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Presented by:

UCLA LGBTQ Studies & QGrad Students

## 2021 UCLA QGrad: Queer Graduate Conference

“Queer Intimacies: Community, Control, Resistance”

<https://qgradconference.com>



### Conference Schedule:

**\*\*All times given in Pacific Standard Time\*\***

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*As a land grant institution, UCLA LGBTQ Studies and QGrad Students acknowledge the Gabrielino/Tongva peoples as the traditional land caretakers of Tovaangar (Los Angeles basin, So. Channel Islands).*

#### Thursday, May 6

**10:00 AM Opening Remarks: Dr. Mitchell Morris, (he/him, UCLA)**

Chair, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Studies Program; Chair and Professor of Musicology, Herb Alpert School of Music

**10:10-11:40 AM Visualizing Queerness**

Liz Kurtzman (she/her, U. of Pittsburgh), “The Queer Gothic and the Horrors of Heteronormativity”

Grace Jung (she/her, UCLA), “Gay Korean American Reception of the Korean TV Drama *Record of Youth*”

Leila Malikyar (she/they, San Francisco State), “Deviant Intimacies: Imperial Readings of Afghan Masculinity”

Amina Cruz (she/they, UCLA), “Brown Queer Punks: An Exploration of a Transnational Aesthetic”

**Respondent: Dr. Mary Zaborskis (she/her, Penn State Harrisburg)**

**11:40 - 1:00 PM Lunch Break**

**1:00 - 2:30 PM Queerstory**

Rebecca Adelsheim (Yale), “Archival Lesbians, Queer Contradictions: *soldiergirls* in Process”

Emma Spies (she/her, UCLA), “‘Contradicted, Misinformed, [and] Fenced out’: Queer Intimacy, Urban Dreams, and Surrealist Thresholds”

Kari Barclay (they/he, Stanford), “Sleeping with the Ancestors: Queer Asexualities in Jeremy O. Harris’s *Slave Play*”

Chido Muchemwa (she/her, U. of Toronto), “The Queer African Archive and Method”

**Respondent: Dr. Will Clark (he/him, San Francisco State University)**

**2:30 - 3:30 PM Break**

**3:30 - 5:00 PM Keynote**

**Dr. Jennifer Doyle (she/her, UC Riverside), “A Pretended Community of Possessions: Notes on Sex, Kinship, and Marxism”**

This zoom lecture grows out of Jennifer Doyle's work writing a preface to an edition of Friedrich Engels's *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. Sharing

excerpts of this essay, which grew out of an online reading group staged during the first six months of the pandemic (Marxism for Artists), she invites people attending this conference to reflect on the relationship between sex/gender studies and Marxism, through Black feminist, Black Marxist, and decolonial lenses. The aim is to reflect on kinship, intimacy, and other models of "ownership"—making space to receive and reflect on the work of artists like Dorian Wood. What sense of belonging, what sense of history, what sense of origin does their work produce for those who experience that work in isolation and together?

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## Friday, May 7th

### **10:00 - 11:30 AM Queerness Across Borders**

Ali Kheradyyar (she/her, UCLA), "Azadi in the Sky: Arshia Fatima Haq's Contribution to *In Plain Sight*"

Mika Lillit Lior (she/her, UCLA), "Crossroads Body and Bodies at the Crossroads: Choreographies of Afro-Brazilian Candomblé"

Sayantan Mukhopadhyay (he/him, UCLA), "Mona's Many Gifts: Friendship and Collaboration in *Myself Mona Ahmed* (2001)"

Allen Baylosis (he/him, NYU), "Singaw (Fume): Six Years After Laude's Death"

**Respondent: Dr. Omari Weekes (he/him, Willamette University)**

### **11:30 AM - 1:00 PM Lunch Break**

### **1:00 - 2:30 PM Digital Queerness**

Elizabeth Dayton (she/her, UCLA), "S3x is the FR!!ends we made along the way: Art as Protest, Community Care and Mutual Aid in Sex Working/Trade Communities"

Abigail Fourspring (she/her, Penn State), “Contained Queerness: Digital Planned Parenthood and Queer Intimacy”

Heath Pennington (they/them, UCSB), “Queer BDSM Intimacies in the Time of COVID”

Emily Barasch (she/her, UCLA), “How to Continue (Together)?”

**Respondent: Dr. Francesca Albrezzi (she/her, UCLA)**

**2:30 - 3:00 PM Break**

**3:00 - 4:00 PM Featured Performance:**

Dorian Wood (they/them), “Selections from ARDOR and REACTOR”

Artist Dorian Wood performs songs from ARDOR and REACTOR, two albums they recorded and released in 2020 during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic.

**4:00 - 4:45 PM Q&A with Dorian Wood led by Dr. Jennifer Doyle**

**4:50 - 5:00 PM Closing Remarks**

**5:00 - 6:00 PM Post-Conference Happy Hour**

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## Visualizing Queerness

May 6, 10:10 - 11:40 AM PST



### Abstracts:

#### **“The Queer Gothic and the Horrors of Heteronormativity,” Liz Kurtzman**

Horror films have never been known for being a safe space for queer characters or viewers, but in recent years, the genre has become more visibly inclusive. Anthology horror shows such as *The Haunting of Bly Manor* and *American Horror Story* have featured queer characters in lead roles, while streaming platforms like Hulu provide an opportunity for low budget queer films like *Midnight Kiss* and *Velvet Buzzsaw*. But what does *inclusivity* mean in a genre with such a high body count?

In order to further consider this question, I turned to the 2019 film *Spiral*, a movie hailed upon its release as “the queer *Get Out*.” The film centers upon a gay couple, Aaron and Malik, who move to the rural suburbs with Aaron’s teenage daughter in 1995. The film presents a nightmarish view of the American dream, as Aaron quickly adjusts to their new life in the remote countryside while Malik grows increasingly paranoid under the observation of their over-friendly neighbors and their bizarre rituals.

I will be exploring how heteronormativity looms as an unfulfilled and unfulfilling goal in this queer gothic film. The rural setting, mysteriously ominous neighbors, and Malik’s own precarious identity as a gay black man converge to tell a tale of paranoia and the failings of conformity. In many ways, *Spiral* follows the tropes of gothic romance, but also adapts those roles and themes for a movie made and released in the Trump era. By putting these horror frameworks and traits into conversation with queer theorists, I aim to uncover whether *Spiral* is simply retreading a classic horror setup with a same-sex couple inserted into the narrative, or if it is scaring up a uniquely queer story.

#### **“Gay Korean American Reception of the Korean TV Drama *Record of Youth*,” Grace Jung**

This project explores the queer diasporic Korean American experience in Los Angeles through the reception of a contemporary serialized Korean TV drama (K-drama) entitled *Record of Youth* which streams exclusively on Netflix in US

territories. My methodology for this project involves textual analysis and ethnography through interviews of gay Korean American men in their 20s and 30s who are not only viewers of K-dramas but also American content creators based in Hollywood as stand-up comics, actors and writers. This project flattens audience studies and production culture studies into a dynamic discourse in which the subjects can speak to and from both angles; the reception and production occur in unison as they take or leave behind influence from K-dramas and create their own work such as TV pilots, screenplays, memoirs and punchlines. I argue that these gay Korean American men's critical viewing and reception of contemporary K-dramas like *Record of Youth* is a practice in engaging with their cultural roots and critically negotiating their relationships with their family including their expression or non expression of their political commitments as Asian American LGBTQ members. These subjects' creative and political practice also give them a means to reimagine new and utopic ideations of queer diasporic Korean life through their own media production. As these men look back and reflect on the K-dramas they watched with their mothers, they see a possibility as media makers "in the service of a new futurity"—per José Esteban Muñoz—to create a queer diasporic utopia for Korean American LGBTQIA+ individuals such as themselves.

### **“Deviant Intimacies: Imperial Readings of Afghan Masculinity,” Leila Malikyar**

My paper examines how American and British media queer the sexuality of Afghan men and how these representations uphold ongoing colonial violence against Afghanistan. Though imperial powers represent the sexuality of Afghan men in a nonnormative light, Ethnic Studies has not considered these constructions as a critical site of inquiry. This omission ignores the ways that media misrepresentations of Afghan men's perceived queerness uphold, justify, and serve as potent forms of colonial violence against Afghanistan.

Narratives of the sexual deviance of nonwhite men have long been associated with imperial and colonial projects; Afghan men are no different. I argue that Western media portrayals of Afghan men work to fund and manufacture consent for the ongoing occupation of Afghanistan by Western forces. To demonstrate this, I identify two discursive themes commonly found in media articles relating to the sexuality of Afghan men: Afghan men as troublingly effeminate and gay, as supposedly evidenced by eyeliner and sandals, or homosocial intimacies such as handholding between men; and Afghan men as rampant pedophiles, as evidenced by the supposedly endemic practice of bacha bazi. Using critical discourse analysis, I analyze the power relations imbued in each kind of misrepresentation of Afghan men's sexuality by Western media.

Ethnic Studies sets itself apart from other fields by exposing the epistemic dimensions of colonial power. The field has articulated how Orientalist and sexuality discourses intersect with colonialism, but not with regard to Afghan men. This paper will show that Western media's Orientalist framing of Afghan male sexuality is an influential component of colonial power in the context of the ongoing Afghanistan occupation.

## **“Brown Queer Punks: An Exploration of a Transnational Aesthetic,”**

Amina Cruz

My work is rooted in the nature of transformation and identity, bearing witness to personal narratives and how we are shaped by the spaces we inhabit. Emerging from a queer punk scene in East Los Angeles, that is predominantly Mexican, my work centers Black and Brown creative embodiment and the ways we foreground revolution within our everyday lives.

I first started photographing QTPOC punks and their visual expressions at various clubs and backyard parties. I began meditating about the community as a whole, how we interact, and who we are outside of these celebratory spaces? Through photography I explore the social terrain and identity created by intersecting cultures and an interrogation of self through visual representations of QTPOC punks.

As I continue highlighting the visual representation of Black and Brown trans/queer punks I see it taking a hemispheric approach, exploring punks throughout the Américas and the Caribbean. For instance, how do we build a transnational community through seeing ourselves reflected in one another? How do we collectively navigate politics, aesthetics and a shifting self?

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### Presenter Biographies:

#### **Liz Kurtzman (she/her)**

Liz Kurtzman is a second year doctoral student in the Theatre and Performing Arts department at the University of Pittsburgh. Her studies focus on the performances of fear, particularly in live horror events such as scare attractions, as well as the acting and embodiment of monsters and villains onstage and onscreen. Liz has also earned a Master's in English literature from Virginia Tech and a Bachelor of Arts from Heidelberg University in Ohio.

#### **Grace Jung (she/her)**

Grace Jung is a PhD candidate at UCLA in Cinema and Media Studies. Her dissertation focuses on Korean variety television shows and gender with an emphasis on masculinity and queerness. Her articles, “Aspirational Paternity and the Female Gaze on Korean Reality-Variety TV” and “Recovering the Career of Korean American Comedian Johnny Yune” are published in *Media, Culture & Society* and *The New Review of Film and Television Studies* respectively. Her article “The Queer Politics of



Korean Variety TV: State, Industry and Genre” is forthcoming in *Jump Cut*. Grace is a published writer and translator, and a former Fulbright scholar.

### Leila Malikyar (she/they)

Leila Malikyar is a second-year Master’s student in Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State University. She is deeply invested in understanding the colonial workings of the Afghanistan occupation by Western imperial powers, especially with how the popular news media represents occupied Afghans. Her current work analyzes how Western media strategically racializes and queers Afghan men in order to manufacture consent for war and ongoing occupation.

### Amina Cruz (she/they)

Amina Cruz was born and raised in Los Angeles, CA and Tampa, FL. She hitchhiked around the country before deciding to move to New York City, where she earned her BFA in Photography from Parsons School of Design. Her interests are based in queer culture, film/analog photography, and exploring the space between transformation and identity. Her current work explores the culture of brown queer punks, on the east side of Los Angeles. Amina volunteers at various community organizations. She has been an active panelist at MOLA and La Plaza de Cultura y Artes. Her work has appeared in multiple television shows and features.

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## Respondent Biography:

### Dr. Mary Zaborskis (she/her)

Mary Zaborskis is an Assistant Professor of American Studies and Gender Studies at Penn State Harrisburg. She works at the intersections of queer, critical race, and childhood studies in twentieth-century and contemporary American literature and culture. Mary’s work has appeared in *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, *WSQ*, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, and *Jump Cut*. Her work on Native American boarding schools, published in the special “Child Now” issue of *GLQ*, received the Crompton-Noll Prize for Best Article in LGBTQ Studies at the 2019 Modern Language Association convention. Mary is a series editor at *Public Books*, where she edits the “Shoptalk” and “Quizzical” features.

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Queerstory

May 6, 1:00 - 2:30 PM PST



Abstracts:

**“Archival Lesbians, Queer Contradictions: *soldiergirls* in Process,”**  
Rebecca Adelsheim

In her 2007 book *Feeling Backward*, Heather Love identifies the contradictions of intimacy in queer historiography: our affirmative bias combined with a longing for community across time results in the constant search for images of ourselves in the past, while we ignore the backward figures whose struggle (and negativity) still has reverberations in and impacts on the present. This contradiction of identification and refusal comes to a head in my own archival research for a new musical about the WWII Women’s Army Corps, *soldiergirls*.<sup>1</sup> Based on the real love letters of Esther Herbert and Marvyl Doyle, the musical traces their romance amid the unlikely formation of queer communities within the patriarchal, heterosexist military structure. The musical itself insists on a slippage of past and present, eliding historical letters brimming with desire, seeking approval, with a contemporary attitude towards queerness through the use of collage, Camp, and anachronism.

This paper explores the multi-layered queer historiography at play in the research and making of *soldiergirls*, and within the story of the WWII Women’s Army Corps. It examines and expands a number of contradictions inherent in the project including Love’s challenge to progressive impulses; intimate love letters written for a partner transformed, over 75 years later, into the material for a contemporary musical; queer intimacy in unlikely, even hostile settings, reverberating across time. This paper exists at the intersections of practice and research, process and perspective, examining the temporal collisions at play in both the historical material and its artistic extraction.

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<sup>1</sup> *Soldiergirls* is written by Em Weinstein, with music by Emily Johnson-Erday. As the dramaturg, the majority of my primary source research was done at the ONE Archives at USC. *Soldiergirls* has received support from En Garde Arts, New York Theater Workshop, and Rattlestick Playwrights Theater.

## **“‘Contradicted, Misinformed, [and] Fenced Out’: Queer Intimacy, Urban Dreams, and Surrealist Thresholds,” Emma Spies**

In a 2015 article, Sertaç Sehlíkoglu and Asli Zengin call intimacy "a difficult but enthralling subject," its potential meanings often ambiguous, confusing, and slippery. Its proximity to secrecy motivates us to ask how it actually *works*, how its many constructions are defined and shaped across different times and locales. They go on to point out that the "sexual realm" has become our primary lens for thinking about intimacy; and although they (rightly) point out how limiting this tendency can be, they do not shy away from emphasizing the important relationship between sexual bodies and dominant structures, including the nation-state, religious organizations, and governing cultural norms. In the end, "[intimacy's] dynamics of sensual and affective attachments and forms of desire" indisputably inform our understanding and experience not just of our own sexuality and gender, but of our spatiotemporal environments and the ways our bodies operate in those loci.

Beginning with the idea that intimacy can "easily create near-aphasic, polysemous confusion," my presentation will examine representations of queer intimacy in urban art and literature of the European Surrealist movement. I will consider how city spaces in Surrealist texts and images simultaneously construct and are constructed by the ways in which they regulate, encourage, deny, or ignore queer romantic and sexual intimacy. I will discuss Surrealism as intentionally mystifying, often incomprehensible—both aesthetically and ideologically—and argue that its queer figures ultimately reach across those gaps, borders, bridges, and thresholds to form intimate connections not hitherto visible in earlier artistic movements.

## **“Sleeping with the Ancestors: Queer Asexualities in Jeremy O. Harris’s *Slave Play*,” Kari Barclay**

In October 2020, Jeremy O. Harris’s *Slave Play* became the most Tony-nominated play in American theater history. Centered on three interracial couples acting out sexual fantasies inspired by chattel slavery, the play explores the uncanny intersections of BDSM, race, and intimacy. In this paper, I examine *Slave Play*’s unexpected resonances with asexuality, a lack of sexual attraction toward others. Two therapists in the play attempt to cure black and brown characters of their alleged “anhedonia,” an inability to experience sexual pleasure from their white partners. Placing this pathology in relation to contemporary sexual desire disorders, I suggest that *Slave Play* dramatizes the intersections of racialization and “compulsory sexuality”—a normative association between sexual attraction and empowerment. *Slave Play*’s characters of color resist compulsory sexuality by approaching sex as a performance for an invisible audience of their ancestors. Rather than trying to express desire for their white partners, they use BDSM intimacies to connect to racial history, which I frame as an asexual way of relating to sex and sexuality. This approach builds on the turn in asexuality as static identity toward asexuality as a sensibility, like queer, that challenges normative assumptions about sex and romance. Looking for asexual resonances even

within sexual cultures, I hope to build what Ela Pzybylo and Daniel Cooper describe as a “queerly asexual archive.” Thus, a play that opens with 30 minutes of BDSM foreplay can nevertheless queer normative expectations around sexual subjectivity.

## **“The Queer African Archive and Method,” Chido Muchemwa**

This paper is a response to Keguro Macharia’s “Archive and Method in Queer African Studies” and his call for exploring what methods in other disciplines may be productive in generating new methods for Queer African studies. I explore the possibilities of Saidiya Hartman’s critical fabulation as a way of locating and hearing the silences voices of queer folk in African Studies Archives. I apply this methodology to the court case of two men arrested in Zimbabwe in 2011 and accused of being “unpatriotic”. These men troubled the notion of citizenship and sovereignty simply through desire, a desire that is completely erased from the telling of the narrative in the media. Through this case study, I will argue for the possibilities of critical fabulation in Queer African Studies. Drawing from critical archival studies, black studies and queer of color critique, I put Macharia and Hartman in conversation to build towards a method for locating and reading queer African archives by centering desire. By so doing, I will show how Queer African Studies destabilise notions of queerness from the west as well as showing the limitations of queer theory’s understandings of the formulation of sexuality for non-western queer subjects.

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### **Presenter Biographies:**

#### **Rebecca Adelsheim**

Rebecca Adelsheim is a dramaturg, researcher, and producer. Recent work includes new play dramaturgy for *soldiergirls* by Em Weinstein, *The Displaced* by Isaac Gomez, *Pivot* by Alex Lubischer, and *In His Hands* by Benjamin Benne. Rebecca has served as Line Producer for Barrington Stage Company and Managing Editor for *Theater Magazine*. Rebecca has dramaturged or produced for companies including Steppenwolf Theater Company, Baltimore Center Stage, Goodman Theater, American Theater Company, among others. Recent awards include the John W. Gassner Memorial Prize for best critical essay submitted to Theater Magazine. B.A.: University of Pennsylvania, M.F.A. in Dramaturgy & Dramatic Criticism: Yale School of Drama '22.

#### **Emma Spies (she/her)**

Emma Spies is a doctoral candidate in the UCLA English department. Her work focuses on Surrealism, phenomenology, queer theory and history, urban narratives, and Critical Theory. Her dissertation examines representations of queer women in Surrealist novels, paying particular attention to the movement and positioning of bodies in city spaces.

### Kari Barclay (they/he)

Kari Barclay (he/him or they/them) is a director, playwright, and researcher completing his PhD in Theatre and Performance Studies at Stanford. His dissertation, "Directing Desire," examines the staging of consent and sexuality in contemporary American theater and the developing field of "intimacy directing." His original play, CAN I HOLD YOU?, was one of the first full-length plays about asexuality performed in the U.S. and enjoyed a sold-out run in San Francisco and reading in New York. Kari is a Ric Weiland Fellow, Carl Weber Memorial Fellow, and winter of the Southern Queer Playwrights Festival. [kari-barclay.com](http://kari-barclay.com).

### Chido Muchemwa (she/her)

Chido Muchemwa is a PhD student in the Faculty of Information at the University of Toronto. Her research interests include critical archival studies, queer African studies and postcolonial studies.

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### Respondent Biography:

#### Dr. Will Clark (he/him)

Will Clark is an Assistant Professor of English at San Francisco State University. His essays and reviews have appeared in *The Henry James Review*, *Nineteenth Century Literature*, *ASAP/J*, and the *Los Angeles Review of Books*. His work examines strains of U.S. fiction at the turn of the twentieth century that depict the emergent category of queerness by challenging the exclusion of queer subjects from the fullest extent of U.S. membership.

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## Queerness Across Borders

May 7, 10:00 - 11:30 AM PST



### Abstracts:

#### **“Azadi in the Sky: Arshia Fatima Haq’s Contribution to *In Plain Sight*,”** Ali Kheradyar

At a time when borders are more contested than ever and the pandemic has left us masked, socially distanced, and further siloed in our homes, beliefs, and internet spaces, Los Angeles artists rafa esparza and Cassils cast their community actions of care in the sky. *In Plain Sight*, a monumental project involving 80 artists, utilized skytyping planes to protest immigrant detention in the United States. Over the 4th of July weekend, 2020, countering typical celebrations of nationalism, the project spread awareness to millions of people looking up at the sky and sent messages of support to those detained. As part of *In Plain Sight*, artist Arshia Fatima Haq wrote “azadi” in the sky over the Orange County Intake Release Facility (“azadi” means “freedom” in Farsi, Urdu, Armenian, and other languages). In this paper, I analyze Haq’s contribution alongside Achille Mbembe’s *y-axis of vertical sovereignty* and Sara Ahmed’s theorization of *slantwise* in order to juxtapose Haq’s message of hope with the events of 9/11 and 45’s Muslim Ban. I argue, through what I call a *queer axis of solidarity*, that Cassils, esparza, and Haq orient us toward a pedagogy of interconnected intimacy on the queer horizon that transcends gallery walls, institutional barriers, and national borders. By devising new protest tactics, building a coalition of diverse partnerships, and using planes to communicate messages in the sky, these artists build on histories of queer resistance and propose an unprecedented political intervention and reorientation.

#### **“Crossroads Body and Bodies at the Crossroads: Choreographies of Afro-Brazilian Candomblé”** Mika Lillit Lior

During a two-day ceremony in Bahia, Northeastern Brazil, practitioners of the syncretic African Diasporic religion, *Candomblé*, dance vigorous and lively sambas that splice through and around the sacred circle of the sanctuary floor, creating an intersection at which both legitimized and marginalized cultural complexes collide. In this mobile site, male-identified mediums, individually and as an ensemble, resignify

their bodies as ritually reproductive forms. Influenced by West and Central African roots and New World experiences of enslavement, colonialism, hetero-patriarchy and systemic racism, Candomblé emerged among enslaved, freed and free African and Afro-descendants on plantations and maroon communities in Brazil, between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. Across a range of regional variations, Candomblé's signature dynamic involves dances of invocation and spirit embodiment. Yet, historically, male mediums have experienced exclusion from Candomblé's arenas of spirit performance because of intersecting indigenous and Western cultural logics that position women's bodies as procreative and, thus, ideal for mediumship.

This paper looks at Candomblé choreographies in an out-of-the-way temple on an island across a bay from Bahia's capital city and its official religious and identity discourses, showing how minoritized male mediums use circular and angular dance aesthetics to position their bodies as and at a ritual crossroads. In this ceremonially contained but socially porous space, practitioners enact queer critiques, through their samba dances, hugs, and whispered praises, of gender and sex norms as they are constructed in both the Afro-religious spheres and in dominant Bahian society. Along the way, I wonder about how to locate my own crossroads body within the frame, in the effort to forge a decolonial methodology of context-driven intercultural research.

### **“Mona's Many Gifts: Friendship and Collaboration in *Myself Mona Ahmed* (2001),” Sayantan Mukhopadhyay**

Dayanita Singh's photo project *Myself Mona Ahmed* (2001) follows the story of the Mona, a *hijra* from New Delhi, across the span of a decade. In a publication that blurs distinctions between book, art object, and epistolary archive, Singh documents Mona's turbulent life through a seemingly endless stream of black-and-white photographs. Refusing the role of silent muse, Mona writes long messages to the Swiss publisher that accompany these semi-biographical images. In her letters, she speaks at length about the injustices she faces as a member of the *hijra* community—an ancient trans-feminine non-binary South Asian gender identity—living in an India experiencing seismic changes in its sociopolitical and economic landscapes.

Using friendship, intimacy, and queer kinship as methods to interrogate the relationship between the book's two key contributors, I contend that *Myself Mona Ahmed* is less a taxonomic biography of Mona than a story of radical solidarity between Mona and Singh that cuts across lines of class, caste, religion, and gender identity. Amidst the complex social hierarchies that exist in India, opportunities for an upwardly mobile cis-woman from South Delhi to form a meaningful entanglement with a Muslim *hijra* from the city's outskirts are otherwise incredibly rare. I argue, therefore, that *Myself Mona Ahmed* exposes the transformative power of queer friendships to reorganize and reorder possibilities in both community-building and in artistic authorship. In doing so, I challenge dominant art historical models that seek to ascribe authorial mastery to singular artists in a hagiographic fashion, violently erasing untold stories of collaboration and mutual care.

## **“Singaw (Fume): Six Years After Laude’s Death,” Allen Baylosis**

*Singaw (Fume)* is a 7-minute performance video offering an interpretation of a spoken word poem entitled *Dugu-dugong Bahaghari* (Bleeding Rainbow) written by Andrew Estacio. The piece is a response to the death of Jennifer Laude, a Filipino trans woman who was murdered by U.S. Marine Joseph Scott Pemberton in 2014. Pemberton was granted an absolute pardon after six years of imprisonment. Hence, this piece serves as a reflection of the flawed justice system in the Philippines, especially towards the Filipino queer community as numerous transgender-related cases are being ignored. The piece highlights a transwoman drag artist taking a bath in the tub along with everyday objects such as flowers, milk, a banana, and a leash—used as representations of the micraggressions, discriminations, and violence experienced by queer victims under a heteropatriarchal society. It offers an alternate representation of Laude’s death by taking place in a bathroom where she was found lifeless. The performance puts forward a statement by amplifying voices against the strong transphobia in the country and the dominance of the white male gaze in the global spectrum.

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### **Presenter Biographies:**

#### **Ali Kheradyar (she/her)**

Ali Kheradyar is a third year Culture and Performance PhD student in the Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance at UCLA. Kheradyar explores the intersections and politics of identity through gestures in performance, video, sound, and text. With an ongoing interest in “the frame,” Kheradyar also examines the use of performance scores as a choreographic strategy in contemporary art and dance. Kheradyar received her BA from NYU’s Gallatin School, her MA in Performance Studies from NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts, and her MFA in Art from CalArts.

#### **Mika Lillit Lior (she/they)**

Mika Lillit Lior’s research centers on ritual choreographies in and around Salvador da Bahia, Brazil. Her dance practices range from capoeira and samba to contact and ensemble improvisation. Her research has been supported by grants from the Fulbright Foundation and the American Association of University Women. Lior has performed with NYC’s feminist acrobatic company LAVA and Raizes do Brasil Capoeira Brooklyn. Her short dance film *Cures for Fear* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DZfLq7grKOg>) received the Audience Award at the International Contact Improvisation Film Festival. She is currently completing her PhD in Culture and Performance at UCLA’s World Arts and Cultures/Dance department.



### Sayantan Mukhopadhyay (he/him)

Sayantan Mukhopadhyay is a doctoral candidate in the department of Art History at University of California, Los Angeles. His research focuses on queer and feminist practices in Indian contemporary art from the 1970s to the present day. He received his MA from UCLA in 2017, for which he wrote a thesis on the late paintings of Bhupen Khakhar. Prior to his time in Los Angeles, Sayantan lived in New York, New Delhi, and Shanghai working in galleries, journalism, and education. He holds a BA in Comparative Literature and Art History from Williams College.

### Allen Baylosis (he/him)

Allen Baylosis is a master's student in the Department of Performance Studies at New York University Tisch School of the Arts, and holds a Bachelor in Speech Communication from the University of the Philippines Diliman. He was also a global scholar under a short-term exchange study program at Hokkaido University in Japan. He is a scholar, performer, artist, and an advocate for gender equality and feminist movement. Pursuing performance studies and utilizing art as a weapon for social change, he has been part of several productions that tackle relevant social issues. His research interests include Filipino diaspora, transnationalism, globalization, queer of color critique, performance of literature, performance curation, and spectatorship—topics of his academic papers which he has presented in international conferences.

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### Respondent Biography:

#### Dr. Omari Weekes (he/him)

Omari Weekes is an assistant professor of English and American Ethnic Studies at Willamette University. His current book project, *Lurid Affinities: Sex and the Spirit in Contemporary Black Literature* explores how Black writers in the late 20th century register deviance and spirituality not as antipodal ideas but as imbricated components of Black life. His writing has appeared in *The Black Scholar*, *n+1*, *The Point*, *Literary Hub*, and other venues.

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## Digital Queerness

May 7, 1:00- 2:30 PM PST



### Abstracts:

#### **“‘S3x is the FR!!ends we made along the way:’ Art as Protest, Community Care and Mutual Aid in Sex Working/Trading Communities,” Elizabeth Dayton**

The contemporary global sex workers rights movements have rich legacies of utilizing art and political performances to intervene in dominant discourses regarding the sex industry. Sex worker activists theorize their use of art as a creative strategy of activism, where placing of sex workers at the center of their own narratives is the best way to ensure to sex worker justice (Holloway & Hurtado, 2017). Following emergent themes of community resilience, resistance, and refusal to disappear of many sex worker art exhibitions (*Yet We Still Dance!*, Bangkok 2013., *Fotos contra la Indiferencia*, Bogotá, 2015., *We’re Still Working: The Art of Sex Work*, San Francisco, 2018., *Whores Will Rise: Protest Art & Resistance Ephemera Against FOSTA/SESTA*, New York, 2018., *But I Am Here*, New York/online, 2021), this paper explores how sex worker art functions as practice of Muñoz’s *queer relationality*—a means to create, foster, and care for community amidst societal conditions that seek your eradication and enable your disposability. I suggest the production/curation of sex worker art functions as “creative strategy” of community resistance, survival, and futurity by sustaining the individual (creating opportunities to monetize their labor) and facilitating the relational (bringing sex workers into community with each other and practices of mutual aid). Referencing recent COVID-era online sex worker art show *E-Viction* (2020), I discuss how sex workers explicitly adapt these creative strategies to ensure community survival amidst increasing hostility, censorship, and surveillance of online platforms to their presence.

## **“Contained Queerness: Digital Planned Parenthood and Queer Intimacy,” Abigail Fourspring**

Scholars who study digital rhetoric and communication have rightly critiqued health management applications that fall under the larger category of “FemTech” for promoting heteronormative conceptions of gender and sexuality, thus limiting inclusivity. Though many health management applications categorized as “FemTech” perpetuate these critiques, Planned Parenthood’s applications (a period tracker called Spot On and an app that delivers birth control, UTI medication, and emergency contraception called Planned Parenthood Direct) discursively resist these critiques. These apps recognize a multiplicity of gender identities, use trans and non-binary inclusive language, and define sexual acts beyond a heteronormative understanding. These discursive moves towards inclusivity create a space that can foster queer community and intimacy. Further, this space exists within the dominant and recognizable bounds of the Planned Parenthood organization.

The latest update to these apps, however, largely eliminated the discursive features that fostered queer community and intimacy. Furthermore, these updates were released in the winter of 2020, at the height of COVID-19 cases in the U.S. I argue that these updates enact a rhetoric of containment that seeks to contain not only COVID-19, but also contains queerness. Ultimately, the updates to the Planned Parenthood apps and the rhetoric of containment that they enact further marginalizes the queer community from the Western medical establishment.

## **“Queer BDSM Intimacies in the Time of Covid,” Heath Pennington**

This paper asks how and in what ways kinky intimacies, always already invested with a certain sense of queerness, have become even more queer since the pandemic began. Drawing upon ten semi-structured ethnographic interviews with BDSM practitioners in ten countries, conducted remotely during the summer of 2020, I investigate the ways in which Covid-induced limitations have served as generative constraints that kink queerness and queer kinkiness. A set of practices often considered largely corporeal in nature, BDSM has been hit hard by pandemic precautions such as social distancing and limitations on indoor gatherings. Yet as a genre of interpersonal sensual, sexual, and erotic interplay focused heavily on consent, harm reduction, and risk management, I argue kink is uniquely equipped to maneuver the pandemic’s labyrinth. Looking to my interview partners’ experiences, I hold that kinksters’ strategies for navigating Covid-19 reveal not only a quintessential yet understudied site of queer worldbuilding, but also a locus of intimate relations that sidestep the need for in-person contact. As pandemic-driven technology queers our orientations to ourselves and each other, this paper offers lessons which a broader public might use to imagine ways of relating that rely less on normative notions of intimacy.

## “How to Continue (Together)?,” Emily Barasch

**How to Continue (Together)?** utilizes the liminal in-between zoom space to co-create a new world. Three performers in collaboration with a composer engage with micro movements, energetic tuning scores, and emergent text constructions to collectively develop a shared language which serves as material to propose a new framework for intimacy grounded in emergence, slowness, and economies of attention. We do not know what will come next, or how we will get there, but we can allow it to radically unfold if we practice deep noticing.

If the zoom space pre-supposes a lack of, or irrelevance of the tactile physical body, and intimacy as we know it is grounded in a physical experience of bodies being together, how then do we find each other in this moment? Across time and space to meet, be together, and find each other? What are the new strategies for and new configurations of “touch”? Where is the body? How do we find each other now? What are the new constellations, networks, and strategies for experiencing, sharing, and experiencing intimacy?

In the words of Jack Halberstam,

“...we cannot say what new structures will replace the ones we live with yet, because once we have torn shit down, we will inevitably see more and see differently and feel a new sense of wanting and being and becoming”.

*How to Continue (together)?* attempts to rehearse these future possibilities in real time and space.

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### Presenter Biographies:

#### Elizabeth Dayton (she/her)

Elizabeth Dayton is a PhD candidate in Gender Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles analyzing how art, performance, and cultural production from sex working/trading communities function as both projects of re-narration of dominant narratives of sex work in mainstream media as well as projects for community survival, mutual aid and futurity. Though typically understood as contemporary art criticism, Dayton aligns her work and analytic of art produced within sex working/trading communities as less “criticism” and more “contextualized and curious enthusiasm.”

#### Abigail Fourspring (she/her)

Abigail Fourspring (she/her) is a second year master’s student in the Department of English at Penn State University. She will also complete her PhD at Penn State, where she will specialize in rhetoric and composition. Broadly, her interests can be categorized as feminist rhetorics, with a particular interest in the rhetorics of health and medicine.

### Heath Pennington (they/them)

Heath Pennington is a doctoral scholar and Chancellor's Fellow at UCSB, a kink practitioner, sex educator, and certified intimacy coordinator. Their interdisciplinary research investigating kinky praxis via performance and gender studies has been presented in two peer-reviewed journal articles, at over 10 academic conferences, and in local, national, and international media including Times Higher Education, Stand News Hong Kong, and Shibaru.life. Heath holds two Master's degrees with Distinction: in Gender Studies from Central European University, and in Performance and Culture from Goldsmiths University of London. They received their BA, summa cum laude, from the USC School of Theatre.

### Emily Barasch (she/her)

Emily Barasch is a Los Angeles based interdisciplinary artist working across mediums of choreography, video, and text. She believes that the ways our physical bodies move through the world are reflections of our past encounters and rehearsals for our future encounters. When we dance our past, present, and future selves are conjured and converge into one another. Emily is thinking through choreography as constructed ecosystems, wherein the social order is highly prescribed and everybody plays a role. These roles however can be fucked with; slippages, subversion, and refusals can occur.

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### Respondent Biography:

#### Dr. Francesca Albrezzi (she/her)

An art historian, curator, and digital humanist, Dr. Francesca Albrezzi works as a Digital Research Consultant at UCLA's Office of Advanced Research Computing and teaches for the Digital Humanities program and the World Arts And Cultures/Dance department. She researches digitally immersive technologies used in GLAM organizations. She is affiliated with the College Art Association's educational committee, Art History Teaching Resources, and the Digital Art History Journal.

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## Keynote Biography:

### Dr. Jennifer Doyle (she/her)

Jennifer Doyle is the author of *Campus Sex*, *Campus Security*, *Hold It Against Me: Difficulty and Emotion in Contemporary Art*, and *Sex Objects: Art and the Dialectics of Desire*. She is a writer, teacher and curator, and guest curated the performance series *Tip of Her Tongue*, for The Broad Museum (2015-2017), and *Nao Bustamante: Soldadera* for the Vincent Price Art Museum (2015). She is a part of the community that stewards Human Resources Los Angeles, a multi-disciplinary arts space in Chinatown, Los Angeles.

## Featured Performer Biography:

### Dorian Wood (they/them)

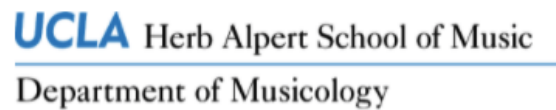
Dorian Wood seeks to glorify both the sanctity and irreverence of intimacy. Through the use of their corpulent body and booming voice, Wood revels in challenging the artist-audience separation, using subject matter informed by their own perspective as a non-binary brown person and an autodidact. Their work has been showcased in concert halls and performance spaces around the world, including at institutions like The Broad (Los Angeles), REDCAT (Los Angeles), Museo Nacional Del Prado (Madrid), the City Hall of Madrid and Teatro de la Ciudad Esperanza Iris (Mexico City). From 2019 to 2020, Wood completed several successful tours throughout Europe, Mexico and the U.S. with their chamber orchestra tribute to Chavela Vargas, XAVELA LUX AETERNA. Wood is a recipient of the Creative Capital Award (2020) and the Art Matters Foundation grant (2020), and a past artist-in-residence at Building Bridges Art Exchange, Santa Monica, California (2020), Etopia, Centro de Arte y Tecnologia, under the FUGA program, Zaragoza, Spain (2019) and MASS Gallery, Austin, Texas (2017). Wood has released over a dozen recordings, among them the albums *BOLKA* (Independent, 2007); *Brutus* (Independent, 2010); *Rattle Rattle* (Atonal Industries, 2013); *Down, The Dirty Roof* (Atonal Industries, 2013), *XALÁ* (Atonal Industries, 2017), *ARDOR* (Independent, 2020) and *REACTOR* (Independent, 2020).

## Featured Artist Biography:

### Laura Chow Reeve (she/her)

Laura Chow Reeve is queer mixed Chinese femme writing and drawing in Richmond, VA. She is currently writing a novel, studying Transformative Justice practices, dreaming about abolitionist futures, and supporting movement organizations through graphic recording.

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