About the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art

The Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art is the first and only dedicated LGBTQ art museum in the world with a mission to exhibit and preserve LGBTQ art, and foster the artists who create it. Accredited by the New York State Board of Regents, the Museum has over 22,000 objects in our collections, spanning more than three centuries of queer art. We host 6-8 major exhibitions annually, artist talks, film screenings, panel discussions, readings and other events. In addition, we publish THE ARCHIVE - a quarterly educational art publication and maintain a substantial research library. The Museum is the premier resource for anyone interested in the rich legacy of the LGBTQ community and its influence on and confrontation with the mainstream art world. There is no other organization in the world like it.

The Leslie-Lohman Museum is operated by the Leslie/Lohman Gay Art Foundation, a non-profit organization founded in 1987 by Charles W. Leslie and Fritz Lohman who have supported LGBTQ artists for over 30 years. The Leslie-Lohman Museum embraces the rich creative history of the LGBTQ art community by informing, inspiring, educating, entertaining, and challenging all who enter its doors.

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The Archive
The Archive is an educational journal published by the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art to educate the general public about the Museum, its activities, and gay art. Tom Saettel, Editor

Published by the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art

The Archive is available for free in the Museum, and is mailed free of charge to LL Museum members.

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Gallery Hours: Tues.–Wed., 12-6pm, Thur. 12-8, Fri–Sun 12-6, Closed Mon.

Closed on major holidays and between exhibitions.

FRONT COVER: Alma López, Our Lady, 1999, Giclee/digital print on canvas, 17.5 x 14 in, ©Alma López. Special thanks to Raquel Salinas and Raquel Gutierrez.

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John Burton Harter, Paul, 1989, Oil on board, 24 x 36 in, The John Burton Harter Charitable Trust
Irreverent: A Celebration of Censorship

February 13 - April 19, 2015
Leslie-Lohman Museum

Jennifer Tyburczy, guest curator

Irreverent: A Celebration of Censorship will not only explore, but revel in, the ways in which the censorship of queer artwork has lead to the reclamation of alleged perversions by exhibiting once again these artworks as sites of survival, creativity, and rebellion. The exhibition draws inspiration from the innovative responses to watershed moments in the history of censoring LGBTQ art in Canada, England, Ireland, the Netherlands, South Africa, Sweden, Turkey, and the United States. In concept, the show is principally drawn from two events: the censorship of Robert Mapplethorpe’s art in the 1980s and 1990s and the more recent withdrawal of David Wojnarowicz’s *A Fire in My Belly* from the National Portrait Gallery in 2010. The exhibition seizes on the international fame of these controversies to delve deeper into the many ways that censorship functions in queer artistic life.

After many galleries shied away from displaying Mapplethorpe’s early-career work because of the sadomasochistic content of his photographs, he collaborated with some colleagues to procure a space for the censored artworks at 80 Langton Street in San Francisco, a nonprofit exhibition space funded by the National Endowment for the Arts. He called the 1978 show *Censored*, and on the cover of one of the invitations he cheekily placed one of his most infamous works: his *Self Portrait*. Earlier with the invitation for his first exhibition in 1973, he had likewise thumbed his nose—or prick—to the would-be censors and his own Catholic upbringing. Featuring a Polaroid self-portrait taken from the waist down, with Mapplethorpe positioning the camera above his groin, he saucily situated a large white dot over his genitals, a play on Pope Pius V’s much-loved plaster fig leaves that were used to cover the penises of any sculpture in the sixteenth century. Mapplethorpe had further tantalized his potential guests to the 1973 exhibition by placing the invitation in a black Polaroid sleeve that he marked “Don’t Touch Here—handle only by edges.”

More recently, artist David Wojnarowicz, who worked during the 1980s and 1990s, became famous again in 2010 after edited fragments of the unfinished assemblage known as *A Fire in My Belly (FiMB)* were removed from the exhibition *Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire in American Portraiture* at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. In the wake of the withdrawal of FiMB, activists projected Wojnarowicz’s film onto the walls of the neoclassical museum, a repetition of the action performed by activists and artists in 1989 when Mapplethorpe’s exhibition, *The Perfect Moment*, was censored.

Drawing inspiration from this intellectual lineage and the queer artists who faced down the self-anointed morality police of the art and art-funding world, *Irreverent* seeks to re-publicize and celebrate censored work by, for, and about LGBTQ lives. The exhibition builds on one of Richard Meyer’s central arguments in his book *Outlaw Representation: Censorship and..."
Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century American Art. Censorship, Meyer argued, has played a pivotal and productive role in queer cultural production. For example, when analyzing Holly Hughes’s Preaching to the Perverted, a performance piece developed in response to the infamous vetoing of grants promised to her, Karen Finley, Tim Miller, and John Fleck (also known as the NEA Four), Meyer wrote: “Hughes’ use of the term ‘perverted’ means to reclaim the language of sexual deviance and moral turpitude as a kind of reverse-discourse of self-description.” In his book, Meyer adapted and applied the concept of reverse-discourse from Michel Foucault’s The History of Sexuality to uncover censorship’s impact on queer artistic life.

For Foucault, the invention of homosexuality and its relegation to the fabricated category of perversion was surely an outgrowth of modern forms of discipline and punishment, but it also marked an opportunity to locate, label, and critique the emergent and stigmatizing system ordered by statistics and shame. In the case of Hughes’s performance piece, the artist not only responded, but also sought to counteract, the defunding of her work by recycling the hateful speech and recycling it into an opportunity for innovative art making. In Preaching to the Perverted, she playfully confronts the denunciation of her art as morally suspicious by preachers—such as Jesse Helms—and by National Endowment of the Arts officials—such as John Frohnmayer—and reconfigures the idea of perversion to create a theatrical celebration that openly embraced the creative capital of the sexually transgressive; all the while her performance critiques the social and historical context in which she and her art were attacked as such.

Irreverent also puts on its feet a concept from my forthcoming book, Sex Museums: The Politics and Performance of Display (University of Chicago, 2015), that I call “queer curatorialship.” As a theoretical praxis, queer curatorialship aims to expose how traditional museums socialize heteronormative relationships between objects and visitors. Within the space of the Leslie-Lohman Museum, the queer curatorial application blurs boundaries of a different sort: the historical and disciplinary distinctions between spaces of display as they pertain to art and cultural history, the politics of display and consumption within LGBTQ communities, and the sometimes rigid ways in which censorship is defined and assigned an absolute location and time of occurrence. In the words of Tobaron Waxman, whose Portrait of Severin will appear in the exhibition:

Colleagues pointed out to me that these are only the occasions on which I am aware of having been censored, i.e. censorship occurred in response to the work after it was programmed. One could assume there are other occasions, simply in response to my body of work, or the way I’ve engaged various themes and political issues. I think this is important to keep in mind, the fact that censorship occurs in different ways. I’m glad that your project explores these distinctions.

With this in mind, and working from the perspective that censorship occurs differently and in multiple ways, locations, and temporal moments, the exhibition includes spaces for the restaging of the social, cultural, and political components that led to, followed, or influenced diverse episodes of controversy. Through wall texts and the artists’ photographic archives and memories, Irreverent situates the works within their historical contexts of censorship and resilience. While queer and dissident sex is central to the exhibition and to the book Sex Museums, both also show how sex has consistently been used as a political tool to silence all kinds of minority voices on issues that range from immigration to religion, to race, gender, and disability, to globalization, capitalism, and neoliberalism.

Take, for example, Alma López’s digital print, Our Lady (see cover.) This print was included...
in the 2001 exhibition CyberArte: Tradition Meets Technology curated by Dr. Tey Marianna Nunn for the Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The exhibition consisted of four Latina artists whose visual work incorporated imagery that reconfigured traditional cultural iconography (such as the Virgin of Guadalupe) using digital technology. Soon after the opening, local police chaplain José Villegas and Deacon Anthony Trujillo were joined by Archbishop Michael J. Sheehan in organizing protests that demanded the removal of the small digital print. The protests were violent. The museum, the curator, and Alma López endured constant verbal abuse and physical threats.

Or consider the case of the 2012 exhibition Aykir (Contrary), where the Izmir Art Center at Kültürpark in Turkey pulled from view three photographs, each by three different artists: Baris Barlas, Damla Mersin, and Seray Ak. Of his Invisibles, Barlas explained:

I took the photo when I was living in Mexico in 2009. One night I was in one of the clubs in Mexico City, and I met this couple and asked them to guide me in the city and pose for me. We had some great shots, and I didn’t choose this work [Invisibles] for artistic reasons. The reason why I chose this work is it looks so [much like] everyday life. In Turkey [however], we don’t see gay couples around kissing, holding hands, etc.

The display of Invisibles, alongside Ak’s photograph (Against) of two headscarved women kissing, and Mersin’s powerful shot (Confuse) of a woman in a headscarf striking a haughty pose and fully in control of her sexuality, fomented discord among municipal officials who decided to remove the three works from the exhibition. In daring to show the everyday lives and desires of Turkish men and women in possession of their sexual selves, and in shining a light on the contradictions of living and loving as a Turkish citizen today, these artists boldly started a conversation on the politics of display around two salient issues in Turkish politics: a woman’s legal prerogative to choose to wear a headscarf (a salient and contentious element of Turkish politics since 2000) and social and political debates about LGBT rights.

One of the primary aims of Irreverent is to unpack the politically fraught contexts within
which diverse scenarios of censorship occurred, such as the shifting understandings of private and public space, the specific demands of the geopolitical milieu and the historical moment in question, and the genre of museum within which the work was displayed. The exhibition area of the Leslie-Lohman Museum will be adapted to showcase these nuances exploring both explicit and implicit forms of censorship.

These histories came to bear on Barbara Nitke's approach to choosing a server to display her artwork in digital format. Well aware of censorship histories post-Mapplethorpe, she leaned on a friend, web designer Bobby Hancock, who published a gay erotic online magazine, to display the work via his server. Still nervous that she and her work would be censored, she made an assertive move and filed a lawsuit, along with the co-plaintiff National Coalition for Sexual Freedom (NCSF), challenging the constitutionality of the Communications Decency Act, a federal statute prohibiting the publication of obscenity on the internet. The 2001 case was called Nitke v. Ashcroft, and then later changed to Nitke v. Gonzales.

When it came to the relatively new display platform of the internet, they argued that the internet disallowed the restricted dissemination of speech based on geography. In essence, Nitke and NCSF aimed to dismantle the 1973 Miller v. California decision that defined obscenity according to the vague notion of “community standards,” claiming that the diffuse “location” of the Web could render any person who posted sexually explicit material criminally liable according to the standards of the most stringent and restrictive communities. Ultimately, the courts ruled that Nitke and the NCSF had not presented sufficient evidence to substantiate the claim that the variation in community standards for internet dissemination would have violated the plaintiffs’ First Amendment rights. Today, Hostgator, a company in Texas that hosts porn sites, displays Nitke’s online photographs, and while she feels confident and safe there, it pushes her photography into a genre of popular sexual consumption that is arguably an ill fit for her work. In our current world of sexting and the policing of social media, Nitke’s legal battles provide an early milestone in the history of the debates over sex and digital display.

(top and bottom)
Michelle Handelman, Dorian, A Cinematic Perfume, 2009, 4-channel HD video, 63 min. Courtesy of the artist.
At one moment in Michelle Handelman’s four-channel video, *Dorian: a cinematic perfume*, that will also be displayed in *Irreverent*, the performance artist K8 Hardy denounces the defamers of queer life: “What gives you the right to judge us?” she says. “Are we a little too excessive?” K8 Hardy’s words in the video took on real-life meaning when *Dorian* was closed down for certain periods of time without explanation, before finally being removed from display altogether at Austin, Texas’s Art House in 2011. These decisions were precipitated by the opinions of one particularly powerful board member who was personally offended by the film’s content.

Boards of directors and trustees and the operations of markets, such as the antique and art markets, greatly influence definitions of “public” and “private” and exert tremendous control in circumscribing the domain of the sayable in museums and other display spaces. The construction of publicness and privativeness in the twenty-first century museum has had chronic repercussions for the display of dissident and queer sexualities and has created a culture of warnings and suppression around queer artworks. *Irreverent* will go beyond the warning signs, without fear, and push back against the current cultural emphasis on “civil discourse” and “intellectual freedom” that arguably does important legal work in making possible certain display events but neglects to expressly defend the content of the work in jeopardy. “If we are afraid to offer a public defense of sexual images,” contends Carol Vance in reference to the problematic ways in which Mapplethorpe’s art was defended as valid and valuable, “then even in our rebuttal we have granted the right wing its most basic premise: sexuality is shameful and discrediting.”

*Irreverent* refuses to concede to the censors, would-be or actual, and elects instead to jubilantly revel in queer erotic pleasures and the resilience, survival, and rebellion of the diverse social and political issues that queer artists audaciously depict in their work.

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4. Carol Vance, as quoted in Meyer, Outlaw Representation 217.


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(left) Damla Mersin, Confuse, 2010, Color photographic print, 70 x 50 in. Courtesy of the artist.
(below) Barbara Nitke, Veilna and Elissa, 1, 1998, Silver gelatin print, 14 x 21 in. Courtesy the artist.
About ten years ago I began to reinvent myself and resurrect my art career. At the time, using social media and blogging rather than print or a gallery to introduce my past and new work to a wider audience seemed crazy. However, within a few years I had built a large following—as well as the attention of galleries that I now show in. I looked around and realized that all of my friends were fellow artists utilizing the internet in the same way.

Taking a cue from the DIY punk ethos of the late-70s/early-80s East Village art scene, a current crop of artists have the same impatience with
the system and an inherent need to showcase their work in a new and sometimes unruly medium. The computer screen, the internet, rather than the wall of a gallery became their forum. Just as early-80s artists would display their work on rotting piers, abandoned furniture, tenement bathroom walls, and subway billboards, the class of 2015 lets its creative chaos circulate across the multifaceted online landscape where viewers can instantly connect with the work and post or re-blog it, extending not only its virtual life but extending it to a perpetual audience as well.

#interface is an eclectic mix of many of the New York queer artists working in a wide variety of styles and mediums that I became friendly with during the rise of social media over the past decade. A virtual visual arts community was spawned, evoking the upstart spirit of seminal galleries like P.P.O.W. and presenting unapologetic in-your-face artists, à la the late David Wojnarowicz. By mixing painters, photographers, sculptors, videographers, installation artists, designers, and performance artists together in a sometimes jarring but always attentive way, I hope to reintroduce that earlier spirit and bring attention to a group of artists similar to their early-80s counterparts who are nonetheless distinctive in a very contemporary, future retro world of their own.

I have asked each artist to submit one or two small-to-large pieces, regardless of theme but merely representative of what they consider their best work. I really want this exhibition to emblemize a shifting time in the art world where technology allows the artists to not only create in a different way but alters the way the public encounters artwork and comes to know artists—all this without ever walking into a gallery or museum. But in order to make that virtual world work, we need a balance—ultimately the true art lover wants to view it in person. So bringing these thirty artists together under the Leslie-Lohman roof is not only a treat but also a perfect extension for presenting the work—the marriage between the online gallery and the brick-and-mortar gallery bringing the work full circle.

The twenty-nine artists showing are, in no particular order: Scooter LaForge, Slava Mogutin, Brian Kenny, Natasha Gornik, Isauro Cairo, Brett Lindell, Alesha Exum, Bubi Canal, Dietmar Busse, Benjamin Fredrickson, Derek Dewitt, Walt Cassidy, William Spangenberg, James Salaiz, Tom Taylor, Diego Montoya, Erika Keck, Gio Black Peter, Ben Copperwheat, Chuck Nitzberg, Jordan Eagles, Naruki Kukita, Adrian Carroll, George Towne, Allen Todd Yaeger, Chick Byrne, Joel Handorff, Maria Pineres, and Leo Herrera.

Walt Cessna is the author of Fukt 2 Start With: Short Stories & Broken Word (sixteenefourteen.com/fukt.html), photographer (waltcessna.tumblr.com), editor and publisher of the annual art and literary journal VACZINE (blurb.com/b/5466251-vaccine-1). #interface is his first curated exhibit for the Leslie-Lohman Museum.

[top] Gio Black Peter, Big Dreams, 2014. Acrylic and oil pastel on NYC subway map, 32.5 x 23 in.
All True Tomboys: The Art of Christina Schlesinger
January 23–27, 2015 Prince Street Project Space

Sandra Langer

The barriers to multiple varieties of sexual pleasure are down. New generations of lesbians now live fully in the open. However, in 1972 when Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon published Lesbian Woman, talking about lesbian sexual gratification, especially the use of the dildos, was rare among lesbians. Times have changed since they wrote their groundbreaking study and no one now thinks twice about paying a visit to the local toyshop with a girlfriend or boyfriend. It is as common as going to the movies. But in the hot 1990s, picturing gay sexual practices was anything but commonplace, especially of women making love to women with dildos. For this reason the Leslie-Lohman Museum’s Prince Street Project Space deserves kudos for presenting Christina Schlesinger’s trailblazing series of Tomboys and Dildos from that period.

Schlesinger is a wickedly interesting, unapologetic and high-spirited woman. We both grew up in a world that hated gay people, calling us homo, sissy, faggot, bull dyke, lesbo, and queer. It was scary to be queer in those times—times when gays were regarded as perverts and criminals. Then as now heterosexuals who made rules and regulations dominated a world that discriminated against our community and were so threatening that they forced us into hiding those we loved and ourselves. In many places around the globe, it is still true that being gay can get you killed.

In the soul-shattering 90s, the very idea that a lesbian would dare to depict her authentic sexual self, much less display same-sex eroticism in a public context, was unthinkable for many. It is against this backdrop that Christina began visualizing images of her own coming of age and coming out and the various sexual practices and pleasures of women loving women.

In these self-portraits, based on old photographs of her and items of clothing incorporated into her highly skilled mixed-media works, Schlesinger tomboyishly mugs for the camera. Her portrayals collapse time and space like the pages from a lesbian version of Proust’s famous novel detailing the sweetness of lost time and memory. Yet the artist’s images are not just about memory; rather these images speak with wit, intelligence, and compassion to every tomboy who has felt same-sex desire and loved another girl.

In the 1990s, images of lesbian sexual desire did not figure largely in the world of art; boyish girls with stiff dildos on their hands and knees adoring their girlfriends were the stuff of future lesbian wet dreams. Only in 2015, and only because the Leslie-Lohman Museum...
exists, is Schlesinger’s pioneering work being exposed to a new public. In the 90s she could not find a venue despite the fact that heterosexuals were experiencing a new period of sexual freedom, a time when glam-rock bands made up of gorgeous boys dominated pop culture. But it was also a time when AIDS changed all our lives; when “Silence=Death” became a rallying cry for Act Up in response to Ronald Reagan’s disregard for gay lives, and the criminalization of gay sex was routine. The idea of parted and penetrating another woman with a dildo, something that is taken for granted today among lesbians, was taboo. What seems natural today was anything but that back then. A woman artist celebrating the joys of lesbian identity and sex could have ended up in jail or worse in those homophobic times.

As an out lesbian, Christina put herself in a dangerously vulnerable position by being overtly joyous and shouting “this work is about me.” Above all, Schlesinger’s visualizations were not simply about the suppressed connection between an artwork and a fetishized object made by a “degenerate lesbian” at a time of cultural disorientation; she was not out to shock anyone. Rather, they were about asserting her lesbian desire and emphasizing the intoxicating sense of erotic pleasure she got from making love to women.

The times I tried to show the dildo paintings, even in Ptown, people were uncomfortable with the paintings. Why, I do not know. [And laughing, she adds] Now nobody seems to care because gender has become so fluid.

The artist’s words ring true as I am currently reading a groundbreaking quarter of novels by a younger lesbian writer, Suzanne Stroh, who has one of her characters talk about the “cock in her brain” that she happily fills her lovers with as asserting her right to “be in her.” But in the 1990s, Christina’s saying, “hey, I’ve got one and we don’t need you,” was very daring. It took courage to be radical, raunchy, and cool. Her intimate drawings depicting two women fucking and flaunting the dildo, and parting the folds of a lover’s vagina, were simply outrageous. She repeated this act in slightly differing variation throughout the series, showing lesbian erotic desire as simply a force of nature. I asked her if she was aware of setting out to make a political statement with this work.

I don’t think I was consciously making a feminist statement at the time—I was more just fooling around. It was also, I guess, [depicting] how wearing the dildo made me feel: “cocksy” for sure, and confident that ‘yes, I can have one too’, and I liked the thrusting movement it gave you in sex. Later, I had an affair with a woman who used the dildo on me and that was a whole other feeling, being fucked rather than fucking, though both were good, it seemed to depend more on the partner you were with.

Naturally, I was prompted to ask Christina how it felt to create and attempt to show work with lesbian feminist content that subverted male power, authority, and privilege at a time of repression—at a time when many gays feared reprisals from straights who blamed the AIDS epidemic on them. She responded that at the time her insistence on representing female masculinity meant that she had claimed the right to give and take pleasure with other women thus refuting the notion that the gaze is exclusively male. In fact, her actions prefigured lipstick lesbians in the “girls just want to have fun” era. Girls actually did enjoy being objects of desire and flaunting their femaleness with no inhibitions about wanting other women to have sex with.

It is hard for today’s audiences to comprehend that the fear of showing Schlesinger’s images was so off-putting, even the gay community in Provincetown, which saw her images of two women making love with each other as a clear and present danger. It is gratifying to me as an unapologetic lesbian and art critic to think that, after twenty-two years of gathering dust in her studio, these works can finally be exhibited, and will make a new generation aware of how far we have come since the repressive dark ages of LGBTQ history. That Christina’s work had to wait twenty-two years before it could be publicly exhibited demonstrates how important it is to reclaim our heritage and, most importantly, underscores the value of love and healing for our community. My only caveat is that these pop-up exhibitions are so short-lived, because the messages conveyed by Schlesinger’s art are still so relevant for gay history and for a younger generation to understand.
The Queer/Art/Mentorship Program

Rick Herron, Guest Curator

Queer/Art/Mentorship, now in its fourth cycle, pairs emerging artists in New York with someone who is well established in their field. Each mentorship lasts approximately one year. What that partnership looks like, and what comes out of it, is different for everyone. For the first time, we have organized an exhibition to highlight recent work by the 2013/14 Q/A/M fellows and mentors. One of the most obvious challenges, and most exciting opportunities, about this exhibition is that Q/A/M includes artists working in five disciplines: literature, film, performing arts, visual art, and curation. Within each discipline, artists in the program tend to work in several different modes simultaneously.

How could I as the curator represent the fellows as a unit if their interests may only intersect tenuously and temporarily? A white cube gallery exhibition would create a false hierarchy within the group, prioritizing visual art at the expense of writers, performers and time-based projects. We are fortunate and very thankful, then, to partner with the Leslie-Lohman Museum this autumn to present a series of Queer/Art/Mentorship projects, exhibitions, and events over the course of several months in the Wooster Street Window Gallery and the Prince Street Project Space. Including readings, screenings, performances, visual art, curated projects, a zine, and a collaborative printed publication, our inaugural exhibition recognizes that queer art is not made to appeal to the tastes of one audience. Rather, from the passerby on Wooster Street who stops to read the protest signs in Seyi Adebanjo’s photographs to you, dear reader, we hope that anyone who sees one part of the exhibition will be inspired to seek out more.

Everyone who applies to Queer/Art/Mentorship, no matter the focus of their artistic output, is seeking to be a part of a cross disciplinary intergenerational community. All of us play roles in several communities simultaneously, and Q/A/M encourages us to make ourselves even more permeable and expansive. As we exit the program, we are looking for the ways we can mentor others while continuing to rely on those who have inspired and fostered our development. Thank you to Ira Sachs and everyone at Queer/Art/Mentorship, and to the Leslie-Lohman Museum, for creating the opportunity for us to collaborate. Our tremendous gratitude goes out to all of our mentors who graciously dedicated a year to support our practice and that of New York’s queer art community.

Please be a part of the Queer/Art family by attending Queer/Art/Film screenings held monthly at IFC Center and through the artist meetup Queer/Art/Brooklyn at The West. You can learn more at queerartfilm.com and queerartmentorship.org.

Rick Herron is a curator, artist, and writer from Plattsburg, Missouri now residing in New York City. He was a 2013-14 Q/A/M fellow and is curator of the PPS and Window Gallery exhibitions at Leslie-Lohman.

(top) Bridget de Gersigny, Mouths Made for Eating (Panel 1), 2014, Paper on chipboard, 77 x 80 in.
(bottom left to right) Colin Sel and Lain Kay, Documentation of Whip Paintings, 2014, Digital photographs, Dimensions variable.
Artmaking Support

Hunter O’Hanian, Museum Director

I was recently asked to attend a reception at Lincoln Center for the new head of the National Endowment for the Arts, Jane Chu. Speaking to a room full of other New York City cultural leaders, Chu made much about the economic impact of culture and how it can strengthen communities, but little was said about the role of artists and art making, particularly of making art which might not otherwise be commercially viable.

As I listened to her talk about various NEA programs supporting community development, I reflected on the role the NEA once had in supporting artists to develop and make work of importance to them and their communities. In particular, I thought about the Individual Artists Grants that were a casualty of the culture wars of the 80s and 90s. The loss of these grants, censorship, malicious destruction of artworks, and institutional bias against artwork relating to sexual orientation or gender are reasons why our forthcoming exhibition, Irreverent, is so important. In that exhibition, we will present artwork that was intentionally excluded from exhibitions or damaged due to its content.

In short, grants to individual artists started in 1967 and lasted until the mid-1990s. They were awarded on artistic merit based upon review and recommendation by other accomplished artists. Grants ranged from $500 to over $30,000. Not only did they provide artists with financial resources to pursue their work, they were important to recognize the accomplishments of American artists. Thousands of such grants were awarded, to everyone from Raymond Carver, Donald Judd, Grace Paley, Mark Morris, and Laurie Anderson. By the late 1980s, more than $10.5 million was being awarded annually to hundreds of artists.

The end of the program began in April 1989 when an art center in Winston-Salem, North Carolina organized a group exhibition that included a 60-by-40-inch 1987 photograph by Andres Serrano, entitled Piss Christ. The image depicted a golden hазe in which a 13-inch plastic and wood crucifix was immersed in a vat of Serrano’s urine. Serrano was one of nine artists whose work was selected for the exhibit from 500 applicants. The hosting organization had received a $30,000 grant from the NEA to support the exhibition. It also received funds from the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, and numerous private and corporate donors. Serrano never received an NEA individual artist grant. Piss Christ had been in existence for two years prior to its exhibition in Winston-Salem.

The Serrano image was denounced by the American Family Association as “anti-Christian” bigotry. US Senators Jesse Helms (R-NC) and Alfonse D’Amato (R-NY) joined 36 other senators in “expressing outrage” at the NEA as a result of the exhibition. On the floor of the US Senate, Helms said of Serrano: “He is not an artist. He is a jerk.” Numerous bills were introduced to zero fund or abolish the NEA altogether. Other bills were introduced to restrict the way the NEA funding could be used, including proposals that would limit the content of individual works of art.

At the same time, a retrospective of Robert Mapplethorpe’s work, known as The Perfect Moment, was scheduled to open at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington in July 1989. The exhibition had been organized by the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania. It had been exhibited in Philadelphia and Chicago without incident. After Washington, it was scheduled to travel to Cincinnati and several other cities. Some of the 150 images in the exhibition represented explicit gay acts, including one of the pieces in our Irreverent exhibition. While a $30,000 grant from NEA had been used to organize the exhibit and create the catalog, Mapplethorpe had not received an artist’s grant. He died of AIDS-related complications several months before the exhibition was to open in Washington. US Congressman Richard Armey (R-TX) and other members of Congress labeled his work “morally reprehensible trash.”

Rightly, the NEA leadership responded that it was forbidden by its enabling legislation to interfere with the artistic choices made by its grantees—even if some individuals may deem the work controversial or offensive. The Corcoran caved in to pressure and canceled Mapplethorpe’s exhibition. Protestors projected images of Mapplethorpe’s work on the exterior of the building. The Corcoran later apologized for pulling the exhibition. The little known Washington Project for the Arts picked up the exhibition, which ultimately attracted more than 50,000 visitors.

By 1990, over 85,000 individual artists grants had been awarded by the NEA and fewer than two dozen having been questioned. In June 1990, then NEA chair John Frohnmayer, appointed by President George H. W. Bush, vetoed the grants to four performance artists because he did not like their work. They later became known as the “NEA Four”: Karen Finley, Tim Miller, John Fleck, and Holly Hughes.

By 1994 the Republicans gained control of both the US House and Senate for the first time since 1954, similar to the situation to be repeated in January 2015. In 1996, Congress passed, and President Bill Clinton signed, legislation outlawing most of the NEA’s funding to individual artists. The categories for artists’ grants went from seventeen down to four. While in the past artists were able to apply for a grant based upon past accomplishments, changes in the legislation allowed artists to apply for funding only for a particular project—thus giving the NEA control over the content of the work. The following year, the NEA budget was slashed by 40%, from $162 million to $99 million. Now, nearly twenty years later, the NEA’s budget is only at $146 million—the funding level from the mid-1980s.

Further restrictions were passed by Congress stating that the chair of the NEA, in establishing procedures to judge the artistic merit of grant applications, is to “take into consideration general standards of decency and respect for the diverse beliefs and values of the American public.” Much of the work in the Leslie-Lohman Museum’s collections or shown in our exhibitions would not fit within that standard. It is why organizations like ours must exist and exhibit the work we do. We are grateful for the governmental support we receive from the Department of Cultural Affairs of the City of New York and the New York State Council for the Arts. Although the NEA declined to support the Irreverent exhibition, we are hopeful one day to receive NEA funding for our exhibitions.

However, nothing would be better than a return to the days when artists could receive funds again to make the work they wanted from the national government. ■
News from Prince Street Project Space
Rob Hugh Rosen, Deputy Director of Programmatic Operations

Jan 23-25 All True Tomboys; the Art of Christina Schlesinger
Schlesinger tells us: “The tomboy is the lesbian’s inner core, her secret weapon.” This exhibition explores tomboys, big and small, in mixed media oil paintings combining flannel shirts, t-shirts, photo transfers, marbles, dildos, and other “fun stuff.”
Christina Schlesinger: All The Little Girls, 1994, Oil and fabric on canvas, 20 x 16 in.

Feb 6-8 Blue Movie (Afghanistan)
Multimedia works by Jeanne Hilary
Jeanne Hilary is a photographer and new-media artist. Her work has been exhibited at the Centre Pompidou, the Palais de Tokyo, and the Musée Carnavalet in Paris, the Museum for Contemporary Photography in Chicago, and elsewhere, and is included in public and private collections internationally.

Feb 27-Mar 1 The Art of Martin H. H. Leff-Cinthus
Leff-Cinthus (b. 1928) studied art at the Brooklyn Museum Art School, The Art Students League of New York, and Cooper Union. Involved in almost all the art forms, Leff-Cinthus worked as a musician, composer, writer, and an actor. For decades he made his living as a textile designer, but in recent years he has returned to painting. Leff-Cinthus acknowledges the influence of Picasso, and many of his drawings and paintings reinterpret Picasso’s works with an emphasis on themes of omnisexuality and polyamorousness.

Mar 12-17 The Humorous Art of Kai Teichert
At first glance, Teichert’s collages are reminiscent of the still-life paintings of the old masters. On closer scrutiny, the details become recognizable as intimate body parts: genitals, nipples, anuses, lips, scars, tattoos, etc. They seem to be a reversal of the famous paintings of Giuseppe Arcimboldo (1527-1593), who created faces from vegetables, fruits, flowers, or seafood. Teichert’s goal with his exhibition is to be “playful and humorous, and meet the moral high ground with a disarming smile.”
Kai Teichert, Root Vegetables, 2013, Collage, 11 x 16 in.

UPCOMING AT PRINCE STREET PROJECT SPACE
Mar 27-29 Works by the artists of the Leslie-Lohman Drawing Studio
Apr 9-21 Paintings by Delmas Howe
May 7-12 Group show of collages, curated by Charles Leslie
Events Programming at Leslie-Lohman Museum

Jerry Kajpust, Deputy Director for External Relations

On September 18th we celebrated our second annual Founders’ Day celebration honoring Charles Leslie and Fritz Lohman. Held in GMHC’s (Gay Men’s Health Crisis) Keith Haring dining room, 200 guests talked, laughed, and shared food, drinks, and entertainment. This year we had five major corporate sponsors: Merrill Lynch, Wells Fargo Mortgage, Halstead Properties, L7z Group, and Conservation Framing Services, as well as several donations to support our silent auction and our gift bags designed by artist Brian Kenny. Museum Director, Hunter O’Hanian addressed the group, updating them on the exciting progress of the Museum followed by music performances by Brett Gleason and burlesque numbers by Amber Ray and Chris “Go-Go” Harder.

In collaboration again this year with the Queer New York International Art Festival, Abel Azcona presented a provocative and challenging performance event on the evening of September 25th using his body to illustrate personal experiences of abandonment, pain, and empathy. In Someone Else he showed us interpersonal relations, both sentimental and sexual, which parallel the hidden true feelings, true love, or true object of desire. Azcona a Spanish interdisciplinary and performance artist, uses themes directly informed by his experiences as the child of a prostitute, and his passing through multiple children’s shelters, mental institutions, and foster homes, as well as adolescent episodes of drug use, prostitution, and several suicide attempts. The resilient artist assures the public that when he practices self-harm, it is his own choice to alter the shape of his body, as opposed to an abused child or woman who has no choice.

James Bidgood’s now celebrated and renowned film, Pink Narcissus, was shown to an audience of over eighty people on the evening of September 27th. The film follows the fantasy of a handsome male prostitute (Bobby Kendall), alone in his apartment, lounging and fantasizing about worlds where he is the central character. For example, he pictures himself as a matador, a Roman slave boy and the emperor who condemns him, and the keeper of a male harem for whom another male performs a belly dance. The film was shot entirely in Bidgood’s Hell’s Kitchen apartment between 1963 and 1971, and all the sets, props, etc., were created in the apartment as well—giving true meaning to a low budget film! Bidgood designed and made the sets, provided the makeup and costumes, and used the neighborhood hustlers as his cast. It was an incredible undertaking, and one that eventually led his frustrated backers to take the film from Bidgood and finish it themselves; this was why Bidgood took his name off the finished film. After the screening, Bidgood talked with the audience about the making of the film, gay life in New York in the 70s contrasted with life here today, keeping in touch with Bobby after the film, and many other personal anecdotes all rounding out an entirely delightful evening.

LESLIE-LOHMAN EVENTS

We are always adding new events to our programming at the Museum, so be sure to keep up to date by checking our calendar section at LeslieLohman.org. Also, you can join our e-mail list by signing up on our website (Join Mailing List). You’ll receive our weekly update of events and happenings here at the Museum, and once a month you’ll receive our Leslie-Lohman Recommends, featuring exciting events and exhibitions in New York City and beyond.
GALLERIES ISSUE 52

Galleries of Interest

See Current and Upcoming Exhibitions at Leslie-Lohman Museum on the Back Cover

NEW YORK CITY
ClampArt, 521-531 W. 25th St., NYC, clampart.com Jan 8-Feb 14 Pacifico Silano: Against Nature Feb 19-Mar 28 Chuck Samuel’s: Before the Camera
Grey Art Gallery, 100 Washington Square E nyu.edu/greyart Jan 13-Apr 4 The Left Front: Radical Art in the “Red Decade,” 1929-1940
Jadite Gallery, 413 W. 50 St. jadite.com thru Dec 24 Four Takes on The Male: Androxx, Robert Cusido, Joseph Radoccio, Richard Taddei
Monya Rowe Gallery, 34 Orchard St., NYC monyarowegallery.com Mar 1-Apr 12 Vera Iliatova: New Work
Munch Gallery, 245 Broome St., NYC, munchgallery.com Jan 7-31 Group Exhibition: Feb 5-Mar 22 Scooter Laforge Museum of Sex, 233 Fifth Avenue, NYC, museumofsex.com thru Jan 11 Ety Fefer, Grumlidos: red-light district of Lima thru Spring 2015 Fantastic! Pleasures & Perils of the Erotic Fairground
Participant Inc, 253 E. Houston St., NYC, participantinc.org thru Dec 21 Greer Lankton, LOVE ME Jan 11-Feb 21 Emily Rosysdn: if Only a Wave, Time as queer activism: Mar 8-Apr 12 Joy Eispersa
P-P, O-W, 535 W. 22 St., NYC, ppowgallery.com Mar 20-Apr 18 Ann Agee, work in porcelain
Team Gallery 83 Grand St., NYC teamgal.com Jan 18-Feb 15 Flatis: Steven Baldi, Carina Brandes, Bruce Conner, Robert Cumming, Brice Dellisperger, Evan Eiselt, Melanie Gilligan, Bradley Kronz, Larry Sultan, Wolfgang Tillmans

BROOKLYN
Figureworks 168 N. 6th St, Brooklyn, NY, figureworks.com Jan 9-Feb 18 Without Color Part 2: Meredith McNiel, Alexander Ney, Joanne Scott; Feb 13-Mar 15 Howard Eisman, Fred Hutt, Arlene Morris; Mar 27-May 3 Crystal: 15 Year Anniversary Exhibition

NORTHEAST
Firehouse Gallery, 8 Walnut Street, Bordentown, NJ, firehousegallery.com Work by Eric Gibbons
Gallery Kayafas 450 Harrison Ave, Boston, MA gallerykayafas.com thru Jan 10 Caleb Cole: Other People’s Clothes

Rice/Polak Gallery, 430 Commercial St., Providence, RI, ricepolakgallery.com thru Dec 31 Gallery Artist Group Show
The Andy Warhol Museum, 117 Sandusky St, Pittsburgh, PA, warhol.org thru Jan, 4 13 Most Wanted Men: Andy Warhol & the 1964 World’s Fair Jan 31-Apr 19 Someday is Now: The Art of Corita Kent

WEST
Center for Sex & Culture 1349 Mission Street, San Francisco sexandculture.org thru mid-Jan Blackmail, My Love: Katie Gilmartin
GLBT History Museum, 4127 18th St., San Francisco, CA, gblthistory.org/museum Ongoing Queer Past Becomes Present; Ongoing Biconic Flashpoints: 4 Decades of Bay Area Bisexual Politics; and 1964: The Year San Francisco Came Out
ONE Archives Gallery & Museum, 909 W. Adams Blvd, Los Angeles, CA onearchives.org thru Jan 11 Montelizand
Rio Bravo Fine Art, 110 N Broadway St., Truth or Consequences, NM riobrafofineartgallery.com thru Dec 28 Demas Howe Fresh Water
Regen Projects, 6750 Santa Monica Blvd, Los Angeles, CA regenprojects.com thru Jan 24 Gillian Wearing: Everyone

MIDWEST
Catherine Edelman Gallery, 300 W. Superior St., Chicago, IL, edelmanartgallery.com thru Jan 31 Sandro Miller: Malkovich, Malkovich, Malkovich: Homage to photographic masters; Feb 6-Apr 4 Identify, Tara Bogart, Heather Dewey-Hagborg, Jess T. Dugan, Michael Tchong, Garth & Pierre
Leather Archives & Museum, 6418 N. Greeneview Ave, Chicago, IL leatherarchives.org thru Jan 11 The Family Tree & Mutagenesis part deux: New Work by Homovoy

SOUTH

World Erotic Art Museum, 1205 Washington Avenue, Miami Beach, FL, weam.com/web Dec 1-Apr 30 Mark Kostabi

CANADA
Ottawa
La Petite Mort Gallery, 306 Cumberland St, lapetitemortgallery.com thru Jan 4 Richard Hawkins & William S. Burroughs, Cerith Wyn Evans, Iva Genzken, Tom of Finland
NGBK, Oranienstrasse 25 ngbk.de Jan 8-18 Independent Publishing exhibition & workshop
Schwules Museum, Lutzowstrasse 73, schwulesmuseum.de Dec 7-Mar 23 Leonard Fink Coming Out Gay Lib & NYC Waterfront photos; Dec 7-Mar 31 Porn That Way; Dec 8-Mar 31 And It Was Good as It Was: 13 Years Klaus Wowrinit, homage to a gay pioneer

Groningen, NL
Galerie MooiMan, Noorderstraatstraat 40, mooiman.nl thru Jan 11 Oh Boy... one city: two worlds, Benyamin Reich photos; Georg Weise, painting, sculpture; Jan 25-Mar 31 Masculine Masters, New Figurative Men, Part 1. Group re. Cornelius McCarthy (7th Ed); Mar 18-22 St. Quero: Gonzalo Oraun Affordable Art Fair Milan, Italy

Madrid
La Fresh Gallery, Conde de Aranda 5, lafreshgallery.com thru Jan 30 Amoresuperm: Slava Mogutin & Brian Kenny

Munch
Kunstberhandlung/Saatchi Gallery 40 Muller Strasse 40 kunstberhandlung.de thru Jan 19 30x30 No.12 Group exhibition; Jan 29-Feb 21 Ulrike Wenzel: Feb 26-Mar 21 From Russia with Love: Anonymous, noble nude paintings

Paris
Balice Hertling, 4 Rue Ramoanu, balice hertling.com thru Jan 24 Julie Beautiful: You Seek
Galerie Vanesa Rau, galerievanesarau.com thru Jan 19 Ryoko Kimura: Beast Beauty of Men
La Galerie au Bonheur du Jour, 11 rue Chabanais, aubonheurdujourenet By appointment Erotic objects & art Publication: Plaisirs et Débauches au masculin 1780-1940, 336 pp, 275 illus.
Musée d’Orsay, 62 Rue de Lille musee-orsay.fr thru Jan 25 Sade: Attacking the Sun

Tampere, Finland
Museum Centre Vapriikki, Alaviestanrannat 5 thru Mar 15 Sealed with a Secret Correspondence of Tom of Finland
Implications of the “Gay Revolution” for LGBTQ Art

Ray Warman

Wordsworth, writing of a much earlier and more violent revolution, hit the mark: “Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive / But to be young was very heaven!”

Likewise delighting in a new day, of late, have been queer folk of all ages. Individual geographic, family, and social circumstances will always differ somewhat, but today’s LGBTQ population enjoys in general a world vastly different from that of just 50 years ago—when, for example, candidates for admission to the New York Bar were cautioned against admitting to the “Committee on Character and Fitness” any nonnormative sexual or other interests, and when members of our community were accustomed to living only on the fringes of conventional society, if not to thoroughly closeting themselves. Today, however, large numbers of us are proudly “out” and find greater societal recognition in a LGBTQ world altered radically—and on balance, much for the better—by the internet and “social media.” We’ve been living within—to borrow from the hyperbolic subtitle of Linda Hirshman’s breezy chronicle of a couple years ago, Victory—a veritable “gay revolution.”

Focused upon legal and political events, Hirshman’s book does not address cultural developments, whether in the performing arts, in literature, or in the visual arts. No less notable, however, than our community’s legal and social acceptance has been the same revolution’s significant impact upon—and its implications for—what might be considered “gay art.”

Gay art—indeed, even the tamest depictions of same-sex desire—was relegated by the art world 50 years ago to remote shadows, if not to utter invisibility. Such widespread maladjustment—indeed, dis-ease—was epitomized by our community’s reaction to the informal showings of such art introduced by Charles Leslie and Fritz Lohman in 1969 to enthusiastic gatherings in their SoHo home. In addition to art that was more sentimental or of social commentary, much of what they exhibited was quite erotically charged, even to the point of being considered downright “pornographic” by some viewers.

That combination of considerable enthusiasm with individual discomposure is easily understood as a reflection of the times in which the viewers were living. They were predominantly gay-leaning—but, at that time, not necessarily gay-identified—and most were accustomed to viewing erotica, if they so indulged themselves at all, only in intensely private—and sadly shame-reinforcing—circumstances. Initially, then, they felt rather awkward in any public inspection of work whose artistic merit they might well have overlooked amid other concerns. What readily became clear, however, was that the opportunity to view “gay art”—even, for that matter: pornography—together with other spectators would serve many of their essential needs: It might provide healthy titillation, of course, but, more important, it might be a simple connection with like-minded men and women, and even provide the vital affirmation that was generally unavailable within a world where psychiatry pathologized homosexuality as a “disorder” (as it continued to do until 1973).

The times have changed dramatically, however, and as a Wordsworth aptly perceived, revolutionary times can affect disparate age groups to markedly different degrees. The latter-day gay revolution has not only deepened, but fundamentally altered, the generation divide long present between older and younger generations in our community: Differences that in the past might have concerned “just” physique and life-situation particulars nowadays extend also to deeper-seated attitudes and feelings. Today’s LGBTQ youth—coming of age largely free of the circumstances hampering individuals born prior to 1950 or so—needn’t look to “gay art” for self-affirmation, nor for the erotic content or interpersonal connections that they can find online without delay in whatever variations they desire.

Those fortunate to realize only in recent years their LGBTQ identity may benefit from support groups at school and/or work, and have internet-based access to information, literature, contacts, and art—material that previously could have been found, if accessible at all, only furtively. They have in general been spared the sometimes overwhelming social baggage—denigration, discrimination, marginalization, even criminalization—borne in general by those “in the life” before Stonewall and its aftermath.

Past covers of The Archive reflect part—but inevitably just a small fraction—of the range of art that is the Leslie-Lohman Museum’s focus. Cover of The Archive Issue 14, Autumn 2004, featuring Neel Bate (aka Blade). Untitled (Detail), 1989, Ink and colored pencil on paper. 22 x 15 in. Collection LLM.
True, gay-hostile attitudes may stubbornly persist in home environments—even within the most enlightened families and communities—and their transmission can hardly be expected to disappear within the next couple generations. Likewise, an unhealthy amount of negativity will continue to be internalized by some LGBTQ youth, and, as prior generations can attest, is vexingly resistant to eradication once it takes root in anyone. Increasingly, however, the potential impact of internalized homophobia is mitigated by the more positive factors that highlight today’s LGBTQ engagement with the larger world.

Many of today’s “queer” youth may be disinclined to identify themselves as gay, straight, bi, etc.—or often to “define” themselves at all—but for healthier reasons than their understandably more guarded elders would have had. Their more secure maturation reflects itself in a variety of ways affecting intergenerational LGBTQ life. Greater self-esteem empowers younger members of our community to more readily reject any personal advances, whether real or imagined, from older men or women. In contrast, the same elders years ago might well have welcomed—indeed, may have actively sought—from the preceding generation what they couldn’t find elsewhere: attention, guidance, and, above all, approval. Gay bars of all varieties, adversely affected by the rise of internet-based connecting, seem at times the province of those whose only cell phones may be, like mine, of the “flip-phone” variety. Greater openness in society at large has noticeably diminished the appeal and increased the average age of the “gayborhoods” and resorts to which prior generations, largely closeted elsewhere, gravitated. Younger members of the “leather” subculture seem likelier to be focused upon straightforward interpersonal bonding, where earlier generations might have been drawn to such activities, consciously or otherwise, largely as a way of addressing their guilt, shame, “masculinity,” or other long-repressed issues. Likewise, our artists, with fewer societal irritants resulting in the pearls of “identity art”—and with younger artists often leading the way—are opening themselves to broader possibilities than heretofore might have been imaginable. And more and more—to borrow a phrase from an interview with Charles Leslie appearing in this journal eleven years ago—our art is “about something larger than hot sex.”

With once-iconic aspects of gay life becoming less recognizable, future generations might need a museum of mid-twentieth-century gay culture—perhaps a “Gayville,” à la Williamsburg, that recreates, complete with costumed interpreters, a variety of “ye olde gay life” settings, from banal bedrooms and their clandestine porn-stashes, to an apartment overdone with campy tchotchkes, and perhaps even venturing into a drag queen’s closet (with the obligatory three-piece suit for the nine-
to-five workweek), and on—but only well after dark—to the “leather bars” and so forth. But I digress.

With younger LGBTQ art-lovers no longer looking particularly to gay art for erotic stimulation, hookups, or affirmation, what instead might be the focus of an institution such as our Leslie-Lohman Museum? In fact, almost a half-century after Charles and Fritz brought wide-eyed visitors first to their home and later to their “underground” Prince Street gallery, our prospects may be richer than ever: not only to continue offering our visitors—in Oscar Wilde’s memorable phrase—“art for art’s sake,” showing work that they can appreciate for its materials and technical accomplishment as much as for its homoerotic subject matter, but also, more important from a longer-term perspective, to catalyze provocative encounters, at once bracing and inspiring, with the greater depth of our LGBTQ heritage. Our current exhibition, Classical Nudes and the Making of Queer History, is a great example of what can be done along just such lines.

Although we can’t predict the elements and needs of an unforeseeable future—even our strategic-planning process, now underway and welcoming the input of our current members, can’t realistically address more than the next few years—we can look forward to the LLM’s ongoing evolution with certain broad goals ever more clearly in mind:

- art’s role in bridging the LGBTQ past with its future;
- our increased conversation with the non-queer artistic community—no longer a matter of our isolation, nor a question of assimilation, but rather an opportunity for mutual engagement enriching all involved; and
- throughout it all, our continued service to the LGBTQ community as it evolves, with broader understandings of the “queer”, and as it sustains and is sustained by art that remains no less stimulating than that which startled our forebears to view publicly.

To claim “bliss,” much less “heaven,” would be exaggerated, but gay art lovers of all ages have much to celebrate: Thanks to the foundations laid for us by Charles and Fritz, we of the Leslie-Lohman Museum have a rich legacy of art that will continue to speak meaningfully to LGBTQ experiences past, present, and future.

Ray Warman—pensioner, bookman, and free-lance gadfly—is a member of the LLGAF Board. Born—and almost named “Harry”—on Election Day night 1948, he came of age as a gay man only in the 1990s. His observations of generational differences are drawn, in part, from his work in advancing LGBTQ support groups (first at a Fortune100 company and later at a “Big Law” firm), as well as from his service as president of a bellwether gay leather club.
Art & AIDS: Amor y Pasión
January 22 – February 1, 2015 Leslie-Lohman Museum
Osvaldo Perdomo and David Livingston, Guest Curators

For the sixth year, the Museum is happy to partner with GMHC. The exhibition, *Art & AIDS: Amor y Pasión*, features artists with HIV or AIDS who participate in the weekly therapeutic art classes run by GMHC’s Volunteer, Work and Wellness Center and by artists who have sought support from GMHC. Forty-eight artists will be represented in the exhibition.

During this exhibition, artists are allowed to sell their work, allowing them the opportunity to increase their financial independence and offering the chance to exhibit publicly, which in turn may assist them in securing gallery representation.

This year, their work will be exhibited alongside works by Keith Haring. To mark the 25th anniversary of Haring’s death from AIDS, the Museum borrowed from the Haring Foundation six significant prints from a series called *Bad Boys*, made in 1986. These works have seldom been exhibited publicly. They are bold, joyous examples of Haring’s examination of his own sexuality from a time when many contemporaries became sick and were dying. After Haring discovered his own HIV status several years later, he allowed it to become part of his public identity.

Museum Director Hunter O’Hanian chatted with one participant in the GMHC program—Joseph P.—about his work, the GMHC program, and how HIV effects his life.

Hunter O’Hanian (HOH): Joseph, tell me a little about yourself.

Joseph P. (JP): I am 42 years old, ugh! I live in the Hamilton Heights area of Manhattan—native New Yorker from Hell’s Kitchen. I currently work part-time at the Rotella Gallery in Soho. I also model part-time for Leslie-Lohman’s drawing group, the Gay Men’s Figurative Drawing Group at the Center, and occasionally at the Life Drawing classes at GMHC.

HOH: How do you keep yourself busy?

JP: I love to stay in shape and enjoy working out. I enjoy the company of a rich social life with my friends, sharing many things we have in common such as art, theater, support groups, and travel. And drawing of course. I go every Wednesday to the Life Drawing Group at GMHC. As an artist, I also attend the group at Leslie-Lohman, and the group at the Center is quite wonderful as well.

HOH: What is centering your life these days?

JP: At this point, creativity. The one thing in my life that has always made me happy, challenged me, invigorated me, has been my art. So this past year has been a time to going back to what I love the most: drawing, painting and creating.

HOH: When did you find out that you had HIV?

JP: I discovered I was positive in 2003, so it’s been some time. It was an adjustment, but I was thankful that I had options initially and a huge support network,
which included GMHC and a great therapist. I was also thankful I didn’t need to go on medication until 2006. I was in a good situation, never having an AIDS diagnosis, and my blood work is great. I quickly learned that it was no longer a death sentence and that I had great options with medication once I started. Dealing with the insurance coverage is definitely a pain, but, again, I have support to deal with the insurance bullshit and red tape attached to getting appropriate medical care. It can be very stressful but these days it’s about being of sound mind so one can deal with it.

**HOH:** How have you seen your life change over the decade since your diagnosis?

**JP:** Dating used to be stressful, particularly with revealing my status. I continue to educate myself about living with HIV, what it means to be undetectable and how the virus is transmitted. I have come across some ignorant gay men, unfortunately, who don’t educate themselves about HIV as well as other STDs. A question that still angers me today from “negative men” would have to be, without a doubt, “Are you clean?” Or perhaps, “Are you drug- or disease-free?” Okay, I get the drug-free question, but the rest is pretty inconsiderate and really dumb! But, in life we all have crosses to bear. Some people suffer from anxiety and depression. Others suffer from diabetes, cancer, bipolar, hepatitis, and herpes. Are they considered “dirty?” “Not clean?” No! I like putting my diagnosis, and my blood work is great. I quickly learned that it was no longer a death sentence and that I had great options with medication once I started. Dealing with the insurance coverage is definitely a pain, but, again, I have support to deal with the insurance bullshit and red tape attached to getting appropriate medical care. It can be very stressful but these days it’s about being of sound mind so one can deal with it.

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**HOH:** Where do you draw your inspiration?

**JP:** My art is reflective of some of my favorite artists, musicians, and clubs from New York’s past. I love anything by Georgia O’Keeffe. My favorite painting is *Black Iris.* I can stare at it for hours. I also love Raphael, Toulouse-Lautrec, and Frida Kahlo. I also love the pinup artists Alberto Vargas and Olivia De Berardinis. I am also inspired by great designers such as John Galliano, Alexander McQueen, Gaultier, Mugler, and Vivienne Westwood. Fashion icon models such as Linda Evangelista and Yasmeen Ghauri are women who have been instrumental in a lot of my creations. Of course, for me, Madonna has to be on this list. Her reinventions are timeless!

**HOH:** Do you get to visit many museums and galleries?

**JP:** The Metropolitan Museum of Art is always first on my list. It has been an important education for me as I have spent hours drawing statues on the marble floors. I also love the Frick and El Museo del Barrio. That is where I first saw a Frida Kahlo collection. 

**HOH:** What is your art background?

**JP:** Going back to my freshman year in high school, I have had good art teachers. I trained with a great teacher—Robert Coane. I later trained with him in his private studio. Robert taught me the fundamentals of classical drawing starting with anatomy, still life, and how to use live models. I have also taken painting classes at the Art Students League of New York. I was a fine arts major in college but was not able to finish my degree.

**HOH:** Tell me more about the life drawing group you attend at GMHC.

**JP:** I absolutely love it. I think David Livingston is an amazing teacher who gives us different styles and techniques to try every week. He is very hands-on with everyone, helping us grow as artists. We escape reality for two hours and leave our problems at the door when we attend this group. That’s what I love about it. The first thing we do before drawing is shake our hands and arms, getting rid of the negativity. The class is about fluidity and letting yourself go. It has been fundamental to helping me get back to what I love. When I draw or paint, I forget about the drama, pain, issues, and negativity outside, and I think about the beauty and creativity inside.

**HOH:** Tell me about the work you’ve been making recently.

**JP:** Lately at home I have been working on floral pieces. I love doing single flowers of an erotic nature. I also enjoy the female form, and incorporate strength, beauty and femininity in my pictures. This year has been a time to start incorporating the male form in my art, and appreciating the beauty of the male nude, which is why I am also doing these groups. I have always leaned towards women, from supermodels like Linda Evangelista, comic book heroines like Wonder Woman and Storm, old Hollywood actresses including Marilyn Monroe, Rita Hayworth, and Ava Gardner, to Greek mythological figures such as Medusa and Diana. I would now like to do the same with the classical male nude to appreciate my own beauty through a self-portrait.
The Leslie-Lohman Collection Continues to Build and Grow

As of late November 2014, we have cataloged over 12,000 objects into our database. Our best estimate reveals we now have more than 24,000 objects in our possession. We are busy working to continue to catalog more items as we secure missing ownership documentation and update artists’ biographies.

In addition, the Accessions Committee has been busy reviewing work for recommendation for inclusion in the permanent collection. At the end of October, the Board has voted to accession 1,323 objects. These objects can be found on our website. Pictured here are some of recent pieces that were added to the permanent collection.

We are always interested in obtaining new work. Please feel free to contact Museum Director Hunter O’Hanian, or Wayne Snellen and Branden Wallace in the collections area, if you would like to make a donation of artwork. Any of us can help you through the process. 


(below) Anna Campbell. /sash, 2013, Latex and balsa wood, 6 x 6 x 37 in. Gift of the artist.
(below) Jack Pierson, Hot Dogs at Sunset, 2003, C-print on Fujiflex Crystal paper, 14 x 11 in. Foundation purchase with funds provided by Richard Gerrig and Timothy Peterson.


(right) Delmas Howe, Picnic in the Grass, 1979, Oil on canvas, 48 x 60 in. Gift of Angela Tese-Milner and Michael Milner.


Current and Upcoming Exhibitions at Leslie-Lohman Museum

Classical Nudes / 26 Wooster Street
October 17 2014 – Jan 4, 2015
Examining the influence of the same-sex gaze as seen through the classical form from Antiquity to the Renaissance, 18th/19th Centuries, and present day.
Curated by Jonathan David Katz.
Unknown artist, Ruhm, 1910, Embossed print on paper, 4.5 x 7.5 in.
LLM Collection, Foundation purchase.

Irreverent / 26 Wooster Street
February 13–April 19, 2015
Work by artists that has been censored from exhibitions due to its gay and sexual content.
Curated by Jennifer Tyburczy.
Zanele Muholi, Being (Detail, Ed. 8), 2007.
Courtesy of the artist and the Yancey Richardson Gallery.

Art & AIDS: Amor y Pasión / 26 Wooster Street
January 22–February 1, 2015
Works by participants in the GMHC art therapy program. 48 artists will be represented in this exhibition.
Curated by Osvaldo Perdomo and David Livingston.
Clecia Lira, African Pietà, 2013, Digital photograph on Plexiglass (Ed. 2/5), 50 x 50 in.

#interface / 26 Wooster Street
May 1–July 5, 2015
Twenty-nine New York based queer artists working a wide variety of mediums that have developed an artistic community through social media platforms.
Curated by Walt Cessna.
Scooter LaForge, Masters of the Universe, 2011, Oil on canvas, 50 x 60 in.