

Large print guide

Absolutely Queer

Open from 17 February 2023

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Absolutely Queer
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This guide reflects the exhibition at the time of printing,
February 2023

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ABSOLUTELY QUEER

Queer creativity in Sydney is boundless, refracting the world to show kaleidoscopic possibilities. Across cartooning, performance, videogame development, art, costume and fashion, the LGBTQIA+ creatives in this exhibition present nine absolutely queer visions. As part of Sydney WorldPride, Powerhouse is proud to present their stories through objects, interviews, films and commissioned works. United by their drive to spread joy and uplift the queer community, they continue the legacy of past generations of queer creatives, galvanising and inspiring all of us.

This exhibition contains nudity, religious references, sexual references, themes of death and explicit language.

Matthew Aberline Maurice Goldberg

The Beautiful and Useful Studio,
collaborative art studio

‘Through our ephemeral yet absolutely huge installations, we playfully and gracefully celebrate the decades of powerful protest that came before us. We love fun and play, and our work divulges complex messages to be unpacked by the viewer. Both of us grew up as slightly awkward outsiders in the 70s and 80s before working with the LGBTQI+ community for many years. Our lives have been touched by the impact of the good and the bad times: bullying and fear, HIV and AIDS, isolation and a lack of queer role models in popular culture, as well as the positive impact of PREP, the YES Plebiscite, and an incredible wave of inclusion in Australian society. We feel our work continues the legacy of fabulousness as an act of protest, a legacy started many decades before by many iconic heroes and many more unsung heroes who bravely shared their stories loudly and proudly. We want our work to share some of those stories and celebrate how far we’ve come, and where we are going.’

Matthew Aberline’s pronouns are he/him
Maurice Goldberg’s pronouns are he/him

Fabulous: Acts of Protest and Celebration

Sublimation printing on polyester
(100% recycled PET), air, lighting

Sydney, 2023

Commissioned by Powerhouse, 2022

Audio transcript — see page 21

Norrie

Activist and cartoonist

‘When I was a lad, which wasn’t very often, same-sex sex was illegal. Over the years the laws against “carnal knowledge against the order of nature” have been abolished, along with the laws against “cross dressing”. Eventually, sex changes were legally recognised, and now, anyone can marry anyone they love, and the fiction that all people have to be male or female has been legally refuted. It may well be that in the future, less babies born with intersex variations will be rushed into surgery to “normalise” them. Legal sex and gender distinction may well be seen as irrelevant as race or religion or father’s occupation, all things that used to appear on legal identity documents. Children may grow up in environments that nurture them no matter how diverse their natures and interests may be. Society may well be more inclusive, and less divisive. After all, we’re all in this together.’

Ultrasex: (Beyond Division), independently published, 2019, p 303

Norrie’s pronouns are they/them

Left

Bubble Bike

Metal, plastic, rubber, textile, electrical components

Customised and used by Norrie, Sydney, 2017–2022

Purchased 2022

Right

Passport

Paper, plastic

Sex ‘X’ passport issued by the Australian Passport Office, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Sydney, 2011

Gift of Norrie, 2022

Recognised Details Certificate Paper

The first ‘sex: not specified’ Recognised Details Certificate issued by the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Sydney, 2014

Lent by Norrie, 2022

Video transcript — see page 21

Brenton Heath-Kerr

‘The most interesting experience ... is the way that other people react and treat you ... I’ve had experiences being in a specific costume — *The Gold Woman* — where she was particularly glamorous and elegant, and people just treated me like I was some goddess. It was really different to, for instance, *Tom of Finland*, where here’s this macho dude and everyone’s frightened of him.’

Brenton Heath-Kerr

Interview with Judith O’Callahan,
12 May 1994

Brenton Heath-Kerr (1962–95)

Tom of Finland

Lycra, cardboard, plastic

Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras
costume, 1992

Purchased 1994

Audio transcript — see page 22

Brenton Heath-Kerr and Darian Zam

‘We had a shared sense of theatrical, kitsch aesthetics and pop culture appropriation. Brenton wanted to debut “Betty” in the sexually charged environment of Sleaze Ball, so we had 72 hours to make her from scratch. The marionette-like method was inspired by the classic jointed wooden artist’s model. After tracing around his body, I drew cartoons then painted the pieces which were laminated and assembled with straps and bolts. Worn with a black bodysuit underneath, it caused a sensation and stopped people in their tracks when she appeared. Brenton loved the idea that you could become someone else through costume.’

Darian Zam, 2022

Brenton Heath-Kerr (1962–95) and Darian Zam

Betty Page

Lycra, cardboard, plastic

Sleaze Ball costume, Sydney, 1994

Purchased 1997

Sexy Galaxy

Drag king

‘In the mid-80s I went to a bogan high school where you hid the fact that you were gay. But I was lucky enough to get into the West Australian Academy of Performing Arts and that’s when I started meeting gays and my peeps and came out.

When I first saw a drag queen, I thought, Wow, that’s what I want to do. I knew that was my calling but for a long time I was too frightened and too insecure to perform alone. In the end, it didn’t take me long to get on stage — I just needed someone to do it with.

Now I perform because I love it. I love wearing the costumes and the industry and hanging out with drag queens because of the humour. I love those aspects and that’s why I do it, not because I need anything from it.

I’m a different drag king to a lot of drag kings because I’m a queen-king. I want to be camp and flamboyant. All I ever wanted to do was work alongside the queens and share our communities.’

Sexy Galaxy’s pronouns are she/her

Clockwise from *Black and Gold*

Black and Gold

Upcycled suit jacket, cable ties, synthetic gold, plastic sequins

Melbourne, 2016

Hand puppet in a copy of Sexy Galaxy’s *Black and Gold* costume

Reticulated foam, felt, Dacron wadding, sequins, synthetic fabric

Designed for the ‘Kings of the World’ online show, Melbourne, 2021

Diva Awards

Awarded to Sexy Galaxy, Sydney, 2003, 2004 and 2005

Lent by Sexy Galaxy

Priscilla

Cotton blend, sequins, glue, acetate, foil

Sydney, 2017

Tom of Finland

Foil Lycra, net, holographic foil, heavyweight Lycra pant lining, wire, diamantes, elastic, foam, plastic sheet

Hat designed and made by Sexy Galaxy, outfit designed by Sexy Galaxy and made by Peri Jenkins, Sydney, 2019

Lilac Muscle Suit

Sequined lycra

Designed by Isaac Lummis for Sexy Galaxy, Sydney, 2021

Costumes designed, worn and lent by Sexy Galaxy, unless otherwise stated.

Video transcript — see page 22

Pete Foley Scott Ford

Fuzzy Ghost

‘As we got older, we noticed there were so few documents of particular places and times in which we’d lived. *Queer Man Peering Into A Rock Pool.jpg* was driven by a desire to share these moments and feelings. As a queer person, it’s really important to keep making things that specifically represent you rather than trying to be “relatable”. It’s these hyper-specific reflections of our community that give us strength, and bolsters us to say, “I can dress like that if I want to. In fact, I think I need to ramp it up.” You don’t have to carve yourself into a particular type. There’s so many ways to be queer and it’s beautiful when you see that.’

Pete Foley’s pronouns are he/him
Scott Ford’s pronouns are he/him

Queer Man Peering Into A Rock Pool.jpg

Videogame

Sydney, 2022

Purchased 2022

Installation commissioned by Powerhouse,
2022

Supporting digital assets:

Video courtesy of Mexican Summer Studios

Webpage courtesy of GamesHub

Gameplay courtesy of isshehungry

(Johannes J Jaruraak)

Gameplay courtesy of Viking Blonde (Will
Overgard)

The Hole, Taiwan, 1998. Fox Lorber Films,
director Tsai Ming-Liang

Video transcript — see page 23

Peter Tully

‘The gay community in Sydney was coming together with a political identity, and I thought along with a political identity there should be a cultural identity ... There were clubs opening and great parties and people were into gay books and gay novels and Dennis Altman wrote his book and there was a great sense of liberation reaching a peak in Sydney and huge numbers coming out of the closet ... There was suddenly a community of thousands of people — who all needed jewellery ... to wear to parties.’

Peter Tully

‘Farewell to an Arty Party Boy’,
David Leser, *HQ Magazine*, Summer
1992/93

Peter Tully (1947–92)

Mary Don’t Ask

Mixed media, found objects

Designed for Tully’s solo show
Primitive Futures at Roslyn Oxley9
Gallery, Sydney, 1984

Purchased with the assistance of the Crafts
Board of the Australia Council and Mojo
MDA, 1986

‘I like to use light reflective surfaces
such as safety reflective plastic, actual
reflectors, laser and holographic
papers that react and flow in artificial
light. When my sculptures are worn
by someone who is moving and
dancing, you see the colours flashing,
shining and reflecting. I have always
been interested in optical illusions
and with viewer interaction through
reflective surfaces.’

Peter Tully

Australian Art and Artists,
Sue Melville, Julie Rollinson,
Science Press, Chapter 27, 1996

Peter Tully (1947–92)

Mardi Gras costume

Fabric, plastic, feathers, metal, found
objects and materials

Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras
costume, 1990

Purchased 1995

Audio transcript — see page 25

Dennis Golding

Mixed media artist

‘I learnt from the age of three how to paint from my mum, who learnt how to paint from her mother. So, there is this generational storytelling within our family.

Growing up in Redfern, a common experience for many Aboriginal kids was seeing the police every day. I didn’t realise that this had an emotional impact on how I see life and how I see myself. That’s why I always take a gentle approach in my practice to give a stronger representation of us and how we should be celebrated and honoured.

I explore how symbols talk about heraldry, marking connections to Country, connections to identity. I started to play with the cultural motifs or circles and diamonds, which are often scarred traditional symbols from my Country. With the Superhero Capes, I introduced cultural symbols from my own Country, along with tracks of emus, to challenge those categorical boundaries between the symbolism of Superman with symbols of my own Country and my identity as a queer man.’

Dennis Golding’s pronouns are he/him

Arch panel

Wood, acrylic paint

Sydney, 2022

Commissioned by Powerhouse, 2022

Shield armour and cape

Epoxy resin, enamel, aluminium, gold leaf

Sydney, 2022

Commissioned by Powerhouse, 2022

Audio transcript — see page 25

Brian Ross

‘[Mardi Gras] gives me the opportunity as an individual to be creative, it’s quite open in its ideas. I can do as I want, make what I want. It’s very challenging, it’s something I build up to each year, I put a lot of effort into it and I see if I can do better than last year.’

Brian Ross

Interview with Judith O’Callaghan,
16 June 1994

Brian Ross

Lobster Mornay

Easyform, Fome-Cor, closed cell polystyrene, Chux superwipes, latex, fluorescent paint

Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras costume, 1994

Purchased 1994

Audio transcript — see page 26

Renè Rivas

Costume designer

‘Be open, be honest with yourself and above all be proud of what you do and who you are. I’m originally from El Salvador where gays had to hide their sexuality for fear of their lives. When I was young, I was kidnapped and taken to a camp, but I escaped. I was lucky. I came to Sydney as a refugee in the 1980s because of the civil war. Australia has allowed me to be open about my sexuality and express my creativity. Australia allows people who do not have a voice because of taboos, religion or culture to be themselves, no matter who they are or what they believe.

I was volunteering at an HIV charity, the Bobby Goldsmith Foundation, and one year in the mid-1980s I wore a costume that I made to the annual fundraising ball. Peter Tully, the artistic director of Mardi Gras, said to me, ‘Oh, you’re very creative,’ and invited me to join the Mardi Gras workshop designing and making costumes and floats for the parade. From then on, I was in paradise and my life was changed.’

Renè Rivas’ pronouns are he/him

Left to right

Priscilla Bonnet

Artificial flowers, rooster feathers, plastic doll, repurposed costume jewellery, customised mask, plastic sequins

Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Fair Day, 1992

Gift of Renè Rivas, 2023

Gay Rainbow Unicorn

Artificial flowers, walis tambo (tiger grass broom), plastic horn, synthetic fabric, paint, repurposed costume jewellery, customised mask, sequined rainbow collars, rainbow flags

Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Fair Day, 2022

Gift of Renè Rivas, 2023

Plumage of Paradise

Including yellow ankle cuffs

Deconstructed mirror balls, ostrich and duck feathers, repurposed costume jewellery, plastic beads, sequins, paillettes, synthetic fabrics on an EVA foam and wire base, synthetic fabric

Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade, 2016

Lent by Renè Rivas

Headpiece

Repurposed fans and costume jewellery, artificial flowers on an EVA foam and wire base, synthetic net

Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras 40th anniversary launch, 2018

Gift of Renè Rivas, 2023

Warrior of Love

Sequined synthetic fabric on an EVA foam base, rooster feathers, repurposed costume jewellery, sequined synthetic cape

Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade as part of the FLAGCOM float, 2022

Gift of Renè Rivas, 2023

Master Judge

Including upside down jockstrap

Sequins, repurposed costume jewellery, buttons on a velvet-covered EVA foam and wire base, rooster feathers, polyester, spandex, gold lamé

Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, 2020

Gift of Renè Rivas, 2023

Captain Burning Man Hat

Repurposed costume jewellery, pheasant feathers, customised sequin cap on an EVA foam base

Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Fair Day, 2019

Gift of Renè Rivas, 2023

White Peacock

Deconstructed mirror balls and synthetic fabric on an EVA foam and wire form, ostrich feathers, repurposed costume jewellery

The Albion Centre float, Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade, 2015

Gift of Renè Rivas, 2023

Two-Dollar Bag

Repurposed tarpaulin (woven polyethylene)

Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Fair Day, 2000, remade 2022

Gift of Renè Rivas, 2023

Three Horned Unicorn

Plastic horns, repurposed costume jewellery, rooster feathers, velvet cap, paint, synthetic fabric and braid, beaded mesh

Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Fair Day, 2019

Gift of Renè Rivas, 2023

All costumes designed, made and worn by Renè Rivas.

Audio transcript — see page 26

Justin Shoulder

Multidisciplinary artist and event curator

‘I see myself as a storyteller and have been practising worldmaking through fashion shows and performance since I was a child. My obsession with the realm of fantastic creatures and mythology has been ever present, and it manifests today as a practice that moves between performance, filmmaking and events.

The people around me inspire me and keep me going. They encourage me to defend, take care of things and to be in collaboration with the world I live in, not as an individual, but as part of a collective. I would really like to honour my collaborators and acknowledge that my work is inspired by our events and conversations on the dancefloor.’

Justin Shoulder’s pronouns are he/him/they/them

Left to right

Lolo ex Machina

Plastic, metal, textile, electronic components

Designed for the ‘Ex Nilalang (Balud, Dyesebel, Lolo ex Machina)’ video series by collective Club Ate (Justin Shoulder and Bhenji Ra), 2015

OO

Plastic, metal, textile

Designed for ‘The River Eats’ performance work, Sydney, 2012

Carrion

Plastic, metal, textile

Designed for the ‘Carrion’ performance work, Sydney, 2017

Costumes designed, worn and lent by Justin Shoulder.

Costume and set design in collaboration with Matthew Stegh, Anthony Aitch, Willow Darling, Ami Shoulder, Marty Jay, Nick Wishart; Sound design by Corin Iletto; Lighting design by Fausto Brusamolino; Produced by Insite Arts.

Installation commissioned by Powerhouse, 2022

Video transcripts — see page 26

Katie-Louise Nicol-Ford Timothy Nicol-Ford

Nicol & Ford, demi-couture fashion atelier

‘Nicol & Ford is a complex love language to ourselves, each other and our community, which aims to raise queer voices of the past and present. Our research identifies inspiring people who have historically been overlooked because of their lives, choices, identities and/or sexualities. *La Pouffe* is inspired by the life of Carlos de Beistegui (1895–1970), a wealthy art collector, philanthropist and flamboyant eccentric. In 1929 he commissioned modernist architect Le Corbusier (1887–1965) to create a clean white cube apartment in Paris, which interior designer Emilio Terry (1890–1969) then stuffed full of French and Italian Rococo antiques. Because of aesthetic differences, Le Corbusier stripped his name from the apartment and walked away from the project. In researching this story, we became interested in aesthetics and design as an intrusion of the queer community. In our work we aim to exhume individuals we feel deserve to be celebrated, using our contemporary queer cultural framework to reframe historic erasure. By celebrating their lives through diverse bodies we create dialogue between past and present queer identities.’

Katie-Louise Nicol-Ford’s pronouns are she/they

Timothy Nicol-Ford’s pronouns are they/them

‘The process of working with Tim and Katie was so special because I’ve often experienced times in the industry where I’m not seen, where I’m ostracised or where there isn’t space for me as a plus size woman.’

Mia Dennis

‘I’m a Wakka Wakka man from Queensland and Fashion Week 2022 was my debut to modelling. The whole outfit was custom-made by Tim and Katie and fitted me perfectly. The show was so powerful and I felt so beautiful and strong.’

Kai Clancy

Nicol & Ford *La Pouffe* collection

Afterpay Australian Fashion Week, Carriageworks, Sydney, 2022

Footage courtesy of IMG

Models: Demon Derriere (Felicity Tchorlian), Hayley Tanzer, Porcelain Alice, Lady Fur (Andy Bagala), Basjia Almaan, Millie Sykes, King (Ella Drinkwalter), Anja Brown, Suzy Wrong, Rosie Rivette, David Congram, Tayla Macdonald, Jamaica Moana, Kai Clancy, Mia Dennis, Jack Huang, Vallarie Gomez

Left

La Pouffe Look 1

Velvet, hessian

Sydney, 2022. Modelled by Demon Derriere (Felicity Tchorlian)

Purchased through the Australian Fashion Fund, 2022

La Pouffe Look 17

Silk georgette

Sydney, 2022. Modelled by Jack Huang (House of Silky)

Purchased through the Australian Fashion Fund, 2022

Right

La Pouffe Look 12

Vintage tapestry, hessian

Sydney, 2022.

Purchased through the Australian Fashion Fund, 2022

Clothes racks

La Pouffe garments, calico toiles and cardboard pattern blocks

Sydney, 2022

Lent by Nicol & Ford

Bags

J R Harvey Leathergoods

Bags for *La Pouffe* collection

Leather, cord, tassels, chain, diamantes, repurposed framed painting, metal fixtures

Sydney, 2022

This collection includes items both lent by J R Harvey Leathergoods and purchased through the Australian Fashion Fund, 2022

Garments designed by Nicol & Ford unless otherwise stated.

Left

La Pouffe Look 7

Vintage suede velvet, satin bias edging

Sydney, 2022. Modelled by King (Ella Drinkwalter)

Purchased with funds donated by Dr Gene Sherman AM, 2022

La Pouffe Look 11

Deadstock flocked upholstery fabric

Sydney, 2022. Modelled by David Congram

Purchased with funds donated by Dr Gene Sherman AM, 2022

Right

La Pouffe Look 15

Vintage curtain, repurposed tapestry

Sydney, 2022. Modelled by Kai Clancy (House of Silky)

Purchased through the Australian Fashion Fund, 2022

***La Pouffe* Look 16**

Silk satin

Sydney, 2022. Modelled by Mia
Dennis (House of Silky)

Purchased through the Australian Fashion
Fund, 2022

Shoes

Done by Matea

Shoes for *La Pouffe* collection

Vegetable-tanned kangaroo leather,
salvaged leather, FSC Certified
Australian pine, New Zealand pine,
vintage doorknobs, vintage piping
cord, vintage fabrics, 20 per cent
recycled content rubber

Designed for Nicol & Ford's *La Pouffe*
collection, Melbourne, 2022

This collection includes items purchased
through the Australian Fashion Fund and
with funds donated by Dr Gene Sherman
AM, 2022

Garments designed by Nicol & Ford unless
otherwise stated.

Phoebe Hyles

Jewellery for *La Pouffe* collection

Fimo, recycled jewellery and objects,
rhinestones, beads, crystals, ceramic
shards

Sydney, 2022

This collection includes items both lent by
Phoebe Hyles and purchased through the
Australian Fashion Fund, 2022

Audio transcript — see page 28

Nikita Majajas

Doodad and Fandango, jewellery and object design

‘*The Chapel of Love* installation is inspired by my wedding to Charlie Villas, my partner of 18 years. The “Chakita” wedding was a celebration of love, a queer political statement, a thank you to our friends and family and a camp extravaganza. We chose to theme it in pink — because in my mind rainbows are for branding, whereas pink is absolutely queer.

The love chapel is a candy pink installation which contains representations of the Chakita love story. *Just a Piece of Paper* references the document we signed at our wedding, as well as the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey that ultimately enabled the wedding to take place. I’ve been guilty of saying marriage “is just a piece of paper” but that piece of paper and who has the right to hold it has been taken for granted by many.’

Charlie Villas

DJ, event and music curator

‘Our relationship is built on lots of fun. We love to laugh and dance. I feel like a lot of our life is lived on the dance floor, surrounded by our queer family.

During the marriage equality survey my mum was really sweet, she was reminding people in her neighbourhood, “Don’t forget to vote yes.” I was in Prince Alfred Park for the live announcement. Alarming, 38 per cent of the respondents voted no, but it was a relief that the majority voted yes. It was so electric to be there.’

Nikita Majajas’ pronouns are she/her
Charlie Villas’ pronouns are she/her/
they/them

Mirrors, left to right

***Rainbow Daisy, Face with Ears
and Cute Daisy***

Acrylic laminate, marine ply

Sydney, 2022

Lent by Nikita Majajas

Queer as You, Queer as Me

Acrylic laminate, marine ply

Woodford, 2022

Commissioned by Powerhouse, 2022

Left to right

Pronoun Necklace

Inlaid acrylic, laminate

Woodford, 2022

Commissioned by Powerhouse, 2022

Queer Love Collection

Inlaid acrylic, laminate

Woodford, 2022

Commissioned by Powerhouse, 2022

Just a Piece of Paper

Acrylic laminate, marine ply

Woodford, 2022

Commissioned by Powerhouse, 2022

Chakita

Glass, neon

Sydney, 2019

Lent by Nikita Majajas

Plinth

Wedding Outfit

Brocade suit and blouse by Amanda

Testa, earrings by Doodad and

Fandango, shoes by Fluevog

Sydney, 2019

Lent by Nikita Majajas

Wedding Outfit

Suit tailored by P Johnson, bowtie by

Calibre, hat by Akubra

Sydney, 2019

Lent by Charlie Villas

Jewellery and artwork by Doodad and

Fandango

Doodad and Fandango

image credits

Mish Mash, photographer: Liz Ham, model:
Ange Yu

Byzantine Bijou, photographer: Liz Ham,
models: Mia Dennis, Dan Azzo, Basjia Almaan

Punk Girl, photographer: Liz Ham, model:
Millie Sykes

Mean Machine, photographer: Nikita
Majajas, model: Millie Sykes

Going Viral, photographer: Nikita Majajas,
model: Mia Dennis

Junk Food, photographer: Sasha Dobies,
model: Nadia Roosens

Eat your makeup, photographer: Nikita
Majajas, model: Waan

Camille Walala Collab, photographer: Gita
Bugha, model: Jordan Ebbitt

Paperbag, photographer: Nikita Majajas,
model: Audrey Hulm

Audio transcripts — see page 28

(Near elevator)

Ron Muncaster

‘In the early days it was very risqué to go out on the street dressed up in outrageous costumes, and Mardi Gras gave us the opportunity to do that ... Having a crowd of people all dressed up gave us the courage, whereas we wouldn’t have done it on our own.’

Ron Muncaster

Interview with Glynis Jones, 26 June 1995

Ron Muncaster (1936–2017)

Cotton Blossom

Tulle, fibreglass rods, surgical mesh, roller blind material, peacock and rooster feathers, faux pearls

Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras costume, 1994

Purchased 1996

Audio transcript — see page 30

AUDIO AND VIDEO TRANSCRIPTS

The Beautiful and Useful Studio

Maurice Goldberg: We're very interested in celebrating what makes us different. We have a belief through all of our work that if we focus on the happiness that we can have as human beings in this world, that then we will create more of that. What we do as artists, us as artists, is not just fabulous, not just colour, not just joy and happiness, but it's also about the sociological concept that creativity is essential to our survival.

Matthew Aberline: I mean, WorldPride is the spotlight. It's going to be an opportunity to share our stories and sharing that with the world, sharing all the kind of fabulous diversity that happens here. And I think that kind of global platform is going to be pretty damn exciting.

Maurice Goldberg: To me, pride is not just a big party. Pride is a celebration of a particular subset of our world that has conquered huge discrimination and has won a lot of battles and has led the way to show many other discriminated groups that there is hope that you actually can break through incredible barriers that seemed insurmountable.

Norrie

I'm a human being, not a human doing. I do male role. I do female role. I do poofter sex, dike sex, hetero sex, bisexual sex, heavy dancing and dishes on alternate Fridays. I do do

the dishes more often now but that was a quote from my book. It is important to realise that we are beings not doings. People often ask well, 'What do you do?' As if that's more important than how you are in the world. You shouldn't worry so much about our functions or whether we're performing to other people's expectations. It's our being that's the important thing. Well, when I picked the surname, May-Welby, I guess that was acknowledging uncertainty. It was a little bit of a joke about 'may well be a boy, may well be a girl'. What is it, really? And then it's also an affirmation, because it means I may be well. I may well be gives me permission to be well. So then I try to look beyond the boxes of gender to find permission for ways of being. These doctors used to say to transsexuals and they had to pass as their new gender and they had to be seen as that and nothing else. And they were not to be seen as trans. And I thought it was important for people to be able to be seen as trans. If it's okay to be a man or a woman and to go from one sex to the other, then it's okay for that to be in their in-between period. Whether you're moving from one gender to the other or whether you're just being in between, that place must be okay. And it had to be claimed as okay. So we tried to come up with terms for it — I clumsily came up with spansexual. I think it's now non-binary and non-binary doesn't mean not male, not female, it means not bound by what other people

stereotype thoughts of about being male or female. I can be non-binary and I can identify as a woman. I can identify as a man at the same time, if necessary. There's nothing wrong with that. Being between is fine. And as a proportion of the human population — about one or two per cent, depending on your definitions — that are not clearly biologically male, or biologically female. I've got a platform now. People want to know what I think so I guess I might as well use it. I've got a monthly platform in a local newspaper — *The South Sydney Herald*. And once a month I get to do a little cartoon. Do I just do a pun on it? Do I just do a silly joke in it? Is it just lines and squiggles? Is it colour and movement? And there's usually at least one thing that happens a week never mind a month that seems worthy of capturing the moment. So that's how I do the cartoons. While I don't have biological children of my own by being a community activist, I feel like I've got a huge extended family. In fact, I've sort of got a whole generation that I look after because I become a figure in the community. So you have a responsibility.

[Norrie sings 'Grateful for Grace']

Brenton Heath-Kerr

With the nature of the structure of Tom, his very nature is rigid. But by the way that it is constructed, it has a tight flat surface and it's actually really quite difficult to manoeuvre unless you sort of go like a bit of a crab. But then I realised the first time I wore it that it actually had quite a

bit of a bend. So, for all intents and purposes, just walking straight ahead, it has this bizarre cartoonesque feel, sort of like quirky puppet-like feeling. A lot of the work that I've created my, principle favourite materials have always been plastics and basic photographic work and imagery. The more recent pieces I've developed have been with using latex, which has the ability to be anything. A lot of my work has been based on anatomical features and sides of people and basically the principle of the anatomy.

Sexy Galexy

Sexy: Well, hello. Yeah. Okay. Normally. Normal, normal, normal, normal, Sexy voice.

Host: Do that other horror stuff.

Sexy: Just let it happen. I always wanted to perform, but, you know, growing up I wasn't allowed to do dance or gymnastics or anything like that. I just had to play basketball. That was my mum's thing. But I was always very, very shy. And had really bad anxiety. And when I first went to a gay club, I saw a drag show and I just had this feeling just come over me. It was pretty amazing. I've never felt it before towards anything else, and I knew that's what I had to do. I was like, that's my calling. I need to do drag. I was so nervous. But as soon as I heard the first 'woo' when I was up there on stage, it just — everything changed. All that anxiety and fear changed into adrenaline, and I just felt my whole persona change and I wasn't nervous anymore. See, back then, just to be a

woman in an environment that men dominated, which was most things, was a political statement enough like, you know, I heard soon after I started doing drag that you can't do drag because you're a woman. Which devastated me because, you know, I come from a very male chauvinist environment where I couldn't do anything because I was a woman. And so my statement was, 'I'm here, I'm a woman, and I'm going to do whatever the F I want.' I didn't want to get up there and do political statements because, you know, internally I was miserable. So I wanted to get up there and have a good time and show the audience a good time. And this was all of our escape, to come to this venue or to go out and have our own escape from whatever else is going on for us. Things like — see, I hadn't even heard of drag queens. See I hadn't even heard of drag kings then. I wanted to be a drag queen. I mean, my first character was a king but I didn't really distinguish the difference between the two. I just thought drag was drag. Most of my costumes I make myself. The muscle suits, no I didn't make those. I got some very talented people to make those for me. But most of the other stuff yeah. Like the theme? Well, you know, I've worked a lot on my mental health over the years, and because I had quite bad mental health problems and one of the things that I discovered was that the only way that you can change is to take responsibility for who you are and the way you think and the way you respond or react to the world. So you got to feel the fear and do it anyway.

Just got to go, go, go with what you want to do in life, no matter how intimidated you feel about it. My name was Karen and I wanted to change my name. I decided on Lexie. And then I was at my friend's place and he's a hairdresser and he was colouring my hair one day and he just called me Sexy Galaxy. And I thought, That is amazing. I felt like it just encompassed all these things that I felt that I was, and it was so good. I was like, I'm going to change my name by deed poll to Sexy Galaxy because it's so fantastic. And so on the 11th of March 1998, I went to Births, Deaths and Marriages, and I became Sexy Galaxy. I've always thought Karen's not going to have a very interesting life, but Sexy is.

Fuzzy Ghost

Scott Ford: I was always influenced by anime as a kid growing up, like things that are always left of centre. It's always a little bit queerer than I guess a lot of the aesthetics I grew up with. A little bit more pop-y and playful in that way.

Pete Foley: We work so well together because we're both very inspired by the same stuff, which is largely Japanese. And so a lot of my illustrations has always been very clean, very designerly, like the vector side of cute Japanese.

Scott Ford: Pete was just talking about games more and more and kind of, picking around, looking at game engines. So, one day I just suggested to him, I'm like, 'Oh, you should just try and make one. Just do it!'

Scott Ford: Saw a film clip by Cate Le Bon, 'Daylight Matters'. The sketch that I did of Bong walking through the landscape set the tone of that waving kind of arms, that looseness.

Pete Foley: We'd already been talking about beaches and kind of having this frolic through the beach. Because so many, especially male characters in games are so masculine, to animate this character, I want him to walk the way we walk, or the way that I want a queer to be able to walk and just be celebrated for walking. You know, there's that little hand pop. He doesn't have animatable fingers, but his hands just have a little bit of a pinky raise so that it doesn't matter what expression his hands are doing, it's always just a little bit gay.

Scott Ford: We wanted to make him an older character. But didn't want him to look the way in which many older people are represented. So, we wanted something fresh, something queer, something taken from our real lives. Because I love the Australian habit of wearing a big jumper or a big jacket with tiny little short shorts.

Pete Foley: We realised that we started mirroring some things that were in Tsai Ming-liang's film, *The Hole*. So then we started playing with the idea of actually showing scenes from it, which all the postcards in the game are actual 1 to 1 shots from the film, just with the characters transposed over it as their memories are kind of messed up.

Scott Ford: In a way we were challenging ourselves to do like a queer post-apocalyptic aesthetic in some way.

Pete Foley: I think the way that we told this story, you don't get that a lot in games. You don't get cross media references very often.

Scott Ford: The depiction of a queer older man and a queer, older relationship, is probably a big part of that.

Pete Foley: I come back to that glorious review on GamesHub by Leah Williams. It was the first review that we had and she just immediately summed everything up. And capital S, saw everything.

Host: *Queer Man Peering Into A Rock Pool.jpg*

Pete Foley: It's really lovely to get a nom[ination] that I think recognises that we did try to do something quite different and yes, we got it finished. Streaming has been word of mouth, just random people searching the magic of queer tags on steam. And I don't really care if that person plays it or not. The fact that they see that it does exist, it is there. And they just see that there's people engaging.

Scott Ford: I like it as a queer space.

Pete Foley: *Viking Blonde* had played it, and he just played through and then gave this really great unpacking at the end.

Viking Blonde: I think that was looking to say something very, very special and I think it hit it. I couldn't help but feel like whilst the end credits were playing. I kept thinking like, you know, this is what could happen if emotionally stable people worked at Nerve.

Pete Foley: Making games and especially 'Queer Man Peering' is the first time where we've put something out there and we feel like people grabbed it and were like talking about it. They were interested in it, actually have an input.

Peter Tully

1978 was my first experience with Mardi Gras, and it was the year that we had the riot. It just sort of went on from there. I mean, because of the police, it's grown to what it is today. One of the reasons why the Mardi Gras kept going was for law reform. You know, we were pushing for reform, and we did eventually achieve that goal. But there are other issues which needed exploring and examining at the time. And of course, then AIDS came. Mardi Gras remained important politically, you know, for the AIDS issue. I think it's given the community a focus, strengthens that feeling of pride and a feeling of community, which I think is very important to people under pressure. And art is a great tool. Humour is a great tool, too. And those things have been combined with the politics. And I think that's why we've got such an effective parade, you know, with the images and icons that are created by the artists from the community. And that comes out of a shared experience.

Feed Them To The Cannibals, ABC, 1991
With thanks Peter Tully and Fiona Cunningham. Licensed: 10X Media / Screen Ocean

Dennis Golding

I'm Dennis Golding. I'm a Kamilaroi man, a proud man from the north-west of New South Wales. The stories that are layered within these representations and presentations in new artwork is speaking about how Aboriginal people are disconnected to their Country, but also contemporary issues that really impact on their wellbeing in society. I grew up and started to deconstruct a lot of those ideas of, what do you often see as the masculine representation of these figures, especially in pop culture, like Superman and Batman? The superhero capes; I introduced cultural symbols from my own Country, challenging it with symbols of my own Country and my own identity as a queer man as well. And I introduced the purple cape so you see a queer Aboriginal man draped in a purple superhero cape overlooking the landscape. You can see what I'm trying to do is provoke the viewer to understand that what the superhero sees are these disruptions of Country and identity. I really wanted to then introduce native flora by overlaying these paintings and drawings of native plants over these European motifs, because I felt there was a great connection between the European motifs, the fence, my connections, Country, especially Collarenebri, which actually means place of many flowers. I think it started to just connect and resonate so much with each other that I'm now presenting a new work that is introducing native flowers.

Brian Ross

I started making costumes in 1983. In those days, there was no costume competition after the Mardi Gras parade, so we'd wander around the party still in costume, and I think '84 they started with the costume parade. With Lobster Mornay, I found a design on a restaurant menu guide. I thought it was a lot of fun and actually to transform this graphic, which was originally a plastic sculpture photograph for the menu into a three-dimensional costume. The materials I've used in Lobster are mainly foam core. They're very lightweight materials. I consider whether the material's light enough to wear, whether it's waterproof, whether it will catch the wind. I think almost all my costumes, I've been completely inside. Yeah, I've always been quite shy. So, I can sort of present another part of my personality when I'm inside the costume.

Renè Rivas

Most of my work, they have a lot of influence of the culture that I came from: the Indigenous of El Salvador. Especially, you know, the Pipils and the Toltecs, where because I'm part of that culture, you know, like a *mestizo* [mixed], you know, in another way. We have Central American background and then we have like a European. That's why we call *mestizo*. Peter Tully really influenced who I became. Peter Tully for me was [a] very passionate artist. Peter Tully saw my creativity and he said to me, 'You would like to come to Mardi

Gras workshop?' Peter said, 'Ah, she's going to be good. She's fantastic. She's very creative.' I was thinking they [were] talk[ing] about some lady or some girl, because when [they said] 'she', [I thought] they were talking about someone else. And I said, 'Oh, might be someone very creative,' in my naive way. But they were talking about me. Peter Tully took me under his wing and then took me to the workshop at Mardi Gras. I met someone in the process in the Mardi Gras and that was Ron, Ron Muncaster. And then Ron Muncaster, who is amazing [at] doing costume, he said to me, 'You're very creative. I want you to come with me and help me to make a costume.' And he had the blossom. Anyway, we had to sew, we had to create the feathers, we had to put everything. And he was telling us what to do. I was very, very lucky because I learnt a lot of tips from him to create costumes. He was one of my mentors, too. Peter Tully, Ron Muncaster, they used to say to me, 'Always be who you want to be and never be afraid to express yourself because you're very creative and go there and express yourself.'

Justin Shoulder

Lolo ex Machina

I'm interested how my costume-based practice connects to very long histories within the aura of costume as spectacle, costume as storytelling. Artists like Brenton Heath-Kerr and Peter Tully all form part of that lineage. And it's connected to Mardi Gras, like early days of Mardi Gras, where the costume as a kind of

street spectacle, it was often quite a political gesture as well. So, I'm kind of interested how that can connect to that as well. Thinking about, like sideshows and this idea of like circuses and freakshows, and museums often, like, have a kind of sense of the anthropological. And I am interested in playing with that a bit. People often see the mask as something that conceals, but often it reveals the kind of inner workings of your psyche. So, I feel quite at home in this strange way. In costumes and objects, I almost feel more myself. What is it about concealing and revealing? I really think that the costumes reveal more than conceal in that it's like your spirit can inhabit these multiple forms.

The River Eats

I had this very binary idea of this division between nature and technology. *Pinky*, who's this pink saccharin, full, the whole body is pink. USB portals for teeth. It's deeply plugged into the cloud. Like was actually like, the same as OO. And OO is this primordial being that's fungus and mountain. And she's like lava. She's everything. She's a shapeshifter. But actually, I was like, oh, no, actually, they kind of support each other. Like, they have this kind of Taoist complementary relationship where they're co-dependent. And so, I started to think more as politics evolve, technology as an extension of the body as another tool. There's this beautiful interplay between *Pinky* and OO that's also embedded in other stories, where I had recently lost a close friend, Bhumi, and my grandmother. And I was in Brazil and

I had made this offering to the Iguazu Falls and it could just be like coincidence, but I was just like crying, so devastated. And all these butterflies came out of the waterfall, and they were just on my face drinking my tears with their proboscises, like tapping my face. I've never experienced anything like it, and my face is covered in tears and butterflies. And I could see the fur on their wings blowing in the wind. And then they had these black and white patterns all over their wings. And then I was like, I started to draw from that as this sign or symbol for this particular mourning of these people in my life. And so, I created this figure called OO.

Carrion

Carrion is the flesh that birds like vultures eat, so it's decaying matter that becomes sustenance for other beings. So, I was interested in a figure that survives on the waste of other figures. Actually, the original costume came from a Monster Gras. There was that kind of post-human theme. And serendipitously, my sister had, and me, had made this kind of mould of my face like a death mask. And then I found all these, like, iPhone cables at Reverse Garbage. And I was like, Oh, she's a Medusa, this kind of techno Medusa. So, and the mask was made for the costume ball, and then it just kind of became this amazing puppet, like my body as a puppet, because the jaw's articulated. It's probably my most inhabited figure in my life, like, I've done hundreds of shows. Kind of when I think about it, it's kind of like Betty Grumble's face makeup, the

pink and the green. That mask is so full of my sweat and it's scratched. If you're going to think about animism like you go, Oh, there's a lot of spirit in that object because it's like lived through so many shows all over the world, rubbish heaps and like dusty warehouses and nightclubs, and I can easily tap in because when I put it on it's like [makes noise]. Carrion is kind of like a post-human. She's a clown. She loves to do drag. They have all these different texts, poetry that I recite. Sometimes it's a Lana Del Rey motif, or it could be something, a weather report, like the swirling of all the things in the psyche at the time.

Nicol & Ford

Timothy Nicol-Ford: A lot of our work is informed by fabric because we work with designer remnant fabric as part of our sustainability practice. We don't generate our own textiles and we don't buy new textiles. We only work with deadstock fabric, and we have some wonderful suppliers in Sydney that we work with for that. So that's a limitation we accept and work with. And so, we find a meeting place between design and availability of fabric and then there's a melting pot in there somewhere.

Katie-Louise Nicol-Ford: So Nicol sourced the textiles from all over the place. There were some deadstock bolts of upholstery fabric from the [19]50s and 60s that came from auction houses. There were some tapestries that were 150 years old that were covered in dust and horsehair and all sorts of different things.

Timothy Nicol-Ford: I think I was interested in the tension between deconstructing and reconstructing a previous item. So, whether that was the form of kind of curtains or tapestries or couches, how you could try and retain the physicality of a previous object and yet completely invert it into something wearable.

Wedding vows by Nikita Majajas and Charlie Villas

Charlie Villas: I promise to be more present and to listen to you as I believe, to be more loving is to be completely in the moment with you. I promise to always tell you how ridiculously cute you are and take more photos of you when you ask me to. And I promise to always accept whatever look you want to do. After all, this is how I fell in love with you. I promise to always be playful with you, to laugh and keep having fun. After all, this is one of the reasons why we, Chakita, are solid as a rock. I promise to cook more — hang on, this is someone else's vows — and be more confident, not just as a sous chef in the kitchen. I promise to always be your cheerleader when you're smashing goals in life; your defender, whenever you need backup; and to be your number one supporter to help you realise yours and our dreams together. And I promise to always treat life as an adventure and to keep doing what we love and do best: eating, shopping, travelling, dancing, and enjoying life to the fullest.

Nikita Majajas: Charlie, it was instant sizzle the moment I first laid eyes on you. And though it took you years to

notice me back, when you finally did it was fireworks and heart explosions. It was worth every second of the wait, as well as given me endless years of teasing material to boot. After 15 years of blissful togetherness, it may seem unnecessary to take this step of marriage, but there are many reasons why it does make sense to me. Here are just a few: 1. Because the last 15 years have been incredible. You have been the best partner I could have ever wished for. You are loyal and funny and sweet. You are my rock and I love being yours. You are the cutest with the most beautiful big brown eyes and the best outfits. And you fill my life with laughter and music and fun. 2. Because we can. I want to stand here proud with my Cha Cha in front of all the people we love and the whole damn world and declare our love and commitment as worthy of ceremony, fanfare and legal rights as any heterosexual relationship. 3. I know that spending the rest of our lives together is going to be awesome. So, I promise you today that I will continue to support you, to make your needs equal to mine, to love you and be there for you through the hard and easy, the fun and the sad. I promise to try to be a good nurse when you are sick and to make room in the wardrobe for you if you really, really need it. But most of all, I promise, higher than the highest mountain, deeper than the deepest sea, that's how I will love you, oh darling. Endlessly.

Nikita Majajas

I love social media. Well, no, I will correct that. I used to love social media. Instagram was an incredible

thing that happened to me because it created my business. I was an early adopter, just from a personal point of view, just taking photos. I just got obsessed with Instagram very quickly. And then as I was starting to make things, when I was hand sawing acrylic jewellery and I was taking photos and putting them on Instagram, I was getting instant feedback from people who were loving it and it grew really quickly. And at that time, maybe about eight or nine years ago, there weren't many people doing that sort of thing. And it grew very quickly, and it was a very organic growth. And I really took on the Instagram. Content making, that was just as exciting to me as what I was making in jewellery in the workshop. I really started to see my Instagram as my having my own magazine, and I thought, God, it's like I'm the editor, I'm the photographer, I'm the copywriter, I'm the model, I'm the stylist, I'm the creative director. It was like total creative control of this thing that I really treated as a magazine. I would be trying to create the kind of magazine that I wanted to read or see, which is a lot of variety, a lot of colour. I was able to use a lot of the skills that I learned at school, like my Photoshopping skills for retouching and collaging. I just saw the potential of it really early on and it was great until they stuffed everything up and they ruined it by changing the algorithm. Now none of that creativity is rewarded through that app anymore. So, I used to put a lot of effort into doing photoshoots. Oh my God, I loved it so much, creating a whole visual world for my jewellery

to sort of come alive in. It was my favourite part of my practice, I think, was collaborating with other creatives to create amazing images and do photoshoots. And you would be rewarded on the app for these amazing images, you know, the likes and the followers and the feedback and the engagement which led to sales. And it all made sense.

Ron Muncaster

A few friends of mine got together, and when this parade started, we decided to make it an artistic parade because the first two ones were just marches. So, we decided to dress up for it. So, a few friends of mine with Peter Tully decided to make it a costume parade. Some people wonder where I get my ideas from, and I get them from strange places like walking through BBC Hardware. Now my costume this year ... So I thought, well, I look sort of Southern, so I'll call myself Cotton Blossom, because all my costume was white and frothy and colourful. When I decided to make this white costume for me this year, it's really only a sort of a copy of a Rio Carnival frock, really. But I'd never made a sort of a proper crinoline before. So, I got miles of tulle and I spent about three months on the sewing machine, sewing all these frills and making up these roses. I mean, there was seven metres of tulle just in one small flower which had to be trimmed with sequins, then gathered on the machine and then sequins sewn in the middle. And that poor sewing machine of mine was nearly almost broken down.

Absolutely Queer was realised through collaboration between external creative partners and the multidisciplinary Powerhouse team.

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