

'OUT' FOR INSPECTION
A STUDY OF CONTEMPORARY GAY ART

BY
PAUL McCAULEY
MARCH 1989

T614

NC 0034846 5



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE STATE HISTORIC ARCHIVIST

ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF ART & DESIGN

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE

'OUT' FOR INSPECTION
A STUDY OF CONTEMPORARY GAY ART

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF HISTORY OF ART & DESIGN
AND IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE
FACULTY OF FINE ART
DEPARTMENT OF SCULPTURE

BY
PAUL McCAULEY
MARCH 1989

LIST OF CONTENTS

	Page
1. Acknowledgements	3
2. List of illustrations	4
3. Introduction	6
4. (First) Section 1 A Brief Synopsis of popular contemporary gay art	8
5. Introduction of the participating artists	13
6. Section II Political & Socio-political content within gay art	19
7. Summary of conversations with artists Section II	29
8. Section III The subject of pornography and Aids in relation to gay art (introduction)	34
9. Subsection (Part 1). The subject of pornography	35
10. Subsection (Part 2). In the Light of Aids	41
11. Conclusion	47
12. Bibliography	52
13. Footnotes	55

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank a variety of people for their help in obtaining the necessary information for this thesis.

Michael Petry for his participation in giving an interview.

Andrew Heard for his letter and interview.

Robin Whitmore for his interview and gift of illustrations.

Derek Jarman for his interview and advice.

Maria McMahon, editor of 'Square Peg' magazine for her very generous help in finding information on the whereabouts of the various artists discussed.

Alison D. MacLeod of Watermans Gallery (visual arts programmer) for her information on Philip Core (painter).

Philip Core for his many letters and completion of the questionnaire.

Chris Borwn for his questionnaire and generous donation of a variety of illustrations.

Gordon Rainsford for his questionnaire and offer of an interview.

The editor of 'Gay Man's Press' for his help in obtaining a variety of information on the artists discussed.

Pas Pascali (writer and art critic) for his help in obtaining information on the art scene in London.

Emanuel Cooper for his letter and offer of an interview.

The editor of 'Gay Times' for information on various artists.

Ratumi Faskoioi for his participation (photographer).

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- FIGURE (1) Seated Nude , 1984 .
Painting by David Hockney .
- FIGURE (2) " Keith " 1987 , Life drawing
by Mario Dubski .
- FIGURE (3) " Christopher" 1987 , drawing
by Mario Dubski .
- FIGURE (4) Image of Bondage , photograph
by Robert Mappelthorp .
- FIGURE (5) Gilbert & George , " Winter tongue
Fuck " , 1982 .
- FIGURE (6) Gilbert & George , " Black Church
face " , 1980 .
- FIGURE (7) G & G , Hard Cock , 1982 .
- FIGURE (8) G & G , "Lickers " , 1982 .
- FIGURE (9) G & G , " Cock " , 1982 .
- FIGURE (10) G & G , " Ass " , 1982 .
- FIGURE (11) Christopher Issherwood and his
boyfriend , Davig Hockney .
(Painting) .
- FIGURE (12) Robin Whitmore 1. Postcard Piece .
1987 .
- FIGURE (13) Robin Whitmore 2 . Postcard Piece,
1987 .
- FIGURE (14) Derek Jarman (Director) Still
from the film " Sebastiani " .
- FIGURE (15) Tom of finland , Illustration .
- FIGURE (16) Gilbert & George , " The Four
Felings " , Photo piece , 1980 .
- Figure (17) Robert Mappelthorp ,
Elliot & Dominic, 1986 .

INTRODUCTION

FIGURE (18) QUESTIONARE , For survey on AIDS ,
(1988)

FIGURE (19) Scientific America , (Front cover)
Illustration of AIDS virus .
January 1987 .

FIGURE (20) Photograph of News story on
" Gay Plague " October Magazine Winter 1987 .

FIGURE (21) Sample of Questionare ,
Printed , January 1989 .

FIGURE (22) Sample of letter , which
accompanied the Questionss, circulated to the Artists .

INTRODUCTION

In my diploma thesis for 1988, entitled 'The Art that Came Out', an attempt was made to give a critical analysis of the work produced by the most notable gay artists who emerged in the sixties and seventies. The work was set against the background of historical events and socio-political activities which occurred during the time of its production. From this approach one could see where the inspiration and ideas of the artists stemmed from. Also it was possible to judge how the work produced reflected and commented on the events of these two decades. It was found that the primary concern of the majority of the artists discussed was to bring greater attention to the male physique and its capabilities. The channels of gay expression were narrowed to produce increasingly explicit images of gay male fantasy. This approach steered away from the political or socio-political commentary (relating to sexuality), which snowballed in the United States and Europe. As a result of such a blinkered view, several problems arose in relation to political content, sexuality and pornography.

An attempt was made to try and point out the main dilemmas which arose as a result of such a concentration on the male physique. However, due to the lack of literature and imagery on the subject of gay art, it was impossible to delve further into the subject to find *reasons* for such an approach. It was also difficult to gauge the opinions and aspirations of the artists involved.

By going to London and interviewing a variety of prominent gay artists and by circulating a questionnaire dealing with the various aspects of gay art, it was possible to obtain a greater knowledge of the subject. With this information it was feasible to explore and elaborate on a variety of questions and arguments, which stemmed from the subjects briefly discussed within the diploma thesis produced in 1988.

To begin with, in section one we shall take a brief look at the work produced by gay artists from the early sixties to eighties. Taking into account the criticisms which arose in relation to the lack of political content. With the introduction of the points of view put forward by the artists who participated in the 'enquiry', one can see the flexibility for exploring a variety of arguments. Within section two the attitudes towards political and socio-political content in art shall be examined.

Questions shall be asked in relation to:

1. The idea of adopting a political viewpoint within art.
2. The discrepancies over the function of art.
3. the arguments over a responsibility to one's audience.

With the introduction of political theory, an attempt shall be made to clarify the disparity over the classification of the 'political' label.

In the last section we shall see the attitudes towards the 'pornographic' label and its use in clasifying 'homoerotic' artwork. Two questions shall be asked.

1. Is the 'homoerotic' work fetishistic and so damaging to its audience.
2. Could the work be colluding with, rather tha reacting against the negative forces within society which merge the homosexual being with pornography, deviancy and disease.

Finally, the subject of Aids shall be discussed. Firstly to see the conservatice rhetoric attached to it and how dangerous that is. Once more the homosexual identity is being surpressed by the national identity. Secondly the question shall be asked; is it necessary for artists, particularly gay artists to utilise the art medium to combat the strong negative opinions which have re-emerged in the light of Aids.

This thesis is one of exploration. There are no finite answers given, as the situations and arguments under discussion are constantly changing and interacting to form new theories and positions. One can only hope to produce and clarify the attitudes and dilemmas which exist in relation to the subject of gay art, at this present time (1989).

A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF POPULAR CONTEMPORARY 'GAY ART'

PLUS THE INTRODUCTION AND COMMENTARY OF THE ARTISTS PARTICIPATING IN THE DISCUSSIONS AHEAD

'The Art that Came Out' was a thesis produced for the Diploma in Fine Art 1987/88. It concentrated on the work of several noted gay artists in the last twenty years. There were several questions posed for investigation:

1. What was the predominant subject matter or themes of gay artists.
2. How did the work evolve within an increasingly open society of the sixties and seventies.
3. Did their work reflect the thoughts and feelings, personal, social and political, which developed during these years.
4. Did it help dilute the social, moral and political pressures in relation to homosexuality which were congealed within that society.

The thesis was exploratory, to answer these questions one first had to research the activities of the time, recording the feelings and aspirations of the emerging gay community. Gay history remained anecdotal until the late fifties. With the increase of economic prosperity came greater flexibility and personal freedom. The early liberal sixties brought about gay organisations like the Californian universities 'Mattachine Society' (very much an elitist group). Gay people had little individual identity at this time, adopting the stereotyped 'role play' characteristics. For example 'drag queens' and 'transvestites', an accessory to gay nightlife. Gay activity was closeted and co-existed with the underworld. However with the events of Stonewall in New York, this was to change dramatically.

During a regular raid by police on the Stonewall pub, several occupants, tired of apathy and a complacent attitude, fought back. This attitude of confrontation and pride mushroomed in many university campuses from Columbia to Berkeley, with popular support for the militant confrontation approach. The mood was radical with an interaction of support between black power, left-wing and feminist groups. Coming out at the time was the core message, a message which was reflected in the works of artists such as David Hockney whose paintings dealt primarily with gay relationships. Work like 'We Two Boys Clinging' was a typical example, the subject matter determinately public in its

theme. The two figures are depicted close together. With zig zag markings physically uniting them, Hockney's child-like drawings showed a simple unsophisticated approach.

Much of Hockney's sixties work had undertones of homo eroticism, evident in the painting 'The Room Tarzana' where the figure of the man lies face down on a bed, his naked rounded backside offered as a clear invitation. At the time this was considered a provocative approach yet common among several gay American artists stemming from the late fifties painters as various as Kenneth Angler, Paul Cadmus and George Platt Lynes.

Gay liberation in America in the late sixties had spread throughout the states. For many it was considered a logical extension of the new left, a radical sixties movement. A new student generation had taken the stand after Stonewall. The mood for militant confrontation was sustained particularly in New York. The glorification and portrayal of the male in domestic or manual work scenes, half clad or totally naked, was reiterated during these years time and time again by artists such as Michael Leonard, David Hunter and Ian David Baker, all showing allegiance to the glamorised male physique, consisting of rose tinted observations of young muscular men.

Michael Leonard mostly deals with the male, particularly his fascination with the figure undressing. Men on building sites, undressing, are themes Hunter turned to with obsessional persistence. As he remarked: "I simply want to show that it is a fit, indeed wonderful subject for picture making and conveys my own delight in the painting of flesh" (e.g.) Seated Nude 1984 (fig).⁴ David Hunter also found favour with the male physique. His bodies were built by washes and overtones, the softeners of water colour adding a sense of vulnerability to the figure. His figures were isolated, inviting full attention to the body. The spectator, when looking at the glamorous images became a voyeur.

Mario Dubski was an artist who, like Hockney had arrived from London to New York city in 1969 and was almost immediately caught up in the euphoria of post Stonewall activity. His imagery was strong – constructing a large photo

montage of gay protests and rallies, men behind bars and prints of 'gay pride and power'. Dubski's approach was very different from Hockneys' and others. His work was reactionary rather than illustrative. It did not just say 'there I am'. It was bluntly here we are, take note. The mood – rebellious and sinister. Dubski maintained a strong exploration of the male body by unashamed appreciation as an erotic object. Yet the figure is far from glamorised. The form – thin and almost emaciated with a strong element of the personality involved. The drawings link the person and the erotic and explore their complex interaction many of the figures like Keith (fig²) and Christopher (Fig) are rendered in ways which suit their personalities. Dubski also adapted the figure portraying it in characteristic roles to comment on the plight of the gay community and mens' sexuality.

During the seventies in San Francisco 25-30,000 people had moved into the city. There were gay lawyers resident in the city plus gay businessmen, doctors psychologists and gay churches of several denominations. In 1977 Harvey Milk was elected the first gay supervisor in the Castro area of the city. Social habits were changing, it was not uncommon to see a gay couple hand in hand downtown. The attitude to relationships had changed along with the introduction of 'new' sexual moods. The Kinsey Institute of Research in 1978 released a survey on the sexual behaviour of gay men and women in the city since 1970. They found that 40% of males interviewed had over 500 partners during their careers and 28% had over 1,000. Needless to say sexually-transmitted diseases were a problem within the city.

Although the situation within San Francisco was quite unique, the incentive for change had been taken in European cities too. In Ireland the movement took off with the setting up of the 'Gay Rights Movement' by David Norris in Trinity College in 1973, with meetings filled to capacity. In London marches and demonstrations were common. It was legislated in 1969 that homosexuality was no longer punishable for men over the age of 21. 1970 saw the setting up of The British Gay Liberation Front. Gay nightclubs flourished and new gay literature arrived on the newsagents' stall like Gay News and Gay Times.

The portrayal of the male in art had come forward. The variety of lifestyles and exploration of gay sexuality became themes of artists like Robert Mapplethorpe, Gilbert and George, Denis O'Sullivan and Duane Micaales. The use of photography is prevalent in their work the gay male given greater exposure.

Denis O'Sullivan exposes the secret and private as a direct challenge to the silence and fear of homosexual life. His work like toilet pieces (panels with 'glory holes' plus graffiti), expressing guilt feelings and transvestite with torn stockings, a charcoal drawing of a man wearing a negligee demonstrate the so-called closeted lifestyles. Yet one finds its rendering, the seepy toilet slabs and murky charcoal drawings, to be without personal comment or effort to indicate these aspects in perspective or in relation to the gay scene as a whole.

Robert Mapplethorpe is an American artist who used the medium of photography to interpret his feeling towards homosexual eroticism. His work is carried out in a dark studio in Bond Street, Lower Manhattan in conditions of perpetual night. Mapplethorpe's approach has gone from neutral witness in 1976, where explicit material bought in a sex shop in New York is used for a collage incorporating text and photographs (Fig. 5), to including himself in 1978/79 engaged in personal and very intimate erotic acts. These highly erotic sadomasochistic images were seen as a self-discovery on the part of the artist. After observing the explosive and repetitive images of sexual performance the viewer or voyeur according to Mapplethorpe is said to 'accept these paroxysms as normal although it is their exceptionality that causes them to be photographed in the first place.' Mapplethorpe wishes the human body to 'redeem its passion'. He wishes to 'release that lame and weak ego, the body to rediscover its cohesion'. To redress the balance!

The imagery of sexual aggression is mirrored in the work of Gilbert and George, two British art students of the St. Martin's School of Art, who set up a 'partnership' in 1967. They consider their passage through life as living sculptures, their interest is not in the aesthetics but in culture. Their materials and techniques are quite new. The luminous 'photo perspex works' are large with bright contrasting colours which grab the viewers' attention. The language reflects the principles of billboard advertising, the language of the modern media. Much of their work reflects the social and political situation in Great Britain. With photo pieces reflecting the racial injustices and the domination and power of the state over the individual. For example black church face (Fig. 6) and nationalism. There is also a strong current of sexual expression in much of their work.

Gilbert and George are blatantly honest with their use of crude (gay) imagery, the open mouth and ejected tongue of 'A Winter Tongue Fuck' (Fig. 6) are used to suggest sexual organs. The imagery reflects that of the exploration of

puberty with 'Hard Cock' (Fig.7) 'Lickers' (Fig.8) rendered like naughty copy drawings of adolescence. With other works like 'Buggery Faith' a little strong for even that level of imagination. Like Robert Mapplethorpe's work, again there is an argument for the need to shock but unshock by a bombardment of sexual imagery. The opinions and persona of the model used irrelevant, he or she seemingly an object of the artist's ego. The pieces 'Cock' (Fig.9) and 'Ass' (Fig.10) show close ups of same. The blatant images are given no subtlety or personal context, they are what they are. The reason they are there is because of what they are, sexual organs. Their appreciation a sexual one, pornography or art there is hardly a hairline of distinction.

Within the broad spectrum of work explored during these two decades several questions arose with surprising frequency, particularly in relation to the erotic imagery produced. Secondly there was a lack of imagery relating to any other activity outside of that physical euphoria. It became clear and provoked an interesting interrogative that the homosexual subject matter taken on by the majority of gay artists during 'the art that came out', dealt primarily with iconographical imagery.

Looking at the gay rights movement of the seventies indeed, the sexual revolution at large, the political protests which occurred plus the changes in attitudes towards homosexuality, it is surprising that so few known gay artists at the time took these events into their work. Where was the unleashing of opinion as well as feelings which have long been repressed? Was the struggle for freedom of expression narrowed into confessional portrayals of male fantasy? (An 'admirable' portrayal which existing for many centuries). Perhaps in the past to devote oneself to drawing the male nude seemed a highly reactionary thing to do, but now the subject of homosexuality 'coming out' was travelling in several channels through the intricate labyrinth of society, creating a rich and infinite amount of exciting controversies and channels, personal political and social. Yet gay imagery at this time seemed to be narrowed further away from many of the characteristics, even within the gay relationship, which contained a cocktail of feelings, i.e. loyalty, support, love and role play (father-son, passive-dominant). The emphasis was placed firmly on a sexual euphoria of pleasure and/or pain. Was this a reflection of emancipation?

The diploma thesis set out to give a coherent and structured synopsis of the most notable works relating to gay subject matter but the result was such, that one could only question and speculate on the subject of homosexual work, since the literature and imagery recorded on the subject was very limited and inaccessible. I felt it would have been presumptuous at that stage to try to deduce any clear reasons as to why such homoerotic work was paramount. One had to talk to and question artists who were involved; those at the roots of the emerging work in order to reach any conclusions. So clearly there was room for further research. To obtain this kind of information it was necessary to choose and concentrate on some particular centre of the arts (a city). London was chosen. Firstly from the point of view of accessibility and secondly to obtain a coherent opinion panoramic view and analysis. The first step was to draft a questionnaire which encompassed several aspects of 'gay art' (questionnaires are included). The artist was given the choice of answering whatever questions he felt were relevant to his own attitudes and approach to the work. There was also a choice of answering the questions verbally by recorded interview or through a written reply. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Firstly there were questions relating to the artists' own work and where it stood in relation to homosexual subject matter, The artists' work in relation to his audience and the general media, Secondly there is a section dealing with the historical background of 'gay art' in the last thirty years, questioning the artists' knowledge, experience, attitudes and opinions of same. Finally there is a section on the subject of Aids in the community and in art. (A situation which will be dealt with later in the thesis).

The artists who participated were:

<i>(Questionnaire)</i>	Gordon Rainsford <i>(photographer)</i>
<i>(Recorded interview)</i>	Michel Petery <i>(sculptor)</i>
<i>(Recorded interview)</i>	Andrew Heard <i>(painter)</i>
<i>(Questionnaire)</i>	Christopher Brown <i>(painter, illustrator)</i>
<i>(Questionnaire)</i>	Philip Corr <i>(painter)</i>
<i>(Recorded interview)</i>	Robin Whitmore <i>(performance artist, sculptor)</i>
<i>(Recorded interview)</i>	Derek Jarman <i>(painter/film-maker)</i>

All the artists are well established within Britain and several were involved and would have first-hand knowledge of the art work produced in Britain and elsewhere during the last ten to twenty years. Apart from Michael Petery all are of British nationality and all live in the London metropolitan area. They also work in a wide variety of media.

By exploring the questionnaire and conversations, it became possible to gauge the thoughts, information, opinions and aspirations of the artists involved. Which, when pieced together give a clear reason as to why the work during the late sixties to eighties concentrated largely on the male physique and its capabilities and paid little attention to the various aspirations and events, both political and social, which flourished during these years.

From the broad spectrum of opinions and suggestions given by the various artists interviewed, let us look firstly at the attitudes towards and level of adoption of, the gay subject matter. Within this discussion we shall also see the stigma which existed in relation to the 'gay artist' label.

Michel Petry is a sculptor whose work deals with the subject of global awareness. His interest is in how people see themselves. He studies the nature of 'reality' and nature of truth. His work involves a broad spectrum of imagery reflected through performance and instillation. His perspective on politics, society, sexuality, race and religion is observed from a panoramic view point. His desire to find the universal broader terms of reference, away from the systematic subjugation of groups of people, gave rise to an immediate disparity between our view points, particularly when it came to the idea of focusing on a specific field of gay art and more precisely on its political and social context. Petry had criticisms firstly towards the classification of gay artist, as he pointed out: "It is a total dead end to say that I am a gay artist". Petry used the example of Nancy Spero who he claimed to be a feminist and an artist whose work was "not viewed in feminist shows" but in 'shows', "she was not a feminist artist". The example was also used of Hockney, "he used gay imagery but he is not a 'gay artist', people do not say 'gay artist David Hockney'. There was also a comparison made between the classifications of black art or ethnic art, where Petry felt that if labelled one was immediately

slotted into a limiting category. "The moment you put art into these narrow boxes you kill it", he went on to say. "The worst thing I have ever seen is an ethnic black programme run by white people, for their idea as to what these cultures are. The same applies to lesbian and gay art".¹ It was felt that once you were labelled that definition left you vulnerable to the media. "All homosexuals first and foremost must produce art, I can not stress it enough because people like Derek Jarman get stuck into situations, where people say "gay film-maker" and then he can't get out of that box".²

It is fair to say that people do not refer to one of the most prominent sixties British artists as 'gay artist David Hockney', this being his first and foremost classification. But when making reference to his approach and work, the 'label' of gay artist is often adopted by critic etc., firstly because of his sexual preference and secondly because of the content in much of his work, so there are two reasons for the classification. If a black man produces art unrelated to his ethnicity does that mean one can not refer to him as a 'black artist'? Petry seemed to confuse the argument by introducing the example of ethnic programmes run by white people. The argument is now diverted away from the position of one's own dislike or denial of such a classification, to the denial of other peoples' representations of one's background. An example was also made of Derek Jarman, an internationally renowned film-maker (painter) who has produced several films, i.e. Sebastiani, Jubli, Caravaggio, Last of England and War Requiem, some of which express homosexual subject matter. Petry was perturbed at peoples' attitudes to 'labelling' Jarman as a 'gay film-maker' a classification which seemed contrary to Jarman's diversity of work.

I asked Derek Jarman for his response to this representation. His reply: "I love being labelled a gay artist".³ I always wanted to be labelled as a gay artist". What I do object to though is when people expect me to do only gay films or gay subject matter". Jarman obviously felt comfortable with this label of 'gay artist'. But what of Michael's criticism that such an approach can lead to misrepresentations and constraints on a diversity of expression?

"I don't think it matters. I think you grow out of that, eventually you find out and know if an artist is gay and eventually the artist surpasses that. You grow out of that context". Jarman pointed out that by making films unrelated to the gay subject matter you show a flexibility of approach that immediately denies this 'rigid gay context' validity. "It really doesn't matter having such a classification",

as nothing grows out of having that opinion (i.e. relation to the classification of 'gay artist'.)

Robin Whitmore is a performance artist and sculptor whose work deals primarily with the subject of homosexuality and oppression. His reply to this subject was simple and straightforward. He felt "that anyone who is gay at the moment is making a political statement, what we are is the truth of the matter".³ Whitmore felt you can not deny the existence of this classification, whether it be in relation to sexuality? sociology or occupation. By being openly gay one is making a political statement". Which brings us to the question of political and socio-political content within art.



FIGURE I .



FIGURE 2 .



FIGURE 3 .



FIGURE 5 .



FIGURE 6 .



FIGURE 7 .

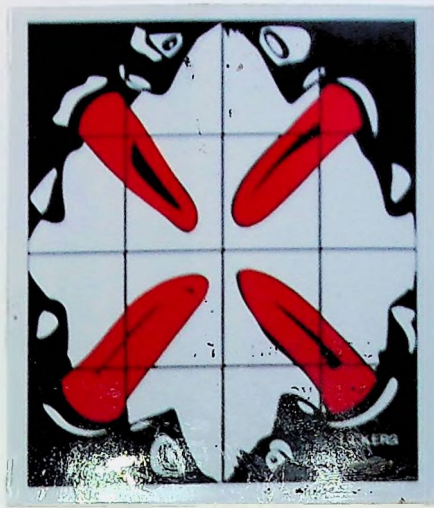


FIGURE 8 .



FIGURE 9 .



FIGURE 10 .

POLITICAL & SOCIOPOLITICAL

CONTENT WITHIN GAY ART

SECTION II

Within the conversations of the various artists who were interviewed, there was firstly a passionate response both for and against the various levels of political content and secondly there was a diversity of opinion as to what constituted a political label. To begin with a synopsis shall be made of the various ideas and opinions of the artists involved. With the introduction of political theory we shall see a greater clarity given to the diverse arguments expressed, questions shall be answered in relation to the 'gay artist' label and also the quandry over the subject of politics in art. Finally a list of reasons shall emerge which explain why the gay art work of the past two decades avoided the path of strong political commentary. To begin with I would once again like to take the example of the sculptor Michael Petry. As his opinions on the subject of political content within art were expressed with great vigour and intensity.

Petry felt that it was important to point out when doing a thesis on the subject of 'gay art', that "most of the art produced in the seventies was made by gay people in art, in dance and in theatre and that the homoerotic images were only one hundred of a percent of the work produced"². Petry felt that "several people were using political clout within art, they just weren't using gay imagery to do it". He first produced the example of Gilbert and George's work, then retracted it, after realising their extent of homoerotic images. Then he used the example of Hockney's work, in relation to the painting of Christopher Isherwood and his boy friend (Fig!'). Within the picture both men were staring at each other, the image and its atmosphere he felt "reflected the all encompassing factors of a relationship", its homosexual content had a provocative effect". Petry then suggested "let us take the example of Lenord Berstine and his music, Merce Cunningham ... Morris Taylor, I could go on and on". Indeed if one were to use such precarious examples from the world of music, outside of the subject under discussion one would not at all be surprised to list an abundance of names.

Still unconvinced the question was posed again as to why political or socio-political work was so limited within gay subject matter at that time (in the sixties

and seventies). The only example evident seemed to be that of Mario Dubski. Petry replied "why should people be expected to do anything ... art is very selfish". He later felt that there was probably not much political content, but it was such a narrowed approach "the politics was on the street, in the bath houses, it was on stage"¹. Petry was making the point that the activities, trends etc., were in their early processes of evolution and so were too fresh and underdeveloped to allow clarity of expression or criticism. Petry felt "that at the end of the day the thing that artists do best is make art not politics". He then posed a question "name me one heterosexual dealing with the subject in their work"⁴. One felt this to be unfair firstly because heterosexuality within art work is a recurring and ubiquitous theme with extensive levels of expression and representation. Secondly there is little comparison between the treatment of a 'taboo' subject and the treatment of a set of 'normative values'. Finally there is a dual sexual exploration through the expression of heterosexuality unlike that of homosexuality. The question was then narrowed by Petry to the subject of female art. One used the example of feminist work. However Petry felt that "that's feminism not politics". "If you feel that feminism is political, then in that case Robert Mapplethorpe's work for example two men fist fucking is stronger than any feminist work as it is even more disruptive to the patriarchy".¹

The use of sexually explicit imagery as a weapon seemed to reinforce the idea of the homosexual being, having a narrowed definition through sex and sexual activity, one felt the idea led to a lot of problems as several people considered it to be an imposition and an unnecessary pressure which led to social and personal problems. Petry disagreed, "I don't think it did", after much argument he pointed out that "we were not speaking about art in the last half hour". Because that's the problem. The moment you start talking about gay art you talk about gay problems, women's art, women's problems. Petry was suggesting that you always express the political opinion through conversation as it is the most flexible media for its expression, the 'problem' he relates to is his opinion that, to incorporate politics into art is an exploitation of the art form. As this art form is inadequate for its demands. He continues "I am not a propagandist and the worst art I've even seen is by propagandists ... some of it is not art it is propaganda parading as art. Politics, I see it as such a vile thing and art is above it".

It was reiterated that art was a voice. It gets seen on tv and papers, yet it was hard to understand why it's not used so flexibly. Petry said: "I don't think anyone making any pictures which are anti 'The Sun' change anyone's opinion. The only thing that could be provocative after Hockney, was the Mapplethorpe pictures ... one must remember that homosexuality was illegal only 25 years ago". It was then he pointed out that perhaps it was now a time of greater flexibility and not a time of oppression. However Petry felt "that it was again". Using the example of Philip Corr, whose work on homosexual subject matter (sometimes sexual explicit) is causing controversy. He reiterated: "Don't bring politics into art, that cheapens it and pulls it into the gutter, why role in the shit, it's a filthy field full of filthy people. All politicians are in it for themselves". When it was pointed out that there are people who are political for the sake of their community, Petry's reply was: "Yes but they're not politicians".⁷ Petry sees himself "as a crusader of the aesthetic and the conceptual". "What I'm interested in is the way people see themselves in the nature of reality, the nature of politics". He felt "you probably can't find what you're looking for because people are dealing with it in a bigger question".

Within the arguments put forward by Petry there are several discrepancies. He pointed out that there are several reasons to suggest that politics or socio-political content exists in gay art. He took the example of Hockney's work on Christopher Isherwood and his boyfriend, a representation of a relationship which may have produced a mild nudge at the viewer's conscience, one must remember Hockney, work is not overtly obvious and may need a discussion to be untangled. Then an example was made of Lenord Bernstine and his music. Perhaps there was representation of gay expression in other fields like music, but to have to divert attention so suddenly to a different media might show an unwillingness to engage with an attempt to establish the degree, if any of socio-political content. Or perhaps Petry was unable to recall any relative examples for the simple reason that they may not be clearly evident. Petry assumed that "you probably can't find what you're looking for as people are dealing with a bigger question". The assumption being that if you broaden your terms of reference you may find the representations of arguments and comments sought after. But ultimately homosexuality is put in some context, it is only explored by drawing together all the elements which combine to make the subject an entity onto itself.

This smaller framework would become dissolved and incomprehensible when dispersed into that 'bigger question'.² Petry's argument turned full circle to denounce the intercession of political content within art. Throughout the interview he reiterated "that you can do what you like, why should people be expected to do anything, art is very selfish".² All after we had agreed on the precedent of freedom and concentrated on the assessment of attitudes of self-motivation. Politics was not given a broad spectrum of definition by Petry, one just had to look at his reply when it was pointed out that several people were political for the sake of their community. The reply "yes, but they're not politicians", inferred a narrow perception of politicians, or those involved with politics to be members of a parliament employed in the job. One may recall that this is said in the light of a statement made earlier "that politics was on the street and in the bath houses etc."² The claim that feminism was not political and if it was, the supposition that Mappelthorp's crude imagery holds greater clout because, it perturbs the patriarchy, is both incoherent and presumptuous. Those sweeping statements without, drawing references to the feminist criteria and assuming the level of a patriarchal response also show a spurious perspective. Petry's stance of doing what you like avoiding the 'filth' of politics within his work, is of course a fair and righteous approach. There is however a certain irony when one sees the denial of responsibility and inanity towards ideas, also reflected within his arguments.

However, there were two very important points made. Firstly the idea that "politics was on the street and in the bathhouse, it was alive on stage". It was in the making undeveloped, and not ready for a panoramic criticism. Secondly when Petry discussed the work of Chris Corr, he felt the work stood out. It was art first and foremost and had a gay sensibility. The work being produced recently was not only homoerotic. However that homoerotic work was liked by curators because it shows their fashionable gay artists make it because they can sell it, and they certainly can. It's part of a market, it can be shown". One pointed out that perhaps it's unfortunate that the media always pick up on this homoerotic work. Petry agreed "Of course they do because at the end of the day what is better for selling a newspaper". Or selling your painting? "Exactly ... that has a lot to do with it".

Robin Whitmore's work has strong political or socio-political content, as he said himself "My work is very much about Aids really, very much about people dying

around us and the prejudices that exist. A performance in co-operation with Neill Bartlett called 'That's What Friends are For' was recorded for Channel Four (British television). The subject matter was that of Aids and homosexuality within the family. () The comparison was made between the father and mother's relationship and that of their son and his boyfriends. Near the end of the five minute piece, questions are posed to the son who will take you to the hospital and who will go to your funeral. The reply: "Well that's what friends are for". The work reflects the interplay and aspirations of a family caught in the crises of Aids. It also reflects upfront the social and often political aspects of the Aids subject. I put to Whitmore "the accusation made by Michael Petry that politics was such a vile thing it cheapens art". Art is above it and that "Politics should be kept out of art". Whitmore's reply was no surprise. "Rubbish. It has to be involved. That's what's wrong with art, it's not dangerous". What of Petry's point that when one discusses politics and discusses the social problems involved one is then stepping outside of the art form, as it is not the best media for political discussion. Whitmore's reply: "I think anyone who is gay at the moment is making a political statement. That's what we are the truth of the matter". But what of Petry's point that one can fall into a ghettoised position, a situation which he feels is dangerous of being a gay artist it labels you. Whitmore: "OK, it does it labels you, depending on what you do but that's not important. The most important thing for me to do is express my anger about that and express how I really feel also. How different it feels to other people and because the way our society is structured, it is political to do that". Whitmore feels that one should not avoid or ignore the accusations and criticisms because they label you, as that is avoiding ways in which to combat these core elements of interpretation and proves them wrong. Petry made the point that when dealing with political messages it often constrains your aesthetic sensibilities because of the need for a simple and austere approach. However Whitmore found "That exciting and quite challenging I don't just want to create beautiful images, they should be challenging to the viewer". He used the examples of two postcard pieces (Fig. 13) both which contained provocative imagery with text. One was of a boy not more than fourteen years of age, naked and in chains (Fig. 12) and secondly a repeated image of a man on a cross. A short statement is printed on the back of each card. With the image of the cross it reads 'Dear Lord protect us from Aids – outlaw homosexuality' (a caption taken from a 'National Front' poster). On the reverse side of the boy in chains it reads 'Rule One nothing like illegality to increase desire'. This card

was produced in the light of Clause 28. A rule banning publications of literature or educational material on the subject of homosexuality, particularly in schools in Britain. Both cards are simple, powerful and provoke thought, if not anger particularly when one considers the first example relating to religion, Aids and heterosexuality. Whitmore pointed out that 'they were handed out free of charge in pubs and clubs'. I asked him by doing this was he fulfilling what could be termed, a responsibility to his audience, the public? He replied "I hadn't thought of it like that, but I suppose I do feel a responsibility to an audience, I want to educate, to work people up. The shows we do are about showing people their situations, show that there is a solidarity there, when you see people listening it gives you strength". Did he feel there was a responsibility to put the work in a definite context, so an audience could gauge the homosexual perspective? Whitmore replied: "Yes, I do. We always show the whole social situation".

Whitmore's approach and attitudes contravene with those of Michael Petry. He feels that once openly gay, you are making a political statement. It is automatically political because of the structure of our society. Whitmore feels "that there is very little imaginative work around at the moment". He stresses that "it is good to have work that reflects what is around you" and that involves political attitudes. He also took the example of Philp Corr's work, as used by Petry to demonstrate the repression of gay subject matter by the media and society. However Whitmore found the work to be "dull work, which gets written up as risky ... it's the stuff that gets published at the moment, in the press and magazines, it's very successful and very unimaginative". He makes a very important point here although Michael Petry finds this homoerotic imagery to be a provocative tool and subject to the suppressive forces of the moral majority. Whitmore sees this situation as a game of sorts. One sees the 'trendy' magazines cultivate the image of the 'repressed artist', the label provokes our liberal sensibilities. We are encouraged to be supportive or judgmental. This 'controversial' situation is a plastic one fashioned to mask the diminishing resistance to such a prompting approach.

Derek Jarman also shows disfavour with Petry's arguments. In his own work, taking for example, of the film *Sebastiani* (Fig. 4) he pointed out that the film "did not deal with the social background, it was very homoerotic. It was an extremely positive gay film ... there was no violence". I asked him did he feel it

important for the 'straight' community to appreciate his work? "I do hope that it will be appreciated. I do think in that way my work is political ... Here I would disagree with Michael Petry when one sees how the work is funded and all the pressures on film and the political pressures on the television companies, with censorship and the IBA (Independent Broadcasting Authority) ... it is highly political." Jarman later pointed out that politics "didn't always have a leading position within my work because I wasn't always politically aware of all the problems that existed. One encounters problems through making a film ... and before you know it 'willey nilley' that you're in the struggle whether you like it or not." Jarman also stressed the point that "being political is not just dealing with the content. It's also dealing with format, and that most people don't ever begin to grapple with that one. You actually see people congratulating themselves because of their political content. Yet it's actually colluding with the establishment. There are two ways of doing things". He also felt that gay sexuality is not the be all and end all. Indeed sexuality is not an issue which dominates Jarman's most recent films. 'Last of England' and 'War Requiem' are both political, but are not homosexual in theme. However Jarman indicated that his next film would be a gay one. Finally Jarman felt that "all gay art is extremely political". Even the work of Michael Pertyr? "Yes, I think it is because it falls into a particular place" and then it does eventually become political". This refers to a point made earlier that whether you like it or not once you deal with any issue either gay related or otherwise and once you are openly gay within the society, this acknowledgement will have or will be seen to have an influence. As Jarman points out (The Struggle is Unavoidable).

Jarman felt that he was not aware fully of the political and social gay problems until he encountered them by nudging at the patriarchal system. This position could apply to several gay artists who, within time might realise the problems and their extent. Perhaps if several artists knew the extent of the gay oppression and prejudice within and outside of the gay community they may feel compelled to produce work which would comment and combat that bias. However, if artists are unwilling to grapple with the entrails of gay oppression to begin with, one sees a stalemate position, where they may never reach an awareness like that of Jarman. Remaining perhaps cocooned within a naïve situation and knowing the general position of homosexuality within western society one would not rule out this possibility. Indeed, this situation may not

only cultivate a lethargic ambivalence, but lead to misguided and shaky opinions towards homosexuality.

Andrew Heard is an artist who works in a pop style using imager from 'Carry On' films and other media images to establish the essence of British culture. Although gay, he does not deal with the subject regularly. He dislikes the label of 'gay' as he points out: "I don't see myself as gay inverted commas or straight inverted commas".⁴ He feels: "We should bring people into the society as it becomes increasingly fragmented, racially, sexually and with class values within society".⁴ Heard feels "That to be overtly gay (within one's work) alienates too many people. Gay artists tend to concentrate on homoerotic material and I'm not really interested in it".⁴ I asked what his opinion would be of other peoples' work, and had he seen it around.

Heard: "No", not at all? Apart from friends shows I don't go to art galleries. "There's nothing interesting happening. If I do like something I will go, but I don't like to cloud myself with other peoples' work. When I asked do you feel a responsibility to your audience, he replied: "No, it comes naturally".⁴ A rather obscure answer.

Heard felt that he had "Quite strong and controversial views about gay life" and expressed them candidly. "I feel it is important to keep people in, not out, therefore I don't feel there should be a London Lesbian and Gay Society, or funding for straight projects for straight people to be together and not allow gay people to join. It's insulting, demeaning and totalistic and I don't agree with it. I asked as to what option was left for people who were gay, in assuming reassurance and recognition for their position? Heard felt that "People can come out to their friends, they don't need a lesbian and gay centre to come out in. I have a similar opinion to art. It's too limiting."

With these statements Heard must qualify as an example for the concerns pointed out earlier in relation to lack of awareness, ambivalence and misguided opinions. For fear of entering into an extensive political argument one can point out simply the discrepancies in hand. Firstly, to make a point that people can come out to friends is invalid and presumptuous, presupposing the gay person's situation and the character and attitudes of friends. Secondly, although the idea of a unity of cultures and races seems like an admirable concept, to achieve this by eradication of supportive structures however is illogical. It presupposes

a devolution of prejudices. Thirdly, there can be no comparison between an existing gay society, which deals with an oppressed group, and a fictional straight society which doesn't allow gay people to join. A straight society cannot be classified as it does not exist, unless of course one is talking about the society as a whole!

Finally, Heard had similar opinions to art ... "it is too limiting."³ "I found it particularly homoerotic and extremely coy". He took the example of 'Tom of Finland' drawings (Fig. 15) which he found to be done in a very finicky way; without a breath of vision. Knowing Heard's disdain for gay imagery and his disinterest in its explorations, it's surprising that he can deduce such opinions finding it limiting and extremely coy. Particularly when he has chosen to ignore within gay art the extent of and explanation from these limitations.

Within the arguments put forward by several of the artists discussed, there was great confusion and disagreement in relation to the existence, extent and classification of political content. Apart from the question of a 'responsibility' to produce a political content or message. Michael Petry's view of political interpretation within art was narrowed to include only main stream politics of governmental concerns. However Derek Jarman's view encompassed the diplomacy within the film industry down to the interaction of the film crew. To help clarify these situations it was necessary to take the diverse arguments of Jarman and Petry and put them into a framework to decipher the discrepancies at hand.

Petry is by definition the 'A-political liberal'. This type of liberal is classified by Bernard Crick in his book 'In Defence of Politics' as "a person who wishes to enjoy all the fruits of politics without paying the price or noticing the pain. He may treat certain things as natural rights, thus by definition outside politics or he may think that politics is simply the art of political parties and politicians. Thus narrowing the scope of politics dramatically and unrealistically. He overestimates the power of reason and the coherence of public opinion, he underestimates the force of political passion". There is an uncanny similarity between this classification and the structure of Petry's own philosophy and reasoning. Petry no doubt sees politics as dirty. "It cheapens art". Art is seen as the great liberator, it surpasses the political classification, it breaks free from the chains of dialectics and ideologies. It is freedom. Bernard Crick also sees the A-political liberal as being "fertile in devices for putting politics to one side. His

jealousy for the purity of liberty is so great that he tries to keep such, a man of the world, as politics away from her".⁶ Petry would no doubt rather see a world of autocracy. The political label is ultimately unavoidable, as politics is the working of ideologies and as Roland Barthes states in his essay on 'The Mother' by Brecht: "Nobody lives without ideology, the absence of ideology is itself an ideology".⁷ Ultimately then the diverse arguments of Petry and Jarman are political ones and the staunch position that Petry holds is a particular ideology, within a spectrum of ideologies and thus is a political viewpoint.

Karl Marx was the first to point out that the artist cannot afford to stand apart from the systems which govern society. Derek Jarman's argument that an A-political position is an impossibility and that political conflict is intrinsically interwoven through the various levels, situations and structures of society, is one which stems from Hegel's theory of the 'dialectic', an idea which was further elaborated on by Marxist theory. In its simplest form (away from historic reference) the dialectic principle holds the elements of cause and effect. There are three main components to the theory i.e. the thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis. The thesis represents a given situation, for example the law or governing methods of a country. Then the new and challenging situation or ideology is introduced, this being the anti thesis. This new idea conflicts with the old ideology – their interaction being the synthesis. Out of this contention comes a settlement or new proposal which is in turn the new thesis. This process is a continuous one and exists on all levels of human evolutionary process with patriarchal arguments – social interactions and personal conflicts. As J.B.D. Millar points out in his book 'The Nature of Politics', "No matter what disagreement may be settled new ones arise to make politics, and as society grows more developed, great new diversities make their appearance to register themselves before long at political level",⁸ through the dialectic structure. To reiterate the political definition can encompass any situation where ideologies or ideological states interact and merge within a given spectrum. The political process assimilates the dialectic pattern, a pattern which encompasses all situations as all situations are sybernetic (inter-connected and mobile). Thus, once a person is living within a given society they are part of and automatically interact to produce a political language or situation. This definition does not only show that the political label is an unavoidable one for the artists discussed, but also shows that the political context within the work is always in

some way related to a homosexual context and that the 'gay artist' label largely as a result of this is unavoidable once the artist's sexual preference is knowingly homosexual. To clarify this point let us take an example of Andrew Heard's opinion and approaches towards homosexuality.

Heard feels that concentrating on or political support for homosexuality within a society and indeed within art work only helps to further fragment what he feels is an already too segmented society. By avoiding the gay scenario one can see that he is firstly making a clear political move, but more importantly, because he is homosexual and is deliberately denying gay ideology he is in fact producing or reinterpreting the homosexual ideology not abandoning it. His work reflects the denial of gay imagery by its **deliberate** absence of expression.

There is one final question to be tackled within this section and that is the reasons as to why the work produced by gay artists in the last two decades ('60s and '70s) did not reflect or parallel the strong emerging politics of the gay rights movement? In summing up the arguments and positions given by various artists so far, a clear set of reasons shall be listed, reasons which could only help obstruct the creation of a strong form of political expression.

- 1. The stigma towards the 'gay artist' label.** Michael Petry and Andrew Heard disliked the classification of 'gay artist' because of the isolatory connotations of the label and also because of the expectations for the production of gay-related material only.
- 2. The disparity in opinions as to the function of art.** Andrew Heard felt that the gay classification did not only encourage limitations within the 'coy' work, but it helped fortify the fragmentations of the society. Yet Whitmore felt that this lack of commitment was a 'problem'. Art was not dangerous enough. No one was utilising its capacity for polarising or commenting on a political situation. However Petry suggests that the media of art is too weak a forum in which to express a political belief, when compared to literature or conversation.
- 3. The arguments relation to the different terms of political expression.** Michael Petry felt that to produce a piece which had a strong political message (to appeal to a broad audience) one had to apply strong limitations on aesthetic freedom. however Whitmore found this a challenge which produced a broad spectrum for experimentation. Jarman also pointed out

that many dealing with political content often disregarded the format. Without restructuring this format one was threading on a fine line between protesting against and colluding with the patriarchy. For example, to criticise a political decision one has to use representations from that political decision. The aesthetic challenge is in trying to structure the information in a way in which exposes the political or socio-political injustice of misinformation.

4. **The disagreements over responsibility.** On the point of responsibility Michael Petry felt that one only has a responsibility to oneself, as an artist. Yet Whitmore felt a responsibility to educate and show a solidarity through art. Derek Jarman too, through his television interviews and his open proclamation of being HIV positive, reflects a responsibility. Within many of his films there is a supportive portrayal of the homosexual. Gordon Rainsford feels that responsibility depends on the "purpose of the work and likely audience of it. I certainly accept self imposed restrictions". He brings up the point that a responsibility must be self-imposed and a personal decision.
5. **The confusions as to the political classifications within art.** This situation can be highlighted once again when one recalls the diverse viewpoints of Michael petry and his narrowed perceptions of politics compared to Derek Jarman's belief in a Marxist approach which encompasses all social activities within the realms of political classification.
6. **Political inactivity due to lack of awareness.** Jarman felt that he became aware of the political problems in relation to homosexuality, through making his films. The point was also made that if other artists were willing to explore gay oppressive situations they may then feel compelled to comment on the subjects which unknowingly and intrically effect them. However for many there is no initial drive and so one encounters a catch 22 situation.
7. **Isolation and repression.** To be cocooned without much knowledge or awareness of oppression seems bizarre when one considers the open and 'relatively' free society that many of the artists inhabit in London, plus the world of communications in which they manouver. However on a personal

level, the homosexual (artist) has several hurdles to overcome involving 'coming out' to one's self, family and friends. The decision whether or not to express one's own sexuality through the art medium may be a difficult one.

8. Radically diverse approaches. Many gay artists are free to integrate within the greater art scene. Yet because of the strong personal approaches taken, several do not know of each other's work. Nor do they find comparisons or similarities which would stimulate an interaction and spark off a 'movement' of gay expression.

This lack of interaction and comparison coupled with the diverse conflicting attitudes towards political and socio political content, the stigma towards the 'gay artist label', the irony of political inactivity due to lack of awareness and the many hurdles faced when 'coming out', all show clearly. Many of the factors which **steer** the progress of gay art away from a political or socio-political flow of expression.



FIGURE II .



FIGURE 12 .

(ON THE BACK)

R U L E O N E
N O T H I N G L I K E
I L L E G A L I T Y
T O I N C R E A S E
D E S I R E



FIGURE 13 .

(ON THE BACK .)

R U L E F O U R
P R O T E C T U S
F R O M A I D S
O U T - L A W
H O M O S E X U A L I T Y



FIGURE 14 .



FIGURE 15 .

THE SUBJECT OF 'PORNOGRAPHY'

AND AIDS IN RELATION TO GAY ART

SECTION III

In the last section we have seen that the 'gay art' label is an unavoidable one once the artist is knowingly homosexual and secondly that the political classification is also unavoidable. Through the study and criticism of the many arguments put forward by the various artists (in relation to responsibility and political awareness etc.) several predicaments were brought to light which could be seen to hinder the flow of a firm or consistent political commentary within gay art. However there is one question which stems from the various criticisms made and that is, why should art play the role of a conspicuous political commentator? As the artist Michael Petry so vigorously pointed out in his arguments over political commentary, "Why should the artist have to say anything, art is selfish". Through the art of the sixties and seventies in the work of artists such as David Hockney, Gilbert and George and Robert Mapplethorpe, there was particular attention paid to an 'explicit' imagery. Its production with increasing explicitness, was seen by several of the artists discussed as the prime provocative nudge at society. It was the political weapon.

As Michael Petry pointed out: "Mapplethorpe's work of the two men fist fucking, was most disruptive to the patriarchy".² Robin Whitmore in discussing this work felt that the way gay men define themselves as being different is through their sexuality. "How else do you show it? The 'erotic' imagery is a way of defining yourself and that's why it's done".³ However one could say that this firm concentration the homoerotic image only helped narrow the definitions of the homosexual and its meaning without, in many cases an attempt to classify the work in any context, as Tan Zita Grover in his essay on 'Aids keywords' points out: "The great diversity of human kind is often reduced by means of the term 'gay' to a single stereotype".⁹ Does the gay imagery produced then collude with, or help in fuelling these dangerous misconceptions within society, which merge the homosexual 'deviant' to the already over expanded pornographic label?

In the light of Aids, with the aggressive marketing of Aids as a conflation of gay male sex and with the more dangerous implications arising from the precarious fusing of homosexual pornography and Aids, by way of wrath and deviancy, one could also ask the question, is there a necessity to expand on the work

produced by many gay artists to combat particularly the negative imagery or iconography of the Aids epidemic? To answer these questions it is necessary firstly to look at the subject of pornography, to see the attitudes involved, its many classifications and the arguments, laws and legislations which surround it. Secondly an examination shall be made on the subject of HIV/Aids. Particularly in relation to homosexuality and its treatment, through the evolving discussion and events relating to the virus. Through the discussion of these subjects, arguments shall be uncovered which give credence to the necessity for reaction or criticism of the positions taken in law, politics, the media and society in general.

PART I: THE SUBJECT OF PORNOGRAPHY

(ANSWERING QUESTIONS)

1. In what way is the 'gay imagery', particularly 'erotic' imagery, counter productive?
2. Does the gay imagery produced collude with or help in fuelling dangerous misconceptions within society which merge the 'homosexual deviant' to the already over-expanded label?

We have seen in the first section of this thesis, a criticism of several popular gay artists whose work leaned heavily on the 'glorification' and explicit representations of the male figure, from Hockney to Mapplethorpe. The imagery time and time again, gave homage to the male, as Mapplethorpe's image pushed the erotic variations to their capacity or limitations. Many feminists are often criticised for the attitude that by being against still means abolition not analysis of the multi-faceted 'pornographic image'. However in a gay society a culmination of reasons, pride of homosexuality, a desire to justify one's self, by means of literature, action or most importantly illustration, leads to the ironic notion that combating prejudice means reinforcement no analysis of pornographic imagery. Examples of this can be found in several conversations with the artists discussed.

Michael Petry once more enacted the role of a political liberal in justifying the pornographic or erotic imagery. He felt: "That it is the right of the artist to do what they like. People who want to do anything with one another is fine once they are both consenting". It was pointed out to Petry that once a

photographer's image was then put on a wall for the viewer to see, he or she were voyeurs and that a personal concert may be surpassed.

However Petry felt that this person was being photographed by their consent. He went on to use an example of Linda Lucardi a 'page 3' girl, who he felt "was doing a job she knows and she's being paid for it. He felt that women were cheapened within our society as by-products of this imagery". In response to the question, did the erotic imagery give the viewer a voyeuristic position? Derek Jarman felt "that all art was voyeuristic". Jarman "felt that gay pornography was very liberating". He brought up an important point in relation to gay films, making "the only way to make a gay film in America – was to make gay pornography because you wouldn't be allowed into Hollywood. What else could you do. There was no other structure". Jarman felt that this work was very liberating for those who managed to see it as it opened doors for them". He knew Robert Mapplethorpe very well and went on to describe how he "Met Robert on a summer's day in 1970 on the King's Road and ended up in his studio where Mapplethorpe showed him some photographs of a boy chained to a rock playing the role of 'Pramethious'.

I asked Jarman what he thought of it and he promptly replied: "Robert, oh he was very sexy!" After redirecting the question Jarman expressed his delight in the success of the work, but personally found it cold and lifeless. Finally Robin Whitmore, in discussing a performance with Neil Bartlett on the subject of pornography, clarified the delimas which he felt existed within homosexual pornography. "The show is all about how you like pornography and yet at the same time you hate it". Whitmore felt it was exploitative and yet it liberated gay men. He explained: "That pornography is all that gay men have got, it's very difficult as there is so little literature around". Yet ironically Whitmore felt that "The imagery was exploitative for men in the same way that it was for women. The work was mostly of young boys playing up to that whole game that the attractive man is young and penniless". This 'rent boy' and 'sugar daddy' syndrome immediately brought to mind the work of Gilbert and George, work like 'The Four Feelings' (Fig.), a piece which shows the artists, their hands, the four feelings reaching out to a naked youth standing with his hands behind his head. On bringing up the example of the two artists, Whitmore ironically expressed his delight at an opportunity to be in one of their photographs and explained the situation where several young men had walked up and down the King's Road (London), in the hope that they would be asked to participate in photographs by the artists.

Within the conversations there was a general support for the predominantly erotic images of the gay artists discussed. Philip Corr (painter) found that people felt his work of men in sexual positions, to be pornographic. However, he turned to question the pornographic label although Robin Whitmore saw pornography as both positive and negative. He was vague in finding the root to its negative side. Indeed what is the argument against this erotic work, outside of the moralistic vague denunciations of it as being immoral, wrong or at odds with nature?

One must remember that homosexual explicit material within the forum of art often surpasses mainstream criticism in relation to the pornographic label. Firstly, because many critics are considered immediately biased, once the subject is gay it means 'dirty' or 'taboo'. No matter what the subject matter or visual image portrayals. Thus their judgment is unquantifiable. Homosexuality for many is like a 'third sex' apart from the desire and habits of heterosexual life. Secondly with the expansion of the women's movement a greater awareness came about in relation to the exploitation of the opposite sex. The sexual division gave clarity as to whom the oppressed were. However, within homosexuality there is no defining line, race, religion, sexual and political identities as these are surpassed by homosexual tendencies. So exploitation lies on an individual level (perhaps older 'dominant over younger passive' being the only apparent division). Men exploiting men sexually seems so bizarre and out of context with the general norm.

To strike a balance in the arguments relating to the pornographic image and to answer the question as to what is the negative effect of pornography. Let us look beyond the moralistic arguments of a corruption of the family unit by such deviant portrayals (this assuming that sex can be thought, or like Aids, caught like a virus) and look at a more conscious argument or theory which questions the value of pornography. To do this we must look at the personal responses to and reasons for the desire for pornography away from the imagery itself. Alis Millar in her book 'The Drama of Childhood' points out "that sexuality is encoded in individuals, regardless of later orientation, by a process of recording information. This information is received in the form of any experience associated directly or indirectly with sex". "

Within our society there are several social taboos surrounding sexuality and the expression of emotions. So, such incidents will not be adequately dealt with

by any individual. As a result of repressing these feelings of a sexual nature a neurosis (a repression and denial) of these events may occur. Thus undischarged and unevaluated memories of distressful incidents become as Millar states: "The formative elements of compulsive patterns of behaviour"¹². A distinction must be made between the person and the behaviour pattern. On the one hand, the person is creative and intelligent, capable of new responses to each specific situation. On the other, the behaviour pattern of a person is only capable of repetitive and rigid responses and is incapable of reasoning. A behaviour pattern will only be activated by an appropriate stimulus that relates to the original repressed incident, the neurosis. Pornography restimulates the rigid behaviour associated with an individual's early sexual experiences and thus serves only to further entrench the individual in that behaviour of fetish. So pornography could be seen to augment a neurosis and in doing this it cultivates a negative and damaging condition. An example of this can be found in Freud on sexuality where he discusses the desire for sado-masochistic activity.

Freud points out that one of the main theories of sado-masochistic tendencies lies with a guilt factor which is often felt and repressed in sexual practice with the introduction of bondage. "A channel is opened to relieve pain and punishment, a balance is found between 'the act of sexual fulfilment and repentance'"¹³ for the 'wrong' thoughts and actions. The practice of bondage appears to harbour the feelings of shame and self-denial. The guilt feelings are a fundamental ingredient to encouraging sado-masochistic activity. These guilt feelings stem from a repression spurred on by social taboos. The neurosis are a result of these repressions, thus the sado-masochist activity and imagery reflecting it only helps to fuel the subconscious condition.

An example of Robert Mapplethorpe's work can be used to show the connection between this analysis and the gay art work discussed. In one of his pieces 'Elliott and Dominic, New York City 1979' (Fig.), sado-masochistic activity is clearly shown as the viewers' attention is invited by the two men staring out at the onlooker. One is suspended upside down in chains while the other holds the body firmly. By using this imagery and others like it, Mapplethorpe hopes to bombard the viewers' vision, allowing he or she to accept the activity as the norm, letting one 'become more aware of their own physical selves and its capabilities'. Yet we have seen through Freud's arguments that sado-

masochism sprang from the desire for what is presumed a wrongdoing. So this use of hard core imagery and its objectives could be considered retrogressive, colluding with, rather than elevating the repressive forces of society. The example of Mappelthorp is perhaps more extreme when compared to other 'milder' examples which can be seen through the various representations of the male physique in gay art. The neurosis discussed and the repressive influences relating to it, have broad and immesurable interpretations. Yet, where does one draw the line between good and bad behaviour patterns? What is a 'natural' stimulus. One could say that the stimulus of a neurosis may in fact enlighten the recipient to its effects and damage rather than further blur his or her vision of the condition.

While this analysis may show that the homoerotic work produced by gay artists may in fact have a negative force other than its desired effect, through its exploration, it is also important to point out that this analysis is by no means complete. Firstly, in its structure (as a theory) and secondly, in the prognosis. However it is an examination which stirs the arguments on the right lines away from the representations of the by now multi-faceted pornographic label to the effect of the work on the audience concerned. For as Simon Watney points out in his book *Pointing Desire*: "It is ultimately pointless to assume an aggressive pro-porn stance since the terms of any possible discussion have already been fixed in advance in such a way that we can only be heard as the voice of pornography, itself speaking in favour of actual sexual violence".

One could go further to say that this fluctuation (the extending and condensing) of the term 'pornography' only goes to show that the label is non-specific and is often diluted to an extent of being 'meaningless'. Yet it is used as a prime source in making specific arguments for or against an array of male and female images. However, whether the classification is misused or over-utilised, the problem still remains. Where, for example, the image of two men kissing is merged with the pornographic label showing a dangerous misinterpretation, many sections of our society (politicians, solicitors and religious groups), tend still to see homosexuality as an illness. A sinister deficiency which belongs to the immoral classifications which encompass pornography, child abuse, etc. There is a spurious connection made between all these subjects. Simon Watney gave practical evidence of this in his essay *Aids, Pornography and*

Law. He made references to the Wolfgang report produced in 1957 in Britain. A strategy which "was intended to establish a firm distinction between the domains of the public and private involving, a shrinking of legislative control over personal conduct combined with a more rigorous policing of the cordon representing the public domain".¹⁴ This report brought many questions of sexuality into the public forum. Homosexuality like pornography, was seen as a 'problem' of public life and a threat to its structure. This led Watney to point out that: "With this report in effect we are been invited to choose whether we prefer to regard homosexuality as indecent and, or obscene or intrinsically pornographic".¹⁵

From this example one can see a sad irony and perhaps a dangerous situation. Many gay artists concentrated, when dealing with overt gay subject matter, on the homoerotic image, as it is seen as a weapon in defying negative public opinions. This work continues to get the greatest notice because, as Michael Petry points out: "It's risky, trendy and it sells".¹⁶ For many it prods at and penetrates the pornographic label. Yet the irony lies in the fact that while making a provocative political stance, the artists are also narrowing their own definition to the same level as the blinkered definitions of the media or society itself. In many ways the work colludes with rather than contrabits social misconceptions. It may be seen as a fuel for political ignorance.

This dilemma is strengthened when one widens the scope of discussion to include the issue of Aids. Many people would not only see pornography and homosexuality in a similar light. But firstly see Aids as a conflation of gay male sex and secondly merge their vision of homosexuality as an illness with that of Aids. So that homosexuality equals Aids. Gayness becomes an icon of desire. When the political situation in relation to Aids is considered, with politicians hastily instigating whatever solutions they see fit, one fears for the position of the homosexual whose identity is dispersed amongst the various issues and policies, by politicians who continue to assemble misconceptions from their fragmented knowledge of gay people.

IN THE LIGHT OF AIDS

ANSWERING THE QUESTION

PART II

WHY SHOULD ART PLAY THE ROLE OF A CONSPICUOUS POLITICAL COMMENTATOR?

In the previous section we have seen the justification of the erotic by several artists. Firstly, this imagery was seen (through the example of Robert Mapplethorpe's work) as fuelling a particular fetish (i.e. sado-masochism). This fetish may have stemmed from a particular neurosis and this imagery like other explicit works, could have helped cultivate the subconscious condition. Secondly, the 'erotic' portrayals were seen as a provocative nudge, a defensive weapon. Yet the disparity of views within society, in relation to homosexuality and the fusion of (what was considered) 'pornography' or erotic with the 'homosexual', appeared to be given credence by the seemingly blinkered approach of several gay artists, as opposed to its original intentions of undermining such repressive misconceptions. With the introduction of Aids into the community, there was a polarisation and intensification of the situation. As Richard Goldstone has stated in his article *Fear of loving in the gay community*, "Aids Hysteria is the infections agent that has surpassed our immunity from guilt, returning to the pre-modern idea that illness is not an expression of the inner self, but a punishment and a sign.

Therefore it is appropriate to take a *brief* look at the subject of Aids. As the conservative rhetoric relating to it encroaches upon the civil liberties of gay people and more importantly, as the Aids virus itself threatens many lives. Indeed the virus is known to have personally affected two of the artists who have participated within this thesis. By looking at the political and socio-political synthesis in relation to Aids, it is possible to see the prejudices against homosexuality magnified, as a result of Aids being viewed as a conflation of gay male sex, disease and death. It is also possible to see the formation of a new ignorance and repressing rhetoric evolving from the old. In viewing the political dogma and iconography of the disease, one can see an argument for: a necessity for (gay) artists to continue to participate in the struggle against this criteria. To clarify this argument it is important to look briefly at the dilemmas which are deeply entrenched within society, problems which only help to provoke misconceptions and misjudgements in relation to Aids. The area of Aids imagery shall then be examined to see the

portrayals (by the media) of people suffering from HIV/Aids and how subtle those images can be in conveying a very negative picture!

Tens of thousands of lives have been directly influenced and affected by the consequences of HIV/Aids. Yet as Simon Watney points out in his essay *The Stigma of Aids*: "Even the most fundamental medical facts concerning HIV and Aids remain all but universally understood". It was also pointed out by Watney "That the entire subject continues to be framed by a cultural agenda that is as medically misinformed as it is socially misleading and politically motivated". Richard Goldstine summed up the situation well in his comments on 'the subject of Aids'.^β "For those of us living and working in the various constituencies most devastated by HIV, it seems as if the rest of the population were tourists casually wandering through the very height of a blitz, of which they are totally unaware. For example, in Ireland to date 36 people have died of Aids, a further 90 have 'full-blown' Aids and 810 have proven HIV positive. 23,000 people have already taken the test (These are governmental statistics released for the month of March 1989). In carrying out a survey in the National College of Art (concerning attitudes and knowledge of the Aids situation), over 50% of the hundred people who participated answered 'yes' to the question: "Do you personally know of anyone who is HIV positive". (Questionnaire is included. Fig.).

Yet on national radio, reporters must still reaffirm the ways of contracting the virus to combat the many misconceptions which still overshadow and constrain a deeper view and analysis of the problem.

The question may also be asked as to how concise and 'balanced' is the media itself? Within the media there is an unconscious idea, particularly of public television and radio, that their voice is one which speaks confidently on behalf of the general public. A public which is viewed as a homogenous entity organised into discreet family units. Many of these stories relayed by tv and radio are a mixture of formal 'facts' and informal speculation. This information is often tumbled, giving a somewhat sinister but 'entertaining' picture of the situations relating to 'newsworthy' subjects like homosexuality and Aids. Among these misconceptions created by the 'reputable' media, there is a particular view which is best summed up by Simon Watney in his essay 'The Spectacle of Aids'. "This truth (media information) of Aids resolutely insists that the point of emergence of the virus should be identified as its cause. Epidemiology is thus replaced by a

moral etiology of disease. That can only conceive homosexual desire with a medicalised metaphor of contagion¹⁵. Aids is thus – a 'gay plague'. This incorrigous situation can be taken a step further, when one considers the idea that society is juxtaposing the activity of the Aids virus (its entry into the body and destruction of its defence structure, i.e. T4 cell). With the image of the homosexual (considered at variance with the family), who is infecting and destroying the structure of society, the family unit. As is pointed out in the essay 'Veins of Resemblance' by David Green: "When history is biologised with recourse to the authority of seemingly unquestionable and innate laws"¹⁶. The perception of the natural order of social structure and stratification is always thought to be readily available in the structure of the human body. It is this sense of a 'totalised' threat to a biologised identification of self with nation, that characterises both Nazi medical politics and modern realism.

It is here that we can see the underlying threat to those groups which have been prejudiced against (as a result of Aids) by society at large. Indeed the aspiration for isolation of 'Aids victims' or 'Aids carriers', have already been echoed through the media. It is also important to point out here, that the medical world cannot stand apart from moral prejudice. For even in the most obscure medical journals, we will not find pure clinical facts. Since medicine, like any other professionalised branch of knowledge is invariably informed by some social and historical context.

Let us now look at two examples of images which visually depict the Aids situation. Firstly in an essay 'The Iconography of Aids' Sander Gilman describes a photograph in the 'New York Times' on December 23 1985. "A person with Aids is seen as a patient isolated from the supposed act of healing"¹⁷. Gilman points out that: "The sense of physical distance is palpable, the observers are as far removed from the patient as they can be, without being in another room. The ground provided for the observer of this image is the tension communicated, not by the treatment of the patient, but by the implication of the disease". The image was of a homosexual man seen as both victim and cause of his own pollution. Secondly, let us take the imagery of the virus itself. (Fig.). The illustration on the front cover of 'Scientific America' magazine depicts the Aids virus in a graphic style which is similar to the imagery of weaponry. The virus looks more like a destructive mechanism. As Paula Treichler writes in her essay 'Epidemic of Significance': "The stylised graphics encourage us to see the virus as a perfect inorganic military

mechanism primed for detonation".²⁰ In fact, this style of illustration of a beeded crome pod, mirrors the imagery depicting the destructive proceses of weapons by molecular activity, found in various scientific and military manuals.

Many images of the Aids victim are those of hospitalised people with withered, wrinkled and debilitated faces (Fig.). Their expression is one of depression. This association of depression, with the unhealthy body fortifies the classic association of the nature of the mind, i.e. (homosexuality as a mental illness), with the imager of the body (the homosexual) deviant. The visual representations of the Aids situation by the media, mirror the standards of their literature which is itself riddled with dangerous innuendos. A large proportion of the population are used to the written word and its capabilities in producing diverse argument, in relation to particular problem. However, only a smaller proportion of people are able to read into the photographic images and illustrations which accompany the various texts. So very few are fluent in the visual language which only helps to accentuate the misconceptions in articles and news stories. Here we can see an argument for positive pictures to combat the spurious views which are directed by the general media. Several of the artists discussed so far have expressed, 'through personal experience', their awareness of the negativer criteria relating to Aids. Since they and other artists have the capacity to interpret and create various visual images and because of their heightened awareness, perhaps their participation in producing a more 'balanced' view in a necessary one. This imagery then could conclude with the attempts made by various writers like Simon Watney and Paula Freichler to combat the news and views of the deceptive media.

Douglas Crimp in his essay, 'Aids Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activity', gave an example of artists who had participated in an exhibition which opened in New York called 'Art for Aids'. The precedent of the exhibition was to raise as much money for medical research as possible. However Crimp found this approach to be very uneasy for three reasons. "Firstly because Aids research must be seen as a governmental responsibility".²¹ Secondly Crimp feels that "We should not be so blind as to trust science as if it were natural and uncontaminated by politics".²¹ And thirdly, he pointed out "That this financial response to a social crisis only helps perpetuate the idea that art had no social function".²¹ Here we can see a confliction of approaches between the commerical position of art within society, as opposed to the actual utility of the subject matter itself. Crimp goes further to say that "Art

does have the power to save lives. This power must be recognised, fostered and supported in every way possible. But if we are to do this we must abandon the idealist concept of art. We don't need a cultural renaissance, we need cultural participation in the struggle against Aids. We don't need to transcend the epidemic, we need to end it". It is here that we see the request for a very specific political approach. Robin Whitmore would, no doubt share the position of Crimp in the need for a flexible participation in criticising, polarising and exposing the negative imagery and creating a more noticeable positive picture reflecting on Aids. There is no doubt that art has a platform of influence and communication within society which could be utilised.

Robin Whitmore in co-operation with Neill Bartlet has produced a performance called 'Confusion of Love'. The piece portrays the life of Simion Solomon, an artist and homosexual who lived in London at the turn of the century. Solomon refused to conform to the attitudes and structures of that society and suffered severely the prejudices of that stance. As Whitmore explains: "The piece compares Solomon's life living in London at that time, to someone who is living in London now with the prejudices of Aids around them ... and how that is similar in a lot of ways". The work reflects on the remembrance of a conspicuous homophobic attitude towards gay culture. The idea is simple and very effective, but it is a chip at the top of the iceberg. There is an ever increasing need to counter-balance the scales of ignorance and injustice. Yet, this requires the activation of a strong political conscience within art. But as we have seen in the section on 'political content in gay art', there is an array of arguments surrounding the primary debate over the definition and effect of this form of political expression, apart from the proposal for an adoption of a particular viewpoint.

Furthermore, is it possible to decipher and prohibit society's fashion for metaphoric representations, like that of merging homosexuality with disease? For, as Susan Sontag writes: "I wish sex could be stripped of its metaphors and reconstituted along the lines of pure pleasure. But I'm not convinced arousal can be sustained without fantasy, or fantasy composed without morality and myth. Since we are so vulnerable to the erotic potential of metaphors, how can we hope to be less susceptible when illness intersects with sex and death". The Aids scenario has fuelled our passion for merging various uniform patterns or situations. A function

which is encompassed within the processes of exploration and creativity. Perhaps our approach should not be to inhibit the metaphorical process but to use the process to its full potential. To obtain a more fruitful perception away from the deeply imbedded scenario of us the 'pure and innocent', versus them the 'infected guilty'.

With reference to the historical aspects of the time, it was found that the 'sexual revolution' had shaken the social, moral and political parameters engrained within the society, thus allowing for a free flow of gay expression. However much of the gay exploration was narrowed into a sexual viewpoint, an activity which was given a predominant position in art work which was deemed to be 'gay' in theme. To find the rationale for such a limited approach and the attitudes towards the work under discussion, it was necessary to look to a variety of notable gay artists. The artists chosen had executed work during the period and portrayed themselves and so were well aware of the subjects under discussion.

The first argument to arise from the writers interviewed was on the subject of the 'gay artist label'. Michael Perry and Andrew Hearn had voiced their disquiet for such a categorisation as it was felt that the label immediately isolated and 'ghettoised' the artist and his work and also raised the audience's expectations for the production of gay-related material only.

However Derek Jarman showed that the label was unavoidable once the artist was knowingly homosexual. He also pointed out that nothing grew out of having such a negative denial to the classification.

In section two the various conflicting attitudes and arguments relating to the subject of politics in art were discussed. With the introduction of political theory it was possible to see where the various artists stood in relation to the political spectrum. It was also pointed out that the political spectrum encompassed all activities and attitudes which interested artists in society, by way of the dialectic movement. So the particular viewpoint or ideology used to regard the gay artist's political statement within art, was itself an ideology or political perspective. In summing up on the observations of the various artists, a clear set of arguments emerged, all of which obviously could have played a part in rendering the creation of a strong form of political expression within gay art.

CONCLUSION

In section one an attempt was made to give a concise synopsis of the work produced by the most notable gay artists of the last two decades (sixties and seventies), with reference to the historical events of the time. It was found that the 'sexual revolution' had diluted the social, moral and political pressures congealed within the society, thus allowing for a free flow of gay expression. However much of the gay exploration was narrowed into a sexual euphoria, an activity which was given a predominant position in art work which was determinedly 'gay' in theme. To find the reasons for such a blinkered approach and the attitudes towards the work under discussion, it was necessary to talk to a variety of notable gay artists. The artists chosen had executed work during the sixties and seventies themselves and so were well aware of the subjects under discussion.

The first argument to arise from the various interviews was on the subject of the 'gay artist' label. Michael Petry and Andrew Heard had voiced their disdain for such a classification as it was felt that the label immediately isolated and 'ghettoised' the artists and his work and also fuelled the audience expectations for the production of gay related material only.

However Derek Jarman showed that the label was unavoidable once the artist was knowingly homosexual. He also pointed out that nothing grew out of having such a negative denial of the classification.

In section two the various conflicting attitudes and arguments relating to the subject of politics in art were discussed. With the introduction of political theory it was possible to see where the various artists stood in relation to the political spectrum. It was also pointed out that the political spectrum encompassed all activities and attitudes which interacted within the society, by way of the dialectic mechanism. So the particular viewpoint or ideology used to reject the overt political statement within art, was itself an ideology or political perspective. In summing up on the conversations of the various artists, a clear set of arguments emerged, all of which ironically could have played a part in hindering the creation of a strong form of political expression within gay art.

They were:

1. The stigma towards the adoption of gay subject matter and the 'gay artist' label which accompanies it.
2. The disparity in opinion over the function of art.
3. The confliction between the strong political message and its limitations on aesthetic freedom.
4. The disagreements relating to the responsibility to one's audience to one's self.
5. The argument over what constitutes the 'political' label.
6. The point made by Derek Jarman that political inactivity by many gay artists was probably due to their lack of awareness of the situations which exist.
7. The isolation and repression of the homosexual 'voice' by various sections of society.
8. The lack of comparison or similarity between the gay artists discussed a harmony which could have sparked off a 'movement' of gay expression.

Within section three a study was made on how the homosexual was viewed within society. Through the exploration of political legislation and the media it was possible to see the various juxtapositions made by society when relating to the subject of homosexuality. Many people tended to merge the 'pornographic' label with that of homosexuality, jumbling the two under the classification of 'deviancy' and 'perversity'. It was pointed out that the blinkered approach taken by the artists discussed, in expressing a purely iconographical approach to the male figure, only helped fortify the negative perceptions of gay people which existed within society. The artwork colluded with, rather than reacted against the conservative rhetoric and homophobia, as the work penetrated the multi-faceted pornographic label. (Pornography seemed to equal homosexuality).

Furthermore the work, deemed pornographic, appeared to have a discouraging effect on the individual 'voyeur'. The imagery could be seen as an expression of a particular fetish (especially when referring to the work of Gilbert and George and Robert Mapplethorpe). As we have seen the 'fetish' stems from a particular neurosis. The neurosis in turn is developed by a denial of the freedom of sexual expression and questioning by a society which exerts an embargo on the exploration of sexuality. As a result of this, much of the explicit homoerotic work could be seen to collude with the deeply entrenched social taboos, rather than reacting against the repressive conditions.

Finally the subject of Aids was studied to see the effect it has had on our society and the gay population in particular. It was shown that society found it hard enough to deal with the fundamental facts on the contraction of the virus, let alone the complexity arguments and situations which surrounded the topic. Aids was viewed by the media as a conflation of gay male sex – disease and death. Various sinister and underlying attitudes were exposed in relation to 'the government and the home', where the homosexual was seen as a culprit, at variance with the family structure and so was a threat to such a 'natural biologised' order. This attitude drew parallels with Nazi medical politics. Furthermore the merging of these representations of homosexuality in society with the impressions of the Aids virus and its destruction of the body, only helped fortify such sinister metaphors. Homosexuality was seen as an illness and Aids represented the physical disability of the sickness.

The metaphoric portrayals were accompanied by visual images produced by the media to reflect their particular attitudes. One felt that it was important for artists to participate in criticising, exposing and creating a more noticeable and positive imagery, to diminish the intensity of such a negative picture. After all, the argument no longer lies purely in the support for a freedom of gay expression (sexual or otherwise), but in demand for support and understanding. At a time when so many (gay) people must battle with the destructive processes of a ruthless disease, let alone the virulence of society.



ABOUT YOURSELF:

1. Sex (Please tick) ☒ Male ☒ Female

4. Marital Status (please tick)

Married	<input type="checkbox"/>
Single	<input type="checkbox"/>
Widowed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Separated	<input type="checkbox"/>
Divorced	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Age (Please tick) 3. Place of Birth (Please tick)

Under 20	<input type="checkbox"/>
20 - 29	<input type="checkbox"/>
30 - 39	<input type="checkbox"/>
40 - 49	<input type="checkbox"/>
Over 50	<input type="checkbox"/>

Dublin	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other city/town	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outside Ireland	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Current residence:

Dublin	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other town/city	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outside Ireland	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Are you in a sexual relationship at present? (Please tick) ☒ YES ☒ NO

7. If you are in a relationship, how long have you been together? _____

8. Do you and your partner have sex only with one another? (Please tick) ☒ YES ☒ NO

9. How many men, if any, have you had sex with over the past twelve months? _____

10. How many women, if any, have you had sex with over the past twelve months? _____

11. Most people feel some degree of sexual attraction to both sexes. Where would you place yourself on the following scale from completely heterosexual to completely homosexual? (Please circle the appropriate number):

Completely heterosexual 1 2 3 4 5 6 Completely homosexual.

12. Which, if any, of the following sexual acts have you engaged in over the past twelve months? (Please tick):

Vaginal intercourse (using a condom) ☒Anal intercourse (Using a condom) ☐Vaginal intercourse (Not using a condom) ☐Anal Intercourse (without a condom) ☒Oral sex ☒Mutual masturbation ☐

13. Do you have any condoms at present (please tick):

☒ YES ☒ NO14. Have you ever bought condoms yourself? (Please tick) ☒ YES ☒ NO

15. How risky do you think the following sexual acts are for passing on the HIV virus (the virus thought to cause AIDS) from a person with the virus to their partner?

(Please tick)

Vaginal intercourse without a condom

Vaginal intercourse with a condom

Anal intercourse without a condom

Anal intercourse with a condom

Deep kissing

Oral Intercourse

Sharing a dildo or vibrator

	Very Risky	Risky	Safe	Don't Know
Vaginal intercourse without a condom				
Vaginal intercourse with a condom				
Anal intercourse without a condom				
Anal intercourse with a condom				
Deep kissing				
Oral Intercourse				
Sharing a dildo or vibrator				

16. How frequently, if ever, do you use the following at present? (Please tick)

Tobacco				
Alcohol				
Dope/grass/hash				
Cocaine				
Heroin				
Poppers				
Speed				
Acid				

17. Have you ever shared needles to inject drugs? (Please tick) ☒ YES ☒ NO

18. Have you ever taken the HIV test (the blood test for the virus thought to cause AIDS)?

(Please tick) ☒ YES ☒ NO

19. Have you ever seriously considered taking the HIV test? (Please tick) YES NO

20. Do you know or did you know anyone who has AIDS at present or who has died of AIDS? (Please tick)

☒ YES ☒ NO

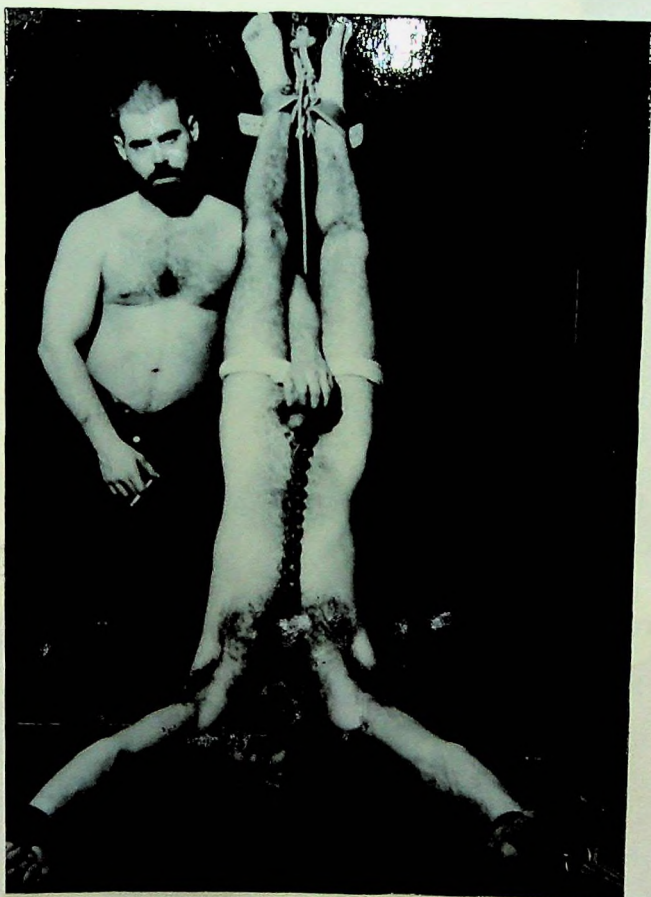
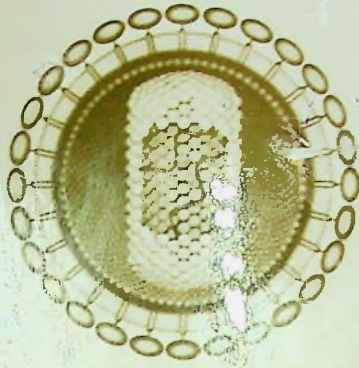


FIGURE 18 .

SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN



January 1987

Virus de grande In the cover article for Scientific American by Robert Gallo, AIDS is unveiled as a virus of his own "discovery" of what he called "the HTLV-III virus." The stylized graphic encourages us to see the virus as a perfect inorganic military mechanism, primed for destruction.

FIGURE 19 .

NEWYORK POST

TUESDAY, OCT. 6, 1987

Founded by Alexander Hamilton in 1801

35 CENTS

FINAL

Editorial: Gandy and the Thompson County, and the Senate Page 2.

Stacks in P. 4

TV Ratings P. 95

Triggered 'gay cancer' epidemic in U.S.

THE MAN WHO GAVE US AIDS

STORY ON PAGE THREE

His love's safe after ordeal on icy peak

Weekend killer William Moore's love's ordeal was not over. Last night in Cherry Hill, N.J., his son, and turned up safe and sound after being trapped on Sunday's frosty snow-capped Mount Washington in the Catskills. Moore's love's ordeal was not over. Last night in Cherry Hill, N.J., his son, and turned up safe and sound after being trapped on Sunday's frosty snow-capped Mount Washington in the Catskills.



FIGURE 20 .



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1 ART, BEAUTY & PORNOGRAPHY**
A JOURNEY THROUGH AMERICAN CULTURE
John Huer
Ch. 13; What is Pornography, Ch.14; Pornography & The Market Place
- 2 CITIES ON A HILL**
Francis Fitzgerald
Pan Books Ltd., Picador, 1987
- 3 DAVID HOCKNEY**
Mario Livingstone
Thames & Hudson, 1981
- 4 DAVID HOCKNEY BY DAVID HOCKNEY**
Edited by Nikos Stangos: Introduced by Henry Geldzahler
Thames & Hudson
- 5 PICTURES BY DAVID HOCKNEY**
Selected & Edited by Nikos Stangos
Thames & Hudson, 1979
- 6 DAVID HOCKNEY; A RETROSPECTIVE**
Printed in Japan & USA, 1988
- 7 GILBERT & GEORGE**
Brendan Richardson
The Baltimore Museum of Art, 1984
- 8 GILBERT & GEORGE**
THE CHARCOAL ON PAPER SCULPTURES: (1970-'74)
A conversation between Gilbert & George with Demosthenes Davvetas
- 9 GILBERT & GEORGE, 1968-1980**
E Hoven
London & The Municipal Van Abbemuseum
- 10 GILBERT & GEORGE**
THE COMPLETE PICTURE 1971-'85
Carter Ratcliff
Published 1986
- 11 MICHAEL LEONARD: PAINTINGS**
Forward by Lincoln Kirstein & Edward Lucie-Smith
GMP, 1984

12 THE BLACK BOOK

Robert Mapplethorpe

Munchen: Schiemer Mosel, 1986

13 ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE

Text; Susan Sontag

Twelve Trees Press, 1985

14 ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE: LADY LISA LYON

Text; Bruce Chatwin

GB 1983

15 SIGMUND FREUD ON SEXUALITY

THREE ESSAYS ON THE THEORY OF SEXUALITY & OTHER WORKS

Penguin, 1977

16 SQUARE PEG

ISSUE No. 18: 'LIVING WITH AIDS' 'RAVING REVIEWS'

Square Peg London

17 SQUARE PEG

ISSUE No. 15: 'THE LOVE THAT DARED SPEAK ITS NAME WHERE THERE WAS
ONCE SILENCE'

Ibid

18 SQUARE PEG

ISSUE No. 14: 'MAKING A STATEMENT'

Ibid

19 SQUARE PEG

ISSUE No. 19: 'MUSCLE BOUND UNDERGROUND' & 'PROMOTING HOMOSEXUALITY'

Ibid

20 SEX, VIOLENCE & THE MEDIA

H J Eyesenck & D K B Nias

London Temple Smith, 1978

21 THE PORNOGRAPHY OF REPRESENTATION

Susan Cappeler

22 THE MALE NUDE: A MODERN VIEW

Francois de Louville, Edward Lucie-Smith

Phaidon Press Ltd., 1985

23 THE SEXUAL PERSPECTIVE

HOMOSEXUALITY & ART IN THE LAST 100 YEARS IN THE WEST

Emanuel Cooper

BIBLIOGRAPHY >

25 THE FACE

MAGAZINE

Issue No. 95 ; Robert Mappelthorp , Pages 89 - 95 .

26 THE POWER OF THEATRICAL MADNESS

Jan Faber , Photographs ; Robert Mappelthorp .

27 THE BODY ; IMAGES OF THE NUDE

Edward
Lucie Smith London Thames & Hudson , 1981 .

28 THE LAST OF ENGLAND ,

Derek Jarman , Constable & Company , 1987 .

29 THE NATURE OF POLITICS

J D B Miller ,
1971 A Penguin Book .

30 SEX & GERMS , THE POLITICS OF AIDS , Cindy Patton .
South End Press , 1985 .

31 SCIENTIFIC AMERICA , MAGGAZINE , Issue October 1988 .

32 POLICING DESIRE , PORNOGRAPHY AIDS AND THE MEDIA ,
Simon Watney Comedia Books , 1987 .

33 OCTOBER MAGAZINE . ISSUE 43 , PUBLISHED BY

MIT press winter 1987 .

34 IN DEFENCE OF POLITICS , A Penguin book ,

By Bernard Crick .

35 ILLNESS AS A METAPHORE , Susan Sontag , (Penguin) .

36 HERPIES AIDS AND OTHER SEXUALY TRANSMITTED DISEASES,
Derek Llewellyn Jones , Faber & Faber, 1985.

37 DEREK JARMAN CARAVAGGIO ,

Special photographs by
Gerald Incandela , Thames & Hudson ,
1986.

38 DANCING LEDGE . DEREK JARMAN , 1984, Quartet Books.

39 AIDS , A PLAGUE IN US , A social perspective ,
Antony A Vass ,
Venus accademica.

FOOTNOTES

1. Michael Petry (from) an interview lasting 60 minutes on the subject of gay art, relating to political content, pornography and Aids (January 1989).
2. Derek Jarman (from) an interview lasting 60 minutes on the subject of gay art in the last 20 years. The questions discussed are listed in the questionnaire (January 1989).
3. Robin Whitmore (from) an interview lasting 60 minutes on the subject of gay art relating to political content 'erotic' illustration and performance.
4. Andrew Heard (from) an interview lasting 30 minutes on 'gay art' discussing the validity of its expression.
5. Bernard Crick 'In Defence of Politics', page 123. (A Pelican book).
6. Bernard Crick, 'In Defence of Politics', page 126.
7. Roland Barthes, 'Essay on the Mother by Brecht', page 18.
8. J.B. Miller, 'The Nature of Politics', (A Pelican Book), Chapter 1 Politics and Diversity.
9. Tan Zita Grover in his essay on 'Aids Keywords' October magazine, winter 1987. p.17.
10. Gordon Rainsford (artist) from questionnaire, answering question 6: Do you feel a responsibility to produce work which tries to maintain a positive image or a constructive criticism of homosexuality.
11. Alis Miller, 'The Drama of Childhood', page 58.
12. Alis Miller 'The Drama of Childhood'.
13. Richard Godstine from an article 'The Fear of Loving Gay Men', adapted for the essay 'The Spectacle of Aids', October magazine, winter 1987 page 72.
14. Simon Watney, 'The Spectacle of Aids', essay, October magazine winter 1987, p.72.
15. Simon Watney 'Special of Aids', October magazine, 1987 page 79.
16. Richard Goldstine 'A Plague on all Our Houses', the Village Voice, Vol. xxxi, adapted by Simon Watney for October magazine.
17. Simon Watney, 'The Spectacle of Aids', essay page 73, 'October', winter 1988.
18. 'Veins of Resemblance', Photography and Eugenics (an essay by David Green), London, Commedia, 1987, p.13.
19. Sander L. Gilman, 'The Iconography of Disease', page 99, winter October magazine, 1988.
20. Paula Trechler in her essay epidemic of significance, page 60, October magazine, winter 1988.
21. Douglas Crimp essay Aids, cultural analysis cultural activity, page 6.
22. Douglas Crimp, essay Aids, cultural analysis, cultural activity, page 7.
23. Susan Sontag, Illness as a Metaphor, paperback, Penguin Books.

Please feel free to answer questions which you feel are relevant to your own attitudes and approach.

T614

QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY

GORDON RAINSFORD

1. Does your work contain gay subject matter, and if so what level of importance would it be a predominant element?

In my personal work a gay/homosexual element is predominant, not through any decision I have made but because it interests me.

My commercial work contains gay subject matter when appropriate (eg work for the gay press; photo-journalism around gay issues).

2. Do you approach the subject of homosexuality from a personal perspective as it affects you emotionally, or from a wider social perspective as it affects the (gay) community at large?

Both! The former in my personal work, the latter more in commercial work.

3. Do you feel gay art is self indulgent, not relevant to many, excludes a wider audience?

It can be, but needn't. The level of interest in, for example, Hockney & Mapplethorpe, shows it needn't exclude a wider audience.

4. What are the difficulties you find (if any) in dealing with the subject of homosexuality personally/ socially, in trying to communicate?

None, other than the difficulties in trying to communicate anything personal.

Please feel free to answer questions which you feel are relevant to your own attitudes and approach to

NC 0034851 1



1. Does your work contain gay subject matter, and if so what level of importance would it have? Would it be a predominant element?

In my personal work a gay/homosexual element is predominant, not through any decision I have made but because it interests me.

My commercial work contains gay subject matter when appropriate (eg. work for the gay press; photo-journalism around gay issues)

2. Do you approach the subject of homosexuality from a personal perspective as it effects you emotionally, or from a wider social perspective as it effects the (gay) community at large?

Both! The former in my personal work, the latter more in commercial work.

3. Do you feel gay art is self indulgent, not relevant to many, excludes a wider audience?

It can be, but needn't. The level of interest in, for example, Hockney & Haplethorne shows it needn't exclude a wider audience.

4. What are the difficulties you find (if any) in dealing with the subject of homosexuality personally/ socially, in trying to communicate?

None, other than the difficulties in trying to communicate anything personal.

Do you feel through art you can relate or fully express homosexual thought, activity, and gay oppression etc.?

No - I don't think that is its purpose. Its function, for me, is to highlight and select areas of interest, to alter the balance of attention.

6. Do you feel a responsibility to produce work which tries to maintain a positive image or as a constructive criticism of homosexuality?

It depends on the purpose and likely audience of the work - I certainly accept self imposed restrictions

CONCIOUS
OF A
RESPONSIBILITY
SET MORE

7. Do you feel it is important to be recognised by what is labeled the "straight" community and to be appreciated by them?

Yes, by certain sections of the straight community, but on our terms, not theirs.

8. In what way do you feel your work succeeds in obtaining its desired qualities (in terms of medium, expression, mood etc.)

I don't think I can answer this about my own work!

Do you feel the broad media of art should reflect the situations both personal and social which developed in the light of AIDS?

I think it inevitably will reflect (and is beginning to) something as important as AIDS, but how distorted that reflection will be, particularly since most people's sources of knowledge are so inaccurate and unhelpful, is another question.

2. The events leading up to and after "Stonewall" had much of an impact on firstly the gay community and to a lesser extent the community at large. Are you happy with the approach taken in the last twenty odd years by known gay artists in Britain and America?

I don't think people should feel their work should have to express something they don't feel. What is wrong is when they suppress what they do feel, in order to better gain acceptance.

3. Do you feel the work reflects the issues, lifestyles and mood of the time? Or would you feel there to be too many representations of one aspect of homosexuality, for example iconography or representations of the male physique?

See Q5 above — For me art highlights selects, and by doing this gives us an idea of what is under the surface, which is different from any superficial "truth."

1. Do you think it is particularly important for gay artists to approach the subject of AIDS in their work to counteract the ignorant perceptions of the media, the cliché moralistic portrayals?

If they want to approach the subject at all then there is an obvious responsibility to approach it in a responsible manner (whatever that may be!)

2. Is there a particular message within your work which comments on or expresses any aspect of AIDS?

Much of my ^{personal} work is an oblique reaction to AIDS but I don't think it has a message that can be verbalised.

3. Do you feel isolated in your situation when dealing with the subject because of the confusion and complexities which surround the problem?

Sometimes, but I'm probably in a privileged position and have greater access to information and debate than most.

4. Do you feel there is a common awareness and concern about AIDS within the artistic community of London?

I don't know - I don't know how much I have knowledge of the "artistic community".

5. Do you feel that there has been a change in the art work of London gay artists that coincides with the dramatic changes in lifestyles and attitudes of the gay community?

There must have been, although I find it hard to pinpoint.

6. Has this change effected your own work?

Not consciously, although the changes in lifestyle & attitudes have.

7. Do you hold any particular hopes or aspirations for the gay art scene in Britain, or indeed for your personal work in the future?

I certainly do for my personal work - a hope for more sense of purpose. I don't know about for the whole scene, other than that it should be there, thriving and questioning.

Extra Paper

Dear Paul,

By all means feel free to contact me to arrange to meet when you are in London, if you think it would be helpful. I've tried to answer your questions as best I can - I don't know if you know, but I am a photographer, and without getting into a debate about whether or not photography is, or can be, art (which seems to me to not be very important), there is a difference for me between my commercial work (eg. for the gay press) and my personal work. I don't know where the dividing point is, and that probably doesn't matter much either, but I say this to explain any ambiguity in my answers.

Good luck,
Gordon

Please number your answers.

Please feel free to answer questions which you
relevant to your own attitudes and approach

T 614

QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY

ANDREW HEARD

1. Does your work contain gay subject matter, and if so what level of importance would it have? Would it be a predominant element?

Occasionally gay subject matter but not
predominant.

2. Do you approach the subject of homosexuality from a personal perspective as it effects you emotionally, or from a wider social perspective as it affects the (gay) community at large?

Personal emotionally.

3. Do you feel gay art is self indulgent, not relevant to many, excludes a wider audience?

Yes.

4. What are the difficulties you find (if any) in dealing with the subject of homosexuality personally/ socially, in trying to communicate?

Exclusion of many people from that experience.
I try & make the subject broader.

Please feel free to answer questions which you feel are relevant to your own attitudes and approach to

NC 0034854 6



1. Does your work contain gay subject matter, and if so what level of importance would it have? Would it be a predominant element?

Occasionally gay subject matter but this not predominant.

2. Do you approach the subject of homosexuality from a personal perspective as it effects you emotionally, or from a wider social perspective as it effects the (gay) community at large?

Personally & emotionally.

3. Do you feel gay art is self indulgent, not relevant to many, excludes a wider audience?

Yes.

4. What are the difficulties you find (if any) in dealing with the subject of homosexuality personally/ socially, in trying to communicate?

Exclusion of many people from that experience.
I try & make the subject broader.

5. Do you feel through art you can relate or fully express homosexual thought, activity, and gay oppression etc.?

Yes, though that sounds like boring art to me.

6. Do you feel a responsibility to produce work which tries to maintain a positive image or as a constructive criticism of homosexuality?

I attempt to record my personal experiences, as they are. I do not attempt to propagandise or 'convert'. I am not sermonising, nor am I a missionary.

7. Do you feel it is important to be recognised by what is labeled the "straight" community and to be appreciated by them?

Very much so.

8. In what way do you feel your work succeeds in obtaining it's desired qualities (in terms of medium, expression, mood etc.)

This question doesn't really make sense.

1. Do you feel the broad media of art should reflect the situations both personal and social which developed in the light of AIDS?

Yes.

2. The events leading up to and after "Stonewall" had much of an impact on firstly the gay community and to a lesser extent the community at large. Are you happy with the approach taken in the last twenty odd years by known gay artists in Britain and America?

Not that interested.

3. Do you feel the work reflects the issues, lifestyles and mood of the time? Or would you feel there to be too many representations of one aspect of homosexuality, for example iconography or representations of the male physique?

Yes - gay art usually means homo-erotic.

Very few artists get past long pictures of sailors & languorous young men. It's an obvious trap for bad artists.

1. Do you think it is particularly important for gay artists to approach the subject of AIDS in their work to counteract the ignorant perceptions of the media, the cliché moralistic portrayals?

No. [↑] Leave that to the politicians.

2. Is there a particular message within your work which comments on or expresses any aspect of AIDS?

I have crossed the subject of AIDS in ^a picture with wider implications called 'I'm Next', i.e. it's not specifically only about that subject. The person I shared my studio with - David Robinian - died of AIDS last November & since that time I have been painting things related to his death, most notably a picture entitled 'Goodbye' - but all these pictures should be seen in a

3. Do you feel isolated in your situation when dealing with the subject because of the confusion and complexities which surround the problem? ^{wider context.}

No.

4. Do you feel there is a common awareness and concern about AIDS within the artistic community of London?

Very definitely.

5. Do you feel that there has been a change in the art work of London gay artists that coincides with the dramatic changes in lifestyles and attitudes of the gay community?

No idea.

6. Has this change effected your own work?

No.

7. Do you hold any particular hopes or aspirations for the gay art scene in Britain, or indeed for your personal work in the future?

For my personal work I hope to reach an ever - wider audience in the future, & to do more interesting work.

I am not interested in the 'gay art scene' or indeed the 'gay scene' as such.

Extra Paper

Please number your answers.

Please feel free to answer questions which you feel are relevant to your own attitudes and approach

T614

QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY

CHRIS BROWN

1. Does your work contain gay subject matter, and if so what level of inclusion? Would it be a predominant element?

ALTHOUGH IT DOES CONTAIN GAY SUBJECT MATTER, THE LEVEL CAN VARY DEPENDING ON WHAT I CHOOSE TO DEPICT - FOR EXAMPLE IN MY DRAWING (LINO-CUT) OF TWO SAICOM - "OU VOULEZ VOUS EN VENIR?" IT IS THE PREDOMINANT ELEMENT - WHEREAS IN COMMERCIAL WORK SAY A PARC(AS) BANK DRAWING IT IS SUBORDINATED.

2. Do you approach the subject of homosexuality from a personal perspective as it effects you emotionally, or from a wider social perspective as it effects the (gay) community at large?

AT FIRST PERSONALLY - BUT RECENTLY (AIDS) IN A MUCH BROADER VIEW POINT.

3. Do you feel gay art is self indulgent, not relevant to many, excludes a wider audience?

OF COURSE IT CAN BE - JUST A POLITICAL OR WOMEN OR ABSTRACT ART CAN - BUT IF ITS GOOD IT SHOULD REACH THE WIDER AUDIENCE. AS GOOD ART (WHICH HAPPENS) IT SHOULD BE APPRECIATED AND ENJOYED BY AS MANY AS POSSIBLE

4. What are the difficulties you find (if any) in dealing with the subject of homosexuality personally/socially, in trying to communicate?

PERSONALLY I FIND NONE - THE WAY IN WHICH I DRAW IS FAIRLY ANONYMOUS, I STICK USUALLY TO HEAD AND SHOULDERS AND IF I DRAW A PRICK IT'S USUALLY CHILDLIKE (INNOCENT) I SUPPOSE IF I WAS A REALIST AND I DREW SWEATY MEN HUMMING EACH OTHER PEOPLE MIGHT THINK THE WORK "PORNOGRAPHIC" - (ALTHOUGH I FIND ART HARD TO BE PORNOGRAPHIC -) WHICH IS A PROBLEM FOR SAY ART - PEOPLE FIND IT HARD TO ACCEPT SAY MEN / WOMEN SO THEIR VIEW OF THE WORLD IS THOUGHT PERVERSE.

Please feel free to answer questions which you feel relevant to your own attitudes and approach to w

NC 0034847 3



1. Does your work contain gay subject matter, and if so what level of importance would it have? Would it be a predominant element?

ALTHOUGH IT DOES CONTAIN GAY SUBJECT MATTER, THE LEVEL CAN VARY DEPENDING ON WHAT I CHOOSE TO DEPICT - FOR EXAMPLE IN MY DRAWING (LINO-CUT) OF TWO SAICOM - "OU VOUEZ VOUS EN VENIR?" IT IS THE PREDOMINANT ELEMENT - WHEREAS IN COMMERCIAL WORK SAY A PANCARD BANK DRAWING IT IS SUBORDINATED.

2. Do you approach the subject of homosexuality from a personal perspective as it effects you emotionally, or from a wider social perspective as it effects the (gay) community at large?

AT FIRST PERSONALLY - NOW RECENTLY (SINCE AIDS) IN A MUCH BROADER VIEWPOINT.

3. Do you feel gay art is self indulgent, not relevant to many, excludes a wider audience?

OF COURSE IT CAN BE - JUST A POLITICAL OR WOMEN OR ABSTRACT ART CAN - BUT IF ITS GOOD IT SHOULD REACH THE WIDER AUDIENCE. AS GOOD ART (WHICH HAPPENS) IT SHOULD BE APPRECIATED AND ENJOYED BY AS MANY AS POSSIBLE

4. What are the difficulties you find (if any) in dealing with the subject of homosexuality personally/ socially, in trying to communicate?

PERSONALLY I FIND NONE - THE WAY IN WHICH I DRAW IS FAIRLY ANONYMOUS, I STICK USUALLY TO HEAD AND SHOULDERS AND IF I DRAW A PMCK IT'S USUALLY CHILDLIKE (INNOCENT) I SUPPOSE IF I WAS A REALIST AND I DREW SKETCH MEN HUMMING EACH OTHER PEOPLE MIGHT THINK THE WORK "PORNOGRAPHIC" - (ALTHOUGH I FIND ART HARD TO BE PORNOGRAPHIC -) WHICH IS A PROBLEM FOR SAY ART - PEOPLE FIND IT HARD TO ACCEPT SAY MEN / WOMEN & THEIR VIEW OF THE WORLD IS THOUGHT PERVESE.

Do you feel through art you can relate or fully express homosexual thought, activity, and gay oppression etc.?

I CAN EXPRESS MY OWN GAY THOUGHTS AND SOMETIMES THEREFORE
A WIDER VIEW OF A GAY UNIVERSE - I'VE NEVER TAKEN
OPPRESSION - CARING, SUPPORT, JEALOUSY, LOVE, ^{YES} - BECAUSE I
USE SYMBOLS - THE BIRD, HEART, PINK, JAGGED, HAND, HAIR
WHICH ARE SOMETIMES PERSONAL SOMETIMES UNIVERSAL I'VE NEVER
FOUND ONE TO REPRESENT OPPRESSION SUCCESSFULLY - WITH THE
TIME IS MIGHT MATTER -

6. Do you feel a responsibility to produce work which tries to maintain a positive image or as a constructive criticism of homosexuality?

I'VE NEVER REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT IT - MORE THAT ANXIETY -

7. Do you feel it is important to be recognised by what is labeled the "straight" community and to be appreciated by them?

YES - WE ARE A WHOLE THE SOONER "GAYS" ARE OTHER
MINORITY GROUPS ARE TOTALLY ACCEPTED THE BETTER FOR US
ALL - I DON'T BELIEVE IN AN SHATTERED EXISTENCE -

8. In what way do you feel your work succeeds in obtaining it's desired qualities (in terms of medium, expression, mood etc.)

SOMETIMES I FEEL I HIT THE NAIL NEARLY ON THE HEAD - I
LIKE "ANGEL BOY", ST. FRANCIS, THE BOY WHOSE HAIR TURNS INTO
THISS - I START WITH A SERIES OF WORDS WHICH BECOME IMAGES
IN MY MIND - I AM FOR SOMETHING VISUALLY POETIC - FOR A LONG
TIME THE MOOD WAS OPTIMISTIC, THE SADNESS CAME IN - IT WAS
ALL VERY INNOCENT NOW THAT IS GONE - LOVE DRIVES ME ON,
A SELF LOVE AND A LOVE OF SPECIAL FRIENDS - IF I PRODUCE
ONE OR TWO IMAGES A YEAR THAT I'M SATISFIED WITH THEN
I'M PLEASED.

Do you feel the broad media of art should reflect the situations both personal and social which developed in the light of AIDS?

NOT ALL THE TIME - SOMETIMES - IT SHOULD ^{NOT} BE TREATED AS
A SECOND HANDS ABOVE OUR HEADS - THERE IS LIFE AND WE
SHOULD TRY TO BE OPTIMISTIC - IT IS FOR SOME TO DEAR
AND OTHER NOT - JARMAN I THINK WILL TALK IN ITS EFFECT
ON SAYS - ONE CANNOT EXPECT ALL ARTISTS TO BE MOTIVATED
BY IT.

2. The events leading up to and after "Stonewall" had much of an impact on firstly the gay community and to a lesser extent the community at large. Are you happy with the approach taken in the last twenty odd years by known gay artists in Britain and America?

IT ALL STARTED WELL TRAILING OFF DURING THE LATE
NINETIES AND EIGHTIES - PERHAPS AIDS WILL PRODUCE SOMETHING
OF A RENAISSANCE.

HOWEVER THE REAL SODD SAY ARTISTS DIDN'T START
STONEWALL, CARMUS- SPONGE PLAST CUNT, CATER - ALL PRODUCING
HOMO-EROTIC ART BEFORE '68 - I THINK SOMETIMES IT OPENED
THE FLOOD GATES OF MEDIOCRITY. BY THAT STANDARD WAS
IMPORTANT AND MUST NEVER BE GIVEN UP.

3. Do you feel the work reflects the issues, lifestyles and mood of the time? Or would you feel there to be too many representations of one aspect of homosexuality, for example iconography or representations of the male physique?

UNFORTUNATELY MUCH OF SAY ART IS BODY OBSESSED AS ART
MANY SAY MEN - FOR THEM (AND FOR STRAIGHTS - (I HATE THAT
ARM-NON-SAYS)) SAY ART IS HUNKY MEN, BULKY CLAD
OF NOT CLAD, TANNED, OVER DEVELOPED (IN MANY AREAS) -
MUCH LACKS HUMOUR, ~~DEPT~~ DEPTH, FEELING (Y/N I SUPPOSE IT
DIDN'T MEET OUR TIME) - ~~THE~~ ~~OF~~ ~~ENGLAND~~ ~~TRICK~~ ~~THE~~ ~~PISS~~ ~~OUT~~
~~OF~~ ~~SA~~ ~~IN~~ ~~THE~~ ~~MAN~~ ~~SAY~~ ~~MAN~~ ~~HAVE~~ ~~SO~~ ~~OBVIOUS~~ -
LIKE TEENAGERS - INSTEAD OF BAD POSTER, THEY HAVE BETTER,
OF DIFFICULTY.

1. Do you think it is particularly important for gay artists to approach the subject of AIDS in their work to counteract the ignorant perceptions of the media, the cliché moralistic portrayals?

IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ARTIST TO DO WHAT HE CAN
SOME WILL BE MORE ELOQUANT THAN OTHER, SOME WILL
CREATE IMAGES WHICH CONVEY A MESSAGE - YOU CANNOT
FORCE AN ARTIST TO WORK IN A WAY WHICH SITS ASIDE
HIS/HER SENSE -

2. Is there a particular message within your work which comments on or expresses any aspect of AIDS?

YES ~~CARING~~ - LOVE WHICH SHOULD BE WITHIN US
~~DEATH WHICH AIDS HAS EXISTED~~

YES CARING, LOVE - WHICH ~~IT~~ WOULD BE THERE ANYWAY -
PERHAPS AIDS HAS MINIMIZED IT.

3. Do you feel isolated in your situation when dealing with the subject because of the confusion and complexities which surround the problem?

NO.

4. Do you feel there is a common awareness and concern about AIDS within the artistic community of London?

YN - very much so.

5. Do you feel that there has been a change in the art work of London gay artists that coincides with the dramatic changes in lifestyles and attitudes of the gay community?

6. Has this change effected your own work?

7. Do you hold any particular hopes or aspirations for the gay art scene in Britain, or indeed for your personal work in the future?

THAT ALWAYS HOPE THAT SOMEONE WILL
PRODUCE SOMETHING WONDERFUL - I'M A LITTLE
JEALOUS OF THE SEX AND MEDIA - SOMETHING
ISOLATION IS MORE CREATIVE.

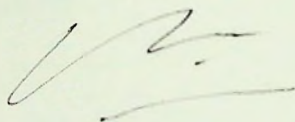
Extra Paper

DEAR PAUL -

I'D RATHER FILLING IN FORMS - I'M MUCH BETTER AT
ANSWERING QUESTIONS PUT PERSONALLY - ALSO MY DISCRETE
TENDENCIES ARE INCREASED -

I'VE RUN OUT OF STEAM - DON'T HESITATE TO QUIZ
ME ON ANYTHING -

I'LL WRITE YOU

A stylized handwritten signature, possibly reading 'Paul', written in dark ink.

Please number your answers.

Please feel free to answer questions which you feel are relevant to your own attitudes and approach

7614
QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY

PHILIP CORE

1. Does your work contain gay subject matter, and if so what level of importance? Would it be a predominant element?

Yes - both the Male Nude per se, and the search for Narrative subjects naturally assume a gay reference when I undertake them. I'm told I paint women oddly, and feel this must mean minus sexuality. My narrative ideas involve male relations.

2. Do you approach the subject of homosexuality from a personal perspective as it effects you emotionally, or from a wider social perspective as it effects the (gay) community at large?

Of course all art with the name uses a personal perspective and expresses the artist's emotions (or takes its impetus from them). I do, however, try to find stories, scenes, subjects that are Universal, to make my own (gay man's) feelings about love, death, joy sorrow, etc. comprehensible to all. I want to use the language of the the figure and all possible media to show how broadly applicable is my own isolated experience.

3. Do you feel gay art is self indulgent, not relevant to many, excludes a wider audience?

I feel the tradition of "PIN-UPS", i.e. single figure, nudes, fantasies (Cadmus, Michael Leonard, Rex, Hockney) is an equivalent of Vargas, and definitely self-indulgent. The older, greater tradition, stemming from Michelangelo, of the grand and anguished Narrative is for all people and all time.

4. What are the difficulties you find (if any) in dealing with the subject of homosexuality personally/socially, in trying to communicate?

Sexuality is not taken for granted. People may dislike Homosexuality, but it obscures them. An oil of a naked woman (even a little girl, eg. Balthus) is a "study" and, though tacitly sexual, is considered as Form; an oil of a naked man is "Erotic Art", especially if the cock is visible, and is supposed to reveal obsessions with class, or cock size, or so forth. Any picture does that, but we are discursive, say, S. Spence's obsession with flabby tits, or Balthus Paedophilia as promptly as they do with obsessions. So I feel people think I'm an outlaw, when I'm a Classicist.

Please feel free to answer questions which you feel are relevant to your own attitudes and approach to

NC 0034852 X



1. Does your work contain gay subject matter, and if so what level of importance would it have? Would it be a predominant element?

Yes - both the Male Nude per se, and the search for Narrative subjects naturally assume a gay reference when I undertake them. I'm told I paint women oddly, and feel this must mean minus sexuality. My narrative ideas involve male relations.

2. Do you approach the subject of homosexuality from a personal perspective as it effects you emotionally, or from a wider social perspective as it effects the (gay) community at large?

Of course all art worth the name uses a personal perspective and expresses the artist's emotions (or takes its impetus from them). I do, however, try to find stories, scenes, subjects that are Universal, to make my own (gay man's) feelings about love, death, joy sorrow, etc. comprehensible to all. I want to use the language of the the figure and all possible media to show how broadly applicable is my own isolated experience.

3. Do you feel gay art is self indulgent, not relevant to many, excludes a wider audience?

I feel the tradition of "PIN-UPS", i.e. single figure, neat fantasies (Cadmus, Michael Leonard, Rex, Hockney) is an equivalent of Vargas, and definitely self-indulgent. The older, greater tradition stemming from Michaelangelo, of the grand and anguished Narrative is for all people and all time.

4. What are the difficulties you find (if any) in dealing with the subject of homosexuality personally/socially, in trying to communicate?

Sexuality is not taken for granted. People may dislike Homosexuality, but it obsesses them. An oil of a naked woman (even a little girl, eg. Bathus) is a "study" and, though tacitly sexual, is considered as Form; an oil of a naked man is "Erotic Art", especially if the cock is visible, and is supposed to reveal obsessions with class, or cock size, or so forth. Any picture does that, but we are discursive, say, S. Spencer's obsession with flabby tits, or Bathus Paedophilia as promptly as they do my obsessions. So I feel people think me an outlaw, when I'm a Classicist.

5. Do you feel through art you can relate or fully express homosexual thought, activity, and gay oppression etc.?

Yes. Over the years I've managed to collect a series of images - based on my life as it happens to me - that do cover a lot: fantasies of desire; childhood memories; parental discrimination; oppression; male bonding; male Narcissism; the sexuality of violence; AIDS; the links between sophisticated Straights and Gays... I'm interested in the Gayness within all experience, the essential solitude we must all admit.

6. Do you feel a responsibility to produce work which tries to maintain a positive image or as a constructive criticism of homosexuality?

No, neither. I'm only interested in making images that I'm throwing forcefully in my imagination, in as moving and accessible a technique as I can muster.

7. Do you feel it is important to be recognised by what is labeled the "straight" community and to be appreciated by them?

As no gay in England have given me shows, bought art, supported me at all - and as gay critics have been nasty and obstructive to me, I have no choice but to sell where I can. Certainly I am no Ghetto-dweller and believe in Universal Brotherhood.

8. In what way do you feel your work succeeds in obtaining it's desired qualities (in terms of medium, expression, mood etc.)

Everyone I know rather fiercely likes a different (often dramatically opposed) bit of my oeuvre: so I succeed at variety. Pictures better painted, more original (in all modesty) than much-reviewed equivalents are totally ignored by critics: so I succeed at unsettling. I have painted a dozen or so pictures 20 or so drawings and 2 sculptures that, when I come across them, have an absolute autonomy, almost as if someone else had done them; The techniques differ, but that is my test of work that is free (free from self) and successful.

1. Do you feel the broad media of art should reflect the situations both personal and social which developed in the light of AIDS?

Mine does. How could it not? Even portraits of men now dead do it automatically. HIV + my self I reflect thru with every breath, and certainly with every picture. As far as attempting big social statements in Political Reasons - but does not have to do that. To the real audience every simple line + brushstroke is politics, in feeling, is an expression of the Times.

2. The events leading up to and after "Stonewall" had much of an impact on firstly the gay community and to a lesser extent the community at large. Are you happy with the approach taken in the last twenty odd years by known gay artists in Britain and America?

No. I think Pono has taken greater steps. Though Camp and exaggerated, Tom of Finland does touch a deep nerve in an admirable and relentless way. Today, Bastille explores a newer sexuality with Panache. But Hockney's cold lack of emotion (eg. "Tanzania" - a picture of his lover like an Ad in a Sunday Supplement) or Bacon's obfuscations are disappointing. Atilla Richard Luckacs (US, in Berlin), ~~and~~ Caballero (Gall. Pierre Loeb, Paris) and a few others are fusing a real, emotive, unequivocally Gay painterly style.

3. Do you feel the work reflects the issues, lifestyles and mood of the time? Or would you feel there to be too many representations of one aspect of homosexuality, for example iconography or representations of the male physique?

The Pin-Up again. There is surprisingly little depiction of emotions about a subject so ringed about with high feelings. Bacon aside, few gay artists seem to be interested in depicting their loves, a lack thereof, their sufferings, or even the emotions that make a man beautiful to them. (After all, why is Man X attractive rather than Man Y?) Being gay is being, to some degree, isolated - so where is the concomitant exploration of the self, something clearly developed in gay literature? I don't

mean all gay art should be self-portraits (though the long series by Christian Bérard are uniquely moving), just that the moods, obsessions and origins of the gay approach must (visually expressed) include more than pectoral muscles and dinner-jackets. There is also too much pastiche by gay artists: imitations of successful styles a part masters, too little originality.

1. Do you think it is particularly important for gay artists to approach the subject of AIDS in their work to counteract the ignorant perceptions of the media, the cliché moralistic portrayals? If they can. But, if they are better at painting apples, why paint Rhetoric? A gay Chardin would be more valuable today than a gay Socialist Realist. However, sexuality needs re-affirmation; we need a broad knowledge of our own history and art-history; we need to explore more of our own feelings, less of our own style.

2. Is there a particular message within your work which comments on or expresses any aspect of AIDS?

Yes / 1. That desire is NOT a bad thing, and will not disappear through fear. That it is beautiful, noble and inevitable.

2. That death is not to be feared. That anyone who explores the body and the visible world as an artist does, will feel - à la Pascal - a unity with Eternity ^{that provides} ^{courage}.
3. Do you feel isolated in your situation when dealing with the subject because of the confusion and complexities which surround the problem?

Of course, even approaching the problem as art is difficult: photos? oils? drawings? Symbolism or deadpan Realism? Should we reflect the anguish in the technique or the subject? I face these issues daily. Art and the power to make it comes from Joy - and where is the Joy of AIDS?

4. Do you feel there is a common awareness and concern about AIDS within the artistic community of London?

An awareness yes, a concern, no. The subject is fairly important, publicly lightly treated. I'd say a climate of nervous fear, with not much artistic enterprize prevails.

5. Do you feel that there has been a change in the art work of London gay artists that coincides with the dramatic changes in lifestyles and attitudes of the gay community?

No - not really, though a vague assertiveness about expressing the self and personal eroticism has arisen in reaction to Cl. 28, first, and AIDS, second. Theatre, filmaking + writing are well ahead.

6. Has this change effected your own work?

~~Yes~~ Yes, but its more to do with getting older (37) and increasing confidence. Solitude, anger and illness have certainly motivated me strongly to get my ideas on canvas clearly and unequivocally; to do things I've left in abeyance for years; To exhibit my deepest self - as that's all I have left.

7. Do you hold any particular hopes or aspirations for the gay art scene in Britain, or indeed for your personal work in the future?

I would like to assert the Vocabulary of Classical Figurism - making sculptures and pictures combining life-drawing and Greek Precedents in formalism - a vocabulary that was my first language, and about which I have been a bit shy, or unassertive. I'd like to apply all this to issues around me - ie, just to do more of what I've always wanted to, better.

NC 0034853 8



Paul McCauley
Fine Art Sculpture
100 Thomas Street
Dublin 8
Ireland

Dear

I am a student of the National College of Art and Design (Dublin) studying Fine Art Sculpture in my degree year. Much of my subject matter deals principally with Gay themes both personal and social. I know of no other artist in Ireland who is dealing with this subject so as you can imagine I feel a certain isolation.

To try and combat this I have decided to concentrate my degree thesis on a small group of contemporary Gay artists in London.

The editor of 'Square Peg' kindly gave me your address after I enquired about artists dealing with homosexuality within their work.

I shall be visiting London for post graduate interviews in theatre design in late January and would be very grateful if I could talk briefly with you during this time at your convenience. I realise how precious your time must be and would very much appreciate the opportunity.

I am sure this would not only benefit my thesis but would help in the development of my personal work.

However if this is not possible I enclose a questionnaire of which I would be very grateful if you would consider. I enclose a stamped addressed envelope which can be express posted for contact information, questionnaire or any other information which you feel would help.

Thankyou for your kind attention.

Yours sincerely,

Paul McCauley