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HOMOMUSEUM: Heroes and Moments

*What do Alexander the Great, Gertrude Stein, J Edgar Hoover
and Andy Warhol have in common?*

May 21 – July 30, 2005

Opening reception Saturday May 21 7-10pm

(New York, NY May 10, 2005) Exit Art, the nonprofit cultural center whose programs explore the diversity of cultures and voices in contemporary art, is pleased to present **Homomuseum: Heroes and Moments**. **Homomuseum** is an in-depth and multi-faceted glimpse into the lesbian / gay / bisexual / transgender (LGBT) icons and histories that shape contemporary art and culture today. The **Homomuseum** takes its poignant title from the idea of an imaginary national art museum dedicated to the presentation and historicizing of art created by LGBT artists. Conceptualized by Exit Art co-founders, Jeanette Ingberman and Papo Colo, **Homomuseum** presents the visions and stories of LGBT artists, in the post-Mapplethorpe and post-AIDS activism of the 1980s. This show responds to the tremendous influence that LGBT culture has on mainstream and pop culture and investigates how homosexuality is defined and expressed by the queer community today.

Homomuseum is an exhibition, video program, performance series and archive project. The *visual art exhibition* features interdisciplinary work by twenty-seven LGBT artists who created conceptual portraits of homosexual individuals that have influenced culture or works that are founded in a historical moment in gay history. In a five-week *video program*, feature length documentaries present unique aspects of contemporary gay life; from homeless transvestite prostitutes to racism confronting black gay men to same sex marriage (schedule of programs follows). Lesbian *performance and music* will complement the exhibition and fill Exit Art's space for several nights in June. For the *archive project*, people from the LGBT community have submitted objects and mementos that are personally significant to them as a gay person, each piece includes a brief narrative or label about the chosen object. Archive objects include: a set of video tapes that document Ethyl Eichelberger's celebrated drag performances, a compilation of early 20th century brothel photographs of young

male prostitutes, a script from a play about the queer director Dorothy Arzner, a documentary by a woman recording her friend's last days as he lies dying of AIDS, letters and newspaper clippings researching the persecution of gays and lesbians under Nazi occupation and much more.

ARTISTS

Christopher Arabadjis
Alvin Baltrop
James Bidgood
ak burns
Christopher Clary
JP Forrest
Leor Grady
Stephanie Gray
Michela Griffio
Geoffrey Hendricks & Sur Rodney (Sur)
Derek Jackson
Aaron Krach
Marget Long
Gabriel Martinez
James Morrison
Rune Olsen
Predrag Pajdic and Rachel Wilberforce
Robert Ransick and Blake Goble
Matthew Ravenstahl
Milton Rosa-Ortiz
Shane Ruth
Mary Ellen Strom
Jonathan Wahl
Phillip Ward

HEROES & MOMENTS

Alan Turing
NYC West Side Piers
Tony Duquette
Jack Smith
AA Bronson
Sal Mineo
Michelangelo + Felix Gonzalez-Torres
Kristy McNichol
Teena Brandon
Homosexuals burned in the Middle Ages
Diva songstresses
The dance floor
Mercedes McCambridge
Felix Gonzalez Torres
Felix Gonzalez Torres
The Bonobo ape
Crossdressing ritual
Jean Genet and Gertrude Stein
Coming out
Alexander the Great
Jesus Christ
Courbet's *The Sleepers*
Sons of Sodom
Quentin Crisp

VISUAL ART EXHIBITION

HEROES

James Bidgood is seen as the father of pulp and glamour aesthetic, yet his works are still scarcely known. For **Homomuseum**, his photographs from the late 1960s pay cinematic homage to the youthful body in elaborate and romantic shimmering stagings of a homoerotic paradise. Bidgood was strongly influenced

by Tony Duquette, an interior designer to the stars in the 1950s, who also spent much of his professional life as a costume designer on Broadway and in Hollywood. Duquette won a Tony Award in 1961 for his costume design for the play *Camelot*.

Paying homage to the brilliant queer avant-garde filmmaker and performance artist Jack Smith, **ak burns** creates a beautiful water fountain out of trash. The idea for this project was taken from an interview between Smith and Sylvere Lotringer. During the interview, Smith explains his ideas for a better society that functions around the exchange of trash that could be used to create familial habitats and that a water source would be a central architectural feature in the gay home. For **Homomuseum** burns creates a water fountain out of a series of found plumbing fixtures including a bathtub, sink and toilet that are artfully arranged with plants and other domestic objects realizing some of Smith's ideas for a queer home.

AA Bronson has been an inspiration to so many people through his work with General Idea and his more recent work as a healer. **Homomuseum** artist, **Christopher Clary**, was one of the young people who came to know Bronson as a healer. Clary found the therapeutic moments he spent with Bronson paved a way for him as an artist and gay man, and created a powerful feeling that he cannot put into words. Clary has tried to capture Bronson's presence through a slide show of 80 images that were pulled from 2,000 pictures that he took of him over the course of two hours.

Around the time of Mercedes McCambridge's death last year **Homomuseum** artist **Marget Long** learned that she had performed uncredited the voice of Regan, the possessed girl in *The Exorcist*. "I rented the movie again just to *listen* to McCambridge. I closed my eyes and imagined her, then fifty-seven years old, inventing the voice of the devil. I pictured her trying out that deep, inhuman voice on a bunch of studio technicians. I imagined her smiling between takes at the sheer weirdness of the sounds she was making. I thought of her laughing at the perversity of the whole situation." For **Homomuseum** Long created an audio piece using McCambridge's "voice effects" from *The Exorcist*. The 3-minute looping piece is a straight-up appropriation of her performance, most other voices from the track are removed so listeners can hear McCambridge channel the devil in all her spectacular acoustic glory.

In **Milton Rosa-Ortiz's** installation, he confronts the rarely addressed, homo or bisexuality of Alexander The Great. Created out of empty shell casings from AK-47's

(the weapon of choice of the US Military in Iraq) and suspended from the ceiling by monofilament, Rosa-Ortiz creates a dais of Alexander The Great in bed with his "companion" Hephaiston. The casings define the relief of two men tenderly lying in bed covered by a blanket. The position of the bodies is inspired by an Egon Schiele sketch, and the blanket takes the shape of the map of the world that the Macedonian King conquered (from Yugoslavia to the Indus River). In this elaborate installation, Rosa-Ortiz comments on contemporary political issues such as same-sex marriage and homosexuals in the military, on another level, the piece conceptually links Alexander's conquest of the Arabian empire, with the U.S.A.'s liberation of Iraq.

MOMENTS

The late African-American photographer **Alvin Baltrop** spent over a decade risking his life to produce an enormous historically valuable body of work documenting gay history that most galleries and publishers refuse to touch. The 20 gelatin silver prints selected for **Homomuseum** chronicle life on the old West Side piers from 1975 to 1986, depicting the casual sex and nonchalant narcotizing, the creation of artwork and music, sunbathing, dancing and the effects that the outbreaks of violent crime and AIDS had on the gay community during these times.

Fluxus artist **Geoffrey Hendricks** and his partner **Sur Rodney (Sur)** pay tribute to homosexuals burned in the Middle Ages in their interactive installation. Hendricks and Sur use faggots (bundles of branches tied together) to create a structure under which the public is invited to sit and enter names of homosexuals throughout history onto registry cards that will then be affixed to the work. After the **Homomuseum** exhibition, the faggots with nametags attached will be burned in the spirit of Buddhist or Hindu cremations while the names and histories from the cards will be read.

Very few places have been and continue to be as crucial to the queer community as the dance floor. One hundred years ago, it was the only almost-safe space where queer men and women could meet. Over time, its role remained but the location moved repeatedly. During the 1920s, friends might congregate in the basement of a townhouse in Harlem. During the '50s, the dancing might take place in the back of one of the newly opened gay bars, more public but still illegal and so it was hidden from view. Today, the dance floor remains a highly charged space. **Aaron Krach** creates a reflective dance floor for his installation, encouraging the public to walk on and interact with the piece and fully experience the magic of being on the dance floor.

Inspired by the Biblical story of *Sodom and Gomorrah*, **Jonathan Wahl** created his sculptures, *Sons of Sodom*. Like Lot's wife who was told to leave Sodom by God and be saved but was turned into salt for looking back, gays and lesbians today seem to enjoy a similar secondary punishment of surviving into the present, only to be caught between *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* and a proposed constitutional amendment inspired by this biblical story. *Sons of Sodom*, is realized in an installation of 10 sculpted portrait heads made out of salt of Wahl and 9 of his gay friends. The sculptures are presented as antiquities, fragmentary heads with no bodies. They resemble the remains of Greek and Roman societies that we cherish as much for their artistic achievements as the political environments of democracy and pluralism.

HOMOMUSEUM VIDEO PROGRAM

Saturdays, June 18-July 23, 2005

Curated By Jim Browne

June 18, 2005 @ 2pm

HIDE AND SEEK

Directed by Su Friedrich, 1996, 65 minutes

Su Friedrich's brilliant film, *Hide and Seek*, mixes documentary and fiction to create a fascinating portrait of lesbian childhood. Revealing the imaginary universe of young lesbians, it's about being at an age when sexual feelings are still vague. The fictional narrative tells the story of Lou: a twelve year old girl living in Brooklyn in the mid 1960's, coming to terms with her burgeoning sexuality. Her story is skillfully woven between interviews with twenty adult women who recount salient moments from their childhoods, including their first attractions, how they felt when they first heard the word lesbian and thoughts about the possible cause for their homosexuality. Mixing several genres, the film also includes more than 100 photographs of lesbians when they were young girls, and archival footage from educational films and home movies.

June 25, 2005 @ 2pm

NITRATE KISSES

Directed by Barbara Hammer, 1992, 67 minutes

Nitrate Kisses explores eroded emulsions and images for lost vestiges of lesbian and gay culture. This first feature by Barbara Hammer, a practicing pioneer of lesbian cinema, weaves striking images of the sexual activities of four gay and lesbian couples with footage that unearths the forbidden and invisible history of a

marginalized people. Archival footage from the first gay film in the U.S., *Lot in Sodom*, (1933) footage from German documentary and narrative films of the 1930's are woven with current images of desire in this sexy haunting documentary.

July 9, 2005 @ 2pm

THE SALT MINES

Directed by Carlos Aparicio & Susana Aikin, 1990, 47 minutes

The Salt Mines explores the lives of Sara, Gigi and Giovanna, three Latino transvestites who for years have lived on the streets of Manhattan supporting their drug addictions through prostitution. They made their temporary home inside broken garbage trucks that the Sanitation Department keeps next to the salt deposits used in the winter to melt the snow. The three friends share the place known as "The Salt Mines" with a varied community of homeless people. They talk about their sexual identity, their past and their dreams. We follow their daily lives day and night until the place is closed and sealed by the city, forcing everyone to disperse.

July 16, 2005 @ 2pm

TONGUES UNTIED

Directed by Marlon Riggs, 1989, 55 minutes

This is the acclaimed account of Black gay life by Emmy Award-winning director Marlon Riggs. Using poetry, personal testimony, rap and performance, *Tongues Untied* describes the homophobia and racism that confront Black gay men. Some of the tales are troublesome: the man refused entry to a gay bar because of his color; the college student left bleeding on the sidewalk after a gay-bashing; the loneliness and isolation of the drag queen. Yet Riggs also presents the rich flavor of the Black gay male experience, from protest marches and smoky bars to the language of the "snap diva" and Vogue dancer. A benchmark film which speaks for itself.

July 23, 2005 @ 2pm

TYING THE KNOT

By Jim De Seve, 2004, 87 minutes

Jim de Sève's no-frills documentary takes a concerted look at the heated and ongoing debate about same-sex marriage in the United States. Focusing on two gay couples who've become entangled in laws forbidding homosexual wedlock, the film puts a human face on the issue. Included are interviews chronicling marriage's evolution through the centuries and a discussion by proponents, who debunk the arguments against gay unions.

SPRING BENEFIT GAYLA!

Exit Art's spring benefit will feature a preview of **HOMOMUSEUM** on Wednesday, May 18th, honoring Artist **James Bidgood**, Lawyer and Activist **Mary D. Dorman** and **God's Love We Deliver**. For ticket or sponsoring information please contact Andrea Salerno at 212-966-7745 x24 or andrea@exitart.org.

ABOUT EXIT ART

Exit Art has charted the new in art and contemporary culture since it's founding by directors Jeanette Ingberman and Papo Colo in 1982. Over the course of 20 years, Exit Art has acquired a substantial reputation for curatorial innovation, depth of programming in diverse media, and especially for bringing to public attention the work of important unknown artists. Part of its mission is to present the work of under-recognized living artists in innovative ways that expose the diverse, multi-disciplinary nature of contemporary culture. Its exhibitions, performances and programs challenge traditional notions of what art is and explore the rich amalgam of voices and cultures that continually shape America. As such, it has grown to become one of the most admired, innovative spaces for supporting artists and providing the public with a visionary look on what's to come. Exit Art now stands as an archive of cultural thought and expression routinely mined by artists, students, curators, and scholars. It is no small wonder that Exit Art's programs have attracted a million visitors from across the country and around the world.

FUNDING

General support for Exit Art's exhibition program provided by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Starry Night Fund at The Tides Foundation, Greenwall Foundation, Jerome Foundation, New York State Council on the Arts, Brown Foundation, The Carnegie Corporation of New York, Altria Group, Inc., JPMorgan Chase, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, Exit Art's Board of Trustees and our members.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Exit Art is located at 475 Tenth Avenue at 36th Street. **Homomuseum** will be open each Tuesday through Thursday, 10 am – 6 pm; Friday, 10 am – 8 pm; Saturday, 12 noon – 8 pm Closed Sunday and Monday. There is a suggested donation of \$5. For more information, the public may call 212-966-7745 or visit www.exitart.org.

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