



For Immediate Release

## WRIGHTWOOD 659 PRESENTS GROUNDBREAKING EXHIBITION ON STONEWALL REBELLION

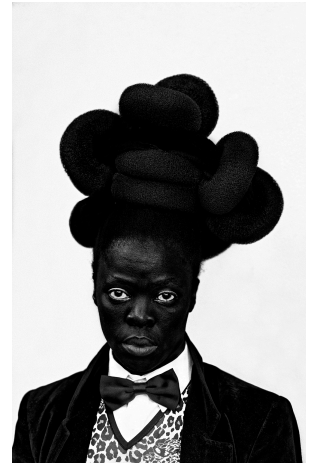
***About Face: Stonewall, Revolt and New Queer Art***  
**May 22 through July 20, 2019**

Exhibition reframes traditional view of historic uprising

Media Preview: Wednesday, May 22, 2019, 10 am

(CHICAGO, IL – May 10, 2019) Wrightwood 659 hails the Stonewall Rebellion on its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with *About Face: Stonewall, Revolt and New Queer Art*.

This major exhibition, which occupies all four floors of the new Tadao Ando-designed Wrightwood 659, features nearly 500 works that seek to reframe the traditional view of the uprising. Rather than claiming Stonewall as the beginning of the gay and lesbian liberation movement—as is customary—this exhibition focuses on a rejection of the traditional binary view of sexuality and gender identity, exploding the very idea of gay and straight, woman and man, minority and majority, or feminine and masculine. In the works on view in the exhibition, sexuality and gender identity, far from clear categories, bleed and overlap to the point that “queerness” becomes a verb, not a noun.



Zanele Muholi, *Phaphama*, at Cassilhaus, North Carolina, 2016

Centered on the idea of resisting these structuring binaries, the exhibition celebrates a pluralistic, intersectional rebellion grounded in the idea that identity is at once deep-rooted and disposable—truth and drag in one package. *About Face* engages the diversity of queerness with painting, sculpture, photography, film and video, and installation and performance art of the highest quality. Showing many international artists for the first time in the US or Chicago, the exhibition will introduce audiences to some of the best queer work being done today.

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*About Face: Stonewall, Revolt and New Queer Art* is on view from **May 22 through July 20, 2019**. Wrightwood 659 is its only venue. A scholarly catalogue will be published after the exhibition closes. Information to follow.

Exhibition curator Jonathan David Katz, Visiting Professor of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies at the University of Pennsylvania and chair of the doctoral program in Visual Studies at the State University of New York at Buffalo, notes, "The traditional view that Stonewall represents the birth of a gay and lesbian movement, is not, in fact, accurate: The Stonewall Rebellion was not the beginning and it was never just about gay and lesbian. Indeed, it was ignited by trans people of various stripes who put the notion of sexuality as either gay or straight under pressure. With work by an enormous diversity of artists, the bulk of them contemporary, *About Face* intends to trace the hybridity and ongoing metamorphosis that is the dominant profile of this long struggle for equality and inclusion."

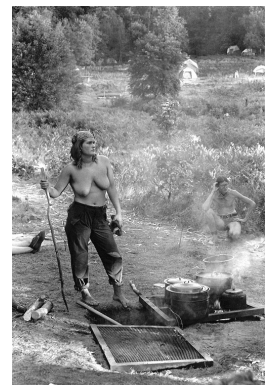
### Exhibition

Unlike other exhibitions presented on the anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion, *About Face* attempts to provide a state-of-the-field survey of queer art today, with works by artists from Canada, China, Colombia, Cuba, France, India, Indonesia, South Africa, the UK, Sweden, and the United States. They are trans, female, male, and intersex, as well as African or of African descent, Indigenous, Asian, and Latinx, and/or some combination of all of these. Together, they give form to the idea of a collective queerness defined by transness and metamorphosis, even as they celebrate our racial, gendered, and ethnic differences. Many of the artists, including Harmony Hammond, Keith Haring, Sharon Hayes, Peter Hujar, Deborah Kass, and Jacolby Satterwhite, to name a few, have become canonical, while others, such as Greer Lankton, Jerome Caja, Del LaGrace Volcano, Alice O'Malley, and Attila Richard Lukacs, are equally talented but less well known in this country.

*About Face* is installed in four sections that map a trajectory from political resistance to the transcending of stable identity categories. It



Del LaGrace Volcano, *MOJ OF THE ANTARCTIC, OPEN ARMS, ANTARCTICA*, 2005



Joan Biren, *Aime and j. at the workers' kitchen at the 8th Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, Hart, MI 1983*

begins with a section called *Transgress*, encompassing works that aggressively resist available social hierarchies. Works on view in this section include *Lock Up* by Martin Wong, one of a group of works on same-sex intimacy among men who don't read as queer; a substantial showing of never-before seen photos by one of the founders of queer politics, murdered San Francisco Supervisor Harvey Milk; a primer on lesbian liberation by Joan E. Biren, and some photos by Peter Hujar that are exhibited here for the first time. The following section, *Transfigure*, reframes often stereotypical tropes of identity, playing with their sometimes negative connotations and subverting presumptions. Jacolby Satterwhite's virtual reality video, for example, immerses us in a queer utopia while South African Zanele Muholi's glorious self-portraits self-consciously limn the parameters of blackness as exoticism. Other works here include a suite of magisterial, heretofore unseen, abstract paintings by Harmony Hammond that challenge the presumption that for art to be lesbian, it must represent the body.

This section is followed by *Transpose*, which traces the give-and-take between queer and non-queer cultures. Deborah Kass' abstracted disco paintings, Nick Cave's *Soundsuits*, and John Dugdale's nostalgia-tinged photography all testify to the fact that the divide between queer and straight is never as pronounced as some politicians and preachers would have us believe.



Deborah Kass, *Daddy I Would Love to Dance*. 2008

The works in *Transcend*, the final section of the exhibition, flee any grounding in defined and circumscribed identity categories. Kent Monkman, perhaps the leading Canadian artist at work today, is represented by his masterwork, *Dance to the Berdashe*, its title taken from a 19<sup>th</sup>-century George Catlin painting of a queer Native American ceremony. In Monkman's multi-media installation—projected onto Buffalo hides that on close inspection are actually seen to be modern, manufactured “hides”—traditional First Nations dances combine with hip hop moves and even Hollywood film choreography to yield a culture that is already hybrid, even as we approach it as authentically indigenous. Carlos Motta is shown crucified nude and upside down in his *Inverted World*, appropriating Catholic iconography to make a statement about the Church, while Jerome Caja's 120 small-scale paintings, at once whimsical, furious, funny, and death-haunted (some are painted on the ashes of dead

friends), echo his own bad drag queen persona and his incandescent career before his premature death from AIDS.

### **ADMISSION**

Tickets are available online only, starting May 13: [tickets.wrightwood659.org/events](https://tickets.wrightwood659.org/events). Walk-ins are not accommodated.

### **FUNDING**

*About Face: Stonewall, Revolt and New Queer Art* is made possible by the Alphawood Foundation Chicago.

### **ABOUT WRIGHTWOOD 659**

Wrightwood 659, a private, non-collecting institution that opened in late 2018, presents up to three public exhibitions annually, devoted to socially engaged art and to architecture. Located in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood, Wrightwood 659 was designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Tadao Ando, who transformed a 1920s building with his signature concrete forms and poetic treatment of natural light.

Future exhibitions at Wrightwood 659 will include a presentation of work by Japanese painter Tetsuya Ishida (1973-2005), organized in collaboration with the Museo Reina Sofia, in Madrid, on view at Wrightwood 659 in fall 2019 and, in spring 2020, *Allure of Matter*, a major exhibition of contemporary experimental art in China, presented in partnership with the Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago.

For additional information: <https://wrightwood659.org/>

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### **Image Captions**

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Zanele Muholi, *Phaphama, at Cassilhaus, North Carolina*, 2016

Archival Pigment Print, 43 3/8 x 30 in.

Image courtesy of the artist, Yancey Richardson, New York, and Stevenson  
Cape Town / Johannesburg.

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Del LaGrace Volcano, *MOJ OF THE ANTARCTIC, OPEN ARMS,*  
*ANTARCTICA*, 2005

Giclée print, 44 x 64 in.

Image courtesy of the artist.

Joan Biren, *Aime and j. at the workers' kitchen at the 8<sup>th</sup> Michigan Womyn's*  
*Music Festival, Hart, MI*, 1983

Pigment Inkjet Print on Cotton Rag Paper, 20 x 16 in.

Image courtesy of the artist.

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Deborah Kass, *Daddy I Would Love to Dance*, 2008

Acrylic on canvas, 78 x 78 in.

Image courtesy of the artist.