THE FIRST HOMO—SEXUALS

The Birth of New Identities 1869–1939


"The Damned Club"
A.A

Today, everybody knows the word "homosexuality." But this wasn't always the case. For a long time, sex and love with the people of the same gender were forbidden. There were laws against it.

Where Does the Word "Homosexuality" Come From?

The word "homosexuality" came up about 150 years ago in Europe.

At that time, society was changing a lot.

Two people were important:

– Karl Heinrich Ulrichs was a German lawyer

– Karl Maria Kertbeny was a Hungarian writer

Both said that love for the same gender is not something bad. But they explained this in different ways.

Ulrichs said: If someone loves a person of the same gender, it is part of who they are. People are born this way. It is natural and not wrong. Ulrichs called gay men "Urning" and lesbian women "Urninde." He wanted to show that love for the same gender is part of human nature.

Kertbeny thought differently. He said: What matters is freedom. Every person has the right to choose whom they love. The state must not decide this. That is why Kertbeny fought against laws that punished homosexuality.

In 1869, Kertbeny created the words "homosexual" and "heterosexual." That was very important. A lot has happened since then: People have begun to think differently about sexuality. You can also see this in the art from the time.

About the Exhibition

The exhibition is called:

The First Homosexuals: The Birth of New Identities 1869–1939.

It shows artworks from the time between 1869 and the Second World War.

The exhibition was first in Chicago. Now it is shown in Basel. The exhibition in Basel looks more closely at Switzerland. The Kunstmuseum Basel shows artworks and documents from its own collection alongside artworks from around the world. These works show how homosexual people lived in the past, also in Switzerland.

The exhibition has three rooms, with a total of six themes.

First Room

– *Before*: What was life like when the word "homosexuality" did not yet exist?

– *From Concept to Image*: How did the first homosexual people show themselves in their artworks? How did they show their surroundings?

Second Room

– *Changing Bodies*: How did people show bodies in art? What has changed?

– *Speaking in Code*: People could not speak openly about their homosexuality. What secret signs and codes did they use?

Third Room

– *Gender Diversity* is about trans people*.

– *Colonial Images and Counter-Images*: How are the histories of colonialism and homosexuality linked?

Why Is the Exhibition Important?

The exhibition shows how queer* people saw themselves. It shows how they made art about their lives, their bodies, and their feelings. For a long time, people did not see or hear these stories. This exhibition shows them now. It helps us understand history better and more fairly. In the past, many queer people were treated badly and forced to be silent. In some countries, this still happens today. That is why we must remember these stories and protect the rights of queer people. This is important.

*queer

Queer means different. Queer describes people who live and love differently from what society expects.
The word queer used to be an insult. Today, many people use the word proudly to describe themselves. Queer refers to many different people.

Queer people include, for example:
Gay men, lesbians, and trans people.

*trans people

When a baby is born, doctors examine its body. Then they write down "boy" or "girl." Trans people are people whose gender is different from what was written down at birth. Some people know this from a young age. Others understand it later in life. They live as the gender that is right for them.

Elena Filipovic

Preface

The First Homosexuals: The Birth of New Identities 1869–1939 invites us into a moment when desire, identity, and self-understanding began to take new public form. It celebrates the courage and power of art to give shape to what had long remained unnamed. Through around 80 paintings, photographs, sculptures, and works on paper the exhibition traces how new images of sexuality, gender, and identity appeared after 1869—the year in which the term "homosexual" was first coined—and how these transformed how people understood themselves and each other.

Such a project is only possible through the extraordinary commitment of many people. This exhibition was first organized by Alphawood Exhibitions at Wrightwood 659 in Chicago and researched and curated by Jonathan D. Katz, Curator, and Johnny Willis, Associate Curator. It is based on Katz's impressive research, carried out over many years, and documented in the publication that accompanied the first presentation. For this exhibition guide, his introduction to the Chicago exhibition is being published in German and French for the first time. *The First Homosexuals* was adapted for Kunstmuseum Basel in collaboration with the curators Rahel Müller and Len Schaller. Katz and Willis have supported the team here with their remarkable trust, expertise, and enthusiasm. At a moment when so much prejudice and persecution of people for who they are and who they love prevails across the world, to realize such an exhibition is an achievement that deserves explicit recognition.

The global scope of this project has only been made possible thanks to numerous international loans. Collectors and institutions in Brazil, Chile, Croatia, Denmark, England, Estonia, France, Germany, Mexico, Peru, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the USA have generously supported this project with works from their collections. The project was also shaped by important local collaborations: Rolf Thalmann from the Swiss Gay Archives shared his extensive knowledge with the museum team. Under the direction of Andreas Wenger, the scenography students at FHNW in

Basel contributed valuable ideas to the exhibition architecture, and the queer organization *Basel tickt bunt!* collaborated with the Kunstmuseum for this project.

My heartfelt thanks go to the team at the Kunstmuseum, who devoted themselves fully to this project to create a version specifically for Basel. Rahel Müller initially oversaw the project; her curatorial contribution in the early stages was fundamental. Len Schaller then took over and brilliantly brought the exhibition to life on site in close curatorial collaboration with Jonathan D. Katz and Johnny Willis. Schaller was supported by Anna Dedi, Renate Wagner, and the entire project team—in particular Hanna Banholzer, Eleonora Bitterli, Matthias Fellmann, Jan Haller, Daniel Kurjaković, Kim Huệ Lương, Monika Mascus, Esther Rapoport, Vera Reinhard, and Annegret Seger. From conservation and education to communication, this exhibition is the result of an extraordinarily collective effort across all departments of the museum.

A very special thanks is due to the Alphawood Foundation Chicago for its unflinching and generous support. Without the exceptional commitment of its Founder, Fred Eychaner, its Executive Director Chirag Badlani, and the whole Alphawood team, this exhibition would not have been able to be realized here. We are all deeply grateful. I would also like to thank Samuel Werenfels warmly for his support for this exhibition guide as well as the Foundation for the Kunstmuseum Basel for its tireless support of the museum.

The First Homosexuals in Basel

Today, the term "homosexuality" may seem as though it has always been self-evident and part of everyday language. In fact, it emerged only around 150 years ago in a Europe shaped by profound social and cultural upheaval. The concept developed from a correspondence between the German lawyer Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825–1895) and the Austrian-born Hungarian author Karl Maria Kertbeny (1824–1882). As early as the 1860s, Ulrichs had invented the term *Urning* to describe people with innate same-sex desire. In doing so, he shifted attention away from individual sexual acts toward a fundamental characteristic of a social minority, similar to current Western understandings. Kertbeny, by contrast, rejected the idea of a fixed identity and instead emphasized universal human rights. In 1869, he coined the terms "homosexual" and "heterosexual" in two anonymous pamphlets. His aims were political and legal: he opposed laws that criminalized sexual activities between men, appealing to personal freedom and the protection of the private sphere.

The First Homosexuals: The Birth of New Identities 1869–1939 illustrates how new images of sexuality, gender, and identity arose following the first public circulation of these terms in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The exhibition presents a wide range of artistic positions that make visible the emerging awareness of homosexual and trans identities. The selected works offer insights into queer communities, intimate encounters, coded desires, colonial entanglements, and self-determined ways of life. They bear witness to shifts in the understanding of sexuality, the body, and ultimately gender, showing how cultural production not only reflects new concepts of identity, but actively helps shape them.

The First Homosexuals was initially exhibited at Wrightwood 659 in Chicago in 2022 and then even more expansively in 2025. For the presentation at the Kunstmuseum Basel, the exhibition's checklist specifically includes additional works and archival materials from the region, including from the museum's own collection. This not only offered the opportunity to view the Öffentliche Kunstammlung Basel from a fresh perspective, but also to make visible the lived realities of homosexual

people in Switzerland: from an indignant yet fascinated anonymous account of the cruising scene in Basel in the 1920s to the minute book of Amicitia, the first organization for lesbians in Switzerland. In fact, Basel's relatively early history of legal tolerance gives this exhibition a particular resonance here, rooting the Kunstmuseum's engagement in the city's own cultural memory.

The exhibition is divided into six thematic sections. *Before* opens the first room, exploring the period before the term "homosexuality" was first used. It then moves to *From Concept to Image*, which examines how the "first" homosexual people depicted themselves and their immediate surroundings. In the second room, *Changing Bodies* demonstrates how the emerging understanding of homosexuality transformed representations of the body in homoerotic works. The section *Speaking in Code* explores how homosexuality was suggested through coded references rather than made explicit. The third and final room begins with *Gender Diversity*, dedicated to trans people whose gender identities and expressions lie outside conventional norms. It ends with *Colonial Images and Counter-Images*, which explores the complex entanglements between the history of European colonialism and the history of sexuality through selected examples.

In the last room, it becomes clear how closely the repression of homosexual and trans people is connected to the fascist and imperial ambitions of the respective societies. Homosexuality is still criminalized in over 60 countries. In many places, the hard-won rights of LGBTQIA+ people are at risk; trans people, in particular, are currently being targeted. This situation serves as a painful reminder that seemingly basic rights can never be taken for granted and that fundamental human rights are still not universally implemented. It also underscores the urgency of this exhibition and makes the Kunstmuseum's decision to engage with this socially relevant subject especially meaningful.

In 1991, the fundraising dinner *Art against AIDS International* took place at the museum, supported by its then director Christian Geelhaar (1939–1993) and organized by the Swiss gallerist Thomas Ammann (1950–1993). At a time when the AIDS crisis was still marked by profound stigma, fear, and widespread silence, this event represented an early and courageous act of institutional solidarity. In the following decades, there were further programs and exhibitions featuring and exploring LGBTQIA+ artists. The Kunstmuseum's collection also includes numerous queer positions, from Ottilie W. Roederstein (1859–1937) to Sadie Benning (b. 1973). However, this is the first time that the institution has presented an exhibition explicitly dedicated to the history and art of queer people. This marks an important institutional milestone and affirms the museum's responsibility to make queer histories visible. It points toward a future in which such perspectives are an integral part of the museum's work.

Jonathan D. Katz

Introduction

Not that long ago, sexuality didn't exist. We're so accustomed to thinking about both gender and sexuality as core aspects of human identity that it becomes very difficult to see that they are in fact a relatively recent historical development. This is of course not to say that in the past people didn't have sex, queer or not, or frame themselves or others according to existing gender norms. It is to say that their understanding of sex and gender were not tied to anything like an essential identity or a collective subjectivity. Same-sex desire, which we now assume to be a deep, inborn orientation, was in the 19th century and into the early 20th understood as more of a liking, a taste, an individual preference—albeit, generally, a persecuted one.

It is hardly historically unprecedented for such seemingly solid core or essential identities to variously emerge and disappear. After all, witches were once as self-evidently real as homosexuals are today. Today we would never segregate bad action only to those we have falsely labeled witches, displacing onto the innocent what is after all a universal human capacity for unethical behavior. So too, before long will we witness the disappearance of that other relatively recent category of displaced, devalued difference, the homosexual, as the dominant strictures around same-sex desire in time give way. When the homosexual goes the way of the witch, which is to say when we no longer embrace the fiction of fundamentally distinct personhoods, sexuality, too, will pass, for it will no longer serve its purpose. To engage in pleasurable same-sex acts will no longer mean that one couldn't also have relations with the opposite sex, or that someone enjoying same-sex relations now might at another moment prefer the opposite sex. Tastes can change and need not ossify into identities. Today we readily recognize this truth as self-evident in every sphere of life—except, tellingly, in the case of sexuality.

The future I sketched out above isn't a fantasy or a fiction. It is instead the world as it existed before the introduction of the word "homosexual" in 1869. In fact, my imagined synergy between homosexuality and witches is hardly mine alone. In what is the earliest preserved "coming out" letter to family, dated November 28, 1862, Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825–1895), the literal first queer activist who authored the first known statement in support of same-sex love, which he termed Uranian love, wrote to his family:

> Because of another regrettable error of the majority and sanctioned by it besides, a similar abuse was once forced upon witches by secular justice. For me it is most difficult to comprehend how God could have allowed a sanctioned persecution of witches and Uranians through so many centuries.[1]

Ulrichs, trained as a jurist, famously wrote that those inclined to same-sex desires were born as *Urninge*, which he classed as a third sex, born with a body at war with a sense of its own gender, resulting in same-sex attraction. He wrote, "I can no longer deny it. The Uranian is a species of man-woman."[2] He then noted that as men are born with teats, so too are women born with what he understood as a vestigial penis, the clitoris, both signifying that the natural human condition is

already to some extent what he calls hermaphroditic. Thus, he concluded, the ostensibly segregated sexes were not nearly as divorced from one another as the culture would have us believe. The urning was a kind of psychic Hermaphroditus with the body of one sex but the erotic desire of its opposite.

Tellingly, the earliest evidence of an embodied queerness, made visible not in the relationship between two or more individuals but in and through an individual alone, is found almost exclusively in Peru. To the Spanish governors of the then-colony, the region's tropical climate, coupled with its numerous mixed Indigenous, Spanish- and African-descended populations, created a particularly heady mix that prompted them to think of Lima as essentially the San Francisco of the day. And as Peruvian scholar Magally Alegre Henderson has argued, it was this region's presumptively "natural" relation to same-sex desire that caused overt expressions of sex and gender dissidence to achieve very public embodiment—especially after 1826, when Peru achieved independence from Spain.[3] From early watercolors of men dressed as women to detailed accounts of Juan José Cabezudo (ca. 1800–1860), a celebrated non-binary or trans chef (to use our subsequent categories) who owned a famous food stall in Lima's market and famously cooked the farewell dinner for Simón Bolívar (1783–1830) when he left Peru, queerness as minoritized sex/gender difference was an integral part of Lima's culture. Cabezudo was universally referred to as *"el maricón"* ("the faggot"), and yet in the same sources celebrated, not derided, for their important contributions to Peruvian culture. As Léonce Angrand's (1808–1886) street scene of 1834–1837 underscores, only in Lima could a mixed-race man dressed as a woman address his ostensible social superiors as an equal, as he does with the cleric and an elite student in parade garb. Clearly, trans identity was no impediment to respectful social interaction, even with authority figures.[4]

Ulrichs's argument later in the century in favor of the essential hermaphrodism of what he called the "contrary sexual instincts," underscores that sexuality and gender are, at this early point in the evolution of same-sex politics, quite literally fused. And even as Ulrichs's terms were overthrown in favor the language of homosexuality, this fusion of sex and gender was furthered. To speak of homosexuality suggests that it is gender as much as sexuality that informs the term. Indeed, sexuality and gender have been bedfellows from the very beginning, as we'll shortly see in the context of Theodor de Bry's (1528–1598) print from the late 1500s. My point is that recent visibility of a specifically trans politics is actually the reemergence into the political light of one aspect of a long-standing convergence between sexuality and gender. Homosexuality and trans/non-binary gender were long allied, but the former hogged the light, often intentionally downplaying gender dissidence in order to sweeten the prospect of the acceptance of sexual difference. Only lately has the gender side reemerged full force, and it is our fond hope that this exhibition will aid in the reclamation of gender to the story of sexual difference.

In the late 19th century, this biologized explanation of an urning's gendered difference did not sit well with the Austro-Hungarian writer Karl Maria Kertbeny (1824–1882). Kertbeny thought the adoption of such biological, essentialized explanations of sexual difference was a losing strategy, for minority identity, however natural, had never before put an end to persecution. So Kertbeny argued

exactly the opposite tack, that homosexuality—the term was his coinage, an attempt to find an alternative to the urning and first used in a letter dated 1868 and published the following year—was a universal capacity for same-sex desire, and not a minority one. His universalist belief in the ubiquity of same-sex desires warred with Ulrichs's conviction of minority status. It's thus quite paradox when we use Kertbeny's universalizing term "homosexual" when we actually mean its obverse, Ulrichs's minoritized identity. In splicing Kertbeny's universalizing term onto Ulrichs's minoritized identity, we've done both thinkers wrong. The point is that sex itself never changes, only the way we talk about it does. But those discursive changes generate wholesale revolutions in how we think about sex—and we think about sex a lot.

Under the influence of Ulrichs, and through a misappropriation of the language of Kertbeny, the homosexual became the motor for a new sexual taxonomy that placed homo and hetero on the opposite ends of what was once understood as singular and whole. In short, people became homosexual when, and only when, they could finally be called homosexual. Under the regime of that fateful coinage, sexuality transformed into a deep truth, a core identity. Something you simply did had finally become something you were, in Michel Foucault's (1926–1984) famous formulation.[5]

Notably, the impetus for the development of sexuality as a field of difference—and of urnings and then homosexuals specifically—came from individuals who sought to label themselves towards transforming social prejudice. Attributing difference to, in Ulrichs's case, an inborn predisposition, or, in Kertbeny's, a universal tendency, allowed individuals to refute the stigma associated with same-sex desire while also lending political agency to what had previously been considered merely an illegal and sinful act. In helping to catalyze a subculture, terms like "urning" and later "homosexual" were gladly adopted by a same-sex loving community hungry to see that a form of desire so natural to them was also, in the larger scheme of things, part of nature, itself. As Ulrichs wrote, "Uranism is a variation in nature, a play in nature of which there are thousands of examples in creation."[6] Through these new coinages, the familiar language of sin and depravity was transformed into a language of possibility and liberation.

But the problem with linguistic binaries like homosexual/heterosexual (and, revealingly, the coining of "homosexual" was coterminous with the coining of "heterosexual") is that they offer but two polarities for something as complicated as human sexuality. Such language can be crude and reductive, and binaries are language at its crudest; if you're not fully one thing, you must perforce be the other. So as language birthed this new identity, it also undercut it, forcing it into opposing preserves that cohered only in terms of what they were not, such that a homosexual was defined only in terms of not being a heterosexual and vice versa. Ironically, the coining of the word "homosexual" came to police the very thing it was invented to liberate. As the complex vagaries of human desire were reduced to this dichotomy, art picked up the slack, becoming a way to imagine, address, and embody forms of desire that, in the absence of a descriptive language, literally could not be named.

That is why this exhibition, an international survey of homosexual and trans art (and as we'll see, it's hard to separate the two) from the term's earliest deploy-

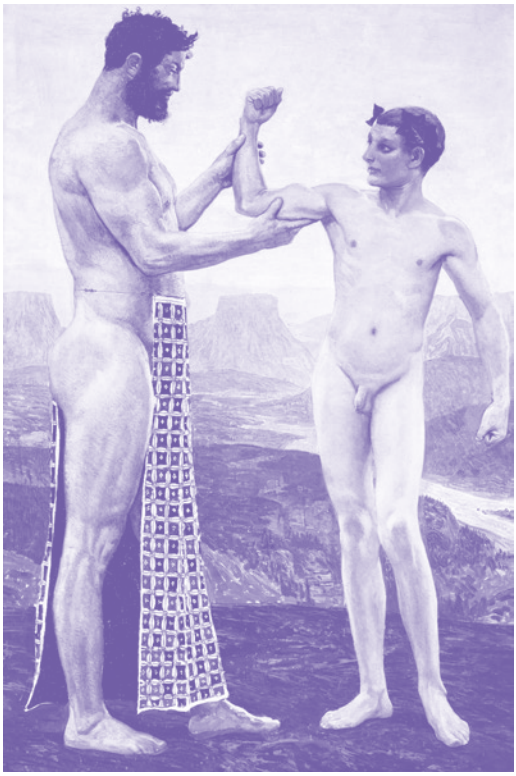
ment, demands to be seen as a response to the impoverishment of terminology following 1869. While the word "homosexual" was widely used in European professional literature by the late 19th century, the term took until the first half of the 20th century to conquer other parts of the globe, and in some regions even longer. Thus, the exhibition covers the first decades of art produced after the concept homosexual was adopted in its region. Of course, the advent of the homosexual category could also prove coercive, hostile to individual variations, and easily legible by law and medicine in their twinned attempt to police social behavior. But art recognized no such limitations. With its limitless evocative prospects, ranging from Realism to Symbolism to abstraction, the complexities of sexuality could escape the black and white or gray of then-contemporary sexual discourse and emerge in glorious color. For the first time in history, a world of visual erotics was born that came to define and color that new creation, the homosexual, in ways language couldn't. In art, homosexuality was lent forms of dress, stance, demeanor, embodiment, and relationality that were utterly new. Equally, art enabled new symbols, poses, facial expressions, and bodily movement; it celebrated both new erotic prospects and traditional domesticities. As the homosexual increasingly appeared in representation, the bare bones of this new identity came to be clothed in its living human flesh.

A quick caveat: by no means is the development and deployment of the label "homosexual" always liberatory, even in art. Not only did it generate numerous homophobic images alongside liberatory ones, but it also, as a term and concept with distinctly middle-European origins, hews closely to the bloody path of colonial conquest, rewriting Indigenous attitudes towards sexuality as it went—attitudes that were often vastly more accepting, and even honorific, than the norm under European colonial governance. These colonial powers, chiefly England, France, Spain, and the Netherlands, often literally rewrote local penal codes to impose harsh punishments for same-sex sexuality, beginning, as this exhibition makes clear, as early as the late 16th century according to Theodor de Bry's print of Vasco Núñez de Balboa's (1475–1519) massacre of the Cueva. It depicts dogs tearing Indigenous men dressed as women, and assumed to be same-sex loving, limb from limb, of a piece with Spain's brutal governance of the New World.[7]

Indeed, even calling this exhibition *The First Homosexuals* spurred intense debate, as some believed that featuring this term in the title only served to compound the historical erasure of Indigenous worldviews. I am sympathetic to that argument, but whether welcomed or not, the word "homosexual," translated into a host of different languages, did in fact and in time become the dominant descriptor for same-sex sexuality across the globe.

Ironically, after the colonial era, some regions that were once welcoming of sexual difference have become infamous for their aggressive prosecution and even murder of homosexuals. This is yet another legacy of colonialism too little invoked. Under Islam before the middle of the 18th century, for example, love poems were largely written by men to boys, not women.[8] Indeed, the first love poem in Moghul India to a woman caused a scandal, for it carried implications about her sexual "purity." An artifact of this distant social world survives in the former Muslim Soviet Socialist Republics and their neighbors, countries such as

Andreas Andersen
(1869–1902)
Interior with Hendrik Andersen
and John Briggs Potter
in Florence
Oil on canvas
128.5 × 160 cm
Museo Hendrik C. Andersen,
Rome, inv. n. 14299



Sascha Schneider
(1870–1927)
Werdende Kraft, 1904
Oil on canvas
200 × 138 cm
Private collection

Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan. Here, a tradition that is viewed critically today known as *bacha bazi* ("boy play") survives, wherein a boy is trained in the "female" arts of dancing and singing and joins a wealthy man's harem of wives. But because he performs a female role, he is not conceived of as male, and thus sex with him isn't understood as homosexual. In a similar vein, before Japan opened to the West, popular erotic illustrations termed *shunga* regularly featured what we would call both homosexual and heterosexual lovemaking, often at the same time. But after 1868 (the first year of the Meiji Restoration and also coincidentally the year the term "homosexual" was first used) as Japan sought to become an imperial power, it came to sanction homosexual representation, in presumed deference to homophobic European sensibilities.

Of course, we find *bacha bazi* and the period before the Meiji Restoration about-face compelling because they so clearly violate our collective understanding of sexuality today; same-sex desire that isn't classed as homosexual, or that isn't seen in opposition to heterosexuality, doesn't make sense to us. But as the inheritors of the homo/hetero binary age out, younger people are increasingly refusing this worldview. The term "queer," for example, elevates a general resistance to the binary division of sexuality, while at the same time not specifying anything about a person's particular desires. My classroom today is filled with students who identify as queer while engaged in intimate relationships with members of the opposite sex—and for them, there is no contradiction in that.

If we take the history of art as the world's largest and most complete archive of the history of sexuality—and clearly, I think we should—then it's high time we examined that archive at the moment of homosexuality's emergence. Images, as I'm trying to suggest, "say" things for which there is literally no language. And as an additional benefit, to speak through representation offers forms of deniability that language can't offer. If I say "homosexual," I am citing a term with a clear and defined predicate. But if I represent homosexuality, I can always disavow responsibility and say that such a reading is merely your imposition onto, or interpretation of, my image. As a result, images both escape the dangers of legal inscription while also capturing nuances that words can barely approach. Images also have a superpower that most language lacks, since representations can speak out of both sides of their mouth simultaneously, often addressing one audience to the exclusion of another at the exact same time. The love that dared not speak its name was nonetheless often painted with remarkable openness.

There is something uniquely powerful about images, especially for the socially marginal. They can act as sites for identification and emulation, not just an affirming "we are here," but equally important, as an agent of collective identification: "we look like this, dress like this, act like this, etc." As instruments of community and commonality, images catalyze a subculture, materializing what was previously inchoate, literally embodying the notional. Images not only represented what was real; they could also lend form to thoughts, fantasies, and dreams, not just embodying ideas, but conducting them into the world and letting them stand on their own two feet. In this sense, images can be experimental and exploratory, a laboratory for bringing into being the not-yet. This is perhaps nowhere more true than when the homosexual emerged as an identity.

La Blanchisseuse (The Laundress, p. 28) of 1879 is arguably the first work in the history of European art to depict a same-sex couple as romantic life partners—not just in the drawing and subsequent painting, but as far as we can tell, in real life. The couple in question were close friends of the artist, and themselves artists of a certain renown. What makes the image remarkable is not just the casual ease with which two men are seen promenading along what is likely the Seine, displaying their affection for one another for all to see. Men arm in arm with other men had not yet, in 1879, become indelibly associated with homosexuality, as it would a few decades later. Indeed, the word "homosexual," although coined, wasn't even in wide use at this time, and I doubt French painter Pascal Dagnan-Bouveret (1852–1929) would have known it or used it, as it circulated largely in the professional medical and psychological literature of the time.

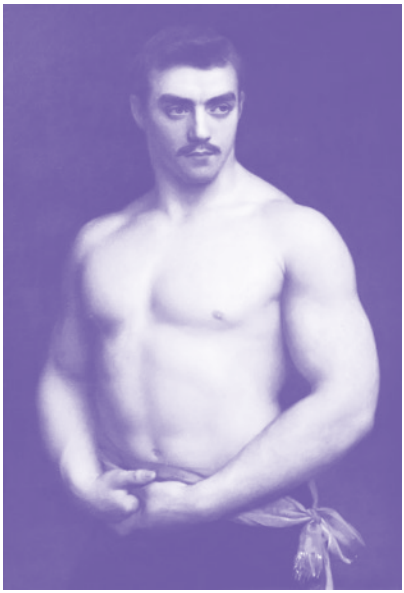
No, what makes the image remarkable isn't the two men holding on to one another; were the drawing merely an image of them, it would hold but limited interest. What makes the image exceptional is instead the image of the laundress who lends the work its title. She stares resignedly at us, the viewer, with a look of mingled ennui, boredom, and disappointment on her face. And she is clearly staring at us, the audience, communicating something wordlessly. At this moment in France, the profession of laundress was generally assumed to be cover for another profession, that of a sex worker.[9] Women out of doors encumbered by baskets of laundry displayed a coded sign of erotic availability and, equally important, a cover for a profession that, while legal in brothels, was illegal in public.

When the laundress/sex worker looks at us, she is assuming we understand what her expression is communicating. And that is that the two men walking arm in arm are not, and will never be, prospective customers, for were they, she would instead be looking at them as potential clients. What she is insinuating to us, in short, is that the couple is a specifically homosexual one. And that was entirely new, this idea that erotic desires could denominate a person as a distinct type. Before this work, of course, there were images of homosexual acts, as there were of individuals clearly inclined toward same-sex relations. But there weren't yet homosexuals. And that word smuggled in a new worldview that posed one's core being, one's "truth," in opposition to the erotic norm, not merely evading it, but as its direct opposite, its converse. What Dagnan-Bouveret is, in short, telling us is that by 1879, while the word "homosexual" wasn't yet in wide circulation, the idea of an essentialized sexuality was becoming sufficiently common knowledge that the artist could count a baleful look from a laundress to carry unspoken implications that we, as viewers, would understand.

Louise Abbéma's (1853–1927) *Sarah Bernhardt et Louise Abbéma sur le lac au bois de Boulogne* (Sarah Bernhardt and Louise Abbéma on the Lake in the Bois de Bologne, p. 18), from 1883, and thus four years later than the Dagnan-Bouveret, replicates the pair-bonding dynamic, albeit in more coded terms. The painter Abbéma was the partner of Sarah Bernhardt (1844–1923), the actress who was then arguably the most famous in the world. The image feminizes Bernhardt, at least in comparison to Abbéma, as she feeds a family of ducks. But this scene of animal heteronormativity is interrupted visually by the appearance of the black swans, who, paralleling the boat, seem to embrace it from either side. Swans, of course, mate for life, and the correspondence between these

Louise Abbéma (1853–1927)
Sarah Bernhardt et Louise Abbéma sur le lac au bois de Boulogne, 1883
Oil on canvas
160 × 210 cm
Collections de la Comédie-Française

Johann Heinrich Füssli (1741–1825), also known as Henry Fuseli
Heavenly Ganymede, 1804
Chalk lithography
37 × 28 cm
Kunsthaus Zürich, Grafische Sammlung, 1938



Gustave Courtois (1852–1923)
Portrait de Maurice Deriaz, 1907
Oil on canvas
96 × 64 cm
Commune de Baulmes

black swans—notably set off from the more common white swans also in the painting—and the Bernhardt/Abbéma couple is a striking example of how art can suggest two very different meanings at the same time.

This, in a nutshell, is the raison d'être for the exhibition: that art can communicate historical nuances and subtleties that escape the more language-oriented accounts of sexual difference, from police archives to literature. While scholarship is ostensibly hungry for new knowledge, it's striking that art history has rarely bothered to address sexuality at all, especially desires in their less normative forms. Most museums are even more loath to address sexual difference, which has of late emerged as something of a third rail in public programming. I suppose this has something to do with art's rather blatant connection to the ruling class and its upholding of the very social norms that the images in turn so often contest.

In 1891, Alice Austen (1866–1952) photographed a scene she labeled *The Darned Club* (inner cover), consisting of two female couples, each pair in an intimate embrace. For the couple on the left—and it is Austen herself at far left—the glances that graze each other's cheek are ratified in the intimate gesture of their feet touching. The photograph's title is apparently a reference to the name some boys in the neighborhood, the Rosebank section of Long Island, coined after feeling excluded from such scenes of fond mutual understanding. A self-portrait with her partner taken on Austen's personal property, the photograph seems almost willfully incriminating, evidence that Austen not only wanted to practice same-sex affection but to document it, too.

Andreas Andersen's (1869–1902) *Interior with Hendrik Andersen and John Briggs Potter in Florence*, from 1894 (p. 15), is similarly frankly biographical. Andersen depicts his younger brother, at age 22, languidly petting a cat gussied up with a bow, still in bed as his presumptive bedmate, the American artist John Briggs Potter (1864–1949), is getting up and dressed. The scene is so intimate, so immediately relatable and so unabashed, that it's as surprising as the Austen photographs. Hendrik's blond, boyish good looks; languorous odalisque pose; smooth skin; and youthful build stand in contrast to the 30-year-old Potter's dark hair, bearded face, and closed-in posture. Hendrik Andersen (1872–1940), like his brother born in Norway, would eventually move to Rome and sculpt massive male nudes for his planned utopian city that never materialized. Potter would eventually work for Isabella Stewart Gardner (1840–1924) in her new museum. But, and this is the point, the affect of the two of them together is so unforced and familiar that they read as intimates. And the fact that they are painted this way in a large-scale painting by Hendrik's brother insinuates that there was no hesitation about such a potentially public suggestion of their tender closeness.

In the aforementioned artworks, representation leads to insights that were specifically difficult, if not actively illegal, to articulate in language. But even as representation could evade language, it could also confirm, establish, and exemplify it. One of the clearest instances of the profound connection between language and sexuality occupies a central role in this exhibition: the plethora of youthful, adolescent nudes on offer in the last quarter of the 19th century. Indeed, in researching this exhibition, during this period we found more representations of nude adolescents than any other subject. But then something surprising hap-

pened: the very artists who painted nude youth after nude youth seemed to suddenly abandon that topic and begin painting not only adult men but men who were the very stereotype of hard-bodied masculinity. In the space of less than five years, the dominant subject for these painters switched from adolescents to bodybuilders. And importantly, while this shift was generally far more visible among male artists, it was by no means exclusively so, and we can find a similar turn from boyish, slim-figured young women to adult women.

The ephebic youth of 19th-century art grew up with remarkable speed in the early years of the 20th century. This shift was a profound one, evident across the works of artists who didn't know one another, indeed, among artists who lived in different countries. To look at Gustave Courtois's (1852–1923) 1872 *Narcisse* (Narcissus) is to see a painting that skirts the edge of what we would deem legal today. (Courtois is the person who is depicted walking along the Seine with his lover as the laundress looks at us in disappointment.) By the early 20th century, however, he painted image after image of muscular, masculine, adult men and the ephebes of his youth are seemingly banished. In 1907, he painted the period's most famous Swiss bodybuilder, Maurice Deriaz (1885–1974, p. 18).

Similarly, the German painter Sascha Schneider (1870–1927), who painted only ephebic youths early in his career, also began to shift his interest to muscular men with the dawn of the 20th century, drawing a spectacular, life-size, detailed image of a bodybuilder (p. 15). Around the same time, Schneider decided to turn his own artist studio into a bodybuilding gym and offered to train clients so that their bodies would resemble the muscular, masculine men he was then painting.

In trying to understand these wholesale shifts in representation within a very narrow historical window from the last years of the 19th century to the first of the 20th, I finally realized that they tracked a fundamental shift in the definition of homosexuality itself. Ulrichs's figure of a gendered body at odds with its animating principle or soul—such that lesbians possessed a male soul in a female body while the converse held true among gay men—proved dominant throughout the 19th century as the leading conception of same-sex desire, and men even began to label themselves urnings. Having bravely written and published the earliest known modern defenses of same-sex attraction, beginning in 1861 and in explicit defiance of Prussian law, Ulrichs's subsequent eight pamphlets helped firmly entrench his ideas. But for all its cultural traction, Ulrichs's conceptual system was bedeviled by its strange terminology and the generalized, manifestly unscientific assertion that one could have a gendered soul at war with one's physical body. In response to these difficulties, Kertbeny's word "homosexual," promoted by several leading experts, soon came to prominence. The word had several advantages, for its meaning was immediately clear and it didn't rely on mystifications such as gendered souls. Moreover, it didn't require homosexuals to claim gender dimorphism, as many were entirely cisgendered, even as they desired their own sex.

My point is that the discursive evolution from urning to homosexual is largely responsible for the concomitant shift from adolescents to adults. While Ulrichs's bigendered definition of sexuality held sway, the adolescent became its privileged avatar precisely because youth is, as it were, incompletely gendered. Since adolescents betray a physical mix of traits belonging to both males and females,

Alice Austen (1866–1952)
Trude & I masked,
short skirts, 1891
Original glass plate negative
10.2 × 12.7 cm
Courtesy of the
Alice Austen House

they became the favored mode for representing Ulrichs's gender dimorphic vision of same-sex desire. Indeed, the heyday of the representation of adolescence among homosexual painters exactly corresponds to the period in which Ulrichs's schema was dominant. But as Kertbeny's term "homosexual" came into its own, and the Uranian faded from view, the image of homosexuality no longer valued the gender indeterminacy of adolescents, and instead began to elevate forms of gender normativity, the more clearly normative the better.

Thus, we have a compelling case study in how discourse informs representation, giving form to new ideas. As the homosexual emerged into gender normativity, the trans inheritance grew increasingly attenuated, to the point that it was largely forgotten. But these 19th-century images of adolescents remind us that before homosexuals embraced a cisgendered norm, urnings pioneered what today we'd call a non-binary embodiment.

While this exhibition ostensibly starts in 1869, it begins with an even earlier section called *Before*. It demonstrates clearly that while homosexuality as a concept was first available only in 1869, there of course has been a long and well-established tradition of figuring same-sex desire in representation. This section makes plain how profoundly same-sex desire is constitutive of culture, even in places and times where it was most pointedly disavowed. Henry Fuseli (1741–1825), a Swiss artist living in England, produced a remarkable lithograph he entitled *Heavenly Ganymede* a mere eight years after the medium of lithography was invented. The usual title for representing the classical tale of Ganymede is "The Rape of Ganymede," but unlike so many of its sister images on the same theme, in Fuseli's version, there is no ravishment about it. The work in fact quietly but insistently violates every single one of the norms of this favored classical scenario of Zeus, in the form of an eagle, kidnapping the beautiful youth Ganymede and spiriting him away to Mount Olympus to serve him in body and soul. In Fuseli's representation, Zeus isn't in the form of an eagle, isn't notably older, isn't seizing the boy against his will, and isn't violent. Ganymede is elevated above Zeus, and even if he is filling Zeus's cup, he is by no means a victim. More to the point, both look lovingly into each other's eyes, their arms intertwined in a gesture that suggests mutual support, deep trust, and sparks of desire. They're roughly the same age—they actually even look alike—and their tenderness with one another is palpable. In contrast to the usual images on this theme by the likes of Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640) or Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669), this one follows the form of a familiar romance in almost every regard, save the gender of its protagonists. But at this moment, a full 68 years before the word "homosexual" was coined, in its pointed refusal of the common, time-honored codes that hailed same-sex desire as nothing other than a form of violence premised on coercion, this is profoundly not a violation but rather a love scene. It is the earliest explicitly egalitarian same-sex love scene in Western art I have found, one not structured by age or power differences. All the more remarkable then that 34 years after the publication of this print, in 1835, James Pratt (1805–1835) and John Smith (1795–1835), both married men, were publicly hanged outside of Newgate Prison in London for sodomy, the last such capital case in England.[10] Therefore, what Fuseli was depicting, for all its romance, was quite literally a capital crime at the time.

The lithograph obviously complicates any easy chronology of the development of same-sex representation, since it substantially predates the word "homosexual," while also seemingly adhering to many of its precepts, even substituting the word "heavenly" for the usual reference to coercion. My point is that there is no founding, eureka moment when same-sex desire was "discovered." As an act, a concept, and an identity, same-sex desire has served many masters with competing agendas. But what we can more or less date definitively to the years immediately after 1869 is the development of the idea that same-sex desire stood in an obverse relation to normative sexuality, that it was born out of a "natural" predisposition, and that it was more or less a permanent state that, with rare exceptions, constituted a foundational or core characteristic of being. This, then, is what we mean—despite Kertbeny's original intent—when we use the term "homosexual." The art that followed this shift in turn began to locate a specifically homosexual character, defined not by its acts but by its affect. It's notable that the codes for suggesting homosexual identity, running throughout this exhibition and by now quite historical, are nonetheless by and large legible to visitors today, evidence that the representation of the homosexual, while quite diverse, nonetheless operated within a limited bandwidth in order to remain legible.

The works in this exhibition, while hardly comprehensive, attempt to describe the development of homosexuality, as a sexuality, identity, community, and politics at the very moment it was consolidating and getting off the ground. For good or for ill—and like all things in life, it's probably both—the homosexual changed cultures across the world. That we are only just now recognizing homosexuality as a historical, as opposed to natural category, harkens to yet another major conceptual shift awaiting its moment just off the main stage.

This text was first published in *The First Homosexuals: The Birth of a New Identity 1869—1939*, ed. by Jonathan D. Katz (New York: Monacelli, 2025).

1 Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, quoted in "Four Letters to his Kinfolk," the letter from Frankfurt am Main dated November 28, 1862, in *Journal of Homosexuality*, Haworth Press, Inc, Vol 51, Supplement #1 (2006), 10.

2 Ibid., 8.

3 See Magally Alegre Henderson, *Androginopolis: Dissident Masculinities and the Creation of Republican Peru (Lima, 1790–1850)* (PhD diss. Stony Brook University, 2012).

4 Ibid., 230–40.

5 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, vol. 1: An Introduction* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), see especially "The Perverse Implantation," 36–51.

6 Ulrichs, "Four Letters to his Kinfolk," 8.

7 Quoted in Kathryn Santner, Frederick and Jan Mayer Fellow of Spanish Colonial Art, 2022 from the Denver Art Museum: "In his expedition across the Isthmus of Panama in 1513, Vasco Núñez de Balboa encountered what he understood to be 'men dressed as women.' These individuals were two-spirit members of the Cueva people. Balboa believed they were practicing sodomy and had the brother of the Cueva leader, Quareca (or Quarequa), and forty others torn apart by dogs." (https://www.denverartmuseum.org/en/object/2000.371)

8 See Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

9 See Hollis Clayson, *Painted Love: Prostitution and French Art of the Impressionist Era* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

10 See Chris Bryant, *James and John: A True Story of Prejudice and Murder* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2004).

I
Before

"Someone, I say, will remember us in time to come."
Sappho (ca. 630–570 BC)

Of course, there was same-sex desire long before the term "homosexual" was first coined in 1869. Representations of sexual difference from various regions are presented here, from a time before homosexuality was even named.

In the early modern era, roughly from 1500 to 1800, a negative attitude toward same-sex love prevailed in Europe. Yet representations of homoeroticism nonetheless found their way into art of the period. Particularly influential in this regard was neoclassicism at the end of the 18th century, which drew on Greco-Roman antiquity and its ideals of the human form. Under the cloak of classical mythology, artists were able to explore homoerotic motifs without having to name them explicitly.

Same-sex relations were socially accepted in many places outside of Europe. As early as the 17th century, erotic images called *shunga* (spring pictures) proliferated in Japan, depicting both homosexual and heterosexual love scenes, occasionally in the same image. However, this official openness ended with the Meiji Restoration from 1868: in the course of political transformation and imperial ambitions, depictions of homosexual relationships were increasingly repressed. Similarly to Japan before the Meiji era, Lima, the capital of Peru, was considered particularly tolerant in the 19th century. Especially after independence from Spain in 1826, gender and sexual diversity was more openly expressed.

Sappho, fragment 147, trans. from Ancient Greek in Philip Freeman, *Searching for Sappho: The Lost Songs and World of the First Woman Poet* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2017), 161.

Francisco Fierro
Hombres vestidos
de mujer, ca. 1834–1841

Upon their arrival in Central and South America in the early 16th century, European occupiers encountered Indigenous societies whose concepts of gender and sexuality differed from Christian-European ideals. Relationships between persons of the same gender were criminalized by the colonizers as "sodomy" and morally condemned. Many previously accepted ways of life were erased. In the 16th and 17th centuries, this repression was particularly severe. After the Latin American Wars of Independence, which lasted until 1826, social control loosened in some cities. Lima began to develop a reputation for greater openness toward diverse expressions of gender and sexuality.

In *Hombres vestidos de mujer* (Men Dressed as Women), Peruvian painter Francisco Fierro (1807–1879) portrays two figures whose attire reflects this reputation. They are not placed in a festive or theatrical setting, where gender roles might be temporarily reversed. Instead, Fierro shows an everyday scene in which their gender expression appears as part of ordinary life. This is echoed in the depiction of Juan José Cabezudo (ca. 1800–1860), attributed to Francisco Javier Cortés (ca. 1770–1841). Cabezudo was a celebrated Afro-Peruvian figure who openly lived a gender-queer existence and often wore women's clothing. This stood not in the way of Cabezudo's social standing: when Simón Bolívar (1783–1830), the South American independence fighter and later dictator, left Peru to continue his military campaign, Cabezudo organized the official state dinner. Together, these works underscore that there is no universal progression toward acceptance, but rather a complex, globally uneven negotiation over how gender and sexuality are understood and judged.

Attributed to Francisco Javier Cortés
Juan José Cabezudo
y un amigo, ca. 1827

Anonymous, German, 18th century
Girl as Heracles, n.d.
Red chalk over black pencil, mounted on yellowish paper
18.2 × 10.3 cm
Kunstmuseum Basel, Kupferstichkabinett, Inv. 1988.124, Geschenk Dr. Francis Raas, Basel 1988

Anonymous, Japanese, 19th century
Hyaku tori, 1870–1879
Woodcut on paper
9.3 × 13 cm
Collection of Brian P. Coppola

Heinrich Beltz (1801–1869)
Der hl. Sebastian, 1848
Oil on canvas
107 × 85.5 cm
Kunstmuseum Basel, Inv. 694, Geschenk des Künstlers, vom Museumsverein übergeben 1849

Arnold Böcklin (1827–1901)
Sappho, 1862
Wax paint on canvas
56.5 × 45.5 cm
Kunstmuseum Basel, Inv. G 1972.7, Geschenk der Erben von Prof. Dr. A. Stoll, Arlesheim 1972

Francisco Javier Cortés (ca. 1770–1841), attributed to
Juan José Cabezudo y un amigo, ca. 1827
Watercolor and tempera on paper
23.5 × 34.2 cm
Museo de Arte de Lima. Donación Juan Carlos Verme

Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528)
The Bath House, ca. 1496–1497
Woodcut on paper
39.7 × 28.6 cm
Kunstmuseum Basel, Kupferstichkabinett, Inv. Aus K.9.163, Alter Bestand

Francisco Fierro (1807–1879)
Hombres vestidos de mujer, ca. 1834–1841
Watercolor on paper
30 × 22.7 cm
Museo de Arte de Lima. Donación Juan Carlos Verme

Johann Heinrich Füssli (1741–1825), also known as Henry Fuseli
Satyr and Boy (after a mural in Herculaneum), 1775
Pen and brush in brown, pencil in some places, on paper
31.8 × 19.5 cm
Kunstmuseum Basel, Kupferstichkabinett, Inv. 1914.132.2, Ankauf 1914

Johann Heinrich Füssli (1741–1825), also known as Henry Fuseli
Two Young Girls Embracing Each Other, 1775
Pen in brown, over pencil on vellum
18.2 × 7.9 cm
Kunstmuseum Basel, Kupferstichkabinett, Inv. 1914.132.5, Ankauf 1914

Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935)
Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Homosexualität (Leipzig: Max Spohr, 1899), 36
Book
1.8 × 15 × 20 cm
Zentralbibliothek Zürich, RK 1069

Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935)
Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Homosexualität (Leipzig: Max Spohr, 1899), 36
Book
1.8 × 15 × 20 cm
Zentralbibliothek Zürich, SCH Z 238:1

Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn (1606–1669)
Male Nude, Seated and Standing (Het Rolwagentje), ca. 1646
Etching
19.6 × 12.8 cm
Kunstmuseum Basel, Kupferstichkabinett, Inv. 2019.176, Schenkung Eberhard W. Kornfeld, Bern 2019

Tamechika, Japanese, 19th century
Yugi-e, ca. 1850
Silk, mounted on paper
35.6 × 558.8 cm
Collection of Brian P. Coppola

Bertel Thorvaldsen (1770–1844)
Ganymede with the Eagle, 1803–1804
Ink on paper
16 × 11.3 cm
Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen, inv. C805

Bertel Thorvaldsen (1770–1844)
Cupid and Anacreon, 1806
Ink and graphite on paper
19 × 17.9 cm
Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen, inv. C265r

II
From Concept to Image

"I am the Love that dare not speak its name."
Alfred Douglas (1870–1945)

How did the "first" homosexual individuals in the 19th and early 20th centuries depict themselves? How did they portray their friends and lovers, and which networks were made visible? With the establishment of the term "homosexuality," a new identity was formed. From perhaps the earliest known European depiction of a male couple by the French painter Pascal Dagnan-Bouveret (1852–1929) in 1879 to that of her queer multigenerational family by the Danish artist Emilie Mundt (1842–1922) in 1893, a new self-understanding unfolded. Homosexuality is no longer understood solely as a sexual act or private preference, but rather as part of one's identity. Simultaneously, a collective visual language developed: homosexuality became recognizable.

In works from the late 19th century, same-sex desire often only becomes apparent on a second glance—for example, through the gaze, gestures, clothing, or body language. These compositions rely on allusions and require careful observation as well as prior knowledge of the references. In the early 20th century, by contrast, the American-French painter Romaine Brooks (1874–1970) already depicted queer self-presentations explicitly rather than merely hinting at them: the portrait of her lover, the dazzling Italian noblewoman Luisa Casati (1881–1957), reveals this new self-confidence—a distinctly androgynous body, bright red hair, unabashedly nude, and a gaze that captivates the viewer.

Alfred Douglas, "Two Loves," 1892, *The Chameleon*, vol. 1 (December 1894).

Well-known in his day, the French portrait painter and author Jacques-Émile Blanche (1861–1942) inhabits the long tradition of the self-portrait in the studio—palette and brush in hand. The formal composition recalls a work by the Italian Renaissance artist Raphael (1483–1520), the so-called self-portrait with a friend. Like Raphael, Blanche places the second figure slightly off-center, his hand resting on the other man's shoulder in an intimate gesture.

Jacques-Émile Blanche
Autoportrait avec Raphael de Ochoa, 1890

Blanche's work exemplifies how French painting in the late 19th century made same-sex relationships increasingly visible. His art and life span a far-reaching network between London and Paris. Blanche portrayed numerous influential homosexual figures of his time, like Jean Cocteau (1889–1963) and Marcel Proust (1871–1922), and was friends with Robert de Montesquiou (1855–1921), Gertrude Stein (1874–1946), and Oscar Wilde (1854–1900).

The man next to Blanche was likely Raphael de Ochoa (1858–1935), his presumed partner. Blanche himself wrote that they shared the same tastes. By staging their closeness so plainly, he renders the partnership legible on canvas, framing the bond as a formative force.

Although homosexuality was not illegal in 19th-century France, public expressions of—mostly male—same-sex desire were still prosecuted under the charge of *outrage public à la pudeur* (public indecency). Pascal Adolphe Jean Dagnan-Bouveret (1852–1929), known as Pascal Dagnan-Bouveret, nonetheless depicted two men, arms interlinked, out for a stroll in his drawing *La Blanchisseuse* (The Laundress). They are presumed to be the painters Carl Ernst von Stetten (1857–1942) and Gustave Courtois (1852–1923), friends of the artist. Their correspondence with Dagnan-Bouveret did not explicitly address their homosexuality, but it describes a shared life and a deep romantic attachment.

Pascal Dagnan-Bouveret
La Blanchisseuse, 1879

This work is among the earliest known depictions of a real-life same-sex couple. Yet it is not the men's interlinked arms that make this work distinctive. It is the other social cues that the image offers, most clearly in the figure of the seated laundress, who directly addresses the viewer and gives the work its title. At the time, laundresses were often also sex workers, another context in which bodies were policed in public space. In this case, her disappointed expression, so pointedly shared with us, that she understands that neither of these men will be her clients. Although the term "homosexuality" had been in circulation for about ten years, the concept was not yet fully anchored in society by 1879. Still, the laundress's reaction implies that the understanding of same-sex desire as an innate, personal, and unchangeable quality was already widespread.

Ottilie W. Roederstein
Selbstbildnis mit roter Mütze, 1894

With a penetrating gaze, the Swiss painter Ottilie W. Roederstein (1859–1937) looks directly at her viewer in this self-portrait. Her turned posture, the strong contrasts, the dramatic lighting, and intimate scale recall works in European portraiture from the 15th to the 17th centuries.

The signature at the top of the image, "O.W. Roederstein peinte par elle même 1894" (O.W. Roederstein painted by herself)—reinforces this claim, as does her attire. The red cap refers to Rembrandt van Rijn's (1606–1669) famous self-portrait from 1660, while the beret was also commonly worn by artists of her own time. By adopting this visual language, Roederstein asserts her identity as a professional artist rather than conforming to prevailing women's fashion.

This work, which is today part of the Kunstmuseum Basel collection, was first presented at the Salon of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1894. It is considered to be Roederstein's first publicly exhibited self-portrait. Today, over 80 additional self-portraits are known. The repeated return to her own image reflects an intense exploration of artistic identity at a moment when women's professional visibility was still contested.

Despite structural obstacles, Roederstein and her partner Elisabeth H. Winterhalter (1856–1952) established themselves with remarkable independence: Roederstein was among the most successful artists in Switzerland, while Winterhalter was the first female surgeon in Germany. They lived together as a couple, shared a household and were financially independent—an arrangement that defied the social conventions of their time.

Louise Abbéma (1853–1927)
Sarah Bernhardt et Louise Abbéma sur le lac au bois de Boulogne, 1883
Oil on canvas
160 × 210 cm
Collections de la Comédie-Française

Andreas Andersen (1869–1902)
Interior with Hendrik Andersen and John Briggs Potter in Florence, 1894
Oil on canvas
128.5 × 160 cm
Museo Hendrik C. Andersen, Rome, inv. n. 14299

Sarah Bernhardt (1844–1923)
Self-Portrait as a Sphinx, 1880
Bronze
34 × 32 cm
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Gift of the Fabergé Society of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 99.24a-b

Jacques-Émile Blanche (1861–1942)
Autoportrait avec Raphael de Ochoa, 1890
Oil on fabric
99.2 × 71 cm
The Cleveland Museum of Art, Bequest of Noah L. Butkin, 1980.230

Romaine Brooks (1874–1970)
Portrait of the Marchesa Casati, ca. 1920
Oil on canvas
248 × 120 cm
Collection Lucile Audouy

Pascal Dagnan-Bouveret (1852–1929)
La Blanchisseuse, 1879
Graphite, ink, and ink wash on paper
31.4 × 48.3 cm
Private collection, California

Herbert Gilchrist (1857–1914)
Walt Whitman, ca. 1887
Oil on canvas
95.3 × 84 cm
Courtesy of the University of Pennsylvania Art Collection, Philadelphia, PA, USA

James Hadley (1837–1903)
Aesthetic teapot (Oscar Wilde), ca. 1881–1882
Manufactured by the Royal Worcester Porcelain Co.
Porcelain
15.6 × 17.8 × 8.3 cm
Kamm Teapot Foundation

Roberto Montenegro (1885–1968)
Retrato de un anticuario o Retrato de Chucho Reyes y autorretrato, 1926
Oil on canvas
102.5 × 102.5 cm
Colección Pérez Simón

Emilie Mundt (1842–1922)
Malerinde og Barn i Atelieret, 1893
Oil on canvas
68 × 81.5 cm
Vardemuseerne, Denmark

Emil Orlik (1870–1932)
Claire Waldoff, ca. 1930
Oil on canvas
66.5 × 52 cm
Stiftung Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Gm 2012/8

R. G. Harper Pennington (1854–1920)
Oscar Wilde, ca. 1884
Oil on canvas
177.8 × 91.4 cm
The William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, Los Angeles

Glyn Warren Philpot (1884–1937)
Portrait of a Man with Hibiscus Flower (Felix), 1932
Oil on canvas, laid on panel
44.5 × 34 cm
Private collection, London

Ottilie W. Roederstein (1859–1937)
Selbstbildnis mit roter Mütze, 1894
Tempera on wood
36 × 24 cm
Kunstmuseum Basel, Inv. 1672, Geschenk eines Kunstfreundes in Zürich 1936

Nasta Rojc (1883–1964)
Autoportret u lovačkom odijelu, 1912
Oil on canvas
118.5 × 88.2 cm
National Museum of Modern Art, Zagreb, Croatia

Augusta Roszmann (1859–1945)
Autoportrait devant le chevalet, 1885–1890
Oil on canvas
41 × 33.5 cm
Kunstmuseum Basel, Inv. 1432, Geschenk der Künstlerin 1926

Konstantin Somov (1869–1939)
Portrait of Boris Snejkovsky, 1933
Pastel on paper-fronted board
37.5 × 27.6 cm
Collection of Dr. Don Bacigalupi and Daniel Feder

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864–1901)
La Clownesse assise (Mademoiselle Cha-U-Ka-O), 1896
From the series: Elles
Chalk, brush, spray and stencil lithography in green-black, black-brown, yellow, red and blue on vellum
52.7 × 40.5 cm
Kunstmuseum Basel, Kupferstichkabinett, Inv. 1932.205.3, Ankauf 1932

III
Changing Bodies

"I may have a beard, and manly limbs and body,
yet confined by these, I am and remain a woman."
Numa Numantis (pseudonym
Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, 1825–1895)

Around 1900, a change occurred in the depiction of male bodies in homoerotic art. At the end of the 19th century, slim, youthful bodies were still central; however, by the early 20th century, muscular, decidedly more masculine bodies moved to the foreground.

During this time there was also a change in European ideals of the body. Various movements promoted the health and strength of the male body, whether in service to the nation, to increase performance in early capitalism, or to build strength in class struggle. While they focused on a naturally athletic body, the homoerotic works of the time centered the artificiality of the bodybuilder. This reflects a changing understanding of homosexuality itself.

At the time, homosexuality was not considered a sexual orientation, but was conceived as a "third sex." The prevailing theory held that homosexuals were born into the body of one sex but with a "soul" of the opposite gender. According to this understanding, homosexual people were inherently a "third sex," and the adolescent body became its privileged figure, as adolescents were thought to embody physical aspects of both sexes. But as the word "homosexual" increasingly came to define same-sex relations, normative gender identities became increasingly valued. Thus, pictorial representations also changed and male bodies were depicted as more mature and emphatically more masculine.

This change is less evident in female artists's depictions of women's bodies: there is no comparable shift toward more traditionally feminine forms. Instead, here too, there is a growing interest in muscular bodies.

Numa Numantis, *Inclusa* (Leipzig: Self-published by the author, 1864), trans. from Latin in Hubert C. Kennedy, *Ulrichs: The life and works of Karl Heinrich Ulrichs* (New York: Alyson Publications 1988), 56.

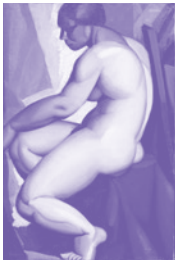
The Peruvian painter Carlos Baca-Flor (1867–1941) was shaped by the Parisian Académie Julian, where he learned, among other things, academic figure drawing. In his work, he often makes cultural references to his homeland, Peru. However, Baca-Flor's positioning between Lima and Paris was not only artistic: he belonged to a privileged group of people with European or European-Indigenous heritage who perceived themselves as "Neo-Europeans." Although they positioned themselves in relation to Europe, they also possessed a strong sense of national identity.

Carlos Baca-Flor
Estudio de joven, 1895

Baca-Flor's depictions of young bodies in *Abel muerto* (Dead Abel) as well as in *Estudio de joven* (Study of a Youth) stand within a 19th-century tradition in which youth was idealized in homoerotic artworks. In *Estudio de joven*, Baca-Flor depicts a young man who appears in a mirror. Mirrors are often used in art to explore the relationships between viewers, artists, and subjects. Here, observers can witness an intimate scene without being noticed by the depicted figure. The subject becomes an object of desire.

The youth in the mirror also refers to the ancient myth of Narcissus, who falls in love with his own reflection. Before the term "homosexuality" was coined, Narcissus was already often used as a reference to same-sex relationships. The loving gaze in Baca-Flor's study is not directed toward one's own image, but toward the young man himself—through the eyes of the viewer.

Tamara de Lempicka (1898–1980) was born in Warsaw and belonged to the upper class of St. Petersburg. After the October Revolution of 1917, she fled to Paris with her husband, the lawyer Tadeusz Łempicki (1889–1950). In 1928, she divorced and later married Baron Raoul Kuffner (1886–1961). She freely had relationships with both men and women.



Tamara de Lempicka
Nu assis de profil, 1923

Her work often drew upon motifs from European art before 1800. However, she was above all known for her confident, erotically charged depictions of women. In her works, she broke down pictorial elements into cubist-like, geometric segments. She rendered figures in a sculptural and highly stylized manner. In doing so, de Lempicka helped shape Art Deco painting. This movement in architecture, design, and art flourished in the USA and Europe between 1919 and 1939.

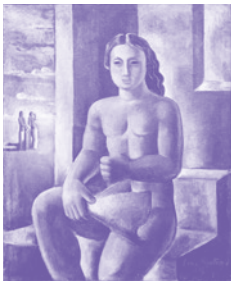
In *Nu assis de profil* (Seated Nude in Profile), the body fills nearly the entire picture plane. The woman's deeply tanned face and forearms indicate her social status as a laborer and her emphatically muscular appearance contradicts the prevailing female beauty ideals of the time. The work was created during a period in which gender roles were being renegotiated. This influ-

enced both de Lempicka's work and the Parisian cultural scene, in which the figure of the *Garçonne* was becoming increasingly significant: she embodied modernity, was often lesbian, wore short hair, male-connoted clothing, and frequently had an athletic body. Artists often used the *Garçonne* as a reference to female homosexuality, as can be seen in the work of Tsuguharu Foujita (1886–1968) in the section *Speaking in Code*.

Aristide Maillol
Le coureur cycliste,
1907–1908

According to his diaries, the author, art collector, and patron Harry von Kessler (1868–1937) was fascinated by the physical appearance of his lover Gaston George Colin (1891–1957). Colin, a racing cyclist and jockey, embodied the slim, athletic physique that corresponded to the homoerotic ideals of his time. During a joint trip to Greece with the French artist Aristide Maillol (1861–1944), Kessler expressed the wish for a life-size marble statue of Colin. Other sources report that he wanted a bronze modeled after the young Narcissus. While Maillol devoted many hours to the commission, Kessler documented the work's creation through photographs and written notes.

With his downcast gaze and weight shifted onto one leg, the sculpture recalls ancient depictions of the mythological god Apollo. For Kessler, ancient Greece served as a model because sexual relations between men and male youths were socially anchored and widely accepted. Against the backdrop of the repression of homosexuality in the 19th century, the naturalness of same-sex desire in antiquity appeared to many as an ideal. During the trip, Maillol allowed himself to be guided by his patron's aesthetic preferences. In *Le coureur cycliste* (Racing Cyclist) he stages the male body as a classical ideal of beauty and strength.



Laura Rodig
Desnudo de mujer,
ca. 1937

The sculptor and painter Laura Rodig (1896/1901–1972) was socially and politically engaged as a feminist and moved in like-minded circles in Chile, France, Mexico, and Spain. Associated with the feminist writer Marta Vergara (1898–1995), she led a long romantic relationship with Gabriela Mistral (1889–1957), one of Latin America's most celebrated poets and a Nobel Prize-winning writer. Rodig was active within Chile's Communist party and, from 1935 onward, fought as a member of the MEMCh (Pro-Emancipation Movement of Chilean Women) for women's right to vote and social equality. Rodig's convictions shaped her as an artist and teacher and found their way into her creative and poetic work.
Rodig's art developed a new homoerotic body ideal that subverted conventional associations with femininity and masculine clichés. In *Desnudo de mujer* (Female Nude), she portrays a muscular, assertive woman with a clenched fist and a steady, direct gaze. In the background, two standing figures can be seen

in a barren landscape under a blue sky, a motif that also appears in another work by Rodig. In both works, the figures elude clear gender classification. Through her choice of pose and the appearance of the bodies, Rodig creates a counter-image to normative gender definitions in early 20th-century Chile.

Carlos Baca-Flor (1867–1941)
Abel muerto, 1886
Oil on canvas
61.5 × 116 cm
Museo de Arte de Lima. Fondo de Adquisiciones 1955. Restaurado con el patrocinio de Julio Lugón

Carlos Baca-Flor (1869–1941)
Estudio de joven, 1895
Oil on canvas
80 × 49.5 cm
Museo de Arte de Lima. Fondo de Adquisiciones 1955

Gustave Courtois (1852–1923)
Narcisse, 1876
Oil on canvas
80 × 150.5 cm
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Marseille

Gustave Courtois (1852–1923)
Portrait de Maurice Deriaz, 1907
Oil on canvas
96 × 64 cm
Commune de Baulmes

Tamara de Lempicka (1898–1980)
Nu assis de profil, 1923
Oil on canvas
81.2 × 54 cm
Döpfner Collection

Aristide Maillol (1861–1944)
Le coureur cycliste, 1907–1908
Bronze
98.5 × 32 × 23 cm
Kunstmuseum Basel, Inv. P 67, Ankauf 1938

Gustave Moreau (1826–1898)
Narcisse, ca. 1890
Oil on canvas
65.4 × 37.5 cm
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Adolph D. and Wilkins C. Williams Fund, 2005.83

Laura Rodig (1896/1901–1972)
Desnudo de mujer, ca. 1937
Oil on canvas
80 × 67 cm
Colección Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago de Chile

Sascha Schneider (1870–1927)
Werdende Kraft, 1904
Oil on canvas
200 × 138 cm
Private collection

IV
Speaking in Code

"[...] one of those friendships between women which are so common in New England."
Henry James (1843–1916)

Same-sex desire was criminalized and persecuted in many societies—and continues to be today. This made it necessary to develop coded signs and clues that might only be understood by like-minded individuals. Established visual traditions were often used for this purpose: motifs from mythology, religion, and art history opened interpretive spaces in which homoerotic themes could be negotiated.

In his painting of two fishermen and a group of onlookers, German painter Ludwig von Hofmann (1861–1945) draws upon the motif of bathers. His work only suggests homoerotic desire: it doesn't reveal anything explicit, and the figures have little physical contact. About 30 years later, the Swiss painter and architect Paul Camenisch (1893–1970) took a much more unabashed approach to the same motif in his own version of the bathers.

Female homosexuality was connected with friendship early on. This is evident in literature, titles of works, and the historic descriptions of relationships between women, such as the 18th-century term "romantic friendship" or popular 19th-century expression "sentimental friends." Works from the early 20th century, on the other hand, show that the concept of friendship during this period fulfilled a double function: it served both to conceal homosexuality and to hint at it. Depictions of so-called friends, at times explicitly erotic, show that the intimacy of such relationships was by no means always a secret.

Henry James, *Notebook II*, 1881–1883, in *The Notebooks of Henry James*, ed. by F. O. Matthiessen and Kenneth B. Murdock (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1955), 47.

Contre-jour (Backlight) by the Swiss artist Marie-Louise-Catherine Breslau (1856–1927) offers insight into the everyday lives of women in 19th-century France. The painting depicts Breslau and her partner, the French artist Madeleine Zillhardt (1863–1950), in their shared home. At the time, private interiors were a common subject for women artists in Europe, as women's lives were often confined to the domestic sphere. In France, married women were not permitted to pursue a career without their husbands's consent until as late as 1965. Wealthy married women were expected to devote themselves entirely to the roles of wife and mother. Unmarried women such as Breslau, on the other hand, could—if their social status allowed—lead comparatively self-determined lives. Breslau was among the first women who were able to study at art academies such as the Académie Julian in Paris thanks to relaxed admission policies.

Marie-Louise-Catherine Breslau
Contre-jour, 1888

In *Contre-jour*, due to the backlighting, both women are bathed in shadow. Breslau sits elevated and gazes directly at the viewer. While presenting a familiar image of warm domesticity, Zillhardt simultaneously casts a dreamy, almost wistful gaze upon Breslau. The violets on the side table offer another hint at their relationship: in the 19th century, violets were considered a symbol of female homosexuality, following the poet Sappho (ca. 630–570 BC), who mentioned them in her poetry. To this day, Sappho remains the epitome of desire between women: her name gave rise to the term "sapphic," and her place of origin, Lesbos, to "lesbian."

An initial interpretation of Swiss artist Paul Camenisch's (1893–1970) *Schweizer Narziss* (Swiss Narcissus) suggests that the artist has transposed the ancient myth of Narcissus into a contemporary bathroom setting. Like the mythological figure, this Narcissus also directs his gaze exclusively at himself. He turns his back on the atrocities of the Second World War, which appear depicted on the surrounding tiles. In doing so, Camenisch criticizes Switzerland's indifference during the war years, which was primarily concerned with its own affairs—self-absorbed, like Narcissus.

Paul Camenisch
Schweizer Narziss, 1944

But the work also allows for another reading. Long before the term "homosexual" entered common usage, same-sex love was associated with the myth of Narcissus. The psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) also connected homosexual desire with narcissism. Seen through this lens, Camenisch's painting functions as a double mirror: it not only reflects Switzerland's self-centered attitude but also the precarious position of homosexuals amid the rise of fascism in Europe.

Despite the comparatively liberal legal situation in Basel from 1919 and throughout Switzerland from 1942, the situation for homosexual people remained tense. The registering and monitor-

ing of homosexuals by police would have facilitated Nazi persecution in the event of an occupation of Switzerland. The social situation contributed to the suppression of homosexuality into secrecy. This forced retreat into private space can also be discerned in Camenisch's *Schweizer Narziss*.

Ida Matton
La Confidence, 1902

Internationally recognized in her time, the Swedish sculptor Ida Matton (1863–1940) spent most of her adult life in Paris, then the center of the international art world. In late 19th-century France, lesbians often experienced the discrimination against women even more acutely than the hostility directed towards homosexuals. Because women were largely excluded from the renowned École des Beaux-Arts in the 19th century, Matton attended the private art academies Académie Colarossi and Académie Julian, institutions that offered students of all genders access to professional training, including life-drawing classes. Even within this context, sculpture remained an exclusionary field. Long associated with physical strength and large-scale public commissions, sculpture was widely considered a "masculine domain." Despite these obstacles, Matton forged her own path in life and defied gender roles.

The double bust from 1902 exhibited here was displayed and awarded a prize at the L'Union des femmes peintres et sculpteurs (Union of Women Painters and Sculptors) in Paris. *La Confidence* (The Secret) is widely understood as a deeply personal work. Matton may be referring to her long-term partner, the Australian opera singer Elyda Russell (1872–1949): the left figure resembles Matton herself, while the right is thought to depict Russell. The physical intimacy, unclothed bodies almost merging into a single form, and the gesture of whispering suggest a bond of trust and tenderness. What Matton is whispering to Russel remains unknown.

Anonymous
Letter, 1926
Paper
22.5 × 29 cm
Staatsarchiv Basel-Stadt, PD-REG 8a 1 (1) 4

Marie-Louise-Catherine Breslau (1856–1927)
Contre-jour, 1888
Oil on canvas
113 × 181.5 cm
Eigentum der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft, Bundesamt für Kultur, Bern, Depositum im Kunstmuseum Bern

Paul Camenisch (1893–1970)
Badende in der Breggiaschlucht, 1927
Oil on canvas
140.5 × 170.5 cm
Kunstmuseum Basel, Inv. G 1985.7, Depositum der Freunde des Kunstmuseums Basel 1985

Paul Camenisch (1893–1970)
Schweizer Narziss, 1944
Oil on canvas
116.5 × 82 cm
Kunstmuseum Basel, Inv. G 1985.25, Depositum der Freunde des Kunstmuseums Basel 1985

Jakob Rudolf Forster (1853–1926)
Justizmorde im 19. Jahrhundert
(Zurich: Self-published by the author, 1898)
Book
1 × 15 × 22.8 cm
Staatsarchiv St. Gallen, KA R.182-4

Tsuguharu Foujita (1886–1968)
Les deux amies, 1926
Oil on canvas
92 × 73 cm
Association des Amis du Petit Palais, Geneva

Ludwig von Hofmann (1861–1945)
Nackte Fischer und Knaben am grünen Gestade, 1900
Oil on canvas
142.5 × 204.5 cm
Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig

Madeleine Lemaire (1845–1928)
Le sommeil de Manon, ca. 1906
Oil on canvas
106 × 158 cm
Döpfner Collection

Lesezirkel "Der Kreis"
Der Kreis, 1953
Magazine, vol. 21, no. 6
2.8 × 16 × 22 cm
Schwulenarchiv Schweiz, Zürich

Ida Matton (1863–1940)
La Confidence, 1902
Plaster
65 × 56 cm
Hälsinglands Museum

Police Inspectorate Basel-Stadt
List of persons known or suspected to be *"warme Brüder"* (homosexual, literally "warm brothers"), n.d.
35.5 × 22.2 cm
Staatsarchiv Basel-Stadt, PD-REG 8a 1 (1) 4

Schweizerischer Freundschafts-Verband Amicitia, Zürich
Minute book, 1932–1938
Book
2 × 22 × 35 cm
Schwulenarchiv Schweiz, Zürich

Irène Zurkinden (1909–1987)
Freundinnen, 1937
Oil on canvas
92 × 73 cm
Kunstmuseum Basel, Inv. G 1960.48, Überweisung des Finanzdepartements 1960/61

V
Gender Diversity

"Masculine? Feminine? It depends on the situation.
Neuter is the only gender that always suits me."
Claude Cahun (1894–1954)

The history of homosexuality is closely related to ideas about gender. Early explanations saw same-sex desire as the result of an inverted "soul"—for example, a "female soul" in the body of a man. Around 40 years after the term "homosexual" was first mentioned in print in 1869, the first terms for trans people appeared—that is, for people whose gender identity does not correspond to the sex assigned to them at birth. During this period, new ways of naming and understanding identity emerged. Sexuality and gender increasingly came to be understood as separate concepts.

With the rise of German National Socialism and the outbreak of the Second World War, these developments came to an abrupt in Europe. The period was devastating for queer people in general, and thus also for many of the artists represented in this exhibition. Magnus Hirschfeld's (1868–1935) groundbreaking Institut für Sexualwissenschaft (Institute for Sexual Science) in Berlin was destroyed in 1933 as part of the book burning campaign of the "Action Against the Un-German Spirit." Toyen (1902–1980), a member of the Czech and French surrealist movements, was forced to go underground during the occupation of Prague; while Estonian artist Karl Pärsimägi (1902–1942) was murdered in Auschwitz concentration camp. The French artist couple Claude Cahun (1894–1954) and Marcel Moore (1892–1972) was active in the resistance on the occupied British Channel Island of Jersey.

Yet this history does not end with persecution or silence. As shown in a late self-portrait of the German artist Toni Ebel (1881–1961)—a survivor from Hirschfeld's milieu—the artistic exploration of homosexuality and trans identities persisted despite repression, and did not end in 1939 with the beginning of the Second World War.

Claude Cahun, *Aveux non avenus* (Paris: Éditions du Carrefour, 1930), English translation: Claude Cahun, *Disavowals or Cancelled Confessions* (London: Tate Publishing, 2007), 151.

Claude Cahun (1894–1954) was an author and artist. She grew up in a wealthy Jewish family in Nantes, France, where she had already met her future stepsister Marcel Moore (1892–1972) when they were teenagers. Moore remained her life-long partner, and they collaborated until Cahun's death. Together, they moved to Paris, where they adopted the masculine-sounding names Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore. Cahun described her own gender identity as fluid and neutral, and from a contemporary perspective is often considered non-binary, neither female nor male.

Cahun and Moore affiliated with the group of artists and writers known as the Surrealists, who placed dreamlike, irrational, and subconscious imagery at the center of their art. They participated in their group exhibitions and various political activities. Cahun was versatile, using whatever artistic medium suited the project at hand: in books like *Aveux non avenus (Disavowals or Cancelled Confessions)* from 1930, she brought together autobiographical fragments, image collages, and poems into a polyphonic composition in close collaboration with Moore. At the same time, Cahun worked for the stage and theater. The poet and artist Pierre Albert-Birot's (1876–1967) experimental "anti-theater" offered her a laboratory for masquerade and role-playing. Today, Cahun is primarily known for a series of photographic performances in which she playfully explores her own (gender) identity, staged and photographed by Moore.

Due to the rise of German fascism, Cahun and Moore moved to the British Channel Island of Jersey in 1937. After the Germans occupied Jersey in 1940, the two carried out various acts of resistance under the pseudonym *Der Soldat ohne Name*n (The soldier with no name). In 1944, both were arrested and sentenced to death, but were saved from execution by the end of the war.

Claude Cahun with Marcel Moore
Claude Cahun and Roger Roussot in *Barbe-Bleue* by Pierre Albert-Birot, 1929

In this painting by Danish artist Lili Elbe (1882–1931), the view opens onto the Italian Mediterranean island of Capri. Two people engaged in lively conversation are situated at the bottom right edge of the image, while the landscape takes up most of the composition. Due to their greater tolerance of homosexuality, Capri and southern Sicily were popular destinations for those whose desires conflicted with prevailing moral codes towards the end of the 19th century. Capri in particular became a place of longing and refuge—a place between lived freedom and romanticized ideas.

While Elbe still signed the work under her former name, there is already a glimpse of the future she desires: the work depicts her living confidently as a trans woman, together with her wife at the time, the artist Gerda Wegener, née Gottlieb (1886–1940). The canvas makes it possible to envision a self-determined life,

Lili Elbe
Lili and Gerda on the terrace (Portrait of Lili and Gerda in Anacapri), 1929

independent of legal circumstances, medical possibilities, or social values.

One year after the painting was created, Elbe became one of the first known people to undergo gender-affirming surgeries. Her legal recognition as female was established, and her marriage to Gerda Wegener was consequently annulled. Same-sex marriages were not legal at that time. She changed her name to Lili Ilse Elvenes and was later known as Lili Elbe. Elbe died in 1931, presumably as a result of complications following her fourth operation in Dresden.

Elisarion
La nuova lega, 1915–1916

The German-Baltic artist and writer Elisàr von Kupffer (1872–1942), known as Elisarion, devised a unique cosmos uniting art and philosophy. In Minusio near Locarno, he and his partner, the historian and philosopher Eduard von Mayer (1873–1960), founded the religion of Clarism in 1926 and began building the temple-like Sanctuarium Artis Elisarion that same year. It was filled with Elisarion's image worlds, which link the cultures of Western and Central Asian countries with references to Greco-Roman antiquity and occult teachings.

According to Elisarion's belief system, humans become truly complete when they transcend the separation between male and female, thus attaining the ideal of androgyny. He rejected the concept of homosexuality as it presupposes a binary division of gender that he fundamentally opposed. Nevertheless, Elisarion's works visually stand in the tradition of late 19th-century homoerotic art, particularly in their idealized depictions of male youth.

Elisarion's investment in self-mythologization and belief in an elevated ideal was not without political affinity: during the era of German National Socialism, he was enthusiastic about Adolf Hitler (1889–1945) and wrote him admiring letters. Elisarion's strict rejection of any distinction between men and women and his attempt to create a universal gender align disturbingly well with an authoritarian logic that privileges sameness over difference. Rather than allowing for variation, Elisarion envisioned one model of human completeness for all. This is echoed visually: the figures in his supposedly utopian imagery appear strikingly uniform in form, gesture, and expression.

Pavel Tchelitchew
Untitled (Seated Man, Multiple Images), 1927

Pavel Tchelitchew (1898–1957), born in the Russian Empire, worked as a painter as well as a stage and costume designer. After living in various cities, including Berlin and Paris, he settled in New York in 1936. There he moved in artistic and intellectual circles that included figures such as the writer Gertrude Stein (1874–1946), the photographer George Platt Lynes (1907–1955), and Tchelitchew's patron Lincoln Kirstein (1907–1996), who was the

co-founder of the New York City Ballet. In this environment, homosexuality and open forms of relationships were a lived reality.

From 1925 onwards, Tchelitchew experimented with methods of depicting multiple perspectives of a person simultaneously. Kirstein described this multiplication as the "mania of triplicity." The painting exhibited here, *Untitled (Seated Man, Multiple Images)*, belongs to a group of what the artist called his "multiple images." The almost photographic superimposition of different views of the same motif sets the figure in motion and presents identity as mutable. This might be understood as reflecting the reality of queer people who have long been compelled to present themselves as one person in public and another in private.

The selection of photographs (pp. 48–49) projected nearby shows that artists at the time experimented with the photographic medium to represent multi-layered identities by using doubling, superimposition, and mirroring. And because photographs were usually small and often taken in private settings, this medium made it possible to capture representations of gender identity and sexual orientation.

Czech Toyen (1902–1980) was a key figure in Czech and French Surrealism. This international art movement emerged around 1920 in Paris and regarded art as a medium for expanding human consciousness and freeing it from rational, bourgeois views. As a consequence, although the Surrealists were often quite explicitly homophobic, queer artists nonetheless took a particular interest in the movement, both because of its refusal of conventions and because it made such social dissidence seductive. Like the Paris Surrealists, their Czech counterparts were interested in Sigmund Freud's (1856–1939) psychoanalysis—particularly his theories of desire, manifest in dreams and the unconscious, as tools for exploring consciousness.

Toyen
Untitled
(Portrait with Nude), 1935

The person behind the gender-neutral pseudonym "Toyen" kept their gender identity and sexual orientation concealed and burned all personal documents. Toyen preferred clothing and pronouns that were read as masculine. Due to this rather masculine self-staging, there has been speculation that Toyen was a trans man or non-binary.

Rendered in only a few lines, the watercolor exhibited here shows an androgynous face with a slim mustache overlaid with an eroticized rear view of a headless, female-seeming body. The face's visible eye focuses on the partially clothed form. The superimposition of the fragmented body with the upper part of the face renders it visible as a desired apparition of the (un)conscious.

Claude Cahun (1894–1954) with Marcel Moore (1892–1974)
Claude Cahun and Roger Roussot in *Barbe-Bleue* by Pierre Albert-Birot, 1929
Gelatin silver print on Velox
10.7 × 7.5 cm
Galerie Alberta Pane

Claude Cahun (1894–1954) with Marcel Moore (1892–1974)
Claude Cahun and Solange Roussot in *Le Mystère d'Adam* by Pierre Albert-Birot, 1929
Gelantin silver print on Velox
12 × 9 cm
Galerie Alberta Pane

Toni Ebel (1881–1961)
Selbstbildnis, 1952
Chalk on paper
78 × 58 cm
Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin

Lili Elbe (1882–1931)
Lili and Gerda on the terrace (Portrait of Lili and Gerda in Anacapri), 1929
Oil on canvas
74 × 92 cm
Kunsthandel James Bauerle, Copenhagen

Elisarion (1872–1942)
La nuova lega, 1915–1916
Oil on canvas, wood
291 × 141 × 11 cm
Comune di Minusio, Centro Elisarion

Elisarion (1872–1942)
La Danza, 1918
Oil on canvas, wood
155 × 82 cm
Comune di Minusio, Centro Elisarion

Elisarion (1872–1942)
Le anime e il giudice, 1937
Oil on canvas
115.3 × 107 cm
Comune di Minusio, Centro Elisarion

Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935)
Berlins Drittes Geschlecht (Berlin/Leipzig: H. Seemann, ^{3}1904)
Book
22.3 × 14.5 cm
Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft, Berlin

Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935)
Passport, 1928
Legal document
11 × 16.5 cm
Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft, Berlin

Kurt Harald Isenstein (1898–1980)
Büste von Magnus Hirschfeld, 1930–1932
Bronze, marble
45 × 27 × 27 cm
Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft, Berlin

Ismael Nery (1900–1934)
Duas figuras, n.d.
Graphite on paper
14 × 10 cm
Collection of Evelyn e Ivoncy Ioschpe, on long-term loan to the Pinacoteca de São Paulo

Ismael Nery (1900–1934)
Figuras em azul, ca. 1920
Oil on canvas on cardboard
45.3 × 33.7 cm
Collection of Fundação José e Paulina Nemirovsky, on long-term loan to the Pinacoteca de São Paulo

Karl Pärsimägi (1902–1942)
Autoportree pärlitega, ca. 1935
Oil on cardboard
51.8 × 43.5 cm
Art Museum of Estonia

Marguerite Peltzer (1897–1991)
Hermaphrodite*, 1928
Plaster
45 × 12 × 17 cm
Museum of Thonon-les-Bains, inv. 2015.0.524

José Guadalupe Posada (1852–1913)
Corrido: Los 41, 1930
Engraving on paper
34.4 × 22.7 cm
Colección Andrés Blaisten México

José Guadalupe Posada (1852–1913)
Corrido: Los 41, 1930
Engraving on paper
34.4 × 22.7 cm
Colección Andrés Blaisten México

Th. Ramien (pseudonym of Magnus Hirschfeld, 1868–1935)
Sappho und Sokrates oder Wie erklärt sich die Liebe der Männer und Frauen zu Personen des eigenen Geschlechts? (Leipzig: Max Spohr, 1896)
Book
21.3 × 14.8 cm
Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft, Berlin

Pavel Tchelitchew (1898–1957)
Untitled (Seated Man, Multiple Images), 1927
Oil and coffee grounds on canvas
116.8 × 89.5 cm
Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, LLC, New York, NY

Toyen (1902–1980)
Untitled (Portrait with Nude), 1935
Watercolor with pencil and pen and ink on gray wove paper
20.5 × 16 cm
Collection of Dr. Don Bacigalupi and Daniel Feder

Gerda Wegener (1886–1940)
Erotisk scene, n.d.
Ink and watercolor on paper
28 × 34.5 cm
The Shin Collection, New York. Courtesy Shin Gallery, New York

Gerda Wegener (1886–1940)
Au plus doux de mes Amis, 1915
Watercolors and pastels on paper
34 × 22.9 cm
The Shin Collection, New York. Courtesy Shin Gallery, New York

Gerda Wegener (1886–1940)
Lili med fjerkost, 1920
Oil on canvas
79.7 × 59 cm
Private collection, Denmark

Gerda Wegener (1886–1940)
Reclining Nude (Lili Elbe), 1929
Watercolor and chalk on paper
52.8 × 63.8 cm
The Shin Collection, New York. Courtesy Shin Gallery, New York

Marianne von Werefkin (1860–1938)
Der Tänzer Alexander Sacharoff, 1909
Tempera on paper on cardboard
73.5 × 55 cm
Ascona, Marianne Werefkin Foundation, Museo comunale d'arte moderna, FMW 0-0-15

Kristian Zahrtmann (1843–1917)
Madam Ullebølle som bacchantinde, 1888
Oil on canvas
48 × 42 cm
Kunsthandel James Bauerle, Copenhagen

* The term "hermaphrodite" is a historical term that is no longer used today. In contemporary language, we speak of intersex people.

VI
Colonial Images and Counter-Images

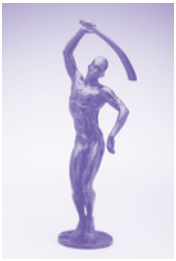
"You'd be surprised how good homosexuality is. I love it"
Richard Bruce Nugent (1906–1987)

As European countries expanded their colonial reach, their values and legal concepts became established in many parts of the world, promoting deliberate hostility towards same-sex desire and alternative conceptions of gender in regions where these had long been taken for granted, such as North, Central, and South America. Theodor de Bry's (1528–1598) depiction of the massacre of "third gender" Indigenous people by the Spaniard Vasco Núñez de Balboa (1475–1519) in Panama around 1513 is a striking example of this.

Hostility towards homosexuality was also used as a political tool. In the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire in particular was depicted as weak and decadent because it accepted the ancient practice of pederasty, in which men had sex with adolescent boys. This portrayal helped justify colonial claims by Europeans to power in the face of the self-evident decline of the Ottoman Empire. In turn, some western artists promulgated a homoerotic orientalism: they judged non-western cultures for their supposed licentiousness, while simultaneously catering to the erotic fantasies of a European public.

Numerous artists developed counter-narratives to this colonial instrumentalization. The Mexican painter Saturnino Herrán (1887–1918) emphasized same-sex desire as a part of precolonial Aztec culture. The Sri Lankan photographer Lionel Wendt (1900–1944) showed the male body caught between colonial modernity and local traditions. In Harlem, New York, a Black, largely queer, cultural scene developed: the Harlem Renaissance. This movement created a new African American self-understanding and a distinct aesthetic as a counter narrative to settler colonialism and racism in the USA.

Quoted in Jeff Kisseloff, *You Must Remember This: An Oral History of Manhattan from the 1890s to World War II* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989), 288.



Richmond Barthé
Feral Benga, Senegalese Dancer, 1935

In the 1920s and 1930s, the Harlem Renaissance in New York marked a defining moment of cultural and artistic innovation that brought forth a modern African American identity and aesthetic. Queer artists, musicians, and intellectuals such as the American sculptor Richmond Barthé (1901–1989) made significant contributions. Within this scene, there were spaces of relative freedom. In public, however, sexuality and gender identity mostly had to be concealed.

Barthé's work was inspired by the Senegalese dancer François "Féral" Benga (1906–1957), who—like the American dancer and singer Josephine Baker (1906–1975)—took Parisian stages by storm. For audiences at the time, both embodied the image of the "exotic," a role that Benga consciously played with. Barthé's sculpture was created after seeing him onstage in Paris in 1934.

Barthé draws upon the idealized body image of Greek antiquity in his sculpture and transposes it onto a Black body. This gesture was both aesthetic and political. It follows the concept of the "New Negro" developed by philosopher Alain LeRoy Locke (1885–1954), a friend and supporter of Barthé. The philosopher encouraged Black artists to draw freely from African, African American, and European cultures, including classical traditions, and shape them into a modern, self-assured identity. For Locke, who was also homosexual, Greek antiquity offered a historical framework in which desire between men could be imagined as natural and culturally grounded, since same-sex relationships were socially acknowledged there.

Saturnino Herrán
Nuestros dioses antiguos, 1916

Saturnino Herrán Guinchard (1887–1918), known as Saturnino Herrán, was a pioneer of Mexican mural painting, which gained international recognition in the early 20th century. In this history painting, Herrán looks back longingly to the time before the oppression and exploitation of Indigenous populations by European colonial powers. He was particularly drawn to the Aztecs—who commonly referred to themselves as the Mexica—a civilization that flourished in central Mexico from the 14th to the early 16th century. Their cosmology, social structures, and attitudes toward the body stood in stark contrast to European norms. Especially striking to Herrán was their understanding of sexuality and gender as flexible rather than fixed. In Mexica belief, gods could take on human shape and shift between masculine and feminine forms. Gender, like divinity itself, was understood as mutable rather than biologically determined. Although a binary distinction between male and female existed, gender was not considered a fixed characteristic.

In *Nuestros dioses antiguos* (Our Ancient Gods), Herrán depicts Mexica figures in a sensuous, openly homoerotic manner.

Drawing on pre-colonial cult images, ritual depictions, and the elaborate garments and ornaments, he evokes a world untouched by European moral codes surrounding sexuality and gender. The painting functions as an act of resistance: in early 20th-century Mexico—a society shaped by rapid modernization, global exchange, and the transformation brought about by the Mexican Revolution—Indigenous culture appears as a counter-model to colonially-influenced narratives.

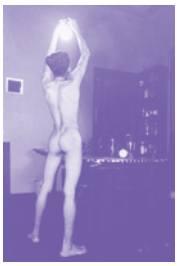
Successful in his time but little-known today, the Spanish painter Gabriel Morcillo (1887–1973) depicts three bare-chested men in theatrical poses in *Fructidor*. They hold overflowing baskets of fruit, wine, and musical instruments. Their bodies are loosely draped with flowing fabric and adorned with headscarves and jewelry—details drawn from the orientalist pictorial tradition that portrayed West Asian cultures as sensual, licentious, and decadent in deeply racist ways. Within European colonial thinking, such stereotypes were often linked to homosexuality, which was framed as a sign of moral and political weakness.

Gabriel Morcillo
Fructidor, ca. 1932

Although his works appear openly homoerotic, Morcillo repeatedly received portrait commissions from the regime of Francisco Franco (1892–1975). In Francoist Spain, homosexuality was criminalized and treated as a social threat. Nevertheless, Morcillo's proximity to the regime may have protected him, even as homophobic rumors circulated about his private life. Franco's circles did not reject his paintings but presented them as moral warnings: images of what would have happened had Spain not been "reclaimed" as a Christian empire in 1492 after nearly eight centuries of Islamic presence on the Iberian Peninsula.

Unlike other colonial powers, Spain not only projected an orientalizing gaze toward West Asia and North Africa, but was also itself subjected to such a gaze. Because of its Islamic past, it was often seen as "oriental" and "exotic." This double position shaped Spanish self-perception and informed artists like Morcillo, who absorbed and reflected these views.

In 1883, the former colony British Ceylon, present-day Sri Lanka, criminalized "unnatural sexual intercourse." This British law remains in force in Sri Lanka today, even though homosexuality is no longer actively prosecuted. Like the island of Capri in Italy or Bali in Indonesia, Sri Lanka was nonetheless an important meeting place for homosexuals. The philosopher, poet, and activist for homosexual rights, Edward Carpenter (1844–1929), described the island as a paradise for homosexuals. While in the 1930s, the Italian writer Giovanni Comisso (1895–1969) dubbed Sri Lanka a "tropical Athens" due to the strong presence of homosexuality.



Lionel Wendt
Nude with a light bulb, ca. 1935

References to homosexual desire also found their way into local art during this period. Alongside the work by the artist David Paynter (1900–1975) exhibited here, this is particularly evident in the work of the filmmaker, photographer, and pianist Lionel Wendt (1900–1944). Wendt was a cofounder of the 43 Group, an association of artists living in the region who opposed colonial rule and its value systems. Through openly homoerotic depictions of nudity and desire, he challenged the prevailing moral codes of British colonial society.

Wendt worked with various photographic techniques, including distortions caused by strong overexposure, so called solarization, as well as photomontages. His photographs depict people, landscapes, and cultural sites in present-day Sri Lanka. Some works have a surrealistic and experimental quality, while others are more documentary in nature.

Richmond Barthé (1901–1989)
Feral Benga, Senegalese Dancer, 1935
Bronze
48.3 × 19.1 × 11.4 cm
Collection of The Newark Museum of Art, Gift of Mr and Mrs Charles W. Engelhard by exchange, 1989

Theodor de Bry (1528–1598)
Vasco Núñez de Balboa's massacre of the Cueva, 1594
From: Girolamo Benzoni, Das vierdte Buch von der neuwen Welt, oder, Neuwe und gründtliche Historien von dem Nidergängischen Indien, so von Christophoro Columbo im Jar 1492 erstlich erfunden (Frankfurt am Main: Dieterichs von Bry, 1594), plate XXII
Book
8.5 × 26.5 × 35 cm
Zentralbibliothek Zürich, Rl 57

Theodor de Bry (1528–1598)
Vasco Núñez de Balboa's massacre of the Cueva, 1594/1613
From: Girolamo Benzoni, Das vierdte Buch von der neuwen Welt, oder, Neuwe und gründtliche Historien von dem Nidergängischen Indien, so von Christophoro Columbo im Jar 1492 erstlich erfunden (Frankfurt am Main: Johann Theodors de Bry, ²1613), plate XXII
Book
9 × 25 × 33 cm
Zentralbibliothek Zürich, IV M 10.4

Saturnino Herrán (1887–1918)
Nuestros dioses antiguos, 1916
Oil on canvas
101 × 112 cm
Colección Andrés Blaisten México

Louis Lumière (1864–1948)
Le Cake-Walk au Nouveau Cirque (Film Lumière n°1350), 1902–1903
35mm film, digitized, b/w, silent
1 min., looped
Institut Lumière

Gabriel Morcillo (1887–1973)
Fructidor, ca. 1932
Oil on canvas
149 × 160 cm
Dr. Adolfo Planet, Valencia, Spain

Richard Bruce Nugent (1906–1987)
Jesus and Judas, 1947
Ink and transparent dye on paper
38.1 × 27.9 cm
Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art, 2015.25.2, Gift of the Estate of Thomas H. Wirth

David Paynter (1900–1975)
L'après-midi, 1935
Oil on canvas
99 × 122 cm
Brighton & Hove Museums

Lionel Wendt (1900–1944)
Nude with a light bulb, ca. 1935
Gelatin silver print
38.1 × 30.5 cm
Gabriel Brotman and Thomas Gensemer, private collection, New York

Digitalized Photographs

Berenice Abbott (1898–1991)
Janet Flanner, 1927
Gelatin silver print
25.4 × 20.3 cm

Berenice Abbott (1898–1991)
Jean Cocteau in Bed, 1927
Gelatin silver print
7.9 × 10.8 cm

Anonymous
Hannah Höch in her studio in The Hague, self-portrait as a double exposure with her painting *Symbolische Landschaft III* on the easel, 1930
Glass plate negative
14.4 × 8.3 cm
Berlinische Galerie, erworben aus Mitteln der Senatsverwaltung für Kulturelle Angelegenheiten, Berlin, 1978

Alice Austen (1866–1952)
The Darned Club, 1891
Glass plate negative
10.2 × 12.7 cm
Courtesy of the Alice Austen House

Alice Austen (1866–1952)
Trude & I masked, short skirts, 1891
Glass plate negative
10.2 × 12.7 cm
Courtesy of the Alice Austen House

Berg & Høeg (1895–1903)
Marie and her brother Karl cross-dressing, 1895–1903
Digital print from glass negative
20.4 × 30.5 cm
Preus Museum, Photo Museum Norway

Berg & Høeg (1895–1903)
Marie posing as a young boy with cigarette, 1895–1903
Digital print from glass negative
20.4 × 30.5 cm
Preus Museum, Photo Museum Norway

Berg & Høeg (1895–1903)
Three facets of Marie, 1895–1903
Digital print from glass negative
20.4 × 30.5 cm
Preus Museum, Photo Museum Norway

Claude Cahun (1894–1954) with Marcel Moore (1892–1972)
I am in training don't kiss me, ca. 1927
Gelatine silver print
11.7 × 8.9 cm
Courtesy of the Jersey Heritage Collections

Claude Cahun (1894–1954) with Marcel Moore (1892–1972)
Self portrait (reflected in mirror), 1928
Gelatine silver print
17.9 × 23.7 cm
Courtesy of the Jersey Heritage Collections

Eduardo Chicharro Briones (1905–1964) and Gregorio Prieto (1897–1992)
Herido por la belleza clásica, 1929–1931
Photo collage, photography
39.5 × 58.5 cm
Museo Gregorio Prieto

Imogen Cunningham (1883–1976)
Gertrude Stein, 1935
Gelatin silver print
23.5 × 19 cm
Imogen Cunningham Trust

Florence Henri (1893–1982)
Margarete Schall, 1928
Gelatin silver print mounted on paperboard
16.7 × 11.8 cm
National Gallery of Art, Patrons' Permanent Fund, 1995.36.88

Heinz Loew (1903–1981)
Double portrait of Heinz Loew and Hermann Trinkaus in the studio, Bauhaus Dessau, Double Exposure, 1927/1988
Gelatin silver print on baryta paper
24 × 18 cm
Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin

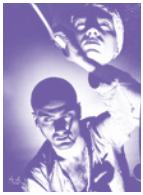
Luis Márquez Romay (1899–1978)
Dos Mujeres, 1926–1931
Nitrate negative
12.7 × 17.8 cm
Archivo Fotográfico "Manuel Toussaint," Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, UAM

Luis Márquez Romay (1899–1978)
Reflejos con máscara
Nitrate negative
12.7 × 17.8 cm
Archivo Fotográfico "Manuel Toussaint," Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, UAM

Alfredo Molina Lahitte (1906–1971)
Portrait of Laura Rodig, 1934
Glass negative
9 × 12 cm
Colección Archivo Fotográfico, Biblioteca Nacional de Chile

George Platt Lynes (1907–1955)
Reclining male nude, 1930
Gelatin silver print
20 × 25 cm
Kinsey Institute, Indiana University

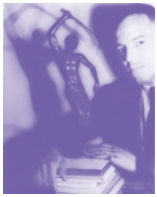
Van Leo (1921–2002)
Self-portrait, 1942
Gelatin silver print
10 × 15 cm
Courtesy of the Rare Books and Special Collections Library, The American University in Cairo



Van Leo (1921–2002)
Self-portrait, 1945
Gelatin silver print
40.4 × 30.4 cm
Van Leo Collection, 0081va. Courtesy of the Arab Image Foundation

Carl Van Vechten (1880–1964)
Bessie Smith, 1936
Gelatin silver print
35.6 × 28 cm
Carl Van Vechten Papers Relating to African American Arts and Letters. James Weldon Johnson Collection in the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library

Carl Van Vechten (1880–1964)
Richard Bruce Nugent, 1936
Gelatin silver print
25.2 × 19 cm
Carl Van Vechten Papers Relating to African American Arts and Letters. James Weldon Johnson Collection in the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library



Carl Van Vechten (1880–1964)
Richmond Barthé, 1937
Gelatin silver print
23.3 × 14.5 cm
Carl Van Vechten Papers Relating to African American Arts and Letters. James Weldon Johnson Collection in the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library

Lionel Wendt (1900–1944)
Boy and Wave (variations), ca. 1938
Gelatin silver print (positive and negative solarization)
30.2 × 40.6 cm
Collection of Fukuoka Asian Art Museum

Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (1885–1939), also known as Witkacy
Self-Portrait, 1912–1913
Gelatin silver print
17.5 × 12.7 cm
Kulturstiftung Sachsen-Anhalt, Kunstmuseum Moritzburg Halle (Saale), Inv.-nr. MOSPh03064

Colophon

This booklet is published on the occasion of the exhibition

The First Homosexuals: The Birth of New Identities 1869—1939
Kunstmuseum Basel
March 7–August 2, 2026

This exhibition was first organized by Alphawood Exhibitions at Wrightwood 659, Chicago, researched and curated by Jonathan D. Katz, Curator, and Johnny Willis, Associate Curator.

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ALPHAWOOD FOUNDATION CHICAGO

WRIGHTWOOD 659 CHICAGO

Alice Austen (1866–1952), The Darned Club, 1891
Glass plate negative, 10.2 × 12.7 cm, Courtesy of the Alice Austen House

kunstmuseum basel