

COVER ART: "SAM AND MON" BY KIM LEUTWYLER



First Mardi Gras
For 78ers



40 YEARS OF

QUEER ART

Rebellion and Subversion

21ST FEBRUARY TO 8TH MARCH 2018

COMBER ST STUDIOS
5 COMBER ST PADDINGTON NSW



40 YEARS OF

There have been many gay and lesbian artists throughout history who have created work that challenges dominant models of gender and sexuality. However the radical politics of the 1970s and 1980s saw an explosion of queer art internationally that challenged the status quo of the dominant cultural landscape.

Defining queer art is the challenge for academics and theorists. Queer artists find ways to express the complex interplay of their divergent world-view, their personal politics, their sexual identity, their activism and their desire to subvert traditional forms, genres and aesthetic structures through finding their own queer aesthetic.

In this forty-year anniversary exhibition *40 Years of Queer Art: Rebellion and Subversion*, we have included works by artists who took part in the first explicitly gay and lesbian art exhibition held in Australia *'The Exhibition of work by Homosexual and Lesbian Artists'*, at Watters Gallery in Sydney in 1978. This exhibition also features works by other 78ers as well as lesser known and later generations of queer artists. While the exhibition does not attempt to be a historical survey of queer art across forty years, it does reflect the ways in which queer artists have played a significant role in shaping Australian visual culture since the 1980s and the ongoing visibility and influence of queer art.

This exhibition showcases thought provoking, diverse art that subversively engages with the politics of identity, community and activism from 1978 to now. An important component of the exhibition is a slide show of archival photographs, banners and posters that capture the events leading up to and following the 1978 Mardi Gras. We regret that space constraints have limited the number of artists represented. Noticeably absent are screen based, sculptural, installation and performance artists.

This show is a glimpse of the richness and diversity of queer art in Australia. It celebrates the role of queer artists in changing societal attitudes, subverting the politics around LGBTQI and contributing to queer culture.

Curatorial Group, First Mardi Gras, February 2018



QUEER ART

Foreword

On the morning of 24th June 1978, the biggest lesbian and gay demonstration up until that day wound its way around Sydney city streets for International Gay Freedom Day. The police attacks that night, at what would become known as the first Mardi Gras, invoked a year of intense mobilisation, despite the tensions that existed between various parts of the homosexual and lesbian movement at the time.

Most people went to the Mardi Gras because they were already active in the homosexual and lesbian and other social movements. Some, mainly gay men, were mobilised for the first time. The 78ers survey, that I conducted in 1998, reveals this temporary alliance of groups and individuals including radical and socialist feminists, radical fairies and effeminists, socialist homosexuals, Left heterosexuals, bisexual and transgender people, and conservative and apolitical gay and bisexual men. Each part had its distinct political and collective identity, historical elements, practices and knowledges. Yet the defence of those who had been arrested or otherwise badly affected and the solidarity of joint action made a broader collective identity in the everyday spaces of organisation and mobilisation, at least for a while. It was a year that redefined relations between the movements, the state and the emerging gay male community.

Collective action produced strong and enduring senses of collective identity in many movement members, these held in a tension with personal identity. The productive processes of collective identity, action, politics and new knowledges were multiplex, dynamic and robust. Art was one of the ways this was expressed. Gay liberation, radical and feminist politics percolated through the work of artists, writers and performers, and in their individual, collective and community art practice. Along with the arts community they were claiming new artistic freedoms in the years following the Whitlam government's liberalisation of censorship laws and artists' challenges to state obscenity laws.

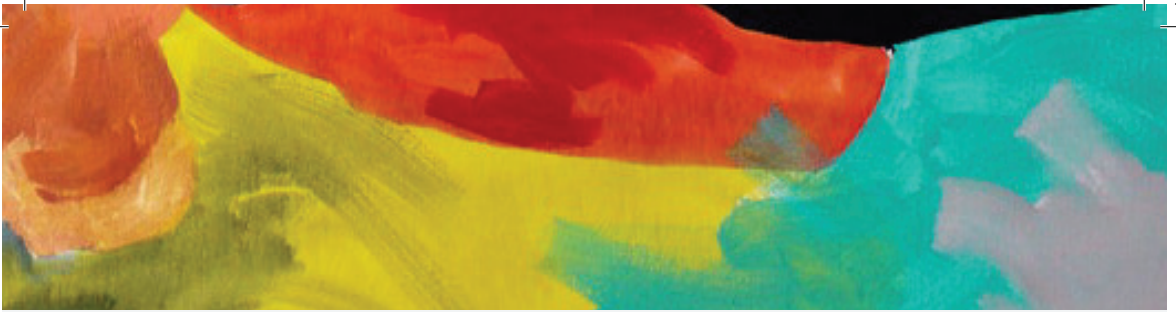
Different activist groupings have come together over the last forty years to celebrate and commemorate their collective identity and history. In July 1978 there was an exhibition of lesbian, homosexual and



gay artists at Watters Gallery in East Sydney. It was associated with the Fourth National Homosexual Conference held that year at Paddington Town Hall. In 1994, movement activists organised *Out with Pride: 25 years after Stonewall*, at the Bare Gallery in Newtown, an exhibition of posters, photos and other works relating to lesbian, gay and lesbian feminist movement groups and mobilisations, including those of 1978. In 1998, 78ers organised a range of social history and celebration events including an exhibition *It was a Riot*, at the Mardi Gras gallery in Erskineville, with a strong historical and documentary focus. Twenty years later 78ers are organising anniversary celebrations, and among them is this exhibition, organised by First Mardi Gras Inc., *40 Years of Queer Art: Rebellion and Subversion*. Artists among the 78ers and others were invited to submit work. The work which is displayed in the exhibition is complemented with a slide show of images.

The work draws on periods across the forty years. There is a collection of photos of the events of 1978 and movement organisation and mobilisations, as well as posters for later lesbian social events and women's movement marches. There are diverse interpretations of the exhibition's themes of identity, community and activism. There are feminist and lesbian feminist themes relating to the de-objectifying, liberating and reclaiming of women's bodies. There are redrawings of classical representations of women's bodies and their 'proper' place and a new eroticisation of lesbian historical subjects. Some of the work canvasses gender and transgender issues around different and disobedient bodies, local transgender history and the experiences of drag queens and sex workers.

The 78ers survey shows changes in the terms and descriptors of sexuality we use. In 1978 one-fifth were heterosexual or bisexual, the others lesbian, homosexual or gay. Few used the descriptor queer. By 1998 more than one in five used it in the queer theory sense of gender and sexual fluidity or in the queer political sense of emergent, separate, radical and dissident queer communities. Some of the artists' works refer explicitly to queer critical theory and queer political themes. They confront heteronormativity (Judith Butler's notion of an overarching regime of compulsory heterosexuality). Some challenge its sex and sexuality binaries (male/female, homo/hetero). Some refer to dissident queer sexual practices. Some resist anti-homosexual



morality and politics. Some seek to disrupt homonormativity (coined by Michael Warner), the tendency to accept a sanitised homosexuality within a heterosexual primacy or to seek inclusion without a critique of the mechanisms of the exclusion of other groups and differences. Others address the paradoxes of equality, of sameness and difference with heterosexuals. One contests colonial art history to remake and represent queer indigenous spaces. Some of the works relate to sex and death, to the HIV/AIDS crisis, politics and commentary. Some refer to same sex marriage and the damaging public debate associated with the ABS survey or an ambivalence about embracing the history of marriage and its institutions.

Much of the work is about collective identity (the norms and knowledge of social movement parts). There are images of activists, social networks and communities and their members and references to the dynamism and fragility of collective action. Some refer to the enduring personal effects of being in a social movement. There are also works about self identity and personal and psychological processes that recognise the damage that many have endured historically and where artists seek to remake new subjects of themselves. Much of the work comes out of lived experience, an art practice developing over time, and relations with communities of practice and broader arts communities.

The exhibition illustrates several things about social movements: that collective identity is enduring (enough to support the processes of producing this exhibition and other commemorative events); that movement parts reconfigure and respond differently to changing social, political and economic contexts; and that they interact with other systems and fields of action, in this case lesbian, gay and queer artists have impacted on the legal limits to public sexual expression and the orientations, concerns and practices within the broader arts community.

David Patricia Abello, February 2018

David's PhD thesis *In Memory of Now: A Queer History of the Present* is available at <http://hdl.handle.net/10453/120249>.

DAVID ABELLO



Garden Party

2010
Photographic art
30cm x 40cm

LISA ANDERSON

Bride Variations

2016-2018
Photos on fabric panels
1.47m x 1.20m x 3 panels
1 of 8



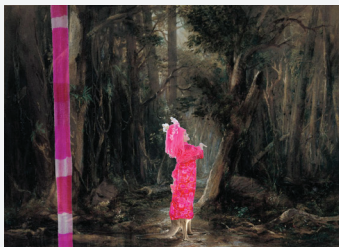
ELIZABETH ASHBURN



Michaelangelo Revisioned: Male2Butch

2003
Charcoal drawing on paper
30cm x 20cm

TROY-ANTHONY BAYLISS

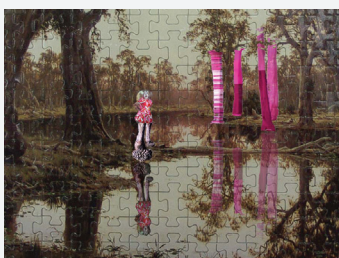


Making Camp at 'Forest, Cunningham's Gap, 1856

2009

Pigmented inks on 310gsm Huhnemuble
German Etching Paper

29.5cm x 42cm

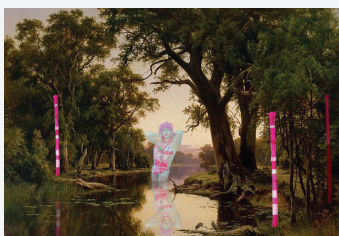


Making Camp at 'Evening shadows, backwater of the river Murray, South Australia, 1880

2009

Pigmented inks on 310gsm, Huhnemuble
German Etching Paper

29.5cm x 42cm



Making Camp at 'A billabong of the Goulbourn, Victoria, 1884

2009

Pigmented inks on 310gsm Huhnemuble
German Etching Paper

29.5cm x 42cm

VIVIENNE BINNS



Something from there on this

2013

Acrylic, film paper on board

28.2cm x 18.3cm

VIVIENNE BINNS (CONTINUED)



Mantilla

2014

Acrylic on wood

27cm x 16.9cm

PHILLIPA BOLTON



Queering Purple

2017

Digital Print

66cm x 50cm

MYSTERY CARNAGE



How are you?

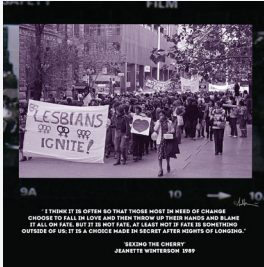
2017

Giclée Print on Fine Art Paper

42cm x 59cm

Limited Edition

SALLIE COLECHIN



Lesbians Ignite

2017

Laminated Giclee print on Fine Art Paper
58cm x 47cm

CHRISTINE DEAN



96 Kings Cross

2015

Oil on canvas
72cm x 72cm



Drag Queen

2016

Oil on canvas
87cm x 87cm

DIGBY DUNCAN



Drop the Charges Meeting July 1, 1978

1978

Five pigment prints on photo paper
22cm x 118cm
Edition of 14

TINA FIVEASH



A Gay Morning Tea!

1994

C-type photograph
70cm x 57cm



Twilight Lovers

1994

C-type photograph
71cm x 57cm

SARAH GIBSON



Mother and Daughter

2015

Oil pastel
61cm x 51.5cm

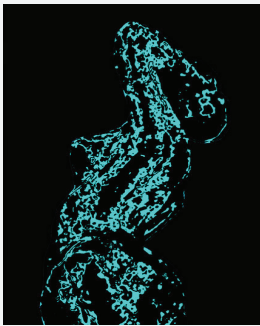


Self Portrait with Pussy Hat

2017

Acrylic on canvas
46cm x 36cm

STEPHANIE GLOVER



Resilience

2014

Photographic art

75cm x 50cm

RICHARD HARDING

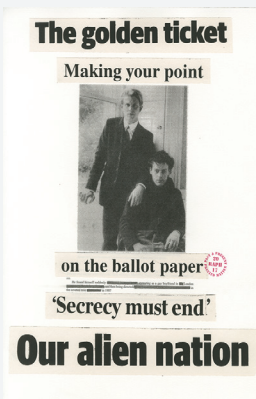


Past and Present GN & RM

2017

Photographic screen-print and collage

42cm x 29cm



Past and Present JW & RG

2017

Photographic screen-print and collage

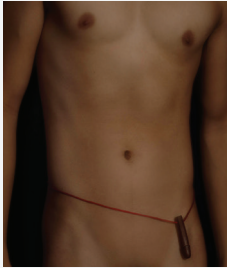
42cm x 29cm

LUKE HARDY

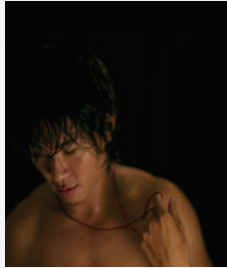
Three works from the Votive series

2009

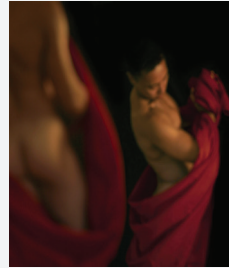
Digital C-print.
104cm x 104cm



Votive IX



Votive X



Votive XII

C MOORE HARDY



Girl Gang: Sluts & Pimp

2002

Colour photograph
76cm x 95cm



Girl Gang: Wranglers

2002

Colour photograph
76cm x 95cm

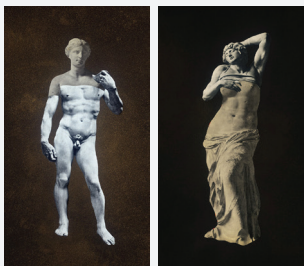
AMANDA HOLT



Bird Woman #1

2011
Collage on paper
83.5cm x 55.5cm

DEBORAH KELLY



The Further Venus Variations

2017
Pigment digital prints on silk
200cm x 100cm x 2 hangings

KIM LEUTWYLER



Sam and Mon

2015
Oil and acrylic on canvas
92cm x 122cm



Bec & G

2016
Oil and acrylic on canvas
102cm x 152cm

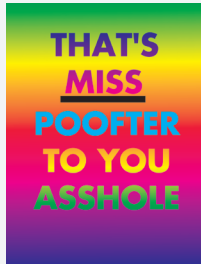
DAVID MCDIARMID

Three works from the Rainbow Aphorisms series

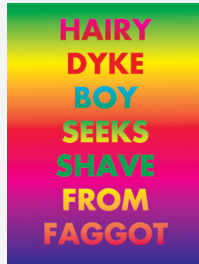
1994

Inkjet print on Platine fibre cotton rag

63cm x 43.5cm



That's Miss
Poofert to
you Asshole



Hairy Dyke Boy
Seeks Shave
from Faggot



Motorsexual
Homocycle Slut
Needs Service

PAUL MCDONALD



David Buchanan

2018

Dye Sublimation Print on 1.2mm aluminium

50cm x 50cm

1 of 1



John and Arthur

2018

Dye Sublimation Print on 1.2mm aluminium

50cm x 50cm

1 of 1

FRANCES PHOENIX



Zippered Vagina

1970s

Cotton and metal zipper

53cm x 42cm



A Redhead's Dream: Portrait of Kerry Higgs

2008

Acrylic on canvas

91.5cm x 213cm

SAFFAA



I am my own guardian

2012

Screen print on BFK 300GSM paper

120cm x 80cm



Fitzroyalty 2

2012

Screen print on BFK 300GSM paper

80cm x 120cm

CAMERON STEAD



Between You and Me

2017

Oil and acrylic paint on stretched latex
60cm x 50cm

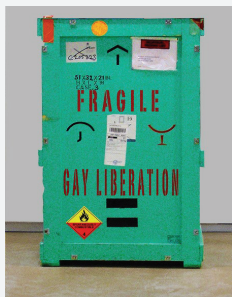


Self Portrait (after Ron Athey) II

2017

Oil and wax medium on stretched latex
95cm x 75cm

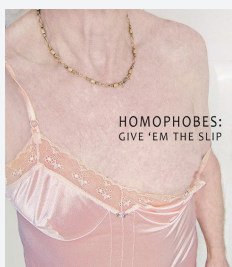
DAVID URQUHART



Fragile

2018

Digital Print
25cm x 17.6cm



Homophobes

2018

Digital Print
25cm x 21.5cm

JOHN WITTE



Untitled 160807

2018

Collage on paper

36x46cm

WILLIAM YANG



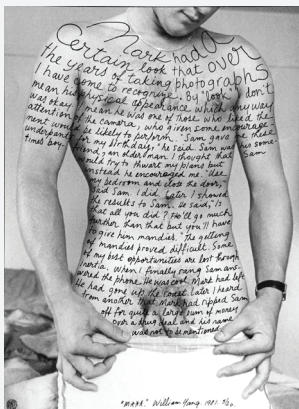
Imagining Caravaggio

2012

Inkjet print on Softex art paper

88cm x 116cm

1 of 20



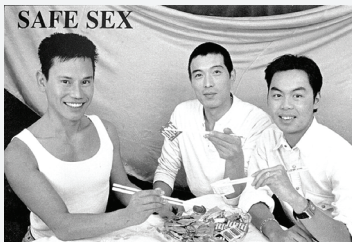
M***

1981

Silver gelatin archival print

52cm x 39cm

WILLIAM YANG (CONTINUED)



Postcard for Silk Road

1994

Silver gelatin archival print

66cm x 77cm

2 of 20

TOBY ZOATES



For Queers, Life's a Riot!

2017

Acrylic on canvas

110cm x 85cm

THANK YOU!

This exhibition is presented by First Mardi Gras Inc. First Mardi Gras represents the participants of the first Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras held on 24th June 1978 and the subsequent events of June, July and August 1978.

First Mardi Gras would like to thank the City of Sydney Council for funding the staging of this exhibition. We would also like to thank our sponsors for their contribution to the Opening Night of the exhibition.



★ SERVE THE PEOPLE ★



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