

Press Release

Cruising in the Shadows: Uncovering Secret LGBTQ+ Culture in New York City

Curated by **Matthew Terrell**

On view:

June 6 - July 26, 2025

Tues. - Sat., 11am - 6pm

Opening Reception: Friday, June 6, 6-8pm

Location:

291 Church Street, NYC, and 3D Online

Featuring work by:

Arthur Tress - Robert Sherer - Bob Damron - The AIDS Memorial Quilt

Cruising in the Shadows is a bold new exhibition examining the history of queer cruising in New York City. Through a dynamic mix of fine art and archival materials, the exhibition explores how LGBTQ+ people sought connection, expressed desire, and built community in public spaces—often at great personal risk.

At the heart of the exhibition are never-before-seen photographs by Arthur Tress, who captured men cruising in NYC throughout the 1960s and 1970s. At the time, these images were considered too scandalous for public display. Now, they serve as a rare visual record of an era when queer people sought connection in the shadows, defying social stigma and legal persecution. Also featured is the work of Robert Sherer, whose colorful, comic-inspired illustrations reframe queer sexual exploration as a natural part of the American experience. Sherer's playful yet subversive depictions of covert queer desire celebrate the resilience and joy found in LGBTQ+ spaces.

Historical materials deepen the narrative. Archival content from the NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project documents the transformation of cruising spots across decades, including Forest Hills Park, a Queens site destroyed by vigilantes just days before the Stonewall Riots. A selection from Bob Damron's *Address Book*—the first printed guide to gay cruising locations—reveals the coded networks queer people relied on during times of criminalization. The exhibition also explores cultural codes like the Hanky Code, used to discreetly communicate sexual interests, and confronts the devastating toll of the AIDS crisis. A 12' x 12' panel from the AIDS Memorial Quilt honors patrons of The Saint, a legendary nightclub that became a site for both joy and HIV education. As shifting attitudes and digital culture reshape queer intimacy, *Cruising in the Shadows* preserves the memory of those who found freedom, danger, and connection in public view.

Cruising in the Shadows was selected through apexart's New York City Open Call. For more information visit <https://apexart.org/terrell2.php> or contact maryam.ghoreishi@apexart.org.

Matthew Terrell is a writer, photographer, and multimedia artist based in Atlanta, with a focus on LGBTQ+ history and culture. His previous work includes *Atlanta's HIV+ Population Now* at the Center for Civil and Human Rights, *The Hate Shield* at Atlanta Pride, and *Living Room, San Francisco, 1986*, an apexart exhibition. Terrell is an Assistant Professor of Communication at Kennesaw State University.

apexart's program supporters past and present include the Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation, the Kettering Family Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, 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 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 the New York State Legislature.

#CruisingintheShadows

291 church street, new york, ny 10013
t +1 212 431 5270 www.apexart.org

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In 1969, Arthur Tress captured this image of a gay man protesting the destruction of Forrest Hill, after an ax-wielding mob chopped down more than 30 trees to deter homosexual cruising. Silver Gelatin Print