

O T H E R

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M I T H

Matt Smith

Other Stories
Queering the University
Art Collection

Other Stories

Matt Smith

First published in 2012 to coincide with the exhibition *Other Stories: Queering the University Art Collection*, 27 February – 5 May 2012

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Contents

5	Foreword Layla Bloom
6	Ordinary Queerness Lara Perry
8	Edward Carpenter: Sex, Spirit, and Social Reform Joy Dixon
12	Other Stories Matt Smith
14	Works
30	Appendix
32	Acknowledgements



Foreword

Layla Bloom

This catalogue has been published to coincide with the exhibition 'Other Stories: Queering the University Art Collection' part of wider celebrations throughout the UK for LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) History Month in February. In recognition of this occasion, the Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery presents a two-part exhibition: the first part concerns the life of Victorian writer, philosopher and gay rights activist Edward Carpenter, whose letters can be found in the University of Leeds Library Special Collections. The second views LGBT history through the lens of contemporary art, creating 'interventions' in our main collection room by the artist Matt Smith. Smith researched personal stories from the LGBT community at Brighton Ourstory and inscribed selections from these on found objects. Each work connects to a piece in the University Art Collection, offering new ways of understanding and reading these objects, as well as opening up debate about the meanings given to objects in museum and gallery displays. It is hoped that Carpenter's vision of a better world alongside Matt Smith's very personal responses to our collection will encourage visitors to reflect on alternative and multiple possible interpretations of these objects, perhaps – like Smith – drawing on their own personal associations and experiences.

Special mention must go to my colleague Dr. Zsuzsanna Reed Papp, who conceived this project. Her passion and dedication – through extensive research, writing and organisation – has allowed the Gallery team to bring together this special exhibition during her absence on maternity leave. Many thanks to my Gallery colleagues, especially Laura Millward, Paul Whittle and Liz Stainforth, for helping make these plans a reality.

We are immensely grateful for support from the National Lottery through Arts Council England, which has made this project possible.

Layla Bloom

Curator

Ordinary Queerness

Lara Perry

Among the pleasures of viewing a work of art from the past in the present is in entering into a dialogue with artist and subject that defies the gulf of time. However many years may separate the act of making an artwork from the act of looking at it, the gap can be closed by the mutual presence of artwork and viewer. Matt Smith's exhibition for the Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery engages with this most powerful dynamic of the art exhibition, devising contemporary works that explore and exploit our individual relationships with historic artworks from the University of Leeds Art Collection. His installation renews and expands our sensitivity to the art of the twentieth century, and reshapes the relationship we have in the present with the past it represents. In particular, this exhibition opens up for us a relationship with the usually repressed histories of lesbian, gay and bisexual relationships in England.

This renewal of our relationship with the historic artworks is achieved in part by removing the works from the conventional discourse of the art display. In what is usually described as an *intervention*, Matt Smith's work follows that of artists who have scrutinised and criticised museum collections by directly reworking the presentation and interpretation of their collection. Influential artists' interventions have included Fred Wilson's exposé of the racist histories told in American museum collections ('Mining the Museum: An Installation by Fred Wilson,' 1992-3); Andrea Fraser's exploration of the classed culture of the art museum in 'Museum Highlights, A Gallery Talk', (1989); and Susan Hiller's 'After the Freud Museum' (1991-96), which probes the conscious and unconscious significances of Sigmund Freud's art collection. These are just a few of the pioneering examples of the genre of artist's intervention, which has developed into a key mechanism through which art institutions interact with living artists.¹

In this exhibition at Leeds, the artist's intervention is focused on elaborating a sense of queer history, the history of the many people whose intimate relationships are not arranged by straightforward heterosexuality. This is a history that is almost always omitted from museums and galleries, even when it is integral to the lives of the artists and artworks that are exhibited there.

In the most extreme cases, the museum offers us an extremely astringent version of art's history which focuses on its formal innovations: Vanessa Bell's *Still Life (Triple Alliance)* (1914) or Trevor Bell's *Image of Blues* (1960), for example, are recorded as exemplars of an evolving British modernism (the painting of 'significant form' followed by the adventures of abstraction). In Smith's display, the emphasis is not on the formal qualities of the artworks, but on their relationship to the historic field of social and sexual practices in which they emerged. Artworks always take shape within the specific network of friendships and working practices, and the acts of social experimentation (and conformity) that accompanied the aesthetic gestures of the artworks are inseparable from them.² For some audiences, and for

some artists, the social gestures that are implicated in artworks are at least as compelling as the aesthetic ones. The juxtaposition of the historic artworks from the University of Leeds Art Collection with Smith's own works opens a dialogue between the pairs of objects that enjoins us to reflect on the ways the artists capture the mood and dynamics of a specific relationship with their models, and with their canvases.

This is not achieved through the sensationalising of particular episodes in the artists' biographies, even where such a move is possible (it is sometimes the case that histories of Bloomsbury artists, for example, dwell rather pruriently on the unconventionality of some of the relationships that formed the friendship circle). Instead the display invites us to reflect on the ordinary qualities of queer history and desires, and of their seamless integration – and not segregation – from more familiar versions of the past. Smith's use of domestic objects in his work is key to this process. Desktop photo frames, children's clothing and coffee sets are normally not admitted to art gallery displays. They belong to the realm of the familiar because our own homes are populated with similar kinds of things, and give us a direct mode of access to the 'foreign country' that is the past.³ These objects anchor the University of Leeds Art Collection in the ordinary but profound currency of the domestic world, and the daily intimacies of the relationships it shelters. Their general connotations are however accorded a definite and particular queer character through the texts that are recorded on the objects. Gleaned from the Ourstory archive of oral testimonies from the Brighton and Hove lesbian and gay community, the quotations reproduce the speaker's own voice, and allow the women and men who recorded their experiences of queer life to speak to us directly.

Each of the quotations and objects that Smith has used in his own works expresses a moment of crystalline clarity about the speaker's situation, and the way that an individual's life is shaped by its encounters with the sexual habits of a society. This aspect of Matt Smith's installation brings much more to this exhibition than the simple elaboration of queer social history. At the same time that Smith's embroidered, impressed, stencilled and otherwise articulated objects bring the University of Leeds Art Collection artworks back to the level of the everyday, they also reanimate them aesthetically. In each quotation is recorded a struggle to give shape to unfamiliar and queer desires, a struggle which parallels the attempts of the artist to create a form and image. In Gaudier-Brzeska's *Standing Male Nude (Horace Brodsky)* or John Currie's *The Seamstresses*, the effort of the artist to call forth a particular vision of his subject is visible in the strained lines that both record the natural world and begin to reshape it. Through Matt's vision of ordinary queerness, we can see the University of Leeds Art Collections artworks as attempts to redraw convention, and give new form to everyday desires.

¹ For an introduction to this practice, see K. McShine, *The Museum as Muse*, exh. cat. (New York, 1999)

² Lisa Tickner, 'English Modernism in the Cultural Field', in D. Corbett and L. Perry eds, *English Art 1860-1914: Modern Artists and Identity*, (Manchester, 2000): 13-30.

³ The description was popularised by David Lowenthal in his influential book, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge, 1985).



Edward Carpenter: Sex, Spirit, and Social Reform

Joy Dixon

Edward Carpenter was born in 1844, the seventh child of a well-off family in Brighton. He went on to become one of the best-known reformers of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, as a feminist, a pacifist, an animal rights campaigner and as an early campaigner for sexual reform. Recent interest in Carpenter has been significant, as the themes that were central to his work—a concern with social justice and sexual politics, and an effort to make connections between various radical causes, from socialism to feminism and sexual reform—are important issues in our own day. In her new biography of Carpenter, Sheila Rowbotham notes 'the remarkable range of *interconnections* evident in his life, through his networks, his mix of causes, his interests and his thinking,'¹ which forces us to recognise the ways that his many interests intersected and complemented each other.

Those interests included both sexuality and spirituality, which Carpenter saw as operating in dynamic relationship to each other. Carpenter was one of a number of figures who were trying to connect 'sex' and 'spirit' at this time. In America, for example, the spiritualist and free love activist Lois Waisbrooker argued (as Sarah Willburn puts it) that 'sex is the way to heaven and is also the vehicle through which spirits rule the world, making women a natural, sexually active, sexually evolved part of the divine order.'² Within the spiritualist movement, the séance was also a space in which both men and women found opportunities to break social, sexual, and gender rules, assisted and sometimes encouraged by the presence of 'spirits.'³ For most of these writers, though, it was heterosexual sex which was seen as linked to salvation; so-called 'sexual perversion' was still often linked to 'spiritual perversion.' Carpenter was unusual in the very positive role he gave to non-marital, non-heterosexual forms of sexual desire. Influenced by Walt Whitman, Carpenter saw desire (or 'love') as at the core of all personal, social, and evolutionary change. In a chapter of his book *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure* (1889) Carpenter described how '[d]esire, or inward change, comes first, action follows, and organisation or outward structure is the result.' Whether the result was a person building a house or a gastropod growing antennae, evolution was a 'true unfolding of a higher form latent within—an organic growth of the creature itself.'⁴ Naming this process 'Exfoliation'—the point at which the old forms are 'thrown off like a husk'⁵—emphasised the moment at which desire or feeling broke through into the material world, transforming it. The result was to blur the distinctions between the ideal and the real, presenting the material world as a kind of crystallization of desire, and as continually susceptible to being modified by the power of that desire. For Carpenter, 'love' had to be the driving force behind all change; love was the life-force 'bursting' through the old dead forms of western civilisation to make way for new possibilities.

Roger Fry (1866-1934), *Edward Carpenter*,
oil on canvas, 1894, Given by Roger Fry, 1930.
(NPG 2447) © National Portrait Gallery

Carpenter was writing about love and sex at a time when both were controversial and highly politicised. Socialist and feminist critiques of marriage and male sexual license sometimes opposed and sometimes made common cause with eugenic and imperial concerns.⁶ In a context where the dominant 'progressive' position on sexuality was represented by the social purity movement—which demanded sexually 'pure' behaviour from both sexes⁷ — Carpenter attempted to make positive connections between love, sex (including same-sex love), desire, and the body.

In his early writings on sexuality—the publication of which was interrupted by the closing down of public discussion of homosexuality in the wake of the Oscar Wilde trial in 1895 — Carpenter even attempted a limited defense of lust (what he described as 'the corporeal amatory instinct'), stressing the interchangeability of lust and love, body and soul, and of the cultural and biological under the heading of the principle of 'Transmutation.'⁸ These slippages between and deliberate confusions of the boundaries between soul and body, the spiritual and the physical, are one of the reasons why Carpenter has been so variously characterised by historians, who have described him both as an advocate of a 'strongly biological theory of sexual behaviour' and as arguing that 'homogenic [homosexual] love was primarily a question of sensibility rather than of congenital "orientation."⁹ In his writings on homosexuality, which he characterized as an 'intermediate sex,' Carpenter refused to resolve these questions, portraying the 'sexual intermediate' as a distinctive (and perhaps superior) way of being, and as a potential future for all humanity. The 'intermediate' was bisexual in the sense that he or she combined the characteristics of both male and female; in an 'extreme specimen' both body and behaviour might evidence traits usually associated with the other sex. The 'intermediate' was also a transitional type in the sense that she or he stood between the extremes of the manly man and the womanly woman. In *The Intermediate Sex* (1908), Carpenter concluded that the most recent and most reliable authorities agreed 'that the individuals affected with inversion in marked degree do not after all differ from the rest of mankind or womankind, in any other physical or mental particular which can be distinctly indicated.'¹⁰ The 'Intermediate Sex' was, for Carpenter, a natural variation, the result of what he described as 'a mixture of male and female elements in the same person; so that for instance in the same embryo the emotional and nervous regions may develop along feminine lines while the outer body and functions may determine themselves as distinctly masculine.' The 'problem' of the intermediate temperament (if it was a problem) was, therefore, 'of Nature's own producing' and same-sex love was, according to Carpenter, 'not only natural, but needful and inevitable.'¹¹

This material has been drawn with permission from Joy Dixon, "'Out of your clinging kisses ... I create a new world": Sexuality and Spirituality in the Work of Edward Carpenter,' *Ashgate Research Companion to Nineteenth-Century Spiritualism and the Occult*, eds. Tatiana Kontou and Sarah Willburn (Ashgate, in press).

- 1 Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, p. 4.
- 2 Sarah A. Willburn, *Possessed Victorians: Extra Spheres in Nineteenth-Century Mystical Writings* (Aldershot, 2006), p. 72.
- 3 See Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room: Women, Power and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England* (London, 1989); Marlene Tromp, *Altered States: Sex, Nation, Drugs, and Self-Transformation in Victorian Spiritualism* (Albany, 2006). As Willburn notes in *Possessed Victorians*, these encounters could also include same-sex eroticism. See pp. 87-8.
- 4 Carpenter, *Civilisation*, pp. 133-6.
- 5 Carpenter, *Civilisation*, p. 138.
- 6 See Angelique Richardson, *Love and Eugenics in the Late Nineteenth Century: Rational Reproduction and the New Woman* (Oxford, 2003).
- 7 Lucy Bland, *Banishing the Beast: Feminism, Sex and Morality* (1995; London and New York, 2002), p. 52.
- 8 Carpenter, *Sex-Love and its Place in a Free Society* (Manchester 1894), p. 8
- 9 For the first position, see Vincent Geoghegan, "Edward Carpenter's England Revisited," *History of Political Thought* 24/3 (Autumn 2003): p. 514; for the second, see Harry Cocks, "Calamus in Bolton: Spirituality and Homosexual Desire in Late Victorian England," *Gender and History* 13/2 (August 2001): p. 217.
- 10 Edward Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex* (1908) in *Edward Carpenter: Selected Writings. Volume 1: Sex* (London, 1984), pp. 196-7, 209. The English term "Intermediate Sex" was Carpenter's phrase; the concept itself was already in widespread use, particularly since the publication of Otto Weininger's *Sex and Character* (published in German in 1903; English translation 1906), which Carpenter quoted on the first page of his text.
- 11 Carpenter, *Intermediate Sex*, p. 213.

Other Stories

Matt Smith

When I started talking with Zsuzsanna Papp and Layla Bloom at the Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery about developing a series of art installations using the Edward Carpenter material as a base, I naturally spent some time reading his biography.

A true *Renaissance man*, Edward was born in 1844 and had a very open relationship with another man, George Merrill. They met in 1891 and lived together until Merrill's death in 1928. This openness ran counter to the historical 'truth' that late Victorian homosexuality was all about covert and persecuted lifestyles and the trial of Oscar Wilde.

At about the same time as we were having these discussions, I heard Amy Tooth Murphy, from LGBT History Month Scotland, talk about her work with LGBT oral histories and how many of the interviewees painted a picture which differed from the 'grand narratives' of the past that we can believe to be universal and true.

Museums and galleries form and develop collections. They often present narratives based on their holdings – which by their very nature are selected, and edited, creating 'universal histories' which include some and exclude others. Since museums and galleries are usually based around object collections, those groups in society that own, use and consume objects tend to be privileged in museum displays.

Unlike most other minority groups – those linked by religion, ethnicity and race – the LGBT community produces a paucity of unique material culture. There are few 'gay objects'. It is also a group that seldom passes knowledge down through familial, intergenerational lines. In light of this, the role of the oral history archive becomes pressing, if members of the fragmented, diverse 'LGBT community' feel the need to place themselves within a wider historical setting.

Similarly, traditional museum and gallery classifications which record object details, such as date, medium and maker, provide a basis for categorisation and order, but often ignore the role those objects played in daily life – the reasons they were made, bought, used and retained. The emotive memories that become embedded in cherished objects are too often lost as they fall outside the normal means of classification.

For all these reasons, I was interested in working with the material in an oral history archive to find out what people thought and felt in the past and to discover what discrepancies the archive may contain and what links and connections such material could make with the fine art collection at the University. I therefore contacted the Ourstory oral history archive in Brighton.

The Ourstory archive's remit is to document the lives of people who have same-sex desire.¹ Like any collection, the archive is obviously selected. Whilst it contains many voices, the

archive is limited by whose stories are told and collected, who is asked to speak, and who is willing to be recorded. Layered over this, was my further sifting and selecting. Going through the archive, I was looking for those voices that interested me – that made me stop and want to consider what was being said.

Working with these first person narratives, I embedded them permanently, into contemporaneous objects. As a counterpoint to the argument that LGBT stories become hidden histories, I wanted to make these memories visible, tangible and permanent by indelibly etching them into objects that these interviewees could have owned, held or viewed.

Throughout this process, I kept coming back to the third equal player in this exhibition – the University of Leeds Art Collection, since this series of interventions forms a three-way connection between the oral histories, the contemporaneous objects and the art collection at the University of Leeds.

Some of the connections were immediately obvious – the Duncan Grant artworks were a key starting point given his widely documented history of same-sex relationships whilst in a long term relationship with Vanessa Bell. Others, such as the *Image of Blues* by Trevor Bell, were connected visually, whilst the relevance of others came out in discussions with curator Layla Bloom.

The oral history archive – whilst certainly not unedited or unselected – provides us with a more rounded, representative portrayal of lives and loves than we can often find through objects alone. By using these contradictory histories, and utilising them to reinterpret the pictures from the collection, I hope to reposition the artworks away from curatorial conventions and certainties and instead within the worlds of emotion, subjectivity and identity.

For some of the pictures in the collection, the links are tenuous and fleeting; for others, they are integral to the biographies of the artists. For all, the intention is that the interventions allow for the pictures to be curated and considered in a new way.

There are often many histories of an object. Trying to reduce history into a single, unified narrative erases the lives of those who lived outside of that mainstream and ignores that the past has always been a collection of complex, fragmented and contradictory stories.

¹ Whilst this doesn't necessarily exclude trans people, I couldn't find appropriate reminiscences and therefore, unfortunately, trans voices are not heard in this exhibition.

Untitled I

Lasercut oak and brass tray, 2012

Until recently, same-sex relationships fell outside state records and family trees. They are often only found by looking at what is omitted and left unsaid.

'At the age of eight or nine, and long before distinct sexual feelings declared themselves, I felt a friendly attraction toward my own sex, and this developed after the age of puberty into a passionate sense of love.'

— Edward Carpenter, circa 1855



George Merrill Photo by Lena Connell. From: Edward Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams: Being Autobiographical Notes* (London, 1916).



Untitled II

Wool blanket, hand embroidery, 2012

Apparently, whilst painting *The Seamstresses*, artist John Currie read Dostoevsky to the two models, who look less-than-enraptured by it, and instead seem to be humouring the male presence in their lives.

'She and I started dancing and the feeling between us was getting a bit powerful. We disappeared one night up into my room. We were just overcome with desire. I didn't seem to care about people knowing. Well. I didn't think there was anything wrong in what we were doing. So, they would see us lying on the bed and, in fact, we used to lay outside, on the lawn, and canoodle in full view of everyone.'

— Gill, circa 1949



John Currie (1883–1914), *The Seamstresses*, oil on canvas, 1913, Gift of Sir Michael Sadler, 1923. The University of Leeds Art Collection.



Untitled III

Stratton Fonopad address book, ink, 2012

Sex between men was legalised in the UK in 1967. Dennis' account highlights his belief that anonymous sex was the safest way of having physical contact in an era when men loving men could result in arrest and imprisonment.

As well as combining decoration and entrapment, *Bird Cage* also shares its name with the 1996 adaptation of Jean Poiret's 1973 play *La Cage aux Folles*.

'I never kept the names and addresses of ...friends written down, it was in my head but I never wrote it down on anything and I would certainly never dream of keeping a diary because I knew loads and loads and loads of queens who were arrested and then they'd go to their house and go through their rooms and they'd find a diary and they'd go through names in that and it could snowball, it was a terrifying thing.

I always thought it wasn't safe to have affairs. One night stands with someone whose name you didn't know and certainly whose address you didn't know and they didn't know yours was really a much better idea.'

— Dennis, circa 1960

Frank Lisle (1916–1986), *Bird Cage*, oil on canvas, 1955,
Transfer from the Educational Resource Service, Wakefield, 2002.
The University of Leeds Art Collection. © Estate of Frank Lisle



Untitled IV

Laser-etched Babycham glasses, 2012

Not all the narratives in the archive agreed. For many, the illegality of male same-sex relationships before 1967 did not have a major detrimental impact. For George, however, it did. His bleak testimony is in stark contrast to ideas of the 1960s as a time of sexual liberation and youthful exuberance. I tried to capture this discrepancy with the use of the Babycham glasses, engraving his story on the glasses made for one of the campest of drinks. Placed in front of Vasarely's painting which utilises optical tricks, the messages play and hide from the viewer. The painting's combination – to my eye – of celebratory bubbles and constricting bars echoes the contradiction of this period for some gay men.

'I had a great sense of relief when the law changed. I was terrified of the law. When you grow up and you find that you're against the law – it worries you. Just the very fact that your existence is threatened all the time and you have to behave in certain ways. And you're vulnerable.

In bars, for example, you never discussed where you worked, you never gave your name, never gave your real name anyway. You'd be Bill or Harry. I have friends who didn't even know my real name...

I lived in terror I'll never get over that as long as I live. It's born into us, it's bred to feel ashamed of what we are. I will die feeling that way.'

– George, circa 1967



Victor Vasarely (1908-1997), *Iaca*, oil on canvas, 1955-7, Gift of the Audrey and Stanley Burton Charitable Trust, 2009. The University of Leeds Art Collection. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2012



Untitled V

Ceramic coffee set, ceramic transfers, 2012

Virginia Bell and Duncan Grant lived together and had a child. Their relationship was open, and saw Grant have concurrent same-sex relationships. These two pictures show Bell and Grant's different views of the same triple alliance.

'Bob and I were in a pretty bad way and she asked me if I wanted to talk about it. Her husband was upstairs, doing the ironing.

She sat around looking very uncomfortable, drinking coffee and not saying anything. About ten minutes before we had to go and collect the children from school, she suddenly said, "I think I'm in love with you."

I remember being absolutely rooted to the settee, thinking, "Shit, what's the answer to that?" After about ten minutes I said, "Well, I'm a bit shocked but I actually think I feel the same."

I couldn't believe how easy it was to slide into a relationship with a woman. I'd always thought you had to be very different from what I thought I was, in order to be able to do that.

Bob was relieved that I'd got some emotional contact with someone else. Her husband, however, had a nervous breakdown for nine months when she told him.'

— Val, circa 1980



Duncan Grant (1885–1978), *Still Life, Asheham House*, oil and collage on board, 1914, Acquired, 2011. The University of Leeds Art Collection. © Estate of Duncan Grant. All rights reserved, DACS 2012



Vanessa Bell (1879–1961), *Still Life (Triple Alliance)*, collage, newsprint, oil and pastel, 1914, Gift of Sir Michael Sadler, 1923. The University of Leeds Art Collection. © Estate Vanessa Bell, Courtesy Henrietta Garnett



Untitled VI

Soap, titanium dioxide, 2012

This is the least permanent intervention in the exhibition. Graham's oral history was recorded months before he died of an AIDS-related disease. When I read his history, I knew I wanted to work with soap. It took much longer to realise all the connections that were inherent in it as a medium. There was the connection with the repetitive nature of caring and cleaning for the chronically ill. Other cultural responses linking washing with AIDS range from kd Lang's video *So In Love* to the sink pieces by Robert Gober.

The intervention is paired with Trevor Bell's *Image of Blues*, blue being the title of Derek Jarman's 1993 film in which he conveyed his experiences with AIDS. As the interviewee lost his train of thought and Jarman his sight, this soap will eventually lose its shape, its message and its form.

'... I knew that it was almost make or break, you know, that I'd been feeling ill for the last five or six weeks, you know, I, I had a temperature every night, sometimes during the day as well, er, had these different things wrong with me – the, the anal bleeding, the pain, the...'

– Graham (1949–1990), 1989



Trevor Bell (b.1930), *Image of Blues*, oil on canvas, 1960, Gift of Audrey Burton, 2007. The University of Leeds Art Collection. © The artist



Untitled VII

Cotton christening dresses, hand embroidery, 2012

For many people in same-sex relationships, having children was not seen as a possibility. The changes that have happened between when these dresses were made and when they were embroidered – new family groupings, artificial insemination and changes in adoption legislation – are enabling people in same-sex relationships to make decisions about whether they want to become parents.

'(my mother) said she would have regretted if I couldn't have been a parent, she would like it to still be my decision, and when she knew that I was planning to have children, she was really pleased. I don't think she's mentioned that to my father.

I would like to have children, I don't know how exactly and I don't know how easy it would be, it would take a lot of thinking about. You'd have to choose where you lived quite carefully.'

– Ellen, 2000



Bernard Meninsky (1891–1950), *Mother and Child*, oil on canvas, 1919, Gift of Sir Michael Sadler, 1923. The University of Leeds Art Collection. © Courtesy of the estate of Bernard Meninsky / Bridgeman Art Library



Untitled VIII

Chrome photo frame, laser-etched glass, 2012

The complexity of the relationship described by Keith illustrates that 'family' can be used in many ways to describe many relationships.

'He cooks me dinner and listens to my problems, he's a good listener. His walls are covered with pictures of me he's taken. We've got an understanding. He leaves my money on the sideboard every week... He's like the family I never had.'

— Keith, circa 2005



Henri Gaudier-Brzeska (1891–1915), *Standing Male Nude (Horace Brodsky)*, pen and ink on paper, c. 1913, Gift of H.S. Ede, 1966. The University of Leeds Art Collection.



Duncan Grant (1885–1978), *Male Nude*, pen and wash on paper, Acquired 1965. The University of Leeds Art Collection. © Estate of Duncan Grant. All rights reserved, DACS 2012



Appendix

Full texts used from Brighton Ourstory.

Brighton Ourstory is a lesbian, gay and bisexual history centre producing shows, exhibitions, books and newsletters, which celebrate same-sex relationships and liaisons. As well as recording the life stories of gay, lesbian and bisexual people in Brighton and Hove, we catalogue, archive, share and display a vast wealth of information and imagery that captures the history of our communities, enabling everyone to find their place and a sense of belonging.

You can find out more about Ourstory at www.brighonourstory.co.uk or email us at info@brighonourstory.co.uk.

Brighton Ourstory was established in 1989, is an independent community-run organisation and a registered charity. We rely heavily on subscriptions and donations to carry out our work.

Untitled I

At the age of eight or nine, and long before distinct sexual feelings declared themselves, I felt a friendly attraction toward my own sex, and this developed after the age of puberty into a passionate sense of love.

— Edward Carpenter, 'Self-Analysis for Havelock Ellis'. In Noël Greig, ed., *Edward Carpenter: Selected Writings, Volume I: Sex* (London, GMP Publishers, 1984), p. 289

Untitled II

I went to an agricultural college for a time and I met this Land Army girl. In the evenings all the Land Army girls used to come into our common room and join in talking. They had an old wind up gramophone and put dance music on. She and I started dancing and the feeling between us was getting a bit powerful. We disappeared one night up into my room. We were just overcome with desire.

I didn't seem to care about people knowing. Well, I didn't think there was anything wrong in what we were doing. So, they would see us lying on the bed, and, in fact, we used to lay outside, on the lawn, and canoodle in full view of everyone. Someone stuck a drawing of us kissing on the door but that still didn't bother us at all.

— Gill, circa 1949

Untitled III

I never really had a steady affair, certainly not at that stage in my life. I didn't like the idea of an affair. I don't think it was safe to have an affair anyway. It was really causing trouble. You had to be terribly, terribly, terribly careful if you did have an affair. I'll give you a case in point. While I was in the army, I met a queen, well, I couldn't help but meet her, called Percy. Well, he had an affair, I think it was 1957 when it all blew up, anyway he had an affair, who was about his own age. They'd been going out together for about two years and Percy was at work one day and his father went into his bedroom and went rooting round in Percy's drawers and found this letter. Well, I don't know what was in the letter but father read the letter and went to the police with it, you see, so they arrested him at work, they arrested the boyfriend at his work as well,

took them both to the station and did the usual thing, keeping them in separate rooms and not letting them see one another, for about five hours, came and said, "Right. Well, your mate's confessed everything so you may as well confess as well and it'll make it a lot easier because then you'll get off light." So thereupon Percy told them everything that they wanted to know and then, armed with this, they went back and got a statement out of the boyfriend because he hadn't confessed at all. Typical, nasty, fuzz trick. Anyway the upshot of it all was that they both got three years in prison simply on the strength of a letter that one had written the other; and it ruined Percy's life, he never really recovered; and this happened to so many people.

So it was quite dangerous to have an affair, you know... I never kept the names and addresses of... friends written down, it was in my head but I never wrote it down on anything and I would certainly never dream of keeping a diary because I knew loads and loads and loads of queens who were arrested and then they'd go to their house and go through their rooms and they'd find a diary and they'd go through names in that and it could snowball. It was a terrifying thing. I always thought it wasn't safe to have affairs. One night stands with somebody whose name you didn't know and certainly whose address you didn't know and they didn't know yours was really a much better idea. And I think really that's true, it's probably why I got away with it all those years.

— Dennis, circa 1960

Untitled IV

I had a great sense of relief when the law changed. I was terrified of the law. When you grow up and you find that you're against the law – it worries you. Just the very fact that your existence is threatened all the time and you have to behave in certain ways. And you're vulnerable. In bars, for example, you never discussed where you worked, you never gave your name, never gave your real name anyway. You'd be Bill or Harry. I have friends who didn't even know my real name...

I lived in terror. I'll never get over that as long as I live. It's born into us, it's bred to feel ashamed of what we are. I will die feeling that way.

— George, circa 1967

Untitled V

At that time I was a member of an educational pressure group and through that was in fairly close contact with a woman who was the parent of a child I had taught. I had to make contact with her around the time I was discussing with Bob about getting a divorce. I went to her home to get a letter countersigned. Bob and I were in a pretty bad way and she asked me if I wanted to talk about it.

Her husband was upstairs, doing the ironing. We were downstairs in her lounge having this conversation for most of the evening. Afterwards we both moved towards the tape recorder to pick up a tape she'd said I could borrow and I can only describe the atmosphere as becoming totally electric. I couldn't work out what the hell was happening. It was a feeling of something very bizarre happening, physically, which I'd never experienced before.

The next day I saw her as she dropped her child off at school, and she said, "Can I come up for coffee?" She sat around looking very uncomfortable, drinking coffee and not saying anything. About ten minutes before we had to go and collect the children from school, she suddenly said, "I think I'm in love with you." I remember being absolutely rooted to the settee, thinking, "Shit, what's the answer to that?" After about ten minutes I said, "Well, I'm a bit shocked but I actually think I feel the same."

The next afternoon we just sat on the floor with our arms around each other and said, "God, I've never felt such a powerful feeling." We kissed then. It was a week before we actually made love. I couldn't believe how easy it was to slide into a relationship with a woman. I'd always thought you had to be very different from what I'd thought I was, in order to be able to do that.

Bob was relieved that I'd got some emotional contact with someone else. Her husband, however, had a nervous breakdown for nine months when she told him. He was violent towards her, did a lot of drinking, threw things at my windows, rang me up in the middle of the night. There were threats of custody over the children. He stopped going to work and chaperoned her everywhere. He roared and screamed around the place, yelling at her and calling

her a whore. She spent three hours telling me she was breaking it off. Four days later she said, "I can't do this. I can't stop seeing you." I said, "What the hell are you going to do?" She said, "Lie through my teeth, there's nothing else I can do."

— Val, circa 1980

Untitled VI

And it's, it's kind of, it's, it's that kind of thing day to day, and I went to, you know, I went to have a blood transfusion a couple of weeks ago er, and I was so tense for some time after that, in fact I probably still am, to, to some extent because I knew that it was almost make or break, you know, that I'd been feeling ill for the last five or six weeks, you know, I, I had a temperature every night, sometimes during the day as well, er had these different things wrong with me – the, the anal bleeding, the pain, the thrush, the, the, the difficulty eating, diarrhoea, the, the you know all, all the stuff that I talked about in that article. But it was also, it was also beginning to be the lack of energy and the, just the, difficulty really of keeping going and the sort of blood transfusion seemed very important because I know, I knew other people who had, you know, lost their energy and lost their drive and so on, and they'd had a blood transfusion and you know, it was like a miracle, you know, (mm), they were different people immediately, you know the next day, well I wasn't, you know it, didn't, it didn't have that effect on me. And, and in fact it was the, it was because it, it was, it was be ... because I was having a blood transfusion for another reason, it wasn't because of the AZT side effects, it was because of general debilitation and bleed...actually losing blood, you know (mm) , and illnesses and so on.

— Graham (1949-1990), 1989

Untitled VII

Do you want a family?

I hope so. I don't think I would want to be the one that has to give birth. One advantage of a gay couple might be that the other one can do that. That might be quite a good idea, you can draw straws for it. And blokes have children. I'd really like to be a parent... (my mother) was really

shocked when I said 'Do you worry that you wouldn't have grandchildren?' She was shocked, she was absolutely horrified that I would think she would want me to live my life in some way for her. But she said she would have regretted if I couldn't have been a parent, she would like it to still be my decision, and when she knew that I was planning to have children, she was really pleased. I don't think she's mentioned that to my father. I would like to have children, I don't know how exactly and I don't know how easy it would be, it would take a lot of thinking about. You'd have to choose where you lived quite carefully.

— Ellen, 2000

Untitled VIII

I make it a rule not to get too involved with punters but there's one old queen I've been seeing for about two years and we've got quite close. I go and see him once a week for a matinee. He cooks me dinner and listens to my problems, he's a good listener. His walls are covered with pictures of me he's taken. We've got an understanding. He leaves my money on the sideboard every week. All the neighbours think I'm his grandson. I call him Grandma and he calls me Cheryl. He's like the family I never had.

— Keith, circa 2005

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