Please, come in...
Please, Come In...
This exhibition has been the product of many collaborations, and we would like to thank those whose insights and support have been invaluable. Firstly, the Art, Design & Architecture Museum team: Director Gabriel Ritter, who told us to dream big and has supported our project since our first meeting with him; Assistant Director Orianna Cacchione, whose insights and support we have significantly benefited from. Registrar Susan Lucke helped secure objects from the AD&A collection and GLBT archives, and Lead Exhibition Designer Arturo Heredia Soto with help from Kevin Clancy brought our dreams into reality with their design and installation; Curator, Silvia Perea, for her translation and feedback. Thank you to Kio Griffith for preparing the wall texts and museum graphics and Ian Miller for designing this booklet.

We are grateful to the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender (GLBT) Historical Society in San Francisco, whose mission is to preserve and make accessible materials found in spaces like the ones we’re evoking in this exhibition. Thank you for loaning us objects that allowed us to present archival evidence of these communities’ beautifully vibrant lives and work. Notably, we are grateful to archivist Isaac Fellman’s knowledge about the archive and his enthusiasm for the project. Thank you to Zack and Jo Miller for their thoughtful gift and preservation of our favorite wallpaper. Additionally, thank you to our colleagues at the Art History Graduate Student Association for their support of this project.

Our deepest gratitude is extended to all those individuals — the lovers, the friends, the strangers — who made up (and still do!) these spaces and who have invited us into them. This would not be possible without the works and dreams of queer individuals and communities. Here is to dreaming of a better world.

Sylvia Faichney
Graham Feyl
Co-Curators
“Queer places are always formed by a mixture of accidental and purposeful (though often unevenly articulated forces).”
Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne-Marie Bouthillette and Yolanda Retter in Queers in Space

Please, Come In… is an invitation. The ellipses that follow the invitation, while they fall off the page, the wall, and the lips of those who invite you in, suggest multiple possibilities of what may come next. Invitations are relational, an exchange with others; they’re performative of hospitality, and they’re ephemeral gestures that pass as quickly as they appear. This exhibition was curated with a focus on engaging with relationality, performativity, and ephemerality and the feelings that frequently spring from them.

Invitations are also spatial; you’ve been invited to move across a threshold. This threshold can be physical; such as the door of a bathroom that creates a border between you and the rest of the party. Or it can be immaterial, such as the often-fluctuating lines that outline the perimeter of a dance floor. To accommodate this characteristic, the exhibition is organized into four spatially distinct yet fluid and overlapping spaces, which we refer to as “environments.” These environments are living rooms, bathrooms, dive bars, and discos. We, the curators, selected these specific environments because they have been underlined as sites where queer lives, powers, and possibilities flourish.

Broadly, these spaces are cited as realms of comfort, refuge, celebration, remembrance, and protest but have rarely been represented in museum galleries or historical literature. Museums have prioritized spaces representing the elite’s homes, displayed as “period rooms.” The period room is a model we’ve been working (away) from; they are fictions that posture as authoritative truths by bringing in walls, chairs, and decorative arts that have likely never met before into the same room and are used to make arguments about the material cultures of a particular historical moment. By considering these spaces not as static rooms that mirror those experienced but as “environments,” we are embracing the fluidity and various possibilities that queer spaces reflect and what is evoked in the invitation.

To apprehend and make visible the often-intangible qualities of relationality, performativity, and ephemerality, we approached this exhibition through theoretical and primary sources on queer lives, experiences, and spaces. We the curators define “queer” as embracing difference, an embrace demonstrated by communities such as those in the documentary Paris is Burning (directed by Jennie Livingston in 1990); in the words and images of author Larry Mitchell and illustrator Ned Asta; the music and photographs of discos, and in the stories shared by historians Jafari Allen and Stephen Vider.1 These accounts have offered a way to visualize a world of splendor, community, and radical joy. The methodology of approaching the intangible as material evidence and embodied experience follows literary scholar Saidiya Hartman’s use of “critical fabulation” as an imaginative narrative tool to make the absences within the archive visible.2 It is also activated by queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz’s notion of a “queer act,” which considers ephemerality as nodes of experiences to stand as evidence of “queer lives, powers, and possibilities.”3 The artworks and objects on display evoke and bring to light these characteristics that tend to be ever fleeting but fundamental for queer experience and placemaking.

1 Please see the reading list on pg. 13 for various accounts of these spaces, and other literature that has informed our curatorial approach. But by no means is this a comprehensive list.
LIVING ROOMS

YOU ARE INVITED TO A HOUSEWARMING

We invite you to join us in celebrating our new home.

Home is a powerful noun. It connotes a firmness in belonging, of appearing comfortably undone, and a realm to reimagine and embrace an emerging sense of self or community.

In the photograph Sisterhood (1994) (24), Lyle Ashton Harris centers a new form of community and family by capturing himself in drag with fellow photographer Iké Udé. Harris encourages us to consider new dynamics of kinship that transcend conventional understandings of gender and familial relations. Similarly, Paul Cadmus’s etching Two Boys on the Beach #1 (1938) (22) showcases an embrace of an unconventional relationship dynamic. In the etching two young men are on a beach, enjoying the sun’s warmth and each other’s company unapologetically. During his lifetime, Cadmus’s paintings and etchings were frequently censored because they included “deviant” imagery, yet his medium of printmaking enabled these images of desire to continue circulating.

The living room is an environment that welcomes performativity, a realm for remaking or unmaking oneself. Channing Hansen’s Spooky Action (2015) (23) mixed-media wall hanging appears improvised; however, its composition is determined by an algorithm. The seemingly undone qualities of Hansen’s hanging underscore a queer sensibility of defying what being “done” looks like. Mark Swanson’s Untitled (Bejeweled Antler) (2009) (20) reflects on a remaking of masculinity and domesticity. His crystal-covered deer antler suggests both glamor and ruggedness. The bejeweled trophy draws us in with its feminine shimmer, repositioning the aggressiveness of hunting as a display of masculinity. Both objects reimagine the expectations of performing within conventional modes of display. They appear comfortably at home in their challenges to traditional understandings of being “done” and gender norms.
With their placement as both out-of-view and yet easy-to-reach, bathrooms ebb between public and private, offering individual rest or collective preparation. They are arenas where passions and desires can be explored and fantasized, as seen in Mel Ramos’ *Ocelot* (1969) (10). In the lithograph, a woman arches her back, her body responding to the bite of an ocelot. The gray color of the ocelot contrasts with the hues of red and pink that encompass the woman and background, projecting the animal in a different sphere than the woman, as if in a fantasy.

Bathrooms are spaces of transformation. In the small alcove on the entry wall, an orange medicine bottle contains a set of false eyelashes from the famous San Francisco drag bar, Finocchio's Club (1936-1999) (5). An essential step in getting ready for drag queens, their encasement in this specific medicine bottle alludes to both creative and practical solutions essential to histories of gendered performance, where individuals would utilize what was accessible to them. The false eyelashes connote an intention to step out, something that is prevalent in Willie Cole's sculpture *Red Leather Venus* (1993) (6). The worn and twisted red heels stand firmly as a body on their own. Their contorted appearance suggests the internalized discomfort some physical transformations require, and their fused form emphasizes connectivity. This collectivity is referenced in Do Ho Suh's *Untitled (Glass Bowl)* (2004) (9). The glass bowl with a pair of hands suspended in the middle evokes how bathrooms can be stages for personal and community care, arenas to hold or be held by something precious yet unseeable.
Dive bars are on the corner of somewhere always nearby. With subtle facades, their blinking neon signs above the entrances welcome you into a requiem of dark corners and the bright eyes of strangers you’ve known for lifetimes. These dark and sometimes smoke-laden rooms are places of collective engagement that generate new forms of knowledge production. Robert Lazzarini’s warped sculpture, Teacup (2003) (11), springs forward memories of meeting with friends over a drink to “spill the tea.” This slang for gossip reflects how sharing stories acts as a form of knowledge production.

Similarly, Nayland Blake’s Halston, Gucci, Fiorucci (1989) (13) emphasizes collective engagement. The names signify fashion designers, many of which influenced the looks of dive bar and disco denizens alike and are lyrics to the musical group Sister Sledge’s 1979 hit “She’s the Greatest Dancer.” The chalkboards evoke erasing and beginning anew in the pursuit of collective learning. However, Blake silkscreen printed the names, transforming the ephemeral and fleeting materiality of chalk into something more permanent, suggesting lessons worth revisiting.

Dive bars are also spaces of protest. The poster for the Gay Liberation Front urges people to “COME OUT!!” and features a photograph, Children of Paradise (1969) by Peter Hujar (12). The poster was produced to commemorate the first anniversary of the Stonewall Riot, an uprising in 1969 at Stonewall, a now-famed dive bar in New York. The riot has been cited as sparking Gay and Lesbian liberation. The poster illustrates the importance of dive bars to the queer community as social environments to express oneself openly and confidently.
DISCOS

The discotheque, a French term for “music library,” has a strong cultural presence: it evokes glamorous outfits, a style of music known for its long vocals and quick beat, and the physical buildings that housed them. The buildings were often warehouses, emptied theaters, or other capacious venues. The physical makeup of these boisterous spaces was flexible and ephemeral. A disco ball, such as the one exhibited, when lit, causes fractured light to cascade over bodies underneath it and the space around it; the momentary light transforms everything it touches. Though the gestures, sounds, and lights were fleeting, these qualities and the disco’s presence are still felt.

Discos were spaces of radicality. The music, costumes, and frivolity pushed against the monstrous monotony of everyday social and cultural expectations. Part of engaging with disco was fashioning oneself to reflect the liberatory nature that discos evoked.

Music was a crucial component of experiencing the disco. The sounds of disco were reactive to the dominating qualities of Rock and Roll. Follow the QR code below for a playlist including sounds that inspired Please, Come In...

TONIGHT ONLY: The Legendary Sylvester will swoon us with hits like “You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real)” and “Dance (Disco Heat)”

“Will you dance with me?”


1. Long pile tufted carpet, wool
   Loan from Art History Graduate Student Association

   Jackie Curtis, 1, 1974

3. Better Homes and Gardens, April 1971


5. False eyelashes stowred in a medicine bottle
   from Finocchio’s collection 1940-1999
   Estate of Frances Garvin and Keith Julius Puccinelli 2018.001.147

   Red Leather Venus, 1993
   Leather sewn shoes
   Museum Purchase Fund 1994.48

   Solon (1970-1980s)
   Photocopy print
   IL2014.001.006

8. Vinyl wallpaper with blue and green stripes, produced in the 1960s
   Loan from Sylvia Faichney
   Gift of Zack and Jo Miller

   Untitled (Glass Bowl), 2004
   Gift of Bruce Robertson and Thomas Kren
   2020.006.004

    Ocelot, 1969
    Lithograph
    Given by Marilyn Arnold Palley and Reese Palley in honor of Marta Palley, Class of 2008
    2004.006.006

    Teacup, 2003
    Glazed porcelain and stainless steel
    Estate of Frances Garvin and Keith Julius Puccinelli 2018.001.031

12. Gay Liberation Front (United States)
    Come Out!!, 1970
    Design by Jim Fouratt, photograph by Peter Hujar
    Gift of Gary H. Brown 1992.32

    Halston, Gucci, Fiorucci, 1989
    Silkscreen on blackboard
    Permanent Collection 1999.89a-c

14. Nell Campbell (b. United States, 1946 - )
    Archival pigment print
    Museum purchase & gift of the artist
    2017.008.016

    Cigarette butts, 2013
    Painted wood
    Estate of Frances Garvin and Keith Julius Puccinelli 2018.001.147

    Ohio Blue Tip Matches
    Cardboard and painted wood
    Estate of Frances Garvin and Keith Julius Puccinelli 2018.001.136

17. Selections from the David Bandy Slide Collection 1978-1985
    Collection Number: 2002-30
    Courtesy of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society

18. Selections from the Les Gundel Fan Collection
    Paper, wood, fabric
    Collection Number: 1998-39
    Courtesy of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society

19. Disco Ball
   ADJ Products (United States and China)
   Loan from Graham Feyl

20. Marc Swanson (b. United States, 1969)
    Untitled (Bejeweled Antler), 2009
    Plastic and rhinestones
    Gift of Bruce Robertson and Thomas Kren 2020.006.007

    Call Heaven, 1991
    Hotel telephone with paint
    Estate of Frances Garvin and Keith Julius Puccinelli 2018.001.031

    Two Boys on the Beach #1, 1938
    Etching
    Gift of Don Trevey to the Ken Trevey Collection of American Realist Prints 1992.75

    Spooky Action, 2015
    Wool, polyamide, viscose, polyethylene, terephthalate, hand-spun California Variegated Mutant (Nashua), Redwood
    Gift of Marc Selwyn Fine Art, Los Angeles 2021.008.001

24. Lyle Ashton Harris (b. United States, 1965)
    Sisterhood [in collaboration with Iké Udé], 1994
    Cibachrome photograph
    Permanent collection 1999.92
EVENTS

Please Come In... Panel Discussion with artist Théo Bignon
October 26, 2023
5:30 pm
Virtual

Curator-led tour of Please Come In... with Sylvia Faichney and Graham Feyl
November 11, 2023
1:00 pm
AD&A Museum

Revisiting the Classics: Paris Is Burning
November 28, 2023
7:00 pm
Pollock Theater