

Four artists busting the stereotype that queer art has to be doom and gloom



Katy Grannan, "Gail and Dale (Best Friends), Point Lobos" (2008) ©Katy Grannan

ART & PHOTOGRAPHY - FEATURE

Alongside legends such as Wolfgang Tillmans, Robert Mapplethorpe, and Nan Goldin, a new generation of painters address the intricacies of life

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LGBTQ-identifying artists have created many of the bleakest, most harrowing images of recent decades. From the mangled, violent erotica of [Francis Bacon](#), to the furious self-mutilation of [David Wojnarowicz](#), to [Nan Goldin](#)'s photographic portraits of HIV sufferers in hospital – the history of LGBTQ art can often paint an overwhelming picture of pain and grief. However, a younger generation of artists is now casting a new light on the queer experience; relatively free from the anguish of persecution and the HIV/Aids crisis, these artists are laying bare the quiet joys of love, intimacy and domestic bliss.

“I’m really struck by how many young queer painters today are working with domestic material,” artist, writer, and curator, [Stephen Truax](#), observes. “Younger artists are portraying their day-to-day lives and using that as content for their work. I saw a link between this, and the work of artists who died of HIV/Aids – like Patrick Angus, Hugh Steers, Peter Hujar, David Wojnarowicz – and those who were making autobiographical work during the crisis – like Nan Goldin, and Jack Pierson. I think it’s important, from an art historical perspective, to take note of both the similarities and differences between the work made in these two key timeframes.”

“It is important to take note of how we’re viewing queer lifestyle in terms of this transformation from pure activism to something more romantic” – Stephen Truax

These recent, more romantic artistic portrayals of queer lifestyle are the focus of a new exhibition, [Intimacy](#), curated by Truax and currently on show in New York. Passing through the gallery, one encounters paintings of LGBTQ couples having sex, displayed alongside tender photographic portraits of the morning after – meditative, introspective pieces that owe their existence to the sacrifices and activism of queer artists in the Nixon and Reagan years. The title, *Intimacy*, not only refers to the relationship between artist and lover but also our relationship with the artworks

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The majority of pieces chosen by Truax for this show were by contemporary artists, but also included are some of the most autobiographical works by key figures from the 20th century, including Robert Mapplethorpe, David Wojnarowicz and Peter Hujar. Reflecting the range of the queer experience today, the exhibition evokes surprising links between artworks in a variety of different mediums and presents artists from diverse backgrounds of race, gender identity, sexual orientation and nationality.



DAZED

LGBTQ-IDENTIFYING ARTISTS WHO HAVE CAPTURED INTIMACY IN THEIR WORK.



Intimacy Courtesy of Yossi Milo Gallery

ELLE PÉREZ

“If you compare an image from popular culture of a transgender person, such as Hilary Swank in *Boys Don't Cry* (1999), you can compare this to the recent work of [Elle Pérez](#) – who presents a

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There's a lot of heat in this photograph, and they're very calm. Ian is pictured wearing a towel like they just got out of the shower. It's capturing these little moments that for me is so compelling.

"Everyone experiences this kind of domestic intimacy regardless of whether or not they're queer, it's an important life-changing event and these are the experiences that connect us as human beings. However, I do think that this domestic comfort is more hard-won with a queer person. It wasn't just handed to us, you know? And it's impossible to separate out from our history – the HIV/Aids crisis – we would not be here if it were not for the political activism and sacrifice of those people who came before us. So this happiness, this joy, came at a price... it was earned."



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KIA LABELIJA

"There's been so much research done in the last few years about this new HIV crisis that's happening in the North American South, particularly in communities of colour. It's just shocking, the numbers are absolutely staggering. So including an artist like Kia LaBeija, who has been very publicly out about her HIV status, and including artists of colour, and artists from a variety of backgrounds, was a very important point to this exhibition.

"We selected this image from a series of works dealing with Kia's identity as a black woman living with HIV. It was important to us to include artists living and working with HIV, who directly address how the disease impacts their life. This particular image is a self-portrait taken in her bedroom and presents an intimate view of the artist into her private life. It was also included in the exhibition *Art Aids America*."



MICHAEL STAMM

"We've got two examples of Michael Stamm's work in this show. One is 'Just Like This Please', from 2016 – which was included in his first solo exhibition at Thierry Goldberg Gallery on the Lower East Side. The other is 'Snake Shawl' from his solo at D.C. Moore in Chelsea. Michael's work is so deeply nuanced, he is a meticulous painter. He uses laser-cut stencils that he makes himself, and he designs a lot of the painting in Rhino and other computer editing tools. I think this is a really beautiful example of his work, it's almost like a Renaissance painting, the way that it's so carefully designed. But the message is so simple: 'just like this please'. We've all had that experience late at night when we're lonely and we are desirous of someone else's affection."



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Michael Stamm, "Just Like This Please" (2016) Courtesy of the artist

PATRICK ANGUS

"There's a portrait by Patrick Angus, who died of HIV/Aids in 1992 – the painting was made in 1990. The subject is Rob Stuart, and he appears in his own bedroom, naked. As it turns out, I was put in touch with Mr Stuart, and he had not seen this painting until last year, at the artist's retrospective in Stuttgart – it has almost never been exhibited in New York. And he came to the opening and he was so moved and touched by this presentation of Patrick's work. Together, they had this very caring, loving relationship. So it was pretty intense to meet this person – it was really powerful.

"The people that I know who lived through that crisis are sort of touched by a younger person trying to directly address it. And I think in the last few years, we're seeing a lot of shows dedicated to HIV/Aids and the artists who were active at that time. Finally, 25-years-after, an enormous number of people died, we can address it from a historical perspective. And I think that the young people that are in this show are so thrilled to be shown next to some of their heroes who they never got a chance to meet. Robert Mapplethorpe, David Wojnarowicz, Peter Hujar – all these people died in the early 90s more or less. It's nice to be able to make this inter-generational connection."



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Patrick Angus, "Portrait of Rob Stuart" (1990) © Douglas Blair Turnbaugh, Courtesy Galerie Thomas Fuchs

Intimacy is showing at New York's Yossi Milo Gallery from June 28 – August 24. You can see more images from the show below:

Intimacy at Yossi Milo Gallery

30 IMAGES



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