

I Am Gay and You're Gonna Hear Me Roar

Upon entry to the Longwood Gallery's *Gay* exhibition viewers are immediately greeted by Jose Joaquin Figueroa's massive photograph, *Playboy* depicting a nude attractive hirsute man wearing a communist beret and in the iconic coquettish pose of Marilyn Monroe's Playboy centerfold. It is the gay love child of both Monroe and Che Guevara. The lush satin red backdrop coupled with the exposed naked body will make anyone stop and take notice. It is both a slap in the face and a kiss on the lips. It's also the perfect amuse-bouche for what's to come.



"Playboy" 2010 Jose Joaquin Figueroa.

Gay organized by curator and artist Ivan Monforte is an ambitious and provocative exhibition that features 20 artists seeking to explore the ever-shifting identity of what it means to be gay. The unapologetic, uncensored and brazen tone of *Gay* harkens back to the days of Robert Mapplethorpe and Keith Haring. There is a fearless excitement in this aggressive and beautiful depiction of contemporary gay male culture—that hasn't been seen in the Bronx (or the rest of NYC for a very long while).



"untitled" 2014 by Carlos Sandoval De Leon. In this installation the use of purses is a metaphor for highlighting the gay euphemism of "bumping pocketbooks".

The fact that so many of the subjects in the work are men of color and by men of color further enriches and deepens the gay cultural narrative. Hector Silva captures this moment exquisitely in three of his pencil drawings. His work, *Michoacano* depicts a gang member or *cholo* covered in tattoos and muscles laying on a chaise lounge with his bandana covering his eyes while his erect penis stands in the air, presumably waiting to be serviced. The juxtaposition of symbolic aggression with literal ecstasy exemplifies the expanding nature of gay identity. This is not a show about quivering campy clowns and drag queens.

Jacolby Satterwhite takes his digital genius to the screen again depicting a flux of imagery that changes by the second. Faceless human figures contort into sexual positions, streams of light and golden bubbles emanate from a variety of body orifices. The abstraction in his works prevents a literal interpretation—but rather seeks to explore motion and sexuality in a way that is just beyond labels and even gender.

The range of work in 'Gay' is expansive. The message is clear, no longer will we be pigeonholed or told to be silent about who we are—and we're no longer interested in covering it up because it might make you uncomfortable. It celebrates the gay identity without apology and instead invites the viewer to better understand the myriad of perspectives being 'gay' is about.



"t-shirt" Steve Locke, 2007.

The Bronx Council of the Arts, Longwood Gallery, Director and Curator of Longwood Juanita Lanzó and curator Ivan Monforte should all be applauded for this is truly ground-breaking work that will go a very long way to rightfully putting the Bronx in the vanguard of the visual arts community in New York City.

"Gay" will run from February 5-May 7, 2014. Admission to the Exhibition is FREE. In addition there will be numerous events planned through the entirety of the exhibition, check the bronxarts.org for the dates, times and events. ■