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Dozens of visual artists showcase queer love in group exhibition

By [Nicholas Boston](#)

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David Antonio Cruz, "iamtheimmenseshadowofmytears,thehopesofmylover,dreamsofmyancestors," 2022.

"Queer Love: Affection and Romance in Contemporary Art" is an exhibition in two locations: the Lehman College Art Gallery, in the Bronx, and La MaMa Galleria, in the East Village. It is a group show of the works of over four dozen LGBTQI+ visual artists in a wide range of media, from painting to digital.

"This is the first queer-themed group exhibition in the history of the Lehman College Art Gallery, which was founded in 1984," said gallery director Bartholomew Bland, explaining that the genesis of the show was an "open forum at Lehman to discuss broadly how to better serve the LGBTQ community on campus."



ggggrimes, "Date Night Distancing," August 9, 2021.

One might ask the question, "What makes love queer?" Well, nothing, as the recently popularized phraseology, "Love is Love" goes. But, not everybody gets to get this unconditional affirmation of their desires and intimacies.

"Everyone wants to experience love of some form in their lives — that is the universal," said Bland, describing the show's curatorial mission. "There are certainly a multitude of queer stories to tell, but, particularly, since Lehman serves college-age students, many of whom are finding their way, or contemplating their relationships, we wanted to create a show that was both beautiful and affirming."

The show includes painting by Vincent Chong and Cobi Moules, silkscreens by Gabriel García Román, murals by Tura Oliveira, textile wall hanging from Christy Gast, digital art by ggggrimes, and more.

Photographers Elliott Jerome Brown, Jr., Rakeem Cunningham, Clifford Prince King, and Paul Mpagi Sepuya explore the body in images that sometimes involve their own physicality as Black gay men.

Pioneering lesbian photographers Barbara Hammer and [Catherine Opie](#) are placed in conversation with their inheritresses Lizzie Alexandra, Lex Barberio, and Sophie Schwartz.

David Antonio Cruz and [Zachari Logan](#), hailing from Philadelphia and Canada respectively, both of whom innovate figurative art, have enjoyed previous shows in the Bronx and contributed to establishing a queer art presence in the borough.

With Lehman College designated an Hispanic-serving institution — a federal category for colleges and universities whose student bodies are 25% or more Hispanic or Latino — there is considerable representation in “Queer Love” of Latinx artists.

Bolivian-Mexican transdisciplinary artist Adriana Elena Bravo Morales's photograph, “Beso de Chola/Chola Kiss” (2016), pictures two indigenous Bolivian women clad in characteristic bowler hats and colorful shawls, stealing a mouth-to-mouth kiss. Cruz's “iamtheimmenseshadowofmytears,thehopesofmylover,dreamsofmyancestors, 2022,” is an intricate rendering of intertwined figures.



While the primary focus is on college-level and emerging artists, a welcome aspect of the exhibition is its inclusion of works by veteran artists whose perspectives on queer love from prior eras by earlier generations are increasingly arcane to contemporary observers, even as they forged a hard-fought legacy.

Gerald Simcoe's drawing “First Kiss” (2008) is a haunting sketch of individual yearning for not only the love of another but of the self. Luis Carle's “Pride, Love and Fireworks, 2003” shows two gay men in an embrace as they watch the fireworks off the west side piers, once a ritual of the New York Pride celebrations. Betsy Damon's “The Intimacy of Carving Together, 1972,” is a photograph of two women chiseling determinedly at a rock cluster outdoors as if sculpting a public monument to their own relationship. [Sunil Gupta](#) presents a selection from his 1976 series, “Christopher Street,” which captures street life on and near the

iconic West Village artery. Timeless are the staged photographs of gamins from the 1960s by the late James Bidgood, who passed away in February, 2021, at the age of 88.

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Adriana Elena Bravo Morales, "Beso De Chola/Chola Kiss," 2016.

Queer Love: Affection and Romance in Contemporary Art | Lehman College Art Gallery
| La Mama Galleria | Until April 6, 2023

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