the images are presented. Is there a proper orientation of how an image is to present itself?

— Tom Hsu

Xandra Ibarra



Plates 83–84: Xandra Ibarra, *Documentation of The Hook Up/Displacement/Barhopping/Drama Tour*, 2017, Live community performance – Former Queer Latino Bars and Lesbian Venues, Photography by Robbie Sweeny

Next page

Plate 85: Xandra Ibarra, *Documentation of The Hook Up/Displacement/Barhopping/Drama Tour*, 2017, Live community performance – Former Queer Latino Bars and Lesbian Venues, Photography by Robbie Sweeny



Artist Statement

It's been exhausting to stay afloat in this era that promises a wider gap between the rich and poor. In the past two decades, low-income and of-color communities have struggled to keep their housing in the Mission neighborhood of San Francisco and abroad. Many adored queer nightlife venues and other convivial spaces have disappeared and resurfaced as sterile establishments that attract upwardly mobile and affluent demographics.

In an effort to resurface the “messy” and “sucio” spirits of queer Latino and lesbian ghosts from gentrified sites in San Francisco, Ibarra led strangers and friends on a bar crawl tour to five former queer Latino and Lesbian bars in San Francisco. Together the group made altars, wrote messages, imprinted their bodies, pleasures and kisses onto the phantom walls of beloved queer venues — Esta Noche (1979 – 2014), La India Bonita (late 70s – 1996),

Amelia's (1978 – 1991), The Lexington (1997- 2015), and Oseito (1979 – 2008). Strangers and friends sipped on spirits, danced, made out, and posted counterfeit “Public Notices of Application for Ownership Change” while 1990s footage of queer Latinos and Lesbians in the former bars was projected onto walls.

— Xandra Ibarra

Plate 86: Xandra Ibarra, *Public Notice of Application for Jotx Pleasure*, 2019, Screen printed yellow leather and steel studs on canvas, 42 x 60 x .016 inches

Curator Biography

Jonny Sopotiuk

Jonny Sopotiuk is a visual artist, curator and community organizer living and working on the Unceded Indigenous territories belonging to the Musqueam, Skxwú7mesh-ulh Úxwumixw (Squamish) and Tsleil-Watututh peoples in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

His interdisciplinary practice explores compulsion and control through the lenses of production, labour, and work.

Jonny is the President of the Arts and Cultural Workers Union (ACWU), IATSE Local B778, Vice-President of CARFAC BC and a founding member of the Vancouver Artists Labour Union Cooperative or VALU CO-OP.

Artistic Director Biography

SD Holman

SD Holman is an artist and curator whose work has toured internationally. An ECUAD graduate in 1990, Holman was picked up by the Vancouver Association for Non-commercial Culture (the NON) right out of art school. Holman was appointed Artistic Director of Pride in Art in 2008, and spearheaded the founding of the Queer Arts Festival, now recognized among the top 3 of its kind worldwide, and SUM, Canada's only queer-mandated transdisciplinary gallery and programmed artists including Kent Monkman, Cris Derksen, Jeremy Dutcher, Paul Wong, Angela Grossmann and Jonathan D. Katz. Curatorial highlights include TRIGGER, the 25th anniversary exhibition for Kiss & Tell's notorious *Drawing the Line* project, Adrian Stimson's *Naked Napi* solo show, and Paul Wong's monumental multi-curator *Through the Trapdoor* underground storage locker exhibition. A laureate of the YWCA Women of Distinction Award, one of Canada's most prestigious awards, Holman's work has exhibited at Wellesley College, the Advocate Gallery (Los Angeles), the Soady-Campbell Gallery (New York), the San Francisco Public Library, The Helen Pitt International Gallery, Charles H. Scott, Exposure, Gallery Gachet, the Roundhouse, Vancouver East Cultural Centre, Artropolis, and Fotobase Galleries (Vancouver). Holman's portrait project *BUTCH: Not like the other girls* toured North America and is in its second edition, distributed by Caitlin Press Dagger Editions.

Artists Biography

Avram Finkelstein

Avram Finkelstein is a founding member of the Silence=Death and Gran Fury collectives. His work is in the permanent collections of MoMA, The Whitney, The New Museum and The Brooklyn Museum. He is featured in the artist oral history at the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art, and his book, "After Silence: A History of AIDS Through its Images" was nominated for a Lambda Literary Award in Nonfiction, and an ICP Infinity Award in Critical Writing.

Christopher Lacroix

Christopher Lacroix (Canadian, b. 1986) holds a BFA from Ryerson University, ON (2012) and an MFA from the University of British Columbia, BC (2018). His work has been exhibited at The Polygon Gallery (Vancouver), window (Winnipeg), Georgia Scherman Projects (Toronto), and Forest City Gallery (London). Lacroix was the 2018 recipient of the Philip B. Lind Emerging Artist Prize. He currently lives and works in Vancouver, BC.

Dayna Danger

Dayna Danger is a 2Spirit/Queer, Metis/Saulteaux/Polish visual artist raised in so called Winnipeg, MB. Using photography, sculpture, performance and video, Dayna Danger's practice questions the line between empowerment and objectification by claiming space with her larger than life scale work.

Danger's current use of BDSM and beading leather fetish masks explores the complicated dynamics of sexuality, gender, and power in a consensual and feminist manner. Danger is currently based in Tio'tia:ke.

Danger holds a MFA in Photography from Concordia University. Danger has exhibited her work in Santa Fe, Winnipeg, Ottawa, Montreal, Peterborough, North Bay, Vancouver, Edmonton and Banff. Danger currently serves as a board member for the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective (ACC/CCA).

Elektra KB

Elektra KB is a Latinx immigrant artist, living and working in Brooklyn, NY. They graduated with an MFA from Hunter College in 2016 and received a DAAD award, pursued at UDK—Berlin with artist Hito Steyerl. Their work engages corporeal sickness and disability, with utopian possibilities and alternative universes. KB investigates: gender, migration, transculturality, and abuse of power. Their work entangles mutual aid, political action, and communication, often with a documentarian-sci-fi-like hybrid approach, exploring utopia and dystopia. Across: photography, textiles, video, installation and performance. KB's work has been written about in: Art Forum, Artnews and The New York Times. Recent shows include: 'Nobody Promised You Tomorrow' at the Brooklyn Museum.

Joseph Liatela

Joseph Liatela is a multi-disciplinary artist based in New York City. Through a transgender lens, his work explores the institutional, cultural, and medico-legal notions of what is considered a “complete” or “correct” bodily formation.

He has exhibited at Denniston Hill, LACE, Field Projects, The Monmouth Museum, BRIC, and PS122 Gallery, among others. Liatela’s work has been featured in The Leslie Lohman Museum Journal, SF MoMA’s Open Space, Artsy, among others. They have received fellowships from the Zellerbach Family Foundation, Vermont Studio Center, The Wassaic Project, Denniston Hill, California College of the Arts, the Banff Centre, and Columbia University.

Kama La Mackerel

Kama La Mackerel is a multi-disciplinary artist, educator, writer, cultural mediator and literary translator who hails from Mauritius and now lives in Montreal. Their work is grounded in the exploration of justice, love, healing, decoloniality, and self and collective empowerment. They work within and across poetry, photography, performance, installation and textile arts. @kamalamackerel

KUNST

Based in Miami, Florida KUNST is an interdisciplinary artist working to contextualize and visualize the aberrant queer phenomenology inherent to our bodies, our experiences and our fantasies. Having studied various fields of interest from philosophy to classical music, since 2012 they have blended their years of study with sculpture, video art, performance, soundscape design and illustration to produce a surrealist fantasy in which the Queer Other is opened up and explored interpersonally.

David Ng

David Ng is a queer, feminist, media artist, and co-founder of Love Intersections. His current artistic practices grapple with queer, racialized, and diasporic identity, and how intersectional identities can be expressed through media arts. His interests include imagining new possibilities of how queer racialized artists can use their practice to transform communities.

Jen Sungshine

Jen Sungshine speaks for a living, but lives for breathing art into spaces, places, cases. She is a nerdy queer Taiwanese interdisciplinary artist/activist, facilitator, and community mentor based in Vancouver, BC, and is the Co-Creative Director and founder of Love Intersections, a media arts collective dedicated to collaborative filmmaking and relational storytelling. Jen’s artistic practice is informed by an ethic of tenderness; instead of calling you out, she wants to call you in, to make (he)artful social change with her. In the audience, she looks for weirdos, queerdos and anti-heroes. In private, she looks after more than 70 houseplants and prefers talking to plants than to people.

Michael Morris

Artist, educator, curator. Michael Morris was born in 1942 in Saltdean, England and immigrated to Canada at age four. In 1960, Morris began his studies at the University of Victoria, transferring the following year to the Vancouver School of Art (now Emily Carr University of Art + Design). After graduating with honors in 1964, Morris attended two years of postgraduate studies at the Slade School of Fine Art at the University College London. There he absorbed the work of Fluxus and the European avant-garde, artistic developments that had a profound influence on the Vancouver experimental art scene. Upon his return to Vancouver, Morris became acting curator of the Vancouver Art Gallery and the Centre for Communications and the Arts at Simon Fraser University. In his roles as a curator and, primarily, as an artist, Morris was a key figure of the West Coast art scene during the 1960s. Notably, Morris, along with Vincent Trasov, founded the Image Bank in 1969, a system of postal correspondence between participating artists for the exchange of information and ideas. The intention of the Image Bank was to create a collaborative, process-based project in the hopes of engendering a shared creative consciousness — in opposition to the alienation endemic to modern capitalist society — through the deconstruction and recombination of its ideological forms. In 1973, Morris co-founded the Western Front — one of Canada’s first artist-run centers — and served as co-director of the Western Front for seven years. Morris has participated in artist-in-residence programs both in Canada at the Banff Centre (1990) and at Open Studio (2003) and internationally at Berlin Kustlerprogramm (1981-1998). Morris was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Humanities in 2005 by Emily Carr University of Art + Design. He currently lives and works in Victoria.

Shawna Dempsey & Lorri Millan

Shawna Dempsey & Lorri Millan have collaboratively created queer, feminist performance and video art for over 30 years. They have exhibited in venues as far-ranging as women’s centres in Sri Lanka, the Sydney Gay/ Lesbian Mardi Gras in Australia and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and have curated internationally as well. However to most, they are known simply as the Lesbian Rangers.

Tom Hsu

Tom Hsu is a studio-based visual artist whose works seeks to investigate the curious condition of spaces, and their correlation to the bodies that attend them, as communicated through the photography of the everyday mundane. He comes from a base in analog photography, and this stability allows him to extend into made, found, and choreographic sculpture, all of which deal with the everyday mundane. He currently lives and works in Vancouver and holds a BFA in Photography from Emily Carr University of Art + Design. He undertook a residency at Burrard Arts Foundation from April to June 2018. He has exhibited at Centre A, Unit/Pitt, Index Gallery, and Yactac Gallery in Vancouver.

Xandra Ibarra

Xandra Ibarra is Oakland-based performance artist from the US/Mexico border of El Paso/Juarez who sometimes works under the alias of La Chica Boom. Ibarra uses performance, video, and sculpture to address abjection and joy and the borders between proper and improper racial, gender, and queer subject.

Wicked Plate List

Plates 1 - 4: Avram Finkelstein, *Silver War Storm*, 2019, Graphite on paper, 80 x 60 inches

Plates 5 - 12: Christopher Lacroix, *Perversions come in all sizes*, 2019, Sculpture & single channel video, 58 minutes and 21 seconds

Plate 13: Dayna Danger, *Bad Girls Series: Red*, 2011, Photography, 60 x 40 inches

Plate 14: Dayna Danger, *Bad Girls Series: Outlander*, 2011, Photography, 60 x 40 inches

Plate 15: Dayna Danger, *Bad Girls Series: Goldilocks*, 2010, Photography, 60 x 40 inches

Plates 16-20: Elektra KB, C.A.T. *Stateless Genderless Passport*, 2019, Performance, sculpture, paper passports, letter press and gold foil printed on paper, stamp and ink pad. CAT – Cathara Autonomous Territory

Plates 21-34: Alex Gibson, Avram Finkelstein, Chhaya Naran, Claire Love Wilson, Jackson Wai Chung Tse, Jeff Hallbauer, Joshua Lam, Kyla Yin, Shane Sable, Tajliya Jamal, *QAF Flash Collective*, 2020, Online workshop and video creation (projection), 1 minute and 12 seconds

Plates 35-40: Joseph Liatela, *Untitled (Molecular Prosthesis)*, 2020, VCT Tile, masonite, singlets used by athletes, resin, marble powder, silicone, steel, powdered Viibryd, Vyvanse, & synthetic hormones, 120 x 108 x 84 inches

Plates 41-53: Kama La Mackerel, *Breaking the Promise of Tropical Emptiness: Trans Subjectivity in the Postcard*, 2019, Photographs, 41 x 29 inches

Plates 54 - 56: KUNST, *Town Crier II*, 2019, Single channel video, 1 minute and 50 seconds. Digital video by Juan Luis Matos of Performance

Plates 57 - 58: KUNST, *Bell: Character Study*, 2019, Performance for camera, Single channel video, 1 minute and 1 second

Plate 59: KUNST, *Object For Exchange*, 2019, Laser print on semi-gloss paper, 8.5 x 11 inches

Plate 60: KUNST, *Ideological Impulse*, 2019, Performance for camera, Single channel video, 40 seconds

Plates 61: KUNST, *Character Study #1*, 2019, Performance for camera, Single channel video, 57 seconds

Plates 62-64: KUNST, *Character Study #2*, 2019, Performance for camera, Single channel video, 1 minute and 39 seconds

Plates 65-68: *Love Intersections, The Haunting of Huli jing*, 2020, Single Channel Video, 3 minutes 58 seconds. Courtesy of David Ng and Jen Sungshine in collaboration with Kendell Yan. Videography by Eric Sanderson.

Plates 69-78: Michael Morris, *Berlin boys from the Boyopolus series*, 1984, Sketch on paper, 12 x 18 inches. Collection of the artist

Plates 79-80: Shawna Dempsey & Lorri Millan, *Homogeneity*, 1998, Video, 3 minutes 37 seconds

Plate 81: Tom Hsu, *Head in Rock*, 2015, Photography, 65 x 44 inches

Plate 82: Tom Hsu, *Cue Holding*, 2019, Photography, 20 x 14 inches

Plates 83-85: Xandra Ibarra, *Documentation of The Hook Up/Displacement/Barhopping/Drama Tour*, 2017, Live community performance – Former Queer Latino Bars and Lesbian Venues, Photography by Robbie Sweeny

Plate 86: Xandra Ibarra, *Public Notice of Application for Jotx Pleasure*, 2019, Screen printed yellow leather and steel studs on canvas, 42 x 60 x .016 inches

The Pride in Art Society (PiA) presents and exhibits with a curatorial vision favouring challenging, thought-provoking art that pushes boundaries and initiates dialogue. As producer of the Queer Arts Festival (QAF) and SUM gallery, PiA brings diverse communities together to support artistic risk-taking, and incite creative collaboration and experimentation.

Pride in Art was founded in 1998 by Two-Spirit artist Robbie Hong, Black artist Jeffery Austin Gibson and a collective of visual artists mounting an annual art exhibition at the Roundhouse Community Centre. Spearheaded by Jewish artist SD Holman and Japanese-Canadian artist Rachel Kiyo Iwaasa, Pride in Art incorporated as a nonprofit in 2006, mounting their first multidisciplinary Queer Arts Festival in 2008. In 2018, Artistic Director SD Holman founded SUM gallery as a permanent space presenting multidisciplinary exhibitions and events. At the time of founding, SUM was the only queer-mandated gallery in Canada—not the first, but earlier attempts had succumbed to gentrification, or exhaustion, or both.

QAF is an annual artist-run transdisciplinary art festival at the Roundhouse in Vancouver, BC. Each year, the festival theme ties together a curated visual art exhibition, performing art series, workshops, artist talks, panels, and media art screenings.

QAF has incited dozens of artistic milestones, notably the commissioning and premiere of Canada's first lesbian opera *When the Sun Comes Out* by Leslie Uyeda and Rachel Rose in 2013; *TRIGGER*, the 25th-anniversary exhibition for Kiss & Tell's notorious *Drawing the Line* project; Jeremy Dutcher's first full-length Vancouver concert; Cris Derksen's monumental *Orchestral Powwow*; and the award-winning premiere of the play *Camera Obscura (hungry ghosts)*, Lesley Ewen's fantastical reimaging of multimedia titan Paul Wong's early career.

Recognized as one of the top 3 festivals of its kind worldwide, QAF's programming has garnered wide acclaim as “concise, brilliant and moving” (*Georgia Straight*), “easily one of the best art exhibitions of the year” (*Vancouver Sun*), and “on the forefront of aesthetic and cultural dialogue today” (*Xtra*).



QUEER ARTS FESTIVAL

The Queer Arts Festival (QAF) is an annual artist-run multidisciplinary arts festival at the Roundhouse in Vancouver, BC. Each year, the festival theme ties together a curated visual art exhibition, performing arts series, workshops, artist talks, panels, and media art screenings. Recognized as one of the top 5 festivals of its kind worldwide (*Melbourne Herald Sun*), QAF's programming has garnered wide acclaim as "concise, brilliant and moving" (*Georgia Straight*), "easily one of the best art exhibitions of the year" (*Vancouver Sun*), and "on the forefront of aesthetic and cultural dialogue today" (*Xtra*).



SUM GALLERY



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QUEER ARTS FESTIVAL



celebrating queer art and artists

