



FINDING QUEERTOPIA

SELF REALIZATION & THE SPACES THAT SHAPE US

TRAVELING EXHIBITION SERVICE



INTERNATIONAL
ARTS AND ARTISTS

FINDING QUEERTOPIA

SELF REALIZATION & THE SPACES THAT SHAPE US

in a world that is constantly evolving, *Finding Queertopia* serves as a celebration of the diverse and resilient LGBTQ+ community, exploring the myriad of ways individuals navigate the path to self-realization within the context of their surroundings. The exhibition brings together work by more than 20 artists to collectively explore the multifaceted dimensions of queer identity, tracing the intersections of personal growth, societal acceptance, and the significance of physical and metaphorical spaces.

Throughout history, mainstream rejection and exclusion have compelled LGBTQIA+ individuals to seek or create spaces where they can openly exist, congregate safely, and build community.

Home, once oppressive or transient, transforms into a site of radical self-discovery—a refuge for free expression and a hub for forging connections with chosen family. Beyond domestic realms, queer people find home in the spaces that provide safety, validation and a sense of belonging: queering a space by inhabiting it.

1. Martine Gutierrez, *Girlicious Like Me*, p80 from *Indigenous Woman*, 2018, C-print mounted on Dibond, 42" x 28", Image courtesy of the artist, Ryan Lee Gallery, New York and Josh Lilley, London, Photographed by Martine Gutierrez, © Martine Gutierrez.





2

Queer life often unfolds on the peripheries, whether in the streets fighting for rights, on secret cruising grounds, or in alternative communities formed outside urban centers. In the face of potential harm, queer spaces become clandestine, operating under the cover of night. From bars and pubs to queer-led clubs and parties, queer spaces offer individuals the opportunity to be their authentic selves, explore their desires and creatively express their identity.

Since the violation and retaliation that occurred when the Stonewall Inn was raided by police in 1969, giving birth to the global Pride movement, queer spaces have been fought for and defended as front lines, refuges and frontier lands. As laws and attitudes shift globally, these spaces become less secretive, yet their sacred role remains vital to the LGBTQIA+ community.

From the first gay bars, found in places like Berlin in the late 19th century, to the present day, clubs and bars worldwide have nurtured the LGBTQIA+ community. Operating underground or proudly identifiable by rainbow flags, these spaces offer sanctuary to queers who find each other and themselves on the sweaty and steamy dancefloors. LGBTQIA+ people have pioneered ways of partying and queer nightlife has influenced and shaped mainstream club culture; from disco, house and pop music, to ballroom, pageants, and drag performances.

While LGBTQIA+ rights make strides globally, a new threat emerges. Gentrification threatens iconic queer spaces in gay villages, transforming clubs into offices and residential blocks. Worldwide, queer spaces face closure, prompting artists to memorialize these venues as a tribute to their history and self-realization.

2. Leasho Johnson, *Anansi and the river maiden (Anansi #16)*, 2022, 67.5" x 104" x 2", Charcoal, watercolors, distemper, indigo dye, logwood dye, oil, collage, gesso on paper mounted on canvas, Image courtesy of the TERN Gallery, The Bahamas, © Leasho Johnson 2024 courtesy of TERN Gallery.



3

3. Francesca Galliani, *The Eagle*, 2014, gelatin silver print manually toned, 20" x 24", Photographed by Francesca Galliani, Image courtesy of The Eagle Bar, NYC, © Francesca Galliani.



4

4. Francesca Galliani, *Stonewall*, 2014, gelatin silver print manually toned, 20" x 24", Photographed by Francesca Galliani, Image courtesy of The Stonewall Inn, NYC, © Francesca Galliani.



5a



5c



5b

Queerness engenders resilience. Queer people channel the power of creativity to redress realities: excavating queer histories and distilling the lessons of the past to create a foundation upon which to project, manifest, and build better futures, new ways of being, and new worlds. Queer happiness and belonging has always been the stuff of fantasies, a revolution of the imagination where everyone is always free, a freedom found in queer-designed utopias: -queertopia.

There are many examples of LGBTQIA+ people coming close to successfully living their dreams of queertopia. Some take the form of communities established beyond the restrictions of mainstream society, offering escape from discrimination, while nurturing momentary freedoms or entirely new realities. Communities like Fire Island's Cherry Grove and the Pines serve as real-world examples of LGBTQIA+ havens, enriched by

5 a,b,c. Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings, *UK Gay Bar Directory* (film stills), 2015-2016, HD Video with Sounds on Hard Drive, 4 hours and 47 minutes, Image courtesy of the artists and Arcadia Missa, London. © Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings.



6a



6b

artists documenting the magic-filled summers of queer liberation. Elsewhere, within towns and cities, LGBTQIA+ people have carved out space for their communities in geographic areas indicated by a critical mass of queer-owned and -inhabited venues or residential buildings. These become known as gay villages and gayborhoods, and offer sanctuary to their communities.

But true queertopia goes far beyond the here and now, as envisioned by artists whose longing for more takes them into new realms. Taking elements from mythology, folk stories, religious iconography and science fiction, we see new lands imbued with queer spirituality, magic and radical futuristic possibilities. The nourishing powers of abundant natural landscapes or the supernatural qualities of imagined worlds offer hypothetical environments in which to thrive. Harnessing the possibilities of new technologies, artists explore

queertopia in new digital frontiers. Artists present alternative worlds bursting with potentiality, thereby undermining the systems and ideologies that hinder constructive growth and happiness for everyone, not just those targeted through marginalization.

6 a,b. Whiskey Chow, film still from *you must everywhere wonder*, 2021, Digital video, colour, sounds, 8 minutes x 26 seconds, Photographed by Ning Zhou (Director of Photography), Image courtesy of the artist, © Whiskey Chow, Ning Zhou, Gene Chen, Carina Qiu, Chow and Ning Zhou, Olly Yip, Ruth Holdsworth.



6b

EXHIBITION EXPERIENCE

The exhibition begins with an introspective exploration of the self, featuring thought-provoking artworks that encapsulate the essence of self-discovery. Visitors will encounter pieces that delve into the struggles, triumphs, and transformations that mark the journey of queer individuals as they navigate their identities, grapple with societal expectations, and ultimately embrace their true selves.

Moving beyond the personal, the exhibition unfolds to showcase the dynamic interplay between queerness and the spaces we inhabit. From intimate and private sanctuaries to public arenas, each space plays a role in shaping and influencing the queer experience. Reflecting on the significance of safe havens, community centers, nightlife venues, and digital platforms, the show examines the impact these environments have on fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment.

Visitors to the exhibition will encounter a rich array of mediums, including painting, photography, interactive installations, and multimedia experiences. These diverse expressions serve as a testament to the richness and complexity of queer narratives and the multitude of ways in which individuals carve out their own Queertopia.

Finding Queertopia invites you to witness, appreciate, and celebrate the vibrant tapestry of queer experiences that continue to shape our world, fostering a vision of a more inclusive and accepting future. Join us in envisioning a world where Queertopia is not just a fantasy but a reality for all.

7. Rene Matic, *Dancers at Sex and Rage*, London, 2023, Archival pigment print, 60 3/4" x 41 3/4" (framed), Photographed by Dawn Blackman, Image courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa, London © Rene Matic.

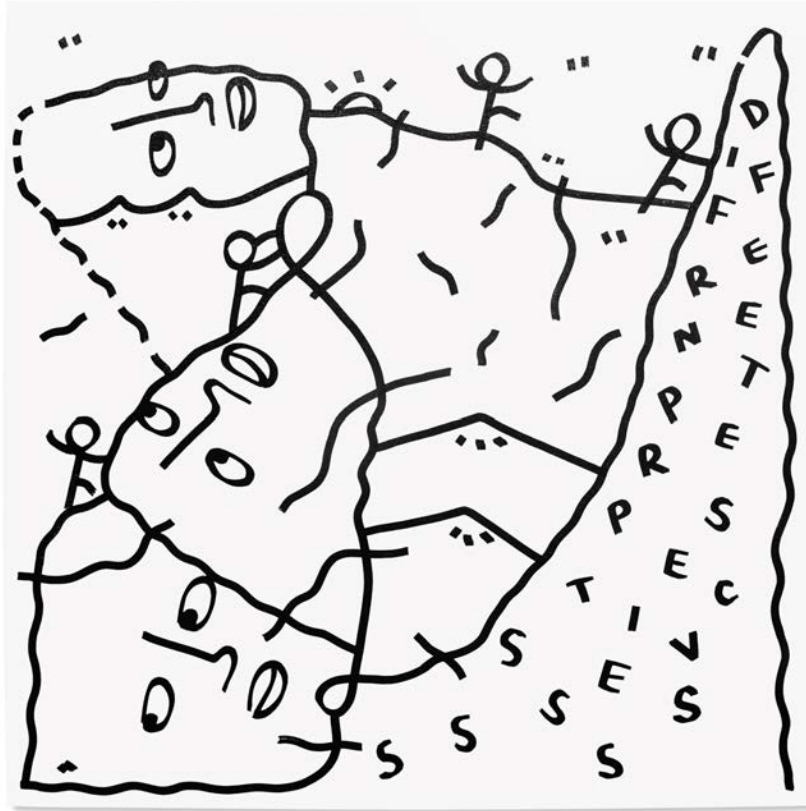
8. Rene Matic, *London Trans People*, 2023, Archival pigment print, 59" x 39 3/4" (framed), Photographed by (name), Image courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa, London © Rene Matic.



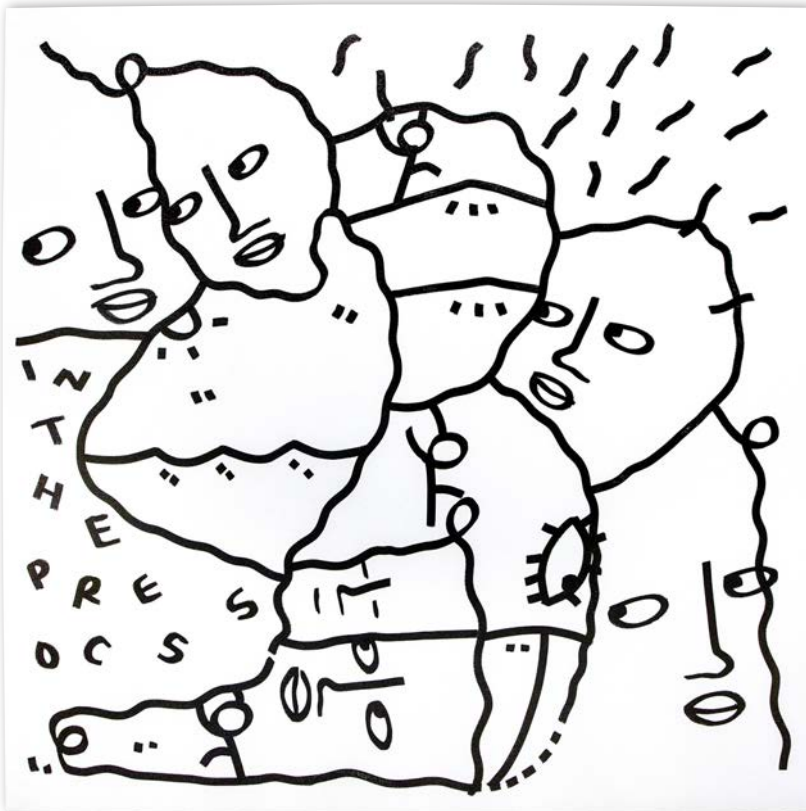
7



8



9



10

9. Shantell Martin, *In the Celebration of Different Perspectives*, 2022, Ink on canvas, 55" x 55", Photographed by (name), Image courtesy of the artist, © Shantell Martin.
10. Shantell Martin, *In the Process*, 2022, Ink on canvas, 55" x 55", Photographed by (name), Image courtesy of the artist, © Shantell Martin.
11. Gray Wielebinski, *Smear*, 2022, Giclee print, mixed media, aluminum frame, 13.58" x 17.3", Photographed by (name), Image courtesy of the artist, © Gray Wielebinski.
12. Gray Wielebinski, *Creamed*, 2022, Giclee print, mixed media, aluminum frame, 12.9" x 19.685", Photographed by (name), Image courtesy of the artist, © Gray Wielebinski.
13. Gray Wielebinski, *Rough House*, 2022, Giclee print, mixed media, aluminum frame, 13.58" x 17.3", Photographed by (name), Image courtesy of the artist, © Gray Wielebinski.
14. Gray Wielebinski, *Branded*, 2022, Giclee print, mixed media, aluminum frame, 18.3" x 22.8", Photographed by (name), Image courtesy of the artist, © Gray Wielebinski.



11



12



13



14



ABOUT THE CURATOR

Gemma Rolls-Bentley has been at the forefront of contemporary art for almost two decades, working passionately to champion diversity in the field. Curating exhibitions and building art collections internationally, her curatorial practice amplifies the work of female and queer artists as well as providing a platform for art that explores LGBTQ+ identity. Gemma is a creative consultant and advisor for brands, organizations, and cultural projects, in addition to teaching at numerous institutions including the Royal College of Art, the Glasgow School of Art and Goldsmiths. She co-chairs the board of trustees for the charity Queercircle, and sits on the Courtauld Association Committee. She spent a decade working at the intersection of art and technology, holding positions of Chief Curator at Avant Arte and Curatorial Director at Artsy. In 2011, Gemma launched the arts arm of the East London Fawcett Group and ran their 2012-2013 Art Audit campaign. Recent curatorial projects include Tschabalala Self's first public art project at Coal Drops Yard in London, the Tom of Finland Art & Culture Festival, and the Brighton Beacon Collection, the largest permanent display of queer art in the UK. In 2023, she curated the group exhibition *Dreaming of Home-* at the Leslie Lohman Museum of Art in NYC, and she is the host of the museum's new podcast series. Her debut book *Queer Art; From Canvas to Club and the Spaces Between* was published in May 2024 by Frances Lincoln.

15. TM Davy, *Fairy and wyeth and moon*, 2022, Oil on canvas, 57" x 43", Photographed by (name), Image courtesy of the artist and Company Gallery, New York, © TM Davy.



FRONT James Bartolacci, *Spectrum Closing Party*, 2021, Oil on canvas, 52" x 68", Image courtesy of Taymour Grahne Projects, Photographed by James Bartolacci, © James Bartolacci.
 BACK Detail April Bey, *Guess Jeans: I Just Want to Have my Titties Out*, 2002, Digitally woven blanket with hand-sewn fabric and glitter, 80" x 240", Image courtesy of the artist, Photographed by (the artist?), © April Bey.

EXHIBITION SPECIFICATIONS

Number of Works

Approximately 55 objects

Curator

Gemma Rolls-Bentley

Requirements

Moderate Security; 2,500 – 3,500 square feet

Participation Fee

Please inquire

Tour

Fall 2025 - Fall 2029

Shipping

IA&A makes all arrangements; exhibitors pay outgoing shipping costs within the contiguous US

Booking Period

12 weeks. Shorter and longer booking periods are available upon request, pricing may vary

Contact

For bookings contact:
TravelingExhibitions@ArtsandArtists.org

For more information about the

exhibition contact:
projectmanager@artsandartists.org

9 Hillyer Court NW
 Washington, DC 20008
 202.338.0680
ArtsandArtists.org