

Intimacy

New Queer Art from
Berlin and Beyond



On the cover: Spyros Rennt

Hanging out at Ludo's, Berlin (2020)

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What does it mean to exhibit queer intimacy in 2020? Heterosexual intimacy is ubiquitous; it remains unmarked, thus almost invisible. Queer intimacy – the exchange of looks, the touching of bodies, a conversation, sex, or being together in a club or a room – is under observation or even hostile scrutiny. In public spaces it (still) often becomes an occasion for homophobic and transphobic insults and physical violence. Nevertheless, lesbians, gays, and transgender and inter folk refuse to be intimidated and seek to develop their own new forms of being intimate. Intimacy is a way of imagining what is common within as well as among LGBTQI+ communities.

Historically, the depiction of queer intimacy is usually the only trace of homosexuality and transgenderism that remains from certain eras or places: black-and-white photographs depicting women kissing or faded polaroids of men seeking the proximity of other men. It has become the scene of experiments on how queer people want to live: in couples or with many others; in the presence of bodies with which they share desires and vulnerabilities; tenderly, exultantly, provocatively.

This promise of intimacy, which always involves a risk, exists in a historical, political, and cultural context. The ubiquity of digital media shapes our encounters or even replaces them. HIV / AIDS and the treatment of the virus have fundamentally changed queer intimacy: fear and paranoia have been replaced with a culture of care. The medical progress that has made HIV/AIDS a chronic disease, the arrival of PrEP and its efficient protection against infection, and the emergence of new sex cultures like chemsex have all offered new possibilities for experimentation with intimacy. And yet since early 2020, Covid-19 severely challenges and restricts us. Contacts are avoided and parties are no longer celebrated. Intimacy seems to be in retreat. Intimacy is something that we are in danger of losing.

Intimacy: New Queer Art from Berlin and Beyond presents over 30 artistic positions that negotiate queer intimacy in different ways, from photographs to paintings, sculptures, video- and sound- installations. These artworks invite us to rethink how we look at intimacy; they allow us to witness past intimacies, and they help us to imagine what it means to share intimacy again after the crisis. However temporary, exciting, or perilous it might look on museum walls, intimacy is nevertheless a way of anticipating a queer future.

Peter Rehberg
Apostolos Lampropoulos



Del LaGrace Volcano
Matt & Eric, Seattle (1996)

Identity and Intimacy

Contemporary queer discourse is dominated by identity politics. Critical discussion and political activism now focus on the way in which power structures determine our social and psychological realities and create particular forms of embodiment. Lesbians and gays have fought for visibility and legal equality since the 1970s, but the conflict has now evolved to include recognition and social justice. For instance, the category “queer” covers marginalised positions of sex and gender – such as trans, lesbian, or gay – but it also considers their entanglement with such factors as race, ability, age, and class.

German society, which until the end of the 20th century primarily saw itself as white and heterosexual, urgently requires this form of “queering.” We can define queering as the means of promoting diversification in representation and resource allocation. It involves creating different images and occupying new spaces.

However, the queer movement does not focus solely its views towards the rest of society, various subsets also assert these demands within queer communities themselves. This leads to conflicts and battles over distribution. The Schwules Museum was founded in 1985 with a separatist approach: lesbians and gays decided not to work together. 35 years later, a queer approach has largely won out: the archive and event and exhibition spaces are intended for all queer groups.

How does the coexistence of different queer groups work? Is there a form of queer fellowship, or is the idea of a queer alliance and solidarity simply a fantasy? What internally holds queerness together? Perhaps “queer” is simply a practical designation from society, which conveniently aggregates the interests of different groups which, ultimately, impose a terminology from the outside? Or on the other hand, what is the full potential of “queer” – politically, socially, culturally, and aesthetically?

The exhibition *Intimacy: New Queer Art From Berlin and Beyond* must offer something in relation to a culture characterised by identity politics. The visibility which identities provide is indispensable for political struggle; but at the same time, identities come with limits, which are strengthened again and again by policies focused on them. We are not **avatars of discourse, although it sometimes appears that way in online debate culture.**

Intimacy recollects another meaning of “queer” beyond identities, which is largely absent from contemporary discourse. **The queerness of intimacy is that it does not necessarily affirm identities, but can instead, unsettle them.** Queer theory has assessed this possibility in terms of gay sexualities (for example, in the texts by Leo Bersani and Tim Dean on anonymous, public sex and barebacking.¹) Gay sex can be an opportunity not only to celebrate ideas about masculinity, but also to shift and revise them².

Through intimate contact, the borders of the self are redrawn and new experiences are had. Identity can be forgotten. Intimacy is, then, no longer a stable refuge. It allows for vulnerability, and it can lead to a sensual loss of the self. **Intimacy reminds us of the value of leaving behind our self, our identity.** This experience applies to all queer groups, if in different ways. And it is not confined to the register of sexuality, even if that is frequently the area in which the most intense experiences are had. Intimacy continues to play out in the affective space³.

With whom is one prepared to tread this possibly boundary-crossing path? Only with one partner, in order to anchor oneself more securely in the social world? Only in the form of the couple? Not likely. Historically, queer people have always experimented with new forms of intimacy. Through public sex and polyamorous relationships, they work on queering the institutions of the couple, marriage, and the family unit. In so doing, they call the very relationship between private life and public life into question.

If intimacy can have such transformative momentum, does it also have the potential to overcome the barriers of identity politics between different queer groups? **Can we meet in an intimate queer space, in which differences are of less consequence?** It is alluring to imagine queer intimacy as possessing such power. The French sexual theorists of the 1970s thought this way. From a gay perspective, Christian Maurel writes: “As gay as we are, if we want to progress with a pure heart or even a pure cock, then our bodies must one day approach the lesbian body, because the person who never touches a woman despises her almost just like the one who wants to hunt her and confine her to his fuck-family.”⁴ Does queer desire of this sort exist? Can the divergent perspectives of a queer world be offset by reciprocal intimate encounters between lesbian, trans, intersexual, and gay people (and also heterosexuals)? A world⁵ in which the model of hetero- and homosexuality, and the idea of the existence of two sexes, no longer has any power?

¹ Leo Bersani and Adam Phillips, *Intimacies*. Chicago 2008; Tim Dean, *Unlimited Intimacy: Reflections on the Subculture of Barebacking*. Chicago 2009.

² Leo Bersani, *Is the Rectum a Grave? And other Essays*. Chicago 2010.

³ Lauren Berlant und Lee Edelman, *Sex, or the Unbearable*. Durham 2013; Peter Rehberg, *Hipster Porn: Queere Männlichkeiten und affektive Sexualitäten im Fanzine Butt*. Berlin 2018.

Our identities do not simply disappear forever just because we have experienced an intimate moment. The power of group identity rapidly returns. Especially when we witness the intimacy of others, the feeling that we need to demarcate ourselves can arise. To witness intimacy is not always to feel invited. There is no straightforward path to a queer utopia. But **the traces of last night's intimacy are perhaps still visible. They remind us that our identities are not everything.**

Peter Rehberg
Schwules Museum

⁴ Christian Maurel, *Für den Arsch*. Berlin 2019, 65

⁵ Oder ein Planet wie Michael Warner und Paul B. Preciado sagen würden: Michael Warner, *Fear of a queer Planet*. Minneapolis 1993; Paul B. Preciado, *Ein Apartment auf dem Uranus: Chroniken eines Übergangs*. Berlin 2020

Intimacy is Critical

Intimacy can take forms as furtive and as intense as a caress, a lick, a quick fuck at a cruising spot, a long session of lovemaking. Or it can take the form of a blow or a kick, as there can be intimacies of extreme violence, too: between abusive and abused spouses, between doctors and patients during non-consensual interventions, between perpetrators and victims. **Intimacy can be a critical state.** It is not only proof of tenderness or lust, but also an experience of cruelty, what precedes rupture, abandonment, or even death. Inherent as it is in intimacy, this ambiguity enacts and brings to light all the potential of togetherness.

On September 21, 2018 Zak Kostopoulos / Zackie Oh was brutally beaten to death by civilians and policemen in the daylight on a pedestrian street in downtown Athens. He/She was a queer and HIV+ activist, a drag queen, an outspoken public figure, and a self-proclaimed restless slut. He/She passed away handcuffed in the ambulance taking him/her to the hospital. The trial did not begin before October 21, 2020. His/her death triggered a hitherto unseen effervescent queer mobilization and numerous demonstrations. Greek social media was flooded with posts mourning his/her death, distant glimpses of the dreadful event and photographs of him/her in marches or during drag shows. He/She was more often described in terms of intersectional feminism than as sex-positive, although he/she was clearly both – and perhaps the latter more than the former.

This spark for collective action among and beyond LGBTQI+ people remains a challenge to our understanding of intimacy: is it easier to openly discuss the infinitely painful intimacy with one's murderer than one's numerous and politicized sexual intimacies? Reactions to Zak Kostopoulos / Zackie Oh's death were moving and poignant. But they also pointed to all those intimacies (the uneventful and repetitive, still private, stigmatized as excessive or oversexualized) that struggle to be recognized as political enough to find their place in the public debate.

Zak Kostopoulos / Zackie Oh's violent death has marked me in more than one way: as a thinker, a Greek native, and a researcher working on intimacy. For me, the mobilization in the aftermath of the violent intimacy to which he/she succumbed is indissociable from the pleasurable and temporary intimacies that he/she stood for. Even if the intimacies he/she enjoyed were somewhat downplayed by some of those who wholeheartedly mourned him/her, celebrating them remains as crucial as ever.

The exhibition *Intimacy: New Queer Art From Berlin and Beyond* seeks to critically revisit intimacy, explore its diverse forms and artistic representations, and reposition it on the spectrum of togetherness. Even more so, as the exhibition takes place during a major pandemic which is also a crisis of/in intimacy. It is an occasion to contemplate and consider intimacy while keeping oneself at a safe distance, remaining untouchable, taking a breath of virus-free air.

Yet, **intimacy is not privacy**. If it relates etymologically to *intimus* (the superlative of the Latin *intus*, the inner, and the comparative *interior*), it occurs neither in the secret depths of one's soul and mind nor in clandestineness – at least not without an intruding eye, such as the eye that might read a personal diary (*a journal intime*) or surreptitiously attest to a sexual act. **Intimacy is not fusion** with the other, either: intimacy happens between two or more people, united yet distinct thanks to their skin. Its mode is hesitation between the impulse for proximity and imminent separation.

This exhibition shows, among many other things, gay beaches and beaches that remain unwelcoming for queer bodies, parties and emptied party venues, kisses and scars. It displays how intimacies are hosted (in beds and clubs, on the grass and the sand), but also how they are un-hosted (in improvised cemeteries and gentrified spaces). It thinks through intimacies with/between aging and sick bodies, bodies of color and bodies that have passed away. It addresses all the slashes uniting and separating pronouns and prepositions in this very text. **Intimacy is of critical value** in understanding the confrontation of our bodies with those of others.

This exhibition is an attempt to answer the question: how much intimacy can we take? **Critical intimacy** is decisive, too: becoming intimate is a way of rethinking the intricacies of our relating to others and the hard core of our being-with. It tells us something about the affinities that we are proud of and about those that we are not willing to expose, as well as about how our intimacies are seen or ignored. I want to remember Zak Kostopoulos / Zackie Oh's as an advocate of multiple intimacies. And I want to think that he/she would have liked the idea of exposing inspiring intimacies that sharpen our critical gaze in a museum. This is, perhaps, what is at stake: enhancing the queer criticality of/within intimacy and empowering queer intimacies-to-come..

Apostolos Lampropoulos
University Bordeaux Montaigne

Look at

Us

Here we are, spectators, in the Schwules Museum in the era of Covid-19, walking through depictions of intimacy. “Look at Us” is also the call from the bodies that we, as spectators, see around us: some are reclining happily, playful and caring. We respond to the call of people who step out of their privacy and share their intimacies in front of a lens or through cracks in a wall, before our attentive

gaze or our furtive glance. Every image portrays two or more of them, and we are the welcome intruders. But none of them could have imagined that for us, as spectators, right here and right now, proximity would be haunted by a new virus. And, at every single step, we realize that intimacy is a risk: the risk of love, the risk of desire and lust, the risk of rupture and violence, the risk of just being-with.

Paul Mpagi Sepuya

Drop Scene Study (OX5A1099) (2018)

Pigment print

Courtesy the artist and DOCUMENT Gallery, Chicago



Paul Mpagi Sepuya is an African-American photographer who lives and works in Los Angeles. His work deals with queerness and Blackness, the relationship between different gazes, and the relationship between artist and subject. Fingers have left smudged traces on the mirror. The Black hand on the camera releases the shutter, captures these traces, changes them through an imprint of light into a new trace, which is causally connected to the object. Indexical icons. The “that is how it was” of photography. The hand in the image,

a fragment of the body visible between the black velvet curtain. It arouses a longing to see more of what is concealed. The hand on the camera, which peeks out between the curtain, reflected in the smudged mirror, framed by the curtains in front of the mirror. The curtain is duplicated in the photograph, it emerges from the background of the studio into the foreground. Sepuya reveals the process of creating the photograph, does away with the distance between the medium and the act of making it, and thus creates intimacy.

Clifford Prince King

Untitled (2018)

Inkjet print



The African-American photographer Clifford Prince King lives and works in Los Angeles. In his photographs, he explores Black male queer identities by documenting intimate, everyday moments and meetings between his friends and lovers. *Untitled* is a collaboration with Paul Mpagi Sepuya for the 2019 Whitney Biennial, and addresses similar themes to Sepuya's *Drop Scene Study*. The photographic studio is, once again, reflected as the scene of events, comes to the foreground

with the black velvet curtain, while smudges make the mirror visible. A blurred hand in the foreground, a direct reflection of the real hand. The two men behind it are photographed mirror images, as the smudges reveal. Mirror and curtain manipulate the perspective. Curtain, hands, arms and cameras divide the self-portrait, draw attention to the setting of the shooting, reflect it as a ceaseless intimate process of negotiation between artists, subjects, spectators, and the work itself.

Derrick Woods-Morrow

'Watching you watch us, but caring less...' (studio portrait of us in 2018. LA, California) (2018-2019)
Inkjet print



Derrick Woods-Morrow lives and works in Chicago. The Afro-American artist and activist explores sexual identity and sensual deviation from heterosexual norms through photography, film/video, performance, and ceramic. Untitled is a cooperation with Paul Mpagi Sepuya for the 2019 Whitney Biennial, and addresses similar themes to Sepuya's Drop Scene Study. Photographs of *white* people to the left of the Black subjects, who are taking photographs in the smudged studio mirror, a mod-

ern triptych. Photography is a medium of reproduction which is inherently shaped by racism. In the 1950s, Kodak established pale skin as the chemical baseline of analogue film technology. The *white* gaze dominates photographic discourse. A young, thin *white* woman, the toned torso of a *white* man, the black photographer in the middle shoot through this narrative with their cameras and record themselves in the intimate setting of the studio, delivering an alternative photographic discourse.

⁷ Sarah Lewis, The Racial Bias Built Into Photography, New York Times, 25.04.2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/25/lens/sarah-lewis-racial-bias-photography.html>

Emerson Ricard

Untitled (2018)

Inkjet print



Emerson Ricard is an American photographer who lives and works in New York. His photographs show queer people in forests, on beaches, and in other natural settings. *Untitled* was created in the same context as the works mentioned above, but is it a portrait of Sepuya. Framed between two unfocused, pale surfaces? Sepuya looks directly into the camera aimed at him, his own in hand, poised to shoot back. Light and shadow fall on him.

Ricard is *white*, his gaze is unmarked. Sepuya is Black, his gaze is marked. In Woods-Morrow's, King's and Sepuya's photographs, the Black artists were both the photographed and the photographers, they looked at and captured themselves in the mirror. Now Ricard looks at Sepuya, without a mirror to return his gaze. But Sepuya returns the gaze, looks directly at the spectator, and draws their attention to their own gaze.

John Paul Ricco

Blue Black Intimacy (2020)

Andrei Pora (editing), video poem, 4' 57"



John Paul Ricco is an art historian and queer theorist at the University of Toronto. He researches, teaches, and writes on gender, sexuality, pornography, and questions of intimacy and ways of being together. The Oscar-winning 2016 film *Moonlight* from director Barry Jenkins depicts protagonist Chiron in three stages, as a child, a teenager, and an adult. In childhood he lives with his mother, a heroin addict, in an underprivileged housing project in Miami. He is viciously bullied, but he does not know why. Even his mother says

that he is different, “too soft”. He grows into a shy, thin teenager and experiences sex for the first time with Kevin, a school friend. As an adult, Chiron is big and strong, and he has traded his soft nature for that of a tough drug dealer. He trained his body into an armour of muscles, but his melancholy eyes look to the floor. Ricco’s reading of the film concentrates on touch and the affective plane between Chiron and Kevin. For Ricco, this narrative of intimacy is important, because it is not about identification or knowledge.

Queer Zines



The medium of the zine – small-format brochures, often made by fans for fans – was frequently used to develop a queer aesthetic of intimacy, as distinguished from pornographic glamour. A new generation of queer zines has emerged since the 2000s: *Butt*, *Kink*, *Dude*, *Original Plumbing*, and *The Tenth*. They can be read as a kind of critique of pornography, because they contrast the objectification of the body through the rigorous application of pornographic conventions with an aesthetic of inti-

macy closer to amateur photography. It is no coincidence that the popularity of the internet gained momentum around 2000. With it, an abundance of images of diverse, non-normative bodies began to circulate: an archive the zines could draw on. However, the medium of the zine is intimate in itself: it is not a commercially printed publication that has to conform to marketing guidelines, but a medium which establishes contact between fans and lovers via images and texts.

Zanele Muholi

Julia and „Mandoza“ Hokwana, Lakeside, Johannesburg (2007)

Gelatin silver print

Musa Ngubane and Mabongi Ndlovu, Hillbrow, Johannesburg (2007)

Nomsa Mazibuko and Fondo, outside the Hope Unity Metropolitan Community Church, a gay church, during Good Friday, Mayfair, Johannesburg (2007)

Katlego Mashiloane and Nosipho Lavuta, Ext. 2, Lakeside, Johannesburg (2007)

Katlego Mashiloane and Nosipho Lavuta, Ext. 2, Lakeside, Johannesburg (2007)-magazine C-Prints

Courtesy the artist and STEVESON gallery, Cape Town



Zanele Muholi is well-known for their photographic activism in South Africa. In their work, they document the lives of Black South African LGBTQI+ people and call attention to discrimination. Muholi offers the viewer intimate glimpses into the everyday life of their subjects. The nose in the hollow between shoulder and head, the arm around the waist, the hand on the breast or thigh, washing and grooming together. The home as a classic private space. One's home is like an extension of the self; this is where we keep personal objects, this is where our bed

stands, this is where we dream and cry. Hannah Arendt describes the private sphere as a part of modern society which functions as the sphere of the intimate, and includes family life as well as emotional and sexual relationships.⁸ Queer people, as Muholi depicts them, occupy family life and sexual relationships in a new way. Through the prism of alternative forms of the family and cohabitation, sexual relationships which do not conform to the societal cis-heterosexual moral conception of biological reproduction become visible.

⁸ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1958).

Spyros Rennt

Coming down, Berlin (2019)

Leg grab, Berlin (2018)

Hanging out at Ludo's, Berlin (2020)

Touched (an abundance of limbs), Berlin (2020) - Magazine

Sofa three-way, Berlin (2020)

Jos and I at the after, Berlin (2020)

Menergy (red light), Berlin (2018)

Pigment prints



Spyros Rennt primarily utilises analogue photography. His subjects include portraits and the documentation of intimate social situations. His photographs offer intimate glimpses into the queer underground of Berlin and other metropolises. Four pairs of naked legs close together, a bottom adorned with welts. A sunken head, arms, legs, hands intertwined, which body starts where? Tattoos, curling dark body hair, a hand that glides under loose sport shorts. Sex in a trio, with socks on. Together as a pair, a trio, a multitude. A deep sweaty hug on the dance floor, a hand rests lovingly

on the head of the embraced one. A “raw tenderness” pervades Spyros Rennt’s images. Raw tenderness, intimacy in private living rooms, rented rooms, and public clubs. Intimacy includes the way in which people encounter each other. In his memoirs, the African-American gay science fiction author, and literary critic Samuel R. Delany describes the sex between men at former cruising spots, like the docks of Christopher Street, as not only sexual, but also a form of taking care of each other and being there for other people in an exceedingly human, tender, and loving way.⁹

⁹Samuel R. Delany, *The Motion of Light in Water. Sex and Science Fiction Writing in the East Village* (Minnesota: University Minnesota Press 2004).

Sholem Krishtalka

Nocturne (2019)

Bed III (2020) - Magazine

Oil on canvas

Midnight Chemistry (2017)

Les Resposants (2017)

Gouache on paper



Sholem Krishtalka is a Canadian illustrator and author. His works are inspired by his experiences in Berlin. His paintings tell stories of loneliness, intimacy, and everyday encounters – in full, strong colours. Enjoying the sun side by side, with closed eyes. Sometimes words are unnecessary between two people. A glance at a mobile phone, one leg enveloped by a pink sheet that creases dramatically. Another glance at a mobile phone, the gateway to the world? Alone in

bed with messages from a loved (or desired) one. The display lights up, to not be alone in those same pink sheets, or to watch the happiness of others, lonely and yearning. Two bodies mirrored. One with a thumb on the circle as a symbol for releasing the shutter, capturing the reflection as a memory. The mobile phone as a modern extension of the body, which encroaches on intimate life in varying ways, all captured in Krishtalka's brushstrokes.

Abel Burger

Devil want my Soul (2020)

Wax crayon and charcoal on paper



Abel Burger is a painter who lives and works between France and Berlin. Since 2018, she has concentrated on portraits of individuals and dealt with questions of intimacy. Embraces are much more than fleeting touches. Sometimes they are nearly as intimate as a kiss. To take someone in one's arms. In one's arms. To be in-the-arms creates a connection, we feel the body of our counterpart, perceive the smell. In the time of the pandemic, it is peculiar to increasingly refrain from hugging.

The figure on the right hugs the one on the left from the side, the arms rest on breast and back, and meet again at the shoulder height of the other. It hugs the other figure, but also itself. The colours are intensified in the fauvist style, red tones dominate. It is an intimate embrace. It is not the nakedness that expresses intimacy, but rather how the faces of the figures are inclined towards each other, the left figure touches the right lightly on the arm, they are almost intertwined.

Del LaGrace Volcano

Harry Carry Simon, London (1999) - Magazine

Simon Harry Embrace, London (2000)

Matt & Eric, Seattle (1996)

Digital prints on Baryt paper

Scott's Bar, Charmaine & Velinda, San Francisco (1982)

Hermaphrodyké: Self Portraits of Desire, On My Knees, London (1995)

Hermaphrodyké: Self Portraits of Desire, Begging Please, London (1995)

Digital print on Baryt paper, aluminium Dibond



Del LaGrace Volcano is an American genderqueer intersex artist, activist, performer, and photographer, and sees themselves as a “part-time gender terrorist”. LaGrace Volcano understands their own body as an archive. Their photography concerns deviations from gender norms, the materiality of bodies, and gender as a construct. LaGrace Volcano’s works reveal the performative nature of social and biological sex, and the intimate embodiment of these cate-

gories. In their photography projects, they represent and situate intersex, queer, and trans people as subjects: the images are created in a context of belonging, desire, and identification between the photographer and the photographed. This practice provides alternative perspectives on bodies, couple configurations, sexual practices, and queer people as sexual subjects with agency – free from cis-heteronormative concepts and boundaries.

Slava Mogutin

iO Tillett Wright and Daryl Nuhn, New York, (2013) - Magazine

Xevi Muntané and Carlos Sáez, New York (2013)

Polaroid Set aus vier Typ PX 70 Drucken

Dylan and Isaac, Riis Beach, (2019)

Lisa and Luisa, Berlin (2019)

Léon and Samuel, Berlin (2020)

Polaroid Set aus vier Typ 600 Drucken



Slava Mogutin is a Russian-American multimedia artist and author, who left Russia for New York in 1995 as a result of political persecution. His works deal with, among other things, themes such as displacement and identity, and the transgression and transfiguration of masculinity and queer sexualities. The models pose sweetly and playfully, softly and a little flirtatiously. Tensed biceps, pursed lips, dreamy gazes. *Dylan and Isaac*, *Lisa and Luisa* and *Léon and Samuel* are from the photo series

“Polaroid Rage”, which tells the individual stories of the subjects in narrative form. The photographs were taken over the last two years in New York, Los Angeles, and Berlin. *iO Tillett Wright and Daryl Nuhn* and *Xevi Muntané and Carlos Sáez* are part of the series “Instant Portraits”, in which Mogutin documents his circle of friends and New York artists. It is pleasant to look at these sweet couples. However, questions arise about the prioritisation of two-person relationships within intimacy.

Werbung

Our Bodies in Time

Intimacy is produced under particular spatial conditions: in proximity to other bodies, in seclusion, or in an intoxicating crowd. But intimacy also always takes place in a particular moment, which can, in turn, swiftly come to an end. The possibilities and forms of intimacy change over time, like our bodies do. Young bodies, old bodies, healthy bodies, sick bodies: all develop their own forms of intimacy. Queer culture is often represented as an accomplishment

of youth. But both aging and the relationship between different queer generations are part of queerness. Over the past 40 years, these subjects were strictly bounded by the context of HIV and AIDS. How did this virus, for which there is still no vaccine, shape our gaze at bodies and sexuality? How do we approach aging or premature death? How do we grieve? While doing this, have we succeeded in keeping queer intimacy alive?

Eva Giannakopoulos

At the Beach 2 (2017)

Two-channel video, experimental documentary, 27' 37" and 10' 41"



Eva Giannakopoulos is a Greek artist and performer who lives and works in Athens. She has performed and exhibited her work in museums, institutes, and galleries, at festivals, on impromptu stages, and in other public, at times unusual, places. Giannakopoulos takes the viewer to turquoise-blue glittering water – with radiant sunshine, a clear blue sky, a soft breeze, heterosexual couples and families. Regular beaches are conservative places, places which only allow heterosexual public intimacy, but holidays are meant to be relaxing, not a continuation of discrimination in

another setting. For this reason, holiday travel is, for queer people, often associated with intensive research in advance. Is this place to some degree LGBTQI+-friendly? Queer families are particularly at risk, because alternative concepts of family and parenthood are seen as a direct assault on the heterosexual nuclear family. Giannakopoulos understands tourism as a normative factor in summer holidays, and thus creates a setting in which parenthood can be reimagined as a matrix, in which roles and identities are subject to open and constant negotiation.

Roey Victoria Heifetz

The Envious once (2016-2017)
Pencil, ink and lacquer on paper
Steinle Collection Berlin



The Israeli artist Roey Victoria Heifetz employs images of strong and elderly women in her Berlin studio in order to represent the painful discrepancy between social expectations and the bodily reality of growing older as a woman. Deep wrinkles and furrows, age spots, shrunken eyes. A hopeful look upwards, a resigned look to the side. Mountains of rugged hands. They almost look like they have been carved out of wood. They are drawn from life, in pencil and ink.

Mainstream media and pop culture are slowly beginning to show an increasing number of images of queer people, but older queer people are mostly excluded, especially trans people. Heifetz' expressive large format portraits of hyper-present trans women are inspired by her observations of elderly women in public and her own self-portraits. She explores the intimate psychological and emotional question of what aging means for trans women.

Annie Leibovitz

Alf Bold im Auguste-Viktoria-Krankenhaus, Berlin (1992)

Silver gelatin print on Baryt Paper

SMU



Film scholar Alf Bold (1946-1993) was involved in the Berlinale and organised the program of the Arsenal cinema in Schöneberg for over 20 years, before it moved to Potsdamer Platz. That is where he met the queer photographers Nan Goldin and Annie Leibovitz. Both of them photographed Bold in hospital and documented his HIV infection. Alongside Jürgen Baldiga's self-portraits, these are some of the most vivid testimonies of living and dying with HIV and AIDS at the beginning of the '90s in Berlin. Annie

Leibovitz, Susan Sonntag's partner of many years, photographed Alf Bold on his sickbed. The moment is intimate, but Bold's gaze and stance remain challenging, almost distant. The body, drawn with sickness, presents itself confidently. It seems unafraid in the face of approaching death. Bold did not reconcile with his heterosexual relatives, nor return to the bosom of his family, as the photographs in the Benetton advertising campaign from that time show. His death, like his life, belongs to him.

Marlon Riggs

Anthem (1991)

Video, 9'



Marlon Riggs was an African-American filmmaker and activist. His documentary films are regarded as aesthetically innovative. Their representation of race and sexuality was provocatively received. His film *Tongues Untied* created nationwide controversy, as the film was intended to be shown on public television and was partially financed with state art funds. Black fingers glide into a pot of Vaseline, a pink triangle flies into the frame, a golden crucifix flickers like a broken neon sign, candles shine, a red rose appears. The im-

ages are layered one above the other. Every kiss a revolution in black, green, red – the colours of Pan-Africanism. Through image, sound, symbolism, and montage, *Anthem* politicises sex, intimacy and love between Black gay men and criticises the societal approach to AIDS and the machismo of the Black Power movement. Other gay Black artists read extracts from their poems or provide voiceovers. Riggs already knew about his AIDS diagnosis when he began working on *Anthem*, and he would succumb to the disease in 1994.

Michaela Melián

Silvia Bovenschen und Sarah Schumann (2012)
3-channel video and audio installation, 60'



Michaela Melián is a German artist, musician (F.S.K.) and professor of time-based media at the HfbK Hamburg. In her works, she combines art objects with sound, moving through the fields of visual arts and music, such as a brief, immersive visit with Sarah Schumann and Silvia Bovenschen. The feminist painter and feminist author lived together in Charlottenburg, Berlin. Schumann was active in the women's group "Bread + Roses" and produced many portraits of Bovenschen and likenesses of other women. One hangs on the mint green

wall behind the two women. In *Älter werden*, Bovenschen analysed the transience of human life. She also wrote several texts about Schumann. The ladies sit gracefully in front of the painting, surrounded by books. Intellectual and stylish; Bovenschen dandy-esque in pinstripe trousers and brogues, Schumann in a pleated skirt and sneakers. A discussion between the two on the visibility of women in art history – to which both of them have undoubtedly contributed, with their works and feminist engagement – sounds from another channel.

Josch Hoenes und Tomka Weiß

Die Schichten der geschlechtlichen Kleidung, (2013-2020)
Ink, Backlit foil

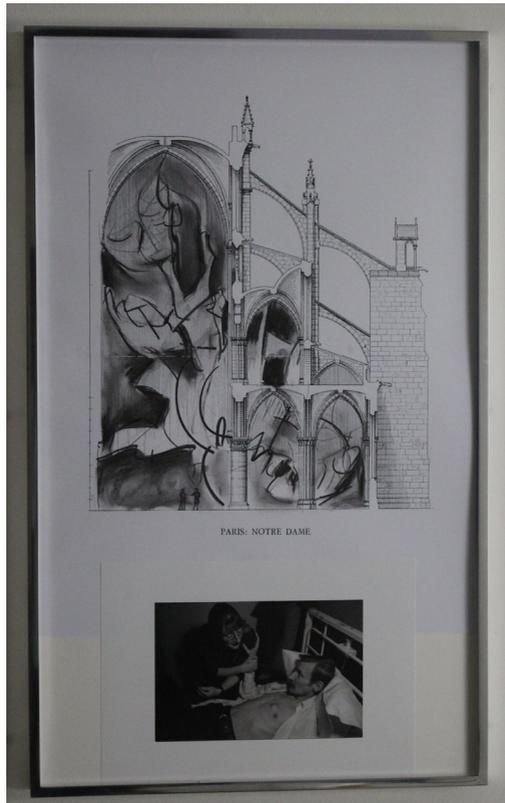


Queer theory teaches that gender identity acquires its impact through clothing, style and the interpretation of the body itself. Labelling practices and semiotic systems produce meaning surrounding the body, for example by assigning gender significance to particular characteristics of the body. How can we escape this corset of normative attributions? The academic Josch Hoenes (1972-2019) and the artist Tomka Weiß – both were also active as trans* activists – respond to this question with their shared artistic practice: depictions of clothed and naked body parts and fragments of text on trans-

parent film interact with each other. It is as if they first mutually generate each other, and then cause each other to disappear again. Depending on light and perspective, this creates new, intimate, configurations. Gender has historically been construed by the human sciences as a fundamental, fixed category. Here, an alternative conception is created: “humanness” is not symbolically represented by a rigid archetype of gender. On the contrary: it appears over and over again in different ways, through the movement and superimposition of body images and textual knowledge.

Simon Fujiwara

Study for My Martyrs I-VI (a Mural) (2020) - Magazine I
Sechs Mixed Media Collagen und Kohlezeichnungen
Courtesy the artist and Esther Schipper, Berlin



Simon Fujiwara is a British-Japanese artist who lives in Berlin. His works include video art, paintings, performances, and installations. Among other things, the body of work considers societal and individual structures of identity. In some of his works, he considers the history of syphilis, but *Study for My Martyrs I-VI (a Mural)* is about AIDS. The distinctive blue curtain ripples marvellously on the floor. In hospital, it is often the only protector of privacy. The emaciated hands are

crossed over the breast, the wrists so thin that the wristwatch slips down, the face gaunt. A teddy bear and balloons, to relieve the distress of the hospital room. These details from the hospital photographs are drawn on to the arches of a print of Notre-Dame cathedral, which is consecrated to Mary, the “mother of mercy”. And yet, the thousands affected by the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s and 1990s never received such mercy from the Catholic church... quite the contrary.

AA Bronson

Blue (in collaboration with Ryan Brewer), Fire Island (2012)

Duratrans transparency in lightbox

Courtesy the artists and Esther Schipper, Berlin

Foto © the artists



AA Bronson is a Canadian artist who lives in Berlin. In 1969, he founded the art collective General Idea with Felix Partz and Jorge Zontal. His works deal with AIDS, genealogy, spirits, healing, and shamanism. The colourful figures almost look mounted in the image, but at the same time, fit in well with the mystical sandy pine forest. The forest, a place of extremely varied rituals: Cherry Grove and the Pines, the LGBTQI+ communities on Fire Island in the state of New York, have been a

queer travel destination for 60 years. During the AIDS epidemic, many people went to this place to live out their last days with dignity. AA Bronson (blue figure with white beard) and his partner Mark Jan Krayenhoff van de Leur (blue figure with black beard) scattered the ashes of those who died of AIDS here. This place is full of queer history and stories, spirits, queer life and afterlife, and intimate encounters between the living and the dead.

(Y)our Sex Power

Intimacy is not identical to sex. But sexual scenes are often the theatre in which intimacy is experimented with: sex defines, but can also change, the idea we have of intimacy. This does not always concern the entire person; at times it is only a single touch of the skin. Certain sexual practices, fetishization, and ritualisation lead to a re-invention of sex and intimacy. Playing

with power shifts the boundaries of the intimate. Surface and depth, inside and outside, the borders of one's own and the other's body are at stake. Sexual intimacy can be experienced with great intensity, we take risks and become vulnerable. Are we entirely ourselves under these circumstances, or perhaps the inverse, utterly beside ourselves?

Doron Langberg

Zach and Craig (2019)

Oil on canvas

Courtesy the artist and Yossi Milo Gallery, New York



Doron Langberg was born in Israel and lives in New York. His large format oil paintings always feature dramatic colour and brushwork, they are emotionally and erotically charged, and they immediately command our full attention. We see pairs of men, pairs of women, or groups of friends in their lounges and bedrooms before, during, or after sex. The reference to sexuality is at times subtle, and at times extreme. *Zach and Craig* (2019) shows a pair of gay lovers

rimming. Rimming – oral stimulation of the anus – can be foreplay for anal sex, or in itself the apex of the sex act. This, by rights, pornographic scene gains transcendental power in Langberg's representation. That is it worth dying for sex is a thought that Michel Foucault and Leo Bersani discuss in queer theory. When we see Doron Langberg's pictures, we understand what is meant. There are moments that are worth living or dying for.

Studio P-P

Marble House, Berlin (2020) - Magazine

Carnivore, Stockholm (2018)

Bettnässer, Berlin (2020)

Head, Berlin (2019)

Pigment prints



Philipp Gallon and Pär Ålander are the visual artists behind Studio P-P. The couple live and work in Berlin, and, in their intimate self-portraits, deal with questions of queer identity and sex and body positivity. The relationship between sex and power is always ambiguous. In *The Will to Knowledge*, Michael Foucault writes that sexuality is not outside of power, but within it.¹⁰ Sex is not “the most natural thing in the world”; like gender, it is constructed. Sex too is

a form of exercising power over others. Questions arise about the availability of bodies, dominance, submission, and the influence of socio-political power structures on one’s own sex. But sex can also be a path to self-empowerment. This is what Studio P-P’s photographs draw on. They are about seizing power, experimenting with different roles and practices, and consciously sharing these sensual, intimate moments with the outside world.

¹⁰ Michel Foucault, *Der Wille zum Wissen. Sexualität und Wahrheit* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1983).

Lucas Foletto Celinski

Fixation / double braided #1 (2017)

Linen, cotton cord, satin strap, steel



The Brazilian artist Lucas Foletto Celinski uses bondage and restraint methods in his sculptures to investigate boundaries and initiate dialogue about the representation of bodies. He lives in Berlin. The thin black cords cover the thick, heavy white cords like a pattern. Hanging from leather straps, rings, and thin ropes, they float in suspension bondage. Pleasure and pain are not necessarily opposites, they can intersect and overlap like the thick white ropes, become pleasurable pain.

Dominance, submission, free surrender of power, and autonomy. Entrusting another person with body, spirit, fantasies, and one's own wishes. Constant communication, consent, attending closely to reactions, carrying out rituals together. Getting to know one's own body with the help of other people, finding and clearly naming one's own boundaries and the access to one's own body. Is BDSM ultimately not a sexual preference, but an intimate practice?

Cibelle Cavalli Bastos

Hardcore Cuddling I (2020)

Video, 10' 10"



Cibelle Cavalli Bastos is an interdisciplinary Brazilian artist who works with video, painting, performance, and sculpture. They live in Berlin and concentrate on the deconstruction and formation of identities. The round image revolves, the perspective is distorted through the fish-eye lens, but we can clearly pick out two intertwined bodies. Perhaps a viewer brings their phone closer to their face to see better. The image continues to revolve, the

positions of the people change, hands stroke a back, a stomach, a head. The red carpet and red curtain seem to melt together in the movement. Cuddling is an expression of intimacy. It is classified as a less dramatic or profound physical encounter between people, but it satisfies strong emotional and physical needs for closeness. This is what *Hardcore Cuddling* draws on. It negotiates the (temporary) dichotomy between hard sex and soft tenderness

Vika Kirchenbauer

The Island of perpetual tickling (2018)

Video onstallation, 35' 38"



Vika Kirchenbauer is a German artist, music producer, and writer. She lives in Berlin. In her work, she engages with Édouard Glissant's idea of the right to opacity, the structures of post-Fordist employment relations, and the relationship between performer and viewer. The plastic sheets and straps are reminiscent of sex parties, but the blue tones recall the large soft gym class mats of the past. A "tickle" can be something enticing, tempting or for-

bidden. Suspenseful situations or films tickle our nerves. Tickling as a sado-masochistic practice, as a loving and playful gesture from parents or partner, or as the cruel torture of older siblings or classmates. Play and violence, laughter and pain, the penetration of the private sphere. A mouth that laughs or grimaces, laughter as a sensual reaction or panic reflex, loud shrieking. Laughing until we cry, a questionable pleasure. Tickling is ambivalent.

Elijah Burgher

The Perineum is the Door! (2018-20219)

Acrylic on canvas drop cloth

Untitled. (2019-2020)

Ink and bleach on inkjet print



The American painter Elijah Burgher produces large-scale images of sigils. The practice of the artist, who lives in Berlin, is strongly influenced by his interest in magic, esotericism, and occultism. In sigil magic, a wish or desire is formulated. The letters are then rearranged to transform it into a graphic symbol, the sigil. A visual code of intimate desire and longing in red, lilac, and mint green, painted on a large canvas drop cloth. A portable base for rituals. Sigils have to be activated to be-

come magical. This is done by thinking about them in an intimate moment, like orgasm. Because the work lies on the floor, we view it in a more intimate context than the usual reverent distance from a framed artwork on a white wall. The viewer can look at the visualisation of Burgher's wish, but will ultimately never know for sure what his desire is. The zine *Sperm Cult*, which Burgher made with Richard Hawkins, also focuses on rituals, occultism, magic and sex.

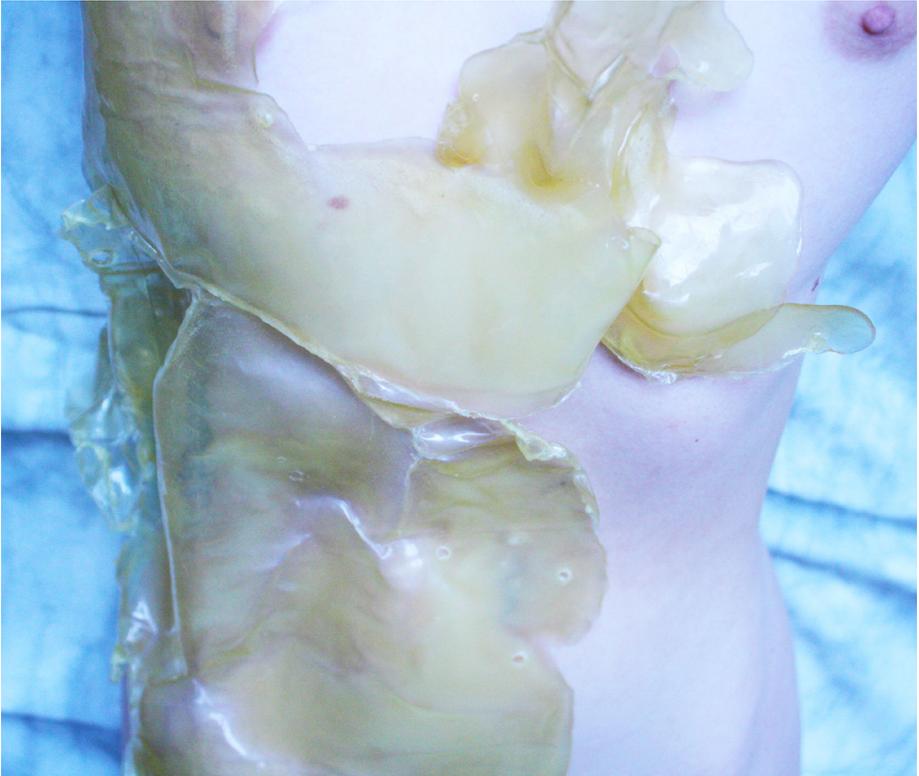
Irma Joanne

Flesh, Rotterdam (2018)

Plaster body project, Rotterdam (2018)

Souled in Stardust, Rotterdam (2017) - magazine

Digital prints



For her performances and sculptures, the Dutch artist Irma Joanne wraps her own body or handmade dummies in various plastics or plaster. *Flesh* swaddled with red foil. Human expressions and extremities become apparent. The body is fragmented, associations with gruesome femicides and slaughterhouses arise. Joanne plays with concealing the form of the body and body parts and then allows them to burst forth; with the body as a sphere of familiar-

ity and intimacy, and with the varied materiality of plastic, foil, fabric, plaster, and skin. Psychology uses the term depersonalisation when people feel alienated from themselves, lose awareness of their own personality, suddenly experience their body or body parts as different or external, or have the feeling of standing outside themselves. Joanne picks up these ideas and fluctuates between the intimacy of one's own body and alienating effects.

Donna Huanca

CASITA QUINCUNX (2020)

Mixed media, oil and acrylic on textile, lead, plastic, synthetic hair, thread, faux leather, metal on steel frame with aluminum fastenings

Courtesy the artist and PERES PROJECTS, Culver City



Donna Huanca is a multidisciplinary Bolivian-American artist who lives and works in Berlin. Her work includes sculptures, performances, and videos. She focuses intensively on clothing, which she understands as a representation of the human body. An interplay between foil, plastic, and clothing. Different materialities: transparent and opaque, light and heavy, robust and fragile. Huanca plays with

opposites. Many of the materials she uses serve to envelop – to protect from outside influences or view. Clothes envelop bodies. These coverings can protect privacy, but they can also be misinterpreted as an invitation to disregard the privacy of others through unwanted physical contact, intrusive stares, questions and comments – and so, in turn, uncover societal problems.

Florian Hetz

Alex, Berlin (2019)
Jo, Berlin (2019)
Giclée prints
o.T., (2016-2019)
Digital photographs



Few fine-art photographers succeed at developing their own unmistakable signature as much as Florian Hetz has. He lives and works in Berlin. Many of his contemporaries document their surroundings in the style of *Butt Magazine* or Wolfgang Tillman – casual, hairy young men at parties or at home in bed. Hetz, on the other hand, casts an almost clinical eye at male bodies, which are at times so white they appear transparent: an aesthetic intensification of the contrast with Black bodies. The classic poses he utilises are reminiscent of the works of Rob-

ert Mapplethorpe from the 1980s – well-composed views of the male body, the alignment of which is repeated in objects that also appear in the image. However, Hetz' photographs also often contain "interference": bodily fluids, hair, or scars disrupt the perfect play of forms. And thus intimacy comes into play: the ideal Instagram motif reveals a confusing aspect or a rupture, thus resisting the fleeting, consuming gaze. Although the images initially seem inviolable, they in fact document that the human body is vulnerable and suffers.

More Parties for Us

This is a plea in the midst of a pandemic. It echoes the lament of the club crowds who deplore the canceled assemblies and the postponed excess. Can one even call for public togetherness in times of social distancing? Even if, nowadays, “More Parties for Us” is an unpronounceable phrase, it remains an invitation to future celebrations of intimacy. Whether in the form of semi-private events or open-air gatherings, sex

parties or off-scene utopias, festive closeness cannot be extinguished, only reinvented. Parties-to-come are meant to be more and more inclusive: get-togethers fostering intimacy for those who are still foreigners; queer refugees seeking hospitable joyfulness; tree-loving orgies or ecosexual hikes; parties combining care, ingenuity, and exuberance in a post-pandemic era; parties with people (un)like us.

Kerstin Drechsel

Untitled, aus der Serie if you close the door (2010)

Oil and pencil on nettle



In her paintings, Kerstin Drechsel addresses intimacy between women who love women, the boundaries of beauty concepts, order and disorder, and the interface between the private and the public. She lives and works in Berlin. There is a sexist cliché that women are constantly in pursuit of love and binding relationships. Lesbian women in particular are seen as “serial monogamists”, even in queer circles. Although anonymous public sex is associated with gay men, including

in theoretical work on it, it also has a long history among lesbian women. A dark, dim, sparse establishment which is determined by sexual functionality. As a semi-public place, the darkroom holds potential for intimate and erotic encounters, bodily gratification and closeness, but also fear and loneliness. When people meet in the darkroom, a particular form of communality emerges, a communality without clear social structures – at least for the duration of the encounter.¹¹

¹¹ Viktor Turner, *Vom Ritual zum Theater. Der Ernst des menschlichen Spiels* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer 1995).

Rafael Medina

The end of a love affair #1, #2, #3 - Monday, 03 Feb 2020 - 07 am, Berlin (2020)

Go Bang!, Berlin (2020) - magazine

Analogue 35 mm, digital prints on cotton paper



Rafael Medina is a Brazilian photographer who lives in Berlin and documents its nightlife. His works show LGBTQI+ people and focus on sexuality and body positivity. The red light is reflected on the rain-soaked ground. There is nobody to be seen in this place, where masses of sweating bodies usually move to the music, skin to skin. The great love affair of the party CockTail D'Amore, which started in 2009 at the club *Griessmühle*, is over. It fell victim to investors and gentrification. Roland Barthes writes that the erotic photograph is a disrupted,

rough pornographic image. He holds that pornography is homogenous, uniform, and simply exhibits genitals, while eroticism conceals, delays, or distracts.¹² The Risograph printing process used for *Go Bang!* produces just this effect. Dirt and graffiti on the tiles of the public toilet, the three men transform the space into a new kind of public convenience. Sex, desire, and intimacy are traditionally relegated to the private sphere, but notably, gay sex happens in public places, so long as you know where, as Medina does.

¹² Roland Barthes, *Die helle Kammer* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 1998).

George La Nonce

The Oracle (2020)

Instapoems (2020)

Audio poems

apparition

nobody saw him
nobody heard him

yet that sudden warmth in me
was unmistakable

the flood of tears I hadn't shed
was unmistakable

oh yes he was there
of course he was there

imperceptible to the rest of the living
as lovers are

george_le_nonce_24.VI.2019

George Le Nonce is a Greek poet, who lives and works in Athens. He has published three poetry books in Greek. His poetry makes use of different textual genres, including short stories, conventional poems, theatrical pieces, and essays, to explore issues like the construction of desire, the terrors of intimacy, and the decay of the body. George is currently working on an English version of his latest, unpublished work, *Oracle*. *Oracle* is a collection of fifty short prose pieces

and fifty poems based on the work of fifty female poets. Fragile faces, fluid identities and indeterminate voices define the territory of the *Oracle*. His other unpublished work, *Serpent*, is a study of sexual desire consisting of 24 poems, 24 999-word quasi-pornographic narratives and 24 short essays. The works presented here, in the poet's own voice, are selected from the *Oracle* and from *Instapoems*, a series of short, imagist poems written in English.

Tejal Shah

Lucid Dreaming V (2013)

Prints and reproductions, collage, digital print on archival paper
Dauerleihgabe SMU



Tejal Shah is a multimedia artist. In her videos, photographs, installations, and drawings, she focuses on the reciprocal relationships between consciousness, ecology, gender and science. She lives and works in New Delhi. A backdrop of apartment blocks, hundreds of square windows. Below, the blue sky, trees, open landscape, rhizomatic roots, knots, and branches. Two figures, with a large, phallic white horn strapped to their heads, seem to swim into the image. These hybrid

figures originated in Shah's 2012 video installation *Between the Waves*. Here, futuristic, anarchistic, spiritual, scientific, organic, inorganic, utopian, and dystopian elements come together. Everything is bound together by the many roots at the bottom of the image. No entities, instead only the interplay and interrelation of many agents and effects – “making kin” in Donna Haraway's sense. Is this what postmodern forms of intimacy could look like?

Victor Luque

Whole, Ferropolis bei Gräfenhainichen (2019)

Photographic print on aluminium Dibond



Victor Luque is one of the photographers who documents Berlin's queer club scene with his unique eye for the camera. The Spanish artist attempts to capture moods in his photographs, create open-ended narratives, and raise questions. Luque's photograph of *Whole* festival inspires thoughts of queer utopias. The Cuban-American queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz, who worked intensively on utopias, understands queerness as performative, because it is not only a state of being, but also an activity in the direction of the future. This activity can

take the form, for example, of protests, performances or parties, which, as it were, "make future in the present".¹³ The *WHOLE* United Queer Festival is a queer electronic music and performance festival. It is staged by a cooperation between Berliners and international underground collectives such as Pornceptual and New World Disorder. Dancing and partying was, and is, a political part of queer history. Amidst the hustle and clamour of the festival, Luque captures still, intimate moments at the Gremminer See. Queer utopia?

¹³ José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopie: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: NYU Press 2009).

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