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Time Out

TfL has revealed all the art that will feature in 2024's Art on the Underground

Mosaics, audio works and a fascinating new pocket map will all come to the tube next year

Written by [Liv Kelly](#) Monday 11 December 2023



Photograph: Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings / TfL

Lots of us Londoners use the tube. We rely on it to get us pretty much anywhere, pretty much every day. And while the daily commute through some often-drab tunnels and stations might not be the most eye-catching way to start the day, Transport for London is out to change that.

The transport operator has just announced all six of the artists whose artwork will be featured across the network in 2024 as part of their flagship Art on the Underground programme. And they all look rather exciting.

First up is work by Joy Gregory, a British artist and photographer, which will be displayed in a series at the Heathrow Terminal 4 rotunda in June. Gregory's work was all made in dialogue with refugees and asylum seekers from the Hillingdon area.

In August, Rita Keegan, co-founder of the Brixton Art Gallery and creator of the Women Artists of Colour Index, will develop a design for the pocket tube map which explores the history of moquette design.

A permanent, six-panel mosaic designed by Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings will also be displayed in St James' Park Station in October, and it'll explore various forms of power and authority.

Finally, there's also some audio work by Joe Namy and a series of commissions due in Brixton station from Claudette Johnson.

'I am confident that these striking artworks will be a welcome addition for commuters and visitors as they travel through the city, helping build a better London for everyone,' says Justine Simmons OBE, Deputy Mayor for Culture and the Creative Industries.

Given that ridership across the London Underground has already bounced back to 88 percent of pre-pandemic levels, with 24.4 million journeys made each week, the tube has the potential to be one of the world's busiest galleries. What better place could there be to showcase such exciting new art to so many visitors?

At Time Out, we just love the Underground. From keeping you up to date with the latest info on closures over Christmas to the fantastic things popping up at stations across the city, like this artwork in Brixton, we have all the latest info.



Journal

20/11/23 • Residency : Amelia Groom

Interview: Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings

Bleak House, an exhibition by the London-based artist-duo Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings, is on view at Kunsthall Stavanger this winter. The exhibition highlights *Inside*, an installation of dollhouses with a multi-channel sound piece, accompanied by the video work *Everything Is Folly In This World That Does Not Give Us Pleasure*. From a body of work called *Disgrace*, a selection of twelve etchings looks at the long history of conservative white feminism in the UK, including episodes of feminism working in service to colonial oppression and capitalist interests, “civilizing” and eugenic feminisms, pro-police and pro-military feminisms, femonationalism, and feminist fascists. In what follows, CAS resident in Art Writing Amelia Groom speaks with Quinlan and Hastings about the work, on view for the first time in Norway.

The timeline for the *Disgrace* (2021) etchings begins in the nineteenth century with the British imperial project, before moving to the conservative ideologies of the Women’s Suffrage Movement and the fact that many suffragettes became affiliated with the British Union of Fascists. The etchings also look to anti-pornography feminists in the 1980s, feminist campaigns against sex workers that are shrouded in a rhetoric of “protecting women,” the hyper-individualized “free-market feminism” of the Thatcher era, contemporary corporate “girl boss” feminism, and Theresa May’s Women2Win group for conservative women in parliament. The historical sweep culminates with contemporary Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists (“TERFs”) in the UK, a place whose virulent strands of feminist transphobia have led to it being dubbed “TERF island.”



Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings, *Bleak House*, 2023, Installation view. Courtesy of Kunsthall Stavanger and the Artist. Photo: Erik Sæter Jørgensen.



Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings, *Bleak House*, 2023, Installation view. Courtesy of Kunsthall Stavanger and the Artist. Photo: Erik Sæter Jørgensen.

Amelia Groom: With these twelve episodes of disgraceful feminism lined up, *Disgrace* invites us to reckon with a long continuum, so it becomes impossible to treat these historical chapters in isolation and say, you know, *the violence of contemporary transphobic feminism is an aberration and "not real feminism."* You're really asking viewers to look at these episodes in relation to one another, as part of a lineage that runs right through the history of conservative white feminism in the UK. Why is it important to look at this as a continuum spanning many years?

Quinlan & Hastings: In the initial research stages of *Disgrace*, we were primarily concerned with the rise of Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminism in the UK, not just as an ugly fringe movement that could be disregarded as fanatical and conspiratorial but as a movement sweeping through every facet of public life, particularly in the government and British press. Worryingly, transphobia had become an issue that bridged political parties and ideologies; you were as likely to hear transphobic slurs and fearmongering from the far-right who perceived it as an unnatural, contaminating abomination, as from the left who presented their transphobia as a feminist issue. We wanted to understand how the relationship between feminism and the political right created the conditions for Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminism to thrive. In order to do this, we had to look back and examine key historical moments. It was painful to construct a timeline that excluded the many wonderful examples of radical feminists who battled for worker's rights, abolition, and against racism and imperialism amongst other issues, but we felt that this mode of conservative feminism had been buried from dominant feminist narratives. We were motivated to construct a timeline that, as Adrienne Rich put it in her 1983 lecture *Resisting Amnesia*, "charges us, as women committed to the liberation of women, to know the past in order to consider what we want to conserve and what we want not to repeat or continue."

It was also important for us to bring other voices and perspectives to this project, so the etchings are accompanied by a publication with essays by Akanksha Mehta, Lola Olufemi and Juliet Jacques. These writers interweave histories of "bad feminisms" with their own personal feminisms and bring us back to our starting point of contemporary TERFery and how we can resist the right-wing urge to build a feminist movement on the backs of those that it excludes.

AG: Why etchings?

Q&H: We have a masochistic tendency to work with complex and technically difficult media as it keeps us on our toes. When you're making work about such a complicated history, it's important to be kept on your toes. We rendered this series in hard ground etchings with aquatint. Conceptually, we were interested in how this medium was used in the first wave of feminism to spread political ideologies and news in cheaply reproduced and widely available pamphlets. Materially, we were drawn to the medium because of the resonance with historical works that we admire, such as Francisco Goya's *Disasters of War* series, which was a key reference for us in this body of work. As with Goya's etchings, we intended the *Disgrace* series to function both as an artwork and an educational resource.



Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings, Bleak House, 2023, Installation view. Courtesy of Kunsthall Stavanger and the Artist. Photo: Erik Sæter Jørgensen.



Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings, Bleak House, 2023, Installation view. Courtesy of Kunsthall Stavanger and the Artist. Photo: Erik Sæter Jørgensen.

AG: Tell me about *Inside*, the dollhouse and multi-channel sound installation in the exhibition. You've previously worked with the politics of public (and semi-public) space, including histories of gay bars in the UK - what precipitated this shift towards domestic interiors?

Q&H: Initially, this project began as an extension of the *Disgrace* series. We were interested in the fact that feminist discourse has situated the home as a site of women's oppression; a place where they are expected to perform domestic, emotional, reproductive and sexual labour for free, subordinate to their fathers or husbands. The home is a space where gender and gendered roles are both invented and reproduced. On the other hand, for early feminists and the women who were first to be enfranchised with the vote of the propertied class, the home was a signifier of wealth, power and mobility that allowed these women to exercise soft political power through social gatherings.

Dollhouses were originally intended for display and were often replicas of the owner's home. In play, they trained young women about the upkeep of a house. The dollhouses also represent microcosms of British class. Class is made visible through the arrangement of rooms; kitchens, sculleries and laundries in the basement, decadent living rooms in the floors above, and rudimentary staff bedrooms in the eaves. We started collecting dollhouses that corresponded with the time periods displayed in the *Disgrace* etchings; a house from almost every decade starting in the 1890's to the present day, representing the changes in domestic architectural styles throughout these periods.

When we began working with Owen Pratt on the sound piece, the work really opened up for us. We began to consider how domestic spaces are designed to engineer familiar gender roles, but in reality, they become containers of a varied multiplicity of identities, many of which resist the burden of the domestic. Often, people have an emotional response to this work; the sound evokes a lot of feelings and people are sometimes reminded of the home they grew up in. We were interested in the fact that for some, the home is a site of love and safety, whilst for others, it is a site of danger and violence. We wanted to make a work that could contain all these emotional realities whilst also providing space for optimism and dreams.



Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings, *Bleak House*, 2023, Installation view. Courtesy of Kunsthall Stavanger and the Artist. Photo: Erik Sæter Jørgensen.

AG: There's also a video work in the exhibition, *Everything Is Folly In This World That Does Not Give Us Pleasure* (2021), which is comprised of found amateur footage of queers dancing, often in domestic settings, with an impromptu and defiant joyousness that offsets the disciplinary confinement and indoctrination that we sense in the dollhouses. I know you've worked with histories of queer nightlife and the role of somatic, non-verbal communication in public sex cultures, and I wanted to end by asking about your thoughts on the importance of dance in queer histories...

Q&H: We made this work during a Covid lockdown. It was commissioned by CIRCA to be displayed on the Piccadilly Lights in London in 2021. It focuses on creating an offering of joy, pleasure and resilience during a time of mourning, isolation and sickness. We were specifically examining the impact of the pandemic on queer identity. We think of the dance floor in a gay bar as a space of world-making and community formation; a vital space where deviant gender forms are realised and are given space to flourish. The dance floor can also be a complicated space with its own hierarchies of power. Problems from the world outside like racism, transphobia, misogyny and sexual aggression are carried by dancers onto the dance floor and manifest into the multiplicity of queer dance cultures.

Since the pandemic, a lot of queer infrastructure, including gay bars and dance floors, have been shut down. The consequence of this shutdown is a loss of identity and community. This video focuses on vernacular queer dance as a space of freedom, resistance and creativity. It explores the practice of dancing in an emergency as something that forms a bridge between the alienated individual confined to a domestic world (with its inherent ideological burden of heterosexuality, property relations and traditional gender roles) and

the broader LGBTQ+ culture/community. The hedonistic joy of dancing is reflected in the text from Giuseppe Verdi's opera *La Traviata*, which is also the title of the work:

Everything is folly in this world

That does not give us Pleasure.



Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings, *Bleak House*, 2023, Installation view. Courtesy of Kunsthall Stavanger and the Artist. Photo: Erik Sæter Jørgensen.

THE CUT

RULES TO LIVE BY MAY 30, 2023

No 'Geniuses' Allowed

By Katja Vujić, a social media editor at the Cut



Photo-Illustration: by The Cut; Photo: Rene Matić

Ten years ago, Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings met as students. They'd both been awarded a chance to participate in a weeklong workshop with New York–based artist Martha Rosler, and despite attending the same university in London, New York was where they were introduced. “We ended up going to a gay bar. We had our first kiss and then they closed the bar, but they let us sit there for hours while they cleaned up,” remembers Hastings. “We love coming back here. It feels kind of like having an anniversary.”

While in New York, they took the opportunity to visit [MoMA PS1](#) together. In another borough, their work was on display at [Frieze Art Fair](#). Hastings and Quinlan are not just a couple — they also share a creative partnership as solid as their romantic one. Once their relationship had hit the six-month mark, they started making art together, and since then, they have cycled through several mediums: film, performance, installation, drawing, and now fresco painting. “Rosie always says that we started working together because we didn’t want to spend any time apart,” says Quinlan, joking about the pair’s codependency.

Codependent or not, it seems to be working out all right. They completed four new fresco paintings to be displayed by their London gallery, Arcadia Missa. Having to carefully plan and structure their painting days can feel uncreative and even oppressive at times, but it also allows for a unique sort of flow state, says Hastings: “Because it’s such a time sensitive medium, it forces you to be so in the moment of painting that it almost becomes a transcendental moment. You have such an intense connection with what you’re doing.”



Hannah Quinlan & Rosie Hastings, *After the Protest*, fresco on wooden panel, 2023, 200 x 240 cm. Copyright: the artists. Photo: Courtesy: Hannah Quinlan & Rosie Hastings and Arcadia Missa, London. Photography: Josef Konczak./Josef Konczak

The new Frieze frescoes were shown weeks after the close of “Tulips,” their collaborative exhibition at the Tate London, which displayed collaged street scenes depicting power dynamics in queer public life. The four new frescoes were made in response to the U.K.’s cost-of-living crisis and the ongoing nurses’ strike. “It’s a crisis for a lot of lower-paid workers, and nurses are the lowest-paid of any public-sector workers,” says Hastings. “Nursing is traditionally seen as a female job, and a lot of British nurses are women, but they’ve also often been recruited from Commonwealth countries. We were interested in the connection between that and the low pay.” The works, say Hastings and Quinlan, are meant to tell the story of the nurses’ strike and highlight the massive scale of the modern workers’ movement, while bringing in the disjointedness and the complexity of the discourse surrounding it. Like Italian frescoes of the Renaissance, their works are loaded with visual symbolism that both tells a story and sends a moral message.

Do you have any personal boundaries or rules, either agreed upon or individually, that benefit your work or the relationship between you?

Rosie Hastings: Rules are actually really important for us. We’re doing drawing and painting, which is not normally considered a collaborative medium. We’ve had to bring in a lot of rules and structures to be able to make that work. In terms of our lifestyle, we make sure that we have two modes: We have work time and we have time for ourselves as a couple.

The fresco project that we’ve just finished for Frieze New York took us six months, and we made a schedule where we planned out every single day and what we would be doing in advance. There’s no space for spontaneity. You’re not allowed to get sick and you’re not allowed to have mental health days. When we’re working, we’re like monks. Our time off is the opposite; we have no plan. We just float from one thing to another, and these periods are when we get our inspiration.



Hannah Quinlan & Rosie Hastings, *The Strike*, 2023, fresco on wooden panel, 213 x 152 cm. Copyright: the artists. Photo: Courtesy: Hannah Quinlan & Rosie Hastings and Arcadia Missa, London. Photography: Josef Konczak./Josef Konczak

Hannah Quinlan: It wasn't until four or five years into our collaboration that we started working in drawing and painting. Before then, one of our first rules was to lose your personal ego and sense of ownership over your own creations. When we first started our practice together, we were making installations, films, and performance art. Those mediums that are more naturally suited to collaboration and teamwork, such as filmmaking, built up our tolerance and confidence for collaboration, because I do think some people would find the idea of not being completely in control of every single aspect of their artmaking quite unpleasant.

R.H.: Yeah, there are no geniuses in our studio.

H.Q.: When we did start drawing, we were incredibly interested in the rules of drawing. I think we drew solely in graphite for almost two years before we even introduced color, and it's only recently that we've started to paint. Even if it feels completely unobtainable, if you are drawn to a particular medium, even if you don't have the technical ability yet, we're confident in the fact that no matter how long it takes, you will be able to achieve those skills. I think that's a good rule to have — to keep educating yourself and learning new things and not just sit with what you know.

Is there any one rule you follow in all of your work regardless of medium?

H.Q.: We're interested in creating an emotional landscape.

R.H.: A lot of our practice is quite research-led, and we use color or sound or different types of imagery to create an emotional connection with the viewer. For us, that's a way to democratize the image. Anyone can walk into a gallery and be moved by the beauty of an image. Sometimes that means taking a more academic approach to painting or drawing, rather than a more impressionistic approach.

H.Q.: With fresco, we're doing what the original medium was intended to do — traditionally, frescoes were used to impart a moral lesson.



Hannah Quinlan & Rosie Hastings, *The Picket Line*, 2023, fresco on wooden panel, 200 x 200 cm. Copyright: the artists. Photo: Courtesy: Hannah Quinlan & Rosie Hastings and Arcadia Missa, London. Photography: Josef Konczak./Josef Konczak

I also imagine that you might have a strained relationship with rules themselves; so much of the LGBTQ+ community's history has been about breaking rules that are harmful or unnecessarily imposed, and your work has centered the ways that state-imposed rules have resulted in state-imposed violence against queer people. What's your rule for breaking rules?

R.H.: We take an approach that is both celebratory and critical. One of our foundational works is a moving-image archive called the [U.K. Gay Bar Directory](#) — we spent a year traveling around the country making films of gay bars and documenting these spaces at a time when a lot of them were closing and we wanted to understand why. We went in quite naive, thinking we were doing this heroic thing for the community. Our ambition was to create a blueprint for future generations of queer people. What we found is that so many of the venues that we tried to film actively didn't want us in there, because it's such a male-dominated scene. We became aware of how, within the community, there are these rules and regulations that are still kind of oppressive and mimicking the wider world's power dynamics. Being critical of that whilst also celebrating these spaces was really important to the final version of the project.

H.Q.: Queer people living within queer communities don't only face issues from outside, but there's also all these internal politics that, as Rosie said, represent the politics of the world at large. We wanted to expand this idea of what a queer space contains and how it is connected to politics at large. You can't ghettoize any smaller culture and not see it in relation to the whole world and society.

R.H.: When we first started making work, we were put into this queer artist genre, and people wanted us to come and do exhibitions as *queer* artists. There was such a pressure on this idea of visibility — making something visible. But what we felt is that an increase in visibility was also paired with an increase in violence; the trans visibility spike has been met with an increase in trans death and these new really transphobic laws that are being put in place all across the world. For us, it wasn't enough to do events that coincide with pride. We had to create a more principled perspective that had deeper roots.

H.Q.: Any venue that wasn't incredibly profitable couldn't exist, and gay bars in the U.K. were notoriously the places where the drink prices were low. They were in areas of low rent. As soon as an area became affected by gentrification, all spaces that weren't based on a huge profit margin just disappeared.

R.H.: And that often coincides with an increase in policing and state surveillance and criminalization of nonprofitable spaces.

The art world is notoriously exclusive and has this strange blend of artists who can be rule-averse and the buttoned-up business people who buy, sell, and curate the work. There are different rules in different arts spaces. Do you have etiquette that you follow depending on the space you're in?

R.H.: It's quite a complicated terrain. You have to try to find a fine line between being a sellout to some of the most evil people in the world who are the main buyers of art and also being able to have a wide audience for your work and connect with the public.

H.Q.: That dynamic within the art world is very representative of, again, the world at large. Anyone who has managed to accrue a vast wealth has done so on the exploitation of others to a certain extent. You're interacting with capitalism.

R.H.: But the reason why you're pushed into those spaces sometimes is because the public infrastructure of museums is exploitative of artists. You'll get asked to spend a year working on an exhibition and you'll get paid, like, a thousand pounds. The assumption is that the money you live off is going to be made from the commercial world.

H.Q.: When you do institutional work, there's often an idea that somehow you're able to do those projects because you're getting money from elsewhere. You can apply for funding; not all artists interact with the commercial art world as much as others.

R.H.: But the commercial art world also isn't inherently evil. It is what generates culture.

H.Q.: There's amazing galleries that are very committed to certain political agendas, like our gallery, for example. I feel like they're very resistant to the idea of an elitist art world.

R.H.: Often it's commercial galleries that are the vanguards of social change, bringing in new artists, different voices, different agendas, and that then leads into the wider art culture. It's complicated. There's no straightforward good, there's no straightforward bad — except the Sackler family. But we feel incredibly lucky to be able to support ourselves and make the work that we want to make and have very supportive galleries who have our back in a quite genuine way and will support us to make the work that we feel is important.

Do you have any rules about how, where, and by whom your art is displayed?

R.H.: No arms dealers, that's the main rule. In an art world that's got money coming in from such diverse sources, the idea of remaining morally pure is a fantasy. Sometimes you have to make compromises. But within that, there's always a power to say no. So that's a rule that we try to stick by.

H.Q.: Beyond institutions, it's about who you develop relationships with.

R.H.: We have a very close relationship with Rózsa Farkas, who's our London gallerist. We really trust her. She's kind of like our mum. That's what we call her — or dad, depending what mood she's in.

H.Q.: And artists are very good at talking to each other. If someone starts acting dodgy, it tends to get around. There's definitely a huge support network that we have.

R.H.: All our best friends are artists and curators, and, you know, it's like a band. It's in a way, it's like a family. So that's a really nice side of the job.

What's your number-one rule for a successful dinner party?

R.H.: Effort. That's it. Maximum effort. Rosie does the cooking, and Hannah does the tidying up.

H.Q.: Make the food amazing.

R.H.: Generosity.

H.Q.: You get what you put in.

R.H.: Yeah, it's like making artwork.

H.Q.: You can't have people showing up for a cold bag of crisps.

What's your best rule for engaging with people at parties?

H.Q.: You've got to be nice. Don't try and act all cool.

R.H.: It helps if you're like a chronic extrovert.

H.Q.: If you're not, just be nice.

What is your number-one rule for meeting other artists?

R.H.: Oh my God, just message them. I feel like we need each other so much. And having solidarity between artists is your most powerful tool within the art world. It's almost like an unofficial artists' union that's quite global.

H.Q.: Yeah, and don't get jealous of other artists.

R.H.: Don't compare yourself.

Do you buy off of gift registries? For weddings, or birthday parties?

R.H.: We never go to weddings. I think we've been to one wedding together. But when we give gifts, we always give an artwork to special close friends. I think that's the best gift you could give as an artist — a bit of yourself.

What is your number-one rule for tipping?

H.Q.: It's totally different in the U.K.; in most places there isn't a tipping culture, apart from fancy sit-down restaurants. It's between 10 and 20 percent. It's very different.

R.H.: I would say the rule is tip like an American.

What's your number-one fashion rule?

R.H.: Wear what Hannah tells me to wear. She's just got really good taste in everything.

H.Q.: I'm really into the fabric. What is it made out of?

R.H.: Hannah's a Taurus, so she's a quality queen.

H.Q.: I'm more obsessed with like, is it 100 percent cashmere? Is it wool? Is it linen and wool? Is it cotton? What kind of cotton is it? Is it soft?

What do you sign your emails with?

R.H.: Normally, an *R* and an *H* and then a few kisses, even when it's really inappropriate.

What's your texting style?

R.H.: Text vomit, where it's a million messages, each with a couple of words. Chaos.

H.Q.: Voice notes. Rosie, you're not really into voice notes.

R.H.: We have some friends we speak to every day. I don't know how we fit in with our work. Our friend Gaby Sahhar, who's also an artist, London-based, we genuinely speak on the phone for like an hour every day, and I don't know what we talk about, but it's very important.

Do you gossip?

R.H.: *Yeah*, gay gossip! That is the fuel of the gay community. That's what we all run off. Goss. But be nice. Gossip, but be nice.

Figuring Figuration

Larne Abse Gogarty laments the absence of serious critical debate about the return to figuration in painting, especially the seeming lack of awareness of the high stakes involved in depicting people in relation to the politics of representation.

On 17 January 2023 the artist Katja Seib posted an image to her Instagram Stories of a squished tube of paint with the line, 'and out of a sudden [sic] everyone hates figurative painting again'. While glib, Seib's comment is provocative, given the exponential boom in figurative painting over the past decade or so, from which she has certainly benefitted (Salerooms AM443, 444, 445). In December 2022, the critic Barry Schwabsky also sounded the alarm, publishing a piece in *The Nation* which, while extolling the virtues of the artists Christina Quarles, Issy Wood and Paula Wilson, suggested the enthusiasm for figurative painting may be nearing exhaustion. The category of 'zombie abstraction' had, of course, already been repurposed in 2020 by Alex Greenberger to describe the market's appetite for so-called 'zombie figuration'. I want to take stock here of this rise and potential decline of the genre in the recent past, making connections to historical 'returns' of the figure while also addressing how and why this kind of painting has been granted primacy within the art world's response to recent struggles around the politics of identity.

Seib is among the painters whose work I became aware of around 2018, after I started working at the Slade School of Fine Art. In my first term in the job, I saw dozens of paintings of people being made: from ethereal color field-style canvases with floaty female figures to large

grotesqueries which situated painting as storytelling; from neon cartoon-like figures situated in voids to energetic portraits which evoked a sustained intimacy between sitter and painter. Despite my close engagement with contemporary artists who work with figuration, including Nicole Eisenmann and Kerry James Marshall (Interview AM421), as an art historian trained in the histories of western modernism, the dominance of representational forms of painting as compared with abstract painting among young art students was surprising, especially given the fact that there seemed to be little reference to the fraught debates that have accompanied the history of figurative painting after abstraction.

Since then, while looking at all the endless pictures of people made and/or exhibited in recent years – at work, in galleries, on Instagram and in magazines – I have consistently puzzled over what kind of position painters working with representing people are seeking to carve out today. In earlier returns to figuration, painting people was sometimes viewed as regressive and indicative of artistic conservatism or, conversely, privileged as uniquely capable of conveying political struggles, disenfranchisement and suffering. The conflict between these positions has had various flashpoints, from the arguments over the merits of realism vs abstraction as a revolutionary art on the left during the 1930s to the debates about abstraction vs representation within the Black Arts movement of the 1960s and 1970s in the US. Such discussions have often been folded into bigger questions about the politics of representation, as well as the fluctuating relationship between artistic and political radicalism. As an example, one could consider Frank Bowling's 1971 criticism of the work of figurative painter Benny Andrews as a 'denial of form', or Benjamin Buchloh's excoriating analysis in 1981 of the return to figuration in neo-expressionism as being marked by authoritarian, proto-fascistic tendencies. In the complex history of figurative painting after the ascendancy of abstraction, the genre has repeatedly been situated as having specific purchase on the struggles over who counts as human. While on the one hand it has been argued that representation is humanising, on the other it has been viewed as cementing continuing forms of de-humanisation at worst and, at best, as constraining the modes of expression available to those historically marginalised from the institutions of modern art.

Moving towards the present, it is somewhat surprising that few of the arguably central critical voices on contemporary painting, such as David Joselit or Isabelle Graw, have had much to say about the flourishing of figuration over the past decade. This may be to do with the fact that, as Niklas Maak writes, 'figurative painting has become a kind of separate artistic biosphere ... unaffected by art-critical and art-historical debates on painting as a medium'. Yet it is also clear that, while Joselit's 2009 essay 'Painting Beside Itself' remains an obligatory guide to 'network' painting, it has little purchase on more recent figurative painting which typically strives for authenticity, not to mention virtuosity. Joselit's account of how network painting relates to the history of painting can be summarised in his description of how 'a Poussin might land in the hands of Jutta Koether, or Stephen Prina might seize the entire oeuvre of Manet'. While it is clear enough to see how Koether and Prina negotiated the so-called 'death of painting' through emphasising painting as a form of mediation or 'network', Joselit's analysis of those practices cannot really speak to the investment in painterly technique and emotion across a wide-ranging sphere of contemporary painting, from so-called queer figuration to Jordan Casteel's realist portraits or Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings's collaborative frescos, which reach towards history painting.

Indeed, Joselit writes that 'whether in a ludic, or a despairing mode, figuration is partially digested into pure passage', a line I take to signal that figuration was one vehicle among many within network painting. This view strongly relates to Koether's description of painting as an 'abandoned building' when she started making work in the late 1980s, meaning that her relationship to the medium was something like being a squatter, tinkering away with discarded property, the critically devalued status of painting at the time enabling a certain openness as a thinking space or 'psychic site'. Yet, for all this, as Manuela Ammer explains, while it may be possible for figures to appear as 'abstract' in a painting since the 1960s, the capacity for a figure to be fully abstract, in any ideological sense, is limited. And for many of the contemporary painters I am thinking about, they are working in a moment in which the medium, and the specific practice of painting people, is far from the abandoned building described by Koether. Rather, it might be compared with new-build luxury flats, perhaps erected on a site which was formerly home to a bourgeois mansion block or social housing, given that figurative painting for much of the 20th century vacillated between

association with the last gasps of academicism and forms of realism that centred on picturing dispossession, poverty and suffering. In contrast to those positions, the orientation of a significant portion of contemporary figurative painting is towards propertied forms of self-possession: less a thinking space and more a self-actualisation space, marked by shiny exteriors and Instagram-ready subject matter that prioritises photogenic forms of pleasure.

While there has been limited critical discourse compared with the seeming ubiquity of figurative painting in the present, the furore concerning Dana Schutz's 2016 painting *Open Casket*, displayed at the 2017 Whitney Biennial, is one of the few instances in which the high stakes involved in painting people have been held up to public as well as critical scrutiny. Schutz's painting depicted the body of the 14-year-old black boy, Emmett Till, who was lynched in Mississippi in 1955. Following his death, Till's mother, Mamie, organised the publication of photographs of the open casket in *Jet* magazine, an African-American publication, which led to this case becoming a catalysing moment in the Civil Rights Movement. When Schutz's painting was received with artist-led protests and an open letter requesting it be removed from the Biennial on the grounds that it profited from the spectacle of racist violence (see Hannah Black profile AM412), Schutz defended her work by asserting 'I don't know what it is like to be black in America, but I do know what it is like to be a mother.' This is a claim which, in asserting Schutz and Mamie Till's shared identity of motherhood, suggests that sameness underpins solidarity. Following the Schutz case, one would have expected to see a continued sense of the high stakes involved in the 'return' of the figure, particularly given that the places where this type of painting is primarily being made and exhibited have seen a simultaneous wave of struggles around race, sexuality and gender. While I don't want to dwell on the well-trodden Schutz controversy in much more detail, two important elements are worth pausing upon.

First, for many of her critics, Schutz's decision to paint Emmett Till lying in his casket was a cynical form of seizure because, as George Baker writes, the subject aligned with 'the disfigured figures of her art', collapsing Till's death with the 'artist's own aesthetic' – that is, a kind of repurposed expressionism where disfigurement cohered with that style. This is a gesture Baker associates with one of painting's founding myths: that of Narcissus, and the idea of boundless self-love. Or in other words,

the inability to recognise the other unless you see yourself there. How does this notion of boundless self-love via painterly representation manifest in relation to the contemporary discourses of self-realisation? And, second, how might Schutz's notion that the work's ethical basis rests on her shared identity as a mother with Mamie Till indicate broader limits on how recent figurative painting conceives its politics?

The orientation of a significant portion of contemporary figurative painting is towards propertied forms of self-possession: less a thinking space and more a self-actualisation space, marked by shiny exteriors and Instagram-ready subject matter that prioritises photogenic forms of pleasure.

Identity is situated as a special form of property, painted into the canvas in ways that seek to appeal to fellow proprietors, and, if that isn't available, the work can always be purchased, displayed and circulated in ways that provide buyers, viewers and institutions with a piece of that property, enabling an expansion of the forms of ownership previously in their command.

Consider, for instance, the work of artists who have been associated with what has been described as a school of 'queer figuration', including TM Davy, Louis Fratino and Doron Langberg. Much writing on these painters notes how their recycling of art-historical conventions makes a claim to novelty through the fact that their subjects often include people, and the experience of people, who have historically been excluded from the canon. For the critic Joseph Henry this isn't quite enough, and he relates this artistic formula of, for example, 'cubism + queer life = relevance', to the contemporary mainstreaming of LGBTQ+ politics. Visiting a Fratino exhibition at Sikkema, Jenkins & Co in New York, against the background of a heavily commercialised World Pride in 2019 – the rainbow flag was festooned throughout the city and there was widespread representation of LGBTQ+ lives in commercial advertising – he characterised the situation as one where 'the world gaslit us with tolerance'. This exquisite turn of phrase sharply points out the limits of the political purchase of works such as Fratino's, whose inclusion as an example of queer representation in an otherwise intact canon directly matches the liberal, capitalist notion that freedom of choice represents real freedom.

This notion of adding historically marginalised artists to the canon as a corrective is unfortunately widespread in our current moment, as exemplified in the utter banalisation of feminist art history in Katy Hessel's *The Story of Art without Men*, but also within much recent curatorial history. Indeed, the impulse I am partially pursuing here, to historicise this current phase of figuration's return, is made more compelling because of the numerous institutional revivals of previously marginalised practices. The curatorial gesture of 'correcting the canon' is rarely without complications or compromise. For instance, the elevation of Alice Neel and Charles White to 'great painter' status through major retrospectives has involved an inevitable minimising of the way their commitment to painting people was inextricable from their commitments to communism. Or we could think about how the rehang of MoMA in New York to showcase artists including Florine Stettheimer and Faith Ringgold has involved revising its own history as an institution steeped in boosting the hegemonic status of high abstraction in the mid 20th century. Other examples of curating alternative genealogies to contemporary figurative painting might include the renewed visibility of the Chicago Imagists; the forthcoming exhibition tour of Martin Wong; the centrality of Leonora Carrington to last year's Venice Biennale; or the retrospectives of artists including Claudette Johnson and Lubaina Himid – practices which each shed light on the various turns of figuration today.

Returning to the question of how current figurative painting engages the politics of identity, Henry writes that Fratino's work stimulates 'the immediate gratification of identification', whether 'politicised as a mode of solidarity ("the people in that painting look like me and do what I do")' or through the depiction of erotic pleasure. I want to push at Henry's description of solidarity which centres – like Schutz's mobilisation of motherhood as the ethical ground to *Open Casket* – on the idea of sameness. While Schutz's articulation of sameness rested on experience (motherhood) as a means to override other differences, and Henry's rests on optics that may of course also complicate other differences, both positions suggest that solidarity is based on identification, or that this kind of similarity between subjects ensures a 'correct' progressive politics. This emphasis on sameness does little but describe the stultifying forms of liberalism that dominates the art world (as in canon-correction) and animates the politics of a large portion of recent paintings made of people.

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The problem of this idea of sameness as a weakened form of solidarity can also be found in the notion that friendship and affirmation is the root of a progressive politics, a quality that runs through much of TM Davy's work. My first encounter with Davy's paintings was through the screen of a friend's phone in New York. Visiting in early 2020, just before looking at art on screens would become the primary way it was viewed during the early phase of the pandemic, I was both amused and baffled by my friend's insistence that Davy's work was being championed within the New York art world, but they also explained that this was partly to do with the artist's circle of friends. I tried to check my response to these sentimental portraits, paintings of horses and beach scenes, questioning my immediate distaste. One of his series shows a single figure or couple holding candles in a darkened space, providing a kind of turbo-charged chiaroscuro. Other paintings show his subjects outside, frolicking in the ocean, lying on the beach, kissing, hugging. More recent works appeal to symbolism, mysticism and fantasy, including paintings of satyrs in forests and elves bearing candles whose psychedelic kitsch, I would argue, actually makes them more interesting. Often the paintings are portraits of Davy's friends/celebrities in the art world (Langberg makes an appearance, as does Wolfgang Tillmans). Animals are a recurring fixture, from monumental oil paintings of noble-looking horses on darkened backgrounds, to cats, dogs and bunnies rendered in smaller pictures on paper made with pastel and gouache. I have a note from that initial encounter, which reads 'This is what art history is afraid of. But it's also where identity becomes kitsch', two ideas which continue to inform my understanding of his paintings.

In the notion that this is what art history is afraid of, I mean the fact that this work has gained commercial, exhibition and some critical value despite an overt sentimentality and investment in virtuosity that connects Davy with the kind of values that more typically mark the success of populist painters such as Jack Vettriano. Davy's paintings displace the highbrow notions of 'good taste' that dominate art-historical understandings of style, in the form of continued investments in pared-back, minimal aesthetics as well as the avoidance of sentiment and perhaps even of pleasure. On paper, these sound like good reasons to like Davy's work for the way that it demolishes the pretensions of the critical and art-historical establishment towards critical 'distance'. Strangely, however, the work does not seek to operate at a distance from the establishment, but rather embraces academic conventions of painterly mastery and the influencer-adjacent machinations of the mainstream art world. Its appeal is less to the lowbrow, camp, kitsch and trashy, and more to middlebrow sensibilities and tastes. Moreover, the public display of friendship and intimacy seems less a radical queering of the family, and more a showcasing of a quasi-public-facing 'scene'. If the work of Davy, Fratino, Langberg and others has repeatedly been grouped together, I want to suggest here that this should be understood not only through their shared investment in technique, subject matter and recycling of historical styles, but also because their work offers no view of life that isn't affirmative and based on recognition. In this, it becomes hard to disentangle their practice from mainstream representations of the successful individual as one who is self-realised and recognised by society; notions underpinned by property ownership both historically and today.

In thinking about this subject, I have frequently returned to a quote from Philip Guston: 'I see the studio as a court ... The act of painting is like a trial where all the roles are lived by one person. It's as if the painting has to prove its right to exist.' Dating to the period after Guston's own scandalous return to figuration in his 1970 exhibition at the Marlborough Gallery in New York, the court as a space of relentless injustice is perhaps an odd metaphor with which to justify the existence of a painting. Yet the idea of why an artwork needs to exist remains a question to explore, and perhaps the notion of proving its right to exist indicates the thought process and social commitment of the painter, over and above technical virtuosity, or an untrammelled access to the 'self'. This puts me in mind of Kerry James Marshall's statement that

'artworks are not mystical enchantments. I think of artworks as things you build', because building signals the importance of method and making. Or we could turn to Koether's description of how 'queer painting' and 'women painters' became her guide during painting's period of critical disfavour, and her explanation that her engagement with artists including Marsden Hartley, Pavel Tchelitchev and Georgia O'Keeffe was dismissed as kitsch but, as she explains, 'you start with Florine Stettheimer and you end up somewhere with Jack Smith and Mike Kelley'. Here, the homophobic and misogynistic 'fear of kitsch' is transparent, mapped on to the preservation of masculinity and the canon, and so engagement with those artists offers great potentiality in terms of where they lead you and the different stories that can be told through those practices. Koether's emphasis on how she moved between Stettheimer, Smith and Kelley indicates how her work occupies that 'thinking space' where the artist must make those connections - or builds a case, to return to Guston's metaphor of the court.

Among more recent painters who actively seek to plumb the unknowability of the other in ways that are more unsettling, or more adequate to the complexity of social relations (because, after all, this is what paintings of people lead us towards), I think of the late Noah Davis's painting *Bad Boy for Life*, 2007, which I saw on the same trip to New York during which I had the conversation about Davy. The painting shows a young black boy, perhaps nine or ten, held prone over a middle-aged black woman's lap, presumably a family member or a caregiver. The woman lacks a mouth, and her eyes stare intently back towards the viewer. Her hand is held aloft, presumably about to spank the boy. The scene takes place in a domestic interior, and to their right is an otherwise ordinary-looking lamp with a peculiarly artificial-looking neon green stand. The boy looks glassy eyed but is not overly distressed. His arms are held out straight, straining towards the floor. Over the woman's shoulder a painting hangs on the peach and beige striped wallpaper that looks a little like a reproduction of Claude Monet's *Haystacks*. The painting's title recalls P Diddy's 2001 hit of the same name, a humorous move that combines the punishment of a child with the bravado of the rapper during what was arguably the worst phase of his musical career.

Another painting by Davis, *Untitled (Moses)*, 2010, shows a toddler,

perched in a sink with his back to the viewer. One foot is submerged in a pool of brownish water, the other bent precariously as the child makes his escape. The hand of a caregiver enters the frame of the painting from the right, reaching towards the child. Both these paintings show domestic scenes of intimacy, but in ways that emphasise the complexity of dependency, love and relationships. Violence hovers at the edge but is treated with a kind of humour and casualness rather than tragedy, not least through the titles of Davis's works. A baby bathing in a sink is a scene predisposed towards sentimentality, but none is present here. The title - *Moses* - connects this scene with something bigger: the sink becomes the metaphorical basket, the peril of the journey down the river is now just the danger of a toddler slipping in the sink, again playing with the scale of the scene in terms of its meaning.

Two 2020 paintings by Hamishi Farah also come to mind, namely *Joey* and *Matthew*, which depict two white American men who were arrested in Carroll, Iowa, after attempting a burglary and whose attempt at disguise was captured in their mugshots, which formed the basis for Farah's paintings (both had scrawled marker pen on their faces, Joey creating a scribbly beard and Matthew having drawn on a mask). Painted in acrylics and permanent marker on linen, like Farah's more well-known work *Arlo*, 2018, which depicted Dana Schutz's son, the portraits have an acerbic quality to them. Yet because each painting prompts the viewer to puzzle at their meaning, the high stakes involved in the representation of people are addressed in ways that are neither moralising nor do they rest on any shock value. Both Davis and Farah ludically layer up their paintings with references, but in ways that are distinct from the ironising, distanced tendencies of network painting and, because there is a kind of urgency in the scenes' subject matter, the viewer is pushed towards a thinking space, rather than what Theodor Adorno described as a 'culinary consumption' - that is, the avoidance of anything but experiences of pleasure which reaffirm the individual.

How this 'return to figuration' will be historicised in years to come is yet to be seen, but one would expect a more urgent set of questions to emerge from the intensive painting of people during a period when the politics of representation have never been so high. Perhaps the strangest aspect of this recent history is that we may have seen the most widespread and visible 'return to figuration' after abstraction yet, but without much debate over its stakes. I have said little about the machinations of the art market here but, in closing, it cannot be avoided. The proximity of artists and the market is closer than ever, and, while some of the figurative painters of the past worked with that genre in explicitly politicised terms, now that work has made its way towards mainstream success, as in the case of Neel, White and Wong, to name but a few. And artists who take up similar subject matter in terms of a politicised engagement with realism and representation, such as Casteel and Eisenmann, are readily welcomed by the market and arts' institutions, despite their work engaging in the representation of people in pictures who continue to be marginalised in the everyday workings of those establishments. There lies the contradiction, and while I don't want to end with a crude take about recuperation and representation, it is hard to avoid. Simply put, this isn't an argument against representation, but a note of scepticism about what hyper-visibility in the present means, when few of the institutions organising 'success' have changed.

Larne Abse Gogarty is a writer, and lecturer at the Slade School of Fine Art.

Art | Basel

Our London: Hannah Quinlan & Rosie Hastings

A true Londoner? Someone who can spend hours bitching about it but would never live anywhere else.



Hannah Quinlan & Rosie Hastings. Photo by Angel Li.

What does the word 'London' evoke for you?

Home and friendship – the city we always return to, no matter which vile new Conservative government is stinking it up.

Your first memory of London?

Our shared London memories began when we fell in love, mostly kissing in the video viewing room in the library at Goldsmiths.

Where do you feel most at home?

Curled up in bed with artist Gaby Sahhar, or Jala Wahid and her partner Stephen, having a gossip, the heating on dangerously high, cups of tea on tap. At Arcadia Missa, with our London gallerist Rózsa Farkas, where we find an endless supply of love and support. Spending time with Rosie's mum, eating soup, and having conversations that last ten hours.



Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings, *A History of Morality*, 2022 (detail). Photo by Josef Konczak. Courtesy of the artist, Tate, and Arcadia Missa, London. Copyright Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings.

What is the mark of a true Londoner?

Someone who can spend hours bitching about it but would never live anywhere else.

Which famous figure best embodies London?

Sam Selvon, author of our favorite book about London, *The Lonely Londoners* [1956]. We strongly advise you to stop what you are doing and read it instead.

Your favorite place for breakfast?

Crossroads Café in Peckham. Even though we left the area many years ago, we remain loyal to the best caff in London.

Where are the best boutiques?

I don't know if you would call it a boutique, but Aladdin's Cave in Lewisham, for rare and completely unusable objects.

Guests at your dream dinner party in London?

Rene and Maggie Matić: They make our life extraordinary, and we wish we could have dinner with them every night.

Where do you go out in London?

Soho, always and forever, or wherever Rózsa Farkas tells us to go, because she throws the best parties in town.

Which artwork best represents London?

The series of ink paintings titled 'Inner City Pressure' by Gaby Sahhar: The works are astonishing.

What is the craziest thing you've ever heard or seen on the streets of London?

An unbridled horse galloping down the high street in Clapton during rush hour, chased by a battalion of police cars. We hope she got away.

What can you only do in London?

Spend four hours on public transport in one day and not blink an eye.

What do you miss the most about London when you are away?

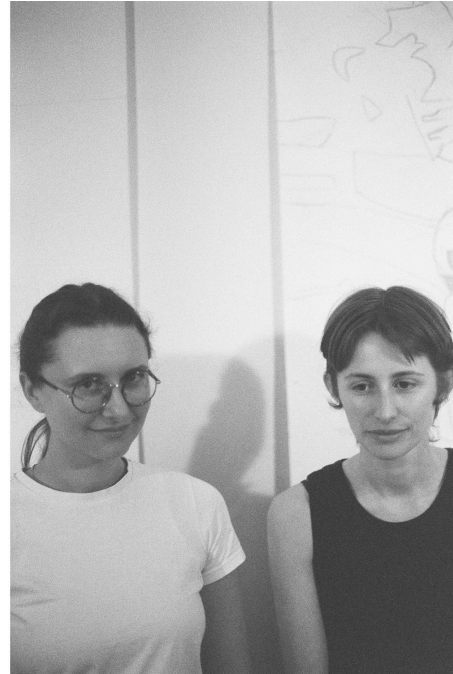
Our friends, the trees and parks, our studio in Woolwich, the river, its vastness, and its architectural diversity.

Your best advice for those just visiting?

Take the Uber Boat from Tate Britain to Woolwich Arsenal, sit on the viewing platform and enjoy an overpriced beer.



Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings. Photo by Rene Matic.



Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings, *Tulips*, 2022 (crop). Photo by Josef Konczak. Courtesy of the artist, Tate, and Arcadia Missa, London. Copyright Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings.

Hannah Quinlan & Rosie Hastings are represented by **Arcadia Missa**, London.

Arcadia Missa will participate in the Positions sector at Art Basel Miami Beach 2022.

'Art Now: Hannah Quinlan & Rosie Hastings' is at Tate Britain, London, until May 7, 2023.

Captions for full-bleed images: 1. Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings, *The Disinherited*, 2022 (detail). 2. Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings, *Common Subjects*, 2022 (detail). 3. Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings, *The Disinherited*, 2022 (detail). All photos by Josef Konczak. Courtesy of the artists, Tate, and Arcadia Missa, London. Copyright Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings.

AEM *How have you learnt to work in this tricky medium?*

HQ & RH We are largely self-taught. In 2020, we did a one-week course with Fleur Kelly, an experienced fresco painter based in the south of France, where we learnt the essentials. But the only true way to learn to paint fresco is through experience and the development of a symbiotic understanding of the materials and their characteristics.

We work to keep the painting style bold, graphic and monumental, since fresco is not a subtle medium. In certain areas, such as faces, we work more intensively, building up layers of pigment until we are able to blend on the surface of the fresco. In other areas, we use only a single layer of paint. When we paint, we don't sit down or talk or change the music. We are so anxious about the plaster drying before we can finish the image that we work in a state of heightened focus. When it works, it feels transcendental; when it doesn't, it feels like hell.

The nature of painting in *giornata*, or section by section, is a highly unusual way to approach a painting because with other mediums such as oil paint, the painting is typically built up as a whole in layers. The surface of the fresco has scars running through it where the plaster joins; the small changes between colour mixes day-to-day can create a completely different feeling from piece to piece. There is naturally a degree of uncertainty as the painting changes so radically in the drying process. We decided to embrace this aspect of fresco painting, to heighten rather than disguise its sculptural qualities. We love how visible the process is on the surface of the painting – how the fresco has its own architecture, and how the plaster and pigment turn to rock that will last forever.

AEM *The architectural qualities of built environments also feature prominently in your recent paintings, as they do in a lot of your work. Why is this something you keep returning to?*



Photo © Angel Li

HQ & RH *Exterior and interior architecture has always played an important role in our work, from our first collaborative project @gaybar, when we built fully functional gay bars in studios and galleries and hosted live event series, to UK Gay Bar Directory, a moving image archive of gay bars in the UK. We are interested in architecture as something that shapes people's behaviours, desires and orientations. For some, domestic architecture represents power – each property owner is the king of their castle – and for others, it represents repression and is a space encoded with rigid ideas of gender roles and sexual behaviour.*

AEM *Have you drawn on specific artistic influences when creating your new works?*

HQ & RH *Our fresco series is heavily influenced by the Masaccio, Masolino and Filippino Lippi fresco cycles in the Brancacci Chapel in the Church of Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence, Italy. The frescos in the Brancacci Chapel depict biblical stories of saints who raise the dead, heal the sick, aid the poor and suffer imprisonment. These saints move through the palazzi and public spaces with a sense of authority and social standing; they are often depicted as stern and powerful – prosperously clothed among a sea of rags and standing upright among the sick, dying and poverty stricken. We are interested in the way that these religious stories unfold within public spaces, where we witness an unruly clash of registers: the disciplinary power of the state versus the political and communal charge of the streets.*

*Meanwhile, the graphite drawing is roughly based on Paolo Uccello's painting *The Battle of San Romano* c.1438–40 in the National Gallery in London, a battle scene featuring soldiers in armour and many horses. In our drawing, the battle scene becomes one of police militarisation, featuring mounted police in full riot gear.*

We have been thinking about the militarisation of the police in light of the new Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill and a 'tough on crime' political approach that results in urban gentrification, sweeping police powers and an expanding carceral system.



Photo © Angel Li

AEM *Have you been looking beyond art history too when carrying out research for these paintings?*

HQ & RH For these frescos, we worked heavily with archival street photography from London, Paris, Berlin, New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco. We sifted through hundreds of images during our research and cut up sections of photographs that we then used to make collages for our compositions. Certain characters depicted in the frescos are Frankenstein's monsters, assembled from many different gender expressions, body parts and costumes. Working with street photography archives – some dating back to the advent of photography – we were able to make our own history of the street, with the freedom to play with an infinite number of potential interactions between the figures. The result is that each painting speaks of many eras, expressed through architecture and costume. Working with existing archives or creating our own has always played a significant role in our practice. We are interested in creating an emotional and sensual relationship between the viewer and a historical moment. We are also interested in a horizontal rather than hierarchical relationship to history, and building empathy and understanding across generational divisions.

Working with archives also allowed us to make historical interventions and revisions. For example, one of the fresco paintings draws from images of two pairs of drag queens being arrested from gay bars in New York in the 1950s. In the 1950s and 1960s in the United States, the 'three-article rule' was used to criminalise LGBTQ+ people, especially so-called 'cross dressers'. The rule stipulated that each individual must be wearing at least three articles of clothing assigned to their biological gender at any given time and resulted in a huge number of arrests in gay areas, such as Greenwich Village in New York, where police raids were frequent and brutal.

In our fresco, we removed the offending police officers and the handcuffs from the arms of the drag queens, transforming the scene into one where the queens are walking home from a wild night down a leafy suburban street. Interventions in art-making can't heal the past or absolve it of its violations and abuses, but it can help you to reimagine the future, especially when drag performers, trans and non-binary people continue to shoulder the burden of such disproportionate political vitriol.

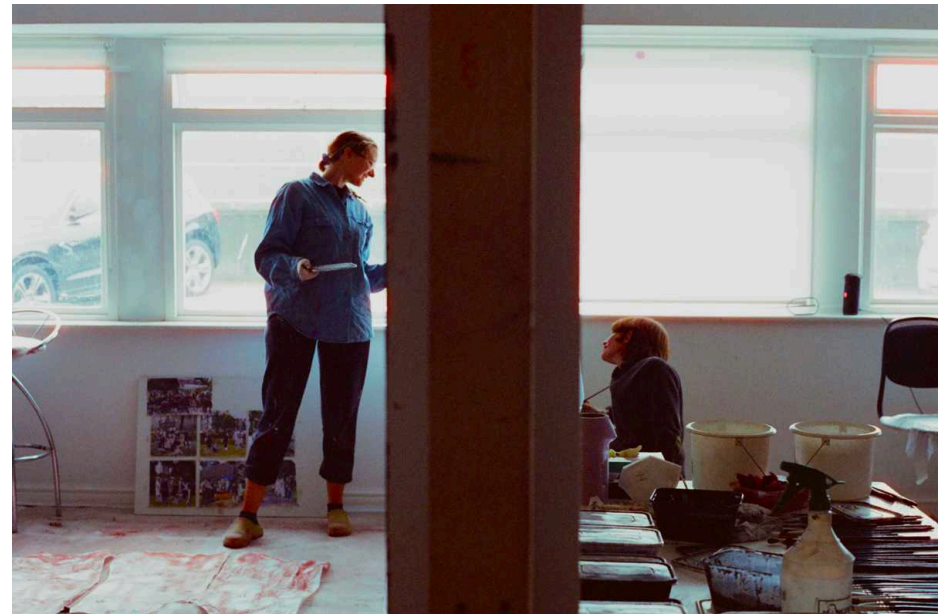


Photo © Angel Li

AEM *How long have you been working together in this way?*

HQ & RH We have worked together for eight years. At first, we argued constantly as our individual artistic egos battled for space and our attitudes towards making clashed. Now we have a way of working that allows us both to flourish. On a good day, we have a deep understanding of our own vulnerabilities and strengths, we help each other grow, and we surprise each other constantly.

When we work, we are often very quiet. We tend not to talk very much in the studio and, strangely, our work creates distance between us as we disappear into deep tides of concentration. When we develop new ideas for work, the conversations are a spark of shared excitement that we can both visualise unfolding into a full body of work. We delegate roles to one another in research and development and we tend to have meetings outside the studio where things feel less loaded and difficult. Occasionally, things spiral out of control, we lose faith in what we are doing, have crazy fights and find it impossible to work.

In order to work harmoniously, we follow a regimented approach to producing work and managing our studio. In relation to the frescos, we have a series of rules that apply to creating the composition, drawing the cartoon and finally painting. We design each giornata so that there is enough for us both to paint each day. People consider our way of working, especially on drawings or paintings, highly unusual, as they think about painting within the context of modernism and the myth of the artist as an individual genius. We think about art-making within a broader historical context as early practices of art-making were highly communal. Large groups of artisans would work together under the control of a master to produce works: one artisan would specialise in painting flowers, while another would paint the architecture. We work like artisans, but we have no master.

AEM *Speaking of flowers, where did the title of your new show come from?*

HQ & RH We struggled to find a title for this exhibition as we didn't want to privilege one aspect of the narrative or define the viewer's experience of the work. In the end we settled on Tulips, which refers to the foliage that runs through all the work in the exhibition. In public spaces, tulips exercise a form of control over green spaces where what is grown or not grown is tightly managed. This form of urban planning is reminiscent of the 'broken windows theory' in criminology, where visible signs of crime and disorder are seen to incite further anti-social behaviour and civil disorder. If broken windows signal disorder, tulips signal order. We see this desire for control and order in dialogue with notions of the commons, and the cultural and natural resources available to all members of society. In the urban scenes of the fresco paintings, the commons would ideally represent the streets and the public garden. These spaces, however, are subject to increasing surveillance, policing and privatisation, prescribing who uses these spaces and how. We think of Sylvia Plath's description of the flowers in her poem 'Tulips':



Photo © Angel Li

Their redness talks to my wound, it corresponds.

They are subtle: they seem to float, though they

weigh me down

Despite the weight of tulips, the promise of the commons perseveres,
like beautiful weeds growing in the cracks.

Hannah Quinlan & Rosie Hastings live and work in London.

*Amy Emmerson Martin is Assistant Curator, Contemporary British Art,
Tate Britain.*

Audio narration by Radhika Aggarwal and Wesley Nzinga.

Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings



In 2012, Theresa May, then British home secretary, introduced the hostile environment policy, restricting undocumented migrants' access to housing, employment, and health care. By 2019, a special rapporteur to the United Nations had detailed how under May's successor Amber Rudd, "the rotten core" of the legislation remained, "destroying the lives and livelihoods of racial and ethnic minority communities more broadly." Immigrant women, even those with paperwork in order, had become reluctant to give birth in hospitals after staffers were effectively deputized as immigration law enforcement. More recently, current home secretary Priti Patel proposed shipping asylum seekers to remote mid-Atlantic sites, following plans to install a floating wall (or a giant wave machine) in the Channel to scupper migrant crossings. May, Rudd, and Patel all call themselves feminists. Rudd once tweeted: "Feminism is a core conservative value." In their exhibition "Disgrace," Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings reckoned with a long history of right-wing feminism in Britain, from the suffragettes through Margaret Thatcher to present day. In an accompanying book of essays, Juliet Jacques cites May's quip, "What does the Conservative Party do for women? It makes us prime minister!"—summing up a rarefied vision of empowerment.

Central to "Disgrace" was a series of twelve etchings that formed something like a fragmented social realist mural. The vignettes read as daffy, then insidious. An etching that depicts a coed round of blindman's bluff was titled for banal rituals of Empire: *Tea, garden & evening parties, rifle competitions, polo matches, the trooping of the colours and other special events*, 2021. Elsewhere, viewers saw women Blackshirts—raising money for Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists with "bazaars, jumble sales, whist drives, dances, etc." in the 1930s—and politicians, including those aforementioned, striding in knee-length skirts as in the military parades from Andrea Mantegna's *Triumphs of Caesar*, 1484–92.

The large colored-pencil drawing *Mother*, 2021, showed an Edwardian woman capturing the Cretan Bull on the lawn of her mansion. The artists imagined this as the origin myth of the exhibition: The woman's task is Herculean, but her power is contingent on privilege, specifically property ownership, which was a condition in the initial right of (some) British women to vote. Another large drawing, *The whole world may, perhaps, be rather a large country house*, 2021, was set on the grounds of Chequers, the rural domicile of the prime minister. Composed as a remake of Goya's *The Straw Manikin*, 1791–92, it depicts women from different historical periods bouncing a floppy rag doll on a sheet, keeping the useless male aristocrat aloft even as they appear to enfeeble him.

Quinlan and Hastings avail themselves of both obscure layering and high legibility in their complex works—archives and reenactments that highlight equivocal liberations within capitalist structures. Their earliest significant commission, *UK Gay Bar Directory*, 2015–16, a four-and-a-half-hour video of empty nightlife interiors, many of them facing threat of closure, established the artists' position of joyful ambivalence.

The duo's presence in male-dominated venues disrupted stale hierarchies; they might have been unintended, even undesired, guests, yet their arduous commitment to documenting these precarious enclaves demonstrated a disarming faith in allyship across identity categories.

With the works in "Disgrace," their gaze has become harsher, though it is still not without humor. The process of rendering figurative drawings collaboratively can result in a bemusing staginess, as if the characters had drawn themselves, to their own disapproval. The awkwardness is fitting, bringing to mind May's stilted attempt at dancing at the Conservative Party conference in 2018 or holding hands with Donald Trump. But the figures are also stately and muscular (I kept thinking I was spotting Madonna), their power not diminished but articulated.

"Bad history is everyone's history," writes Lola Olufemi in the exhibition book. "In the gallery, two white women put whiteness on display. They invite feedback and reflection." Such collaboration was represented in the fresco *Republic #2*, 2021, maybe the only optimistic image in "Disgrace," in which femmes of various ages and races cluster on a public-housing development. They could be discussing questions raised by the exhibition, such as, How can we cultivate a feminism that doesn't pull up the ladder behind itself?

— [Jeremy Atherton Lin](#)

Art

Interview |

'There's a lefty, rose-tinted glaze around feminism': artist duo Quinlan and Hastings

Elizabeth Fullerton |



▲ 'We kept going back and ended up in the Edwardian period' ... Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings. Photograph: Jasmine Cornish

Mon 11 Oct 2021 10.00 BST

For the past five years the artist duo Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings have been focused on gay bars. A couple as well as collaborators, they've created joyous one-night-only gay bars as performances, compiled a vast moving image archive of more than 100 such venues around the country and made films looking at how male sex clubs and men-only gay bars reflect a broader culture of male dominance. Themes of safety, belonging, visibility and power dynamics run through their work as part of an examination of issues around policing, austerity and gentrification in society at large. Oh, and they also make wonderfully sultry drawings featuring buff androgynous youths.

Now the London-based artists, who were co-winners of last year's Jarman award for film, are turning their scrutiny to the feminist movement in Britain. "There's a lefty rose-tinted glaze around the history of feminism," says Quinlan when we meet at their Thames-side studio in London. "We wanted to use the same critical framework we've applied to male culture to look at women." Their new show *Disgrace* at London's Arcadia Missa gallery explores the often overlooked historical connections between British feminism and the political right through a series of etchings, a film, a fresco, two drawings and a book.

The 12 etchings - a new medium for the pair - form the centrepiece, theatrically drawing a thread from largely female propaganda groups such as the Victoria League, formed in 1901 to strengthen imperial networks, to the conservative lobby group Women2Win, co-founded in 2005 by Theresa May. Along the way, they take in the suffragettes, women's voluntary police groups and free-market feminists.



▲ 'It's about being accountable as white women' ... Republic #2, 2021 Photograph: Rob Harris/Courtesy: The Artists and Arcadia Missa, London

"Our aim was to create our own feminist timeline that presents this alternative narrative, thinking about the British empire and colonialism, white feminism, and how class has intersected with issues of feminism, xenophobia and racism in this time period," Hastings explains.

In this potted chronology, posh women are depicted cavorting at a garden party, baking cakes to support the empire, breeding perfect privileged children and mobilising in fascist black shirts; fast forward to the 70s, where pinch-faced puritans and scantily clad liberals battle over the morality of sex work and pornography, and a decade later when a woman in a power suit is shown clambering over bodies to cannonball a social housing block.

These compositions take inspiration from the magic realism of Paula Rego's 1989 *Nursery Rhyme* etchings and the brutal vocabulary of Goya's *Disasters of War* (1810-20), together with other artistic heroes such as William Blake and Gustave Doré. Quinlan frequently pulls out books of drawings to point to sources they've used to capture a scene or movement. The Renaissance painter Andrea Mantegna's *Triumphs of Caesar* series (1484-92), for instance, has been reinterpreted as a procession of success-hungry Thatcherite women including May and Priti Patel in the etching *I'm Not a Woman I'm a Conservative*.

“Someone who reads this as undermining feminism is

probably complicit within this white racist feminism on the political right

Complementing the etchings, a home-movie style “horror” film, Portraits, presents a kaleidoscope of faux nostalgic photographs of early 20th century ladies interwoven with claustrophobic interiors of a Victorian mansion and creepy scenes of Edwardian dolls attended by servants in an immaculate doll’s house.

So what prompted Quinlan and Hastings to take on the feminist movement? It was partly debates around intersectional feminism as

well as the artists’ disgust at hardline Conservative MPs such as May, Patel and even Boris Johnson proclaiming themselves feminists. Gender critical feminism, or what the duo call trans exclusionary radical feminism, for Hastings a “defining issue of our generation”, was also a factor. “We were thinking, ‘what is the origin of this?’” she notes, “and the natural step back is to the sex wars of the 1970s, to this sexual conservatism that is very rooted in feminism. We just kept going back and ended up in the Edwardian period.”

Months of research revealed unsavoury truths about women held up as national icons in school curriculums. While it may be no surprise that wealthy women promoted the imperial project to increase their influence, it’s less well known that a number of suffragettes joined Oswald Mosley’s British Union of Fascists and several were advocates of eugenics.

The artists recognise they may be accused of betraying an imagined sisterhood, but Hastings argues it’s about being accountable as white women. “We’re doing this because we’re feminists,” she says. “Someone who reads this as undermining feminism is probably complicit within this white racist feminism on the political right.”

Quinlan and Hastings met at Goldsmiths College in 2013 when they were both 21 and began collaborating the following year, mostly with computer generated and digital imagery and performance pieces. They only began drawing together in 2017, but their intricate, distinctive compositions have become a cornerstone of their practice, each piece taking about two months to complete. In the last couple of years they have expanded into demanding traditional techniques such as fresco painting and etching for their uber-contemporary explorations of identity. “Our collaboration is definitely powered by our love because the labour is so intense,” says Hastings.

Across all these mediums, the figures are depicted as flamboyantly virile. “We just love the androgyny of Michelangelo’s figures, with their masculine physiques,” explains Quinlan. “And funny little boobs, really pert, high on the chest,” laughs Hastings.

In their show Disgrace, a striking colour pencil drawing, Mother, portrays a brawny woman dressed to the nines in a fancy hat, effortlessly holding a bull on the lawn of a manor house. Giving a playful feminist twist to the Twelve Labours of Hercules, it suggests that women’s political emancipation is a herculean enterprise. “I just love that she’s wearing that outfit but carrying a bull,” says Hastings. “There’s this show of strength, but she’s in front of this English country mansion so there’s the idea that her political power is contingent upon her privilege and property.”

“Whether they’re villains or heroes,” she adds, “we’re always interested in drawing our characters with muscular vitality to show their power ... and think about how it’s wielded.”

Hannah Quinlan & Rosie Hastings: Disgrace is at Arcadia Missa, London, until 11 December

Artist's By Hannah Favourites Quinlan & Rosie Hastings



"When I stepped inside, it was just a bar. Through the haze of smoke I saw faces glance over and look me up and down. There was no turning back, and I didn't want to. For the first time I might have found my people." Leslie Feinberg, Stone Butch Blues

We have been fascinated and troubled by gay bars since we met. We shared our first kiss in a lesbian bar in New York, and we built a gay bar in our bedroom for our first collaborative work. Gay bars are historic sites of visibility and safety in the LGBTQ community that have served as centres for political activism, community-building, and identity production. Despite this, they can be elite spaces that are predominantly white and male-centric, catering to an audience with the financial power to craft institutions to their own sexuality and desire. We love the

way gay bars look, smell, and feel; they are seductive fantasies, a departure from the brutality of the everyday by the way of cheap cocktails, sparkling lights, mirrored surfaces, and black leather. Since the financial crash of 2008 and the subsequent gentrification of urban centres, gay bars have been closing with a rapid intensity, a pattern of course exacerbated by the pandemic. In light of these closures, and the immense creative and philosophical debt we owe to gay bars, we decided to share with you four of the venues that have most influenced our practice.



Growlr, *UK Gay Bar Directory (UKGBD)*, 2016
Video, 4:30 h.

Club Growlr

Club Growlr is a men's-only bar and sex club in Blackpool where we have spent many happy hours filming and chatting with the owner. The venue is a series of rooms bedecked with various signifiers of masculinity: hunting guns, military, football and construction symbols, police uniforms, Tom of Finland-esque artworks, and the Union Jack flag alongside the more predictable porn films featuring hairless young men and a gothic sex maze filled with BDSM gear and gloryholes. Like musical theatre, the gay leather scene blossomed during the postwar period, and may once have offered a creative and reparative way to handle fascism for both the victims and the perpetrators who experienced it as it became a way to reimagine power. So much of the power of fascism comes from its pageantry and elaborate use of uniforms, flags, military symbols and signifiers. Much of the eroticism,

heightened masculinity, and appropriation of sexual power in gay bars comes from a similar place aesthetically (if not necessarily politically). A lot of leather subculture traditions are based on protocols and rituals, and the aesthetics of men's leather culture are drawn from the pageantry of military and police attire. Leather vests, boots, buckles, chaps, straps and harnesses are all visual signifiers in both BDSM culture and nationalist insignia. Considering that the wider fetish community has been involved in political activism from the 1960s onward – and that surviving leather clubs cater almost exclusively to white men – it's worth questioning how these venues are responding to the recent resurgence of nationalism and a shift to the political right, especially in light of the homophobia and transphobia that tend to follow.

Bar Jester

Bar Jester was one of the oldest gay bars in Birmingham – it opened in the 1970s and closed in 2020. When we first visited the city’s gay village in 2016, it had a robust scene that seemed uniquely unaffected by the spate of gay bar closures spreading across the UK. Five years later, it has undergone rapid gentrification in anticipation of the highly politicised HS2, a high-speed rail line connecting London with Birmingham. Bar Jester featured many unique elements that drew us back to the venue again and again: the DJ booth was

a repurposed church pew; in the centre of the floor was a mirrored stage with a pole for dancing on; watching over the dance floor was a reimagined version of Michelangelo’s Sistine Chapel populated entirely by muscular and nude men. Outside the venue was a mural carved in granite of the bar’s namesake, a Jester, that mischievous figure in a bell-lined suit. Once the venue had closed its doors permanently, the Jester carving became a tombstone to the venue within, an ominous mascot for a species of culture in decline.



Still from *In My Room*, 2020
Video, 17:44 min.

Tifkas

Tifkas is a fictional lesbian bar in *Stone Butch Blues* (1993), an autobiographical novel written by activist Leslie Feinberg. The novel chronicles the lesbian bar scene in small-town America during the dawn of the civil rights movement. Dealing with issues including police brutality, sexual violence, and a racially stratified bar scene, the novel documents the unionised struggle of working-class industrial labourers and the precariousness of being non-binary in a binary world. Tifkas is a haven for

femmes, he-shes, drag queens and stone butches. They wear three items of clothing assigned to their perceived gender to avoid arrest during frequent raids; some refuse and face dire consequences including correctional rape by “gangs of sailors, Klan-type thugs, sociopaths and cops” who regularly attack the bar. Confronted by a lack of archival material describing the lesbian scene during this period, we chose to interpret the novel as a primary historical document.



Tifkas. Where Girls Can Be Boys, 2014
CGI render

Funny Girls

Funny Girls is an opulent art deco drag cabaret theatre, awash in pink velvet and plush carpet, which hosts ambitious follies in Blackpool. Blackpool is a historic British seaside resort where the dazzling entertainment culture has been brutalised by austerity and falling visitor numbers. The town provides the conditions for a unique political conflict to play out: between the reactionary nostalgia of the Victorian holiday destination and its vibrant and fantastical queer culture. We were particularly interested in the relationship between the gay scene and musical theatre epitomised by the eponymous Isobel Lennart musical *Funny Girls*. In the 1940s and 50s – musical theatre’s golden era and a time when homosexuality was criminalised in the UK – the industry was dominated by gay men. A coded language was used to describe gay experience, such as “the diva”, a larger-than-life woman who defies sexual and moral conventions. Betty Legs Diamond is Funny Girls’ resident diva, the venue’s leading star since it opened its doors in 1993.



Still from *Something For The Boys*, 2018
Video with sound, 16:34 min.

HANNAH QUINLAN & ROSIE HASTINGS (both *1991, Newcastle and London) are artists working across film, drawing, installation, performance, and fresco to archive the politics and histories of queer spaces. They live in Southeast London. Their solo exhibitions include “Public Affairs” at Galerie Isabella Bortolozzi, Berlin (2020) and “In My Room” at MOSTYN, Llandudno, Wales (2020). Their work has also been presented at Whitechapel Gallery and ICA in London, Centre Pompidou, Paris; in “The Cruising Pavilion” at the 2018 Venice Architecture Biennale; and in “Coming Out” at Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

Jarman prize shortlist 2020 celebrates vibrant escapism

Afro-surrealism, Hollywood racial imbalances and LGBTQ history are explored by nominees for the £10,000 film-making prize



Some of the Jarman award nominees ... clockwise from top left, work by Larissa Sansour, Michelle Williams Gamaker, Jenn Nkiru, and Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings.

Tim Jonze

Thu 2 Jul 2020 10:57 BST

Arabic science fiction, flying paint and a journey through the black techno scene: this year's Jarman award nominees offer plenty of vibrant escapism.

Among the six shortlisted artists for the £10,000 prize, which recognises the pioneering work of UK-based artist film-makers, are Jenn Nkiru, whose work is influenced by Afro-surrealism and electronic music, and Michelle Williams Gamaker, who tackles racial imbalances using the language of Hollywood.



No Church in the Wild, 2015. Photograph: Project Art Works

The duo Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings, with their humorous and at times unsettling work exploring the history and politics of LGBTQ culture, are also on the shortlist, along with Project Art Works, an artist-led organisation working with children, young people and adults who have complex support needs. The latter's 2016 work Tessellate found beauty in Jackson Pollock-esque paint splatters along with the noise of an electric sander.

Larissa Sansour, whose work is informed by both science fiction and her Palestinian heritage, and Andrea Luka Zimmerman, a Munich-born film-maker whose work focuses on marginalised and working-class communities, complete the nominations list.

Now in its 13th year, the Film London Jarman award - named after the late film-maker Derek Jarman - has a reputation for boosting the careers of its nominees. Laure Prouvost, Monster Chetwynd, Charlotte Prodger, Lawrence Abu Hamdan and Luke Fowler are some of the names who would go on to be shortlisted for or win the Turner prize.



Errol McGlashan and Jono Whitty in Here for Life by Andrea Luka Zimmerman and Adrian Jackson
Photograph: Therese Henningsen

Recent winners have included Heather Phillipson, Oreet Ashery and Daria Martin. The 2019 winner, Hetain Patel, is one of the judge's of this year's prize and told the Guardian that being involved with the awards has helped him avoid being boxed in as an artist. "The biggest challenge I've faced has been trying to be recognised as a British artist outside of my ethnicity," he said. "I'll get invited to do shows around the subject of diaspora or race. So to be acknowledged for the medium I'm working in, alongside peers I respect and admire? That's a freeing thing for me."

Adrian Wootton, head of Film London and the British Film Commission said: "With the impact of Covid-19 being felt so deeply by artists and exhibitors, we are more proud than ever to present this year's Jarman award shortlist and help raise the profile of this important body of original work, that questions and articulates the world around us."

The winner of the award will be announced on 24 November. In the run-up to the announcement, the work of the shortlisted artists will be available to view through the Whitechapel Gallery website. A special weekend of online screenings, discussions and performances featuring all six shortlisted artists is set for 14-15 November.

LIFE

Without empathy the term 'community' is redundant

BY GAY TIMES



Focal Point Gallery (Instagram)

As the writer Rosanna McLaughlin so beautifully and bluntly states, "The truth is, I can't recall a time when the concept of community has been placed in so much doubt."

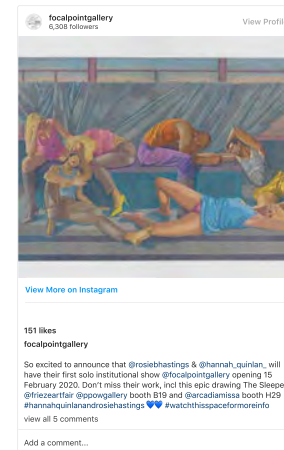
Under a matrix of both external and internal factors the queer landscape is being threatened silently from within and noticeably from without. Since the millennium rising costs catalysed further by the 2008 financial crisis have led to gentrification flourishing whilst LGBTQ+ bars depleting in existence. One website report illustrates this, using images from inside a non-existent magazine, they tracked and traced or rather identified the many LGBTQ+ venues which no longer exist, recording that around 116 venues specifically in London have closed between 2000 and 2016. Forced out of dedicated communes, and allured by the digital scene, the question is if we have no access to dedicated spaces where do we go physically?

This idea of belonging and imagined private utopias were characterised in the subvertive explorations of the mid-twentieth century works of David Hockney's pictorial escapes in *Domestic Scene* (1963), retreats in his Cavafey poetry inspired *The Beginning* (1966), or differently in a more sexually liberating yet overtly violent esoteric excess William Borough's novel *Wild Boys* (1971). However courageous in their time for avocation for same sex relations, in retrospect collectively they portray queer visibility as lacking in outward empathy and visibility for others. This has become confounded.

Such manifestos for a vision for a supposed utopia doesn't widen for the inclusion for lesbians, transgender and BAME individuals. Also how does their context fit within the queer landscape of today given the lack of presence for others, especially where historically queer spaces and our representation are largely tailored and dominated by cis white gay men. This hasn't largely been questioned to the extent till now in which Rosie Hastings and Hannah Quinlan's practice observes and rightly exposes.

Following on from their participation in the group show 'Queer Spaces: London, 1980's - Today' at Whitechapel Gallery, London last year, Hastings & Quinlan's debut institutional solo show at Focal Point Gallery in Southend brings to our attention this paradox of representation. 'In My Room' explores the false sense of commune that is too often portrayed by these spaces and the urgency that is required for others. *Republic* (2020) for example, a fresco painting based upon the drawings of Christ being whipped in public by the artist Andrea Mantegna, is instead subverted and dominated by women in expressions and scenes of distress often directed towards and for the audience to surmise.

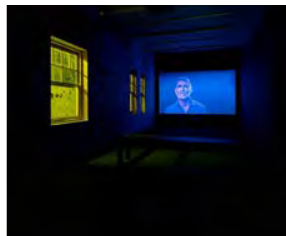
Similarly graphite drawings depicting women either scuffling or embracing outside gay bars which are destined for closure appear too as episodes of inflations. It is this confusion and division which is proliferating now in queer politics such as the presence of anti-trans rights fringe groups highjacking pride parades. This is dumfounded given that the rights that many of us have today were paved by trans women in the Stonewall riots. Like their work *Lonely City* 2019, which portrayed dance floor conflicts between sneering gay men and friends, amongst all our insecurities and strive to love and exist, we are reminded that we are all in the search maybe for lust, affection, liberation, space, or love, whether in fantasy or reality.



Rosie Hastings & Hannah Quinlan

This sense of search for bodily liberation is a subject of Hastings and Quinlan's short film *In My Room* (2020) installed in the main exhibition space. Filmed inside the closed Bar Jester in Birmingham, pole dancers perform and men embrace in front of the fractured imagery of renaissance reproductions on the wall, which at once is both almost reverential and harmonic against the movements of the figures under the fragmented sounds. In a different landscape under the cover of night in woodlands and scrubland often associated with cruising grounds, lies the former army base Shoeburyness Fort. In one scene a line of men perform an intimate almost delicate display. You can't help but feel under the historical contexts of the military past, machoistic culture, the historical implications of cruising, who actually has permission to exhibit sexual expression. Take for example that in the UK police are seeing 81% increases in hate crimes towards transgender people, as well as increases in the risks associated with transgender people meeting others across apps. In contrast LGB people aren't largely exposed to this.

GAYTIMES



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'In My Room', the first solo institutional exhibition by Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings is now open at Focal Point Gallery until 31 May 2020. As a new body of work, this exhibition develops the artists' enquiry into the politics, histories and aesthetics of queer spaces and culture. Open Wednesday to Sunday each week in #Southend. Join us next Thursday 27 February at 5:00pm for a free exhibition tour with FPG Director @katharine.stout - Free and all welcome. Photo credit: @booklookukukala #hannahquinlanandrosiehastings #inmyroom #ukgaybardirectory #Essex @arcadamsisa @southendbc @visitouthend @hannahquinlan @rosiebastings view all comments

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In My Room by Rosie Hastings & Hannah Quinlan

Our collective motivations for safe embrace and explorations in gay bars are like ancient bathhouses becoming threatened and reinstated as artefacts of the past. As we are seeing, as contradictions of our time as a result of changing work times and living costs, dating apps are removing the need for gay bars whilst at the same time forcing those to use apps because there are no bars in their areas, which are largely catered for men. *Gay Bar Directory* (2015-16) on display on the Big Screen outside the gallery is a video archive of the empty interiors of over 100 LGBTQ+ spaces. Under the glitter veneer of the walls and altar like adorations of muscular men imagery, these venues are a far cry from being the namesake of queer culture that they once was. **With only around 50 left in London** the dating app has **become the primary means by which queer people now interact and meet each other**. The issue with this is that many dating apps exhibit racist and transphobic material spread by users on a platform that is supposed to welcome us. BAME and transgender individuals instead are largely being oppressed by these platforms. Under these opposing systems and spaces designed for queer people, Hastings and Quinlan's output are a continuing observance of what they say is **"concerned with communicating the complicated emotional space that is under threat both from internal and external pressures and failures."**

Like the title of the show suggests 'In [Our] Room', when we think about the many idols we had pinned and cellotaped to our bedroom walls to be inspired by, who do we allow and welcome into our narrative respectively? When we seek social connection and expect acceptance we are reminded that we must make and advocate space for others. And in our uncertain and troubled time we don't need community as such, we need to exercise inclusion for all and empathy. After all without empathy the term 'community' is redundant.

In My Room is at Focal Point Gallery, Southend until 31 May 2020.

TANK

CONVERSATION | Hannah Quinlan & Rosie Hastings



Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings, *Hope, Joy, Youth, Peace, Rest, Life, Dust, Ashes, Waste, Want, Ruin, Despair, Madness, Death, Cunning, Folly, Words, Wigs, Rags, Sheepskin, Plunder, Precedent, Jargon, Gammon, and Spinach* (ICA performance), 2019. Courtesy the artists

In their ongoing performance project *Hope, Joy, Youth, Peace, Rest, Life, Dust, Ashes, Waste, Want, Ruin, Despair, Madness, Death, Cunning, Folly, Words, Wigs, Rags, Sheepskin, Plunder, Precedent, Jargon, Gammon, and Spinach*, artists Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings create a cacophonous survey of contemporary queer culture's radical edges and the reactionary white-male mainstream as they rub up against each other.

Enlisting an expanded cast of performers – go-go dancer Ted Rodgers, singer Jesse Hultberg, musicians Owen Pratt and Milo McKinnon, drummer Severin Black – Quinlan and Hastings' work presents an ecstatic and terrifying interpretation of the pride parade, complete with a rainbow-coloured float and big-screen video displays of lip-syncing soldiers and YouTube dance sensations.

Guy Mackinnon-Little spoke to the artists about their work following a recent performance at the ICA as part of Image Behaviour, the ICA's annual convening dedicated to experiments in artists' moving image.

<https://tankmagazine.com/tank/2019/12/hannah-quinlan-rosie-hastings/>

ban the video which was ridiculous but in the end we compromised on censoring certain images within the film. The footage they decided to censor was so innocent – the word “sex” sprayed on a wall, poppers through a shop window, a leather daddy removing his waistcoat, of course they didn’t censor any nude women or the occupying soldiers with their guns. As always with censorship issues, it became a litmus test of what fears are circulating within the public and government: it was a moment that felt indicative of the current shift to the far right. We were lucky to be working with the incredible producer Kamal Akarie who really fought for the video to be shown, he was so shocked by the policing impulses of the council and felt like it was something he had not experienced since Section 28 was brought in under Thatcher.



Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings, *Hope, Joy, Youth, Peace, Rest, Life, Dust, Ashes, Waste, Want, Ruin, Despair, Madness, Death, Cunning, Folly, Words, Wigs, Rags, Sheepskin, Plunder, Precedent, Jargon, Gammon, and Spinach* (video detail), 2019. Courtesy the artists

Could you say a bit more about that tension between public and private space that plays out when you have videos of people dancing in their bedrooms, and then videos of cops making out at pride, all spliced together?

We were considering the entanglement between visibility and capital – gay men, especially gay white men have access to a public sex culture. Gay men have gay bars, saunas, clubs and gay pride, what we would describe as institutions dedicated to their identities and sexuality. In the film we see thousand of gay men, topless and dancing in unison at huge circuit party festivals, we even see similar shots of military-themed parties filmed on the gay cruise ship *Atlantis* which prides itself in only hosting a handful of women out of 2000 male passengers. It's important to recognise that this culture exists because of men's historical and contemporary access to capital, in the 1970s, an important decade for the creation of gay space, lesbians existed within the lowest economic bracket, a situation exacerbated by the gender pay gap (and lower still of course for lesbians of colour), and therefore did not have the same monetary and societal comfort in creating and accessing these spaces. What we tried to show in the video was a wild and radical culture that exists behind closed doors or on the streets, this is what happens when wealth is so unevenly distributed within a supposed “community”.

We've spoken about this quite alarming climate of fear and censorship. Instead of trying to offer some kind of definitive takedown or counter-narrative, what you've done instead is generate this cacophony which grows and grows and grows.

In the past the LGBTQ community has responded to moments of crisis in two ways – by flattening itself and appealing to conservative ideals with the aim of assimilation, or via radical activism that actively rejects conformism and the conservative ideals which created the political environment in which homophobia is dominant. There is a rich history of LGBTQ activism to draw from. ●

Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings' next exhibition is at [Focal Point Gallery, Southend-on-Sea](#), 16 February to 31 May 2020.

MOUSSE



Hannah Quinlan & Rosie Hastings

Interview by Rosanna Mclaughlin

Modern Art
50-58 Vyner Street
London, United Kingdom
modernart.net

Between 2015 and 2016, Rosie Hastings and Hannah Quinlan traveled the UK while making *UK Gay Bar Directory (UKGBD)* (2015–16), a video archive of LGBTQ social spaces. In the wake of the financial crisis of 2007-2008,

the Conservative government's rollout of fiscal austerity had contributed to the closure of nightlife venues across the country. *UKGBD* is a record of public queer culture, legal in the UK for a little more than fifty years, now at risk of extinction.

Since completing the archive, the artist duo has continued to explore the politics, histories, and aesthetics of queer space, shining a light on a complex terrain in which questions of class, nationalism, gentrification,

and patriarchy often collide, particularly in the shadow of Brexit. As their work shows, "G" is by a long stretch the best-represented letter of the LGBTQ family. While gay bars and clubs provide a sense of community for men across the UK, they appeal to a predominantly white clientele, and often incorporate militaristic decor—aspects of a culture critically at odds with the metropolitan, politically aware, university educated, newly invigorated manifestation of queer identity.

I met the artists in London to discuss their recent video, *Something for the Boys* (2018), commissioned by Two Queens gallery in Leicester, where it was shown earlier this year, and their recent turn toward drawing. ROSANNA MCLAUGHLIN: *Something for the Boys* was filmed in Blackpool, a seaside resort on the northwest coast of England. You'd recorded the city's gay venues while making *UK Gay Bar Directory*. What brought you back?

HANNAH QUINLAN & ROSIE HASTINGS: Blackpool is a complicated place. It's a Victorian pleasure town in a state of decline, abandoned by the state, where social problems such as a homelessness and substance abuse flourish. A vibrant gay scene survives in these hostile conditions, as part of a broader tourist industry selling a nostalgic idea of "traditional Britishness." We first visited in the buildup to the Brexit referendum, when nostalgia was gaining political currency, energizing white nationalism in the UK. While filming we developed relationships with people in the Blackpool gay scene who introduced us to their world. We were also drawn to the city's amazing LGBTQ local history archive, formed as a community project in 2005, where written memories, drawings, and photos exist alongside more formal archival materials. The memories submitted are intimate and messy. They include things like, "I fucked this guy on the beach and it made me feel weird."

RM: The two locations in the video represent opposite ends of the Blackpool gay scene. Ted Rogers, a young go-go dancer in a jockstrap, performs at Growlr sex club, and Betty Legs Diamond, an old-school drag artist, performs at the cabaret venue Funny Girls.

HQ & RH: *Funny Girls* is a fantasy of a place: a former art deco cinema where high-production musical theater and cabaret drag shows are staged every night. There is something utopian about the gay scene in Blackpool, where a troupe of drag queens will perform a highly skilled, two-hour variety show to just a handful of regulars. These productions defy

the logic of capitalism that dominates other areas of the entertainment industry, especially in the context of London. It's a reckless pursuit, driven by a longing, desire, and fantasy that feels synonymous with queerness itself. *Something for the Boys* explores the connection between musical theater and gay culture. In the 1940s and 1950s—musical theater's golden era and a time when homosexuality was criminalized in the UK—the industry was dominated by gay men. A coded language was used to describe gay experience, such as "the diva," a larger-than-life woman who defies sexual and moral conventions. Musicals from this time parody the era's rigid social codes.

RM: Do you think the parodic element is still active, or has it transformed into a purely nostalgic form of entertainment?

HQ & RH: It's interesting to answer this in the context of Growlr and other sex clubs we've visited that feature military, nationalist, and leather aesthetics. Like musical theater, the gay leather scene bloomed during the post-war period, and may once have offered a creative, reparative way to handle fascism for those who experienced it. Given that surviving leather clubs cater almost exclusively to white men, it's worth considering these behaviors on a spectrum, and questioning how these venues are responding to the recent resurgence of nationalism and the homophobia that tends to follow.

RM: You filmed Ted and Betty performing without an audience, and replaced the music they were dancing to with a haunting, atmospheric soundtrack, so they seem isolated and out of time. Was this intended as a commentary on the spate of closures of LGBTQ nightlife venues across the UK?

HQ & RH: We were thinking about this moment in time as a moment of crisis. We were considering the closure of queer spaces, but also more broadly the loss of public space and the dismantling of state infrastructure, which are the results of more than a decade of austerity.

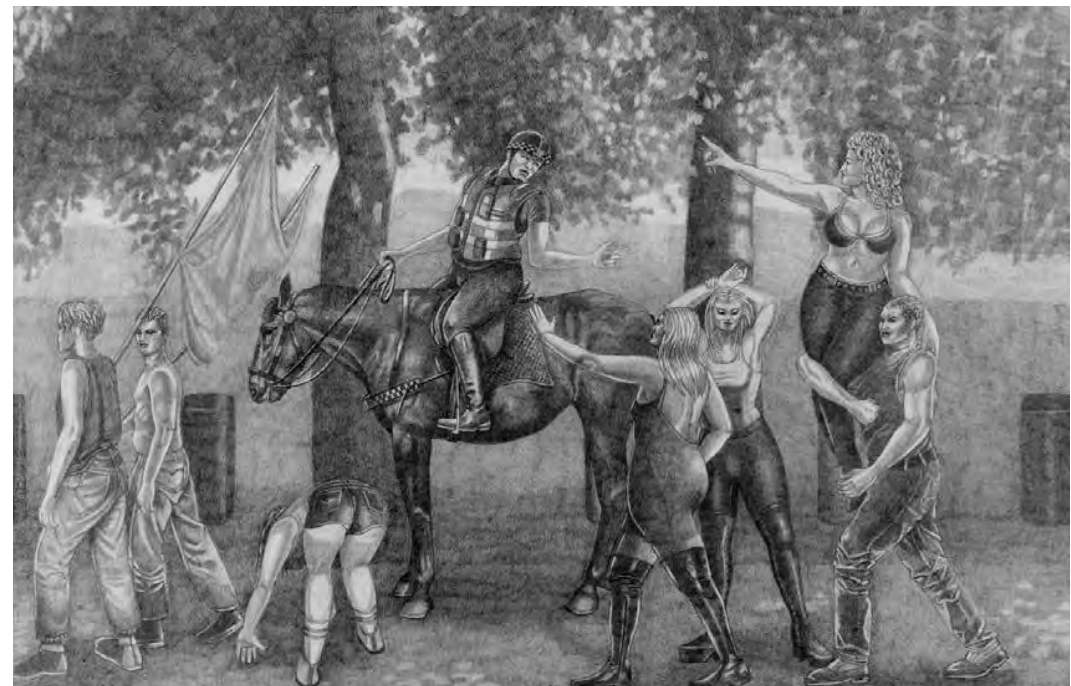
RM: In June 2019 you'll be showing *Something for the Boys* at Hayward Gallery alongside some of your drawings—a relatively new addition to your practice. What prompted the shift in medium?

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HQ & RH: Making *UKGBD* was exhausting. We spent nine months traveling, inserting ourselves into unfamiliar and often exclusively male spaces. Drawing is a private, intimate process, and after we finished, it became our salvation. Previously we hadn't worked figuratively, as we were fearful of replicating real-world power dynamics that deny certain bodies agency. Drawing brought out a more playful and fantastical quality in our work, and became our bridge to figuration: a medium with which to probe, analyze, and re-present these dynamics in an imaginary realm. Our drawings reveal worlds full of dreamlike uncertainty, populated by heroic characters on the cusp of love or violence. It felt like we were digging into the collective queer unconscious, and reveling in the joys and anxieties that define everyday queer life.

RM: Your exaggerated, muscly figures, as seen in *The Dudes* (2017), an epic drawing of a group of friends gathered in a bar, remind me of the cult, gay, twentieth-century pornographic cartoons of Tom of Finland. But as with all of your work, the gaze is altered because you're approaching gay culture from a lesbian perspective.

HQ & RH: We often get asked "Where are the lesbians?" but this is the point. People want our work to show something that isn't a reality: a representation of lesbians happily hanging out in bars. When you come out as a gay man you can go cruising, use Grindr, visit gay sex clubs and bars. Lesbians operate in a more marginal, creative space, inventing their own structures rather than depending on those that already exist. The title of *Something for the Boys* is a tongue-in-cheek reference to the prefabricated structures that enable the mobilization of gay identity, and stem from historic male entitlement to public space.





Rosie Hastings and Hannah Quinlan, *Gaby*, 2018, video still. Courtesy of the artists and Queer Thoughts, New York.

Rosie Hastings and Hannah Quinlan *Queer Thoughts / New York*

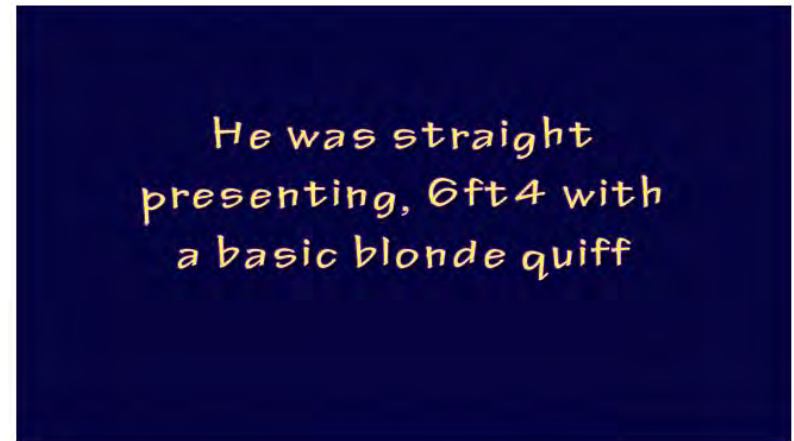
Gay representation exists in a slippery space between liberation and domination, solidarity and violence, of both socioeconomic and interpersonal dimension. The ambivalent localization of violence within gay sociality — both aimed toward it and coming from within it — serves as the subtle thematic framework for the artist duo Rosie Hastings and Hannah Quinlan's most recent show at Queer Thoughts.

A series of carefully executed pencil works on paper depict imagined scenes of intimate queer sociality: a group of beefy, gender-opaque characters, rendered in a stylized "gay hand" somewhere between lesbian comic books and Tom of Finland, are seen drinking, laughing, and making out in sparsely furnished rooms, desire omnipresent in their poses, gestures, and gazes. Hogarthian in both form and spirit, these charged scenes of conviviality nonetheless feel on the cusp of some kind of impending unhinging; desire transformed into rivalry, into conflict.



Rosie Hastings and Hannah Quinlan, *We Haven't Spoken Since*, 2018, video still. Courtesy of the artists and Queer Thoughts, New York.

Bracketed by the drawings is the video work *Gaby* (2018), consisting of three short vignettes that each address the interweaved connections between gay culture and wider systems of violence. The first vignette tells the story of their best friend Gaby, who as an eighteen year old briefly dated a straight-presenting gay cop. In naïve first-person PowerPoint form, Gaby recounts how he romantically engaged and navigated his partner's persistent self-guilt and self-masking, which in the process reproduced homophobia onto Gaby himself (the fatal ending of their relationship ultimately loops back as the title for the show's body of drawings, "We Haven't Spoken Since," all 2018).



Rosie Hastings and Hannah Quinlan, *Gaby*, 2018, video still. Courtesy of the artists and Queer Thoughts, New York.

Directly following this is a vignette compiling found video footage of police officers at pride marches momentarily sidestepping their law-enforcing duties and breaking out in fits of badly simulated twerking and voguing. These harrowing scenes are only furthered by their shared soundtrack, Village People's 1974 hit "Y.M.C.A.," which served as the definitive anthem of the post-Stonewall era of sexual liberation in New York's West Village — which, in turn, triggered the neighborhood's rapid sanitization and gentrification. This is marked by Hastings and Quinlan in a video with a rendered issue of Christopher Street Magazine from 1977, in which an article boasts the gentrifying powers of the gay, male, white middle-class (serving to "clean up" impoverished, undesirable urban areas).

Hastings and Quinlan's succinct examination of gay representation brings its viewer from macro- to micro-political scales of space, intimacy, and desire, and carefully deciphers the troublesome history of gay politics that must still be articulated today.

by Jeppe Ugelvig



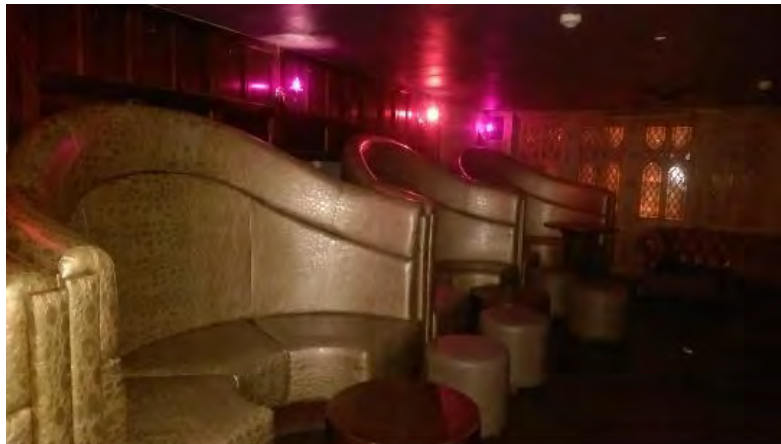
A New Art Book Archives British Gay Bars

HETTIE JUDAH
Jun 19 2018, 3:31pm

Rosie Hastings and Hannah Quinlan have archived a fast-changing scene.

“Our job at The Hoist is to supply you guys with the best thing that a club can give a person: a mini vacation from the everyday.” This enticing promise comes from a poster reproduced in *The UK Gay Bar Directory*, a new book from artists Rosie Hastings and Hannah Quinlan. The club in question lived up to its ambition, as a note on a blackboard hung above a row of urinals testifies: “I FIRST CAME HERE IN MY 20s—I’M NOW IN MY 40s—THANK YOU.”

The Hoist is one of more than 100 of Britain’s rapidly disappearing gay bars that Hastings and Quinlan documented for their multipart project *The UK Gay Bar Directory*, the four-and-a-half-hour film version of which first screened in 2016. The duo assembled the movie from footage shot on a GoPro camera—when the club was closed—over a period of nine months or so. By presenting their imagery in no particular order and never identifying the locations, they engineered a disorienting flood of imagery, sound-tracked by pop paired, in an elegiac turn, with the sound of glaciers melting. Recently acquired by the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool, *The UK Gay Bar Directory* was shown as part of the public art institution’s popular 2017 show, *Coming Out: Sexuality, Gender, and Identity*. Now Hastings and Quinlan have released a book of the same name.



From Rosie Hastings and Hannah Quinlan, *The UK Gay Bar Directory*. Courtesy of the artists and Arcadia Missa, London

“The book is the next of what we hope will be many chapters of the Directory,” the artists told me. “We describe the UKGBD as an archive but in its display as an artwork, we chose not to conform to traditional archival requirements. The book includes what was put aside in the Directory. Where the Directory is mysterious, the book fills things in.”

Among these elucidations are lines striking through the names of bars that have closed in the short time since the project began, The Hoist amongst them. Austerity, gentrification, homogenization, and the internet have

all put pressure on bars that offered space for posing, cruising, fantasy, and sex, and were sites for information exchange and emotional support. The artists’ camera captures all these functions, often through wear and tear. (According to Quinlan and Hastings, some bars that attempted makeovers received complaints and lost customers, visible scars inspiring a certain loyalty.)



From Rosie Hastings and Hannah Quinlan, *The UK Gay Bar Directory*. Courtesy of the artists and Arcadia Missa, London

UKGBD the book makes no claims to encyclopedic status: “It is an archive of gay bars that two lesbians were able to gain access to,” note the artists in their introduction. Its classification as a directory, too, is intentionally specious, inspired by the informal xeroxed guides and early internet listings that the pair turned up in their nationwide hunt for venues. As bastions against cultural mediocrity, the bars depicted also stand aside from anything so trite as ‘British’ identity. “Just as there is not one international LGBTQ identity, there is not one that describes the whole of the UK,” say Quinlan and Hastings. “The gentrified bars of Soho are vastly different from the musical theatre bars in Blackpool, the working class lesbian bar in Liverpool, or the trans co-op bar in Leeds.”

The UK Gay Bar Directory is published by Arcadia Missa.

October sees the art world descend upon London for Frieze Art Fair and a calendar packed with satellite fairs, auctions, exhibitions, events and the chicest of chic parties.

The city's galleries and institutions take the opportunity to showcase their programme highlights, presenting work by top contemporary and historical artists. This year in response to local and global concerns around identity, equality and freedom, there is a critical mass of work on show in London presenting an urgent celebration of diversity and a desperate preservation of queer culture. Gemma Rolls-Bentley provides a rundown of what not to miss this Frieze week!



Hannah Quinlan & Rosie Hastings, detail of *The Dudes* (2017), Courtesy the Artist and Arcadia Missa, Photo: Tim Bowditch

Hannah Quinlan & Rosie Hastings: *We Lost Them At Midnight*

Until 12 November, Arcadia Missa, London

Lesbionic dream duo Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings work together to tirelessly preserve queer culture, documenting a rapidly shrinking scene that offers sanctuary to the community, and imagining new, utopian, radical and critical environments that nurture individuality and resist the cruel destructive impact of austerity and gentrification. For their exhibition at Arcadia Missa, the artists consider queer sociality as a mode of resistance set against an increasingly barren cultural landscape. The sparse gallery reflects the closure of queer venues, the emptying and buying out of London's community spaces. "*We Lost Them At Midnight*" presents a set against which stories and queer mythologies may be enacted.

EXHIBITIONS

Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings "Gaby" at Queer Thoughts, New York

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It is fitting that one of the first American mainstream depictions of post-Stonewall gay culture, via one of its first anthems (Y.M.C.A. by Village People), would situate gay sociality within the physical location of a Christian charity organization. That the category of homosexual has ever existed owes much to Christian charity itself, a moral principle designed to unite a community of people who had lost their common interest (namely, the world). In the case of the people from the 'Village', the euphemistic proposal to "get yourself clean" at the YMCA (submitted as a pretext for aberrant sexual behavior), mirrors the simultaneous movement of a contingent gay community to clean up the West Village (in their eventual pursuit of wealth accumulation and inclusion within Christian family structures). This is only to say that the radical aspects of gay socialization were always anchored to their non-place in society and the extraterritorial spaces they inhabited, and were never acutely reducible to biological fact.

In the collaborative practice of London-based artists Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings, the appearances of LGBTQ culture are evaluated, in both their establishment and clandestine forms, as a tactile environment of lived signs that is performed and transformed by its inhabitants. Under historical circumstances that have liquidated the realms of public and private in favor of an all encompassing society, the queer culture that Quinlan and Hastings undertake is of a foregrounded intimacy; the intimacy of darkened spaces, and of biological processes necessarily brought towards illumination. Utilizing drawing and digital video (and their intersection in digital animation), the works of Quinlan and Hastings serve as both a document of, and proposition for, the social spaces of queer life.

In *Gaby*, a new video work named for the duo's best friend, the artists present three vignettes highlighting intersections of gay culture (its iconography, politics and relationships) and the police (their tactics and their personnel). The vignettes include: a montage of found video clips where active police dance to Y.M.C.A. at pride parades, often joined by celebrating paraders; an animatics sequence of a 1977 issue of *Christopher Street* magazine, extolling (white, male) gay communities' propensity to rejuvenate disregarded neighborhoods and "save" Manhattan from the "slums"; and a recounting by the eponymous Gaby of his brief relationship as an eighteen-year-old with a straight-presenting gay cop.

frieze



All Bar None

An interview with Rosie Hastings and Hannah Quinlan about their project, UK Gaybar Directory

BY HATTY NESTOR

Collaborative duo Rosie Hastings and Hannah Quinlan have spent the past nine months constructing a filmed archive of gay bars across the UK. Currently showing as part of the exhibition 'Utopian Voices Here & Now' at Somerset House, UK Gaybar Directory (2016) is an archive of these spaces, raising important questions concerning the LGBTQ community, both past and present.

Hatty Nestor

The UK Gaybar Directory is a project where you collaboratively filmed 170 gay bars across the UK. What drove you to archive these spaces?

Rosie Hastings & Hannah Quinlan

The project started in November 2015, shortly after Somerset House commissioned us to start the archive. We had already been filming gay bars, but the idea for the archive came as a response to the rampant gentrification of the gay scene in London, and the closure of many historic and popular venues. There was a sense of urgency, that if we didn't document these bars they would vanish into the chasm of unmarked history and be discarded as non-influential, out-dated spaces. We are drawn to gay bars as spaces for communities to congregate visibly, and their relationship to the civil rights movement and direct action. There is a level of self-awareness present in gay bars that is absent in heterosexual spaces, where information concerning mental health, safe sex and addiction is circulated, demonstrating that LGBTQ services can provide the services our government doesn't. The commission gave us the opportunity to create a queer archive. To disrupt the narratives that we were simultaneously historicizing, working through the social, political and historical aspects of gay bars.



Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings, 'Utopian Voices Here & Now', 2016, exhibition view, Somerset House, London

HN Whilst travelling around the UK you collected different objects, leaflets and memorabilia from the bars, which are presented in the exhibition as the piece Scarcity of Liberty (2016). Amongst these objects is the men's magazine Attitude. Can you talk about it?

RH & HQ In the initial stages of this project we purchased a collection of Attitude from the early 1990s. These editions of the UK mainstream gay magazine were being published at the tail end of the AIDS crisis. They focused on the white, young, hairless, healthy male body, creating a toxic model for what a queer body looks like. Through its content Attitude made apparent its commitment to masculinity and a lack of care for inclusivity, something that is universal throughout mainstream gay culture. It's an agenda that we were frequently confronted with in the bars.

HN Was your intention to disrupt Attitude magazine as an archive? Did including this material feel equally as important as a contemporary critique of gay bars?

RH & HQ Yes, we destroyed it as an archive, it can no longer function as one. We ripped the covers off, and mixed up their chronological order. We reinvented it as an example of our fury and rage at the scene and its shortcomings as a magazine.

HN You use mainstream pop music in the video piece, UK Gaybar Directory (2016). Does the music relate to the gay bars you encountered outside of London?



Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings, Scarcity of Liberty, 2016, installation view

RH & HQ For the music we collected field recordings from the bars and also recorded samples of the music that played in each venue. We also inserted sounds from the natural world: glaciers melting, super storms and forest fires. We produced the music to create a highly emotive and visceral sensation – ultra-recognizable songs that draw the viewer into the empty spaces of the bars. We wanted to implicate the viewer by manipulating their sense of the past, present and future. These videos make apparent the nuanced temporalities of the gay bar: on the one hand they are incredibly nostalgic, on the other hand they are futuristic spaces, presenting an idea of a utopia that in the present moment they simultaneously fall short of.

HN The metal sculpture Attitude (2016) overlooks the exhibition, and appears much like a motif. Does this work reflect community relationships you experienced whilst filming?
Karlsruhe

RH & HQ Attitude shows the LGBTQ motif of a rainbow flag. It is intended to mimic the sculptural language of a community centre, be it a library, a hospital or a primary school. We were attempting to communicate the public image of LGBTQ culture, its front or facade – this need to appear acceptable and the desire for a false optimism that erases our history and cultural identity.

HN Does exposing this false optimism, and questioning LGBTQ culture's relationship to institutions, link to other elements of your practice? Or was this an issue that arose whilst documenting the LGBTQ scene in this project?

RH & HQ Since the AIDS years the LGBTQ movement has focused on constructing an acceptable front in order to assimilate into the institutions that continue to oppress us. These include the police, the military, the state and big businesses. Showing this project in institutions such as Somerset House we are expected to operate within this contradiction, of complicity and critique.

HN Viewing UK Gaybar Directory, it is unclear where the spaces are. Was it a conscious choice to keep their addresses and locations hidden?



Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings, UK Gaybar Directory, 2016, film still

RH & HQ Showing the UK Gaybar Directory within an art context allowed the space to operate from the periphery of what could be considered an archive, to expand its context and field of references using audio and installation. The reality of filming was that we consistently had to seek permission to enter male centred or male only spaces, and were often denied access. In a sense it's not an archive of the UK gay bar scene, it is a documentation of the spaces two white and presumed female identified people were allowed to inhabit. The necessity of providing empirical documentation was secondary, as we were more concerned with communicating the complicated emotional space that is under threat both from internal and external pressures and failures.

HN Do you think the UK Gaybar Directory archive in the future will hold more weight because many of the spaces may no longer be functioning gay bars?

RH & HQ Definitely, in a generation's time people will look at these spaces and find it hard to believe they existed. In the same way we will look at the labour union or the NHS and free education, and other localized support networks – the decline of these community services are all linked by the vicious cycles of gentrification and austerity. The erosion of public services has given way to the neo-liberal homogenization of our cultural landscape; its demand for one model that can accommodate for a larger spectrum of needs. The idea that you could go to a space that is open 24/7 to have sex in public, take drugs or buy a £1 pint of beer will be completely alien. These are the spaces that are being taken away from us.

<https://frieze.com/article/all-bar-none>

i-D

@gaybar is a critical, anarchic and queer take on gay history

While questioning queer history and the homophobic present, artist duo Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings are creating critical spaces for all forms of queer culture to thrive.



building a new gay utopia

While questioning gay history and the homophobic present, artist duo Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings are creating safe spaces for all forms of queer culture to thrive.

In the past two years alone 25% of London's LGBTQIA spaces have simply dissolved into nothing: their histories ignored, the communities that once gathered there forgotten, their facades boarded over by pictures of dull, wealthy white couples eating avocado bagels on the penthouse balconies of what promises to be a 'creative living' luxury

tower block. In this Tory austerity of choice—where the rich win while the oppressed lose visibility, space, money, and thus any semblance of safety—it is no surprise that anything that is not for the wealthy white elite is priced out of public view. Our streets and our cities are rapidly homogenising, and while another All Bar One opens in central Soho, queer people wave goodbye to our pubs, our shops, and our clubs.

Frustrated by just how little LGBTQIA space there really is available, and with how much of the space that does exist caters solely for rich white gay men—who very often come with their own set of misogynies, racisms and transphobias—artists Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings decided to start the project @Gaybar back in 2014, to realise a space where queer people could congregate more safely.

“We started doing queer reading groups in our bedroom, and it was a really intimate and beautiful space with all our queer friends. We basically had a lot of conversations about queer space and about queer sociability, and whether this [safe] space can exist... and about problems to do with mainstream gay bars,” Rosie told i-D. “And there was a lot of frustration expressed, it felt like there wasn't a space for our bodies—for gender queer people, trans people, queer people of colour—so what we started doing with @Gaybar was to try and create this space for our friends but to also try and re-materialise political issues we had been thinking about: assimilations, the way gay narratives get consigned to mainstream history, or just ignored, for example.”

The space feels like a gay bar: something about the drinks, the music, the laser lights, the wipe-clean furniture: think decor like the Manchester bar scene circa Queer as Folk — but much more diverse, and much less misogynist. The difference in energy is down to the 'punters' who are encouraged to come and enjoy the space: there is a diversity unlike the popular gay bars on Old Compton Street or the regional boozers some of us grew up in: at @Gaybar people come to celebrate with each other.

Now exhibiting at the David Roberts Art Foundation in Camden, the duo have looked at a post-Hurricane Sandy Fire Island, using CGI, found video of the Island after the disaster, gay bar style furniture and music to create an @Gaybar within the gallery space, entitled How to Survive a Flood. “Fire Island is such a dominant male narrative in our history: it was this gay male utopic space in a time when it was illegal to be gay. We found footage of luxury boats and gay bars being engulfed by the sea and we used this as a point of departure to re-imagine the future of Fire Island as this post-human space. We use CGI to imagine new queer realities.”

@Gaybar is evidently a true work of love, but also of intense critique of the dominant white male structures that isolate queer people from public gay spaces. The artists recognise the importance of somewhere such as Fire Island in the history of gayness and even queerness, but as two queer people they are now asking why they can't be involved in that history? And why queer people can't imagine a collectively more utopian future.

“White gay male spaces are really dominant in historical narratives and they are the spaces that have been offered the most privilege so they're the ones that get historicised more,” Hannah adds. “A lot of what we do is a messy relationship to the idea of archive and history, and a play with fact and fiction. When you do, as queer people, have a lack of history, the idea of an objective history becomes quite absurd because who gets control of history? We don't want to replicate white, western linear history. We don't want to find a bar and recreate it photo-realistically. We are not looking for facts because those are the things that have kept queer people out of history as we know it.”

The pair speak with radicalism attached to every phrase—something the LGBTQIA community certainly needs now. The artists express their frustrations at the fact that all of our resources are dedicated to gay people and marriage, or gay people in the military, but not to the experience of anyone else, of which there are so many.

Their work is about creating a space which de-privileges the white, male body and gives privilege to other types of queer body in space. It is about taking traditional gay bar aesthetics and inserting queer bodies into the space they have created: their practice involves fabricating all elements within the space, from scratch, themselves.

This comes in combination with a questioning of gay assimilationist politics: this is where gay people seek to appear as 'normal' and 'acceptable' in order to become normal and acceptable to the over-riding heteronormative narrative that Western society is founded upon. One can't blame people for seeking assimilation into the heteronormative world: after lifetimes of oppression and traumas because of someone's sexual orientation people are tired, people want to feel safe. "But what is important is to reflect upon is the fact that within our community there are certain bodies that can't assimilate because the system is against their bodies from birth. They are the ones who we have to protect." says Rosie. "As long as there's one white person in the room there will be racism, and as long as there's one cis-male in the room there will be misogyny: it's about acknowledging these problems as structural rather than placing individual blame on one person." Hannah adds. As 'equality' for a very specific, privileged set of white gay men is within grasp, it is time to turn our conversations to those members of the LGBTQIA community who don't have the same opportunity, or desire, to assimilate into heteronormative society. This is what Hannah and Rosie are doing with @Gaybar: allowing space for queer people to congregate and enjoy themselves, aiming for safety, while also reimagining the picture of a new future or new reality through CGI. "It's the choice of music, the type of drinks, a sort of magic. At the beginning maybe some fuckboys or some really cis-guys will come, but towards the end they all get pushed to the back and it's always the queers at the front, ripping it up."

When life for gay people, queer people or any minority oppressed group remains a fight for space and for safety, we need artists like Hannah and Rosie: people who continue to open pockets of safety and comfort for those who have nowhere else to go.

How To Survive A Flood @Gaybar is on display in DRAF Studio 14-28 May 2016. The commission is part of Curators' Series #9. Ways of Living by Arcadia Missa, 15 Apr-23 Jul 2016. For more information see davidrobertsartfoundation.com

Credits

Text Tom Rasmussen

Portrait Francesca Allen

Styling Max Clark

Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings, installation view of How To Survive A Flood @Gaybar, DRAF Studio, 2016.

Courtesy the artists and Arcadia Missa, London. Photography. Tim Bowditch

https://i-d.vice.com/en_gb/article/gaybar-is-a-critical-anarchic-and-queer-take-on-gay-history

A New Generation of Artists in London Is Putting a Spotlight on Queer Issues

• Rosanna McLaughlin Nov 4, 2016 6:19pm [f](#) [t](#) [✉](#)

According to artist duo and couple Rosie Hastings and Hannah Quinlan, “queerness is trending.” Over the past three years, Facebook introduced 71 gender options to its U.K. user profiles following their introduction in the U.S., Caitlyn Jenner made trans identity a water-cooler conversation when she came out on the cover of *Vanity Fair*, and “gender-fluid” entered the Oxford English Dictionary. Queer visibility may be at an all-time high, but if interest peaks at a magazine cover, the experiences of those who fall outside the familiar axis of privilege—defined by wealth, whiteness, and conventional notions of beauty—continue to be marginalized, and with them, the intersectional politics at the heart of queer identities. Moreover, as statistics from the U.S. lay bare, when support is not extended to those most at risk from exposure, visibility can have violent consequences. In 2015, at least 21 trans people were murdered, the highest on record. Nearly all of the victims were transgender women of color.

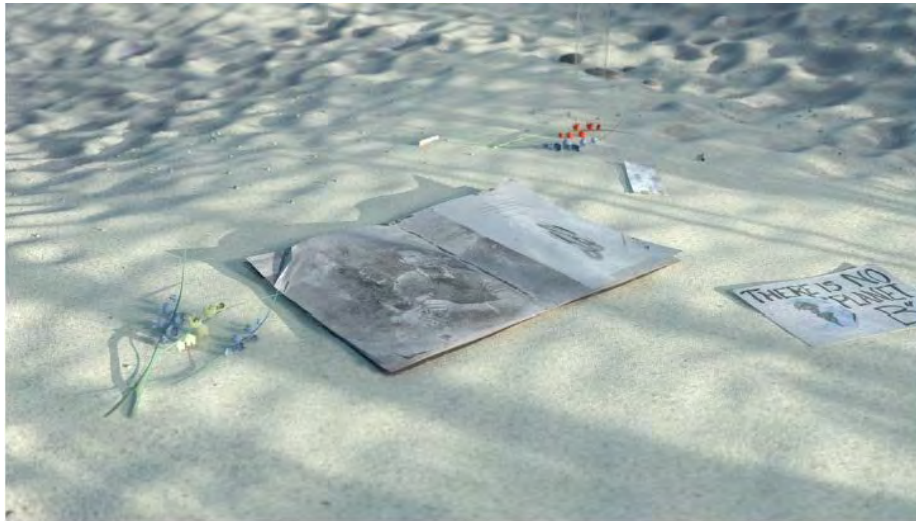
Hastings and Quinlan are part of a growing, London-based network of artists advocating for an engagement with queer issues that goes beyond the buzz. At the top of the agenda is the continued lack of diversity in the U.K. cultural sector when it comes to representing people from the broader queer community, and a frequent failure to move beyond the inclusion of white, homosexual, cisgendered men. “Our work developed from looking critically at mainstream gay identities,” Quinlan says. “While there are things we value about those identities, they can also be claustrophobic and oppressive.”

In the summer of 2016, Hastings and Quinlan installed UK Gay Bar Directory (UKGBD) at London’s Somerset House. The work consists of a bank of monitors playing video footage they took of the interiors of 170 gay bars across the U.K. Shown alongside this film archive was the *The Scarcity of Liberty* (2016), a cork board on which are pinned flyers, magazine covers, and other ephemera collected while filming. Among the sea of idealized faces and rippling torsos staring out from the board, there is a striking absence of lesbian, trans, and non-binary-identifying individuals. Nor is there any body type visible that does not adhere to a narrow physical ideal. This, Hastings and Quinlan say, is precisely their point. In an attempt to create the type of space they feel is missing, they run @GayBar, a nomadic night that moves between galleries and studios across the city. Along with sets by DJs from across the queer spectrum, they have also held vigils for trans and lesbian cultural figures such as Leslie Feinberg, author of the novel *Stone Butch Blues*.

Today’s queer culture has roots in feminist, gay, and lesbian liberation movements, and the AIDS activism of the 1980s. Against this backdrop, queer theory rose to prominence in the early 1990s, when groundbreaking U.S. writers such as Judith Butler and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick took aim at conventional wisdom regarding sex and gender. Attempting to dismantle the binary constructs denoted by the terms “male” and “female,” and the assumption that the sex we are

born with corresponds to gender identity, they called for a radical reassessment of the way we understand identity.

In recent years, changing attitudes toward sexuality have been enshrined into U.K. law, with the same-sex marriage bill passed in 2013 bringing parity for gay and lesbian couples. But for many in the queer community, acceptance into the traditional fold comes at a cost they are unwilling to pay: putting aside their anti-establishment beliefs and assimilating into what contemporary queer theorist Elizabeth Freeman calls “state-sponsored narratives of belonging and becoming.” As former British Prime Minister David Cameron said prior to the bill’s introduction, “I don’t support gay marriage in spite of being a conservative. I support gay marriage because I am a conservative.”



Rosie Hastings and Hannah Quinlan, D.I.N.K #2 (Dual Income No Kids), 2016. Image courtesy of the artists.

In a series of backlit CGI landscapes that Hastings and Quinlan call their “queer sublime,” the rub between the radical promise of queerness and the conformist nature of mainstream gay culture takes on epic proportions. D.I.N.K #2 (Dual Income No Kids) (2016) shows the beach at New York’s Fire Island after a hurricane has hit. Fire Island was a safe haven for gays and lesbians decades before the Stonewall riots of 1969 drew widespread attention to homophobia, and has since become a popular gay party resort. Here, the anarchic force of natural disaster is used as a tool for countering apathy. In the foreground, a battered

magazine lies open at an advert from a Tiffany and Co.’s 2015 “Will You?” wedding ring campaign—the first by the brand to feature a same-sex couple. Its image shows two coiffed white men barely visible beneath a layer of sand.

Over the past decade, South London has become a hub for emerging queer artists. Arcadia Missa, a Peckham-based gallery founded in 2011 by Rozsa Farkas, is one of the city’s most prominent supporters of queer young artists. Farkas began working with Hastings and Quinlan the year after they graduated in 2014 from nearby Goldsmith’s University—itsself home in recent years to leading queer and feminist scholarship, including the Centre For Feminist Research—and this past autumn, Arcadia Missa debuted their work at Frieze London.

Meet London's new generation of sensationalists shaking up the art world

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Photographs by Andrew Woffinden, styled by Sophie Paxton, set design by Nicola Bell (Andrew Woffinden)

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ROSIE HASTINGS & HANNAH QUINLAN



'We build gay bars in galleries,' say Rosie Hastings and Hannah Quinlan. The couple, both 25, who 'fell madly in love on a trip to New York' when studying Fine Art at Goldsmiths four years ago, now live in Brockley and were part of Somerset House's exhibition of cutting-edge work, Utopian Voices Here and Now, this summer. There, UK Gay Bar Directory (UKGBD), using video shot on Go-Pro, combined footage from 170 gay bars they visited across Britain. 'It would be hard if we didn't work together because then we wouldn't have any time with each other,' says Quinlan. They also run a roaming club night, Gay Bar. Their most complicated relationship is with gentrification. 'All the big studio spaces are in disused industrial buildings,' sighs Hastings. 'But we do get that by moving in, we're part of the problem.'

What's your greatest love? *Each other.*

Arcadia Missa ï

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