

*Queer-y-ing the Arab*  
curated by The Earl of Bushwick  
March 19 - May 15, 2021

## HYPERALLERGIC



Art Reviews

### For All the Queer Habibis Out There

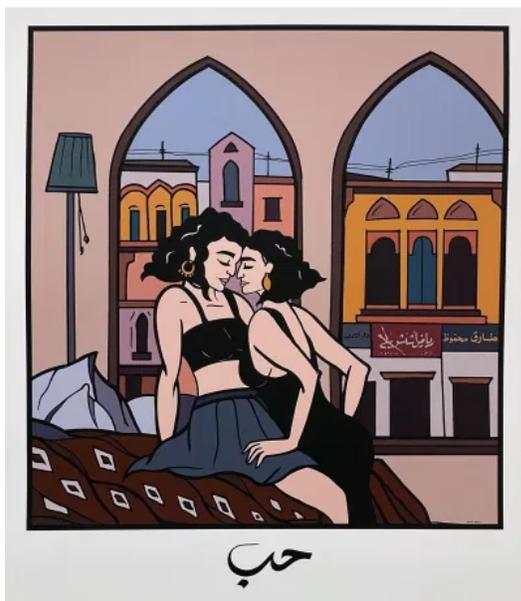
Curated by the Earl of Bushwick, "Queer-y-ing the Arab" focuses on the bedroom and private realm.

by Hrag Vartanian May 10, 2021

Installation views of *Queer-y-ing the Arab*, apexart, 2021 (all images by Hrag Vartanian/Hyperallergic)

The enigmatic Earl of Bushwick has been doing their part to explore queerness in the Arab community for years now. Through various initiatives, including turning

their own Brooklyn home into [The Earl's Court](#) in 2015, they've focused on creating safe spaces through community art projects. Most recently, the orthopedic surgeon by day has gathered together a wide array of objects to mount a one-room exhibition at apexart, which ruminates on queerness and Arab-ness in a display that feels like an archive of wishes and fantasies rather than a window into real life.



One of the [many images](#) in the exhibition that was first posted on @artqueerhabibi

The artists featured are [Jamil Hellu](#), [Aghiles Mana](#), [Rima Najdi](#), [Queer Habibi](#), [Elias Wakeem](#), and the Earl himself. A bedroom is positioned at one end, suggesting the private nature of many queer Arab identities, which, like so many queer identities today, often incubate in private spaces through the mediation of screens, memes, and products (like rugs, pillows, sheets, and other manifestations of consumer identity). Queer Habibi, who also has a popular Instagram account

(@[artqueerhabibi](#)), presents images

that are a welcome departure from the onslaught of mainstream US media, which continues to portray Arab and other SWANA (South West Asian and North African) identities as violent, irrational, and backward. The exhibition doesn't focus on political issues, though expressing queerness in societies where it is still banned or controlled can never not be, and the show prefers to reflect on the vocabulary emerging from domestic settings, which is rather appropriate considering the Earl's own apartment-cum-salon space.

Rarely do I leave exhibitions feeling energized thinking about what will come next, but here I couldn't wait to see the next iteration. If the title of the exhibition is a little too cutesy for its own good — query (get it!) — it also hints at the fun at the core of such an endeavor.



The entrance to *Queer-y-ing the Arab*, apexart, 2021

In a world where we are all clamoring to see ourselves represented, *Queer-y-ing the Arab* is a welcome gesture that reflects on the material worlds we create to cope and flourish, and how these worlds — which would've been unheard of for many of us decades ago — are slowly emerging from the bedrooms of our imagination into their rightful places in the light.

**Queer-y-ing the Arab** is curated by the Earl of Bushwick and continues until May 15 at apexart (291 Church Street, Tribeca, Manhattan).

---

© 2021 Hyperallergic Media, Inc..

Proudly powered by Newspack by Automattic

291 church st. nyc, ny  
10013 p: 212.431.5270  
info@apexart.org; www.apexart.org