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Exhibition Title: "QUEER!"

I have chosen the title "QUEER!" for my exhibition title because it's about the reclamation of the word "queer" and why it is important to the LGBTQ+ community. It's about how, over decades, words and categorisations that have been used to oppress and alienate our community, as a queer individual myself, has been adapted in an act of protest. Derek Jarman (as cited by Barlow) is quoted as saying "For me, to use the word 'queer' is a liberation; it was a word that frightened me, but no longer" (Barlow, 2017, p.13) In this exhibition I am going to include queer art made by queer artists whose practice took place in different times (spanning from the 19th century, 20th century) and how looking back at this is vital to the understanding and liberation of queer people everywhere. I will look at queer theory and how the link between art and queerness is nothing new..."calling someone 'arty' or 'artistic' has often been a euphemism for homosexuality" (Reed, 2011, p.1). Many artists have suffered through oppression, having works banned or having to be subtle with their creative outpourings in relation to their queerness in order to not offend the generalised public or, as often the case, get their works banned and become unable to make money from their practice. Often queer readings are not obvious straight away until you are aware of the context of the individual.

"We don't need an explanation for homosexuality just as we don't need one for heterosexuality" (Ambrosino, 2017). There's a shift in understanding of homosexuality and queerness, once viewed as deviant and unnatural, "In Victorian Britain sex between men was seen not only just as a perversion or as an abominable crime (...) but an infection or contagion.." (Barlow, p.84, 2017), it is now widely accepted as normal. Heterosexuals don't decide to be straight just as queer people decide to be queer. So, why is it important to look at queer art? Looking at queer art gives us a better understanding of the struggles and lives of

queer artists, especially important when they were subject to oppression and controversy simply due to their queerness. It's important to note that not all queerness was treated similarly, "The Buggery Act of 1533 (...) is the first time in law that male homosexuality was targeted for persecution (...) convictions were punishable by death (Dryden, no date available). Whereas, "women's relations to one another were never subject to the same legal scrutiny as those between men, allowing many women to forge intimate bonds" (Barlow, p.14, 2017). I want to make it clear that while I am covering queerness in I do not want this curation to be considered as "lumping" the artists together, as that is not true, each queer individual has different struggles which include factors such as race, where they live, class etc.

For these reasons it is important that I include a range of "queer" art by different people from different periods of time and different backgrounds. The exhibition is placed in mission gallery.

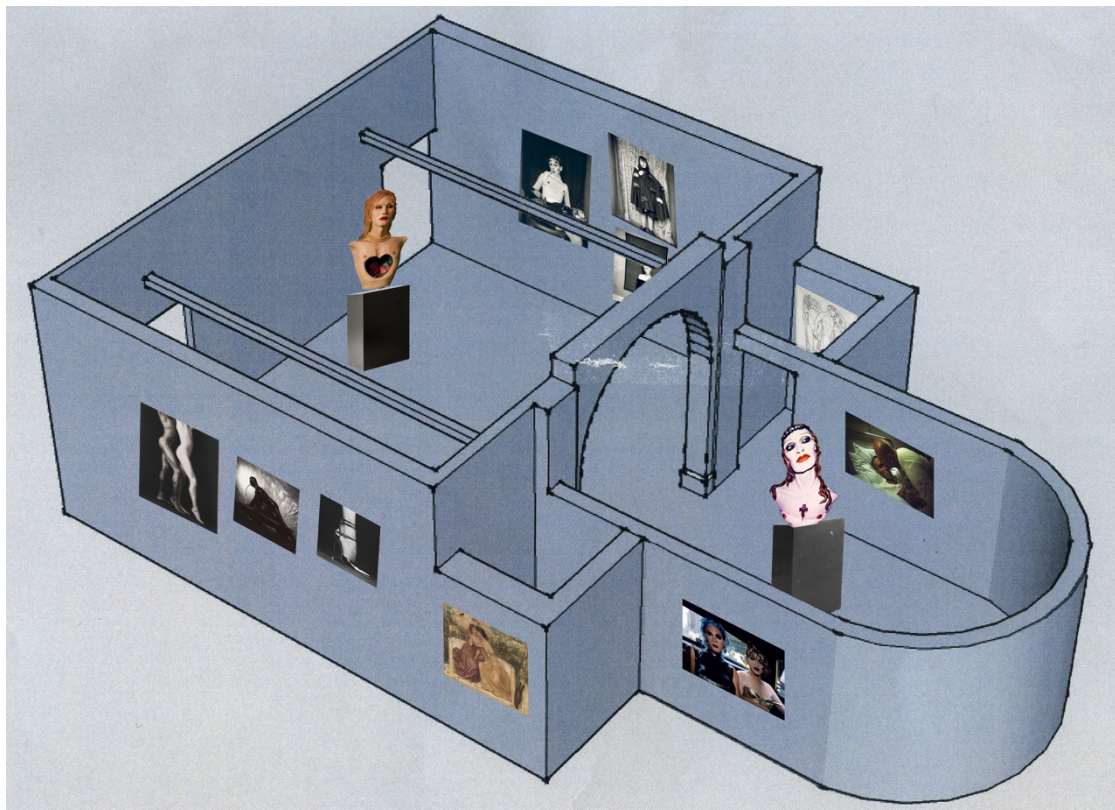


Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

Claude Cahun's (1894-1954) self-portraits, most of which being captured in the late 1920s are important photographs in queer art history, during this pre-WW2 time they played a lot with gender and would later move to Jersey with Partner Marcel Moore and became part of the resistance. "Some people have gender which is neither male nor female and may identify as both male and female at one time, as different genders at different times, as no gender at all, or dispute the very idea of only two genders. The umbrella terms for such genders are 'genderqueer' or 'non-binary' genders" (Richards, 2016). Though non-binary/genderqueer/genderfluid are relatively new terms that does not mean that the existence of genderfluid individuals did not exist before. Claude Cahun's playful approach to gender within their photographs show a deeper part of their being. Cahun wrote "Masculine? Feminine? It depends on the situation. Neuter is the only gender that always suits me." (*Disavowed Confessions*, 1930, Claude Cahun, referenced by Barlow 2017). Gender isn't simply black and white, male or female, it is a performance, a play, an expression. Gender expression is an integral part of queer history. The images a selected of Cahun's work show their playful performances which challenge gender.



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7

Another photographer I am including is Robert Mapplethorpe (1946-1989), his works from his exhibition “The Perfect Moment” (exhibiting in the late 80s) which showcased his greatest work Mapplethorpe’s work from his The Perfect moment exhibition is a collection of works throughout his lifetime. As noted the exhibition has great importance as it was cancelled at the Corcoran Gallery due to controversy. “...right wing politicians, fresh from their debates over AIDS education imagery, seized upon Mapplethorpe’s photographs in their fight against homosexuals’ increasing visibility and acceptance (...) politicians condemned their presentation as ‘art’ in museums” (Reed, p.224, 2011). This is a clear example of the oppression queer artists faced. The pulling of the show in 1989 lead to a artist lead protest outside the Corcoran, it had “drawn the ire of conservative lawmakers (...) dozens of artists announced they would cancel their Corcoran shows in solidarity” (Argetsinger, 2016). While being queer in the late 80s was slowly becoming more acceptable

the likes of right-wing politicians still painted gay-men as AIDs riddled outlaws, represented as statistics and bad examples to the generalised public. Mapplethorpe's works hold great importance in queer art history, representing the strife that came along with being queer as well as being queer in the art world.



Figure 8



Figure 9

I also wanted to include two Greer Lankton sculptures to make the exhibition more immersive, including something the audience can walk around. Lankton (1958-1996) was a transgender artist known for playing with gender and sexuality within her creations. "...the drive that makes people risk so much to represent a gender that they feel is theirs, and yet is very different to the social, cultural and legal expectations of their birth sex". Trans individuals often go through hormone therapy, surgeries, countless medical appointments as well as the often judgemental, unsupportive, bigoted public views of others. Although now, in the UK, a transgender individual can legally change their name and gender this has only been in place since 2004 with the introduction of the Gender Recognition Act, "Under the act, the government awarded trans people full legal gender recognition and allowed them to acquire new birth certificates" (Nevrkla, 2018). That was only 16 years ago. Greer Lankton played with gender within her dolls, being transgender it's clear to see how she uses her work to express her identity. The Jesus/Mary sculpture shows an androgynous version of the pair whereas in her sculpture of Candy Darling (a famous transgender actress and one of Warhol's muses) she pays homage to one of her inspirations. These works offer the audience something to walk around between looking at the paintings and the photographs, making the exhibition that little bit more immersive.



Figure 10

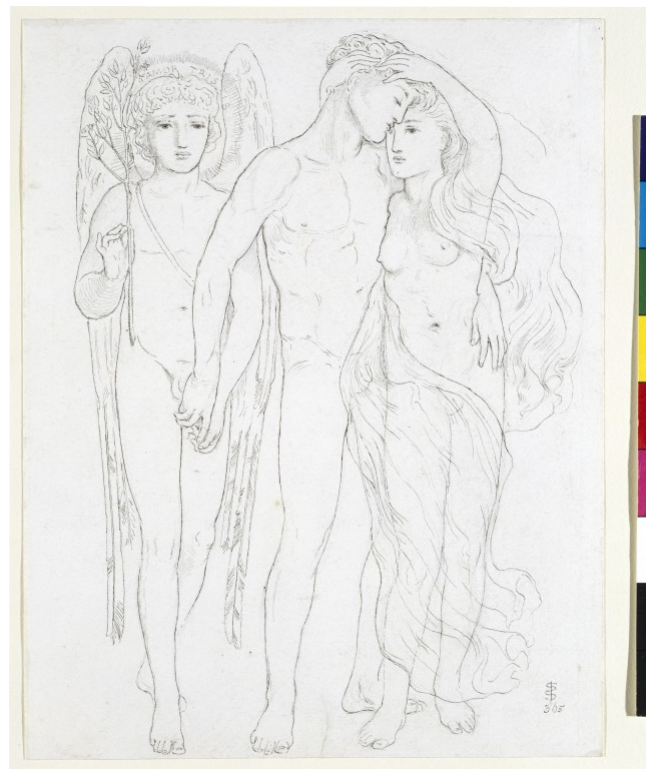


Figure 11

I also wanted to include a painter, Simeon Solomon (1840-1905), Solomon was a homosexual man who produced a bulk of his work in the 1860s and often had homosexual imagery, most famous of which being his painting of Sappho and Erinna in a Garden at Mytilene (1864). His works are important as they showed queer imagery that shocked audiences and predated the shock that Mapplethorpe caused, showing that this problem had been prevalent for a long time. Solomon was “arrested and charged in Paris for ‘indecent touching’ in a lavatory. These scandals were to prove disastrous for his reputation” (Barlow, p.30, 2017). This clearly shows the backlash artists would face However, “his bravery in depicting his own desires (...) has been acknowledged in more recent times. (...) Solomon provided a model for the lawless gay misfit in eternal exile” (Barlow, p.30, 2017).



Figure 12



Figure 13

Finally, I'm including the work of Nan Goldin, her photojournalist approach to capturing her world, revolving around the LGBTQ+ community in New York during the 80s and 90s, when the AIDs pandemic was at large is still relevant to the present day and struggles faces by queer people. The word queers allows a fluidity, a label without being suffocated within the confines of it, "Queer theory is not a singular or systematic conceptual or methodological framework, but a collection on intellectual engagements with the relations between sex, gender and sexual desire" (Spargo, p.9, 1999). Goldin photographed her life within the queer community in New York during the 80s and 90s, touching on similar topics brought up in Mapplethorpe's protest, the oppression the gay community faced and the AIDs pandemic which caused so much suffering, and still. Capturing her world in a documentary style way, her photos have a fondness and an intimacy, it's vital to queer history to have images that capture what was happening within the community, captured by someone themselves who was a part of it (Goldin being bisexual). "In those days people died fast. I watched nearly

everyone I knew die”. (Nan Goldin quoted by Perlson, 2017). The images I’ve chosen capture the community and the struggles endured.

Figures

Fig. 1: Digitally Rendered Gallery Floor Plan

fig. 2 Cahun, C., 1927, Courtesy pf Jersey Heritage Collections

<https://www.anothermag.com/art-photography/7358/claude-cahun-a-very-curious-spirit>
(accessed 10 Mary 2020)

fig. 3 Cahun, C. (date not found), Courtesy of Jersey Heritage Collection

<https://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/07/21/claude-cahun-homosexuality-i-exploring-identity-through-self-portraits/> (accessed 10 May 2020)

fig. 4. Cahun, C. *Self-Portrait* [Full Length Masked Figure In Cloak With Masks], 1928, Jersey Heritage Collections <https://www.npg.org.uk/whatson/wearing-cahun/explore/claude-cahun/> (accessed 10 April 2020).

Fig. 5 Mapplethorpe, R. *Joe, n.y.c.*, 1978 [selenium toned gelatin print], From the X Portfolio, jointly acquired by the J. Paul Getty trust and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. <http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/254555/robert-mapplethorpe-joe-nyc-american-1978/> (accessed 10 April 2020)

Fig 6. Mapplethorpe, R. *Melody (Shoe)*, 1987. Gift of The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation to the J Paul Getty Trust and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. <https://www.dailyxtra.com/a-look-back-at-robert-mapplethorpes-powerful-queer-portraits-72392> (accessed 10 April 2020)

Fig. 7 Mapplethorpe, R. *Ken and Tyler*, 1985, Mapplethorpe foundation, courtesy of the Guggenheim museum. <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-mapplethorpes-photographs-remain-subversive-shock-value> (accessed 10 May 2020)

Fig 8 Lankton, G. installation view of “*It’s All About ME, Not You*”, 2009, courtesy of the Mattress Factory. <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-1980s-icon-greer-lankton-explored-glamour-gender-ecerie-dolls> (accessed 11 April 2020)

Fig. 9 Lankton, G. *Jesus/Mary* (1990) [paper, glass, metal]
<https://greerlankton.format.com/2326526-meet-the-dolls#3> (accessed 10 April 2020)

Fig. 10 Solomon, S. *Sappho and Erinna in a Garden at Mytilene*, 1840 [watercolour on canvas], Tate <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/solomon-sappho-and-erinna-in-a-garden-at-mytilene-t03063> (accessed 12 April 2020)

Fig. 11 Solomon, S. *Bridegroom and Sad Love*, 1865 [drawing], Victoria and Albert Museum, London <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O126681/the-bride-bridegroom-and-sad-drawing-solomon-simeon/> (accessed 12 April 2020)

Fig. 12 Goldin, N. *Misty and Jimmy Paulette In A Taxi, NYC* (1991) [photograph dye destruction print on paper mounted on board] <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/goldin-misty-and-jimmy-paulette-in-a-taxi-nyc-p78046> (accessed 13 April 2020)

Fig. 13 Goldin, N. “*Gotscho Kissing Giles*”, Paris (1993) <https://www.sleek-mag.com/article/aids-through-nan-goldins-eyes/> (accessed 13 April 2020)

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