

# MY QUEER VALENTINE

JANUARY 25 – MARCH 8, 2020

TARGET GALLERY



## About Target Gallery

Target Gallery is the contemporary exhibition space for the Torpedo Factory Art Center.

The gallery promotes high standards of art by continuously exploring new ideas through a variety of visual media in a rotating schedule of national and international exhibitions.

More information is available via [torpedofactory.org/target](http://torpedofactory.org/target).

## About Torpedo Factory Art Center

Founded in 1974 in an old munitions plant, Torpedo Factory Art Center is home to the nation's largest number of publicly accessible working artist studios under one roof.

Just south of Washington, D.C., the Torpedo Factory Art Center overlooks the Potomac River in the Old Town section of Alexandria, VA.

Each year, more than a half million national and international visitors meet and interact with more than 160 resident artists in more than 70 studios and seven galleries.

For more information, visit [torpedofactory.org](http://torpedofactory.org) or follow the Art Center on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Pinterest](#) via [@torpedofactory](#)

Front cover image: Aurele Gould, *Acrylic*, 2017.



Target Gallery and the Torpedo Factory Art Center are part of the [City of Alexandria Office of the Arts](#), a division of the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities.



# My Queer Valentine

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# About the Exhibition

# MY QUEER VALENTINE

## *Target Gallery Exhibition Explores Queer Intimacy*

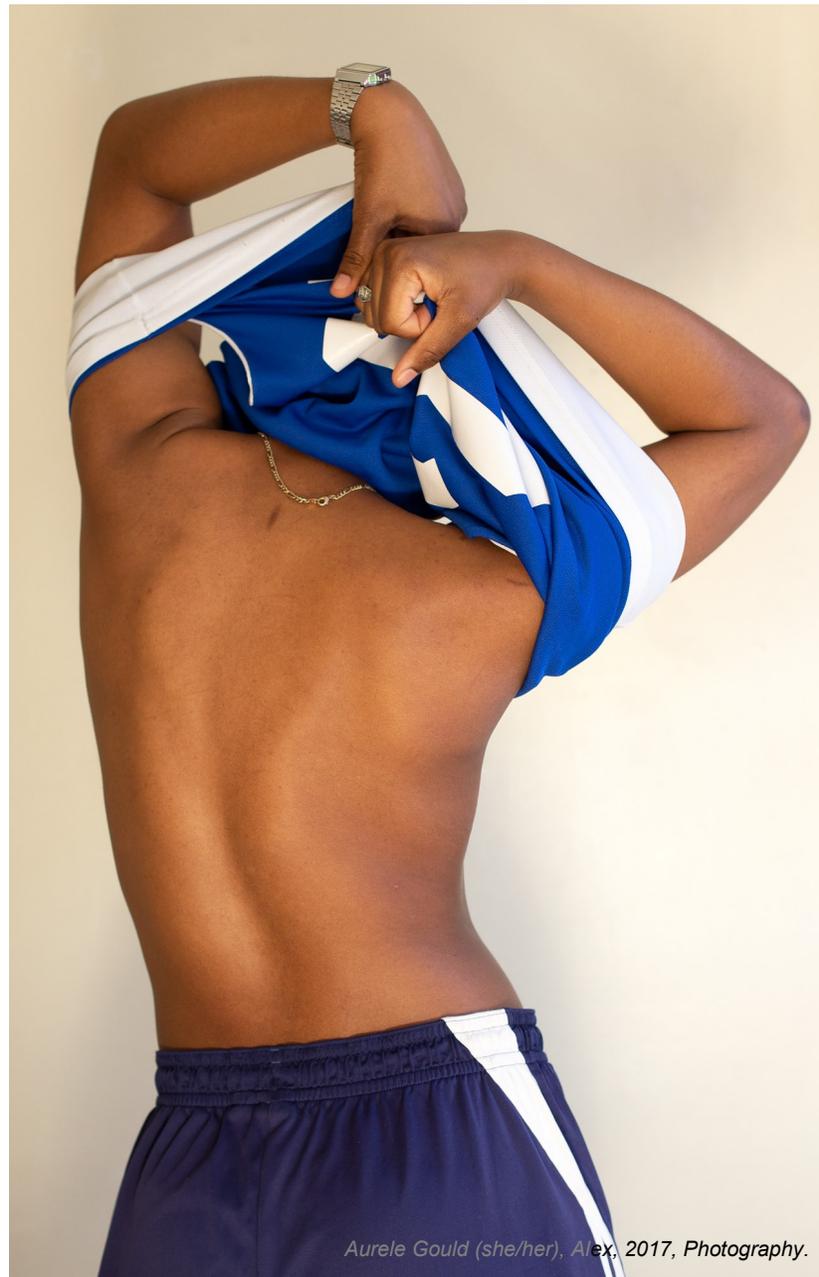
The group exhibition in Target Gallery offers a poignant look at love and relationships for LGBTQ+ -identifying people in *My Queer Valentine*. The exhibition was on view Saturday, January 25 through Sunday, March 8, 2020. The reception on the evening of Friday, February 14 involved various interactive performance art on healing and connection, a photo op at our kissing booth by exhibiting artist Linda Hesh, DIY art-making activities in the grand hall, and an information desk for the public to learn more about and support local LGBTQ+ organizations.

The exhibition features 16 artists, eight who are from Virginia or the D.C. greater metropolitan area.

### Participating Artists

Nicholas Aiden, St. John's, NL, Canada  
**Veronica Barker-Barzel**, Alexandria, VA  
Brandin Barón, San Francisco, CA  
Adam David Bencomo, Baltimore, MD  
**Miki Beyer**, Herndon, VA  
Louis Chavez, Rochester, NY  
Mandy Chesney, Baltimore, MD  
Evin Dubois, Paducah, KY  
**Aurele Gould**, Richmond, VA  
Cat Gunn, Baltimore, MD  
**Linda Hesh**, Alexandria, VA  
Rachael McArthur, Brooklyn, NY  
**Annika Papke**, Alexandria, VA  
**Lucas J. Rougeux**, North Bethesda, MD  
**Todd Stonnell**, Richmond, VA  
**Matt Storm**, Washington, DC

\*Regional artists are bolded.



## ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

**Exhibition juror Andy Johnson**, a DC-based independent curator and gallery director of Gallery 102 at George Washington University, has dedicated much of his curatorial career to unpacking queer intimacy.

“While *My Queer Valentine* has everything to do with the relationship to those around us, it’s also equally invested in the relationship we have with our queer realities, and the ways in which queerness shapes and informs our lived experience,” he said. “*My Queer Valentine* is as much a love letter to ourselves as it is a disclosing of longing to our community.”

Queerness or identifying as LGBTQ+ encapsulates many identities that are not necessarily set within a spectrum. This diversity in perspective is represented in a various styles, mediums, and tones in this exhibition.

For instance, Aurele Gould has three works on view that explore concepts of intimacy for queer women through different narrative portraits of her girlfriend. *Alex* captures the act of undressing, creating a flirtatious dialogue between the subject and the viewer.

Matt Storm has two works from his *Act of Looking* series, which articulates and recognizes inclusive ways to see his trans body. The piece *Act of Looking II, 17, Crossing My Fingers, Getting Away with Something* is a playful love letter to the artist’s sexuality as a transmasculine person.

Artist Miki Beyer’s mixed-media work *You’re Already There. You Already Have Me.* is also a love-letter, but this time between the artist and their partner. They use dialogue from past conversations between the two of them that addresses the panic of identity-erasure as a non-binary person while in cisgender/heterosexual-presenting relationship. It also speaks to the love for each other that promises for a better tomorrow.



Matt Storm (he/him), *Act of Looking II, 17, Crossing My Fingers, Getting Away with Something*, 2017, Archival Pigment Print.



Miki Beyer (they/them), *You're Already There. You Already Have Me.*, Diptych, 2019, Mixed Media on photo paper.

“ ***My Queer Valentine* is as much a love letter to ourselves as it is a disclosing of longing to our community.**

– Andy Johnson

”



# About the Juror

# ANDY JOHNSON

## JUROR FOR MY QUEER VALENTINE

### *My Queer Valentine*

Queer identity, and our relationship to queerness, is distinguishable through an acute, never-ending process of unpacking, deconstructing, releasing, detaching, and falling apart. It's a daily exercise in forgetting everything we've been taught, learned, and forcibly consumed about ourselves. Judith Halberstam in *The Queer Art of Failure* argues that forgetting in itself is an inherently queer tactic of disruption and resistance. While *My Queer Valentine* has everything to do with the relationship to those around us, it's also equally invested in a queer ontology, meaning the relationship we have with our queer realities, and the ways in which queerness shapes and informs our lived experience. *My Queer Valentine* is as much a love letter to ourselves as it is a disclosing of longing to our community.

The works included in *My Queer Valentine* — including photography, painting, sculpture, installation, and mixed media — trace an incoherent road map of the ability for queerness to temporarily bind the parts that resist legibility, to give words and meaning to those unnamable parts, and to reveal the gestures and expressions that animate a politics of disrespectability and nonconformity.

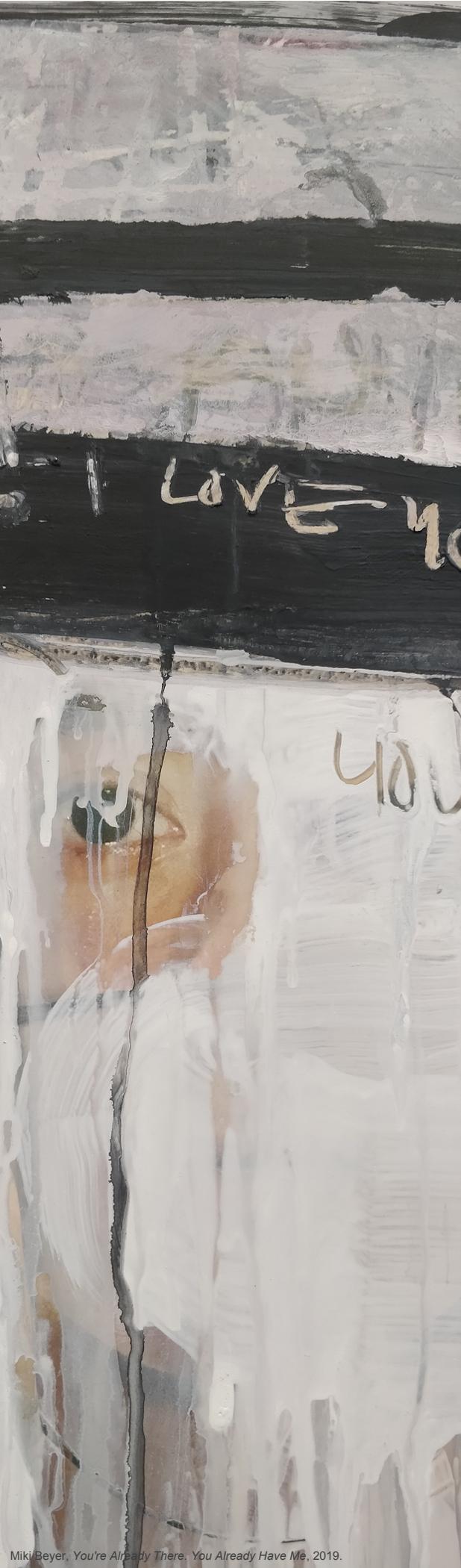
I've dedicated my career to interrogating, unpacking, discovering, decoding, and elevating the intricate beauty of queer intimacy, pleasure, and desire. Perceiving the nuances of our bodies, gestures, and expressions that leave a trace, allow us to find one another, and tethers together a language all our own. *My Queer Valentine* is that trace, one that often leaves its indelible mark and allows us to find our way back to ourselves.

– Andy Johnson



### About the Juror

**Andy Johnson** is a DC-based art historian, curator, and arts writer. He is Director of Gallery 102 at the Corcoran School of the Arts & Design; contributing editor at DIRT; and serves as Assistant Curator and Artist Liaison for Art on the Vine, hosted by the Agora Culture. He was the 2018 Apprentice Curator for the DC Arts Center, and a 2019 Visiting Arts Writer and Critic for The Chart. He has curated and juried exhibitions with Gallery 102, DC Arts Center, Duke Ellington School of the Arts, Dupont Underground, the Smithsonian Institution, among others. He has presented research and spoken on panels at universities, galleries, and museums including Rutgers University, UC Santa Barbara, University of Georgia, Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts, GW Museum, Washington Project for the Arts, and others. He has published articles, exhibition reviews, and catalogue essays with DIRT, The Chart, Common Field's Field Perspectives, The Rib, Pelican Bomb, BmoreArt and more. He holds a M.A. in Art History from The George Washington University.



# Selected Works



**Nicholas Aiden** • they/them  
St. Johns, NL, Canada

*Crybaby*  
Inkjet print  
2019

[nicholasaiden.ca](http://nicholasaiden.ca)  
 [@nicholasaiden](https://www.instagram.com/nicholasaiden)

“*Crybaby* is a boudoir photograph that was crafted to stilt the genre’s traditional heteronormative lens. This image is an overtly cheeky, sensual and humorous rebuttal of such cultural norms and celebrates the femme bodies that exist outside of and alongside the idealized femme/female body. *Crybaby* is a love letter, an intimate gift, to the vast community of people who deserve the softness and delicateness that they are often forsaken outside of and inside of sensual spaces.”

– Nicholas Aiden



**Nicholas Aiden** • they/them  
St. Johns, NL, Canada

*Venus*  
Inkjet print  
2017

nicholasaiden.ca  
 @nicholasaiden

“Venus, the goddess of love, is invoked and embodied by the artist in a stoic performance of beauty. Aiden motions towards the embrace of complex, tenderized masculinities. In a play of sensuality, the inhabitation of antiquated ideals of body, gesture, and colour meet with a contemporized understanding of those bodies that, atypical of tradition, flourish in queer performances of divinity.”

— Nicholas Aiden

[Artist Statement and Bio](#)



**Veronica Barker-Barzel** • she/her  
Alexandria, VA  
**Torpedo Factory Art Center artist**

*“Um Sich Zu Esp: to rest.*

*After coitus, some like to hold on to the moment.”*

*Um Sich Zu Esp*  
Silkscreen  
2014

– Veronica Barker-Barzel

 @jewfroart

[Artist Statement and Bio](#)



**Brandin Barón** • he/his  
San Francisco, CA

*Artist's Reconfiguration of Chastaigne's The Miner's Ball*  
Screenprint on parchment with ink, gouache, pastel and  
enamel (print 2 of 3)  
2019

[brandinbaron.com](http://brandinbaron.com)

 [@brandinbaron](https://www.instagram.com/brandinbaron)

"I am interested in dissecting embodiments of naturalistic and fantasized Southwestern cowboy imagery, focusing on the gay/bisexual/trans and multicultural bodies who aspire to "cowboy" avatars. In this visual analysis, I am interested in widening the diversity of portrayals of these nationalistic/folk masculine tropes."

– Brandin Barón

[Artist Statement and Bio](#)



**Adam David Bencomo** • he/him/they/them  
Baltimore, MD

*Three*  
Archival Pigment Print  
2016

[adamdavidbencomo.com](http://adamdavidbencomo.com)

 [@adbphoto](https://www.instagram.com/adbphoto)

“This was a moment watching three men flirting with each other. In a way, it just reminded me of how being queer redefines how we interact with each other in so many ways. The ability to flirt with a couple or just two other humans at once is one more perspective to add to the definition of love.”

– Adam David Bencomo

[Artist Statement and Bio](#)



**Adam David Bencomo** • he/him/they/them  
Baltimore, MD

*Sikh Love*  
Archival Pigment Print  
2018

[adamdavidbencomo.com](http://adamdavidbencomo.com)

 [@adbphoto](https://www.instagram.com/adbphoto)

“Watching my friends' relationship grow as a queer person of color, there are moments you realize that love is not always easy with extra identifiers of marginalization. My friends here have many rough moments in life due to judgment, and yet they still hold hands in public. It's a very heartwarming moment to witness.”

– Adam David Bencomo

[Artist Statement and Bio](#)



**Miki Beyer** • they/them  
Herndon, VA

*You're Already There.*  
*You Already Have Me.*  
Diptych  
Mixed Media on photo paper  
2019

[mikibeyer.wixsite.com](http://mikibeyer.wixsite.com)

 [@yourgayerdad](https://www.instagram.com/yourgayerdad)

“Painting over portraits of my partner and myself, I explore my feelings of being a non-binary dyke in a cis-het presenting relationship. I use dialogue from past conversations between my partner and myself as an admission of my being in love and a promise of feeling better tomorrow. I note my panic in feeling my identity regularly erased, but acknowledge my relationship and love within that being a positive force that surfaces through all other emotions.”

– Miki Beyer

[Artist Statement and Bio](#)



**Louis Chavez** • they/them  
Rochester, NY

*Wrestle*  
Inkjet Print  
2019

[chavezlouis.com](http://chavezlouis.com)

 [@louischavez](https://www.instagram.com/louischavez)

“*Wrestle* is a part of series of photographs on queer intimacy. Depicting these lovers in the middle of a playful wrestling match, I made sure to capture myself in the mirror in an effort to break down the perception of a photographer as a neutral observer in this type of setting.”

– Louis Chavez

[Artist Statement and Bio](#)



**Mandy Chesney** • she/her  
Baltimore, MD

*Innards*

Rhinestones, glitter, acrylic paint, plastic stones,  
acrylic medium, and varnish on panel  
2019

 @mandychesney

“By focusing on the internal topography of the body rather than the figure, *Innards* represents the collected experiences that inform the heart and body. Through dense accumulation of kitsch materials, the layers create a visceral landscape acknowledging the queer body as a constructed space.”

– Mandy Chesney

[Artist Statement and Bio](#)



**Mandy Chesney** • she/her  
Baltimore, MD

*Oblige Me*  
Rhinestones, glitter, acrylic paint, plastic stones,  
acrylic medium, and varnish on panel  
2019

 @mandychesney

“The junk jewelry in *Oblige Me* speaks to a willing desire for containment. These rescued pieces mimic queer visual enticement, which is often constructed from the cast-off confines of heteronormativity.”

– Mandy Chesney

[Artist Statement and Bio](#)



“My practice challenges notions of masculinity through deconstruction and narrative. I confront the state of tension between the body and identity through symbiotic structures using adornment, dress, and excessive ornamentation.

In *Fanboy Floated*, the bricolaged surface of contrasts the body as the different figures semiotically develop their sexuality and flirt their way through queer culture. Through intense confrontations of materials, process, and form, my work encounters the wear-and-tear reality of these engagements. The macho representations invested into the work — the gestures, self-portraiture, and the figure — are caught between a unique moment of aggression and fulfillment, and get caught up in the drama of their own personal, fragmented, and constructed narrative. What emerges from this physicality and engagements is an intimate and revealing look at this conflated identity, the search for belonging and brotherhood, and the possibilities of an exhausted body.”

– Evin Dubois

### [Artist Statement and Bio](#)

**Evin Dubois** • he/him  
Paducah, KY

#### *Fanboy Floated*

Chickenwire, Epoxy, Hydrocal,  
Burlap, Found Objects, Found  
Clothing, Thread, Steel, Feather  
2019

[evindubois.com](http://evindubois.com)

 [@evinduboyz](https://www.instagram.com/evinduboyz)



**Aurele Gould** • she/they  
Richmond, VA

*Acrylic*  
Photography  
2017

[aureliephotography.com](http://aureliephotography.com)

 [@aurelegould](https://www.instagram.com/aurelegould)

[Artist Statement and Bio](#)

*“Acrylic plays off the stereotype that all gay women have short nails by placing un-stereotypical items (acrylic nails) onto queer women. I created a series with hints of ironic humor to visualize this dichotomy. I like how thought processes can fold unto each other, like thinking about when stereotypes can be used and who they can be used by, how they are set up, and the rabbit hole that “queer aesthetic” unfolds itself to be.”*

– Aurele Gould



**Aurele Gould** • she/they  
Richmond, VA

*Alex*  
Photography  
2017

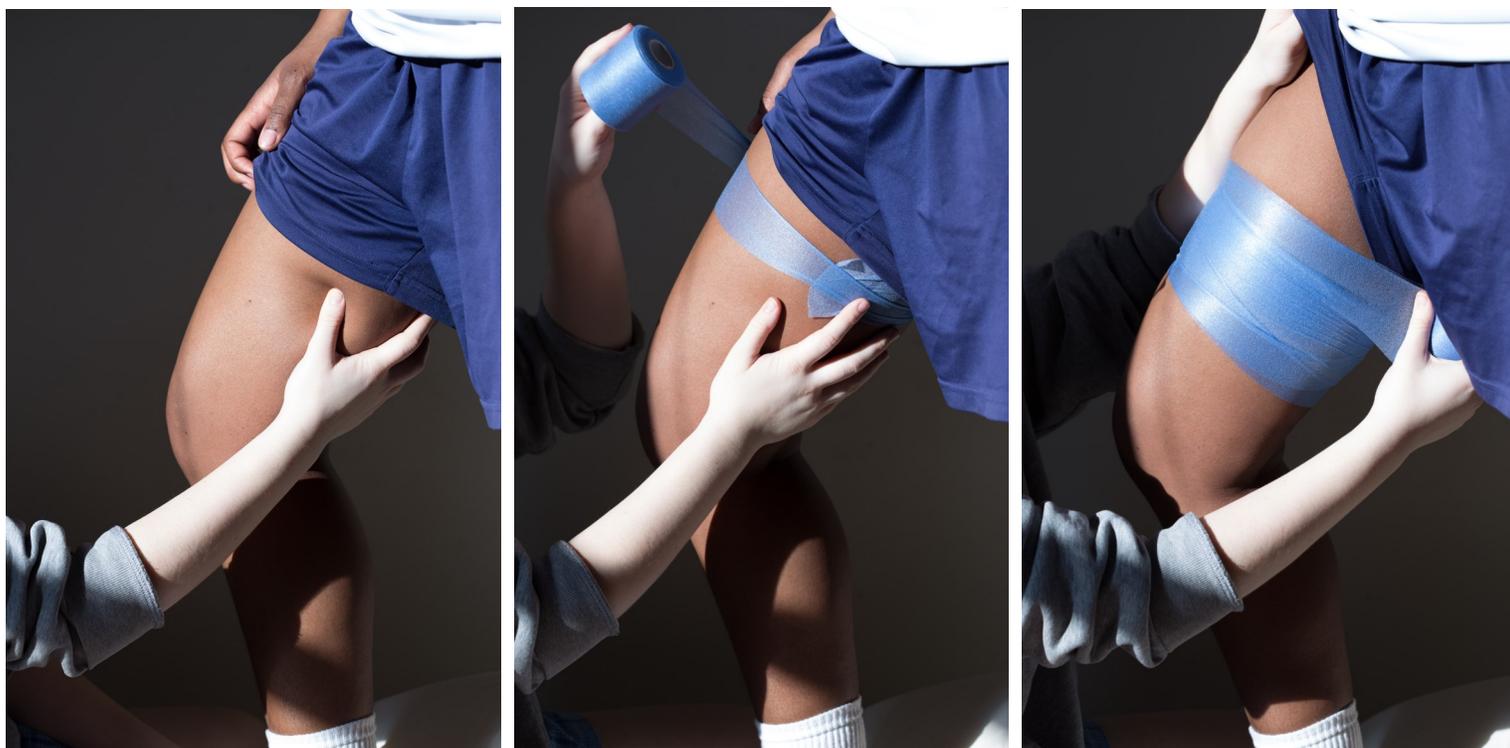
[aureliephotography.com](http://aureliephotography.com)

 [@aurelegould](https://www.instagram.com/aurelegould)

[Artist Statement and Bio](#)

“A photograph of my girlfriend undressing and performing an act to capture for the camera creates balance of playfulness with a sensual pose. I view this as a form of intense flirting, as an understanding between subject and person behind the camera arises. Strong, muscular bodies, skin that sweats, bends, and gets dirty, and tension in actions completed with another person allows layers of access points depending on one’s identity.”

– Aurele Gould



**Aurele Gould** • she/they  
Richmond, VA

*The Intimacy of Pre-Wrap*  
Triptych  
Photography  
2019

[aureliephotography.com](http://aureliephotography.com)

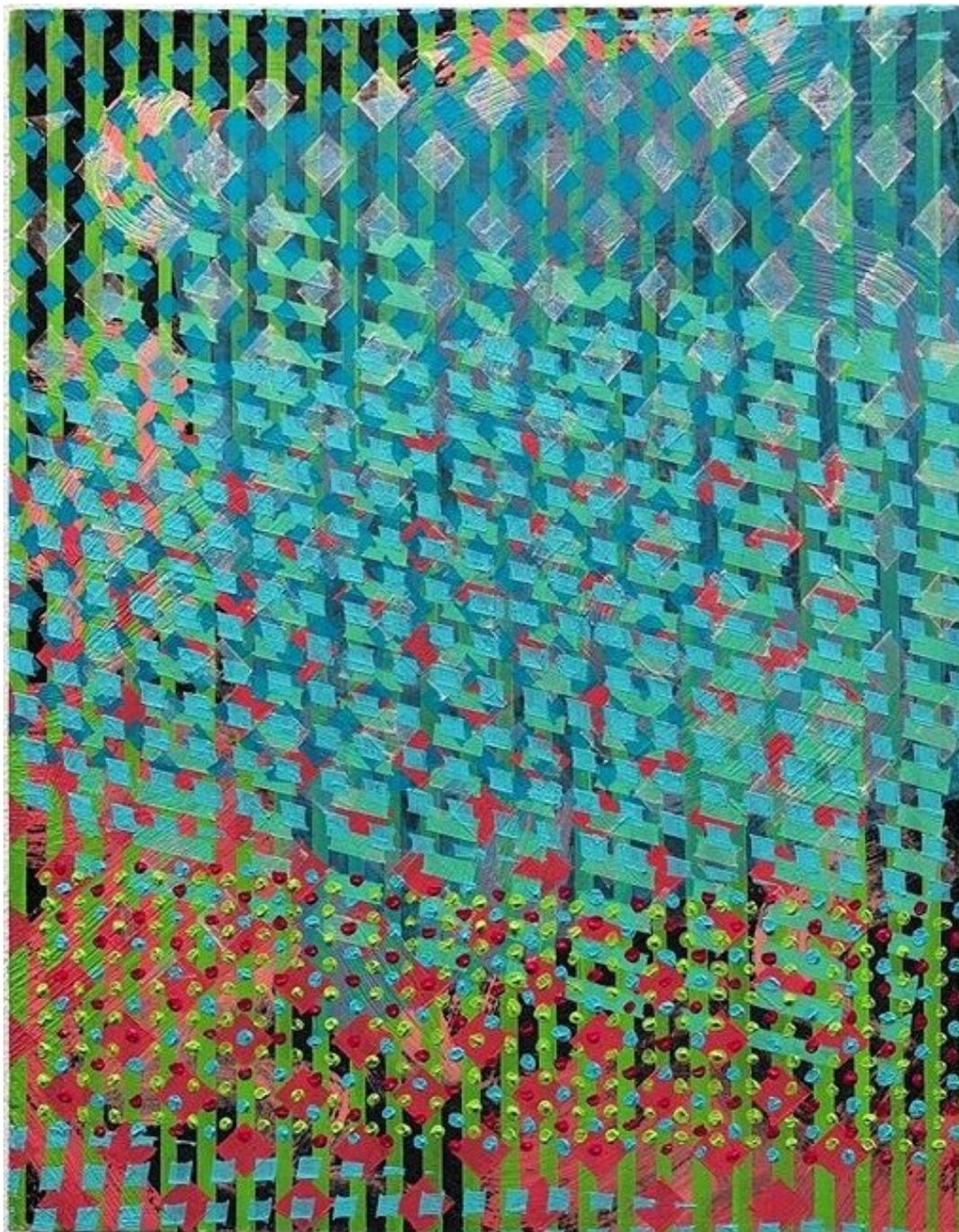
 [@aurelegould](https://www.instagram.com/aurelegould)

“My work is about intimacy (whether sexual or platonic) between women in sports. Pre-wrap is a communal object for girls who play sports. This singular item, used to hold back our hair during activity, was measured around the thigh. It is ritualistic to use this singular object with help from one’s teammates as a way to get ready before a practice or game.

Pre-wrap, although used as utility for us, is also a medical object used to compress muscles in injury, before you apply sports tape. Weaving between a constructed reality and a lived experience, my image exists from a personal drive to create a thesaurus of visual language for non-men. A moment of transference is constructed, a care and an intimacy among women. What does it mean to be a giver? What does it mean to be a receiver?”

– Aurele Gould

[Artist Statement and Bio](#)



**Cat Gunn** • they/them  
Baltimore, MD

*Every moment we spend together has felt more  
like home than anywhere I've ever been*

Oil and alkyd on panel  
2019

[catgunn.com](http://catgunn.com)

 [@little\\_\\_china](https://www.instagram.com/little_china)

“This painting is part of a series that was made during the beginning of a queer relationship, in which my non-binary identity had been acknowledged, validated, and respected. The titles reveal a subtle, poetic, personal narrative. The paintings are about creating spaces that are transitional and dynamic. Navigating through these spaces is a quirky experience, which parallels navigating through a heteronormative society as a queer couple.”

– Cat Gunn

[Artist Statement and Bio](#)



**Cat Gunn** • they/them  
Baltimore, MD

*Now, I fall asleep while inhaling your scent on  
my pillow*  
Oil and alkyd on panel  
2019

[catgunn.com](http://catgunn.com)

 [@little\\_\\_china](https://www.instagram.com/little_china)

“This painting is part of a series that was made during the beginning of a queer relationship, in which my non-binary identity had been acknowledged, validated, and respected. The titles reveal a subtle, poetic, personal narrative. The paintings are about creating spaces that are transitional and dynamic. Navigating through these spaces is a quirky experience, which parallels navigating through a heteronormative society as a queer couple.”

– Cat Gunn

[Artist Statement and Bio](#)



**Linda Hesh** • she/her  
Alexandria, VA

*Kissing Booth*

Wood, acrylic paint, steel, rubber, billboard  
media  
2015

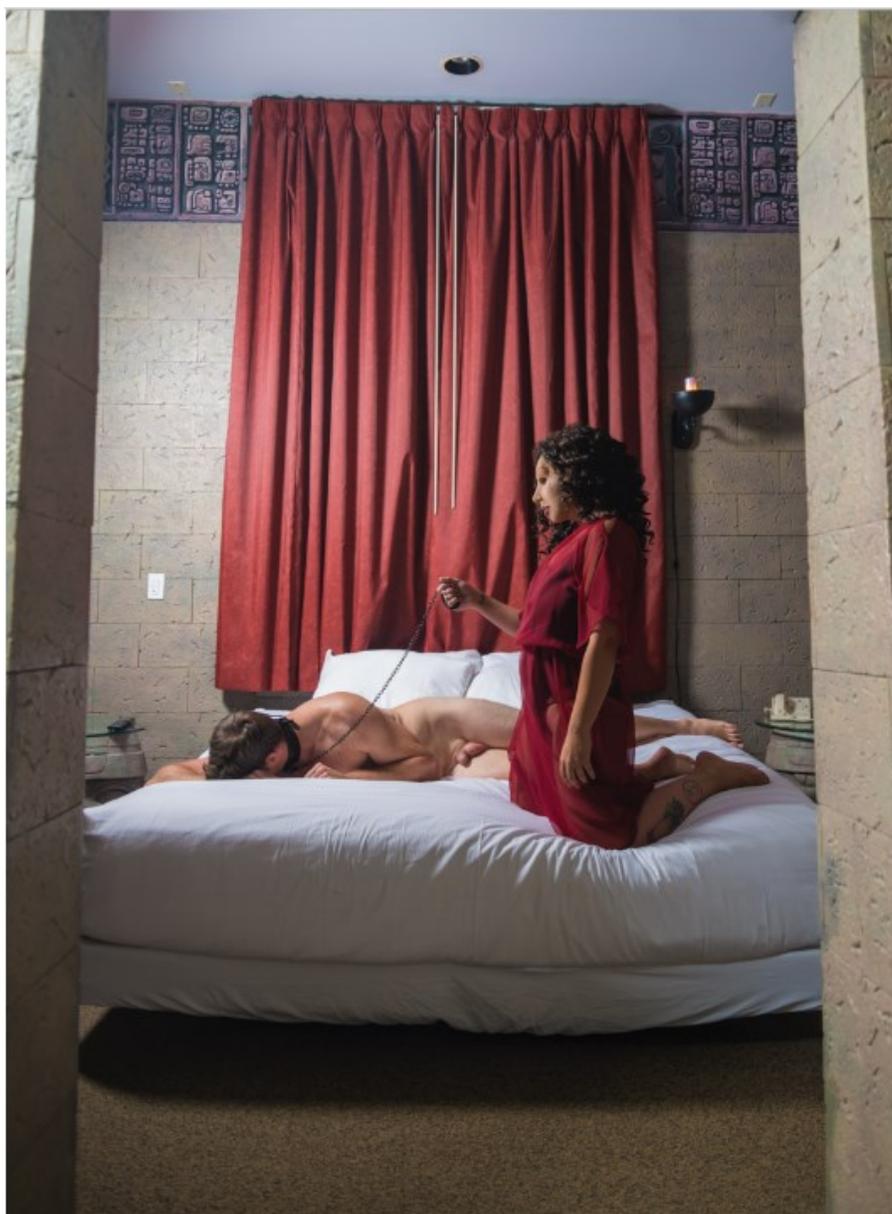
“We may not always feel comfortable with public displays of same sex affection, whether we are the ones showing affection or witnessing it. *Kissing Booth* looks like a stand that would be at a county fair, a place for fun and community. Here, the traditional red and white gingham has been altered so it contains hundreds of same sex couples kissing, creating a safe place for public affection.”

– Linda Hesh

[lindahesh.com](http://lindahesh.com)

   @lindahesh

[Artist Statement and Bio](#)



**Rachael McArthur** • she/her  
Brooklyn, NY

*Mayan Room*  
Archival Pigment Print  
2019

[rachaelmcarthur.com](http://rachaelmcarthur.com)



[@rachael\\_elizabeth\\_mcarthur](https://www.instagram.com/rachael_elizabeth_mcarthur)

[Artist Statement and Bio](#)

“*Hot Dreams* is a photographic project exploring my sexuality through female masking and the search for the ultimate adult fantasy land. It is a celebration of my liberation as a woman in kink. It explores empowerment through becoming an object of desire. This work allows me to challenge my "femininity" as I switch between submissive and dominant. I use my character Blanche Dumont to represent the freedom of my sexual choices and to dictate how my kink will be represented. I create a fantasy world where exploiting myself is the empowerment. I use the love hotels and my body to direct my own fantasy and live out desire. With moments of longing, waiting, action and stillness a narrative is presented that represents my sexuality and my role as a female identifying person in kink.”

– Rachael McArthur



**Rachael McArthur** • she/her  
Brooklyn, NY

*Hawaii Room*  
Archival Pigment Print  
2019

[rachaelmcarthur.com](http://rachaelmcarthur.com)

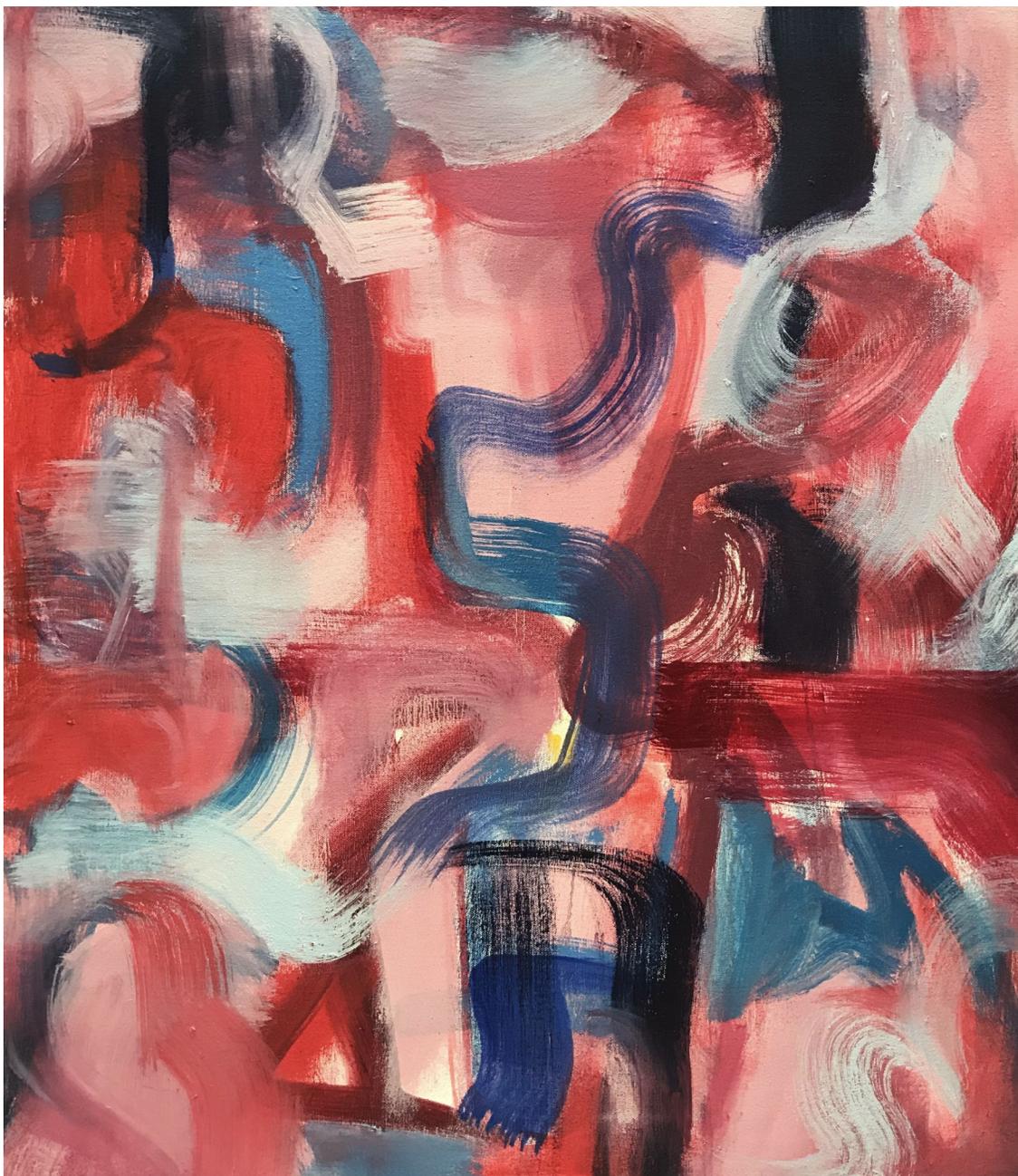


[@rachael\\_elizabeth\\_mcarthur](https://www.instagram.com/rachael_elizabeth_mcarthur)

[Artist Statement and Bio](#)

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– Rachael McArthur



**Annika Papke** • she/her  
Alexandria, VA

*Cherry*  
Oil on Canvas  
2019

 [@annidraws16](https://www.instagram.com/annidraws16)

[Artist Statement and Bio](#)

“I started this painting on Valentine's Day, a day that, ever since coming into my identity as a queer person, has had a special significance to me. I really cherish Valentine's Day as an opportunity to tell all of my friends how much I love them and this piece gave me an opportunity to reflect on the different kinds of love the past year in my life had brought and all of the positive and difficult emotions that come with it. I make this kind of art by reacting viscerally to an emotion with paint and then going back and thinking more deliberately about the marks I've made and altering them and repeating this process until I have a product I'm happy with.”

– Annika Papke



**Lucas J. Rougeux** • he/him  
North Bethesda, MD

*Come back*  
Oil on canvas  
2019

 @lucas.j.rougeux

[Artist Statement and Bio](#)

“This work plays with language to present feelings of melancholic loss of a relationship as well as sexual desire. The text at the forefront of the piece expresses an urgent longing for someone who was once important. The almost hidden text (CUM ON MY) implies a sexual vulnerability. All on a background of delicate colors of gray sadness and yellowed cum stains, the work teeters back and forth between a romantic yearning and a sensitive lust.”

– Lucas J. Rougeux



**Lucas J. Rougeux** • he/him  
North Bethesda, MD

*Let's Ignite a Cotton Pyre*  
Oil on canvas  
2017

 @lucas.j.rougeux

[Artist Statement and Bio](#)

“This work combines and re-purposes the dark history of gay men being burned at the stake for “sexual crimes,” with a deep sexual passion. Through the use of text in the piece as well as the title, the work invites a viewer, or lover, to willingly and defiantly be a part of a steamy, passionate, tender, and dangerous intercourse .”

– Lucas J. Rougeux



**Todd Stonnell** • he/him  
Richmond, VA

*I Scream, You Scream*  
Embroidery, Sequins  
2018



@toddwicktornado

[Artist Statement and Bio](#)

“This piece is from a collection entitled Boy Toys. They each explore and “toy” with the intermingling of playfulness and sexuality. I wanted to take objects usually associated with games and play and push them to the limit of both cheekiness and eroticism. This was my own attempt to challenge the soft-vanilla limitations I’ve placed on sex and love and see things from a new perspective. What began as a self-study, exploring my responses to often X-Rated exchanges on dating app, quickly became a fun challenge to take often benign and forgettable items and give them a more realized identity and flavor. I Scream, You Scream plays with the ever-popular association between dessert and sexual innuendo, with a nice beaded cherry on top.”

– Todd Stonnell



**Matt Storm** • he/him  
Washington D.C.

*Act of Looking I, 17, Crossing my  
Fingers, Getting Away with  
Something*

Edition of 2 + AP  
Archival Dye Print  
2017

“*The Act of Looking* series is my work to create a lexicon of ways to see and recognize a body, inclusive of ways to see my trans body.

This piece in particular functions as a way to show my sexuality as a trans masculine person. I think of it as a love letter to my own sexuality. Subversive, playful, beautiful, mischievous, optimistic.”

– Matt Storm

[mattstormphoto.com](http://mattstormphoto.com)

 [@mattstormphoto](https://www.instagram.com/mattstormphoto)

[Artist Statement and Bio](#)



**Matt Storm** • he/him  
Washington D.C.

*Act of Looking II, 09, Gesture*  
Edition of 3 + AP  
Archival Dye Print  
2018

[mattstormphoto.com](http://mattstormphoto.com)

 [@mattstormphoto](https://www.instagram.com/mattstormphoto)

[Artist Statement and Bio](#)

*“The Act of Looking* series is my work to create a lexicon of ways to see and recognize a body, inclusive of ways to see my trans body.

This piece interacts with how queer sexuality is commoditized. As we see in straight pop culture today, as well as in the way that straight people experience events like Pride parades, queer sexuality has become commoditized for mainstream consumption. Non-queer individuals can 'attach' themselves to, or position themselves adjacent to, queer sexuality, in order to leverage specific attributes that mainstream culture attaches to queer sexuality in this context, specifically, progressiveness, indulgence in excess, fun without consequences, drama, and a risqué-but-not-risky implied by the straight subject's adjacency to (rather than participation in) queer behavior. This piece shows a queer sexuality that more directly challenges the viewer to engage with queerness, rather than commoditize it.”

– Matt Storm



# The Artists

# NICHOLAS AIDEN

they/them • St. Johns, NL, Canada

[nicholasaiden.ca](http://nicholasaiden.ca)

 @nicholasaiden

## ARTIST STATEMENT

Aiden's practice is a relentless questioning of identity and the ways in which we navigate the social facets of the 'self.' They are committed to investigating and challenging the notions of selfhood, primarily through the lens of gender and sexuality. Their work strives to challenge the way that we perceive the body, and in turn, the complexities of identity. Through photography and performance Aiden explores the relationships between dress, pose, colour and texture to present alternative forms of beauty that exploit those visual elements in their familiarity. Aiden's images prompt the viewer to form and reevaluate their own relationships and associations to the body through their own visual vocabulary.

## BIO

Nicholas Aiden is a queer artist from St. John's, NL and holds a BFA in Photography from OCAD University. Their work has been shown in Canadian galleries such as Artscape Youngplace, Trinity Square Video and The Rooms. Aiden's work has been featured in the Scotiabank Contact Photography Festival, auctioned as a winner of ACT's SNAP juried photography competition, and featured in publications produced by The Madeline Co. and the San Francisco MoMA. In 2019 Aiden was longlisted for the Scotiabank New Generation Photography Award. In support of their work they have received funding from ArtsNL.



*Crybaby*, Inkjet print, 2019.

*Venus*, Inkjet print, 2017.

# VERONICA BARKER-BARZEL

she/her • Alexandria, VA • Torpedo Factory Art Center artist



## ARTIST STATEMENT

Through my art, I embark into worlds of adventure. Influenced by various cultures of places that I have lived for moments of time, traveled, and imagined from Eastern European fairytales, and folklore. I am fascinated by Iznik tiles, and Celtic designs and patterns. In my work, I am searching for the self and the place I might belong to in carved lines of the relief block or the etched line of a zinc plate. I started as a painter in this journey, but now I consider myself mostly a printmaker. Printmaking has helped me step back and reevaluate my own style. There is something meditative in creating the plate, and a satisfaction in hand pulling the image off of the press.

## BIO

Veronica Michelle Barker-Barzel is a painter and a printmaker. There is a strong connection, interplay between her paintings and her prints. The style is reflective of places that she has experienced and is stimulated by her personal background. It resonates with a bit of Russian folklore, German expressionism fused with urban surrealism.

Veronica was born in Washington, DC. But grew up mostly in Europe and spent her early 20's in Japan. She received her bachelors in liberal arts from University of Maryland University College. Veronica began her formal training in art when she began her Post Baccalaureate at Maryland Institute College of Art. MICA. Although, she was raised in an artistic household and her mother was singer and a painter.

In 2012, Veronica received second place for a printmaker's show at Art Space in Falls Church, VA. Had first solo shows in Naples, Italy in the early 2000's. She has also exhibited in Japan, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island. More recently she has mostly shown in the DC Washington metro area, including a well received solo show at MOCA in October 2013. While at MICA she had



participated in a couple exhibitions at the school. She has been involved with the artist community in Northern VA, Del Ray Artisans and the Torpedo Factory. In 2016, Veronica joined the Printmakers Inc. studio of the Torpedo Factory. In 2017 she was juried into Torpedo Factory Artist association and is currently serving on the board of the Torpedo Factory Artist Association.

*Um Sich Zu Esp*, Silkscreen, 2014.

# BRANDIN BARÓN

he/his • San Francisco, CA

[brandinbaron.com](http://brandinbaron.com)

 @brandinbaron

## ARTIST STATEMENT

I'm interested in dissecting embodiments of naturalistic and fantasized Southwestern cowboy imagery, focusing on the gay/bisexual/trans and multicultural bodies who aspire to "cowboy" avatars. In this visual analysis, I'm interested in widening the diversity of portrayals of these nationalistic/folk masculine tropes.

My compositions are "staged" through the process of layering my photographic and hand-rendered imagery with stock photography and digital textures. I utilize experimental printmaking techniques, especially in the play between different surface qualities of ink/paint/pigment, in a final output of 3 prints per image. Final prints are then embellished with hand-applied media, including: ink, gouache, pastel, acrylic and/or enamel.



## BIO

Brandin Barón is a San Francisco-based visual artist. After receiving his M.F.A from the University of California, San Diego, he has worked professionally as a fine and digital artist, graphic designer, costume designer for theatrical productions, and design scholar. From 2006-2018, he was a Professor of Design at The University of California, Santa Cruz.

*Artist's Reconfiguration of Chastaigne's The Miner's Ball, Screenprint on parchment with ink, gouache, pastel and enamel (print 2 of 3), 2019.*

# ADAM DAVID BENCOMO

he/him/they/them • Baltimore, MD,  
[adamdavidbencomo.com](http://adamdavidbencomo.com)

 @adbphoto

## ARTIST STATEMENT

Adam David Bencomo is a photographic queer artist currently based out of Baltimore, Maryland. His work deals with a variety of subjects including but not limited to LGBTQIA+ sub-culture, memorialism, gentrification, public art interaction, human consumption, and human usage. Adam's work may involve other mediums outside of photography, but the work tends to be photographic in some capacity.

## BIO

As one who identifies as a homosexual male, I found a home in the queer community amongst the bear community. This subculture was formed to welcome men with various girths, heights, and densities of body hair. It has existed for many years, and at times had forms of exclusivity. The bear community has both positive and negative aspects that helped shape my identity, and it has opened my eyes to evolving and encompassing broader aspects of the queer community within my life. Moments of fun, happiness, and even sadness come because we are humans. We learn to love and sometimes hate. In all this, *My Bearish Life* shows the many aspects of life. You can see the threads of love endure alongside the ideas of body positivity, gender nonconformity, and through passages of sickness and loss as well.

For me, coming out was a very rough process. Numerous relationships changed in a negative way which included my family and friends. When I found friends who accepted me as me, it was confusing in the beginning. They loved hearing me laugh, seeing me smile, and encouraged me to live my life just as it is. RuPaul says that as gay people, we get to choose our family. This is a glimpse of mine. So, welcome to *My Bearish Life*.



*Three*, Archival Pigment Print, 2016.

*Sikh Love*, Archival Pigment Print, 2018.

## MIKI BEYER

they/them • Herndon, VA

[mikibeyer.wixsite.com](http://mikibeyer.wixsite.com)

 @yourgayerdad

### ARTIST STATEMENT

Painting over portraits of them and their partner, *You're Already There. You Already Have Me* examines the artist's struggle with intimacy in an often white-passing, cis-het-passing relationship. They use dialogue from past conversations between them and their partner as an admission of being in love and a promise of feeling better tomorrow. They note their panic in feeling their identity regularly erased through their erratic mark-making, but acknowledge their relationship and love within that being positive force despite their internal conflict.

### BIO

Miki is a multidisciplinary artist based out of Northern Virginia. Their work focuses on the idea of creating and discovering a sense of self in adulthood while exploring their identity as a nonbinary lesbian of color.



*You're Already There. You Already Have Me.*, Diptych, Mixed Media on photo paper, 2019.

Detail of *You're Already There. You Already Have Me.*

# LOUIS CHAVEZ

they/them • Rochester, NY

[chavezlouis.com](http://chavezlouis.com)

 @llouischavez

## ARTIST STATEMENT

*Lovers I Had and Liked* is a contemplation on queer intimacy. This ongoing body of work explores the ways that we navigate the interpersonal as a means of solidarity and survival. The kinship built within our networks of friends and lovers is one of the most useful tools we have in the resistance to assimilation, and our fight against homophobia and heteropatriarchy. It is through our intimate understanding of one another that we offer ourselves the strength and vulnerability needed to sustain our wildest dreams and futures.



## BIO

Louis Chavez is a photographer and visual artist based in Rochester, New York. Taking notes from activist fronts, queer community, indigenous resistance, zine and print culture, their work seeks to weave together networks of solidarity and mutual aid for those who exist on the margins, and to make visible the understated beauty of these lived experiences.

# MANDY CHESNEY

she/her • Baltimore, MD

 @mandychesney

## ARTIST STATEMENT

Mandy Chesney's interest in domestic craft and kitsch sensibilities is evident throughout her multidisciplinary practice. In her work, camp and kitsch function as a visual vernacular outside of traditional notions of fine art. Leveraging these “value added” materials in a way that celebrates their assumed queerness and femininity brings an agency that beguiles cultural assumptions.

## BIO

Mandy Chesney is an artist living and working in Baltimore City. Originally from East Tennessee, She received her Master's Degree in multidisciplinary art from the Mount Royal School of Art at the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) in Baltimore, Maryland. Since graduating Mandy has helped form the collective, Compact Assembly, a collaborative project of other alumni from the Mount Royal School.



Detail of *Innards*, Rhinestones, glitter, acrylic paint, plastic stones, acrylic medium, and varnish on panel, 2019

Detail of *Oblige Me*, Rhinestones, glitter, acrylic paint, plastic stones, acrylic medium, and varnish on panel, 2019

# EVIN DUBOIS

he/him • Paducah, KY

[evindubois.com](http://evindubois.com)

 @evinduboyz

## ARTIST STATEMENT

Challenging notions of masculinity, my practice has fixated itself on the deconstruction and narrative of masculine behavior. Confronting this state of tension between the body and identity is a series of symbiotic structures of attachment such as adornment, dress, and excessive ornamentation. This bricolaged surface contrast the body as these figures semiotically develop their sexuality and flirt their way through queer culture.

Through intense confrontation of materials, process, and form, my work encounters the wear and tear reality of these engagements. Invested in gestures, self-portraiture, and the figure, these representations are caught between a unique moment of aggression and fulfillment, and get caught up in the drama of their own personal, fragmented, and constructed narrative. I source from problematic manifestations of patriarchy, flipping the allegorical potential of these icons like a double agent. This methodology is informed by the theoretical discourse surrounding queer identities, macho representation, and the fixation of the gaze. What emerges from this physicality is an intimate and revealing look at this conflated identity, the search for belonging and brotherhood, and the possibilities of an exhausted body.

By adorning this sensibility, a bravado is built up and broken down for a new form to gaze upon emerges. For the sake of touching down and the further possibility of flight, my intention is to float through this messy mobile of significance. What often remains is unsolved potential, fractured function, and a desire for conclusion from angels that fall and fail again and again...

## BIO

Evin Dubois is a visual artist interested in masculinity, adornment, fashion, personal narrative, and the



body. Through sculpture, jewelry, drawing, photography, and installation, his practice deconstructs the narrative of an often brash behavior and substance through a variety of materials and media. Evin earned his BFA in Fine Arts with an Art History minor from Columbus College of Art and Design in Columbus, Ohio, and recently earned his MFA in Sculpture with a Graduate Art History Minor from the University of Illinois, Urbana - Champaign. He has exhibited his work nationally, and participated in symposiums, workshops, and residencies in the US and abroad. Currently he lives and works in Paducah, Kentucky as Faculty in Sculpture/ 3D at the Paducah School of Art and Design at West Kentucky Community and Technical College.

*Detail of Fanboy Floated, Chickenwire, Epoxy, Hydrocal, Burlap, Found Objects, Found Clothing, Thread, Steel, Feather, 2019.*

# AURELE GOULD

she/they • Richmond, VA  
[aureliephotography.com](http://aureliephotography.com)

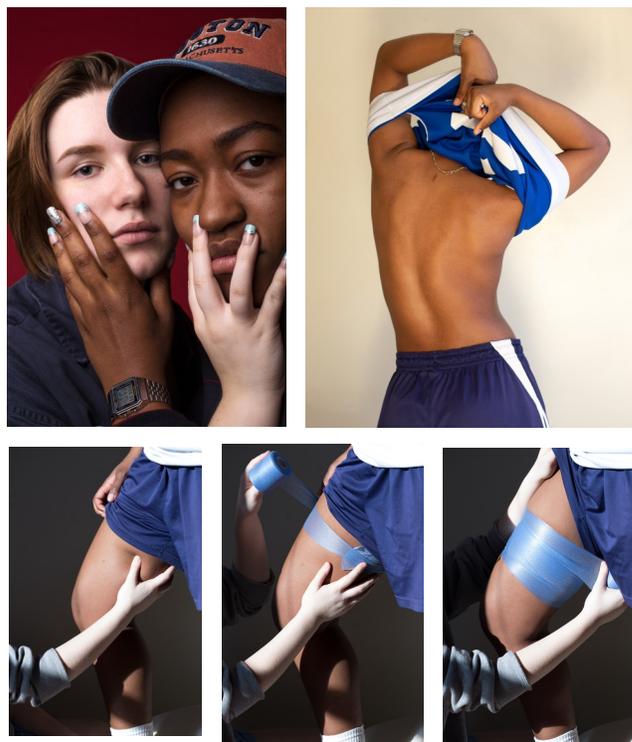
 @aurelegould

## ARTIST STATEMENT

The ways in which visual language can be fruitfully articulated using gesture specific to non-men is at the core of Aurele's work. Inversion as a concept has become critical to play with subversion, humor, and stereotypes as depicted in "Acrylic I." Aurele examines the function of stereotypes in queer coding; how they come to exist, when stereotypes are used, who can use them, and the complex practice in physical appearance that 'queer aesthetic' unfolds itself to be. Aurele's current practice establishes nuance and play within constructed binaries. "Alex" visualizes strong, muscular bodies, skin that sweats, bends, and gets dirty. Athleticism has been reserved for boys, even as gay men have used athleticism for their own aesthetic interests, and Aurele is interested in celebrating non-male masculinity, something that traditionally does not belong. A moment of transference among women is observed in "Pre Wrap", which centers care and intimacy. Weaving between a constructed reality and a lived experience, Aurele's images derive from a personal drive to create a thesaurus of visual language for non-men. What does it mean to be a giver? What does it mean to be a receiver? For all of time, their Aurele's imagery exists as a love letter to all the masc women and non-binary people in their life.

## BIO

Aurele Gould is a photographer based in Richmond, Virginia and DC with a BFA in Photography + Film from Virginia Commonwealth University, and currently works as a Gallery Associate at The Art League in the Torpedo Factory. Aurele has received the Distinguished Photographer Award from Alex Klein of the ICA Philadelphia, exhibited international at the Tasmeeem Doha Conference in Qatar, and was awarded Best in Show by the VCU Photo department at the Photo Velvet senior exhibition.



*Acrylic*, Photography, 2017.

*Alex*, Photography, 2017.

*The Intimacy of Pre-Wrap*, Triptych, Photography, 2019.

# CAT GUNN

they/them • Baltimore, MD

catgunn.com

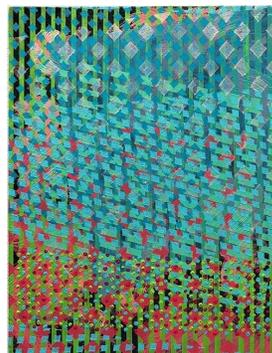
 @little\_\_china

## ARTIST STATEMENT

My work pushes notions of androgyny and queer, combining both masculine and feminine qualities to establish something that is gender-neutral, gender fluid, transgender, or genderqueer. My practice serves as rigorous experimentation that employs a scientific approach; I often juggle multiple paintings and add layers simultaneously to each current work, marginally altering a property to study the outcome. I also employ craft materials, primarily glitter, in order to recall femme, makeup, club, or drag cultures. Assorted recipes bring about diverse results, allowing my work to be a survey of potentially queer objects.

Being a painter who is strongly concerned with materiality, I allow the physicality of my work to arise from the alchemy of the paint. I often use various mediums and processes to create paint from scratch, break it down, change opacity and viscosity, adjust chromatic properties, or alter surface qualities as I feel needed. Various types of paint mixtures are layered over time, only to be smeared, scraped, and sanded, charging the work with a visceral energy that refers back to the physicality of process and the body. The process of covering and erasing these layers I have built up creates a back-and-forth of additive and subtractive, an accumulation and a diminishing.

My current paintings revolve around the notion of creating space, particularly through abstraction from a queer perspective with a playful awkwardness. These self-contained worlds are made up of repeating stripes, gradated forms, twisted squiggles, and organic shapes. Skewed geometry with hard edges flirt with expressive grounds and fields of color, creating an ambiguous space that is dizzying, strange, and dynamic. The quirky geometry and irregularity of patterns allow for vulnerable and imperfect moments, and are equally about sameness as they are about difference. The work, both as



physical objects and as windows into an illusionistic world, suggests a transfer between states— erratic and ever-evolving.

## BIO

Cat Gunn is an artist living and working in Baltimore who identifies as non-binary transgender and queer. They create abstract paintings with layers of oil paints and mediums built up over time, using a variety of techniques to manipulate the alchemy of the paint. Gunn has recently exhibited work at Terrault Contemporary in Baltimore, MD, Maryland Art Place in Baltimore, MD, Drexel University in Philadelphia, PA, 40 West Arts Gallery in Lakewood, CO, and Ashton Gallery in San Diego, CA among others. Gunn received a BFA in Painting from Towson University.

*Every moment we spend together has felt more like home than anywhere I've ever been,* Oil and alkyd on panel, 2019.

*Now, I fall asleep while inhaling your scent on my pillow,* Oil and alkyd on panel, 2019.

# LINDA HESH

she/her • Alexandria, VA

[lindahesh.com](http://lindahesh.com)



## ARTIST STATEMENT

We may not always feel comfortable with public displays of same sex affection, whether we are the ones showing affection or witnessing it. “Kissing Booth” looks like a stand that would be at a county fair, a place for fun and community. But here the traditional red and white gingham has been altered so it contains hundreds of same sex couples kissing, creating a safe place for public affection. Social media posting encouraged!

## BIO

Linda Hesh combines the personal and political playing with taboos and challenging social norms. Text and a multitude of materials comprise her temporary interactive public artworks along with works for exhibition. Her interactive pieces have been in Saint Petersburg in Russia, Chicago, Arlington, Baltimore, Washington DC and Haarlem in the Netherlands. “Linda Hesh's All Gay Review” at Hillyer Art Space in Washington DC was her most recent solo show. Americans for the Arts awarded her for Community Engagement and Social Activism in Public Art in 2011. Hesh's art is held in public collections including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The National Museum of Women in the Arts, The Kinsey Institute, and The Library of Congress.



# RACHEL McARTHUR

she/her • Brooklyn, NY

rachaelmcarthur.com



@rachael\_elizabeth\_mcarthur

## ARTIST STATEMENT

Hot Dreams is a photographic project exploring my sexuality through female masking and the search for the ultimate adult fantasy land throughout more than 30 cities in the United States. It is a celebration of my liberation as a woman in kink and BDSM. It explores empowerment through becoming an object of desire. I represent my kink through the use of role play, female masking, costuming and love hotels. This work allows me to challenge my femininity as I switch between submissive and dominant. I use my character Blanche Dumont to represent the freedom of my sexual choices and to dictate how my kink will be represented. She is a character created from the female masking community (which is mainly men) as a source of taking back my power through my female figure. This fetish allows men to find their empowerment through a silicone or latex female body and to create a woman in parts (ranging from face, legs, breasts and vaginas). I direct my character through this fetish by masking my own face and exploiting my own body. I am the author of my own fantasy, representing my individuality as a sexual self and reclaim my power through the use of a lens. Blanche Dumont is part of the scenarios I create to escape into the fantasy land, to represent myself as a switch, as a woman, as a pervert, as divine, as kitsch and as me.

## BIO

Rachael McArthur is a lens based artist currently living in Brooklyn, New York. Her work involves performance, video, sculpture and her alter ego Blanche Dumont. She uses her work to explore cultural ideals of feminine beauty, kink, BDSM, and sexuality. She has graduated from the Ontario College of Art and Design University with a BFA in Photography and a graduate from the Rhode Island School of Design with a MFA.



*Mayan Room*, Archival Pigment Print, 2019.

*Hawaii Room*, Archival Pigment Print, 2019.

# ANNIKA PAPKE

she/her • Alexandria, VA

 @annidraws16

## ARTIST STATEMENT

My artistic practice is centered around freedom and play. Within my body of work, I strive for constant exploration largely linked to color, material, markmaking, process, and experimentation. In my work, I use both chance and marks from my subconscious and thinking through every detail. Similarly, I alternate between working figuratively and abstractly to try and use what I learn from working with different subject matter and media and translate it to other types of work.

Currently, my work is focused on shared feelings many will experience through my specific, personal lens and trying to . It is all personal, centered on feelings I have had, but I hope others can ways in which to relate within my art. Throughout my life, I have used my art to explore my interpersonal relationships and create a broader connection to the rest of the world. My work is playful, inviting, and meant to be engaging for anyone who looks at it, approaching even dark topics with a sense of levity.

## BIO

Annika Papke is an artist and lifelong community member living and working in Alexandria, Virginia. Annika graduated from the College of William and Mary in 2019 with a BA in Art and Art History and American Studies and strives to pursue a career in art education and programming, having worked in different galleries within the Art Center. She is passionate about making art more accessible within her community, her cat, and friendship.



## Education

The College of William and Mary – BA in Art and Art History and American Studies, 2019

## Group shows

2020

My Queer Valentine, Target Gallery, Alexandria, VA

2019

William & Mary Senior Capstone Show, Williamsburg Contemporary Art Center, Williamsburg, VA

A Sense of Occasion, Andrews Gallery, Williamsburg, VA

*Cherry*, Oil on Canvas, 2019.

# LUCAS J. ROUGEUX

he/him • North Bethesda, MD

 @lucas.j.rougeux

## ARTIST STATEMENT

I do not claim to know what love is, nor that I have felt it. I do know of the complexities, contradictions, and shared experience of passionate gay emotion. My work presents the moments and feelings of desire, lust, and melancholic longing through abstraction and word play. The text in these works address the viewer as a lover, reaching out to form a connection. Let's ignite a cotton pyre combines and re-purposes the history of gay men burning for "sexual crimes" with heated fiery passion. Come Back immediately presents an urgent longing for someone who was once important while almost hiding a sense of sexual vulnerability. Both works use gay male identity to seduce a tender yet dangerous intercourse and bear a delicate vulnerability.

## BIO

Lucas, born in 1995, was raised in Niagara Falls, NY and expressed an artistic passion at a young age. His painting practice took off in 2012 after he took a painting class at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He acquired a Bachelor of Arts from Alfred University in 2017 which explored an interdisciplinary practice including painting, multi-media installation, performance art, and creative writing. He has been exhibited in New York and Maryland and has been living and working in North Bethesda, Maryland since 2018.



*Come back*, Oil on canvas, 2019.

*Let's Ignite a Cotton Pyre*, Oil on canvas, 2017.

# TODD STONNELL

he/him • Richmond, VA

 @toddwicktornado

## ARTIST STATEMENT

As a gay, cisgender man, I am attracted to the male physique (gasp!). The end. That's all. No, just kidding. But yes, I am intrigued and drawn to the perfect, muscular men of wax often associated with those images you might find under the umbrella of #gay #gaylife #gayfit #gaydaddy. At the same time, I have always felt a slight resistance, if not a twinge of resentment towards these images. I have perhaps felt “other than” within this realm and felt that either I could never reach that level of “perfection,” nor would I attract that into my own life. As both an artist and therapist, I have grown softer with this idea of perfection, noting the more important values in my own life, which I have aimed to nurture and reclaim.

“I Scream, You Scream” comes from this personal exploration and recollection, blending various genres in order to poke fun at, while also honoring my place within my community. I still associate the act of eating ice cream to my days chasing down the ice cream truck like a madman. This mirrors what I think a lot of us do as adults, chasing after something so desperately for something so temporary. It also doesn't hurt that ice cream has attributed to many-a-cheeky and risqué song or pun. “I Scream, You Scream” is part of what I consider to be a personal love story, giving myself permission to be playful and breaking the desperation onto which I clung for a lot of my life.

This piece comes from a larger collection of embroidery entitled “Boy Toys;” in this collection, I mix various playthings and objects associated with imaginative play and nostalgia, and I blend them with beefcake and pinup figures, letting these two worlds intermingle and see what happens. Like me, it is a continued work in progress.

## BIO

Todd Stonnell hails from the humble city of Richmond, Virginia. He previously lived in Washington, DC during his Masters studies in Art Therapy at the George Washington University, graduating from the program in 2013. His education granted him the opportunity to work with many



populations, including: adults living with HIV, as well as adolescents in a residential program for emotional and behavioral treatment; it was also during this time that he made his first trip overseas to India, where he worked with children undergoing treatment for cancer. Upon his return to Richmond, he offered art therapy to individuals in residential treatment for addiction, in addition to working with diverse populations in an outpatient setting. His desire to offer a wide array of methods for self expression, eventually led him to becoming a Zumba instructor, teaching a various locations around the city of Richmond.

A chronic introvert at heart, he finds that creating something grants him a language he never knew he could possess, a brightness and spontaneity that does not come as naturally when attempted through words. It becomes a meaningful and fulfilling thread that connects him to others in so many different ways, a tool for growth and resiliency. As an artist he works with many different media, including painting, stained glass, found object sculpture and embroidery. He is consistently attempting to find new and interesting ways to hone in on his craft, as well as push materials to their limits.

*I Scream, You Scream, Embroidery, Sequins, 2018.*

# MATT STORM

he/him • Washington, DC

[mattstormphoto.com](http://mattstormphoto.com)

 @mattstormphoto

## ARTIST STATEMENT

These images are self-portraits from the *Act of Looking* series.

I'm transgender. I rarely see my body, or bodies like mine, represented in photography and art. Sometimes, I see images of transgender people, made by non-transgender artists, for non-transgender audiences, and they feel disappointingly flat and not representative.

My body is incongruous with how we are taught to see bodies. In a way, all of our individual bodies are. We are all more complex, specific, weird, and filled with a spirit all our own, than we should ever hope to overcome.

I began making the series "Act of Looking" in 2017, in order to create an expanded lexicon of ways to see a body, inclusive of ways to see my body.

I use a tripod, a ten-second timer, and natural light. Some poses are especially physical - this is a series about being a self with a body, and the physical manifestation of my body, and how others interpret it, is a significant part of my lived experience. Other poses reference ways that US Americans learn to see bodies, including classical sculpture, renaissance painting, sports, and advertising.

I return to the same studio in Provincetown, Massachusetts, annually to take these. I'll keep making these images as long as they feel worthwhile. I hope that will be a long time.

## BIO

Matt Storm is a photo-based artist in Washington, D.C. His work engages with the theme of identity and the question "who are we, and how do we know?" He approaches this through portraiture, and his imagery includes transgender and queer issues, family, and community.

Storm is a 2020 recipient of the Arts & Humanities



Fellowship (AHFP) from the Washington, D.C. Commission on the Arts & Humanities. Storm serves on the leadership team of the LGBTQ Caucus of the Society for Photographic Education, and he is one of the inaugural artists at STABLE Arts in D.C. Highly involved in Washington D.C.'s transgender community, Storm recently curated a large, extended show of work from artists in the community.

Storm graduated Dartmouth College cum laude with a BA in Studio Art, and with the Perspectives on Design Award. Storm has worked in Dartmouth College's art department, the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, Massachusetts, and the Marpha Foundation in Nepal.

*Act of Looking I, 17, Crossing my Fingers, Getting Away with Something*, Edition of 2 + AP, Archival Dye Print, 2017.

*Act of Looking II, 09, Gesture*, Edition of 3 + AP, Archival Dye Print, 2018.