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# LGBTQ AMERICA

A THEME STUDY OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL,  
TRANSGENDER, and QUEER HISTORY

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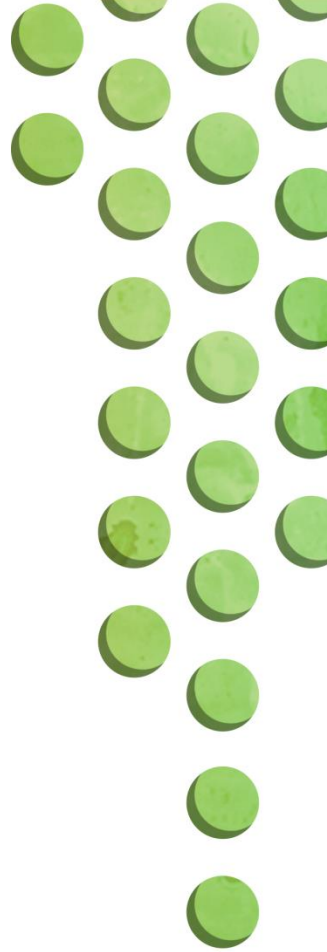
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# THEMES

*The chapters in this section take themes as their starting points. They explore different aspects of LGBTQ history and heritage, tying them to specific places across the country. They include examinations of LGBTQ community, civil rights, the law, health, art and artists, commerce, the military, sports and leisure, and sex, love, and relationships.*

# LGBTQ ART AND ARTISTS

## 23

Tara Burk

This chapter focuses on LGBTQ art and artists in the United States. Due to the scope of this essay the content is necessarily limited. These locations provide a sampling of LGBTQ contributions to broader social milieus and artistic movements. I have attempted to provide content that is representative in terms of region, diversity, and historical scope.<sup>1</sup> Artworks range from performance to the visual arts; places range from murals to theaters to community centers. Two key characteristics have shaped the histories of the places listed in this chapter: multiple identities and historical context. Although the historical scope of this essay is limited to the twentieth century, there are examples of LGBTQ arts in the United States as far back as the eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> There are several excellent resources on LGBTQ art and artists, including: James Saslow, *Pictures and Passions: A History of Homosexuality in the Visual Arts* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1999); Harmony Hammond, *Lesbian Art in America: A Contemporary History* (New York: Rizzoli, 2000); Christopher Reed, *Art and Homosexuality: A History of Ideas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Richard Meyer and Catherine Lord, *Art and Queer Culture* (New York: Phaidon Press, 2013); and Claude J. Summers, ed., *The Queer Encyclopedia of the Visual Arts* (Jersey City, NJ: Cleis Press).

<sup>2</sup> In the collection of the New-York Historical Society, *Portrait of an Unidentified Woman* (c.1700-1725) has long been identified as a likeness of Edward Hyde, who served as Governor of New York and New Jersey from 1702-1708 and was known to appear in public wearing women's clothing. Pre-twentieth century artists of note who engaged in homoerotic themes include the photographers F. Holland Day, Frances "Fannie" Benjamin Johnston, and Alice Austen, and the painter Thomas Eakins. The Fred Holland Day House is located at 93 Day Street, Norwood, Massachusetts; it was listed on the NRHP on April 18, 1977. Clear Comfort, the Alice Austen House, is located at 2 Hylan Boulevard, Staten Island,

The umbrella term “LGBTQ” actually encompasses many identities. In other words, the experiences of individuals who identify with components of this acronym are widely diverse. This impacts the ways in which their art has been created and seen. Most disparities are grounded in uneven social and material conditions based on gender, race, and class discrimination. Male artists, historically and today, benefit from more exhibition opportunities and higher art values than women artists. There have been shifts in this dynamic since the advent of social liberation movements in the late 1960s-1970s. Underrepresented artists have taken it upon themselves to create exhibition opportunities including community art centers and cooperative galleries, some of which are explored in this study.

Due to the fact that until recently it was socially unacceptable to be LGBTQ in the United States, the ways in which we understand and categorize the history of LGBTQ art in the US are different from other art histories.<sup>3</sup> Issues of social discrimination – homophobia as well as racism – have impacted the actual form and content of LGBTQ art. There was a time in the United States when LGBTQ individuals experienced intense pressure to remain “in the closet,” meaning one’s sexual proclivities and/or identity were kept separate from other aspects of professional, familial, and religious life.<sup>4</sup> Actions of censorship such as the Hollywood

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New York. It was listed on the NRHP on July 28, 1970, and designated an NHL on April 19, 1993. The Thomas Eakins House is located at 1729 Mount Vernon Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; it was listed on the NRHP on October 15, 1966 and designated an NHL on December 21, 1965.

<sup>3</sup> For most of the twentieth century, LGBTQ Americans could not disclose their sexual identity in the public sphere without fear of persecution including religious persecution, police brutality, violence, and discrimination in employment (see footnote 3). This climate had ramifications in art: until the 1970s there were no art movements centered on the promotion of LGBTQ concerns and most LGBTQ artists did not create art intended for public exhibition with overt homoerotic content. After the gay liberation movement of the late 1960s and 1970s there was an effort by artists, art historians, and gallery owners to collect and publish histories of LGBTQ participation in the arts. One of the earliest examples of this is Vito Russo’s *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981).

<sup>4</sup> The first long-lasting homosexual political organizations, known as homophile groups, began in the 1950s: the Mattachine Society, founded in the Silver Lake neighborhood of Los Angeles in 1950, and the Daughters of Bilitis, a lesbian organization founded in San Francisco in 1955 which had their headquarters at 165 O’Farrell Street, San Francisco. Areas in which LGBTQ people were persecuted include government employment; for example in 1953 President Eisenhower issued an executive order that made disclosure of homosexuality grounds for termination of employment for any federal employee, an order that stood until 1993. Besides employment discrimination, LGBTQ people faced physical assault in gay bashings, some of them carried out by law enforcement officials. Until 1973,

Production Code (which banned depictions of "sex perversion" from films made and distributed in the United States between 1932 and 1968) and the Culture Wars (an attempt by conservatives to eliminate funding of controversial art in the 1980s and 1990s, many by LGBTQ artists) have impacted the development of LGBTQ art in the US.<sup>5</sup> Before the gay liberation movement of the early 1970s when many people "came out," artists for the most part did not express their sexuality outright.<sup>6</sup> Instead, under various mantles of modernism, artists found ways to indirectly express their sexual difference within countercultural art movements. Similarly, gay men developed "camp talk" in the decades before gay liberation, to safely communicate in public by referring to one another using women's names or pronouns, in order to protect their personal and sexual lives.<sup>7</sup> In fact, particularly before the advent of gay liberation in the

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the American Psychiatric Association considered homosexuality a mental illness, which contributed to discrimination against LGBTQ people. In the 1970s, gay activists pushed for anti-discrimination laws and successfully defeated anti-gay initiatives such as the 1978 effort to ban LGBTQ people from teaching in California public schools. In 1986 in *Bowers v. Hardwick* the US Supreme Court upheld the right of states to criminalize sodomy, even including consensual and private sexual behavior.

<sup>5</sup> For more on homosexuality and the Hollywood Production Code see Russo, *Celluloid Closet* and Patricia White, *Uninvited: Classical Hollywood Cinema and Lesbian Representability* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999). The "Culture Wars" of the 1980s-1990s consisted of ideological battles between conservative and liberal Americans in religious and political contexts. The touchstone issues besides the censorship and defunding of federally funded controversial art included battles over reproductive rights (specifically abortion), homosexuality, the appropriate expressions of patriotism, the separation of church and state, and school curricula. For more information about the Culture Wars as they pertained to LGBTQ artists, see Richard Bolton, *Culture Wars: Documents from the Recent Controversies in the Arts* (New York: New Press, 1992), Steven C. Dubin, *Arresting Images: Impolitic Art and Uncivil Actions* (New York: Routledge, 1992), and Richard Meyer, *Outlaw Representation: Censorship and Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century American Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> Many LGBTQ artists made LGBTQ art for private display, and stuck to conventional themes for the art market. There are notable exceptions including Domingo Orejudos (1933-1991), known as Etienne, who was an artist who created large-scale murals and illustrated storybooks featuring heavily muscled men in homoerotic and sadomasochistic contexts. Along with Chuck Renslow, his lover and business partner, Etienne opened the first leather bar in the country, the Gold Coast, in Chicago in 1958. At 501 North Clark Street, the second location of the Gold Coast, Etienne painted large-scale murals depicting members of the leather community that are now permanently installed in the Leather Archives and Museum in Chicago (6418 North Greenview Avenue). Renslow and Etienne published male physique photography out of their Kris Studios, founded in 1950 in Chicago.

<sup>7</sup> For example, as Michael Bronski explains, "If one man were to be overheard at a public dinner table saying to another, 'you'll never guess what Mary said on our date last night,' nothing would be thought of it." Bronski is cited in Lord and Meyer, *Art and Queer Culture*, 17. Despite the predominance of coding as a mode of public survival for gay men and lesbians during the mid-twentieth century, there were some artists for whom gay sentiment was an unequivocal part of their aesthetic, such as Paul Cadmus and George Platt Lynes. For examples of visual coding, see Jonathan D. Katz, "Agnes Martin: The Sexuality of Abstraction," in *Agnes Martin*, eds. Lynne Cooke and Karen Kelly (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012) and Meyer, *Outlaw Representation*.

1970s, many LGBTQ people engaged in varying degrees of censorship for self-protection. This relates to an important fact of queer art history: the archive of LGBTQ art necessarily includes conventional fine art but it also includes works intended for private and underground circulation, such as scrapbooks, cartoons, anonymous photographs, and bar murals.<sup>8</sup> It is not a coincidence that cities have historically been centers for the development of vanguard art as well as places for LGBTQ people to live a life out of the closet. While rural locations are mentioned in this chapter, urban sites are particularly well represented because of these factors. These places date primarily from the latter half of the twentieth century, which reflects the shift in which LGBTQ art is more often celebrated than censored.<sup>9</sup> However, issues of discrimination persist. I do not wish to establish a narrative towards progress that ends with the unproblematic celebration of LGBTQ individuals and communities and their assimilation into mainstream US society. Many LGBTQ artists maintain a position of marginality in order to critique dominant social norms, and use art as a means to document marginalized communities and promote subversive messages.<sup>10</sup> The sites that follow reflect these factors and include a range of urban places including a community center, a contemporary art museum, a public art mural, and a theater, as well as rural locations (a studio/house and a college).

## Royal Theater

The Royal Theater (Figure 1) in Philadelphia opened in 1920 and closed in 1970.<sup>11</sup> During that period it was a premiere location for African

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<sup>8</sup> For an anthology of queer visual art in these terms, see Lord and Meyer, *Art and Queer Culture*.

<sup>9</sup> While censorship was the rule in mainstream US art contexts, LGBTQ art circulated and was displayed through alternative networks and exhibition venues including bars, magazines, and private collections. Some examples include the Gold Coast bar in Chicago, *Physique Pictorial* in Los Angeles (founded by Bob Mizer in 1951 as the first all-nude, all-male magazine), and the phallic gay art collection of Charles Leslie, a founder of the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art in New York City (26 Wooster Street).

<sup>10</sup> Examples include Robert Mapplethorpe, Ron Athey, Vaginal Cream Davis, and Catherine Opie.

<sup>11</sup> Irvin R. Glazer, *Philadelphia Theaters: A Pictorial Architectural History* (New York: Dover Publications, 1994). In 1919 architect Frank E. Hahn designed its neo-Georgian exterior, and in 1925





Figure 1: The Royal Theater, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2015. Photograph by Tara Burk.

American entertainment. It is an important site because it provided opportunities to LGBTQ artists of color during a period of segregation in the United States. Located at 1522 South Street, the Royal was the first theater in Philadelphia to feature an all-black staff, and was touted as “America’s First Colored Photoplay House” since it screened films featuring black actors. Some of the most prominent African American performers of the period performed at the Royal, including Bessie Smith (1894-1937), who moved to Philadelphia from the American South in the early 1920s. The iconic blues singer, who engaged in sexual relationships

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theater designer William H. Lee completed an art deco interior. The Royal Theater was listed on the NRHP on February 8, 1980.



with men and women, lived in proximity to the Royal and often performed there in the 1920s and early 1930s, during the prime of her career.<sup>12</sup> Smith's trajectory reflects the Great Migration, a period in which African Americans relocated from the southern to the northern United States in the first half of the twentieth century to escape racial oppression and to gain economic opportunity. One result of the Great Migration was a flourishing arts movement in Harlem as well as in Philadelphia.<sup>13</sup> The theater was part of a corridor of African American culture on South Street that flourished during the early-to-mid twentieth century. The Royal, among other locations on this South Street corridor, was featured in the 1996 film by Cheryl Dunye, *The Watermelon Woman*, which is notably the first US feature film directed by a black lesbian.<sup>14</sup> Today the building is vacant and there are development projects in the works, with a plan for the historic facade to be preserved.

## Black Mountain College

Open from 1933 to 1957, Black Mountain College (BMC) was a progressive arts and educational institution located in the remote hills of Black Mountain, near Asheville, North Carolina. The college, founded by

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<sup>12</sup> See Chris Albertson, *Bessie*, rev. ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), and Billy J. Harbin, Kim Marra, and Robert A. Schanke, eds., *The Gay and Lesbian Theatrical Legacy: A Biographical Dictionary of Major Figures in American Stage History in the Pre-Stonewall Era* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007).

<sup>13</sup> Philadelphia is an important, although lesser known, center for African American history and culture during the period of the Great Migration, which engendered greater political and social activism among African Americans and promoted cultural production as well. The most famous example is the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s, wherein the wealthy middle-class African American community of Harlem in New York City produced some of the most talented cultural figures in the nation, such as Langston Hughes, a poet known to have same-sex relationships, and Gladys Bentley, a cabaret singer and pianist who performed a tuxedo at the Clam House. Bentley drew black lesbians and gay men, as well as white sightseers, to the venue because of her gender-bending style (short hair and tuxedo) and her provocative attitude (she would flirt with women in the audience and improvise lewd lyrics to popular songs). See Bonnie Zimmerman, ed., *Encyclopedia of Lesbian Histories and Cultures* (New York: Routledge, 1999) and A.B. Christa Schwarz, *Gay Voices of the Harlem Renaissance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003). Langston Hughes spent some time living at the Harlem YMCA, now known as the Claude McKay Residence, at 180 West 135th Street, New York City. It was listed on the NRHP and designated an NHL on December 8, 1976. Hughes also spent time writing at Yaddo, an artists' retreat in Saratoga Springs, New York that was designated an NHL on March 11, 2013. Among the venues that hosted Gladys Bentley was the Ubangi Club, 131st Street at Seventh Avenue, New York City (demolished in 2013).

<sup>14</sup> In 2005 under the auspices of the Philadelphia-based Mural Arts Program, artist Eric Okdeh memorialized Bessie Smith and others in a mural on the exterior of the Royal.

John Rice, was never accredited and its experimental pedagogy and welcoming environment attracted many of the most influential artists and writers of the day.<sup>15</sup> The school was, in many ways, a do-it-yourself effort: a farm on campus provided the food and students and faculty both helped construct the school's buildings, designed in Craftsman and International Style. These two architectural styles, one American in origin and one associated with the development of modernism in Germany, reflect the school's diverse and international community of students and faculty.<sup>16</sup> Today, BMC is well regarded for the subsequent influence of its students and instructors, many of whom engaged in same-sex relationships, on countercultural arts in the United States. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places on October 5, 1982.<sup>17</sup>

Amidst the social stigmas of the period, BMC was a training ground for gay artists: a beacon for men who had personal, professional, and artistic relationships with other men. In 1952, John Cage, a composer who was known to have same-sex relationships, staged the first "happening" in the dining room at the college. This multidisciplinary event combined sound, performance, visual art, and audience participation in a manner that challenged the ways in which different types of media had traditionally been kept separate in the arts. Happenings were a precursor to the now-common form of art known as "performance art" and are an important American Avant-garde art form, later developed in New York by Cage's

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<sup>15</sup> Mary Emma Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987). In memoirs and interviews many former students and visitors to Black Mountain College detail the same-sex relationships they had there. Many of these BMC alums became major artistic figures in the US. They include the poet Robert Duncan, the writer Michael Rumaker, the composer John Cage, the choreographer Merce Cunningham, and the visual artists Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg. See Martin Duberman, *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community*, Reprint (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, (1972) 2009) and Michael Rumaker, *Black Mountain Days*, Reprint (Brooklyn, NY: Spuyten Duyvil Press, (2003) 2012).

<sup>16</sup> During World War II, the school became a beacon for Jewish intellectuals fleeing Europe including former faculty members at the Bauhaus school in Germany; this was an important connection that influenced the development of modern art at the college. The school was at the forefront of racial integration at a time in US history when education was segregated.

<sup>17</sup> The college moved in 1941 from its original site at Blue Ridge Assembly to a nearby campus at Lake Eden. Today it is Camp Rockmont, a Christian summer camp for boys, and the site of the Lake Eden Arts Festival (375 Lake Eden Road, Black Mountain, North Carolina). *Leap Before You Look: Black Mountain College 1933-1957*, organized by Helen Molesworth and on view at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston from October 2015 through January 2016, is the first major museum exhibit to explore the legacy of Black Mountain College.

student Allan Kaprow.<sup>18</sup> Cage and his life partner and frequent collaborator Merce Cunningham were both affiliated with BMC early in their careers, as were Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, and Cy Twombly; all were men who had relationships with men.<sup>19</sup>

## The Kinsey Institute

The Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction (commonly known as the Kinsey Institute) is located on the campus of Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana.<sup>20</sup> Formerly the Institute for Sex Research, Inc., it was founded in 1947 by the pioneering American sexologist Dr. Alfred C. Kinsey (1894-1956). Kinsey and his staff collected over fifty thousand erotic images (including painting and photographs) beginning in the late 1930s, many having to do with homosexual and transgender subject matter. The collection of these images challenged the public morality and obscenity laws of the time. In 1957 the US Federal Court ruled in favor of the institute for its right to import erotic photographic material for research purposes. These images are now part of the collection of the Kinsey Institute's Library and Special Collections. The Kinsey Institute has been exhibiting and publishing selections from its erotic art and archives since 1990; many of these objects depict LGBTQ subjects.

Kinsey's research and impact on American culture changed the way Americans thought and talked about sex. Specifically, his research introduced bi- and homosexuality into popular American discourse. His 1948 study, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, was based on thousands of sexual history interviews. It was in this publication that he introduced to American audiences the idea of a continuum of human sexuality rather than discrete categories of heterosexuality and

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<sup>18</sup> Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College*; Vincent Katz, ed., *Black Mountain College: Experiment in Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002).

<sup>19</sup> See Jonathan D. Katz, "John Cage's Queer Silence or How To Avoid Making Matters Worse," Queer Cultural Center website, <http://www.queerculturalcenter.org/Pages/KatzPages/KatzWorse.html>

<sup>20</sup> The Institute is currently located in Morrison Hall, on campus at 1165 East Third Street. Other campus locations have included Biology Hall (now Swain Hall East), Wylie Hall, and Jordan Hall.

homosexuality.<sup>21</sup> Kinsey asked interviewees to place themselves on a scale, between zero (exclusively heterosexual) and six (exclusively homosexual). His findings indicated that at least twenty percent of the adult male population fell between three and six on the scale. He and his researchers also recognized asexuality. His bestselling books *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953) were precursors to the national conversations about sexuality that characterized the 1960s and 1970s.

## Six Gallery

San Francisco was a key location for the development of a countercultural artistic milieu during the conservative climate of the 1950s, one that was distinct from the abstract expressionist painting movement that developed simultaneously in New York City. This countercultural movement included the development of beat poetry; many Beat Generation poets, including Allen Ginsberg, had same-sex relationships. In 1952, gay visual artist Jess (a.k.a. Burgess Collins) founded King Ubu Gallery in a former auto repair shop at 3119 Fillmore Street, San Francisco. In 1954 King Ubu was renamed Six Gallery and was facilitated by Jess' lover, the poet Robert Duncan.<sup>22</sup> Six Gallery is best known for the first public manifestation of the Beat Generation, a bohemian group of writers who gained influence in the 1950s through their pessimistic writings on life in America. Many Beat-affiliated writers engaged in same-sex relationships with each other. At Six Gallery, the first manifestation of the Beat movement occurred at a poetry reading in the upstairs room of the gallery on October 7, 1955, which was attended by 150 people. The gallery promoted the reading as “a remarkable collection

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<sup>21</sup> For more on the history of sexuality, see Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*, reissue edition (New York: Viking Press, 1990) and George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of a Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1995).

<sup>22</sup> The name “Six” Gallery was in reference to its six founders: Wallace Hedrick, Deborah Remington, John Ryan, Jack Spicer, Hayward King, and David Simpson.

of angels on one stage reading their poetry.”<sup>23</sup> This was the first public reading of the 1955 poem “Howl” by the gay poet Allen Ginsberg, now considered one of the significant poems in the American lexicon. Today, a plaque and podium outside the former gallery commemorate the October 1955 reading. It was dedicated in 2005 by San Francisco town supervisor Michela Alioto-Pier and Lawrence Ferlinghetti of City Lights Bookstore.<sup>24</sup>

## The Jewel Box Lounge

The Jewel Box Lounge in Kansas City, Missouri, located at 3219 Troost Avenue, was open from 1948 to 1982.<sup>25</sup> The Jewel Box Lounge featured cabaret acts with female impersonators called “femme-mimics,” who recalled earlier vaudeville performances of the early twentieth century and was distinct from the drag performances that exist today in their emphasis on musical and comedy numbers rather than runway.<sup>26</sup> In the 1950s and 1960s it was a successful bar despite the conservative climate in which police enforced laws against cross-dressing.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Lisa Philips, *Beat Culture and the New America, 1950-1965* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1995); Mick Sinclair, *San Francisco: A Cultural and Literary History*, Cities of the Imagination Series (Northampton, MA: Interlink Pub Group, 2003); Jonah Raskin, *American Scream: Allen Ginsberg's 'Howl' and the Making of the Beat Generation* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006). Kenneth Rexroth organized the event, which featured readings by Michael McClure, Gary Snyder, Philip Whalen, Philip Lamantia, and Allen Ginsberg.

<sup>24</sup> City Lights Bookstore itself was an important location for the dissemination of Beat poetry—in fact, it was its associated publishing company, City Lights Publishers, which published *Howl and Other Poems* in 1956. City Lights Bookstore is located at 261 Columbus Avenue at Broadway, San Francisco, California. Ferlinghetti was charged with obscenity for selling *Howl*, and the case went to court. The judge decided that books with “the slightest redeeming social importance” were guaranteed First Amendment protection. This opened the way for previously banned publications, including D.H. Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* and Henry Miller’s *Tropic of Cancer*, to be published in the United States. Philips, *Beat Culture and the New America*; Raskin, *American Scream*. For an account of queer identity in the East Coast Avant-garde scene of the 1950s, see Ann Gibson, “Lesbian Identity and the Politics of Representation in Betty Parson’s Gallery,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 27, no. 1-2 (1994): 245-270.

<sup>25</sup> In 1972 the venue changed locations, to Main Street and Thirty-First Street in Kansas City, Missouri.

<sup>26</sup> See Eric Marcus, Sherry Thomas, and Lynn Witt, eds., *Out in All Directions: A Treasury of Gay and Lesbian America* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 1997).

<sup>27</sup> David W Jackson, *Changing Times: Almanac and Digest of Kansas City’s Gay and Lesbian History* (Kansas City, MO: The Orderly Pack Rat, 2011). The Jewel Box Lounge was distinct from the internationally known travelling variety show called the Jewel Box Revue, founded in 1939 in Miami by Danny Brown and Doc Benner, who were business and romantic partners. The Revue consisted of predominantly female impersonators and was the first racially integrated drag show in the United States, playing to mixed-race audiences in venues such as the Apollo Theater in Harlem, New York.

## Harmony Hammond Studio

Harmony Hammond (b. 1944 in Chicago) is an artist and art writer who lives and works in Galisteo, New Mexico.<sup>28</sup> From her home and studio in New Mexico, where she has lived for the past thirty years, Hammond has become a prominent figure in national feminist, lesbian, and queer art communities. Galisteo itself is a small town (with a population of only 265 in the 2000 census) that is known for its artist residents. Located a half-hour drive south of Sante Fe, Galisteo became a mecca in the 1970s for prominent artists such as Agnes Martin (a minimalist painter and discreet lesbian), and the feminist art writer and critic Lucy R. Lippard, who has been a champion of lesbian artists.<sup>29</sup> Hammond's residential structure in Galisteo is a converted nineteenth-century adobe sheep barn. Before living in New Mexico, she moved to New York from the Midwest in 1969 and came out as a lesbian in 1973. She was integral to the creation of a feminist art movement in the 1970s and is particularly significant for her tireless advocacy for the particular concerns of lesbian art and artists. Hammond was a cofounder of the A.I.R. Gallery (Artists in Residence, the first women's cooperative art gallery in New York City) as well as *Heresies: A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics* (founded in 1977 in New York City).<sup>30</sup> Hammond's first solo exhibition was at A.I.R. in 1973. Since then she has had over forty shows. As an artist Hammond is well respected for her contribution to queering the legacy of modernist abstraction, a

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One of the most famous of the performers was Stormé DeLarverie (1920-2014), a biracial lesbian master of ceremonies, singer, and male impersonator who is rumored to have thrown the first punch at the Stonewall Rebellion in New York in 1969. The Apollo Theater is located at 253 West 125th Street, New York City; it was listed on the NRHP on November 17, 1983.

<sup>28</sup> Other places associated with Harmony Hammond include: the New York Feminist Art Institute located at 325 Spring Street, New York City, New York from 1979 to 1985, and at 91 Franklin Street, New York City, New York from 1985 to 1990, where she taught; the 112 Greene Street Workshop (now private residences) in New York City's SoHo neighborhood where she curated *A Lesbian Show* in 1978; and the Women's Building, 1727 North Spring Street, Los Angeles, California, where she was one of the featured artists in the 1980 *Great American Lesbian Art Show*.

<sup>29</sup> The Harwood Museum of Art, 238 Ledoux Street, Taos, New Mexico is home to the permanent Agnes Martin Gallery dedicated to her work.

<sup>30</sup> Harmony Hammond, oral history interview by Julia Bryan-Wilson at Hammond's Home and Studio in Galisteo, New Mexico, September 14, 2008, Smithsonian Archives of American Art Oral History Program, <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-harmony-hammond-15635>. A.I.R. gallery was originally located in the SoHo neighborhood of New York City, at 98 Wooster Street.

historically male-dominated art form, by challenging audiences to think about issues of identity. Her large-scale, abstract and often monochrome compositions, as well as a large body of prints and sculpture, have pushed the ideas of what queer art can be. Rather than work in a documentary idiom, aiming to represent marginalized subjects, Hammond works in nonfigurative abstract mode, prompting viewers to think of “queer art” in terms of *form* as well as content.<sup>31</sup> In 2000, after years of research and interviews, Hammond’s book *Lesbian Art in America: A Contemporary History* was published. This is the first publication to look exclusively at lesbian art in the United States, and remains a principal text in the field.<sup>32</sup>

## The History of California

Judith Baca (b. 1946) identifies as a Chicana lesbian feminist artist. She works in a figurative style of muralism that recalls the political golden age of the 1930s in the United States and Mexico. She is best known for the 1976 public art mural *The History of California*, popularly known as *The Great Wall of Los Angeles* in Los Angeles. The large (13 feet x 2,754 feet) mural covers six city blocks, and is one of the largest in the world. It is located on Coldwater Canyon Avenue between Oxnard Street and Burbank Boulevard at the eastern edge of the Los Angeles Valley College campus in the San Fernando Valley area of Los Angeles. It is used in the curriculum of the college and other local schools. The Army Corps of Engineers commissioned the mural from Baca as a beautification project and painting began in 1978. It was completed in 1984 with the help of over four hundred volunteers, many of whom came from impoverished or disenfranchised backgrounds and were coordinated by the community

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<sup>31</sup> See Harmony Hammond, *Wrappings: Essays on Feminism, Art and the Martial Arts* (New York: Time and Space, 1984).

<sup>32</sup> While lesbian artists such as Hammond and Louise Fishman explored abstract strategies of art, Tee A. Corinne was one of the few artists of the 1970s who grappled with the problem of how to represent lesbian sexuality in photographs that range from explicit to sexually symbolic. Other artists associated with lesbian feminism include the documentary photographer Joan E. Biren (JEB). Tee A. Corinne and Louise Fishman were among the featured artists at the 1980 *Great American Lesbian Art Show* at the Women’s Building, 1727 North Spring Street, Los Angeles, California. JEB was part of the Furies Collective who, from 1971 through 1973, operated out of their home in the Capitol Hill neighborhood of Washington, DC. The Furies Collective was added to the NRHP on May 2, 2016.



center Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC) in Venice, which Baca founded in 1976.<sup>33</sup>

The mural is significant because it tells the history of California from the perspective of women and minorities. The social realist style harkens back to the US government-funded Works Progress Administration murals of the 1930s as well as to the visual traditions of Mexican muralism by artists such as David Alfaro Siqueiros. Social justice movements that emerged in the late 1960s and 1970s, including labor rights, feminism, gay liberation, and indigenous rights were important influences on *The Great Wall of Los Angeles*. The mural is significant because it includes the history of LGBTQ identified people as well as Native Americans in California. Its chronological scope moves from the time of dinosaurs through the 1950s, and there are current plans to update it through the present-day and to make it more accessible with the addition of a bike path and restoration.

## Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center (known as The Center) is located at 208 West 13th Street, in the historically gay West Village neighborhood of Manhattan, New York. Since opening in 1983, The Center has been a beacon for many in New York City. The Center is important because it demonstrates the notion of art as activism and/or a means to build LGBTQ community. The Center is located in a large brick building that formerly housed the Food and Maritime Trades High School; it was purchased from the City of New York for \$1,500,000 in 1983. The *New York Times* made note with the headline “Sale of Site to Homosexuals Planned.” Gay and lesbian advocacy groups had already been using the building as a site for health, counseling, and social services—particularly urgent needs in the early years of the HIV/AIDS

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<sup>33</sup> SPARC is located at 685 Venice Boulevard, Venice, California.

crisis. Then New York City Mayor Ed Koch was quoted at the time discussing the significance of the sale as one of “a number of steps to be taken by the city to combat AIDS and other health problems that have particularly affected the gay and lesbian community.”<sup>34</sup>

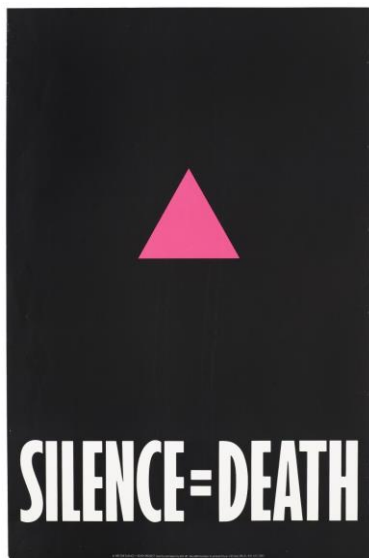


Figure 2: *Silence=Death*, 1987. Color lithograph by ACT-UP, The AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power.<sup>35</sup>

From the beginning, The Center promoted a vision of LGBTQ community that prioritized both art and politics. In 1985 The Center initiated the “Second Tuesdays” program, a lecture series bringing notable figures in the arts (including Audre Lorde, Fran Lebowitz, and Quentin Crisp) to speak directly to the LGBTQ community.<sup>36</sup> On March 10, 1987 activist, author, and playwright Larry Kramer used his platform as a “Second Tuesdays” lecturer to address the government’s unresponsiveness to the escalating AIDS crisis. This meeting led to the formation later that month of ACT UP, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power. ACT UP meetings were held each

Monday at The Center. Many artists were participants in ACT UP and the group became well known for its striking use of visual graphics on placards, t-shirts, and posters designed to bring awareness and action to the AIDS crisis (Figure 2).

Besides agitprop, The Center facilitated other important responses to HIV/AIDS such as support groups. The Center also housed the New York

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<sup>34</sup> David D. Dunlap, “Sale of Site to Homosexuals Planned,” *New York Times*, December 20, 1983.

<sup>35</sup> Creative Commons License (BY-NC-ND 4.0).

<http://wellcomeimages.org/indexplus/image/L0052822.html>

<sup>36</sup> Audre Lorde (1934-1992) was a Caribbean-American writer, lesbian, and civil rights activist. From 1972 through 1987 she lived with her children and her partner Frances Clayton on Staten Island. She was one of the speakers at the Lincoln Memorial at the second National March on Washington in 1987. Fran Lebowitz (b. 1950) is a lesbian American author and public speaker. Quentin Crisp (1908-1999) was a gay English writer.

Memorial Quilt, a participatory art therapy project completed at The Center Quilt Workshop, events held from February to July 1988 that were part of a national effort to contribute panels in memory of people who died of AIDS for the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt. The New York Memorial Quilt was displayed on the Great Lawn in Central Park in June 1988.<sup>37</sup> The impact of HIV/AIDS on gay art was immense. Many queer artists of the 1980s were HIV positive or were friends or lovers of those who were. They responded with intensity to the AIDS crisis through the production of fine art as well as agitprop, guerilla street theater, and a direct-action protest movement in the form of ACT UP and later, Queer Nation (founded in 1990).<sup>38</sup> Paradoxically, at the same time the mainstream art world began to deal with the topic of gay art in exhibitions, the HIV/AIDS crisis nearly decimated a generation of gay artists.<sup>39</sup>

These connections were explored in 1989 at The Center in two important art exhibitions: *Imagining Stonewall* and *The Center Show*. *Imagining Stonewall* was a commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the June 27, 1969 occasion when LGBTQ people fought back against a typical police raid of the Stonewall Inn, located at 53 Christopher Street (in the same neighborhood as The Center). *Imagining Stonewall* was an important exhibition because it provided an example of defiant activism to

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<sup>37</sup> Central Park was added to the NRHP on October 15, 1966 and designated an NHL on May 23, 1963.

<sup>38</sup> Some of the most important LGBTQ art institutions today emerged in the context of the HIV/AIDS crisis in the 1980s, for example Visual AIDS and the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art. Visual AIDS was founded in New York in 1988 as a contemporary arts organization committed to raising AIDS awareness, assisting artists living with HIV/AIDS, and preserving the work of artists lost to the disease. It operates from offices at 526 West 26th Street, New York City, New York. The Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art began in 1969 with the private showing of art from the personal collections of Charles Leslie and Fritz Lohman in New York City. During the 1980s, Leslie and Lohman committed to preserving works of art that were being thrown away; after artists' death from AIDS their homophobic families discarded all of their belongings, including art. In 1987 they founded the nonprofit organization Leslie/Lohman Gay Art Foundation, Inc. The Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art is located at 26 Wooster Street, New York City, New York. The exhibition *Art AIDS America*, co-organized by Jonathan D. Katz and Rock Hushka and on view at the Tacoma Art Museum, 1701 Pacific Avenue, Tacoma, Washington from October 2015 to January 2016, was the first major museum exhibition to explore the impact of HIV/AIDS on American art.

<sup>39</sup> *Extended Sensibilities: Homosexual Presence in Contemporary Art* was the first museum exhibition in the United States to explore the relationship between art and homosexuality, a decade after the impact of gay liberation and its visibility mandates. The exhibition, organized by Dan Cameron, was on view at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, 235 Bowery, New York City, New York, from October through December, 1982.

contemporary LGBTQ AIDS activists and it also gave LGBTQ artists the opportunity to come out in their work and display it in a specifically LGBTQ environment. Many pieces combined personal and political content, such as Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt's *Mother Stonewall and the Golden Rats*, installed in the stairwell in the back of the building as well as the roof, which included text featuring the artist's own memories of the 1969 Stonewall riots.<sup>40</sup> *The Center Show*, which opened on June 1, 1989 commissioned fifty artists to make site-specific installations throughout The Center. Curated by Rick Barnett and Barbara Sahlman, *The Center Show* featured established and emerging artists who dealt with gay sexuality directly in their work including the sculptor Arch Connelly (1950-1993), the AIDS activist art collective Gran Fury (1988-1995), and the painter Keith Haring (1958-1990).

Keith Haring was one of the most famous artists of the 1980s. He was integral to the Downtown or East Village art scene of the 1980s, which included many LGBTQ artists such as Peter Hujar, David Wojnarowicz, Nan Goldin,

Mark Morrisroe, Greer Lankton, and Martin Wong.<sup>41</sup> Haring began his artistic career as a street artist drawing in chalk in the New York City subways. Haring chose a second floor men's bathroom at The Center for his installation, a mural entitled *Once Upon a Time* (Figure 3). He painted

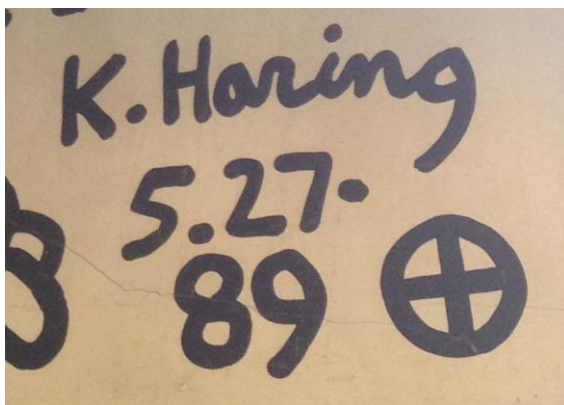


Figure 3: Detail, *Once Upon A Time*, mural by Keith Haring at the LGBT Center, New York City, New York, 2015. Photograph by Tara Burk.

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<sup>40</sup> Reed, *Art and Homosexuality*.

<sup>41</sup> Peter Hujar lived for a time at 189 Second Avenue, New York City, New York. Works by David Wojnarowicz were included in the 1985 *Graffiti Show* at the Whitney Museum of Modern Art, 99 Gansevoort Street, Lower Manhattan, New York City, New York. A location associated with Mark Morrisroe is the Pyramid Club, 101 Avenue A, New York City, New York where he and Stephen Tashjian founded the drag duo, the "Clam Twins." Greer Lankton was a featured artist in the important *New York/New Wave* exhibit at PS 1 (now MoMA PS1), 22-25 Jackson Avenue, Long Island City, New York.

this mural just nine months before he died of AIDS in 1990. The mural itself is a celebration of gay sex and is rife with phallic imagery; it is particularly suited for its location, as men's public bathrooms have historically been places where men who have sex with other men have found each other. Called "A Joyful Mural, Born in a Time of Shame and Fear" by the *New York Times*, it promoted sex positivity—that sex could be pleasurable and empowering—at a time when the gay community was focused largely on HIV/AIDS prevention measures ranging from abstinence to condom use. The room housing *Once Upon a Time* was later converted to a meeting room, and today is devoted exclusively to the Haring installation.<sup>42</sup>

The Center is also home to the LGBT Community Center National History Archive and Pat Parker/Vito Russo Center Library, which contain many arts-related objects.<sup>43</sup> The building has undergone several major renovation projects since the 1980s including in 1998 and in 2013.<sup>44</sup> Today, The Center remains an important meeting spot, particularly for queer youth of color.

## Club Uranus

Jerome Caja (1958-1995) was an artist who represents the radical queer scene that developed in San Francisco in the 1980s and 1990s, which he participated in as a visual artist, a drag queen, a go-go dancer, and a contributor to the nascent "queercore" zine movement. Caja cultivated a nontraditional drag persona that eschewed glamorous

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<sup>42</sup> John Gruen, *Keith Haring: The Authorized Biography* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1991). Because Haring intended it as a temporary site-specific installation, he did little to prepare the bathroom walls for his mural; he just covered the existing paint job, some of which was flaking in parts. In 2011-2012, conservator Harriet Irgang Alden restored the mural. The newly restored mural was unveiled with a special reception and programming and March 2012 was dedicated to celebrate the mural and Haring's legacy, with partnership participation from the Brooklyn Museum among other institutions.

<sup>43</sup> Founded in 1991 to promote LGBTQ literature, the library was named after Pat Parker (1944-1989), a prominent lesbian poet and author of *Movement in Black*, and Vito Russo (1946-1990), gay film historian best known for his 1981 book, *The Celluloid Closet*, which was released as a motion picture in 1996.

<sup>44</sup> For its facade renovation in the early 1990s, the building, along with architect Françoise Bollack, was honored with several awards including the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission Certificate of Merit and the New York Landmarks Conservancy Lucy G. Moses Preservation Award.

mimicry of conventional femininity and instead embraced a haggish persona represented in part by ripped lingerie and messy makeup. Caja's art reflected the influence of his Catholic upbringing in its references to saints and iconography. He drew upon art history as well, and broke the rules of conventional subject matter and taste to create a distinctly queer aesthetic. Caja worked on a small scale, utilizing drag materials such as glitter, lace, and nail polish to create tiny portraits that combined traditional concerns with transgressive subject matter. Caja received an MFA from the San Francisco Art Institute in 1986. Afterwards he achieved national attention, including exhibitions at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and inclusion in *In a Different Light*, the groundbreaking lesbian and gay art exhibition co-organized by Lawrence Rinder and Nayland Blake in 1995 at the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive of the University of California, Berkeley.<sup>45</sup> Caja died from AIDS complications in 1995, at age thirty-seven, shortly after completing interviews for the Smithsonian Archives of American Art.

A series of clubs (Club Chaos, Club Screw, and Club Uranus) in San Francisco opened in the late 1980s and early 1990s and were notable for mixed-gender and gender-bending crowds that gathered for performances, dancing, and live art events. These bars were also favored hangout places of Queer Nation and ACT UP activists, as well as local queer musicians and cultural producers. Importantly, the patronage of these clubs reflected a queer sensibility—women, men, and transgender people were encouraged to attend. Whereas in previous decades the gay community tended to remain separated along gender lines, due to the urgency of the AIDS crisis, men and women came together and “queer” became a favored self-designation which reflected a more expansive and fluid notion of sexual identity. Club Uranus was primarily located at The EndUp, in the South of Market district at 401 Sixth Street and Harrison. The EndUp opened in

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<sup>45</sup> The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art is located at 151 Third Street, San Francisco, California. From 1970 through 2014, The UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive was located at 2625 Durant Avenue, Berkeley, California. Citing structural and seismic deficiencies in the iconic Brutalist structure, the UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archives moved out. Their new location at 2120 Oxford Street, Berkeley, California opened to the public in January 2016.

1973 and was a gay disco open seven nights a week, and today is renowned as a center for House music. Club Uranus began at The EndUp on December 10, 1989. Caja was one of the master of ceremonies for the first Miss Uranus contest (judged by a *San Francisco Examiner* art critic, a sex magazine editor, and a San Francisco Arts Commission Gallery Director). Caja was a frequent attendee of Club Uranus and detailed his performances there in his interview with the Smithsonian Archives of American Art.

## The Corcoran

The Corcoran is an important location in LGBTQ history as the site where the late-1980s controversy over the erotic art of gay American artist Robert Mapplethorpe (1946-1989) reached its apex.<sup>46</sup> This controversy has become a touchstone of the US Culture Wars—debates in the 1980s and 1990s—that played out predominantly between conservative politicians and religious leaders and liberal artists and academics. Among the Culture War battlefields were debates about artistic freedom and funding for controversial artworks, including those with sexually explicit themes.

*Robert Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Moment* was a retrospective of the American photographer, who died from AIDS complications in 1989 and was as famous for his still life photographs of flowers as he was for his similarly composed homoerotic photographs of nude black men. Janet Kardon of the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania organized the exhibition, which was mounted at the university in December 1988 to acclaim by critics and audiences alike, before it traveled to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago early in

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<sup>46</sup> The Corcoran Gallery at 500 Seventeenth Street NW in Washington, DC was founded in 1869 by William Wilson Corcoran. Architect Ernest Flagg designed the Beaux-Arts building and, for over a century, the private museum housed one of the most significant collections of American art in the United States. The building was added to the NRHP on May 6, 1971 and was designated an NHL on April 27, 1992.



1989.<sup>47</sup> Despite the popular and critical acclaim, the show was cancelled two weeks before it was to open at the Corcoran. Director Christina Orr-Cahall, under conservative pressure from several of the museum's trustees as well as Republican United States Senate Representatives Jesse Helms (North Carolina) and Dick Armey (Texas), cancelled the show amid threats that the Corcoran (and other institutions showing controversial art) would lose funding from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). Opponents claimed that Mapplethorpe's work, particularly his *X Portfolio* of sadomasochistic imagery, were obscene.<sup>48</sup>

Orr-Cahall's decision not to show Mapplethorpe's work was controversial, and several artists cancelled exhibits they had scheduled for the Corcoran. The Coalition of Washington Artists organized protests including rallies attended by hundreds of people outside the Corcoran, and on June 30, 1989, they projected slides of Robert Mapplethorpe's work onto the façade of the building. Orr-Cahall resigned from the Corcoran as a result of the controversy. In July and August of 1989, the nonprofit arts organization, Washington Project for the Arts, hosted the Mapplethorpe exhibit in DC.<sup>49</sup> Senator Helms and others followed up on their threats, and in 1990, Helms introduced a Senate bill to deny NEA funds to artwork considered "obscene." The bill did not pass.<sup>50</sup> Today, Mapplethorpe is well respected, and has had a tremendous influence on other artists including the gay artist Glenn Ligon and has been written about in influential articles by the gay art historian Richard Meyer, the gay art critic Douglas Crimp, and the gay art theorist Kobena Mercer.<sup>51</sup> In

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<sup>47</sup> Janet Kardon, David Joselit, and Kay Larson, *Robert Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Moment* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, Institute of Contemporary Art, 1989). The ICA is located at 118 South Thirty-Sixth Street in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago is located at 220 E. Chicago Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>48</sup> Richard Meyer, "The Jesse Helms Theory of Art," *October* 104 (Spring 2003): 131-148.

<sup>49</sup> In 1989 the Washington Project for the Arts was located in the Jenifer Building in the 400 block of Seventh Street NW, Washington, DC.

<sup>50</sup> Meyer, "The Jesse Helms Theory of Art"

<sup>51</sup> The black gay artist Glenn Ligon created an installation entitled *Notes on the Margin of the Black Book* (1991-1993) as a response to Mapplethorpe's 1986 *The Black Book*, a collection of homoerotic nude photographs of black men taken by the (white) photographer. For literature on Mapplethorpe see, for example, Richard Meyer, "Imaging Sadomasochism: Robert Mapplethorpe and the Masquerade of Photography," *Queer Cultural Center* website; Arthur C Danto, *Playing with the Edge: The Photographic Achievement of Robert Mapplethorpe* (Berkeley: University of California Press,

2014 the Corcoran Gallery closed and its collection was transferred to the National Gallery of Art.

The groundswell of hostility to transgressive culture was nowhere more evident than in the controversy that surrounded *Robert Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Moment*. However, the fallout of the Culture Wars was enormous. In July 1989, one month after the Mapplethorpe exhibition was cancelled at the Corcoran, Senator Helms called for an amendment prohibiting the use of public NEA funds for works of art including depictions of homoeroticism among other taboos. All 1990 NEA grant recipients were required to sign this anti-obscenity pledge. In July 1990, John Frohnmayer, the head of the NEA, vetoed four grants by the lesbian, gay, and feminist performance artists Karen Finley, Holly Hughes, Tim Miller, and John Fleck for being too politicized.<sup>52</sup> The artists filed suit when their appeal was rejected, and three years later they settled the suit, winning reinstatement of the grants and challenging the constitutionality of the “decency” pledge required by NEA guidelines in the wake of Helm’s amendment. In retrospect these controversies served to raise important issues: who decides what is art? Is ‘quality’ a relative, socially determined word, like ‘obscenity’? The decency clause remains in effect to this day, and NEA grants to individual artists were discontinued in the 1990s. There are continuing effects of the Culture Wars on the creation, funding, and distribution of contemporary art.<sup>53</sup>

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1996); Douglas Crimp, *Melancholia and Moralism: Essays on AIDS and Queer Politics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004); Kobena Mercer, “Skin Head Sex Thing: Racial Difference and the Homoerotic Imagination,” in Coco Fusco and Brian Wallis, eds., *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self* (New York: International Center of Photography, 2003).

<sup>52</sup> Karen Finley performed some of her early works in places like Mabuhay Gardens, 443 Broadway, San Francisco, California and Club Foot, a live-music venue just east of the Greyhound Bus Station on Fourth Street, between Brazos Street and Congress Avenue, Austin, Texas (now demolished). Holly Hughes performed early work at Women’s One World Café (WOW). From 1981 through about 1984, WOW was located at 330 East 11th Street, New York City, New York; since circa 1984, they have been located at 59-61 East 4th Street, New York City, New York. In 1980, Tim Miller co-founded Performance Space 122 (PS 122), a performance art space at 150 First Avenue, New York City, New York.

<sup>53</sup> As recently as 2010, Culture Wars over homosexuality and religion in art flared up in the responses to the exhibition *Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire in American Portraiture*, which was the first major museum exhibition to explore LGBTQ themes in portraiture. It was on view from October 30, 2010 to February 13, 2011 at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC. The show engendered protests from conservative Christian organizations, who called for the removal of a video entitled “A Fire In My

## Conclusion

It is necessary to understand that due to social stigma, for the majority of the twentieth century LGBTQ artists created art in a national climate of censorship. Especially after the gay liberation movement that followed the Stonewall Riots of 1969, there was a shift in LGBTQ identity in the United States. Many more artists came out as gay, bisexual, or lesbian and began to make art that reflected those experiences and for that reason the amount of LGBTQ art and artists, as well as institutions devoted to them, dramatically increased after 1970.<sup>54</sup> In many forms, then, the influence of LGBTQ individuals on American art has been constant, significant, and ubiquitous.

Within the art world, recent years have witnessed a variety of approaches to the topic of LGBTQ art: a dialogue between the affirmation of difference on the one hand and the disavowal of difference on the other. Many artists who have same-sex relationships do not identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer because social stigmas remain and they are wary that being out as LGBTQ might hinder their careers as artists. Others have created networks based on queer cultural alliances, leading to new collaborations and exhibitions. In fact, some have taken up “queer” as a label that is accommodating of gays, lesbians, transgender and bisexual artists *as well as* heterosexual ones who engage in sexually radical or perverse themes in their art. Whereas figurative art remains a clear method of queer representation, artists have embraced conceptual and abstract aesthetic strategies as well. For many artists, the politics of sexuality cannot be divorced from other identities including gender, race, and class. Today, there is no clear definition of LGBTQ art, yet the field of

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Belly” by the gay artist David Wojnarowicz, featuring an eleven-second clip of ants crawling over a crucifix, on the grounds that it was inflammatory. The National Portrait Gallery is in the building formerly known as the Old Patent Office Building, listed on the NRHP on October 15, 1966 and designated an NHL on January 12, 1965.

<sup>54</sup> For example, while many of the artists active before the 1960s discussed in this essay were known to engage in same-sex relationships, few of them actually identified as LGBT or Q. In contrast, after the 1970s many artists felt emboldened to come out as LGBTQ as well as to make art about their sexuality and create institutions to support it.

artistic production and scholarship regarding LGBTQ themes continues to expand. Many artists from the history of LGBTQ art remain under-recognized and this study aims to contribute to the promotion and recognition of LGBTQ achievements in American art.