

[Out and About!: Archiving LGBTQ+ history at Bishopsgate Institute](#)

The Curve, Barbican Centre
28 February – 21 March 2022
Free Admission



In April 1992, OutRage! members dropped their trousers in their "Bend Over For Your Member" demonstration outside Parliament. They were protesting over the age of consent as, in 1992, UK laws treated consensual sex between gay men under 21 as a criminal offence. The age was then lowered to 18 in 1994 before finally being lowered to 16 as part of the Sexual Offences Act of 2000. Photo: Bishopsgate Institute, Gordon Rainsford Archive

Bishopsgate Institute will be staging a take-over of The Curve at the Barbican with an installation of objects, ephemera and media highlighting 40 moments and stories in London's LGBTQ+ history. From placards carried at demonstrations to never-seen-before photographs documenting London's gay scene over the past 40 years, the items drawn from Bishopsgate Institute's extensive Special Collections and Archives present the stories of individuals, collectives and organisations who fought for social, political and cultural change.

The free exhibition, open for a limited three-week run, will feature a focus on protest including original **OutRage!** protest banners used in their campaign against Section 28 and a truncheon seized at a demonstration by **Mark Ashton**, the founder of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners. This will be complemented by personal diaries, photographs, and treasured objects, many of which will be seen for the first time on public display, helping tell the story of LGBTQ+ life in London from 1982 to the present day.

The take-over of The Curve forms part of the Barbican's 40th birthday celebrations and launches the Barbican Archive's new public programme strand, *The Edge of the Centre* exploring the deep histories, collections, places, people and practices neighbouring the Barbican Estate. More information about this new events series will be released soon.

Will Gompertz, Artistic Director, Barbican, says: *'We're thrilled to be welcoming Bishopsgate Institute into the Barbican for this take-over of The Curve. As the Barbican marks 40 years it is important to reflect on how London has changed and bring some of the missing stories and narratives to the centre. This is just the start of a new stream of work exploring the cultural histories and perspectives of organisations and individuals connected to the Barbican Centre and its neighbourhood.'*

Stef Dickers, Special Collections & Archives Manager at Bishopsgate Institute, says: *'The past 40 years have seen such monumental changes for the LGBTQ+ communities. This exhibition aims to explore some of those moments and celebrate the voices and stories of the people who were there to witness it. Of course, we can never tell every story – so we would also like to use this exhibition as an opportunity for everyone to consider donating their own memorabilia, documents, and photos to empower, inspire and educate future generations.'*

The exhibition celebrates items, photographs, artefacts, media and artwork from individuals and organisations including the **Switchboard, Terrence Higgins Trust, GMFA: the Gay Men's Health Charity, the London Lesbian and Gay Centre, Ivan Cartwright, Duckie, OutRage!, Stonewall FC, Transfabulous, the London Gay Men's Chorus**, photographers **Robert Workman** and **Gordon Rainsford**, and many more.

To complement the exhibition in The Curve, Barbican Cinema will present a rare screening of the landmark gay sex ed documentary, *The Gay Man's Guide to Safer Sex* (UK, 1992, dir David Lewis) on 1 March followed by a ScreenTalk with producer **Tony Carne** and film curator Selina Robinson, who will discuss the film's legacy. Made in association with the Terrence Higgins Trust, when the age of consent for gay and bi men was 21, *The Gay Man's Guide to Safer Sex* was a vital sex educational doc that offered safe sex advice in an artistic and unashamedly erotic piece of cinema. Its graphic sex scenes, shot with an aesthetic that situates it firmly in the early 1990s, made it a unique sex ed film that blends clear medical advice (which had been absent from information communicated by Margaret Thatcher's government) with eroticism. More information about the screening can be found [here](#).

The installation will also be accompanied by a programme of informal talks and conversations hosted inside the gallery by the individuals and organisations whose stories are on display. Participants will include **E-J Scott** of the Museum of Transology; **Tash Walker** of LGBTQ+ phone helpline Switchboard; **Sue Sanders** of the international Festival of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Trans History Outing the Past; and LGBTQ+ activists **Dan Glass** and **Faizan of Imaan**.

Moreover, the Barbican's Creative Learning team will organise *The Archive is Permanently Under Construction*, a free programme running from 22 February – 22 March and open to Young Creatives between the ages of 18 and 25 interested in critically engaging with archives, collections and LGBTQ+ themes. The project will culminate with a **Young Barbican Night** on 17 March 2022, with the group creating a series of original creative responses to the exhibition in The Curve.

END

NOTE TO EDITORS

PRESS INFORMATION

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The Curve opening times

Monday–Sunday: 10am – 7pm

Exhibition

The exhibition has been curated by Stef Dickers, Special Collections & Archives Manager at Bishopsgate Institute and designed by architect Martha Summers in collaboration with graphic and visual designer, Anna Lincoln.

Martha Summers is an architect working in practice on public and cultural buildings, including exhibitions for renowned institutions, and in her own work experimenting with less traditional forms of practice. Most recently she volunteered her help on the London LGBTQ+ Community Centre pop-up, a 6-month proof-of-concept that offers community and event space alongside vital services to LGBTQ+ people of all ages. It was constructed entirely by members of the LGBTQ+ community. She previously founded HI-VIS! Feminist Design Collective in 2016, through which pro-bono design services were provided to the Feminist Library to aid with their relocation project.

Anna Lincoln is a multidisciplinary Designer and Storyteller with more than ten years' experience, based in London. Their recent projects include: A collaborative visual identity for the Feminist Library; An exhibition identity at Calke Abbey for the National Trust; Exhibition graphics for Japanese Woodblock at the British Museum.

Events

A dynamic programme of pop-up events will take place on Thursday Lates and Saturdays during the run of the exhibition. The full programme will be available on the Barbican's website.

Book/Zine

The exhibition is accompanied by a zine featuring essays, photography and design related to the items and objects on display. A zine was chosen as a fitting addition to the exhibition as culturally and historically they have served as an outlet for content considered to be too niche, risqué, or outside of the mainstream.

The Curve

The Curve is the Barbican's free exhibition space that wraps around the back of the Concert Hall. Launched in May 2006, Curve Art is a series of new commissions in which contemporary artists respond to the distinctive architecture of the space. Artists who have previously made new commissions for The Curve are Tomas Saraceno (Argentina); Richard Wilson (Britain); Jeppe Hein (Denmark); Marjetica Potrč (Slovenia); Shirana Shahbazi (Switzerland/Iran); Hans Schabus (Austria); Huang Yong Ping (France/China); Rafael Lozano-Hemmer (Canada/Mexico); Peter Coffin (USA); Clemens von Wedemeyer (Germany); Robert Kusmirowski (Poland); Céleste Boursier-Mougenot (France); John Bock (Germany); Damián Ortega (Mexico); Cory Arcangel (USA); Junya Ishigami (Japan); Song Dong (China); rAndom International (Britain); Geoffrey Farmer (Canada); Ayşe Erkmen (Germany/Turkey); United Visual Artists (Britain); Walead Beshty (USA/Britain); Roman Signer (Switzerland); Eddie Peake (Britain); Imran Qureshi (Pakistan); Bedwyr Williams (Wales); Richard Mosse (Ireland); John Akomfrah (Britain); Yto Barrada (Morocco), Francis Upritchard (New Zealand); Daria Martin (USA); Trevor Paglen (USA); and most recently Toyin Ojih Odutola (Nigeria/USA).

About Bishopsgate Institute

For more than 125 years, Bishopsgate Institute has been a place for people to connect over a joint love of learning and shared experience. Through its daring and playful programming and its unique and important archive, the Institute invites visitors to explore different perspectives and discover the human stories behind the headlines. It encourages a hands-on approach to history, featuring people and stories that challenge the status quo and celebrates the lives and communities often neglected by the mainstream.

Bishopsgate Institute's Special Collections and Archives features more than 150,000 books, pamphlets, maps, and photographs of London. The Lesbian and Gay News media Archive (LAGNA) alone holds 350,000 press cuttings. The photographic archives has more than 500,000 images. The Institute also holds a growing oral-history archive and the collections contain fascinating ephemera, from banners and badges to club flyers and condoms.

About the Barbican

A world-class arts and learning organisation, the [Barbican](#) pushes the boundaries of all major art forms including dance, film, music, theatre and visual arts. Its creative learning programme further underpins everything it does. Over a million people attend events annually, hundreds of artists and performers are featured, and more than 300 [staff](#) work onsite. The architecturally renowned centre opened in 1982 and comprises the Barbican Hall, the Barbican Theatre, The Pit, Cinemas 1, 2 and 3, Barbican Art Gallery, a second gallery The Curve, public spaces, a library, the Lakeside Terrace, [a glasshouse conservatory](#), conference facilities and three restaurants. The City of London Corporation is the founder and principal funder of the Barbican Centre.

The Barbican is home to Resident Orchestra, [London Symphony Orchestra](#); Associate Orchestra, [BBC Symphony Orchestra](#); Associate Ensembles the [Academy of Ancient Music](#) and [Britten Sinfonia](#), Associate Producer [Serious](#), and Artistic Partner [Create](#). Our Artistic Associates include [Boy Blue](#), [Cheek by Jowl](#), Deborah Warner, [Drum Works](#) and [Michael Clark Company](#). The [Los Angeles Philharmonic](#) are the Barbican's International Orchestral Partner, the [Australian Chamber Orchestra](#) are International Associate Ensemble at Milton Court, and [Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra](#) are International Associate Ensemble.

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