

Press Release

apexart - nyc

Queer-y-ing the Arab

Curated by **the Earl of Bushwick**

Virtual Opening and Tour: **March 18, 6 - 6:45pm**

On view:

March 18 - May 15, 2021 Thurs. - Sat. 1-6pm

Location:

3D Online and at 291 Church Street, NYC




Queer Habibi, Yalla Club, Date unknown

Artists:

Jamil Hellu
Aghiles Mana

Queer Habibi
Rima Najdi

The Earl of Bushwick
Elias Wakeem

In the bath-house, the mysteries hidden by trousers / Are revealed to you. / All becomes radiantly manifest. / Feast your eyes without restraint! - Abu Nuwas

Arab culture has long contained expressions of queerness—both in its non-conformity with Western cultural traditions, and in its occasional openness to homosexuality. Abu Nuwas explored gay themes in his 9th century poems, which feel contemporary in their celebration of gay lust and desire.

The last two centuries, however, have witnessed the suppression of queerness in Arab culture, with restrictions on homosexuality and emphasis on conservative social norms emerging primarily with European colonization and later on with the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. Yet Arab queerness and countercultures live on in myriad forms, blossoming in safe spaces and ebbing with repression, whether colonial or religious in origin.

Queer-y-ing the Arab explores queerness through an Arab perspective. It queries and then queers interpretations of queer, Arab, and art, pushing the boundaries of assumption to explore unfamiliar meanings. Not all artists in this exhibition identify as LGBT+, however, they all explore themes of queerness and non-conformity in their artistic practice. The emphasis here is on a more expansive definition of queer: as lying outside expectation or initial assumption. The resulting exhibition challenges the popular notion of the art space as a sterile white cube, and revises the role of art audiences, and their ability to alter artworks and affect their own meaning or interpretation.

**Queer-y-ing the Arab* is an apexart New York City Open Call Exhibition. For the latest information on the exhibition and related events, please visit <https://apexart.org/earlofbushwick.php> or contact elizabeth.larison@apexart.org.

The Earl of Bushwick is a non-binary queer Arab and immigrant, concerned with ideas of the Queer, the Other, and issues of not belonging, especially as it applies to art and class. Their home in Brooklyn, dubbed The Earl's Court (2015), is a long-running safe space and art project. They have presented work at the Armory Show, Bushwick Open Studios, and the National Arts Club, New York (2019). The Earl of Bushwick also curated *We are not artists* (2017), and *Red Black and Nude* (2018).

apexart's program supporters past and present include the Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation, the Buhl Foundation, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Spencer Brownstone, the Kenneth A. Cowin Foundation, Epstein Teicher Philanthropies, The Greenwich Collection Ltd., William Talbott Hillman Foundation/Affirmation Arts Fund, the Fifth Floor Foundation, the Consulate General of Israel in New York, The Puffin Foundation, the Trust for Mutual Understanding, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, and public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, public funds from Creative Engagement, supported by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and administered by LMCC, funds from NYSCA Electronic Media/Film in Partnership with Wave Farm: Media Arts Assistance Fund, with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, as well as the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

#Queer-y-ingtheArab

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