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May 2017

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Detail of "Butler's View" (1993),
self-portrait by Lenore Chinn

Picturing Kinship: Artist Lenore Chinn Links Painting, Photography, Community, Activism

San Francisco native Lenore Chinn's career has combined success in the fields of painting and photography with dauntless advocacy for the rights and cultural contributions of women, people of color and LGBTQ people. Trained at City College of San Francisco and San Francisco State University in the late 1960s and early 1970s, she studied both art and design and sociology. She has exhibited in more than 75 group shows

around the United States and in numerous one-artist shows at such noted San Francisco institutions as the [Luggage Store Gallery](#) and [SOMArts](#).

Alongside her creative work, Chinn has participated in numerous community groups reflecting her passion for social justice and her intersectional experience as a Chinese American, a woman, an artist and a lesbian. She is a cofounder of Lesbians in the Visual Arts and the Queer Cultural Center and has been an active member of the Asian American Women Artists Association and the Harvey Milk LGBTQ Democratic Club. From 1988 to 1992, she served as a member of the San Francisco Human Rights Commission.

"Picturing Kinship: Portraits of Our Community," opening June 9 at the GLBT History Museum, will present a 35-year overview of Chinn's portraits in painting and photography. In this interview, Chinn offers a look at her motivations as an artist and activist -- and a preview of her upcoming show.

What has been the driving force of your creative work as a painter and photographer?

Portraiture is at the core of my visual art practice, whether it's painting or photography -- both are employed in my creative process. As a local artist I focus on the depiction of a wide spectrum of people in all their diversity -- women, people of color and the LGBTQ community. Collectively these images are visual narratives that constitute an art history largely hidden from the public's perception of society and our particular cultural experience.

From my perspective as a painter and former San Francisco Human Rights Commissioner, my portraits reflect the many overlapping communities in which I move or which I have some connection to. Many are colleagues or friends I have chronicled over three decades, so the viewer will see domestic partners, young men now departed due to HIV/AIDS and people from a wide variety of ethnic groups whose lives were impacted by the events of their day.

What's the focus of the exhibition of your work at the GLBT History Museum?

"Picturing Kinship: Portraits of Our Community" will focus on six paintings and six portrait photographs of LGBTQ community members, produced from 1981 to 2016. The subjects are women and men, largely in the arts, who have contributed to the cultural landscape in a variety of fields ranging from poetry to visual arts, performing arts, film, rock music and academia. Some have been involved in local politics laying the groundwork for legislation that changed the course of city policy pertaining to our civil rights, others are from my sociopolitical milieu. Together they have been pioneers in creating visibility and an

infrastructure for our communities.

What inspires your longtime support for the GLBT Historical Society?

I became involved with the GLBT Historical Society and its museum in the Castro through former board member and current Museum Working Group chair Elisabeth Cornu, a personal friend and advocate on behalf of our LGBTQ community. We share a connection to the arts and particularly an interest in representing the community in all its breadth and depth. Over the years I have witnessed the burgeoning of the museum's mission and programming reflecting who we are. While we are not a monolithic community, there is much to our histories and the museum is beginning to close the gap in the public's understanding of our many and varied stories.

From the Managing Archivist Creating Digital Access to Our Collections



by Joanna Black

A sampling of invaluable historical records from the collections of the GLBT Historical Society soon will be more widely available to researchers around the world thanks to three digitization projects now underway:

Archives of Sexuality & Gender. We've recently embarked on the second phase of an online digitizing project with the academic publishing firm Gale/Cengage, which is scanning more of our significant holdings for its series *Archives of Sexuality and Gender: LGBTQ History and Culture Since 1940*. Additions will include the records of the [Asian/Pacific AIDS Coalition](#) and Gay American Indians, as well as the papers of historians [Allan Bérubé](#) (1946-2007) and [Will Roscoe](#) and transgender activist Tamara Ching. The publisher currently offers subscription access to Part 1 of the series online to university and public libraries. The series also is available to researchers in our archives reading room. Part 2 will be published later this year.

Bay Area Reporter. With funding from the Bob Ross Foundation, we are scanning the complete run of the *Bay Area Reporter* from the first issue in 1971 through 2005 (the point at which the paper's own online archives begin). As the oldest continuously published LGBTQ weekly in the United States, the BAR is a foundational resource for learning about Bay Area queer history. We've acquired a state-of-the-art scanner and hired archivist Bill Levay to oversee digitization of the paper. The project will make the searchable back issues available online free of charge. We'll

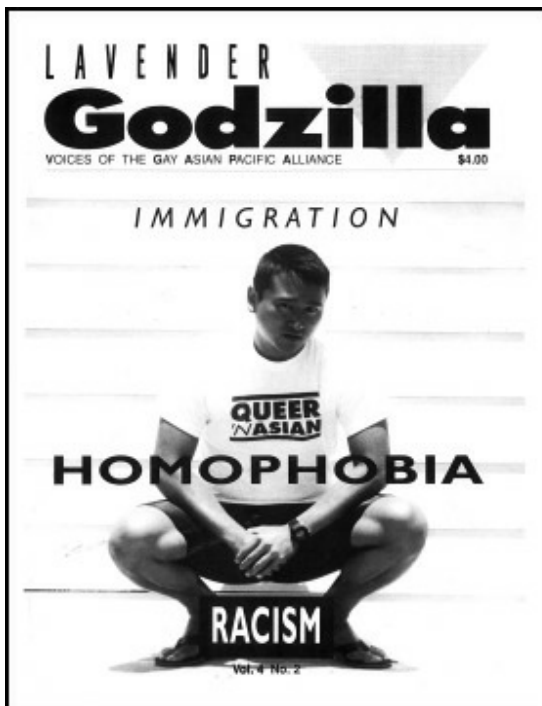
start with volumes from the 2000s, which will be posted late this summer. The full run will be posted by early 2018.

HIV/AIDS History Collections. In partnership with the University of California, San Francisco, and the San Francisco Public Library, we've received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to fund the digitization of HIV/AIDS-related collections and make them available freely on the Web. The funding will make it possible to post a total of 49 archival collections, including 12 from the GLBT Historical Society. In addition, the grant will enable all three institutions to mount exhibitions and public programs drawn from the collections.

Joanna Black is managing archivist at the [GLBT Historical Society](#).

In the Archives

Documenting the Gay Asian Pacific Alliance



by Mark Sawchuk

Visitors to the GLBT Historical Society's archives often expect to look at the papers of just one person or organization. But archival research is like a treasure hunt: apparently unrelated collections may contain information on the same person or topic. A good example is our holdings on the Gay Asian Pacific Alliance (GAPA), an organization established in 1988 to provide support and services for LGBTQ Asian/Pacific Islanders in the Bay Area.

Four sets of personal papers donated by people involved with GAPA document the range of its early activities. [M. J. Talbot](#), a founder of the organization, entrusted the archives with GAPA correspondence, flyers, minutes and ephemera. The Daniel Bao Papers also contain GAPA organizational records; the [George Choy Papers](#) document the relationship between GAPA and OCCUR, the first gay rights organization in Japan; and the [Galen Leung Papers](#) include photographs of GAPA events. In addition, the archives hold GAPA's general newsletter, *Lavender Godzilla*, published from 1988 to 2006, as well as the newsletter of its Community HIV Project (1991-1994) and a separate GAPA HIV-prevention publication, *SEXpert's Enquirer* (1993-1995).

Taken together, these materials show how a diverse group of LGBTQ

people worked within a community-based organization to advocate for the needs of API queer people at a time when when many faced prejudice in both their home communities and the LGBTQ community.

For more details on holdings related to the Gay Asian Pacific Alliance, enter "GAPA" into the [archives search feature](#) on our website. And if you have materials documenting LGBTQ Asian/Pacific Islander communities in Northern California that you might consider donating to the GLBT Historical Society, please contact our managing archivist, [Joanna Black](#).

Mark Sawchuk is a member and volunteer at the GLBT Historical Society.



gay lesbian bisexual transgender
history museum
Spring
MUSEUM
MAKEOVER
CAMPAIGN
APRIL 1 - MAY 15
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TIME
TO LOOK
SHARP

Mona's (circa 1940)

The GLBT History Museum in the Castro is in need of some love. After hosting nearly 100,000 visitors from around the globe, the space is due for a major makeover. We plan to give the front of the museum an exciting new look, including a video wall for exhibits.

With a little more than two weeks left in our [Spring Museum Makeover campaign](#), we're 12 percent of the way to the \$25,000 goal. As with all

crowdfunding efforts, these final two weeks will be all important for gathering the majority of the funds.

You can ensure the museum is ready to welcome its next 100,000 visitors by sharing the campaign with your friends and by [donating today](#).

Upcoming Events

Staged Reading

Rhino in the Castro: Blue Fire on the Water



Monday, May 1

7:00-9:00 PM

The GLBT History Museum

4127 18th St., San Francisco

Free | \$5.00 donation welcome

[Theatre Rhinoceros](#), San Francisco's groundbreaking queer stage company, has teamed up with the GLBT History Museum to

present "Rhino in the Castro," a series of readings of plays reflecting the LGBTQ community and our allies.

This month's offering is "Blue Fire on the Water: A Memory Play With Music" by Renita Martin. There's Jo, in his 80s, teaching Maybelle, a young woman with natural talent, to sing the blues. Maybelle loves Jo, but Jo has secrets. Meanwhile, it's New Orleans, and the water is rising.

Fighting Back

Urban Development vs. LGBTQ Preservation



Tuesday, May 23

7:00-9:00 PM

The GLBT History Museum

4127 18th St., San Francisco

Free | \$5.00 donation welcome

The latest in our monthly "Fighting Back" series exploring contemporary queer-community issues in a historical context, this

multigenerational conversation will feature panelists from preservation battles in San Francisco's LGBTQ community. Panelists will focus in particular on initiatives in San Francisco's SoMa neighborhood, including the Ringold Alley Project, the Eagle Plaza and the Stud bar. They'll lead a discussion of strategies for preserving LGBTQ heritage: What has worked and what hasn't? What new approaches are possible? Can

development and preservation coexist? The forum will be facilitated by historians Shayne Watson, chair of our Historic Places Working Group, and working group member Jim Van Buskirk. To join the Facebook conversation, [click here](#).

Visit Us

EXHIBITIONS & PROGRAMS

The GLBT History Museum

4127 18th St.

San Francisco, CA 94114

(415) 621-1107

www.glbthistory.org/museum

Monday - Saturday: 11:00 AM - 6:00 PM

Sunday: Noon - 5:00 PM

ARCHIVES & RESEARCH CENTER

The GLBT Historical Society

989 Market St., Lower Level

San Francisco, CA 94103-1708

(415) 777-5455

www.glbthistory.org/archives

Call to schedule a research appointment.

CREDITS: Lenore Chinn self-portrait courtesy of the artist. Theatre Rhino photo: Dreamstime. Fighting Back photo: Demolition of the Tool Box (1975) by Henri Leleu.

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