

ARTS & LIVING



"Sarah Bernhardt et Louise Abbéma sur un lac" by Louise Abbéma is seen in the exhibit. **TERRENCE ANTONIO JAMES/CHICAGO TRIBUNE PHOTOS**

REVIEW 'THE FIRST HOMOSEXUALS'

Emergence of a 'new identity'

By Hannah Edgar
For Chicago Tribune

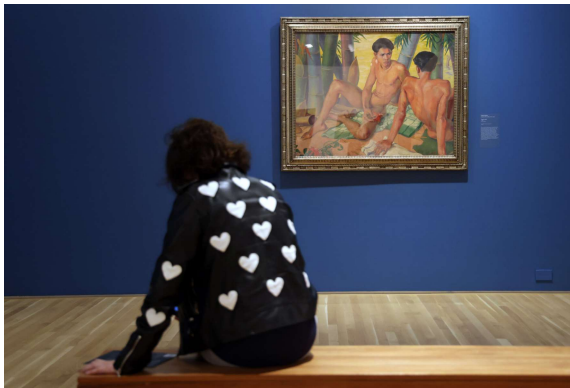
Homosexuality has always existed. It just hasn't always existed under a label or discrete identity.

One might know that, in broad strokes, but it's quite another thing to see that identity coalesce before one's eyes. "The First Homosexuals: Global Depictions of a New Identity, 1869-1930," a new exhibit showing through Dec. 17 at Wrightwood 659 in Lincoln Park, trades the shaky imprecision of language for the more visceral realm of visual art, demonstrating how artists across various cultures conceptualized queer identity.

Many of the works on display have never been seen before by the general public — and there's more to come in a sprawling second part of the exhibition, due to premiere at Wrightwood 659 in 2025 before touring the globe.

"It's always very difficult when dealing (with queerness) historically, because, of course, the terms are different," says Jonathan D. Katz, a pioneering queer art historian and lead curator of the exhibit. "I'm cognizant of the special pressure that those of us in queer studies have to deal with in terms of nomenclature, and I resent that pressure, as well. For example, people can talk about 'marriage' as a shorthand for 6th century marriage, 12th century marriage and 19th century marriage, despite those being vastly different social formations. I want to be nuanced while still reaching a mass audience."

"The First Homosexuals" is



"L'après-midi" by David Paynter is seen in the exhibit.

the third exhibit Katz has curated at Wrightwood 659, a gallery that was founded in 2018 by Alphawood Foundation president Fred Eychaner. It was preceded by "About Face: Stonewall, Revolt and New Queer Art" in 2019 and "Reimagining the Larkin: Frank Lloyd Wright's Modern Icon" in 2021-2022. In 2016, the former Alphawood Foundation Gallery also hosted a traveling exhibition Katz curated, "Art AIDS America."

Curated by a global 23-person team led by Katz, "The First Homosexuals" largely begins its survey in 1869, the year the Hungarian writer and activist Karl Maria Kertbeny coined the terms "homosexual" and "heterosexual." An exception greets visitors at the entrance of the exhibit: an unattributed scroll by a Japanese artist featuring the same subject participating in various sex acts with both men and women, created circa 1850.

"It makes very clear that homo- and hetero- were part of the same erotic continuum," Katz says.

The anonymous scroll lays the foundation for the exhibit's more pliant, historically embracing perspective on human sexuality, positing that queerness is something one does, not something one is. It's a Judith Butler-inspired riposte to the gay and trans rights

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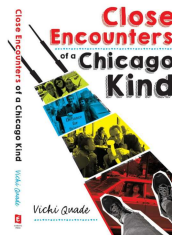
Vicki Quade's show "Christmas Bingo: It's a Ho-Ho-Holy Night" is staged at the Greenhouse Theater Center on the North Side. **VICKI QUADE**

Vicki Quade has done it her way. Including with a new book.

Rick Kogan

Vicki Quade will be back on stage this coming weekend in a show she refers to as a "Christmas Bingo: It's a Ho-Ho-Holy Night," a holiday variation of her "Bible Bingo" which has been around town for a decade. Quade will be sharing the role of Mary Margaret O'Brien with actors Rose Guccione and Kathleen Puls Andrade, each of them able to weave an interactive spell and asking audience members such questions as "Did Santa Claus babysit the baby Jesus?"

This comedy, which is among many Quade shows to have a home at the Greenhouse Theater Center (more at musefun.com), arrives Friday for a six-week stay. It is yet another stop on the inter-



'Close Encounters of a Chicago Kind'
by Vicki Quade (2022).
Eckhart Press

esting life that Quade has chosen for herself, fashioning a career as writer, actor and producer that has made her, as the host of PBS's "Wild Travels" Will Clinger accu-

ately puts it, "a Chicago treasure with an abiding curiosity about the world around her."

Those and other praiseful words appear on the jacket of Quade's book, "Close Encounters of a Chicago Kind" (Eckhart Press), which is lively and typically observant, its foundation formed by the brief stories that Quade had been posting on Facebook for a decade.

Quade is most well known as the co-creator of a theatrical wonder called "Late Night Catechism," but in this book are vivid examples of what has driven her life and career. As she writes, "We are curious people ... I think we are open and friendly. It's easy to strike up a conversation with total strangers, whether it's in line at a movie, sitting in a restaurant, sharing an elevator."

In a pleasant fashion this book has the feel of memoir, as she writes about delivering newspa-

Turn to Kogan, Page 9

CELEBRITIES

Fox among 4 given honorary Oscars

From news services

Four standing ovations in one night might seem a little over-the-top, even by Hollywood standards. But at the Governors Awards Saturday — where Michael J. Fox, Euzhan Palcy, Peter Weir and Diane Warren were celebrated with honorary Oscar statuettes — each moment felt worthy.

After several pandemic-adjusted years, the annual event put on by the Governors of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences was back in full form and teeming with stars.

Fox, who was given the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award for his contributions to Parkinson's disease research, gave a sharp, funny, thoughtful speech to accept the award. "The 6-year-old 'Back to the Future' and 'Family Ties' star was diagnosed with Parkinson's in 1991 at age 29, and in 2000 started a foundation to fund further research into the condition. To date, the foundation has raised more than \$1.5 billion.

"My optimism is fueled by my gratitude," Fox said.

When Warren, 67, took the stage, the prolific songwriter and 15-time Oscar nominee said the words she has been waiting to say for 34 years, since she got her first Oscar nomination: "I'd like to thank the Academy."

Weir, 78, was a leading voice in the Australian New Wave movement, with pictures like "Picnic at Hanging Rock," "The Last Wave" and "Gallipoli" before successfully transferring to Hollywood filmmaking where he directed films like "Dead Poets Society" and "The Truman Show."

"I had a wonderful 20 years of making studio pictures," Weir said.

Viola Davis being close out the night celebrating



Euzhan Palcy, from left, Michael J. Fox, Diane Warren and Peter Weir hold their honorary Oscars on Saturday at the Governors Awards in Los Angeles. KEVIN WINTER/GETTY

Palcy, who was first Black woman to direct a film produced by a major studio (MGM with "A Dry White Season").

"Black is bankable," Palcy, 65, said. "My stories are not Black, they are not white, they are universal."

"Mighty Morphin Power Rangers" debuted on Fox in 1993 and went on to become a pop culture phenomenon. Though his role wasn't intended to be permanent, Frank was later brought back as the White Ranger and the leader of the team. Across spinoff TV series, Frank's Tommy Oliver returned as other rangers and appeared in films as well.

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Styles, Wilde taking a break: After dating for nearly two years, Harry Styles and Olivia Wilde are reportedly "taking a break." People magazine reported Friday. One friend told the magazine that "they have different priorities that are keeping them apart," while another source called it "a very amicable decision."

Styles and Wilde have been dating since he starred in her recent film, "Don't Worry Darling," following Wilde's breakup from actor Jason Sudeikis.

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ASK AMY

By Amy Dickinson

askamy@amydickinson.com Twitter@askamydickinson

Couple in need of cleaner communication

Dear Amy: I am moving in with my boyfriend in a few months. He is everything I've ever wanted in a partner, and I'm excited to move into his small, one-bedroom condo.

I've been spending most nights there since we started dating a year ago. I only have one concern ... he is incredibly messy.

We're talking piles of laundry all over the place, trash overflowing and months-long expired food in the refrigerator.

I'm the opposite. I like everything tidy. I know that I'm going to need the space much, much cleaner to comfortably live there.

What's the right way to address this? And what is the right time to do so?

I'm conscious of the fact that I'm moving into his place. Right now, when I spend the nights, I'm technically still his guest.

I do some cleaning already, but feel like I can't be too critical at this point.

I've tried to raise it gently. I don't want him to be put on the defensive, especially in his own home, but things definitely need to change.

— Clean, Please!

Dear Clean, Please! The best time to address these living conditions would have been when you two were hot to trot and on your way to having sex in his bachelor pad for the first time.

Here's the screenplay: HE: Opens the door to his condo.

YOU: "Nope. Nope, nope, nope."

HE: "What's wrong?"

YOU: "I don't feel comfortable here."

Given that this didn't happen, some blunt

honesty on your part would have been well-expressed up until the fifth time you decided to have sex in his apartment.

Instead, you've chosen to continue to spend your nights there without ever honestly expressing how unacceptable this is, so he has every reason to believe that you're cool with his lifestyle. And now — you've said yes to moving in.

Further confirmation for him that you're probably on the same page.

You should not move in together until you achieve clarity. Whose home will it be? If cohabiting, you should not continue believing that you are a "guest." And if you have been a guest all this time, take a good look around: This is how he welcomes guests into his home.

If things "definitely need to change," then you must establish this thoroughly before you commit to moving in. This should not be delivered as an ultimatum, but as you stating a simple truth: "I'm not willing to live the way you live. It's waaaaay too messy and dirty for me."

He (not you) could offer suggestions for how to address this (get his act together, hire a cleaner or perhaps even compensate you for cleaning), but until you stop dancing around and directly address this issue, the consequences from your reluctance to be honest will be on you.

Dear Amy: My husband and I were invited to a friend's house for a take-out dinner. I asked what to bring, and she asked for wine and a dessert.

When we arrived with the dessert and two bottles

of wine, she informed me that she wanted us to pay for our part of the takeout.

We had had them over for takeout before and never expected them to pay.

In the past when we had dinner at one of our houses, the person doing the inviting provides the main course, so I was shocked. We paid them for the food, but I am really disgusted that they treated us like this.

When she invited us for dinner, she should have told me that she wanted us to pay, and we should have declined the invitation.

I don't know how to handle this.

— Dined and Dashed

Dear Dined: It seems as if your friends owe you for their portion of the wine and dessert you provided.

You could mention this to your friend, but mainly you should use this as a heads-up for the next time they host. I don't see this as "disgusting" behavior, although it is revealing.

Dear Amy: Kudos from this reader for your exemplary response to "J in NY," the uncle who seemed way too forgiving on his toddler nephew's "refusal" to hug him. Children should be able to decide on their own whether they want to submit to any kind of physical contact.

— Grateful

Dear Grateful: A large majority of readers backed me up. Thank you.

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Exhibit

from Page 8

movement's necessary embrace of a more innate, static reading of queer identity to carry political sympathy — i.e., the "We can't help it, we were born this way" rallying cry.

Again and again, "The First Homosexuals" trades that fatalism for the ecstasy of choice. Mexican painter Roberto Montenegro's 1926 "Portrait of an Antiquities Dealer" (alternatively titled "Portrait of Chucho Reyes and Self-Portrait") is replete with gay signifiers that still resound today, but its most moving detail is Montenegro's decision to incorporate himself in the painting.

In the lower-right corner, his blurry image, seated behind an easel, is reflected in a concave mirror on Reyes' desk. Montenegro seems to acknowledge — publicly, bravely — that by looking at Reyes, he sees a part of himself.

Singer Gertrude "Ma" Rainey did the same in her hit 1928 song "Prove It On Me Blues," sung from the perspective of a cross-dressing woman who "don't like no men" and "talk(s) to the gals just like any old man." In case Rainey's subtext — really subtext — was missed by any listener, the song's illustrated ad campaign featured Rainey dressed in a masculine three-piece suit, a brimmed hat rakishly tilted on her head, talking

to two slender, chic women in the street while a scowling police officer watches from the shadows.

The ad, placed in several papers, daringly capitalizes on Rainey's arrest three years prior for allegedly hosting a same-sex orgy.

"What's all this? Scandal? Maybe so, but you wouldn't have thought it of 'Ma' Rainey," the ad text reads.

Katz lived in the 1980s, Katz himself chose queer art again and again, a choice that involved serious risks.

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"Salutat" by Thomas Eakins is seen in the exhibit "The First Homosexuals: Global Depictions of a New Identity, 1869-1930" at the gallery Wrightwood 659 in Chicago. TERENCE ANTONIO JAMES/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

much has changed since then, but "The First Homosexuals" with its myriad perspectives and global reach, mostly resists that pat linearity. For example, curators had to swim upstream to borrow artworks from countries with anti-gay laws, from lending institutions objecting to the exhibit frame to research challenges involved in finding those artworks to begin with.

The works that did make it into "The First Homosexuals" often did so by a series of small miracles. Though Katz and his team recognized early on that the prospect of borrowing relevant works from Chinese

institutions was "slim to none," the exhibition was lent some of its Chinese and Japanese works from, of all sources, a chemistry professor who was a hobbyist collector.

The exhibit's focus on Russian artist Konstantin Somov (1869-1939), also a major coup, is mostly thanks to Pavel Golubev, a Russian scholar and Somov expert formerly working as chief of exhibitions at the Odessa Fine Arts Museum. Because Golubev's work foregrounds Somov's sexuality — a scholarly taboo in Russia — he fled Odessa post-invasion, fearing retaliation.

Golubev is now taking refuge as a visiting scholar at the University of Pennsylvania, where Katz also teaches. Miraculously, despite the threat of war and vested Russian resistance to queer readings of Somov's work, the Odessa Fine Arts Museum was able to send the six selected Somov works to Chicago for "The First Homosexuals."

Those works, as well as all the art on display in "The First Homosexuals," is a limited-time offer. Only a few of the 100-plus works on display for this first installment will return for the 2023 touring iteration, though it will feature some of the same artists — like Gerda Wegener (1886-1940), an accomplished, boundary-pushing painter married to Lili Elbe, the transgender painter whose story was fictionalized in the 2015 film "The Danish

Girl." Katz says the touring exhibition will be larger, including some 250 works, and will focus more on "masterpieces."

"We're going to be showing major works by major painters. This includes everything from famous works by John Singer Sargent to what is probably the first self-consciously trans image" — Wegener's 1927 "A Summer Day" which depicts a male Elbe painting her future, idealized feminine form.

As with the first installment, the next iteration of "The First Homosexuals" will have a global reach. Joining the large curatorial team are also Katz's protégés at the University of Pennsylvania, where he teaches the next generation of queer art historians.

"The Alphawood Foundation has given a grant to Penn to create a fellowship program in queer art history, which will allow us to produce what one hopes will be a sea change in the field," Katz says. "We want to bring that which has been repressed back to the forefront."

"The First Homosexuals" through Dec. 17 at Wrightwood 659, 659 W. Wrightwood Ave., open noon to 7 p.m. Fridays and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturdays, general admission \$15 with RSVP. More information at wrightwood659.org