

**FROM PRIDE
IN DIVERSITY TO
STANDING FAST:
EXHIBITING QUEER
CULTURE IN IRELAND
1996–2001**



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OUTART

The OutArt exhibitions, which ran between 1996 and 2001 in venues in Dublin and Cork came at a crucial moment in Irish queer history. In 1993, thanks to the work of activists and politicians that had been campaigning for reform since the '70s, the laws that made same-sex sexual activity an offence were repealed, overturning the centuries-old legislation that had inscribed homophobia as law. Connected to the wider queer culture that had been burgeoning in Ireland since the mid-90s, the first exhibition was developed to run during Pride, a platform for artists who identified as LGBTQ+ interested in examining sexuality in their work.¹ Though relatively small-scale, the exhibitions represent a moment when sexuality and identity were becoming important concerns for some Irish artists, reflecting the broader shift in Irish society towards awareness and acceptance of people who identified as queer. Over the course of their six year-run, they offer us a snapshot of how this shift in attitudes towards sexuality in Ireland registered in the visual arts and document an emerging community both local and international who were examining what it meant to be queer and Irish at a moment when this identity was being wholly renegotiated.

We first started looking into OutArt as part of an invitation to develop a programme for the 200th anniversary of the RHA. Part of our ambition was to consider the histories of the institution that were less immediately obvious, thinking about how people had interacted with the institution as both insiders and outsiders, and how the gallery had related to the communities around it. It was in this context that we came across the catalogues to *(!N)V!S!B!L!T!ES*

introduction
sarah kelleher and
rachel warriner

^{1.} A note on the term LGBTQ+: We have chosen to use the more recent term LGBTQ+ throughout this introduction, but wanted to note that it was not a common term during the 1990s and early 2000s. Although LGBT started being used in the late 1980s in some circles, the addition of Q+ comes in the mid-2010s. However, the term queer is used from the outset of publications associated with OutArt and, as such, we felt that LGBTQ+ was most reflective of the community and ethos that OutArt sought to represent.

2. See John Turpin, *History of the Royal Hibernian Academy of Arts, Vol. 2, 1916–2010*, (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2018)

and *Confrontations* held in the RHA's Gallagher gallery in 1997 and 1998. The shows were short run, a very temporary inhabitation of the gallery that pointed to a history outside the institution's more established programmes.² Like many of the OutArt exhibitions, *(!N)V!S!B!L!T!ES* and *Confrontations* featured work by a range of artists working in different media, some Irish, some international, with different levels of recognition and professional ambitions. It lead us to think about the series as a whole, exploring its history through the exhibition catalogues and the archives held by the National Irish Visual Arts Library (NIVAL) which offer a window into the ways in which a community of people were examining what it meant to engage with the topic of sexuality through art and what it meant to make art as an LGBTQ+ artist working in Ireland.

This publication and the series of talks that we developed with the RHA (available [here](#)) aim to offer insight into the history, ambitions and legacy of OutArt. Republishing texts and reproducing work that was included in the original catalogues offers a sense of the development of the project, the kinds of work that were shown, and the dialogue that helped frame the disparate practices that were selected. We are hugely grateful to those that helped us develop this project: Patrick T. Murphy, Róisín Bohan and Sarah McAuliffe at the RHA who have supported our research; the Association for Art History; NIVAL for all their help with organising reproductions and loans; Niall Sweeney for his work on this catalogue; and Padráig Spillane for his careful and considered conversations with artists involved in OutArt. Particular thanks are due to the artists and writers who have spoken to us about the project and have given us permission to reproduce their work: Paul Bommer, Linda Cullen, Lorna Healy, Catherine Harper, Andrew Kearney, Fiona Mulholland, Henry Pim, Paul Rowley, Niall Sweeney, Alex Walsh, Louise Walsh, Mick Wilson and Mo White.

The images and texts selected for this publication were chosen to represent a range of the work included in OutArt both in terms of artistic approach but also in terms of the ideas that supported it. They are by no means comprehensive; we have favoured work by Irish artists, in order to focus on the kinds of work being made in Ireland at the time by queer practitioners rather than the work that was being made by artists working elsewhere. We acknowledge that this selection omits an important part of the visual conversation that OutArt initiated. We made this choice because we felt that much of the international work was perhaps better known and had received more scholarly attention—Rosy Martin, for example, (whose work appears in *Pride in Diversity*, *Confrontations* and *Video Invidious*) is an important figure in feminist and queer histories of British Art—and with limited space, we were keen to bring attention to the ways in which those based in and with close ties to Ireland were developing community and discourse here. We have also chosen not to reproduce work included in *Stand Fast Dick and Jane* because it is fully documented on Alan Phelan's valuable archive on his [website](#).

Our hope is that this project will act to broaden our understanding of the institutional histories of exhibition spaces like the RHA. Smaller, community driven projects such as OutArt often worked with the support of larger institutions and the people who worked within them, focusing on different themes and approaches than were shown in the main exhibition programmes. Accounting for these smaller, short-term, self-organised projects tells a rich and sometimes hidden history of Irish art which relates to and sits outside of larger thematic and chronological accounts of Irish art history. In addition, we hope that this history will add to the burgeoning body of work on queer histories of Irish art and cultural practice and

their legacies from writers, artists and curators, such as: *Patrick Hennessy: De Profundis* (IMMA, 2016) and *Queer Embodiment* (IMMA, 2021) curated by Seán Kissane, *I Am What I Am* (Ballina Arts Centre, 2021) curated by Sinéad Keogh, at *The Queeratorial* curated by Aoife Banks at the Butler Gallery (2023), *Queer-in-Progress. Timeline* organised by Livia Páldi and Han Tiernan (2020-present). This project is offered as a broad overview of OutArt and, we hope, an invitation to look more closely at this important and fascinating moment in Irish art history.

OutArt, 1996-2001

The first OutArt exhibition took place in Dublin in 1996 at the City Arts Centre. Entitled *Pride in Diversity: An Exhibition of Gay, Lesbian and Queer Art*, it formed part of the Pride celebrations that year and included work by Colm Brady, Heather Fleming, Tom Gleeson, Kellie Green, Patricia Hurl, Andrew Kearney, Rosy Martin, Kate Murphy, Henry Pim, Billy Quinn, Gerry Scott, Louise Walsh, Mo White, Mick Wilson, and Joan Woods. Pointing to the self-organised nature of the project, a number of those were on the committee, including Pim, Gleeson, Walsh, Wilson, Scott, Hurl and Quinn. The title *Pride in Diversity* describes both the ethos of the exhibition and the approach to selection of work by those tasked with choosing from submissions: Joan Fowler, Therry Ruden and Patrick Hall. Included are works in ceramics, photography, video, mixed media, installation, print and paint that explore subjects relating to gay sexuality, identity and desire. This deliberate heterogeneity of medium and approach—Patricia Hurl’s figurative painting *Mantle*, a fleshy, sensual close up of female breasts, belly and pubis; Henry Pim’s ceramic *Flight into Egypt*, an abstract evocation of vulnerability and shelter; Tom Gleeson’s unsettling *Skin Series* in scorched

and blistered latex and plastic; Mo White’s film *My Eye*, a hypnotic and uncomfortably tactile closeup of a finger probing and piercing a sticky yellow egg yolk—led Mebd Ruane to describe the show as a ‘Rubik’s Cube of gay art’; a tessellation of viewpoints and concerns that refused the flattening of difference.³ Following the logic of Pride more broadly, it was a celebration of the work of LGBTQ+ artists, a show in which those who identified as queer could claim space for their sexuality in the art world. It was this that united the work that was included rather than anything else. The ‘diversity’ of the title reflected the range of the work included, which sometimes explored sexuality directly, sometimes obliquely, and sometimes in ways that were difficult to determine. In Ruane’s words, ‘the show is more a collection of individual perspectives than a curated document about sexuality and gender’.⁴

The development of artists’ practice and their professional ambitions also ran the gamut from those who were well-established and critically lauded to those who had recently graduated or who were using art as a way to expand on activism and community work. Selected from an open call, the sheer range of approaches to practice, subject matter, and artistic ambitions were a fundamental part of the exhibition’s rationale. In her review in *Circa*, Jane Tynan considered what she described as a ‘huge variation in quality’ in the work, but argued that it was an important part of what OutArt was doing, stating that ‘the opportunity to make the aesthetic work to unmask political and social truths and interrupt the complacency of a dominant code of representation is worth the risk’.⁵ Ruane agreed in her review in *The Sunday Times*, arguing for the particular value of this group show in a context where they had fallen out of fashion, stating ‘the fact that you can raise issues about inclusiveness and the rights of minorities more easily in the arts than elsewhere

3. Mebd Ruane, ‘The Rubik cubism of gay art’, *The Sunday Times*, 30/06/1996

4. (Ibid.)

5. Jane Tynan, ‘Pride in Diversity’, *Circa*, 1996, p. 59

6. Medb Ruane, 'The Rubik cubism of gay art', *The Sunday Times*, 30/06/1996
7. 'Introduction', *Pride in Diversity*, (Dublin; City Arts Centre, 1996) p. 1

means that other concerns — like offering role models, like standing up to be counted — come into play'.⁶

This is important for thinking about the significance of OutArt. Few among the organisers or participants argue for the value of the early exhibitions as being about the curatorial vision or a particular aesthetic approach, instead it was about visibility and community, bringing attention to the theme of sexuality through art and asserting its importance as an artistic subject. The endorsement of the show by established institutions, including the Arts Council and City Arts Centre and the art press reflects this; public support and critical attention underlined the importance of artists coming together to discuss sexuality through art practice. Visibility was a priority for the committee, not only in the moment of the Pride celebrations but also in the ways that they documented the exhibitions, producing a full-colour catalogue that was, according to the committee's introduction to the publication that accompanied *Pride in Diversity*, to 'act as a permanent record of this important project'.⁷ Made for each OutArt exhibition, the catalogues recorded the works that were included, offered details on the artists and contextualised their practice through essays from writers who explored queerness and its intersection with art at the time. Acting as an extension of the exhibition, these publications put them in the context of a conversation and community who were exploring sexuality, gender and its relationship to society both in Ireland and internationally.

After *Pride in Diversity*, came *(!N)VIS!B!L!T!ES: an exhibition of gay, lesbian and queer art* (1997). Featuring eight practitioners (including the duo McDermott and McGough, as well as Christa Zauner, Mo White, Veronica Slater, Paul Rowley, Andrew Fox, James Dunbar, and Michael Beirne) it marked a development from *Pride in Diversity* which acted as a first attempt to make LGBTQ+

artists more visible in the Irish art world, and instead moved to organising the selection around a theme. *(!N)VIS!B!L!T!ES* considered what it meant to be seen, with the concepts of visibility and invisibility broadly defined by the selection committee (Ciarán MacGonigal of the RHA, Louise Walsh and Mick Wilson). We can see this in the work. Andrew Fox's drawings, for example, pictured intimate scenes of cruising, with masculine figures waiting on corners or standing naked in the sauna, hidden to all but those who knew to look. Eyes gaze out of McDermott and McGough's *Ber Quay*, searching through holes in a wall that is scrawled with homophobic insults, unclear whether they are shocked, seductive or curious, the work speaks to the contradiction between hidden sex and those that seek to expose it, the cruel jibes making hate visible in a space of illicit pleasure. Mo White's work *X* consisted of slides shown on a continuous loop, with an image of a woman looking into a concave mirror in such a way as she meets our gaze as viewers. The camera is not reflected, meaning that we look at someone looking at us in reflection, the mirror evokes the *Arnolfini Portrait* making its exploration of the gaze not only contemporary but also historical. Themes of looking, being looked at and wanting to be seen run throughout the work.

This exploration was broad, bringing together very different interpretations of the theme that were political, aesthetic, and personal. Similar to *Pride in Diversity* the exhibition was not designed to be a coherent proposition but instead a space to explore what it meant to make work that reflected queer experience. For reviewers, this question was central to assessing the success of the show. Aidan Dunne, for example, expressed the problem with the ambiguity of the idea of 'an exhibition of gay, lesbian and queer art', asking 'What is gay art? Art made by artists who are gay or art that deals with gay subject matter? Or art made by artists who

are gay that happens to address gayness?'.⁸ However, for the selection committee, these ideas were too restrictive for the late 1990s. Arguing for the value of including a diverse range of artists and perspectives, Wilson writes in his catalogue text 'It is an exhibition such as this and the ongoing project of the OutArt Committee which represents one of several possible alternative arenas in which questions of gay, lesbian and queer experience can be interrogated. Thus community building can proceed without inevitably reducing this emergent community to a single voice or a single image or constraining it to coincide with the contours of the nation-state'.⁹ Ruane argues that in *(!N)VISIBILITIES*, 'the decision about whether OutArt is issue-based or artist-based still hasn't been taken', however, this ambiguity was something left deliberately open in the exhibition, allowing gay artists, gay subject matter, artistic and issue based work to co-exist as individual perspectives from within the emerging and increasingly visible movement.¹⁰

8. Aidan Dunne, 'Invisibilities', *The Sunday Times*, 20/07/1997
9. Mick Wilson, '(!N)VISIBILITIES: Some Gambits', *(!N)VISIBILITIES: an exhibition of gay, lesbian and queer art* (Dublin: RHA Gallagher Gallery, 1997) pp. 4-7, p. 7
10. Medb Ruane, 'invisibilities', *Circa*, (1997), p. 59

The contrast between Ailbhe Smyth's catalogue text for *Confrontations* (which took place in the RHA Gallagher Gallery, Dublin, and the Triskel Arts Centre, Cork, in 1998) and the reviews of the show demonstrate the very different perspectives on the need to assert queer identity in what were more usually spaces that represented (or at least were presumed to represent) straight experience. *Confrontations* was conceived to be a more direct challenge than previous shows, representing on the one hand the anger and pain of homophobia and on the other more explicit representations of unapologetic queer sexuality. Political confrontation was important, ILGO and Cecelia Dougherty's work *ILGO Protests, St Patrick's Day Parade, New York* documented the challenge mounted by the Irish Lesbian and Gay Organisation against their exclusion from St Patrick's day celebrations in New York.

Others celebrated queer love and sex. Tom Gleeson's *Feminised Male*, a series of photographic portraits of drag queens, for example, were celebratory and sexual. In *Phyllis Stein and Brendan: The Furnace* (1997) we see an intimate scene taken in a nightclub, a man seems to passionately kiss the chest of Phyllis Stein who is dressed in drag with Fara Fawcett-style waves tumbling over her shoulders, strong blue eyeshadow and cherry-red lips. Taken from above, the image is a celebration of this moment of intimacy on the dance floor; almost glowing with light against the dark background, Phyllis Stein's expression of pleasure acts as a celebration of the joy of queer sex. While there are still abstract works that do not mount an explicit challenge to the viewer, *Confrontations* arguably contains more aggression and sexuality than *Pride in Diversity* and *(!N)VISIBILITIES*, not only in the work but also in the texts published in the catalogue.

For Smyth, who curated *Confrontations*, it was important to keep the clash between straight and LGBTQ+ experience central in discussions of how to represent queer experience. Despite claims that being queer was accepted, even fashionable, she argued that it was still always in confrontation with heterosexism: 'Oh, the luxury of straightness: never having to define, explain, defend, never having to confront yourself, never having to prove or demonstrate'.¹¹ Isabel Healy's review seems to illustrate this dissonance between the ways in which confrontation was understood by the LGBTQ+ community as valuable and necessary and those outside the community that saw OutArt solely as an exhibition of contemporary art and therefore judged it according to those terms. Writing in *The Examiner* about her discomfort with what she saw as the misuse of religious imagery in a work by Paul Bommer, which pictured a green Christ nailed to an upside down cross, ejaculating into

11. Ailbhe Smyth, 'Not Living in Sydney, or Confronting Politics and Art', *Confrontations: An Exhibition of Queer Art*, (Dublin: OUTART, 1998), unpaginated

12. Isabel Healy, 'A Queer Kind of Confrontation', *The Examiner*, 02/09/1998
13. (Ibid.)
14. For example, in David Norris' case against the Attorney General in 1983 which argued that the legislation against sexual activity between men and contravened the constitutional right to privacy was rejected according to the ruling of the Supreme Court 'on the ground of the Christian nature of our State'. Incidentally, the history of the Catholic church's official response to the AIDS crisis contains interesting examples of progressive voices within the church in relation to sexuality and health, see Oppenheimer, Gerald M. "The Catholic Church, AIDS, and Sexuality in Ireland: Uncovering Part of the Story." *American journal of public health* vol. 108,7 (2018): 850-851. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2018.304459
15. Ailbhe Smyth, 'Not Living in Sydney, or Confronting Politics and Art', *Confrontations: An Exhibition of Queer Art*, (Dublin: OUTART, 1998), unpaginated
16. Suzy O'Mullane, '[Confrontations] an Exhibition of Queer Art, Triskel Arts Centre, Cork, August/September 1998. RHA Gallagher Gallery, Dublin June/July 1998', *Circa*, 86: Winter, 1998, p. 59

a chalice inscribed with the words 'second cumming of Jizzus' and held by a demon, she dismissed the work on the grounds of it being offensive and alienating. Healy acknowledged Bommer's 'message of defiance in the face of intolerance' but described it as being delivered 'in a way that many will find distasteful, alienating, too, using a vocabulary unknown to most.'¹² While her objection to this 'irreverent use of religious iconography', its lack of respect for Christianity and the fact that, in her words 'I don't like upside-down crosses' is framed as a reasonable request of liberal society — supported by Healy's claim that 'out of respect, I would not wear fashion clothing with symbols or deities which Buddhists (or any faith) hold dear' — she fails to address the title of the offending work: *If They Had Their Way We'd All Die Out*.¹³ Bommer's work is a direct confrontation with Christianity's impact on the experience of LGBTQ+ people in Ireland.¹⁴ Stripping the politics away from the work, refusing its terms and instead focusing on her own sense of offence, Healy asserts that the work should speak to her as a straight woman rather than allowing for queer rage and mourning to be pictured. Smyth's declaration that 'You cannot bear my extremes — you might touch your own — you cannot bear my presence — you might know your absence. I AM EXCESS CONFRONTING THEIR LACK' seems to be embodied in Healy's objections.¹⁵

Even when less outwardly hostile to work that unapologetically expressed queer anger, desire and sexuality, reviewers often made a point about how though they accepted the idea of a queer exhibition it did not represent their personal experience. Suzy O'Mullane writing for *Circa*, for example, ended her review by saying 'I hope Ailbhe Smith [sic] doesn't think it too hegemonic to have the show reviewed by a professed 'straight''.¹⁶ What might now be termed as a microaggression,

this sentiment points to the ways in which OutArt was being judged according to different criteria and performing different functions for different audiences. For the critics and writers who responded to the exhibition, the reviewer and by extension the audience were often presumed to be straight viewers learning about queer artists' experiences. Even where that was not the case, those like Ruane who expressed support for the political impetus of the exhibitions and treated the work with sensitivity and seriousness, still assessed them according to artistic and curatorial criteria rather than their role in speaking *to* rather than *for* the community. Understandable given the context of art reviews, still it demonstrates the ways in which the exhibitions inhabited a place in between the social world of queer club nights and drag shows such as Powderbubble, Gag and Alternative Miss Ireland and the outward facing activism of groups like the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN). Sited in public institutions, the context of the exhibitions meant that they were viewed as public statements on sexuality, on what queer art might be, who was allowed to make it, and what it was supposed to be about. In the catalogues however, we see a different function coming through. A conversation develops between artists who identify as 'not straight', where the work is not so much a declaration as to the direction that queer art should take in Ireland, but instead a set of proposals — some political, some artistic — about how the relatively small community of queer Irish artists connected into wider international artistic explorations of sexuality, whether there was a unified experience that could be represented through exhibitions of queer art, and how shows of queer art fitted into the wider LGBTQ+ and art communities in Ireland.

Henry Pim's introduction to the catalogue of *Video Invidious: An Exhibition of Queer Work In Around and*

About Video Culture (Art House, Dublin, 1999) reflects the tension between wanting to create a political space for the LGBTQ+ community and a wish to explore aesthetic questions relating to queer practice. He describes a shift in the emphasis of exhibitions from one that was straightforwardly activist to one that maintained a politics but also focused on how to represent that politics in art. With *(!N)V!S!B!L!T!ES*, he writes, 'we were committed to avoiding a good taste approach that would act as an agent to disguise or altogether conceal the Queer Agenda and preserve the assumption of heterosexuality', an approach that he saw as developing in *Confrontations*.¹⁷ In curating *Video Invidious* with Wilson, the aesthetic decision to focus on photography and video was seen as 'a greater limitation in one way than the brief set for the first exhibition but a clear statement of greater confidence'.¹⁸ The move towards a formal constraint demonstrates an interest in artistic approach, limiting the kind of work made in order to explore aesthetic questions in more depth. However, this should not be seen as a turn away from politics or greater representation or LGBTQ+ issues. The inclusion of television and film allowed for content that was expressly activist and designed for a broad audience. Linda Cullen's work, for example, was an extension of her work in mainstream documentary filmmaking, her film *Lust for Power, Second International Dyke March* recorded scenes from the 1998 Dyke March in Dublin, an event that she had been involved in organising, and *First Kiss* which shows everyday scenes of women overlaid with a soundtrack describing their first lesbian kiss. The inclusion of documentary film helps frame the exhibition's politics, inflecting more abstract work like Catherine Harper's *Desirous Skin*, a photograph of a corset-sized overstitched velvet work with a vulval flower and antlers attached. Referencing eroticism and desire through abstract means,

17. Henry Plm, 'The Queer Agenda', *Video Invidious* (ARThouse: Dublin, 1999)

18. (Ibid.)

its inclusion alongside the more explicitly framed politics of Cullen's films helps develop the conversation about lesbian sexuality, making it visible, material and personal.

Things We Do (Arthouse 2000) was themed around everyday life. Notably more introspective in its curatorial premise, rather than the 'Pride' of the first exhibition, *Things We Do* asked for considerations of how queer life was lived. By the turn of the Millennium, the conversation about queer Irish identity had shifted. Rather than the community building and challenge of earlier exhibitions, artists were asked to reflect on their feelings about, and their lived experience of, sexuality. The call out for the exhibitions offers a range of almost existential questions relating to queer identity that ask artists to explore what it meant to be queer in the year 2000:

*Can personal empowerment become a burden? What if you have nothing to fight for? Is duplicity a bonus or a remnant of the closet? Where is the ordinary behind the superficiality of gay culture? Does rainbow inclusiveness mean difference or mediocrity? What happens when what was once called sexual deviancy becomes normalised into mainstream culture? Are the surfaces, movements and disguises of a queer sexuality really what they seem? What are the things we do that help or hinder who we are?*¹⁹

Despite seeming to be the most focused on an interrogation of LGBTQ+ experience of all the OutArt exhibitions, the decision was made to officially open up submissions to non-queer people for the first time. This is echoed in Patrick T. Murphy's introduction to the catalogue in his role as selector where he explicitly distances the show from the realm of 'queer art' and instead foregrounds 'inclusivity', saying that the work included in *Things We Do* 'functions as both and neither queer or straight art, it is simply art, a generous gesture'.²⁰ It is interesting that with the move into the 2000s, the idea of art selected particularly for its

19. Artists Call for *Things We Do*, OutArt papers, National Irish Visual Arts Library

20. Patrick T. Murphy, 'Introduction', *Things We Do* (Dublin: Arthouse, 2000), p.1

statement on identity and politics had lost its currency to the organisers. While arguably all of the work included was as expressly or abstractly political as in previous years — Fiona Mulholland's *Grenade-Heeled Shoes* which combine conventional femininity with deadly weapons, for example, or Phil Collins' photographic series *you're not the man you never were* that trace an abstract narrative of broken buildings, male sexuality and aggression — the focus on the specific, small group of queer artists in Ireland and their connection to international queer art community was gone and instead the exhibition explores sexuality more broadly, not restricting this conversation to the queer community, but instead considering how sex, gender and identity are part of everyone's experience.

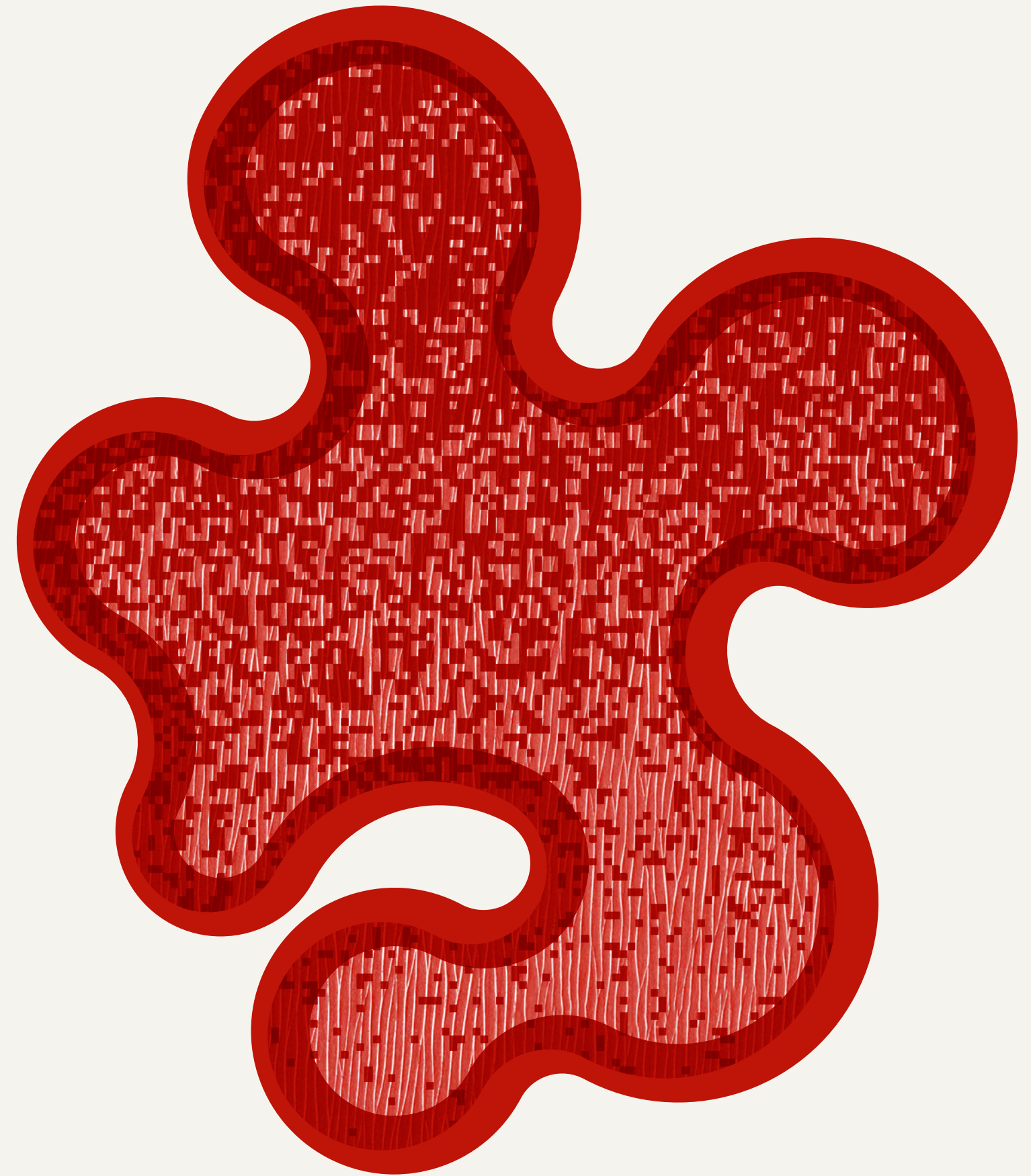
This shift in the broader context of queer representation can be seen in *Stand Fast Dick and Jane* which took place in the Project Arts Centre, Dublin in 2001. A departure from the open call model of previous years, Alan Phelan and Tom Keogh decided to take a different approach and bring in work that represented a queer aesthetic that drew on the legacy of the activist period of art making during the 1980s in the U.S. against the backdrop of the AIDS crisis. Including work by Nayland Blake, Zoe Leonard, Virgil Marti, Marlene McCarty, Donald Moffett and Carrie Moyer, it showed work that was political, confrontational, abstract and considered questions like sexuality, violence, gender, and the environment. Coming at a time when identity politics and activist art was falling out of fashion, *Stand Fast Dick and Jane* offered an assessment of the queer political practice that had been important to the previous two decades in order to both consider what it meant for those living in Celtic Tiger Ireland and to ask what should come next. Unlike the earlier exhibitions, *Stand Fast Dick and Jane* did not seek to represent a community in Ireland, instead it was an art show that celebrated the work of

21. Press Release, Project Arts Centre, 29 June 2001
22. Alan Phelan and Tom Keogh, 'Introduction', *Stand Fast Dick and Jane*, (Dublin: Project Arts Centre, 2001)
23. Alan Phelan and Jane Speller curated the programme *No Respect* in 2004 as a continuation of the OutArt project which moved away from the focus on sexuality of the earlier exhibitions. It involved installations around Dublin that reworked unrealised public art projects. Artists included Oreet Ashery, Alan Phelan and Jane Speller, Mel Jordan and Andy Hewitt, Karen Henderson, Ronan McCrea, and Venessa O'Reilly.

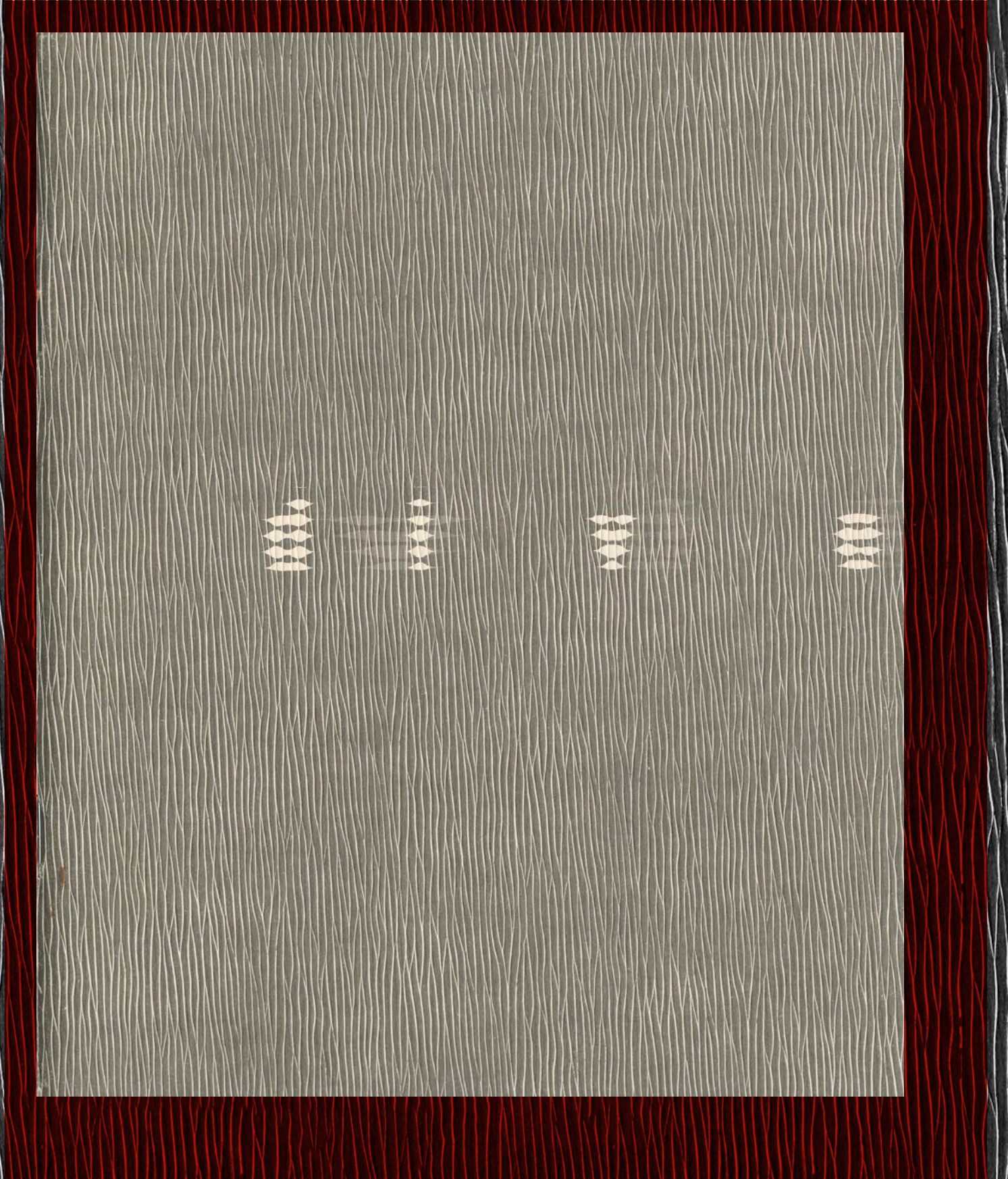
those that had fought against the violent governmental neglect of AIDS in America, who had pushed boundaries, and who had worked to foreground sexuality as a subject in the international art world. No longer representing a (multivocal) conversation between artists, instead this was a curatorial statement by Keogh and Phelan, one that looked back on the previous two decades of political victories and turmoil, illness and neglect, bigotry and pride, pain and joy and thought about what they described as 'the current cadences present in the work of these artists'.²¹ This shift in the context of the art world is reflected in Phelan and Keogh's introduction to the catalogue: 'We have tried to build on previous exhibitions this year by exploring a different terrain of queer art, that being a selection of American artists who came to prominence over the past twenty years through the era of identity politics. Now firmly established, they are dealing with a world where difference doesn't seem to matter any more, identity is not enough of a motive and politics in art is generally more archaic than anarchic'.²² Not rejecting what has come before, instead Keogh and Phelan saw it as a progression, one that built on the work done in earlier exhibitions and responded to changing conditions of the art world in the new Millenium.²³

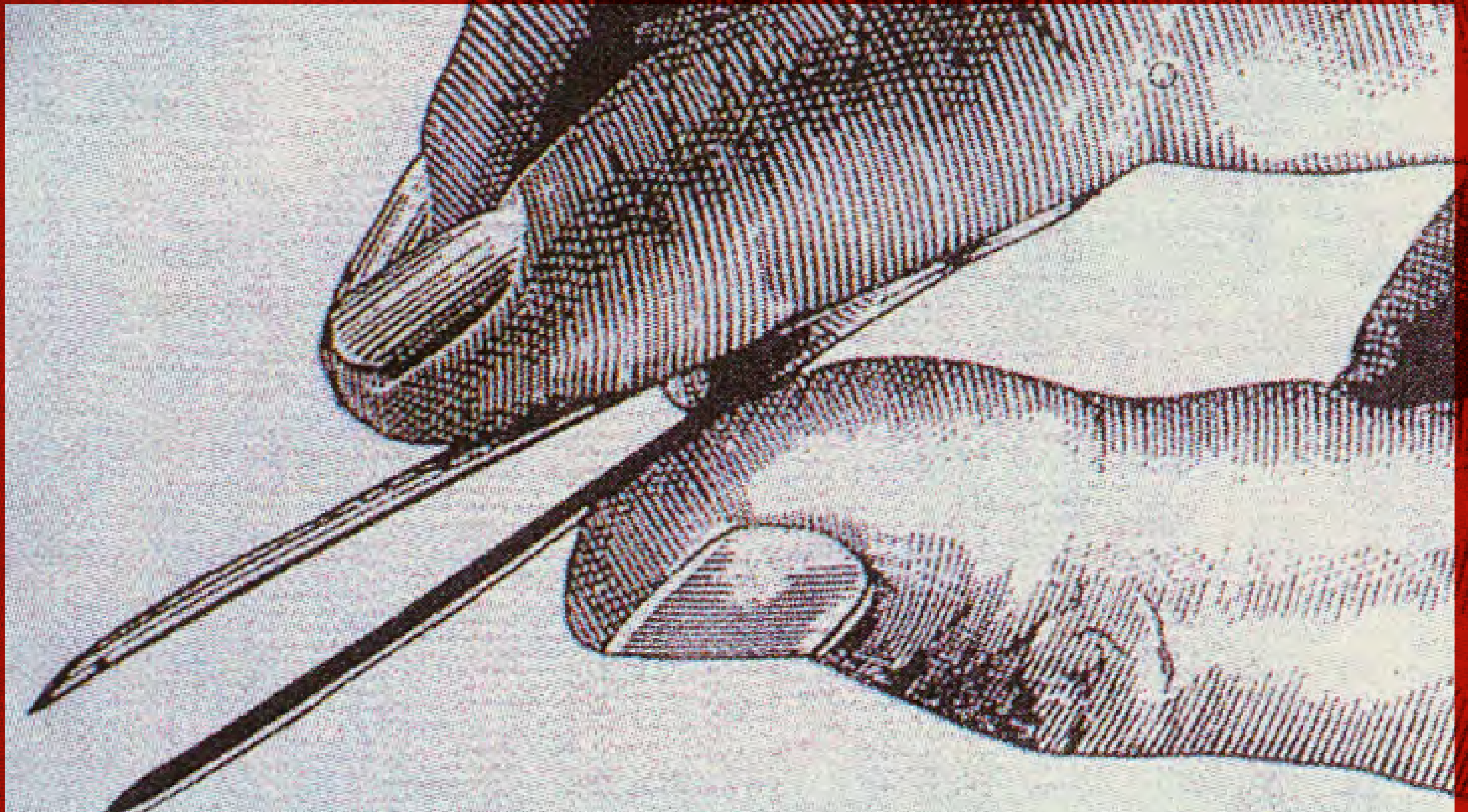
Over the course of its six year run, OutArt brought together Irish and international artists to explore what it meant to make and view queer work in Ireland in the decade after decriminalisation. Acting as a public face of queer representation and reflecting the different priorities of artists, writers, arts organisers and curators who were connected to the LGBTQ+ community it reflects a moment when artists were grappling with art's relationship to sexuality. The exhibitions explored important ideas that helped to develop queer practice in Ireland: what 'gay art' or 'queer art' might look like, whether they were useful categories, how they worked for LGBTQ+ artists

working in Ireland, and whether the priority should be on making political work for the community or developing a queer aesthetic that spoke more specifically to the art world. With its changing committees, writers and curators, OutArt put forward a range of responses to these questions, acting throughout to represent different positions, political investments and artistic approaches. Offering us a window into this definitive moment in LGBTQ+ history in Ireland, OutArt points to the optimism, anger, activism and exploration that co-existed for queer artists around the turn of the Millennium. Though not purporting to be a definitive statement or forthright declaration, each exhibition demonstrates a moment where artists were exploring their own experience and building links within the community in order to start to define the terrain of queer art in Ireland.



1990





PRIDE IN DIVERSITY

AN EXHIBITION OF GAY, LESBIAN AND QUEER ART

1996

artists:

colm brady
heather fleming
tom gleeson
kellie green
patricia hurl
andrew kearney
rosy martin
kate murphy
henry pim
billy quinn
gerry scott
louise walsh
mo white
mick wilson
joan woods

exhibition:

city arts centre, dublin
june–july 1996

OutArt committee:

henry pim
tom gleeson
louise walsh
mick wilson
gerry scott
patricia hurl
deborah ballard
billy quinn

selectors:

joan fowler
patrick hall
therry ruden

publication:

texts:
gill mcknight,
‘pride in diversity’
john hutchinson,
‘freedom and difference’
design:
niall sweeney
photography:
eamonn doyle

funders/supporters:

arts council of ireland
city arts centre
gay community news
dublin pride committee

Pride has long been part of the politics and socialisation of queerness, so its inclusion in the title of this exhibition is unsurprising. Gay Pride, the seasonal and salutary parade in the towns and cities of various nations, provides a unifying and celebratory identification in contrast to an over-riding orthodoxy of homophobia and oppression. Pride then, whether motional or emotional, is a recognised site of cohesive gay and lesbian identity, it is a fixed determinant, an expression of positivity and unification.

The invited artists exhibiting here are gay, lesbian, or bisexual. They are Irish nationals, or are from the north of Ireland, or have another nationality altogether, they are either resident in Ireland, or perhaps live in another country entirely. Their nationalities are dissimilar, so similar, so is their sexuality. Yet they are gathered here in the space pride has provided, a hard won space constantly embattled by censure and denial from without and reaffirmation and compromise from within. This is the strength of this exhibition — shown in Dublin, capital of a nation fragmented by the debris of colonisation and violence, yet committed through the processes of infrequent pacts to determine a social and cultural harmony. A nation steeped in the pluralisms of cross-culture, cross-purpose, and ultimately cross-reference. The diversity of this country affects all not only through the dualities of nationality as represented by the border, but also through the ethical and legislative variants on issues of gay and civil rights. Despite these inherent fissures all difference, be they creed or constitutional, are easily surmounted by a mutual moral accord generated by sexuality; for Ireland

pride in diversity
gill mcknight

and sex has a different more cohesive history altogether. Common moral ground between diverse religious and political factions was easily found outside the doors of the Brooke Centre in Belfast where sanctimonious bigots from all denominations congregated to demonstrate against a public service giving out Family Planning advice, abortion, and safer sex information. Similarly all elements of 'accepted' Irishness combined in their condemnation and attempted exclusion of the Irish Gay and Lesbian lobby in New York's St. Patrick's Day parade. Issues concerning identity and queerness can therefore become complex, for it is through such categorisations, self-delineated or otherwise, that we are constantly re-colonised.

The multiplicity of queerness begrudges the label 'queer'. By subscribing to an identity that is in itself an extension of homophobic discourse do we not delimit ourselves to a strategy of perpetual opposition, perhaps at the cost of a wider cross-cultural reference?

Diverse Identities \ Fragmented Subjectivities?

The diversity of queer experience is enormous. Socially, culturally, historically, there is little that binds us, no common denominator, save our sexuality — multifarious as it is. To project a notion of collective identity through sexuality alone is fractious, the narrative too extensive, the vocabulary inadequate. By looking to the personal for the political definitions are we too quick to intertwine identity and sexuality to the possible exclusion of wider cultural values, especially where queerness is not the crucial factor? For what exactly is a queer identity, what set of terms does it signify?

By 'Coming Out' we enter squarely into homophobic discourse, for identity is a double-edged sword which delineates through oppressive judicial, medical and ethical regimes whilst simultaneously providing a primary point

of resistance. On the axis of this polarity of oppression and resistance sits queer identity, at a point where it seems to exist merely to resist. It is into this site of instability that we 'come out', hoping to free ourselves from subjection and move towards subjectivity, but those very subjectivities are circumvented by the processes of homophobia which, therefore in themselves, become a constituent of being queer. Thus by coming out, by choosing a queer identity, we are inadvertently appropriated by homophobic institutionalism, this in itself is colonisation. The contest is no longer about the sexual but about the political, there is little choice as queerness constantly reinscribes that which it resists. Through this strategy the cultural value of the individual is delimited as focus is placed upon the polarity of sexual identity and its political repercussions. In light of this is pride enough, given that the continuity and coherence it seems to provide is in fact a displacement of a homophobic strategy of cultural invisibility, medical miss-classification, and social erasure?

The title of this exhibition is 'Pride in Diversity', a subtle appellation as to the specificity of our position, for whereas pride affords us visibility, diversity questions which face we shall show. If identity, and a certain identity at that, is in itself a political stratagem, then what do we exclude given the diverse nature of that identity? The binarisms of the 'identity' strategies in which we are complicitous promote us to engage politically with only those facets of our collectiveness which comply to an oppositionary mechanism. But is it really that simple? What of issues such as bi-sexuality, or transgender, S&M, or celibacy ... all of these and more are inclusive under the rainbow banner of pride, but have they an equal political footing in an identity whose political impetus is to usurp heterosexual hegemony? If our political action is founded solely on re-action, does this not imply that the terms of all political

resistance are ultimately dictated by homophobic construction. It is the diversity of our queer culture wherein lies its ultimate strength. By focusing on the fragmented qualities of our collectivity we reinforce the cohesiveness of our identity and enrich our political and cultural platform. This aesthetic dissection of our political body has the chance to liberate us from a political mechanism that compels social and cultural resistance to be permanently delimited by a hegemonic and homophobic discourse.

Revulsion and Indifference: Sexual Allies.

Perhaps the best result an exhibition of this quality can achieve is to remind us of the revulsion and alarm representations such as these inspire in the heterosexual community. It is at such heightened moments of cultural visibility that we must ask ourselves in our pursuit of egalitarian legislation do we really want or even need to 'normalise', domesticise, or even pastoralise our sexuality? Some see progression in the assimilation of queer culture through performances such as Beth Jordache, or through the iconography of Madonna, to name but two examples. But these colonised masquerades merely supplant our own cultural integrity and representations. These examples work through hetero-erotisation alone, there is no implicit political theme, for politicisation and queer sexuality cannot be allowed conjunction within the heterosexual paradigm. What exactly are the tacit threats, that sex and political motivation evoke?

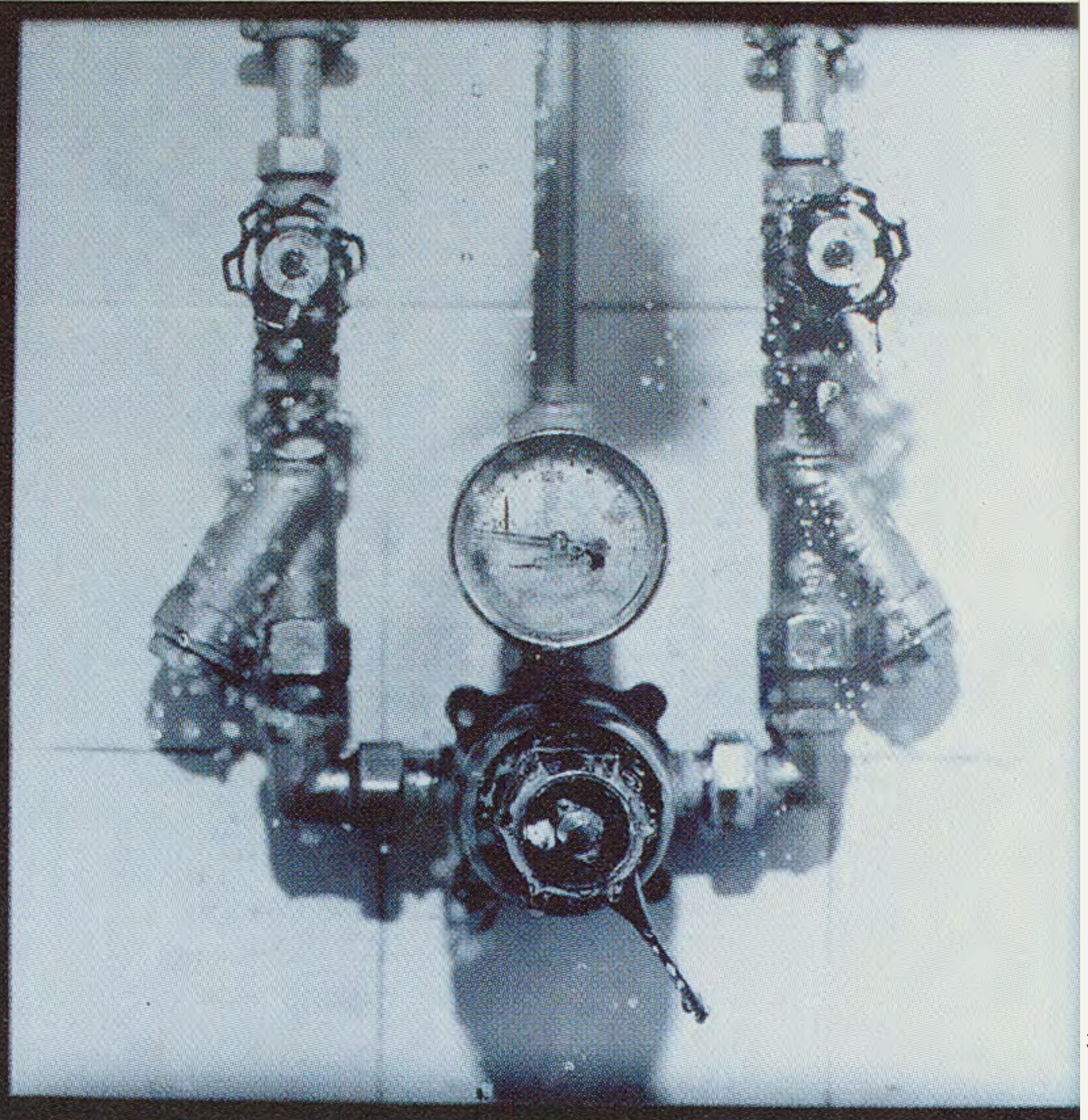
Within heterosexuality the emphasis is on the inter-relation between sex and gender, between sexuality and the social, that is to say that male/female sexual practices are infused with a hierarchical social construction. This sexual paradigm whether represented through explicit pornography, or the pages of a romantic novel equates sex with inequality and therefore violence, be it physical,

psychical or institutionalised. In these terms heterosexuality can be seen to be 'antiegaltarian, antinurturing and antiloving.'¹ The apparent political motif is that gender is a factotum used to promote a social construction of inequality and power imbalance.

Queer sexualities expose the social limitations of sexual difference, and disenfranchise the role of gender from it's [sic] power base. If the mandate of heterosexuality is desire for one's sexual opposite, of desire located in difference, then same-sex desire can be seen as a type of sexual indifference.² In essence this unequivocal ideological difference expresses an incompatible socio-sexual power structure, whereby the sexuality inherent to queer identities destabilises heterosexual hegemony, based as it is on homophobia and misogyny.

As expressed above, the strength of our political resources lies in our sexual diversity, and quintessential to that diversity is our sexual indifference. Through this we challenge the foundations of genderised social constructions simply by existing. Beware liberalist attempts to promote a socio-cultural integration through redemptive efforts to 'domesticise' queer sexuality, whether this policing be from without or within. Legislative equality, even the wish for an integrated gay life style, should not be at the cost of our diverse cross-cultural heritage, socio-sexuality structures, or aesthetic integrity. Under the totem of Pride lets not assume an indigent authority as to the political orchestration and cultural representation of whatever we perceive Pride to be. To do this, to the detriment of our fragmented whole, would be to disenfranchise ourselves from the political and social potentials of a multifaceted, multidisciplinary resistance circumvented and uncalculated by homophobic and misogynistic discourse.

1. 'Is the Rectum a Grave?', p. 215, Bersani, L.
2. 'The Sex Which Is Not One', (1984), Irigaray, L.



henry pim
flight into egypt
clay and wood



louise walsh
swansong
video



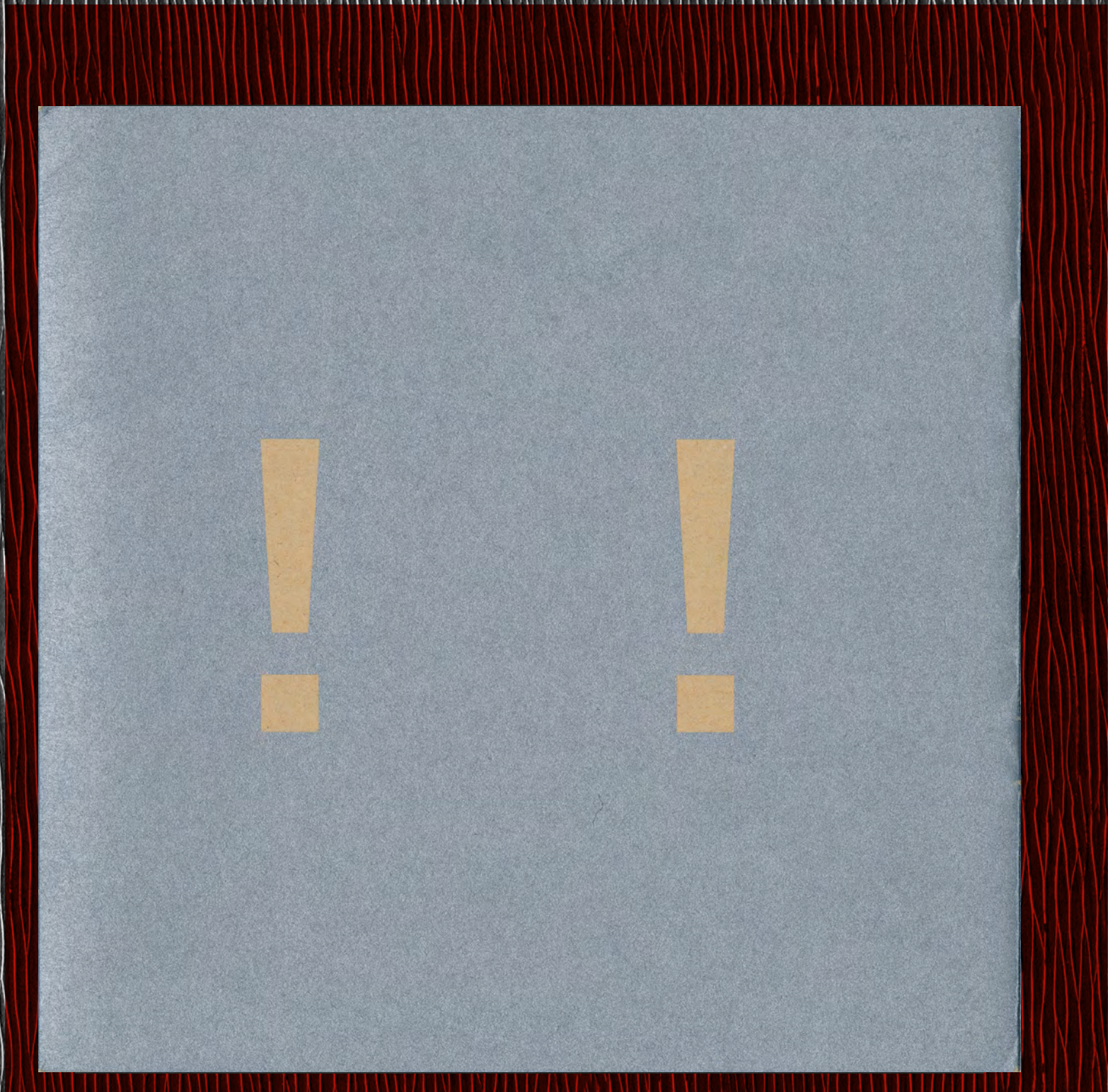
michael wilson

slippage it to me: a narrative again

pillow slips



1991





(!N)V!S!B!L!T!ES

1997

artists:

michael beirne
james dunbar
andrew fox
mcdermott & mcgough
paul rowley
veronica slater
mo white
christa zauner

exhibition:

rha gallagher gallery, dublin
27 june – 27 july, 1997

OutArt committee:

tom gleeson
henry pim
mick wilson

selectors:

ciarán macgonigal
louise walsh
mick wilson

publication:

texts:

mick wilson,
'some gambits'
lorna healy
'four rooms of one's own'

design:

niall sweeney

fundes/supporters:

arts council of ireland
rha gallagher gallery
dublin pride committee

This essay aims to explore the poetics and politics of the exhibition title (In)visibilities through linking it with performativity, representation and institutional space.

Contemporary queer (In)visibilities are a product of their performative histories.¹ The '50s butch dyke, the leathermen of the '60s, all effected a number of operations on their own bodies, their conduct and ways of being which wilfully alienated or visually differentiated them from mainstream society and very often their parent gay community. The courage involved in forcing people to see/fear/desire at the risk of violence can not be underestimated.

The transformative power of dress codes to the body and its performances has rich genealogies within gay and lesbian histories. Artwork is catching up with these histories; the last ten years has seen an increase in the amount of art work which through seeking alternatives to reproducing colonised meanings around the body have recognised the power of clothing to indicate the absent body and to reconceptualise how we think about the body.² Such frock work can be seen in Slater's painterly unpicking of the signs of '50s high femininity and Rowley's exploration of gender as multi delictous [sic] masquerade. Beirne's stitched torsos map out how we are sutured into the fabric of society through our body techniques. But reasserting visibility and identity is a constant process, you have to keep dressing up and going out. According to Judith Butler there are no core (select from one or a combination of the following) gendered/ sexed/ classed inner selves. Identity hinges on the compulsion to repeatedly reenact or reassert the self. In this essay the context of our theatrics is important:

four rooms of one's own
lorna healy

1. Queer in the context of this essay is strategic and temporal and does not seek to cover over difference and conflict.
2. See the work of Beverley Semmes, Jana Sterback, Mary Kelly, etc.

3. Judith Butler, 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination', 1985, in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, H. Abelove, M.A. Barale and D. Halpern eds., Routledge, London, 1993, pp. 311.
4. S. Turkle, 'Life on the Screen: identity in the age of the internet', 1995, in *Identity and Difference*, K. Woodward, ed., 1997, Open University, London, pp. 315.

How are where I play at being one (a lesbian) is the way in which “being” gets established, instituted, circulated and confirmed.³

The spatial State of play for “Irish” gay and lesbian subjectivity is changing. What constitutes the “Irish” gay and lesbian subject is being questioned and re-figured. Through globalization and its technological acceleration, transcultural links are being forged with other spaces, creating new discourses which are not entirely restricted to physical place and therefore do not necessarily align themselves smoothly with the narrative of the nation. Such a link may have been forged by the OutArt Committee by extending their invitation to artists such as McDermott & McGough, Slater, White, Zauner and Rowley who either work or originate from outside of Ireland. Mick Wilson’s essay extends the disjuncture between sexuality and the nation when he writes “to identify the concerns of lesbians and gays with the various elements of nationalistic and anti-colonialist ideologies, is a questionable if strategic fiction”. In terms of cultural representations of the self I would add that the visible boundaries of self and community need no longer terminate at the threshold of the skin or in the choice of clothing or bar but are in dialogue with other culturally created spaces like that of the web site, the art gallery, etc.

[There is a larger cultural context surrounding] the story of eroding boundaries in the real and virtual, the animate and the inanimate, the unitary and the multiple self, which is occurring both in advanced fields of scientific research and in the patterns of everyday life ... we shall see evidence of fundamental shifts in the way we create and experience human identity.⁴

The State’s relationship to our spatial play may be changing but what exactly are we playing at? The performative gymnastics of gay and lesbian identities are often read as a poor copy of an original and compulsory heterosexuality.

5. Judith Butler, *ibid.*, pp. 313.
6. Michael Foucault, 1980, *Power/Knowledge*, Harvester, Brighton, pp. 119.
7. The quote marks refer to Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, 1986, Verso, London. In her approach she uses psychoanalysis, semiotics and film theory to argue for the importance of sexual difference and fantasy as key concepts within contemporary theory.
8. Jacqueline Rose, *ibid.*, pp. 227/8
9. Laura Mulvey, 1989, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, MacMillan Press, London, pp. 167. She is referring to Michel Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, MIT, Cambridge Mass., 1968.

Butler argues that heterosexual performativity is like a dog chasing its own tail; a phantasmatic ideal of heterosexual identity exists which “is produced by the imitation of its effect” but the performance constantly fails to naturalise this ideal fully, so it is in endless repetition of itself.⁵ So if the entire spectrum of sexualities are performative then surely we are all equal masqueraders (re: eejits)? There exists regimes of power and surveillance however which frame certain strands of the masquerade as perverted and thus the players are ostracised and punished. A Foucauldian reading would suggest that this power is not only negative but can also induce more transgressive pleasures.⁶ The resistive kitschification of heterosexual stereotypes through camping it up, then may involve the aforementioned element of bravery but also that of pleasure. Western dynamics of desire and pleasure circle around the act of looking and being looked at “Sexuality” then is constructed “in the field of vision” or (in)visibility.⁷

Through a semiotic of kitsch the visual field can also be ruptured to expose the primal myth of compulsory heterosexuality as phantasmic.⁸ Aesthetics of excess reach dizzying heights each year through the spectacle of the Gay Pride March. The politics of *en masse* excess could may [sic] be traced back to the medieval carnival.

For Bakhtin, carnival’s strength arouse out of its place in class culture: a transgressive space, but acknowledged and permitted by the Law, through which the resentments and envy of class hatred could be acted out in ritual or metaphor.⁹

The carnival is a liminal and ludic stage in the traditional narrative structure which is, however, ultimately conservative due to its temporal nature, as it finally intended to justify the status quo in an objectively conservative manner. Each year O’Connell Street is transformed and the Natural Order is reversed through this sanctioned riot,

but when the party is over, the marchers retreat back into their relatively (in)visible private spheres. This example hopefully brings to life Butler's point regarding the political centrality of the space of our play. As an exercise try holding a personal Pride march in your living room and see if it makes the headlines. The degrees to which personal pleasures are political hinge upon space.

Very good but what of the business of making art? How does this relate to performativity? Performativity and representation could be paralleled with the differences between marching in your living room and in the main street. Representation creates meanings which are communicated within more public spheres, an extension of the performance of the "I". In light of the recent emphasis on diversity it is a joke to suggest that the experiences of one queer could represent or have authority over the multitudinal experiences of all queers. For the political subject representations are never ideologically neutral and are always inscribed with the desire and the subject position of the Author, who can not afford the luxury of being dead.¹⁰

For "women" (gay and lesbians) who "have not had the same historical relation of identity to origin, institution and production that men (hom(m)osexual society) have had" the hypothesis that the Author is dead "prematurely forecloses the question of identity for them"¹¹

Another link or way into performativity as art making is provided through the psychoanalytic theories of Lucie [sic] Irigaray on the "dancing space". Through the research of Hilary Robinson it is suggested that the whirling motion of little girl's play is linked to her non linear relationship with language and ultimately the language of paint or in this case peinture feminine. Thus, acts of signification within art making like the gesture "will always be marked by bodily specificity".¹²

10. The death of the author refers to the post-structuralist claims by Roland Barthes [1977] and Michael Foucault [1979] that the author could "no longer justify the 'natural authority' of his Speech" [Borsa, 1990]

11. My brackets, from Borsa, *Frida Kahlo: Marginalization and the Critical Female Subject*, 1990, pp. 106. She is quoting Nancy Miller, *Changing the Subject: Authorship, Writing and the Reader*, 1986.

Representation as an extension of the "I" comes hand in hand with questions of readership or consumption. As viewers the joy of recognising ourselves within the cultural landscape or in mainstream representation can not be underestimated. It is vital for affirmation of existence.¹³ Because of their importance to our sense of belonging representations are the site of hegemonic struggle and thus hopefully change.

But where to do this "change"? Virginia Woolf wanted a room.¹⁴ Irate New Yorkers have been know [sic] to shout "get a room" at frisky couples on the subway. You simply need a room to do your stuff in (practitioners will be painfully familiar with this) Woolf's room works on two levels. There is the actual physical space and there's the Symbolic Room. The latter refers to the societal space that needs to be cleared out in the Symbol hotel in order for production to occur. Conditions of production involve a complexity of interconnected factors, such as, a nurturing language, institutional support, material comfort, peers, time. Well Virginia, check this, we have four. This Room is not usually reserved for carnival goers (PI)(st)aying in the Symbolic hotel or just having a physical room, marks the difference between dancing in Powderbubble or in J.J. Smiths.¹⁵

But this is daft of course, have we forgotten about the dangers of assimilation? Surely, "they" will destroy "our" pleasure and "our" politics? In reference to "their" double repression of lesbian meanings, frequently, feminist breath gets shallow with anxiety at the thought of Her invisibility. Lesbianism doesn't even rate Symbolic signification. Such uneasiness surrounding assimilation is for good reason too. If we were to momentarily take an Irigarayan stance on sexual difference, Irigaray describes the dominant phallic economy as hom(m)osexual and rooted in singularity ... of the (male) sexual organ. The exchanges

12. Griselda Pollock, 1996, *Avant-Gardes and Partisans Reviewed*, Manchester University Press, pp. 282. However, Hilary Robinson was the first to offer us the potential contribution of Lucie Irigaray's writings, especially in a paper entitled 'Gesture in Psychoanalysis'. Hilary has been researching this alongside sexual difference theory and an analysis of painting in a doctorate at the University of Leeds. Papers given University of Leeds, 25 November 1994 and at the Museum of Modern Art Oxford, 12 November 1995.

13. For a lively debate surrounding the issues at stake within popular culture's recent fascination with lesbianism, see Hamer and Budge eds., *The Good, The Bad and The Gorgeous*, 1994, Pandora, California.

14. Virginia Woolf, 1929, *A Room of One's Own*, Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, New York.

15. J.J. Smiths refers to the small upstairs room of a bar on Wexford Street, Dublin. For much of the '80s it served as the only constant space where lesbians could meet. It was demonized by the press and eventually folded. Powderbubble is a more recent and visually sophisticated Dublin phenomena. On a regular basis the queers occupy a Room or a mainstream space. Kitsch hedonisms are heightened through the spectacles of performance, computerised simulcrums, etc.

16. The quotes are from Jonathan Dollimore, 1991, *Sexual Dissidence*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, pp. 250. The original Irigaray text is *This Sex Which is Not One*, trans. Porter & Burke, Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY, 1985.

17. Teresa de Lauretis, 1987, *Technologies of Gender*, MacMillan Press, London, pp. 25.

upon which patriarchal society are based rely on repression of difference and thus “take place exclusively among men” and that “this means the very possibility of sociocultural order requires hom(m)osexuality as its organising principle. Overt masculine homosexuality is subversive” because it openly interprets the law according to which society operates; once the phallus becomes merely an instrument of pleasure it loses its power.¹⁶ Such theories around sexual difference have been critiqued as heterosexist however they constantly refer back and are paralysed by their own terms, ie man/woman. Similarly as Wilson’s catalogue essay describes, the discourse of Other sexualities “continues to be fundamentally defined and structured around straightness”.

In order to prise open the debate I would like at this point, to suggest a shift in focus away the polemic movements of us/them, mainstream/marginal, and inside/outside. Marginalised existences are never outside of ideology. We live in a society so we are always inside ideology. According to Teresa de Lauretis the political agent also recognises many of their personal or unrecorded experiences in the “space off”.¹⁷ This refers to that which is invisible, but inferred by the frame or by mainstream representations. Within this blind spot of representation lies the affirmative positivity of the agent’s politics. In terms of representation, this may involve imaging the not yet imaginable. Thus the movement of the political agent is not that of inside/outside but that of present/future. For example, the discourse surrounding “woman” as subject and not object of desire, the gaze, the fetish, etc is one which is just emerging. Mo White’s work performatively probes these possibilities and extends upon or concretises what was formerly merely implied. If we are to place the remaining work under the ambiguous lens of the show’s title (in)visibilities then the renegotiation of existing visibilities is inferred in

18. Stuart Hall, 1997, *Representation*, Sage and Open University Press, London, pp. 274.

19. Teresa de Lauretis, *ibid.*, pp. 26.

20. Michael Foucault, *ibid.*, pp. 131.

the linguistic appropriations of Dermot and Gough, the sartorial reframing of Veronica Slater, the hyperreality [sic] of James Dunbar’s simulcrum [sic] landscapes and in the dramatic exaggerations of Andrew Fox’s drawings. Such counter-strategies locate themselves “within the complexities and ambivalences of representation itself, and tries to contest it from within”.¹⁸

The domestic work of mapping the (in)visible is insinuated in the memory work of Paul Rowley, the other bodies of Christina Zauner which are made uncanny through the close up, and the visceral pastiches of Michael Beirne. De Lauretis would suggest that to inhabit both the visible and invisible representational space, to live in those coexisting and contradictory terms, is the positionality of the political subject.¹⁹ Politicisation then does not always occur through making positive representations of queerness but also happens through living in the space of double knowing of both the invisible and the visible spaces of representation. One of the key political moves of this essay then, is to suggest a conversation change away from the paralysing binaries of straight/queer, man/woman and moving the subject on to the two fold representational strategies at hand; that of undoing the visible so that we may re-do the (in)visible.

Getting four Rooms or the institutional support for such (in)visibilities marks a point of departure in the discursive formation of Irish gay and lesbian identity. By discourse Foucault means “a group of statements which provide a language for talking about—a way of representing that knowledge about a particular historical moment.”²⁰ The “homosexual” then is a specific kind of social subject which is produced through discourse. The discursive subject position created around homosexuality is in a state of constant flux, rupture and disturbance, we have had the inverts, the predators, the gays, the queers . . . A discursive

formation sustains a regime of truth around that subject position. In this case the addition of institutional support as opposed to repression to the Irish discursive stew of queerness, marks a point of departure in a discursive formation (however temporal) and thus creates new regimes of truth whereupon new subject positions may be created.²¹

21. Stuart Hall, *ibid.*, pp. 44.
22. Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger, 'Matrix and Metamorphosis', in *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 4.3, 1992, Brown university, Providence, pp. 200.
23. John Berger, 1972, *Ways of Seeing*, BBC TV, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

The final disruptive step, within this essay, of phallogocentric logic of “us”/queer and “them”/institute is achieved through extending Foucault’s discursive shifts to the process of metamorphosis [sic]. Within psychoanalytic theory if castration is the defining process of phallogocentric order, then metamorphosis is that of the matrixial order. The matrix is a ground breaking theory as it provides an alternative structure for psychological development to that of the phallic order. It is based on the prenatal state which can co-exist alongside the phallic order. The matrix and metamorphosis is a rich resource as it can also provide a model for difference theory:

Metramorphosis is the process of change in borderlines and thresholds ... (those) conceived are continually transgressed or dissolved, thus allowing the creation of new ones”.²²

As aforementioned queer identities are altered by the addition of institutional support but how is the Art Institute metamorphosised? As John Berger wrote in 1972 we approach the work of art with predetermined value systems of beauty, truth and ultimately authority.²³ These universals serve to justify art histories [sic] systematic exclusion of marginalised identities. Since the '60s concerted political efforts have been made by the likes of gay, lesbian, black and feminist groups to try to counter art’s authority and ideological purity. If you are looking for the artistic truths about the real secret of gay identity then this is not the space. OUTART are not “out” to any particular notion of

fixed lesbian and gay identity. As Wilson’s essay points out “we may want our rights, our liberty, etc” but the question as to “who WE are is also posed”.

This exhibition destabilises its own authority on both the grounds of queerness and art. The work in the show suggests a decoding of existing and visible representations surrounding queerness and an encoding of (in)visible or inferred meanings. The space does not command a fixed authoritative gaze but rather a series of fragmented looks which are constantly interrupted in order to make spaces for the viewer. The open ended nature of these performative representations hopefully will offer the choice to discursively invest in whatever space makes most sense to you ... or alternately you could go for a drink instead.

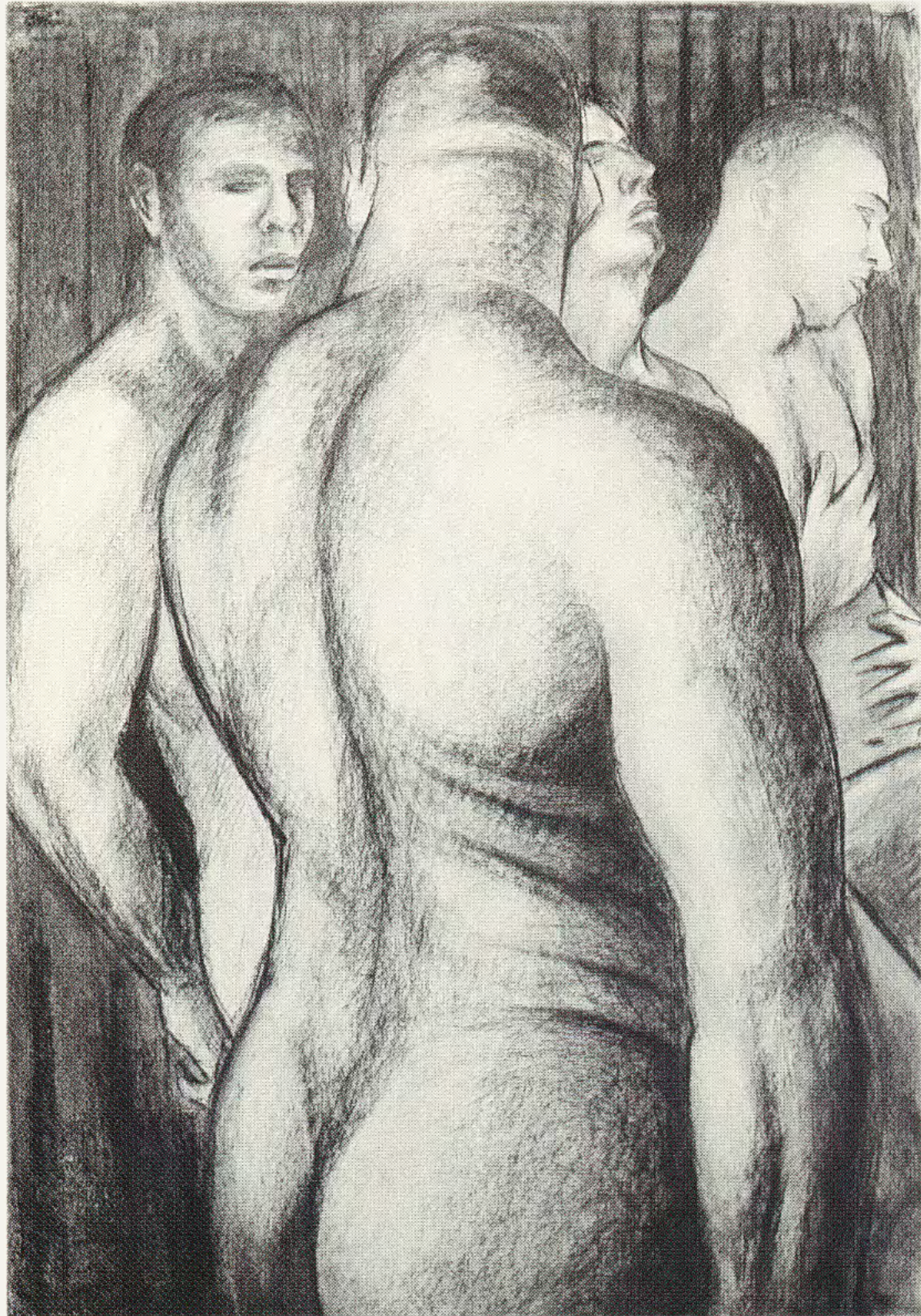
As the latter suggests going for a jar might seem far preferable to reading this essay with its lofty and seemingly unproblematic concerns with theory and the gallery space which can be easily targeted as boring, elitist and irrelevant. I will make one last stab at disrupting the either/or approach to the question of choosing high or popular culture, theoretical or ground level political strategies. The concerns are interconnected, we need it all.

andrew fox

sauna I

1992

pencil and crayon on paper



street corner

1993

pencil on paper



paul rowley

pacific

1996

video



mo white

x

1997

slide projection and photographic installation



1998

[CONFRONTATIONS]



CONFRONTATIONS: 1998

AN EXHIBITION OF QUEER ART

artists:

paul bommer

lisa & paula crickaro

heather fleming

tom gleeson

lorna healy

celia dougherty & ilgo

mumtaz karimjee

paul kinsella

rosy martin

mcdermott & mcgough

paul mcclure

paul rowley & david philips

niall sweeney

lynn turner

martin yelverton

exhibition:

rha gallagher gallery, dublin

23 june – 5 july 1998

triskel arts centre, cork

28 august – 30 september 1998

OutArt committee:

henry pim

ailbhe smyth

mick wilson

curator:

ailbhe smyth

publication:

texts:

mick wilson,

'gay de gay regay a-gay(y)in'

ailbhe smyth,

'not living in sydney — or confronting politics and art'

design:

liam furlong

funders/supporters:

arts council of ireland

rha gallagher gallery

dublin pride committee

gay community news

ncad

triskel arts centre

An earlier version of this essay was presented at a Colloquium on Queer Culture held in OutHouse, 25 April 1998, and co-organised by WERRC, (UCD?). I am grateful to the respondents on that occasion who have helped me to develop further this still incomplete piece.

PART ONE:

Getting Over It.

"The mise-en-scène of identity is today a well paid job. Since resistance and transgression are the replacements of taste, how can [we] deflect this construct?"

Juan Davila (1998)

"I have seen the respectable homosexual wincing in agony at the presence of a swish queen, or an obvious bull dyke — not out of dislike for [him or her] as a person, but out of fear of being associated with 'that {queer'}?' even in an all-gay crowd."

Martha Shelley (1969)

"Who [we] white man?"

Tonto (Undated)

"[E]very one as he is himself, so he hath a self propriety, else he could not be himself."

Richard Overton (1646)¹

When I first put together a general heading to talk about queer culture I wanted to deal with what might be termed the "straight appropriation of queer". Appropriation has been something of a buzz word in art theory since the late seventies. It refers, in a certain literal sense, to the making over of something into a possession, into a property, a belonging. It implicates participants in questions of contested ownership. When Madonna did her *SEX* book, she was seen by many queer activists and artists as having appropriated a certain queer approach to desire, sexuality, imaging the body, fantasy and fashion. Of course for much gay male culture, Madonna already functioned as an

gay de gay regay a-ga(y)in
michael wilson

1. DAVILA, Juan, (from a published response refusing an invitation to write for an *Art & Design* volume on Art and Cultural Difference, 1998); SHELLEY, Martha, "Respectability" *The Ladder*, Vol. XIV, no. 1&2, 1969, p.24.; TONTO, cited in an old joke; OVERTON, Richard, *An Arrow against all Tyrants*, 1646 (from a Leveller tract about the franchise and manhood suffrage.)

exemplary point of reference before the appearance of the *SEX* book.² Liking Madonna was for many a way of marking oneself out as a young urban gay male and also as having a particular range of attitudes to sex, emotional expression, intimacy, the management of appearances, and so forth. One might go so far as to say that liking Madonna had become for many a key element in elaborating a culture of self.³ Madonna's flirtation with bisexuality and lesbianism (through such means as her high profile exchanges with Sandra Bernhard) made her iconicity available for many different symbolic constructions. These appropriative manoeuvres were perhaps predominantly made by, though not solely restricted to, gay men. Thus Madonna is one of many symbolic resources employed by gay men, just as in different historical moments Judy Garland or Bette Midler or Barbara Streisand have been mined as symbolic repositories. Already, one may see that there is another order of appropriation operative. The American star-system epitomes of femininity, presumably constructed for a straight audience, perhaps arguably even primarily for a straight female audience, are appropriated. These constructions of femininity as spectacle and as attitude are in a great many instances appropriated or made over into the ownership of gay men. Madonna had earlier (before she invented *SEX*) discovered Voguing and black and latino gay working class Drag Ball culture: the famous Drag Balls of Harlem NYC.⁴

If ten or so years ago young predominantly white gay men all over the West (and its enclaves within the cities of South America, Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe) were running around under mirrorballs, shaking their tushes, and waving their hands as if they Vogue models, simultaneously on acid and steroids, turning fake tan orange before your very eyes: if this was happening, it was because Madonna had done it with glorious glamorous style in a pop-video

2. For a discussion of this and other aspects of Madonna-culture see Cathy Schichtenberg (ed) *The Madonna Connection: Representational Politics, Subcultural Identities and Cultural Theory*, especially Lisa Henderson's 'Justify Our Love: Madonna and the Politics of Queer Sex', pp. 107-128 and Cindy Patton's 'Embodying Subaltern Memory: Kinaesthesia and the Problematics of Gender and Race', pp. 81-106; see also bell hooks, 'Power to the Pussy: We Don't Wannabe Dicks in Drag', in L. Frank & P. Smith (eds) *Madonnarama*, Pittsburgh, Cleiss Press, 1993.
3. 'Culture of self' in both the sense of cultivation of a particular selfhood which privileges appearance, artifice, surface etc and a cultivation of 'self' as central value and principle in a kind of meta-narcissism, not without its parodic and ironic moments: *disco-techne*.
4. The 'Drag Balls' are competitive events where members of different groups or gangs ('houses') of gay men; drag-queens and male-to-female transsexuals attempt to outdo each other in performing various social and cultural appearances ranging from 'butch queen' and 'white executive male' through to 'sophisticated (Dynasty-type) female evening-wear', 'best banjee girl' and 'fashion shoot model'. These different headings are termed "categories".

with Willi Ninja of the Harlem House of Ninja.⁵ Willi Ninja was one of the hundreds, perhaps thousands of men who participated in the Drag Ball culture of Harlem, but one of the few who achieved exposure and marketability outside the Drag Ball circuit. The culture of the Drag Balls was bound up with other cultures, the culture of poverty, prostitution, crime, drugs, the culture of pre-, mid-, and post-op male-to-female transsexuals, the culture of cable TV and American soap-opera from *All My Children* to *Dynasty* and *Dallas*. So Madonna had got it from Willi Ninja, who got it from the Drag Balls, who got it from *Vogue* magazine and TV, and from everything else, including early twentieth century music hall and cabaret, the Harlem Renaissance of the twenties and thirties, and the almost forgotten drag queens of the forties and fifties. And Madonna's appropriation was also the basis for Voguing performances here in Ireland, whether in the George, or the Shaft, or the Temple, or some bedsit in Phibsboro or some hairdresser's party in Sligo or wherever ...

One further putative appropriation requiring mention in this context is the film made by Jenny Livingston *Paris is Burning* which brought international attention to some of the Drag Balls and some of the people involved in this culture.⁶ Madonna's access to Voguing may or may not have been informed by Livingston's project. Livingston's film is of interest in this context because it also has been cast as an appropriation in very particular terms. It has been described as an appropriation by a white middle-class lesbian of black and latino working class gay male culture, and even as these terms are used to describe the making over of something into someone-else's property it is apparent that appropriation is often a term of reproach, a word used to accuse someone of theft or robbery. There is also the sense, perhaps naive, of something basically unfair about the ability to take something over and make it

5. Madonna, *Vogue*, Warner, General Release, March, 1990.
6. Jenny Livingston, *Paris Is Burning* (1991)

7. For a discussion of these and related issues in respect of the film see bell hooks, 'Is Paris Burning?', *Zeta Magazine*, Vol. 4, no. 6, June 1991, pp.60-64; Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, Routledge, 1993, Chapt. 4 'Gender Is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion.' pp. 121-142; John Champagne, *The Ethics of Marginality*, Univ. of Minnesota, 1995, Chapter 3, "'I Just Wanna Be a Rich Somebody': Experience, Common Sense and Paris Is Burning", pp. 88-128.; Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, Routledge, 1993, p.23 and Chapter 4, 'The Golden Apple: Jenny Livingston's Paris Is Burning', pp. 93-111.

into one's property. This is the power of acquisition and it is a power, like all powers, not universally available: it is not exercised with simple mutuality and furthermore not all appropriations work. The people in Livingston's film may try to appropriate the look of whiteness, wealth, power and legitimated sophistication but they don't necessarily become white, wealthy, powerful, sophisticated and legitimate as these categories are policed in the dominant culture (nor do they necessarily contest these categories as such). Rather, perhaps their apparent transgressive chic becomes appropriated by film-makers, academics and writers (like this one).⁷ So when I begin by talking about the "straight appropriation of queer culture" it may seem inevitable that I am going to be critical and say "hands off hetties, this is ours." Possibly (probably) at first, this is where I was heading, unwittingly, by using the term "straight appropriation". The more playful phrase "Gay De-Gay Re-Gay A-Ga(y)in" may be taken to mark a desire to approach the questions of queer culture in a different, though inevitably tentative, manner.

Before returning to that phrase let me, by way of preliminary, rehearse a basic proposition as to why an alternative approach may be desirable: queer culture as a property which needs to be policed and protected from straight appropriation is a dead end, a redundant idea dependent ultimately on the 17th- and 18th-century conceptions of the individual as self-possessed and as anchored in property relations. This, as I am arguing, redundant, idea is (it is worth bearing in mind) consistent with the libertarian idea of the rights-bearing individual as a basic unit of community and society. It is arguably the Enlightenment project which privileges the idea of personhood in terms of identity and property. Proprietorial rights thus become a primary model of civil liberty: it's my self/body and I can do with it what I want so long as it doesn't conflict

8. These terms, as well as being central to the often gender-blind civil rights traditions of the West, may be read in the feminist critiques of power regimes in respect of reproductive rights, abortion and medical authority. This has proved to be a powerful model for feminist activism since at least the 1960s, and so, clearly reinterpretation of so powerful a paradigm must be considered cautiously. In this instance, however, I am obliged to present a crude reduction of a much more complex matter which has engaged the researches of feminist theorists and such eminent political historians and philosophers as J.G. Pocock, Michel Foucault, Jurgen Habermas and C.B. Macpherson among others.

9. OVERTON, Richard, *An Arrow against all Tyrants*, 1646, pp. 3-4.

10. See Note 1, p.296 and Chapter 3, Section (i) in MACPHERSON, C.B. *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke*, OUP, 1962.

11. (Ibid. p. 142.)

with your right to do what you want with your self/body etc.⁸ Queer theory is one of several initiatives which seek to challenge this logic of personhood with its attendant Cartesianism in *extremis*.

*To every Individuall in nature is given an individual property by nature, not to be invaded or usurped by any: for every one as he is himselfe, so he hath a self propriety, else could he not be himselfe, and on this no second may presume to deprive any of, without manifest violation and affront to the very principles of nature, and of the Rules of equity and justice between man and man; mine and thine cannot be, except this be; No man hath power over my rights and liberties, and I over no mans; I may be but an Individuall, enjoy my selfe, and my selfe propriety, and may write my selfe no more then my selfe, or presume any further; if I doe, I am an encroacher & an invader upon an other mans Right, to which I have no Right.*⁹

It may be worth noting that, in the general context of my first publication, this Levellers' tract by 'man' excluded women, men under twenty-one, servants (often excluding wage-earners in general), and beggars.¹⁰ It may also be helpful to consider the following gloss on the cited passage by a late-twentieth century political theorist.

*Not only has the individual a property in his own person and capacities, a property in the sense of a right to enjoy and use them and to exclude others from them; what is more, it is this property, this exclusion of others, that makes a man human: 'every one as he is himselfe, so he hath a self propriety, else he could not be himselfe'. What makes a man human is his freedom from other men. Man's essence is freedom. Freedom is proprietorship of one's own person and capacities.*¹¹

In what way this conception of proprietorial selfhood intersects with identity politics may be seen in part in the boundary disputes implicated in the terms 'gay', 'lesbian'

and 'queer'. Consider Elizabeth Grosz and her anxieties about the profligacy of the term 'queer':

[T]he phrase 'lesbian and gay' by now has a pre-designated and readily assumed constituency and a correlative set of identities as well as a series of easy presumptions and ready-made political answers. The label 'queer' does problematize many of these presumptions; but its risks are greater than simply remaining tied to a set of stale and conventional assumptions, assumptions which now carry the weight of given truths. 'Lesbian and gay' has the advantage of straightforwardly articulating its constituency—while 'queer' is capable of accommodating, and will no doubt provide a political rationale and coverage in the near future for many of the most blatant and extreme forms of heterosexual and patriarchal power games. They, too, are in a certain sense queer, persecuted, ostracized. Heterosexual sadists, pederasts, fetishists, pornographers, pimps, voyeurs also suffer from social sanctions.¹²

Grosz restates her anxieties of inclusion, specifically identifying against bisexuals: “the proliferation of queer sexualities is bound to include bisexuality (a position that I have always believed both wants to have its cake and eat it, anguishes and cries oppression at the impossibility of doing so), heterosexual transvestism and transsexualism, sadomasochistic heterosexuality.” The specific point of intersection highlighted here between identity politics and proprietorial selfhood is the precondition of an exclusionary moment: an auto-constitutive evacuation from self of other.

'Queer' in as much as it seeks to transcend identity politics is often disregarded by orthodox 'lesbian and gay' activists as politically disempowering. The assumption is that political agency is locatable only within stable identity: mutability, antagonism, incommensurability across the 'constituency' are seen as strategic liabilities and

12. GROSZ, Elizabeth, 'Experimental Desire: Rethinking Queer Subjectivity' in COPJEC, Joan (ed.) *Supposing The Subject*, London, Verso, 1994, pp. 133-157. (See n.3, pp. 153-4.)

shortcomings in respect of real-politic. However, 'queer' as a more inclusive identity (inclusive but of course not without the need for certain apparently obvious exclusions) has been actively promulgated by 'lesbian and gay and queer and ...' activists and writers. Mark Simpson puts it somewhat confrontationally; “Gay, in short, did with queer precisely what it always lambasted the 'straight world' for doing: it took what it wanted and disregarded and suppressed the threatening stuff.”¹³ (If one remained within the initial frame of appropriation we might be saying that 'gay and lesbian' have appropriated 'queer'.)

The proprietorial dimension to identity politics reaches its apogée in the struggle to contain the public meanings of the terms of identity, the struggle for positive self-representation: 'gay is good'. Lesbian and gay Pride is a strategy typical of the gay-is-good initiative and the struggle for positive self-representation. It is also an instance of contested ownership. This year there has been a minor confrontation over events mobilised under the banners of 'Pride' and 'Mardi Gras'. The voluntary sector and the commercial sector appear to be in conflict over ownership of lesbian and gay Pride. Business self-interest has appropriated the mantle of community representation (typically illustrated by the inclusion of safer-sex guidelines in publicity materials) successfully mimicking the voluntary sector's community-positive appearance. There is clearly an attempt to displace the voluntary community infrastructure in favour of a cohort of business interests. How can such proprietorial claims on public meanings be enforced or even arbitrated? In the generalised market context there is the apparatus of copyright, patent and trademark and the trading offense of “passing-off” but should this machinery be deployed in respect of representations and categories of person? Arguably, the requirement is to rethink the politics of

13. SIMPSON, Mark, *Anti-Gay*, London, Cassell, 1996, pxvi. Isaac Julien predicted something similar in the early nineties in relation to Queer Cinema: “What's happening is a difference in stance—a militantly confrontational attitude. However, we know that what's Queer today will be appropriated as Gay tomorrow.” ('Queer Questions', *Sight and Sound*, Sept. 1992, p.35)

identification and the mechanisms of community building and (while taking full account of the logic of the market which permeates contemporary social and cultural life) to promote an alternative to proprietorial models of selfhood.¹⁴

The public avowal of identity, ‘I belong with ...’, ‘I am the same as ...’, is the investment of selfhood in a category of shared (i.e. ownership compromised) public meanings: it is an investment in that which cannot be owned but only (occasionally) contested. I may well be gay, and gay may well be good but gay, well, it may never be mine ... And here begins the movement: Gay-Degay-Regay-Aga(y)in.

PART TWO:

Getting back down/on/from/against/with it.

The term ‘gay’, we may feel, is something we basically understand. Indeed it may be a term we know so intimately so as to feel almost possessive about it: a sense of the “hands off hetties again, the word is mine”. On the other hand, some of us may feel the term ‘gay’ has already gone a bad way, taken a turn to the *right* and *straightened* out. The politics of the word ‘gay’ have been denounced somewhat ungenerously as assimilationist and apologetic.¹⁵ Some now signal a renewed allegiance to the stigmatised word ‘queer’. It is worth rehearsing here a recent critique of the term ‘gay’ marshalled under the banner of Anti-Gay by Mark Simpson:

What is this thing called ‘gay’? And is it any good?

Whatever it is, there is certainly no shortage of it. We now have gay bars, gay priests, gay television, gay football, gay radio, gay plagues, gay brains, gay beer, gay lifestyles, gay serial killers, gay videos, gay counselling, gay Members of Parliament, gay magazines, gay bookshops, gay plumbers, gay pop stars, gay holidays, gay plays, gay youths, gay ads, gay novels, gay clubs, gay condoms, gay studies, gay soldiers, gay professionals, gay districts, gay boutiques,

14. In the first draft of this paper I attempted to approach what I believed to be the ambivalences, gaps and weaknesses of proprietorial identity politics from another angle in the following passage:

Who owns lesbian and gay pride? Who owns the right to speak for lesbians and gay men? Who owns The George? Who owns this initiative to exhibit? Who owns the key to the door of entry into or out of the closet? Who owns the key to the door of entry into or out of the canon of things gay and good? Will the Sauna be a part of queer culture or not? Will we celebrate a ten-way fuck in a darkroom as queer culture or are we only going to talk about ten line poems and triptychs? Do I lose the right to talk publicly about being queer when I sleep with a woman? Are women who continue to identify as bisexual but are married to men in or out of our community building project? What are they in or out of? Is it part of our queer culture when a fifty-five year old married man gets a blow job in his big car from a fifteen year old boy for fifteen quid? Is it part of queer culture to call the fifteen year old a (knacker) because he has limited schooling and a north inner city accent? Who owns gay law reform? Who owns and controls its meanings? Are lesbians gay?

In response to that earlier draft some speakers were anxious to distinguish between issues of ownership in gay business and issues of ownership in respect of community resources. Similarly significance is attached to the distinction between the self-interest (seldom so-called) motivating activists and the voluntary sector. While I would by no means wish to erase these distinctions I should like to challenge the simple assumption of an unproblematic representative role passing

into the hands of activists and voluntary workers.

I would also direct attention to recent controversies in London in respect of the ownership and usage of a community resource see the discussion in Jo Eadie’s ‘Indigestion: Diagnosing The Gay Malady’ in SIMPSON, M., *Anti-Gay*, pp. 63-83. Eadie argues “We can see in that conflict a persistent attempt to confine what it means to be lesbian or gay by demanding that those who are not quite, should conform, or get out. As if that insistence would thereby prove that the lesbian and gay community, the lesbian and gay identity, was adequate for anyone, if only these foolish people would realize it and change themselves so as to fit.” (pp. 71-2.)

15. MORTON, Donald, ‘The Politics of Queer Theory in the (Post) Modern Moment’ *GENDERS*, No. 17, Fall pp. 121-150.

16. SIMPSON, Mark, *Anti-Gay*, London, Cassell, 1996, pxi.

17. PATTON, Cindy, *Inventing AIDS*, 1990, p. [page number missing]

gay flags, gay haircuts, gay cities, gay money, and, of course, a gay press where all these gay things, and many more besides, are enthusiastically profiled, interviewed, promoted and ... listed.

*Never mind the quality, just feel the length of our lovely lists.*¹⁶

While there are arguments about the value of the word ‘gay’ its lexical status is generally assumed as that of an adjective (if over-subscribed) or a noun: the gay (adjective) bar was filled with gays (nouns). The word ‘queer’ has in part proved attractive because it can operate not only as an adjective and a noun, but also a verb. One can do *queer* things and be a *queer*, but also one can *queer* the whole thing up or at least try to do so. That the word ‘gay’ may be considered as a verb also is suggested by the relatively recent use of the new verb: ‘degay’.

‘Degayed’ was apparently first used by Cindy Patton in 1990 in relation to the history of public health campaigning, AIDS activism and the HIV/AIDS health crisis. In her book *Inventing AIDS* Patton claimed:

*People who were not gay recognised the importance of making people aware that there was risk through behaviours engaged in by people who did not identify as gay. The gay community helped degay AIDS in order to stem the tide of increased discrimination and violence resulting from the perception that all gay people including lesbians had AIDS. AIDS organisations also helped to degay AIDS by asserting that their group served anyone with AIDS and were not ‘gay’ political or social organisations.*¹⁷

In becoming generalised to “anyone” and thus not “just” a gay thing, the AIDS Crisis becomes degayed. This is not the only manner in which this word has been used.

Recently, I was invited to talk about the filmwork of Andy Warhol at the Irish Film Center. The Education Officer who extended the invitation asked that I might address the interrelationship between the three terms ‘Warhol’,

'Gay' and 'Cinema.' While researching the piece it was alarming to realise the degree to which the commentary on Warhol ignored the questions of Warhol's self-proclaimed 'swish' queerness. In the work of recent queer critics there was to be found an alternate use of the word 'degay'.¹⁸ In describing Warhol as having been 'degayed' by his mainstream art commentators, queer critics referred to the exclusion of the gay moment of the work: the gay contexts of production, distribution, and reception, the gay personnel, the gay references, the gay sources. All these aspects might be described as the gay moment of the work which in subsequent commentary was made over as incidental, not centrally significant, inconsequential, and so on: degayed.

18. See DOYLE, J. FLATLET, J & MUNOZ, J.E. (eds.) *Queer Warhol*, 1997.

It has been suggested that there was in the nineteen-seventies a degaying of gay women in the sense that the word "lesbian" displaced the words 'gay woman' which had apparently been in place along with a range of other terms since the 1950s. It might also be possible to speak of a degaying of lesbianism aligned with some aspects of nineteen-seventies English-language Feminism sought to actively distance themselves from gay male culture. It is worth bearing in mind that in the 1980s the American so-called "Lesbian Sex Wars", central to the trumpeting of "queer", were in part informed by a renewed engagement across lesbian and gay male culture in urban centers in the US such as San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York.

Another use of the term 'degay' is to be found in the work of Leo Bersani, a key figure in challenging the orthodoxies of Gay Liberation. Bersani argues "gay men and lesbians ... having nearly disappeared into their awareness of how they have been constructed as gay men and lesbians ... having degayed themselves, gays melt into the culture they like to think of themselves as undermining."¹⁹ Thus for

Bersani degaying is a problematic activity or manoeuvre rooted in the embrace of the constructionist account of identity which argues for the historical contingency of 'gay' and 'lesbian' identities. Mark Simpson as part of his response to Bersani argues that degaying is an inevitable follow-on from, and reaction against, the gay liberationist politics and strategies of the seventies and eighties.²⁰

In a more generalised sense the term 'degay' may be seen to allow of a move beyond reductivist analyses which speak of a vast overarching homophobia. Instead of a single unified blunt violent motive-force constructed as homophobia it may be possible to use a combination of terms such as degay to describe dynamic, complex, and mobile systems of desire, anxiety and violence. In this way degaying would be construed as one part of the diverse and contradictory processes of social and sexual policing. Degaying is not always or indeed primarily a straight forward disavowal of gayness: to degay is not simply to say it isn't gay. Degaying is to acknowledge on the one hand "Oh, yes its gay but its not that gay ..." or "... its gayness is not the important thing ..." or "... its gay but that doesn't matter, what matters is something else entirely..." Most of us will have heard (or even used) a line such as "Well just because I'm gay doesn't mean ... (fill in as appropriate)." Degaying is thus about dis-articulating gayness from shared public meaning. Degaying actively breaks any possible linkage between intimate desire and public performance. Clearly degaying is a strategic manoeuvre available to service diverse agendas including the Anti-Gay, the Pro-Gay, the Gay-Friendly, the Gay-Tolerant and the Gay-Negating. In this sense it may be construed as neither a good or bad thing in itself. It is a device, a strategy: "Well just because I'm gay doesn't mean I can't be a good employee." This is an important strategy. "Well just because I'm gay doesn't mean I make gay art, I just happen to be gay and I just

19. BERSANI, Leo, *Homos*, Harvard UP, 1995, p.6.

20. Simpson makes the following claim: "[D]e-gaying oneself is not something that you embark upon because you think that it will Change the World but because, as in the course of a feud that you've quite enjoyed up until now, or at least felt self-righteous about, you suddenly discover that you're very bored and don't want to go on playing Tweedle Dum to someone else's Tweedle DEE forever. 'De-gaying' is also the inevitable result of postmodernism finally catching up with gay and fragmenting its pretentious 'grand-narrative'. People are leaving gay because they no longer believe its claims to interpret the world or make it a better place." (p.xvii)

happen to make art, I don't make art because I'm gay." This also is a strategy. In each case I acknowledge that gayness is in some way a datum but deny it is an issue: it is made inconsequential.

If we allow for the uneasy co-existence of all the above usages of degay, we can return to the term 'gay' and review its potential as a verb. Degaying is an activity that in large part takes on a value according to its performative context. Similarly gaying will be an activity that likewise has an ambivalent and contingent value. And taking a cue from degaying we may construe gaying as actively forging the articulation of intimate desire, sexuality and public meanings. The classic movement of gaying might be the movement out-of-the-closet but it also includes the construction of those very positions assumed outside-the-closet. Gaying thus retrospectively refers not only to the gay liberationist strategies of outing-oneself but also to the 19th-century construction of a taxonomy of sexualities/personae that make outing coherent. Gaying refers also to the contesting of these generally stigmatised positions 'invert', 'pervert', 'homosexual', 'urning', 'dyke' and so forth in terms of value: "these are not 'bad' but 'good' or at least acceptable positions." Gaying is also epitomised in the basic tenet: 'gay is good'. Gaying is also the impulse to make the lists scorned by some and worn by others.²¹

Everyone who has come out or who has been queer-bashed can attest to the very real, dramatic and potent activity that gaying represents. It is the strategy which so far has been predominantly advocated by gay and lesbian activists and political agitators. It is a strategy like degaying that is subject to transformed meaning and significance accordingly as it is implemented in differing contexts. Before the processes of degaying can be performed the processes of gaying must be already active or implicated. Regaying according to this logic of sequence depends

21. I am thinking here of the well known tee-shirt which sports a list of historical figures "Michelangelo, ... Oscar Wilde ... and me."
22. This phrase, derived in part from the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben's *The Coming Community* was employed in "Invisibilities: Some Gambits" (1997) as indicating the possible emancipatory potential of lesbian and gay community, and marks the point of development for future work on rethinking political personhood and collectivity in relation to the tentative researches presented here. The suggestive and resonant aspects of this phrase in the context of a rethink of proprietorial selfhood are the terms "have nothing" and "in common."

on the prior moments of both gaying and degaying. Regaying is not simply the restatement of "gay is good" but an affirmation that reworks both prior moments so as to reconstruct gayness as a centrally significant public meaning. At this point regaying may be posited as an as-yet-unrealised and speculative moment, the content of which remains obscure. However, there does emerge a suggestive dialectic of strategies: gay-degay-regay.

What advantage or gain accrues to those of us who have constituted ourselves as a gay and lesbian community, by refiguring gay as an activity and as a strategy (and one, furthermore that is placed in a dialectical process)? Well, it lets us "have our cake and eat it". It allows the mobilisation of a (provisional) collectivity but it does not worry overly at the boundaries of the collectivity and displaces the central issue of identity, the categories of essence and being, in favour of a dynamic frame of doing. But strategies must presumably be implemented to achieve goals. If we forego the hope of a stabilised well-defined constituency in favour of an unstable opportunistic configuration of people engaged in various forms of gaying, degaying and regaying, what objectives are meaningful? In asking this of course one is at the beginning of a politics. One is also constructing an arena within which the basic categories of political selfhood can be rethought.

CODA: Towards a "community-of-those-who-have-nothing-in common".²² A-Ga(y)in.

The material presented here is tentatively presented as a contribution to a dialogue. Speculative, fragmentary and provisional it is incomplete and therefore its presentation here should be construed as a gentle provocation to those of us who would substitute identity for politic.

tom gleeson

phyllis stein and brendan: the furnace 1997

1997

photograph



lorna healy

doing it for/to themselves

1997

photographs

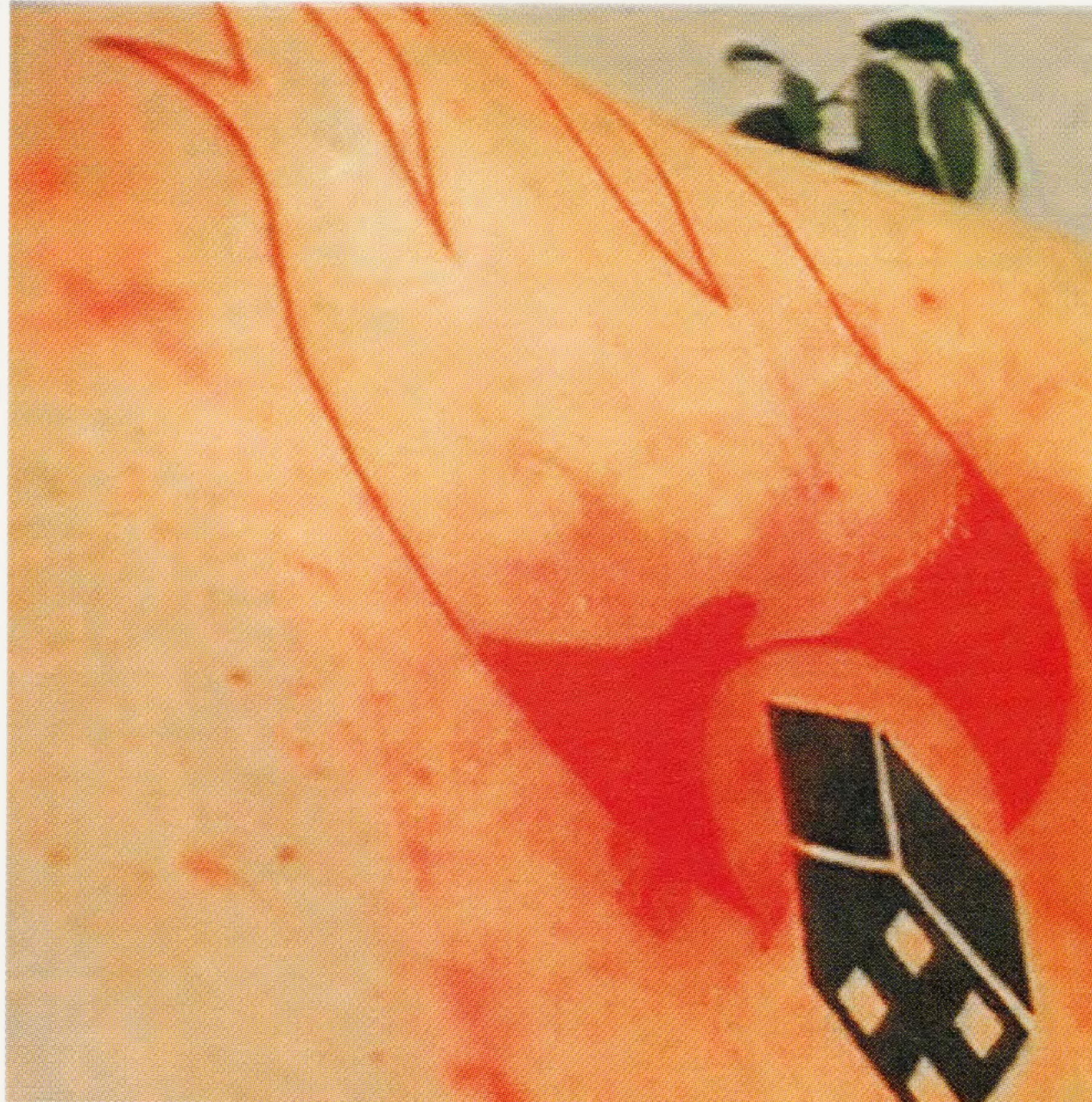


niall sweeney

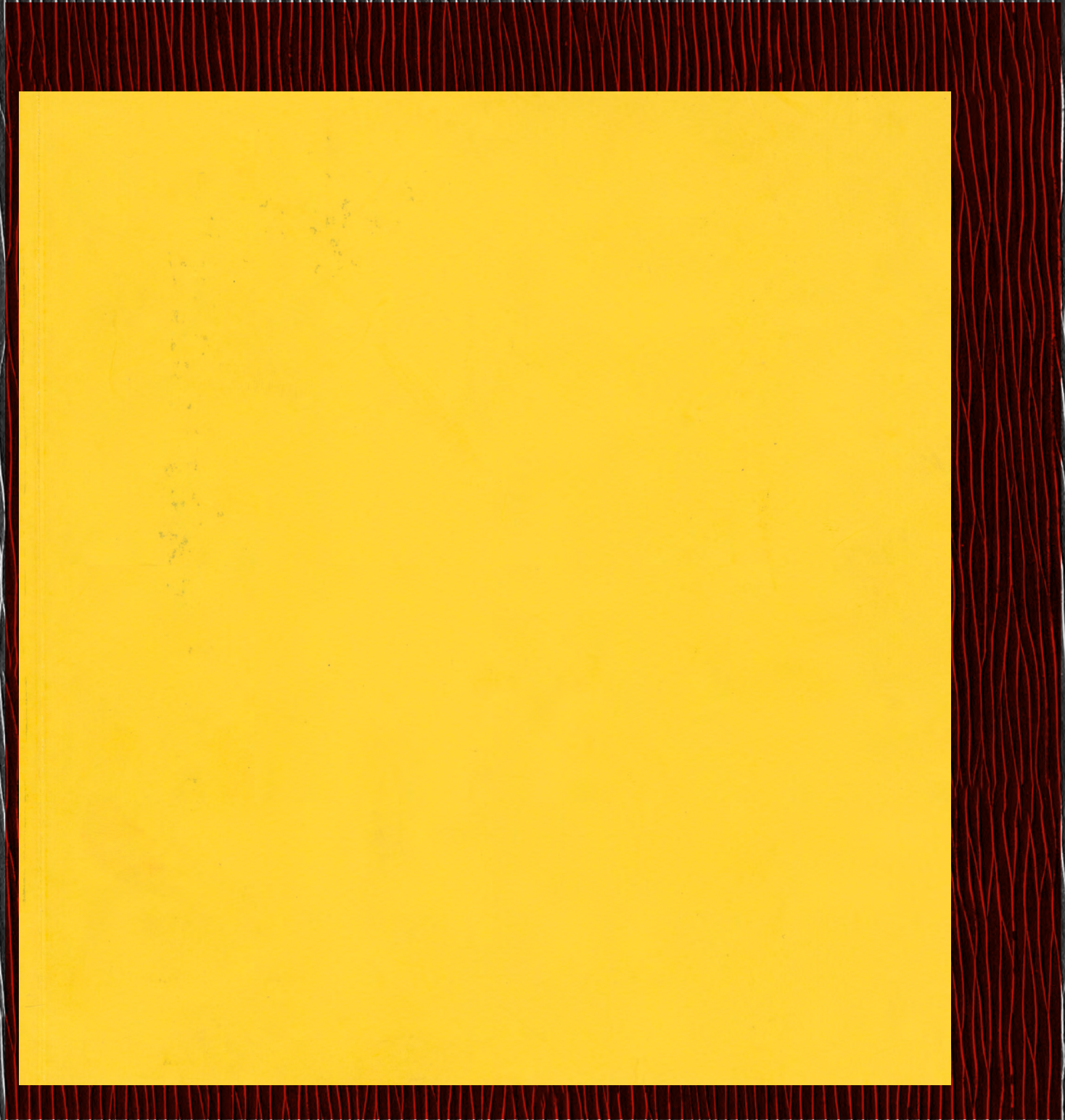
b.l.a.b. (bleeding like a bastard)

1997

skin, ink, blood, needles, plant
video projection on latex screen



1993





VIDEO INVIDEOUS: AN EXHIBITION OF QUEER WORK 1999 IN AROUND AND ABOUT VIDEO CULTURE

artists:

garrett barry
paul connell
linda cullen
cecilia dougherty
james dunbar
javier de la garza
michael gillespie
tom gleeson
catherine harper
eliz lagerstrom
rosy martin
abigail o'brien & javier de la garza
ciaran o'keefe
david philips & paul rowley

steve reinke
sarbjit samra
alex walsh
louise walsh
eoin whelan
mo white
martin yelverton

exhibition:

arthouse, dublin
25 june – 24 july 1999

curators:

henry pim
mick wilson

publication:

texts:

henry pim,
'the queer agenda'
lynn turner,
'documentary friction, revisited'
john thomson,
'vision mixing'

seminar:

what are you looking at?
what are you looking for?

invited panellists:

sarbjit samra
katherine o'donnell
michael gillespie

funders/supporters:

arts council of ireland
arthouse
dublin pride committee
gay community news
werrc

It is much quicker if I start by making three lists
(please fill in or delete as applicable):

1 Issues we could address: Gender, sexual alignment,
the family, sex-informed relationships (loving or abusive),
heterosexist assumptions, health, employment...

2 People we might be: Lesbian, gaymale, bi-sexual,
heterosexual, trans-gendered [sic]

3 Artistic practice: (not all queers are artists, not all artists
are queer) Contemporary and historical precedents,
techniques and technology, skill, blatancy, concealment...

When OutArt first met in 1995 it was decided to adopt an inclusive approach to the first exhibition. We adopted the title, or theme of '*Pride in Diversity*'. Then, as now, we saw ourselves representing a broad constituency but were never particularly democratic. What began as a collective (with all the inability to make radical decisions that this implies) soon mutated. The administrating group who arranged the venue, contacted artists and applied for money, appointed two selectors whose job was to exercise their personal taste (and prejudices) in assembling the exhibition that took place in June 1996 at the City Arts Centre. Since then the selection has been given to different people for each of the shows. It is a justifiable concern that many artists would resist the Queer category as being too narrow a definition. We found however that enough work was submitted to ensure what turned out to be a varied

the queer agenda
henry pim

and exciting first exhibition. Once we had moved beyond that first public presentation, it seemed that 'all kinds of everything' approach was not particularly useful. For the 1997 exhibition the show moved to the RHA Gallagher Gallery and we narrowed our scope by reducing the number of artists chosen and that those chosen would highlight a queer agenda. We were committed to avoiding a good taste approach that would act as an agent to disguise or altogether conceal the Queer Agenda and preserve the assumption of heterosexuality.

For the 1998 show this idea was taken further and as the title '*Confrontations*' suggests the issue emerged not only that plain speaking or shock tactics be the order of the day, but that for the sake of impact a more subtle and allusive approach could be as effective. The debate around blatancy or concealment had long been central to the practice of mainstream art and we were happy to be a part of this rather than to construct the idea of an isolated cell of artistic activity. Happily we are not the only platform from which the Queer Agenda may be discussed but by creating a site where queer issues may be presumed to exist we have paradoxically created an atmosphere in which blatancy is only one option. A more evasive technique can be just as effective.

This year's show '*Video Invidious*', has narrowed the brief to include artists who use photography and video: a greater limitation in one way than the brief set for the first exhibition but a clear statement of greater confidence. There will be more opportunities in the future to explore other aspects.



catherine harper
desirous skin
1999
cibachrome,
stitched velvet



linda cullen

first kiss

1998

video

lust for power: 2nd international dyke march

1998

video



alex walsh
bedroom culture
1998-9
phototext



SOLO

THINGS WE DO

OutArt



THINGS WE DO

2000

artists:

garrett barry

phil collins

pierre yves clouin

nuno alexander ferreira

andrew fox

fiona mulholland

deirdre a power

nairn scott

kaye shumack

exhibition:

arthouse, dublin

22 june – 23 july 2000

OutArt committee:

tom keogh

alan phelan

orla scannell

alexander liebert

selectors:

patrick t. murphy

publication:

texts:

dr suzanne o'shea,

“difficult beauty’ towards an art of the ordinary’

fadi abou-rihan,

‘average’

design:

alan phelan

funders/supporters:

arts council of ireland

arthouse

dublin pride committee

dublin corporation

the british council

ambassade de france en irlande

sofasofa

ucd women's education

research and resource centre

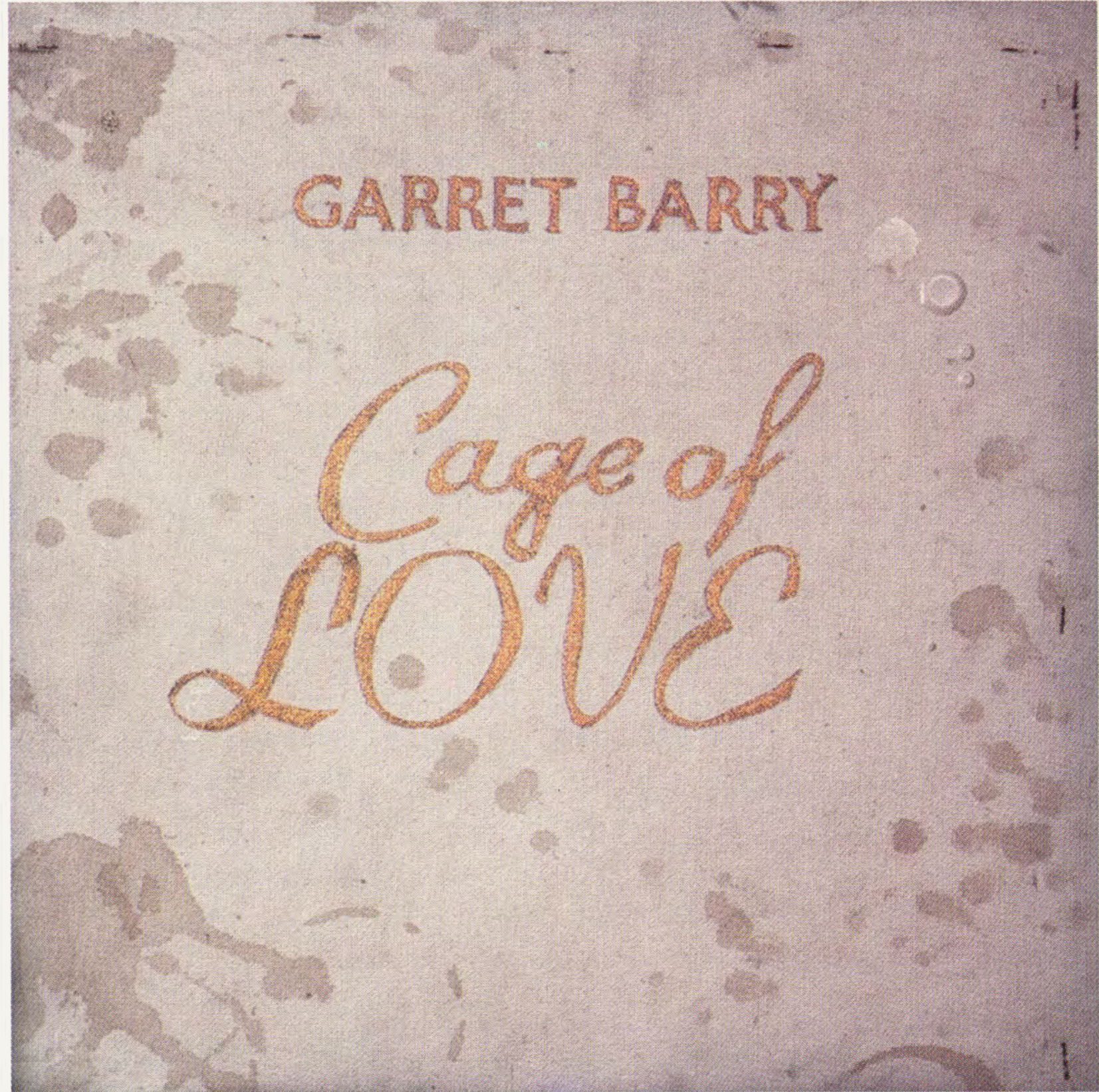
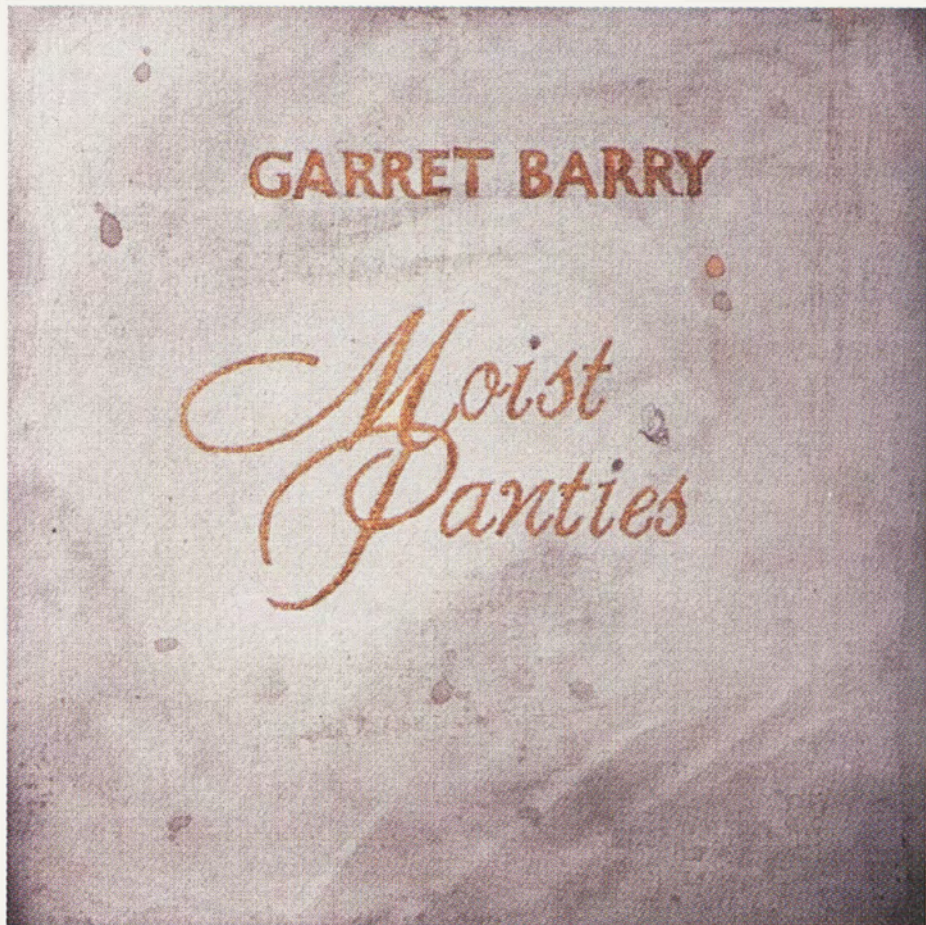
friends of OutArt

In this selection of OutArt we have attempted to identify artists in the submission that place issues of art before issues of sexual identity or politics. This reassertion offers, in my opinion, an exhibition whose breath transcends the exclusivity of what was understood to comprise ‘a gay art exhibition’. By foregrounding aesthetic issues the syntactical structure is by necessity broadened resulting in greater inclusivity.

‘Queer Art’ was a form of protest art, a necessary demonstration against the discrimination and marginalization of gays. It was also a celebratory art, an insistence of the wealth and dynamic of gay culture outside of straight culture. It defined itself on the basis on sub-cultural separation. Its polemical stance was effective to some extent in creating legislative and socio-structural change but it severed formal aesthetics from its judgement and required a narrow definition of content.

The brief of this exhibition was work that addressed the everyday in its ordinary and sometimes extraordinary manifestations. The banal rituals of daily life provide some of the most profound moments of questioning for an individual. This art has the ability to exquisitely witness these questions and provide company for our attempts to answer them. As such it functions as both and neither queer or straight art, it is simply art, a generous gesture.

garrett barry
cage of love
fuck me forever
moist panties
1998
mixed media on canvas



deirdre a power

alive with pleasure

1997

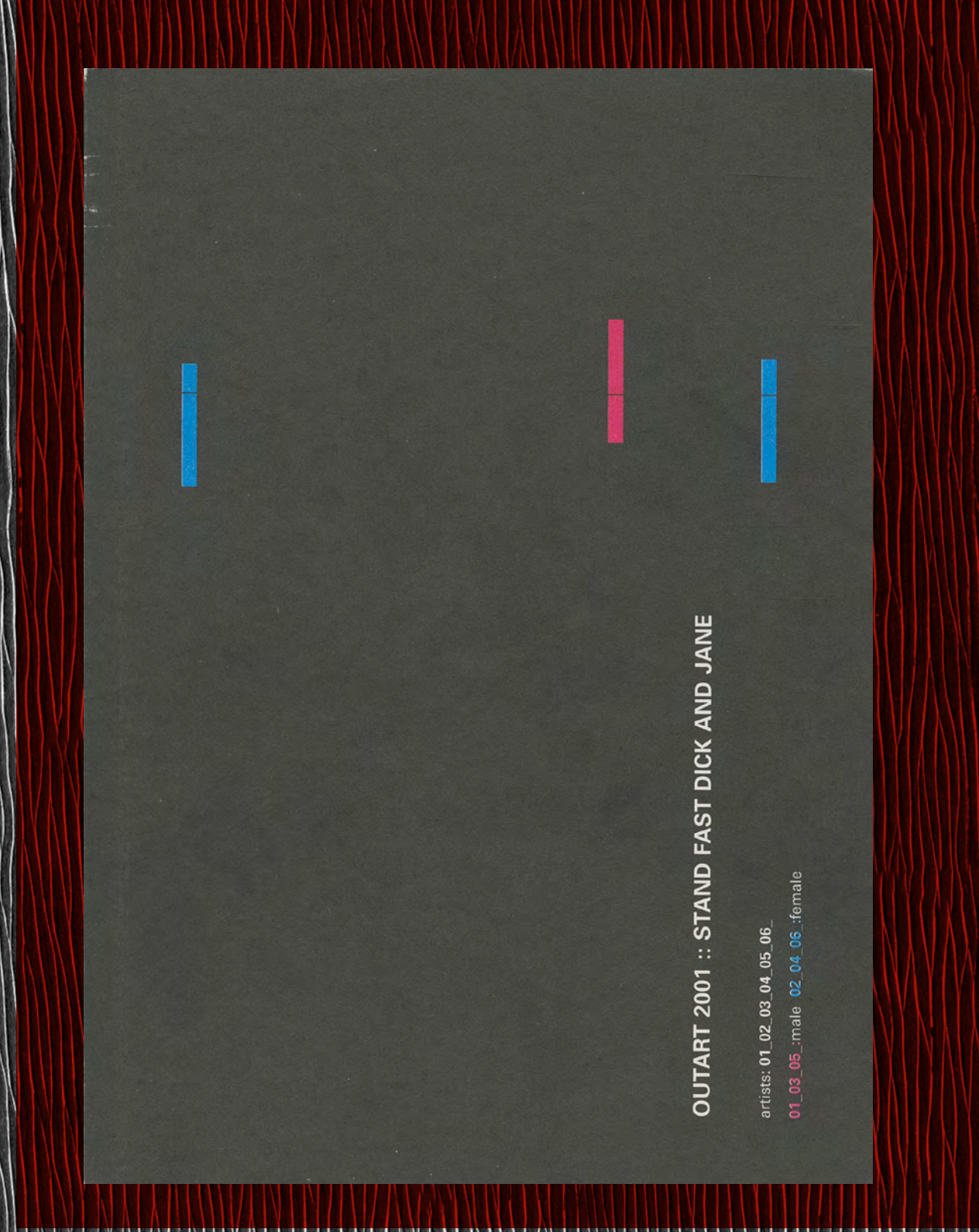
dried pigment, wax,
shopping bags, perspex



fiona mulholland
flowers
2000
cast metal and dummies
dimensions variable



2001



OUTART 2001 :: STAND FAST DICK AND JANE

artists: 01_02_03_04_05_06_

01_03_05 .male 02_04_06 .female

STAND FAST DICK AND JANE

2001

artists:

nayland blake
zoe leonard
virgil marti
marlene mccarty
donald moffett
carrie moyer

exhibition:

project art centre, dublin
28 june – 28 july 2001

curators:

tom keogh
alan phelan

publication:

texts:
nayland blake,
'how did we get here?'

Over the past few years the OutArt brief has become wider, initially exhibiting Irish gay and lesbian artists, expanding to international artists and non-gay artists with curatorial themes and decisions becoming more focused each year. The group open submission show has evolved into an invited format where works were selected through discussions with individual artists, galleries and institutions.

OutArt has never sought to prescribe. A curated show, however, does give a false sense of commonality, flawed maybe but hopefully discursive. We have tried to build on previous exhibitions this year by exploring a different terrain of queer art, that being a selection of American artists who came to prominence over the past twenty years through the era of identity politics. Now firmly established, they are dealing with a world where difference doesn't seem to matter any more, identity is not enough of a motive and politics in art is generally more archaic than anarchic.

Through discussions we asked if there was any merit in promulgating a particular aspect of the work of artists, queer or otherwise. Last summer we met artist Donald Moffett in Dublin at Richard Torchia and Patrick Murphy's show at the RHA. From this initial encounter the concept developed further through several meetings with artists in the US for an exhibition looking at the legacy of the gay activist period in the late 1980s. The minority politics which had come to the forefront through the AIDS crisis had created a new kind of queer identity and art. This is discussed later in the essay by Nayland Blake, one of the

contributing artists to the show. He discusses from his own experience of the time how queer art has developed and changed over the years.

While approaching Project for the venue we came across 'Stand Fast Dick', the name of the rock formation on which Dublin's City Hall or Royal Exchange is built on. It runs under the River Liffey and down Essex Street where the Project building is located and was once visible as it rose out of the river providing an obstacle for ships which often proved fatal. This seemed like an interesting metaphor for what we were attempting to do—examine a striking historical moment which has been gradually embedded into the cultural matrix, once posing a threat but now acting as a foundation.

Once we started looking at artists' work another theme emerged. Many were looking to childhood and adolescence, exploring that period of awkwardness and uncertainty from an adult perspective, one that is able to cut through sentimentality and embrace the trauma, anxiety and violence of that time. 'Dick and Jane' the beloved and now controversial American children's book characters made an entry here. Their characters had changed each decade from the 1940's mirroring the social and cultural changes of the times but still upholding wholesome family values. They are loved for their instructional innocence and hated for their promotion of stereotypes and this combined with 'Stand Fast Dick' produced the metaphor which seemed appropriate.

Ireland, at this moment, also stands at an important point in its social and economic development. Many would argue that the greatest threat to social inclusion and integrity comes, not from traditional Conservatism, but from placing economic success over the sense of community. The 'Celtic Tiger' has within it the 'Pink Pound' which, at worst, presents us with an amoral, selfish generation and at best,

the potential of an unpredictable and unstable future. The fortunes of the liberal agenda have always been closely tied to economic affluence. This will inevitably suffer when our cyclical boom proves to be short lived. But this is not what 'Stand fast Dick and Jane' seeks to resolve. The work in this exhibition is as engaging as many of the people who have influenced the changes within queer culture over the last thirty years on both sides of the Atlantic. These now allow us to take an open and critical overview of what has happened, where we stand now, and what possibilities exist in front of us, 'although past performance does not guarantee future success'.



IMPOSSIBILITY
AND ME —
PALM TREES
EXCLAMATIONS
TRADE GOTHIC
AND BLOOD

I have always loved palm trees. How they seem to erupt so impossibly vertiginous into equally impossibly blue skies. Topped with their Sideshow Bob barnets, whipped by hurricanes, the lacerating blades of their fronds nurturing cascading abundances of sweet fruit. Sentinel fireworks, fingers to bad weather, exclamations flanking the road to sunnier times some distance ahead. Palms produce both male *and* female flowers — often on the same tree.

By the time I designed the first OutArt publication, things had been brewing for quite some time. Almost a decade earlier in 1987, just out and just out of school, myself and some friends had started Alternative Miss Ireland at Sides Danceclub on Dame Lane in Dublin, an event that would, for me, define and influence everything that was to come: friendships, loves, life and work. It was a very long night of raw, joyful visibility and expression; its inclusivity and promotion of a broader idea of queerness and the impact and potential it had beyond the confines of the club, was foundational — the transformational social, cultural and political power of dressing up and having fun. Later that year, I spent the summer working at *Gay Community News* in Boston, which brought both political and design awakening through direct exposure to many groundbreaking ideas in AIDS activism.

By 1995, Panti had arrived ripe from Tokyo. Youth was on our side, Dublin was to be our stage, and we set about its revolution. We planted our own palm trees, erupting into the already reddening sky: Gag, H.A.M., Powderbubble — clubs as catharsis, crucible and provocation, as much to ourselves and to the queer community as to the world at large.

From the start, 1996 was a riotous ride. Everything swelling and flowing together in one great queer wave, each *thing* tumbling (crashing) into the next, each gaining strength and momentum from the other. Early in 1996, nine years after her first apparition, we jump-started Alternative Miss Ireland back into life. She rapidly emerged as an annual event that ran non-stop until 2012, transforming the ground she walked upon, one piercing stiletto at a time, becoming not only a national queer force, but also one of the most significant fundraisers for Irish HIV/AIDS organisations throughout her time on Earth. Everything I did felt like it refracted through the prism of her progress.

I had, at the time, adopted an (ir)rational dogma to deliver *all* graphic design through one typeface—Trade Gothic—a voyage of discovery as to just how far one body could be pushed; just how many expressions achievable through something seemingly so functional yet inherently irregular. The structure soon became my alibi in a kind of S&M relationship with the font. Either that, or so much was concurrently happening that the torment of selecting a new typeface for each project was just too much... whichever it was, I used it for *everything*.

That very first OutArt publication—*Pride In Diversity*—is still one of my favourite things (the design of which I have built upon here for this online retrospective publication). The sensuous yet slightly threatening rivulet-incised skin (or is that bark?) texture of its cover, my ongoing dogma in using Trade Gothic, the upsidedownness of so much of it, and yet it is a dark beauty nonetheless—littered as it is with youthful errors, which I have now come to love in this era of glossy perfection. And of course, that blood-red image of palm trees dropped in on the last page with no explanation, hanging somewhere between windscreen to the view ahead and rear-view mirror.

A year later, with the design for 1997's *(IN)VISIBILITIES*, I replaced every letter 'i' in the entire publication with an exclamation mark. *!rr!tant p!n pr!cks that pr!cked the eyes of even the most accommodating and/or complacent—including my own—comfort was not an opt!on.* Clearly so, as I also ran half of the publication back to front, bound into the twin-spined cover. Nothing done for no reason, but at the same time, a certain deliberate discombobulation seems to be in the blood.

As a designer, I am acutely aware that I am often in the role of caretaker to other people's work, its representation and reproduction, and the same was as true then as it is now—albeit now with a few more years of experience. So any deliberate discombobulation is there to enhance rather than disrupt, unless of course disruption is the context and drive, which, occasionally, it is. It's a thought that became even more apparent as I shifted, in 1998, from designer to participating artist in *Confrontations*, with a projection of me having a burning house bloodily tattooed on my back—a house that had featured on a screen-printed poster for a season of experimental theatre and performance that I had designed in 1996, and which inevitably featured Trade Gothic.

So it follows that in this online retrospective the works are shown scanned directly from the pages of the original OutArt publications, and then enlarged such that the community of small dots of colour that create the totality of an image are made clearly, viscerally visible—while the potency and currency of the works remain undiminished.

I am, with one hand, channelling the spirit of the time, that *riotous* time, and then perhaps, with the other, delicately slapping the face of the face-perfect now with a bouquet of the lacerating fronds and some sweet fruits of a palm tree, as we hurtle along the road ahead, into the blood-red sky.

BIOGRAPHIES

GARRETT BARRY

[original biography: from *Things We Do*, 2000]

Garrett studied fine art at both DIT, Mountjoy Square and NCAD, Dublin. Since then he has exhibited in several exhibitions in Ireland including *Absolut Art*, RHA Gallagher Gallery, 1998 and *Video Invidious* at Arthouse in 1999. He lives and works in Dublin.

LINDA CULLEN

[current biography]

Linda is an enduring and committed programme maker, she is CEO of COCO Content, one of Ireland's leading production companies. She lives in Dublin with her wife and teenage twin daughters. Her best-selling novel *The Kiss* (a lesbian love story) was published in 1990. She has been directing, writing, producing and executive producing since 1985 and has been responsible for steering the success of numerous popular household TV brands and award-winning documentaries. She is currently executive producer of *First Dates Ireland*, *Room to Improve*, *From That Small Island*; *The story of the Irish*, and others. She made *First Kiss* and *Lust For Power* in 1998, at a time when there was little onscreen visibility for the LGBTQ community in Ireland. She went on to direct the award winning RTE documentary *We're Here, We're Queer, We're Irish*, and more recently co-produced and directed *The 34th*, the award winning feature length documentary about the fight for Marriage Equality in Ireland, licensed by Netflix.

ANDREW FOX

[original biography: from *[IN]VISIBILITIES*, 1997]

Andrew is a figurative artist currently based in Clonmel, Tipperary. He trained in Limerick College of Art and Design and the Academy of Fine Art in Perugia, Italy. He completed his studies in Limerick in 1984. His work has been exhibited in several galleries around Ireland and has been featured in the *Young European Artists* shows in London and Brussels. He is committed to working within the conventions of figuration and at the same time attempting to "expand the boundaries of expression from within a given framework".

TOM GLEESON

[current biography]

Tom is a graduate of NCAD with a Masters in Fine Art from Central St Martins, London, and a Doctorate in Law from the University of Southern California. He has exhibited in Ireland, the UK and the US, working primarily in video, photography, drawing, performance, and writing. He was a founding member of OutArt. His work has explored LGBTQ themes including the imagery and attributes of drag, nostalgia, romantic love, and the gay lived experience, as well as a macro view on existence itself. He lives and works in Los Angeles.

CATHERINE HARPER

[current biography]

Northern Irish artist, writer and researcher, Catherine has exhibited in Europe, North America and Australasia. Her most recent writing includes *The Red Hand/s (Lámh Dhearg) of Ulster and other bloody Irish flags...* and *Bloody Textiles, Bloody Sunday, Bloody Ireland* for the Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of World Textiles, and she is currently preparing a book, *The Stained and Bloodied Cloths of Ireland*, for publication by Bloomsbury Academic in 2025.

LORNA HEALY

[original biography: from *Confrontations*, 1998]

Lorna is a graduate of NCAD who has received MAs from Trinity and the University of Leeds. She currently lectures in Cultural Studies and Art History at NCAD and CCAD Cork. Trained initially as a painter, Healy continues to work in a variety of media, including photography and video. Her work has been exhibited in Ireland and the UK and most recently she has presented work as part of *Critical Access ARTiculate* at ARTHouse Temple Bar, Dublin. She is also a writer, broadcaster, and currently presents a cultural review programme on national television.

ANDREW KEARNEY

[current biography]

Andrew is a mixed media installation artist living and working in London, whose work has been shown internationally. After finishing his MA in Chelsea College of Art, he won the Barclays Young Artist award and exhibited at the Serpentine Gallery in London in 1992 and completing a fellowship in the PS1 studios of contemporary art in New York; Kearney has developed installation work for, among others, the Camden Arts Centre, Tate Britain, the Douglas Hyde Gallery in Dublin, the Irish Museum of Modern Art, the Ottawa Art Gallery and the Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff Canada. He also completed a three-year AHRC funded fellowship at Middlesex University in 2008 titled 'Spaces Buildings Make', culminating in an installation on the South Bank as part of the London Architecture Biennale and two books comprising theoretical and practical research.

FIONA MULHOLLAND

[current biography]

Fiona has been successfully working across a range of disciplines and contexts for over twenty-five years. Over the course of her career, she has produced award-winning designs, large-scale public art, curated exhibitions, and presented her artworks within gallery contexts in Ireland and Internationally. Her practice is primarily concerned with cross-referencing conflicting narratives of 'nature' and 'culture'.

HENRY PIM

[current biography]

Henry studied Ceramics at Camberwell School of Arts & Crafts, London, and at The Rietveldt Academie in Amsterdam. From 1990, until his retirement in 2011, he was Lecturer in Ceramics at The National College of Art and Design in Dublin. He is now a freelance Ceramist based in London, with a studio at Vanguard Court in Peckham. He exhibits regularly in The UK and elsewhere.

DEIRDRE POWER

[current biography]

Deirdre graduated from LSAD with a NDAD in Painting in 1985. She continued her studies in Photography at Empire State College, SUNY in New York (1992-1995), where she lived from 1985, returning to Limerick in 1999. In 2012, she completed a Masters in Social Practice and the Creative Environment at LSAD. She has led various collaborative projects with civic and youth groups including Urban Tree Project, Tree Council of Ireland, EVA International, the Hunt Museum and Ilen Project. Her work is represented by the Phatory Gallery in New York. She has undertaken residencies at the McDowell Colony, New Hampshire, USA; the Tyrone Guthrie Centre, Monaghan; Nuuk, Greenland and Funchal, Madeira. In collaboration with artist Chelsea Canavan, Deirdre is currently developing an educational interchange with students in Limerick, Ireland and Funchal, Madeira 2020.

ALEX ROSE

[current biography]

www.instagram.com/eirealex/
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PAUL ROWLEY

[current biography]

Paul is an artist and filmmaker. He is known for the films *Seaview*, filmed with residents of the direct provision centre for asylum seekers in Mosney, Ireland, and *The Red Tree*, which unearths the forgotten history of Mussolini's prison island for gay men. His company Still Films has produced many other films including *Pyjama Girls*, *This One's For The Ladies*, and Vivienne Dick's *New York Our Time*. He is currently completing work on *Gays Against Guns*, a documentary about the American gun violence epidemic.

NIALL SWEENEY

[current biography]

Niall was part of a ground-breaking collective of artists that emerged in Dublin during the 1980s-90s, forging cross-disciplinary projects in design, art, technology, clubbing, music and activism — notably Alternative Miss Ireland (1987-2012). He moved to London in 1998, where he received an MA in Typo/Graphic Studies at London College of Printing. In 2000 he founded Pony Ltd., London, a creative collaboration with electronic musician Nigel Truswell (Sheffield). Pony is an award-winning, internationally-acclaimed studio working in art, design, print, theatre, film, performance, installation, music, publishing and writing. Pony's work has been published, exhibited, performed, collected and screened around the world. In 2022, Niall was made Honorary Fellow of IADT, for his "immense contribution and impact, in Ireland and internationally, in visual communication design and for his work, advocacy and achievements in advancing equality and inclusion."

LOUISE WALSH

[current biography]

Completing her MFA at University of Ulster in 1986, Louise lectured at Limerick School of Art & Design (1988-1996) and National College of Art & Design (1992-2022). Her site-specific sculpture interrogates 'othered' dynamics of embodied experience and desire. Themes of persisting joy, survival and rebellion playfully puncture constricted orthodoxies of queer, intersectional-feminist and national identities.

MO WHITE

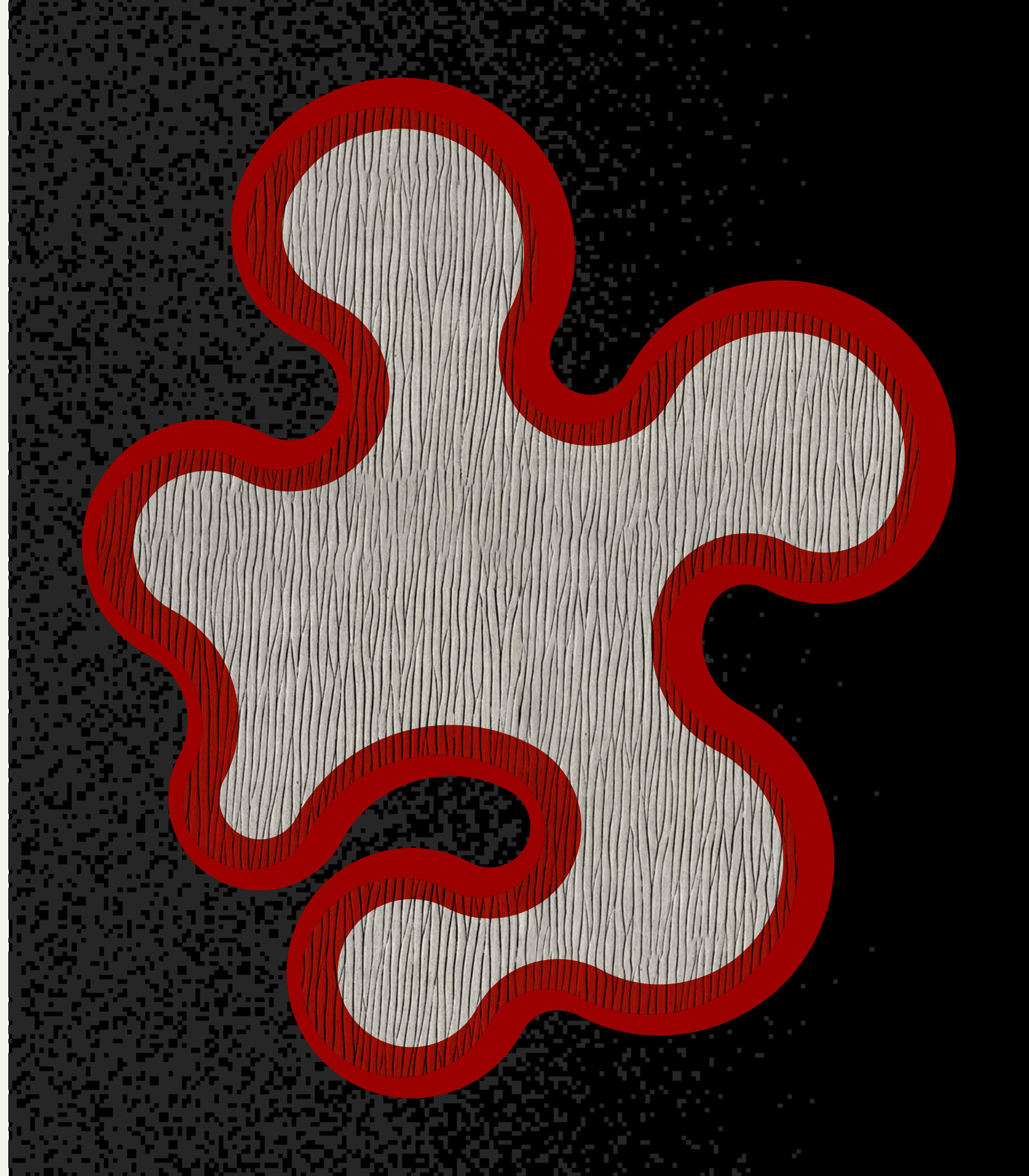
[current biography]

Mo White AKA Dr Mary C. White is still an artist and writer; working in moving image, print and photographic media and exhibiting internationally, alongside occasional forays into academic and arts publishing, and after 30 years teaching in higher education, she is retiring from this to continue making art and write.

MICHAEL WILSON

[current biography]

Michael is an artist, educator and researcher based in Gothenburg and Dublin. He is currently Professor of Art and Director of Doctoral Studies at HDK-Valand, University of Gothenburg.





***FROM PRIDE IN DIVERSITY TO STANDING FAST:
EXHIBITING QUEER CULTURE IN IRELAND 1996–2001***

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