

Press Release

20 January 2023

(Un)Defining Queer

27 January – 3 December 2023



This first-of-its-kind exhibition at the Whitworth delves into the gallery's collection to explore how we can use a queer lens to define what the term 'queer' means. Examining same-sex love and desire and gender fluidity across different cultures, the exhibition will offer a survey of artworks that seeks to redress historic omissions that have existed as a result of heteronormative museum practice.

Presenting collection works alongside loans the exhibition includes artists Ajamu X, Niki de Saint Phalle, General Idea, David Hockney, Maggi Hambling, Pearl Alcock, Keith Vaughan, Matthew Bamber, Sarah-Joy Ford, Wolfgang Tillmans, Chester Tenneson and Jez Dolan.

Exhibition producer Dominic Bilton has led the development of this exhibition in partnership with Curator (Historic Fine Art) Imogen Holmes-Roe and with support from the LGBT Foundation.

Dominic said: "LGBTQIA+ people representation in the art collection, in the gallery, in history and in culture is so important. It shows how they have informed things like printmaking, textiles, and art practice.

"We have an opportunity, through the exhibition and engagement with our LGBTQIA+ communities to amplify and support an often-marginalised group. Traditionally museums and galleries have not engaged with LGBTQIA+ communities, whether that be due to lack of expertise on the subject of queer art history, or a lack of capacity and knowledge around how to engage with our queer communities. *(Un)Defining Queer*, seeks to redress these historic omissions by presenting works, some that have never been on display before, interpreted through a queer lens."

Dominic added: "We've got over 70 artworks in the exhibition, and I really hope that people feel inspired, and get a sense of history and community from it. I hope people come away from this exhibition proud of who they are regardless of whether or not they are queer."

(Un)Defining Queer is a participatory-led project that has been working with an intersectional group of people, who self-identify as LGBTQIA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning, intersex and asexual) to help us develop a glossary of queer terms. As part of the exhibition, visitors will be invited to contribute to the development of our 'Queer Glossary' as we explore how to define LGBTQIA+ representation and visibility within the gallery.

Exhibition curator Imogen Holmes-Roe said: "*(Un)Defining Queer* is an exciting opportunity for the gallery to continue building on the work that has already begun through our wider *Queering the Whitworth* programme and to give it greater visibility. Through working alongside the project's participants, we have discovered artworks that either haven't been shown at the Whitworth or interpreted through this lens before."

Centred around key themes that include Queer Gaze, Performativity, Chosen Family, Mythology and Activism, the exhibition seeks to challenge the heteronormative gaze. The space itself will hold moments of activism, from the colour scheme that is used within the exhibition, reclamation of homophobic language to the year-long inclusive engagement programme.

In proud partnership with the LGBT Foundation.

For further press information, images and interview requests please contact Catharine Braithwaite on 07947 644110 or cat@we-r-lethal.com

Notes to editors

Image above: Ajamu X, Bud Kim, 2018 © the artist, Ajamu Studio

The project has been developed in partnership with LGBT Foundation

The exhibition development was made possible from funding by The National Heritage Lottery Fund, thanks to National Lottery Players

About the Whitworth

The Whitworth is proudly part of The University of Manchester, operating as a convening space between the University and the people of the city. It was founded in 1889 as The Whitworth Institute and Park in memory of the industrialist Sir Joseph Whitworth for “the perpetual gratification of the people of Manchester” and continues this mission today in new contexts. In 2015 the gallery undertook a £17 million redevelopment by architects MUMA, which doubled the public space, creating new facilities to house the collection of over 55,000 works of art, textiles, and wallpaper. Along with expanded gallery spaces, a study centre, learning studio, and collections care centre, the gallery reconnected with its park, with communal gardens and outdoor programmes. The gallery is driven by a mission to work with communities to use art for positive social change, and actively address what matters most in people’s lives. This new vision has been developed as part of an international dialogue about how to evolve and adapt museums to a constantly changing world. This work is underpinned by three key concepts: learning together, through making and doing; creating a place of care, consideration, and community; taking action.

www.manchester.ac.uk/whitworth

Gallery opening times:

Tuesday to Sunday 10am-5pm, Thursday late opening until 9pm

With thanks for our official paint sponsor Little Greene.