

EXHIBITION GUIDE

ABOUT  
FACE

STONEWALL, REVOLT  
AND NEW QUEER ART



659 WEST WRIGHTWOOD, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60614

# ABOUT FACE

## STONEWALL, REVOLT AND NEW QUEER ART

This is an exhibition about metamorphosis. Fifty years after Stonewall, we're still very much a community in progress. The traditional view, that Stonewall represents the birth of a gay and lesbian movement, couldn't be further from the truth on at least two counts: it hardly represents the beginning and it was never just gay and lesbian. On the contrary, we have always embraced a transpolitics, in the sense of working to variously *transgress*, *transfigure*, *transpose*, *transform*, and finally, *transcend* a world of binary options, whether they be gay/straight, male/female, minority/majority, or conformist/nonconformist. Not for nothing were trans folk of various stripes the literal spark that ignited the Stonewall flame. This exhibition thus focuses on art in which boundaries blur, forms mutate, the natural is denaturalized, and the transgressive and transcendent are linked. In the works on view in *About Face*, sexuality, gender, ethnicity, and race – far from being clear categories – hybridize and overlap to the point that “queer” becomes a verb, not a noun.

As a result, we have changed the culture such that, in the main, we all are growing queerer and queerer – slowly and discontinuously to be sure, with strong regional differences and numerous, agonizing setbacks. And by we, I don't mean only those of us who already identify with the term queer; I mean to include quite specifically those who don't. Queers aren't the outliers anymore, we're the team leaders, thought-leaders, and cheerleaders for a brave new world where the stable, familiar categories of identity continue to erode and mix. This hasn't been an easy accomplishment and the route is littered with corpses – with AIDS by no means the only cause of death. But importantly, this new queerer world isn't about creating a more modern, stable identity, but the perpetuation of a continuously hybrid one, a recognition that we are all an amalgam of many identities, that the problem with “identity politics” is that it's written in the singular. This recognition was modeled in art long before it could be brought to life.

*About Face: Stonewall, Revolt and New Queer Art* is installed in five sections – *Transgress*, *Transfigure*, *Transpose*, *Transform*, and *Transcend* – that map a trajectory from political resistance to the overcoming of stable identity categories. A state-of-the-field survey of queer art today, *About Face* features works by a diverse group of artists from Columbia, India, Cuba, the UK, Sweden, South Africa, China, France, Indonesia, the United States, and Canada. The artists are trans, female, male, and intersex, as well as African or of African descent, Indigenous, Asian, White, and Latinx, and/or some combination of all of these. Most of these artists actively seek to recruit audiences to the very queer recognition that, without the defining or policing of our differences, identity is always plural, what the poet Frank O'Hara termed “myselfes.” Thus to be queer is to be a hybrid thing. *About Face* charts this ongoing process of the queering of our culture.

**Jonathan D. Katz, PhD, Exhibition Curator**



## PATRICIA CRONIN

(b. 1963)

In her multidisciplinary art practice that includes painting, sculpture, and installation, Patricia Cronin takes ancient forms and relates them to contemporary issues of human rights, commenting on issues like sexism and class. She often borrows from 19th century sculptural models but uses 21st century technology in her work. The 2002 project, *Memorial to a Marriage*, is an over life-size funerary monument of Cronin and her partner Deborah Kass, embracing each other in a bed of sheets. Drawing influence from Gustave Courbet's 1866 painting *The Sleepers*, Cronin's piece acts as a memorial marking the couple's future grave. For her, the artwork is also political. The piece was created at a time when gay marriage was still illegal in the United States, and in this way it commemorated a union that hadn't happened yet and, at the same time, memorializes a future death. Cronin received her BFA from Rhode Island College and her MFA from Brooklyn College. Her work has been shown at the Venice Biennale and in solo shows at institutions such as the Brooklyn Museum, the Tampa Museum of Art in Florida, and the Lab Gallery in Dublin, Ireland.

**ARTWORK** | *Memorial to a Marriage* | 2002 | Carrara Marble