

# DAZED

## Four artists busting the stereotype that queer art has to be doom and gloom



Katy Grannan, "Gail and Dale (Best Friends), Point Lobos" (2008) ©Katy Grannan

### ART & PHOTOGRAPHY - FEATURE

**Alongside legends such as Wolfgang Tillmans, Robert Mapplethorpe, and Nan Goldin, a new generation of painters address the intricacies of life**

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LGBTQ-identifying artists have created many of the bleakest, most harrowing images of recent decades. From the mangled, violent erotica of Francis Bacon, to the furious self-mutilation of David Wojnarowicz, to Nan Goldin's photographic portraits of HIV sufferers in hospital – the history of LGBTQ art can often paint an overwhelming picture of pain and grief. However, a younger generation of artists is now casting a new light on the queer experience; relatively free from the anguish of persecution and the HIV/Aids crisis, these artists are laying bare the quiet joys of love, intimacy and domestic bliss. \_\_\_\_\_

“I’m really struck by how many young queer painters today are working with domestic material,” artist, writer, and curator, Stephen Truax, observes. “Younger artists are portraying their day-to-day lives and using that as content for their work. I saw a link between this, and the work of artists who died of HIV/Aids – like Patrick Angus, Hugh Steers, Peter Hujar, David Wojnarowicz – and those who were making autobiographical work during the crisis – like Nan Goldin, and Jack Pierson. I think it’s important, from an art historical perspective, to take note of both the similarities and differences between the work made in these two key timeframes.”

**“It is important to take note of how we’re viewing queer lifestyle in terms of this transformation from pure activism to something more romantic” – Stephen Truax**

These recent, more romantic artistic portrayals of queer lifestyle are the focus of a new exhibition, Intimacy, curated by Truax and currently on show in New York. Passing through the gallery, one encounters paintings of LGBTQ couples having sex, displayed alongside tender photographic refers to the relationship between artist and lover but also our relationship with the artworks themselves; the exhibition opens the doors to a number of artists’ personal lives, becoming a microcosm of a wider society in which the LGBTQ community is increasingly less ostracised.

The majority of pieces chosen by Truax for this show were by contemporary artists, but also included are some of the most autobiographical works by key figures from the 20th century, including Robert Mapplethorpe, David Wojnarowicz and Peter Hujar. Reflecting the range of the queer experience today, the exhibition evokes surprising links between artworks in a variety of different mediums and presents artists from diverse backgrounds of race, gender identity, sexual orientation and nationality. To guide us through the abundance of queer art on display, Truax spoke to Dazed about four notable LGBTQ-identifying artists who have captured intimacy in their work.

# MICHAEL STAMM

"We've got two examples of Michael Stamm's work in this show. One is 'Just Like This Please', from 2016 – which was included in his first solo exhibition at Thierry Goldberg Gallery on the Lower East Side. The other is 'Snake Shawl' from his solo at D.C. Moore in Chelsea. Michael's work is so deeply nuanced, he is a meticulous painter. He uses laser-cut stencils that he makes himself, and he designs a lot of the painting in Rhino and other computer editing tools. I think this is a really beautiful example of his work, it's almost like a Renaissance painting, the way that it's so carefully designed. But the message is so simple: ~~'just like this please'~~. We've all had that experience late at night when we're lonely and we are desirous of someone else's affection."

