On the Road: Loans, Traveling Exhibition Send GLBT History Across the Country and Beyond

From an exhibition in Berlin in the late 1990s to a new show in San Francisco, loans from the archives of the GLBT Historical Society have helped cultural institutions across the United States and beyond put queer history on display. And with the first traveling exhibition from The GLBT History Museum attracting visitors in Richmond, Va., the society is not only making artifacts available to curators elsewhere; it's also putting its own curatorial vision on the road.

One of the society's earliest major loan agreements involved sending some 40 documents to the monumental "Goodbye to Berlin?" show organized in the German capital to mark the 100th anniversary of the homosexual emancipation movement in 1997. Since then, numerous curators have borrowed materials from the archives. The latest loans are currently featured in one exhibition on the far side of the U.S. and another just a few blocks from the archives:

Brooklyn Museum (Brooklyn, N.Y.): "Twice Militant: Lorraine Hansberry's Letters to The Ladder." For a show on African American playwright Lorraine Hansberry's correspondence with the pioneering lesbian magazine The Ladder, the Brooklyn Museum borrowed scarce issues of the publication from the Historical Society's periodicals collection. The exhibition is open through March 16, 2014, at the museum's Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art.

Catherine Morris, the curator of the show, noted that "The GLBT Historical Society
helped us by stepping in effortlessly to become a collaborator and major lender." She adds that the society’s commitment to "collecting, maintaining and supporting GLBT history plays a vital role in keeping history alive" and helps institutions like the Brooklyn Museum "teach broader audiences about the histories the Historical Society is preserving."

Center for Sex and Culture (San Francisco): "Safe Sex Bang: The Buzz Bense Collection of Safe Sex Posters." To fill out the history of the safer sex movement, the Center for Sex and Culture borrowed copies of "Play Fair," a brochure produced by the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, as well as a poster promoting risk-reduction among injection drug users. The show is open through January 2014.

"We see these items as integral to helping us tell a fuller story," said cocurator Dorian Katz. "The Sisters’ pamphlet is the earliest example we have of safe sex visual production that is sex positive and aimed at gay men. We also have an enormous bus shelter poster of Bleachman in the show that says "Condom: Use It!" -- and the poster we borrowed from the Historical Society provides more of a context for the work Bleachman did."

First Traveling Exhibition

Also currently on view is the first traveling exhibition from The GLBT History Museum. Curated by Historical Society board member and artist-in-residence E.G. Crichton, "Migrating Archives: LGBT Delegates From Collections Around the World" debuted at the museum in February 2013. The show is now on display through December 31 at the James Branch Cabell Library at the Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Va. The VCU Libraries brought Crichton to Richmond to discuss the exhibition and her work with the archives. For more details and for links to a video of Crichton's talk and to the short videos included in the exhibition, visit the VCU Libraries website.

After the run of the show at VCU, the GLBT Historical Society will make the exhibition available for display at other institutions. For information about borrowing "Migrating Archives," contact Crichton at egc8@sbcglobal.net.

Workshop Participants Contribute Stories to Document San Francisco Queer Historic Sites

More than 50 people came together November 14 at The Women's Building of San Francisco to contribute stories to a new project sponsored by the GLBT Historical Society to document queer historic sites in the city. Project directors Donna Graves and Shayne Watson and society Executive Director Paul Boneberg introduced the event.

"We were thrilled with the number of people who took part and with the energy and enthusiasm in the room," Watson said. "And everyone loved the community historians -- the diverse group of individuals who helped kick things off by taking the floor to talk about LGBT places that have been meaningful to them."

After the opening presentations, the participants broke into working groups to recount their own memories of places associated with San Francisco queer history, ranging from homophile organizing to the intersex movement to AIDS activism, from gay cruising to lesbian consciousness-raising, from Tenderloin transgender life to Harvey Milk. Note-takers recorded the stories, portions of which will be incorporated into the final report.

Financed by the San Francisco Historic Preservation Fund, the project is expected to take more than a year. It will result in a citywide LGBT historic context statement that will help keep queer history alive for locals and visitors. For more information, contact volunteer coordinator Kyle Maxwell-Berman.

ON DISPLAY

The GLBT History Museum displays a wealth of material from San Francisco's vast queer past.

IN THE ARCHIVES

The GLBT Historical Society is home to one of the world's largest gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender archival collections.
EXHIBITIONS & PROGRAMS

The GLBT History Museum
Location: 4127 18th St., San Francisco, CA 94114
Phone: 415-621-1107
Website: www.glbthistorymuseum.org

Admission: $5.00 general; $3.00 with California student ID. Free for members. Free for all visitors on the first Wednesday of each month (courtesy of the Bob Ross Foundation).

Hours
Mondays & Wednesdays - Saturdays: 11:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.
Sundays: Noon - 5:00 p.m.
Tuesdays: Closed

Holiday Schedule
Christmas Eve: Open 11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Christmas Day: Closed
New Year's Eve: Open 11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
New Year's Day: Closed

ARCHIVES & READING ROOM

GLBT Historical Society
Location: 657 Mission St., Suite 300, San Francisco, CA 94105
Phone: 415-777-5455, ext. 3#
Website: www.glbthistory.org

RESEARCH HOURS

Holiday Schedule: For year-end holiday closures and hours, check the GLBT Historical Society website.

Weekdays: By Appointment & Subject to Availability
Members: Wednesdays - Fridays: 11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Nonmembers: Fridays: 11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Saturdays: No Appointment Needed
Open to members and nonmembers 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. the first and third Saturday of the month; no appointment needed. Hours subject to change; before visiting, check the GLBT Historical Society website.

For more information or to contribute stories, photographs and other information on queer historic sites in San Francisco, contact Graves and Watson at sflgbthistory@gmail.com. They are particularly interested in learning more about sites important to communities of color, transgender people, the bisexual community and others who are underdocumented in LGBT history.

For coverage by the Bay Area Reporter, click here.

Dozens of publications focusing on HIV/AIDS are represented in the Periodicals Collection. Among the most distinctive is Diseased Pariah News, a graphically forceful zine of black humor by and for people with AIDS that produced 11 issues from 1990 to 1999.

For in-depth information on the GLBT Historical Society and The GLBT History Museum, visit our website.

For updates on the museum and archives, like us on Facebook. (Be sure to select "Get Notifications.")

For an overview of the goals and history of the museum and archives, see our entry on Wikipedia.

For an array of videos from our archives and programs, see our YouTube channel.