

MEDIA RELEASE

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CyArk, Friends of the Lyon-Martin House and GLBT Historical Society Announce Virtual 3D Tour of San Francisco Lesbian Landmark

San Francisco — Digital historic preservation firm CyArk, the nonprofit historic preservation group Friends of the Lyon-Martin House (FOTLMH) and the GLBT Historical Society today unveiled a pathbreaking virtual tour of the Lyon-Martin House, the San Francisco landmark inhabited for over five decades by Phyllis Lyon (1924–2020) and Del Martin (1921–2008). In 1955, together with three other lesbian couples, Lyon and Martin cofounded the first lesbian civil and political rights organization in the United States, the Daughters of Bilitis (DOB), much of whose activities they oversaw from their house in San Francisco’s Noe Valley neighborhood. The virtual tour is available to the public and can be experienced on the society’s website at www.glbthistory.org/lyon-martin-house.

Originally intended as a social club, the DOB soon transcended this function in large part due to the efforts of Lyon and Martin. The pioneering group established chapters around the country; organized discussion groups; offered information and support; and worked to improve the legal and social status of lesbians. The same year they cofounded DOB, Lyon and Martin purchased a small, 756-square foot cottage on a double lot in Noe Valley, and the house quickly became the beating heart of the organization. For five decades, the Lyon-Martin House provided both a cozy home for the couple and a meeting space and mailing address for queer, feminist and progressive organizing.

Sold to a private buyer in 2020 following Lyon’s death, the structure and property are a historical site of international significance. In recognition of this fact, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors unanimously bestowed the status of San Francisco Landmark on the house on May 4, 2021. Friends of the Lyon-

Martin House, a fiscally sponsored project of the GLBT Historical Society, is now working with the property owner, the city and other stakeholders to document the historic structure and plan for its long-term future.

“The GLBT Historical Society holds an enormous collection of archival materials documenting Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin’s work and relationship,” said Andrew Shaffer, interim co-executive director of the GLBT Historical Society. “The ability to digitally preserve the house where so much of their work took place adds such incredible depth and value to the collection. The house was where they held meetings, planned events, edited DOB’s journal *The Ladder*, and built an incredible life together. Now everyone with an internet connection will have a chance to enter their world and witness how their grassroots work began.” Franco Stevens, who founded *Curve*, the most successful lesbian magazine in the world, remarked on the significance of *The Ladder* for lesbians. “Their publication paved the way for *Deneuve / Curve* magazine by establishing a model for reaching the lesbian community.”

CyArk’s virtual tour of the Lyon-Martin House is a groundbreaking evolution in digital historic preservation efforts, enabling far more members of the public to experience and learn about the Lyon-Martin House than would otherwise be possible. The house’s small size, limited occupancy and situation on a steep hill in a residential neighborhood present significant public access and accessibility challenges. The virtual tour eliminates all potential safety, accessibility and occupancy challenges while providing a seamless, three-dimensional experience for virtual visitors enriched by historic photographs, interviews and commentary.

“CyArk’s extraordinary documentation work provides a global and accessible experience that allows people to engage and emotionally connect to LGBTQ history and Lyon and Martin’s lifesaving work,” said Shayne Watson, a cofounder of FOTLMH and San Francisco-based architectural historian. “It enables FOTLMH to begin planning for future efforts to restore and preserve the Lyon-Martin House to ensure its rightful place in the legacy of San Francisco’s built environment.”

San Francisco District 8 Supervisor Rafael Mandelman, who sponsored the historic landmark designation for the site and represents the Noe Valley neighborhood, concurred. “I commend FOTLMH and the GLBT Historical Society for this cutting-edge work to bring Phyllis and Del’s story to life for a new generation of LGBTQ activists and allies,” he said. “It’s one thing for the city to grant landmark status to a building, but it takes community-led efforts like this to make that history accessible and fresh, something that’s especially needed when it comes to queer history.”

CyArk created the 3D model for the tour using thousands of photographs and laser scans to accurately document the home as it exists today. The rendering additionally incorporates digital versions of several of Lyon and Martin’s possessions currently housed in the GLBT Historical Society’s archives to

provide a sense of the interior when they lived there. The tour is organized into a total of 17 stations, taking in areas including the front yard, living room, second-floor landing and kitchen. At each station, visitors can use four keys on their keyboard to move in three dimensions and the right mouse button to rotate the camera 360 degrees.

Each station is accompanied by historic commentary, reflections and interviews provided by LGBTQ historians, friends and family members of Phyllis and Del, including Marcia Gallo, associate professor of history at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas; Don Romesburg, professor of gender and women's studies at Sonoma State University; and Kendra Mon, the daughter of Phyllis and Del. Finally, the tour incorporates the voices and reflections of Phyllis and Del Martin themselves, drawn from the extensive oral histories and interviews conducted prior to the deaths and held in the GLBT Historical Society's archives.

"We are incredibly proud to help share the story of Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin through a unique place-based experience centered on the home they shared for over 50 years," said John Ristevski, the CEO and chairman of CyArk. "By combining 3D documentation of the home with voices from leaders in the LGBTQ community, including the voices of Phyllis and Del themselves, we hope others are able to learn more about the importance of their work and their legacy in the ongoing struggle for equal rights for all."

The virtual tour of the Lyon-Martin house is available at this link: www.glbthistory.org/lyon-martin-house. This project was generously supported by Iron Mountain as part of the larger Journey to Equal Rights initiative.

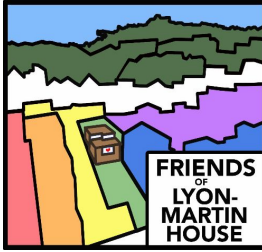
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ABOUT PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS



CyArk

[CyArk](http://www.cyark.org) is a nonprofit organization committed to empowering our connection with historic places. Founded in 2003, CyArk pioneered the application of 3D recording technologies to the preservation and celebration of cultural heritage and has worked with local partners at over 200 sites in more than 40 countries. CyArk strives to connect new audiences to heritage through place-based web, mobile and immersive experiences that inspire reflection, conversation, and imagination.



Friends of the Lyon-Martin House

[Friends of the Lyon-Martin House](#) was organized in 2020 to advocate for the preservation of the longtime home of trailblazing lesbian activists Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin, located in San Francisco's Noe Valley neighborhood. Our mission is to document and preserve the Lyon-Martin House for the purpose of educating San Francisco's LGBTQ community and the public about the significance of Lyon and Martin's lives and work.



GLBT Historical Society

[The GLBT Historical Society](#) is a public history center and archives that collects, preserves and interprets the history of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people and the communities that support them. Founded in 1985, the society is recognized internationally as a leader in the field of queer public history and maintains one of the world's largest archival collections of LGBTQ historical materials. Our operations are centered at two sites: the GLBT Historical Society Museum, located in the heart of San Francisco's Castro neighborhood; and the Dr. John P. De Cecco Archives and Research Center, open to researchers in the Mid-Market district.

The GLBT Historical Society

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