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#artcologne

## Queer Budapest at ART COLOGNE 2021

### Resisting Erasure: Queer Art in Hungary

The queer art and creative scene in Hungary is one of the most exciting in Europe but is often overlooked and has lacked attention from an international audience. What makes it one of the most interesting scenes emerging in Central and Eastern Europe is not least the resilience and creative power the LGBTQ+ community harnesses in the face of a government that is openly pursuing policies of societal erasure. The creative community is thriving despite this political climate. This year, Queer Budapest presents itself with a selection of artists at ART COLOGNE and thus at one of the world's leading fairs for modern and contemporary art.

The aim of the exhibition is to initiate a debate about queer Hungarian art while simultaneously raising awareness about the problems the artists face. Selected artworks will be contextualised by recent political events and measures that attack the rights and civil liberties of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/intersexual and queer people in Hungary, such as Article 33 or the most recent law against so-called "homosexual propaganda".

While these developments of necessity provide the political backdrop for the exhibition, it at the same time aims to provide a stage for celebrating the talent of the exhibited artists and the queer community as a whole. The exhibition shows works by artists working with different themes and in entirely varied art forms. The connection with the political and societal basic conditions will be repeatedly emphasised for the audience in that the concrete events and experiences that have been and are still defining for the queer scene in Hungary are described.

The exhibition divides the works shown into three thematic categories that the organisers have judged as especially relevant:

- 1: Works by artists directly addressing the political climate.
- 2: Works by artists exploring and creating safe spaces for queer people (i.e. nightclubs)
- 3: Works by artists working with the concepts of "community" and "identity"

#### Statement of Queer Budapest

Queer Budapest is very pleased to present an exhibition of works by young, emerging and established representatives of the Hungarian queer art and creative scene, as well as of the diaspora during ART COLOGNE 2021.

As the world slowly emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Hungarian queer community has found itself in increasingly uncertain territory. Over the course of the past year, the Hungarian government has found new ways to further restrict the



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rights of in any case already stigmatised and marginalised queer people: the prohibition of legal gender recognition, the making of marriage equality all but impossible or, most recently, the far-reaching legislation that equates homosexuality with pedophilia and prohibits LGBTQ+ education and representation in the media. However, despite this challenging environment, queer artists are refusing to tolerate these efforts or to remain silent about policies that seek to erase them from society. They continue to produce works that have the power to inform and educate. They are works that inspire us to take our fate into our own hands and preserve the wish for a world free from institutionalised hatred.

From the perspective of "Resisting Erasure: Queer Art in Hungary", art is a central method for both exploring and celebrating identity. With works ranging from performance through painting to photography and themes like identity, community and feminism, the exhibition will present a multi-faceted view of contemporary queer life in Hungary.

The exhibition curated by Zsuzsanna Zsuró and Thomas Roughan includes works by Ádám Csábi, Anna Ádám, Barnabás Lakatos-Gelléri, Borsos Lorinc and Hollow Systems, as well as by representatives of the LGBTQ+ Roma community in Hungary.

Queer Budapest would like to thank Daniel Hug, the ART COLOGNE team and all our supporters and sponsors for making this exhibition possible.

### **On the history of Queer Budapest**

Queer Budapest is a platform that supports the work of members of the Hungarian queer art and creative community, as well as of the diaspora. Queer Budapest was founded in 2020 by the art researcher Zsuzsanna Zsuro (born in Budapest) and the artist Thomas Roughan (born in London) after they met at Central Saint Martins - University of the Arts in London and determined that they were both dissatisfied with the lack of attention the Hungarian queer art and culture scene was receiving.

Queer Budapest's first exhibition was held in November 2020 on Népsziget, an island in the Danube in north Budapest, and was met with an overwhelmingly positive response, showing that there was a great interest in and a real need for the presentation of Hungarian queer art. This initial exhibition was followed by a radio and podcast series in early 2021 called Queer Budapest Talks, in which the makers engaged in in-depth discussions with many queer creatives. During its run, the series became the second highest rated podcast in the visual arts category in Hungary.

It was also during this time that Queer Budapest started to gain attention from the international arts media. Both The Calvert Journal and Artnet News reported on the platform. Currently, and thus against the background of the increasing tensions between the queer community and the Hungarian government, Queer Budapest is preparing a special exhibition in the context of ART COLOGNE 2021. With "Resisting Erasure: Queer Art in Hungary", Queer Budapest wants to provide the talent of Hungarian queer artists with a bigger stage and at the same time contribute to directing international attention to their difficult situation.

### **Exhibited artists**

**Anna ÁDÁM - Performance**

The “School of Disobedience” is an experimental, unorthodox and radical performance art school and Fight Club, open only to women. Based on critical pedagogy, empowerment methods and guerilla tactics, the school helps participants achieve political consciousness through the regular practice of creating, fighting, protesting, resisting and revolting. A boxing ring is installed prominently at the art fair, thus ensuring maximum visibility. The public is invited to join the daily “Fight Club” classes or experiment with this interactive installation on their own. There is a performance in the ring each afternoon, each of them celebrating female fighting capacity.

**Ádám CSÁBI - Photography**

The photography of Ádám Csábi captures quick, split-second impressions of parties as queer safe spaces - unique, intimate **insights into the fragile and at the same time wild and supportive scene of the intertwined techno and LGBTQ communities.**

**Barnabás GELLÉRI - Painting**

Barnabás Gelléri is engaged with the relationship between personal feelings and their depiction. He translates the challenges and difficulties, as well as the joys of everyday life into only seemingly easily digestible compositions. However, the incredible complexity of his paintings is revealed upon closer inspection. He does not differentiate between artistic and personal identity in the process. His realm is dominated by his creatures, most notably the snake and the ox. Gelléri is currently studying at the Hungarian University of Fine Arts in Budapest. He previously undertook studies at the Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design (MOME). His works have already been shown in many group and solo exhibitions, including "Coming of Age" of Pince Project in 2018 and "Queer Budapest" of the Skurc Group in 2020.

**Borsos Lorinc (Janó BORSOS and Lilla LORINC) - Installation**

Lilla Lorinc and János Borsos have worked together since 2008 as Lorinc Borsos. Behind the name is an entity with its own creative consciousness. He/she is currently 12 years old. His/her gender, sexual orientation and intellect are consistently characterised by bipolarity. The basis of his/her existence is the coexistence of contradictions, although his/her actual goal is the dissolution of duality. He/she despises hierarchy and the social divide and exclusion created in its wake. For Lilla Lorinc und János Borsos, art first becomes interesting beyond morals, when it still exists in an unfiltered state, immediately following the moment of the birth of an idea. This is because political correctness or self-censorship have not yet come into play.

**Hollow Systems - Performance/AI**

For us, the idea of queerness is equivalent with subversion: we primarily view it as a tool. Phoenix (2018) was our first joint work. Our aim was to showcase the gay club culture through two major mythological figures; the phoenix rising from the ashes and the lonely Minotaur in its labyrinth, waiting for its next victim (or saviour). We want to involve the audience and therefore like it when our work has no straightforward meaning, because the viewer can then become something more than an outside observer. However, our aim is not to teach others how to become more

open-minded. Rather, our works should show that reality is not as cohesive as it seems, and that the roles we assume could easily be entirely different.

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### **Roma LGBTQ+ Community - Photography**

#### **"Owning the Game" art project**

"Owning the Game" is a photo exhibition that brought together members of the Hungarian Roma queer community to create a form of expression appropriate to and representative of them. The exhibition opened in the context of Budapest Pride in July 2021.

#### **Photo**

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#### **Note for editorial offices:**

ART COLOGNE photos are available in our image database on the Internet at [www.artcologne.com/imagedatabase](http://www.artcologne.com/imagedatabase) in the "News" section. Press information is available at: [www.artcologne.com/Pressinformation](http://www.artcologne.com/Pressinformation)

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