

SUMMERHALL
Open Minds Open Doors

PARALLEL
LIVES
ANGUS REID

PARALLEL LIVES • ANGUS REID



PARALLEL LIVES

Angus Reid combines painting and drawing, film-making and historical research to make this ground-breaking vision of gay men in Scotland, past and present. The images portray same-sex love and tenderness. Why does this love inspire fear? Why have images like these never been shown in public in Scotland?

The research goes deep into secret archives to find the story of Harry Whyte, Scotland's forgotten advocate of gay liberation who stood up to Stalin when it mattered. Whyte's protest is parallel to that of Tomasz Kitliński in contemporary Poland; Reid works in solidarity with Kitliński, and the Polish LGBT community.

Parallel Lives is a potent mix of art and activism, whose message reaches beyond the gallery and has become ever more urgent over the past months. Using the tools of lockdown Reid kick-starts conversations about [The Male Nude](#), about [Being Painted](#), about [Harry Whyte](#), about [Stalin and the Homosexuals](#), and to make a stand against homophobia he asks Peter Tatchell for [a master-class in LGBT activism](#). Click on the titles to launch the films.

Those films, this catalogue and the exhibition itself aim to start conversations within the LGBT community and in society at large about art, about tolerance, about love, and about activism.

Curated by Andrew Brown and Robert McDowell

WAR MEMORIAL LIBRARY



PARALLEL LIVES

ANGUS REID

I am not alone but I feel alone
do I obey the uncontrollable
beating of my heart

I feel alone but
I am not alone
I have company
the company of this non-stop knocking
as though there were someone on the other
side of a door banging to be let in
banging on a door that is inside me

who is it demanding entry who is
it making this row
who is this stranger?

is this the uncontrollable impulse
of my heart
the impulse to touch a man

how do I live with a heart that leads me
to the beat of an alien tattoo

QUARTET
Charcoal and chalk on paper, 2018





Charcoal and chalk on paper, 2019
Digital composite, 2019





Charcoal and chalk on paper, 2019
Digital composite, 2019
Oil on canvas, 6' x 6', 2019 (overleaf)



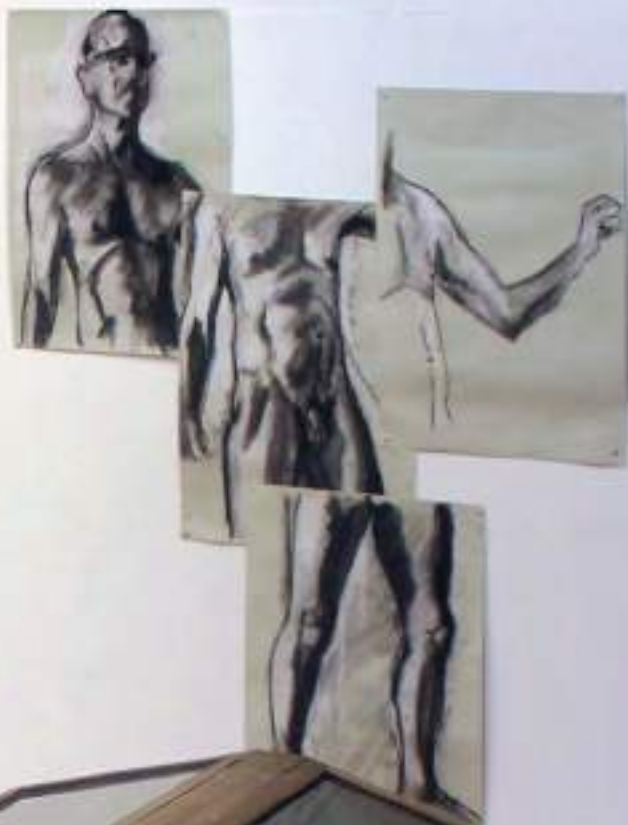














DUET

Digital composite, 2020

Oil on canvas, 6' x 4', 2020 (overleaf)









SOLO
Digital composite, 2020
Oil on Canvas, 6' x 3', 2020 (overleaf)











THE FACT THAT I AM H



OMOSEXUAL

IN NO WAY



DIMINISHES MY VALUE



AS A REVOLUTIONARY



THE MASSE

ARE



Ann B. Masse



Ann B. Masse



Ann B. Masse



NOT

INTOLERANT





Homophobia is undoubtedly the result of ignorance and/or of ideologues politically exploiting that ignorance. A third source may be ignoramuses – fearful types – who, along with their families, are somehow personally threatened by homo-erotic whatever. Ignorance is hard to legislate against.

Can homosexuality be depicted in art? I don't mean as an erotic idea but more profoundly as a gendered or de-gendered culture? Feminism, for example, is probably the biggest sub-genre in art, but not a genre because it has no fixed formalism or style. Neither has any other abstraction or general condition of society or any sexuality when depicted as an inspired work of art. Homosexuality may be in the thinking of artists, within the content of the artwork, or in terms of who or what is empathically portrayed. The art - *how* the artist uses painting, drawing or camera lens - may find some difficulty in pinning down expressiveness insofar as the medium is also the message.

Angus Reid's work has same-sex relationships as subject matter but not in a cliché-ridden or stereotypical expression. The figures have other emotions depicted rather than any obvious eroticism. It's not about sex as an action! The work is about the incidental depiction of emotions, about sentiment, which in this case happens to involve naked men clinging to each other. The principal painting and studies for it in this show are studies in what it means, before all else, to feel human and true to themselves and to each other.











PARALLEL LIVES

OPPOSITIONISTS



HARRY WHYTE

- 1907 Born in the Canongate, Edinburgh, son of William Whyte and Harriet Otter.
- 1914 Attends Heriots school, leaving at 16 to join the Edinburgh Evening News.
-1923 He makes journalism his career and is also a talented linguist, speaking French and German.
- 1922 'Borodin' (Mikhail Gruzenberg) is deported from Scotland as a suspected Soviet agent. He returns to Soviet Russia where as editor-in-chief of the Moscow Daily News he later employs Harry Whyte. Had they met?
- 1926 3 – 12 May General strike.
- 1927 Whyte joins the Independent Labour Party.
- 1929 Two week holiday in Germany. Whyte may have visited Magnus Hirschfeld's Institute of Sexual Research in Berlin. Isherwood, Auden, Gide and Eisenstein were all visitors at this time.
- 1931 Whyte joins the Communist Party of Great Britain and comes under regular state surveillance. His passport is amended to disallow free travel in British Empire territories, a standard anti-communist procedure. At the time the surveillance begins Whyte had moved from Edinburgh to London.
- 1932 A government informer reports Whyte's contribution to an editorial meeting of the Daily Worker, later the Morning Star. Whyte suggests that all news should be presented 'with a class twist', and that the link between unemployment and suicide be a news item. He joins the West Central London branch of the Friends of the Soviet Union. In April he travels to Moscow to take up a post at the Moscow Daily News (MDN). He also contributes articles to Russia Today and the Daily Worker.
- 1933 As best 'shock worker', Whyte is promoted by Borodin to head of editorial staff. He applies for transfer of his membership of the CPGB to its Soviet equivalent, the AUCP. On December 17th the re-criminalisation of homosexuality is introduced by stealth on the initiative of the OGPU, the secret police, with Stalin's approval. Three men who are working at the MDN are accused of homosexuality and arrested at this time: Charles Ashleigh, an English labour activist who had been deported from the USA for 'sedition' in 1921; Hillary Brown, another English journalist; and a Russian, Victor Pavilovich. Is one of these the identity of the un-named man with whom Harry Whyte admits to having had 'homosexual relations'?

- On March 7th Article 121 is added to the Soviet Penal Code prohibiting male homosexuality and introducing a sentence of three years hard labour. Stalin himself intervenes to increase the punishment. It is estimated that between 800 and 1000 men are imprisoned every year for the duration of the Soviet regime. Whyte experiences a period of personal anguish: he visits two psychiatrists in search of a cure to this 'cursed dilemma'. In May, Whyte writes a letter of protest directly to Stalin, stating 'I have a personal stake in this question insofar as I am homosexual myself'. The letter accuses Stalin of being 'an opportunist, not a dialectician.' Stalin writes on the letter: 'An idiot and a degenerate. Archive'. The letter survives unseen in the most secret Kremlin archives until 1993, but provokes an immediate response. The writer Maxim Gorky makes the first public defense of the law in Pravda citing the crude propaganda slogan 'Kill all the homosexuals and destroy Fascism'. The existence of the letter goes entirely unnoticed by the British Secret Services. 1934
- Whyte continues to contribute articles to the MDN until late November. On the 21st it publishes Whyte's last article 'Chelyushkin epic now a play' about a dramatization of the rescue in 1934 of a ship's crew stranded in the polar ice. 1935
- Maxim Gorky dies unexpectedly and Andre Gide, cited in Whyte's letter, rushes to Moscow to speak at his funeral on the 20th June. It appears that Whyte is purged from the AUCP in July for 'moral misdemeanors' and returns to London, arriving on the 2nd August aboard the Soviet motor vessel Alexey Rykoff from Leningrad. This seems like extremely diplomatic treatment. In November, Left Review publishes his article 'Goodbye to a' that', and by December he is in charge of publicity for the Spanish Medical Aid Committee. 1936
- Employed by the Daily Herald as features editor. 1937
- Applies to live in French Morocco, and leaves. An MI6 file dated 23rd May states: 'He was on bad terms with the Communist Party but is thought to have recovered his position'. In Morocco Whyte is employed by the French Government Travel Agency at Rabat, and employed by Reuters. 1938
- Following the French armistice, Whyte leaves for the Spanish zone in Tangier where he is employed as Press Attaché in the British Consulate until December. He is reported as having undertaken 'low level spying' for Col. Tobey Ellis, the head of Tangier Secret Intelligence Service. At this time Whyte befriends Michael Childers Davidson, the foreign correspondent and self-confessed pederast. Davidson had been a member of the German Communist Party from 1929 – 1933 and mentions first meeting Whyte at that time. 1940

- 1941 In June both Whyte and Davidson are arrested and imprisoned by the Spanish authorities following Davidson's failed attempt to enter French Morocco in disguise. Whyte is alleged, in one SIS communiqué to have 'connection with the dope trade and with the white slave trade'. He is deported with Davidson, arriving in Glasgow from Gibraltar on the SS Scythia on July 13th. His confiscated books include Rilke, Chekov, Teach Yourself Spanish, Teach Yourself Shorthand and Will America Fight? He applies for a visa to be correspondent in the Soviet Union for the Daily Mirror, but is refused by the Soviet embassy. He is mobilized and drafted into the Royal Navy as an 'ordinary coder'.
- 1942 Serves on the Arctic convoys, stationed from 26/4/42 until 31/12/44 as BMO in
-1944 Archangel, north Russia.
- 1944 A 'highly secret' memo requests that Whyte be employed by MI6 on 'Japanese phonetic work in Columbo'. It is turned down, describing Whyte as 'unsuitable for work of a highly secret nature'.
- 1945 5th July Atlee is elected with a majority Labour government. In December Whyte is finally demobilized. He had risen to the rank of 'Temporary Acting Leading Coder'. He lives in Camden town with his brother.
- 1946 Contributes three articles to Socialist Review: 'A serviceman asks: could you live on this, chum?', 'Is 7 the sailor's lucky number?' and 'World Navy Army and Airforce'. There is renewed interest in Whyte as an active communist and he is noted to be literature secretary of the Star group of the Communist Party.
- 1947 Reuters reports him as missing work due to having been assaulted in his own home.
- 1950 Whyte leaves Britain for Turkey.
- 1953 Ends his contract with Reuters and works instead for the Kemsley papers, the Daily Telegraph, the News Chronicle, the World Veterans Federation and others. Two American spies cite him as having been 'a protégé of Charles Ashleigh'. The British Press Attaché also files a report for MI6 that says: 'Whyte has drifted away from the party as a result of some disagreement with Moscow methods but his heart still seems to be very much in Russia and he has some leanings towards Tito's brand of Communism. He is said to drink heavily, to be homosexual and not at all an engaging character socially.'

Whyte dies in Istanbul and is buried in the Protestant cemetery. He leaves £1 to a Turkish man. 1960

Sources:

The Times, 30th August 1922, p8 *Foreign Communist Sentenced*
Harry Whyte, *Can a homosexual be considered worthy of membership of the Communist Party?* (1934)
Michael Childers Davidson, *The World, the Flesh and Myself* (1962)
Dan Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia* (2001)
Jeffrey Meek, *Queer Voices in Post-War Scotland* (2015)
Lisa Kirschenbaum, *International Communism and the Spanish Civil War* (2015)
The National Archive.



A communist pioneer of gay rights

ANGUS REID and TOMASZ KITLINSKI

tell the story of Harry Whyte, a working-class voice who defended homosexuality in Soviet Russia from a Marxist perspective – and whose arguments resonate today

THE masses are not intolerant of gay people. This assertion is the crux of the socialist case against homophobia.

When you can grasp that intolerance doesn't come from the masses, you can recognise that it is a choice and a form of ideological oppression.

This how the argument was made to recognise and defend gay people in revolutionary Russia.

And yet for Stalin, to whom the argument was addressed, there was no doubt that it was unacceptable. He dismissed the man who made it as an idiot and a degenerate.

That man was a 27-year-old journalist from Edinburgh who was working in Moscow. A working-class intellectual who spoke French, German and Russian, he is the unknown Scottish hero of gay liberation. His name is Harry Whyte, and the year was 1934.

Born in 1907, Whyte had left school at 16 to join the Edinburgh Evening News. Following the General Strike of 1926 he joined the Independent Labour Party, and, moving to London in 1931, he joined the Communist Party of Great Britain. Immediately he came under state surveillance that would last for his entire life.

He was a jobbing journalist who made it his mission to contribute to the left-wing press.

An intelligence report from 1932 documents his criticism of the Daily Worker, the forerunner of this newspaper.

He objects to the publication of news without a "class twist" and, citing the many accounts of suicide caused by unemployment, he points to the kind of stories that never get published by the capitalist press but that must be the business of the Daily Worker.

His editorial acumen remains as relevant today as it was in the 1930s.

His talents were quickly recognised and by the summer of 1932 he had achieved what must have been a career ambition: to become head of editorial staff at the Moscow Daily News, and a contributor

not just to the Daily Worker but to other British and Russian newspapers as well.

He had grasped a key role in history as a principle English-language spokesperson of Soviet Russia.

Although Whyte was one of the most significant left-wing journalists of the period (and of this newspaper) his achievement and his memory have been erased because, in his identity as a revolutionary socialist, he was openly gay.

And, in a way that is rarely seen today, he brought class analysis to bear on the condition of homosexual men.

For Whyte, homophobic laws and homophobic culture go hand in hand with the class system and, as he puts it, "the emancipation of working-class homosexuals is inseparable from the general struggle for the emancipation of all humanity from the oppression of private-ownership exploitation."

He had grown up in the sexually repressive atmosphere of a Scotland in which homosexuality would remain a crime for his entire life, and from which he had escaped, first to the gay underworld of London, and then via Magnus Hirschfeld's progressive Institute for Sex Research in Berlin to revolutionary Russia.

By making this journey, Whyte deliberately placed himself inside the first great wave of sexual liberation in the 20th century that was happening in early Soviet Russia.

All laws that regulated and prohibited sexual activity between consenting adults had been abolished in 1917, and the Soviet penal code of 1922 no longer mentioned homosexuality at all.

In 1923, Nikolai Semeshko, Lenin's commissar of health, described the emancipation of gay men as "part of the sexual revolution."

In 1925 Grigoriy Batkis, director of the Moscow Institute of Social Hygiene, drew attention to the fact that "homosexuality ... which is set down in European legislation as an offence against morality ... is treated exactly the same as so-called 'natural' intercourse by Soviet legislation..."

The early Soviet revolutionaries were proud to emancipate all the oppressed parts of society and attracted remarkable gay men to their cause from around the world.

Edinburgh's Harry Whyte is perhaps the most significant of them all because of a remarkably courageous protest that he made directly to Stalin.

His was the only voice to object to the secret recriminalisation of sodomy introduced in 1934.

Normally new legislation was announced and explained in Pravda, but the new law was introduced without public knowledge, as though it were a matter of national defence.

It was a secretive move but had far-reaching consequences; it ushered in decades of regressive abuse of gay men in every country in the Soviet sphere.

The oppression brought about by homophobic legislation and homophobic culture would not be redressed in socialist countries until the 1970s.

It was undoubtedly dangerous to write the letter. Whyte was clearly incriminating himself and risking his membership of the party and his position at the Moscow Daily News.

But Whyte had the intellect to defend gay people from a socialist, class-based point of view.

Today, the cause of gay rights has been appropriated by the right, and for many identity politics eclipse class politics.

Whyte stands in diametric opposition to this, and a communist like Mark Ashton, founder of Lesbians and Gays support the Miners, was his direct heir.

Whyte argued that the persecution of gay men goes hand in hand with the class system, and that the crises of capitalism will give rise to further waves of homophobic repression.

One need look no further than today's Poland, Hungary and Turkey to see evidence for his approach.

Whyte pointed out the way the bourgeois class avoid a legal punishment that is applied with maximum severity to gay workers, and it is on behalf of that class – the 2 per cent, an estimated two million gay men



in Soviet Russia – that he stood up to Stalin.

The letter he sent Stalin was 4,000 words long and argued with passionate sincerity, as though everything depended on it.

The real struggle in his own life was clear from the evidence he presented that homosexuality is innate and he pleaded with Stalin to "recognise as inevitable the existence of this minority in society be it capitalist or socialist..."

Stalin didn't reply. But he didn't arrest Whyte or destroy the letter. Instead, he sent it to the archive and recruited the renowned Russian man of letters, Maxim Gorky, to respond in Pravda.

Gorky's vitriol speaks for the high political tensions of the totalitarian era. He wrote: "...the destroy homosexuals and fascism will vanish..." and Stalin approved.

Hitler had come to power in Germany and the two regimes were locked into a public exchange of homophobic slurs in a propaganda war against the other.

Those insults quickly turned into internal cultures of homosexual oppression and the next three decades were the darkest era of persecution of gay men, whether in Nazi Germany, in the Soviet Union or in liberal,

capitalist Britain.

For a gay socialist like Whyte, there was nowhere to turn. But he never gave up a lifelong and persistent loyalty to the Soviet Union.

To protest against Stalin's homophobic laws didn't necessitate rejection of the whole socialist project.

Whyte didn't leave Russia for two years, but by 1936 the party purges expelled him from both the party and the country.

Returning to a Britain he had been glad to leave, he gave his energy to anti-fascism by working for the Spanish Medical Aid Committee, and then working for Reuters in Morocco.

When World War II broke out he applied to be posted as foreign correspondent to Moscow.

His visa was refused by the Russians. Astonishingly, Whyte found another way to return to Soviet Russia, this time as a coder on the Arctic convoys.

His record states that for 18 months he was stationed in Archangel. He had seized the opportunity to use his Russian, to fight fascism and to contribute to the victory of Soviet Russia, but this time as a British serviceman.

After the war he returned to journalism in London, taking up the cause of inadequate demob pay for veterans in

Socialist Review, among other articles. In 1950 he moved to Turkey and he died in Istanbul 10 years later.

Whyte's significance is as a working-class voice defending homosexuality from a Marxist perspective.

His letter to Stalin argues for human rights before human rights existed, and his arguments continue to resonate today.

We can see the vindication of his argument in a case like Cuba. There, a socialist regime that inherited Stalinist homophobic prejudice has grown out of it to become one of the most socially emancipated countries in the world.

The letter was preserved in the secret presidential archives and discovered in 1993.

It was first discussed in Dan Healey's book *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia* (University of Chicago Press, 2001), and subsequently translated and published in English by the Russian artist Yevgeniy Fiks.

An account of Whyte's life can be found in Dr Jeff Meek's social history *Queer Voices in Post-war Scotland* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

Whyte's life and writing are celebrated in Angus Reid's exhibition, *Parallel Lives*, that is currently showing at Summerhall, Edinburgh.

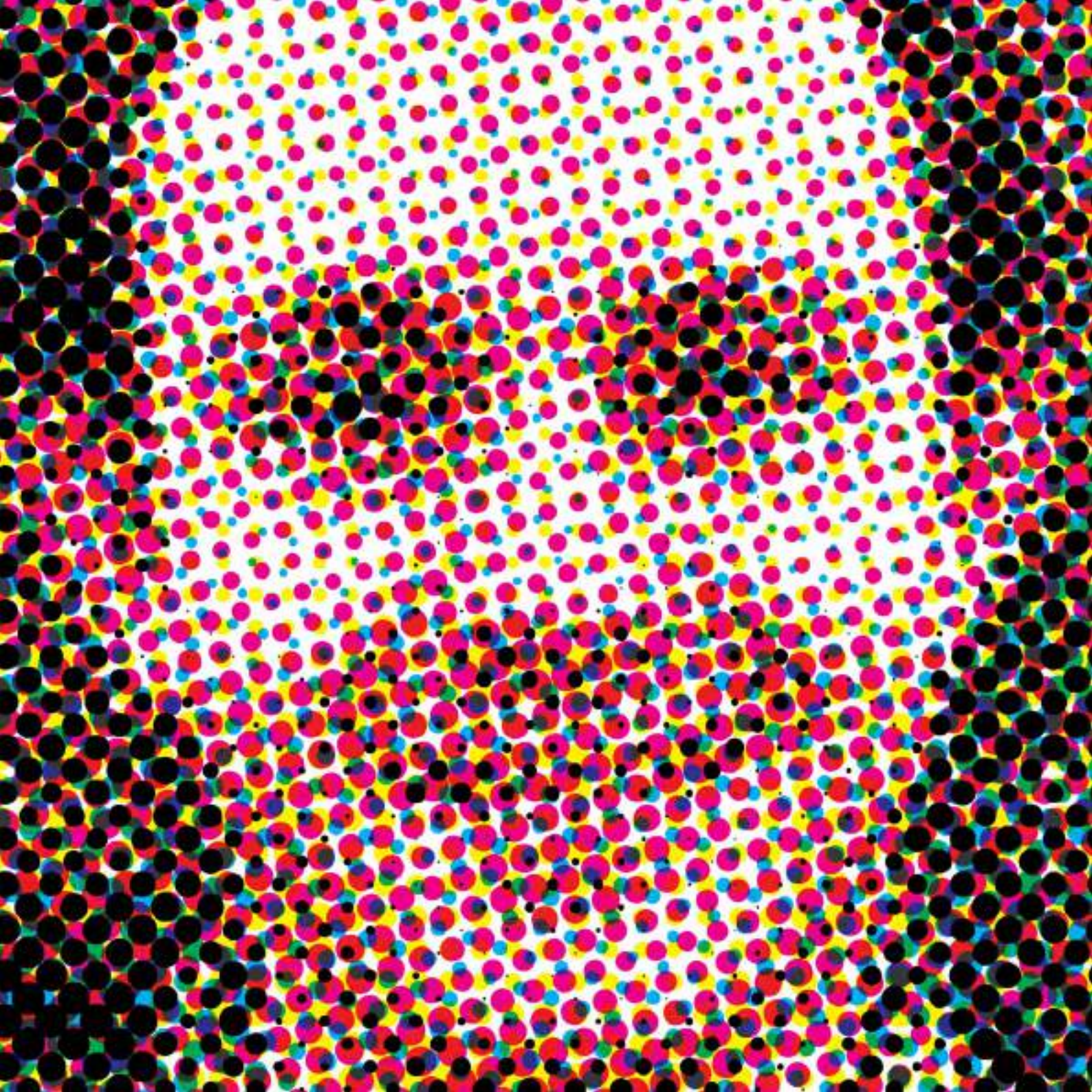
The fact that I am homosexual in no way diminishes my value as a revolutionary.

One should recognize that there is such a thing as ineradicable homosexuality, and hence one should recognize as inevitable the existence of this minority in society, be it a capitalist or even a socialist society.

In my view... the masses are not intolerant of homosexuals.

What is the attitude of bourgeois society to homosexuals? Even if we take into account the differences existing in the legislation of various countries, can we speak of a specifically bourgeois attitude to this question? Yes, we can. Independently of those laws, Capitalism is against homosexuality by virtue of its entire class-based tendency. This tendency can be observed throughout history but it is manifested with especial force now, during the period of Capitalism's general crisis.

I have always believed that it was wrong to advance the separate slogan of the emancipation of working class homosexuals from the conditions of capitalist exploitation. I believe that this emancipation is inseparable from the struggle of all humanity from the oppression of private ownership exploitation.



MARK ASHTON

- 1960 Born in Oldham, UK; then the family moves to Portrush, County Antrim, Northern Ireland.
- 1978 Moves to London; works as a barmaid (in drag) at the Conservative Club, St James St. Lives variously as a 'squatter, drag queen and hotel worker'.
- 1979 Margaret Thatcher elected.
- 1982 Spends three months in Bangladesh visiting his parents. His father worked for the textile machinery industry. On his return he joins the Communist Party, supports CND and volunteers for London Lesbian and Gay switchboard.
- 1983 Takes part in the London Lesbian and Gay film project *Framed Youth: Revenge of the Teenage Perverts*. Margaret Thatcher re-elected.
- 1984 6th March Miners' strike begins. Ashton collects money for the striking miners at the Pride march in July, and immediately afterwards forms Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM) with Mike Jackson. 10th December the 'Pits and Perverts' benefit concert, at the electric ballroom Camden Town is fronted by Bronski Beat. In the film *Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners* Ashton says: *"The group started off in July, after Gay Pride so that one community could give solidarity to the other, alright? It is really illogical to say: 'I'm gay and I'm into defending the gay community but I don't care about anything else'. It's ludicrous. It's important that if you're defending communities you defend all communities and not just one, and that's the main reason that I'm involved in it."*
- 1985 11 LGSM groups operating in the UK. London LGSM raises £22,500 in total. Becomes General Secretary of the Young Communist league.
3rd March Miners' strike ends in defeat.
In May, at the Labour party conference, the support of the NUM is crucial in passing a motion to support equal rights for lesbians and gay men.
- 1986 Joins Red Wedge, the cultural left's campaign to influence the 1987 general election.
- 1987 In January, he is admitted to hospital with pneumonia, diagnosed with AIDS, and dies 12 days later. In June Margaret Thatcher is re-elected for a third time.
- 1988 Despite outspoken opposition from the NUM, Thatcher introduces Section 28 banning local authorities and schools from the '*promotion of homosexuality*' and '*teaching the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship*'.

When the first meeting of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM) took place on the 8th floor of a council block in Bermondsey, South London, none of the eleven men present could have known that within the space of a year not only would LGSM be a national movement commanding respect from lesbians and gay men as well as straight workers up and down the country, but would herald a turning point in the relationship between the lesbian and gay movement and organized labour.

It was a time of immense optimism, especially for those who were on the receiving end of Thatcherism. The miner's strike was like a beacon at this time. Arthur Scargill and the burly women and men of the mining communities were like a shot in the arm. Those who took an interest in politics were euphoric. We relished every day as the tension rose and the struggle intensified. The miners were fighting for all of us. It was right and fitting that we should throw in our lot with them.

It should never be said that diversity of political thought and differences in ideology automatically leads to inactivity. LGSM incorporated within it every political trend on the left (and a few more besides). What was amazing was the amount of 'non-aligned' people who began to come along. They took up the cause with a zeal and commitment that put us lefties to shame. They became the heart of the group. They showed what ordinary people could achieve out of selflessness and concern for others.

What was most interesting were the inner dynamics of the group. People began to find their potential within the different areas of work that LGSM took on. Video (we made two films!), designing leaflets and posters, thinking up ideas for badges and stickers, speaking at public meetings or having ideas on ways to collect or make money. The crème de la crème was our superb (well, it was!) Pits and Perverts Ball. Over 2500 people attended and there was a marvelous selection of acts which culminated in a set by Bronski Beat, the top selling gay band. Throughout all this activity we more and more came to realize our individual and collective potential. At the height of the strike London LGSM was sending approximately £500 a week down to the valleys of South Wales.

Our initial meeting with representatives from the mining communities was a very exciting affair. I don't know who was more nervous, us or them! They told us stories about their community, mused on specific incidents connected with the strike, introduced us to the local characters through tales of pickets and strikes, past and present...

It was bloody marvelous. It added so much colour to the black and white 'facts and figures'. It made all the difference. The warmth and openness that people expressed collectively swept us off our feet!

It wasn't just about jobs or economics as the talking heads on the BBC or the political pundits in the Sun would have us believe.

Those had to be measured in real terms, in human terms: what closing the pits meant to peoples' lives, their language and culture, friends and relationships, human ties and bonds. This is what they were fighting for: their right to determine their own future. We could relate to this. The cold unidentifiable market-place which exists within the heads of the rich and powerful was light years away from the human values and the respect for human dignity which both our communities were based on.

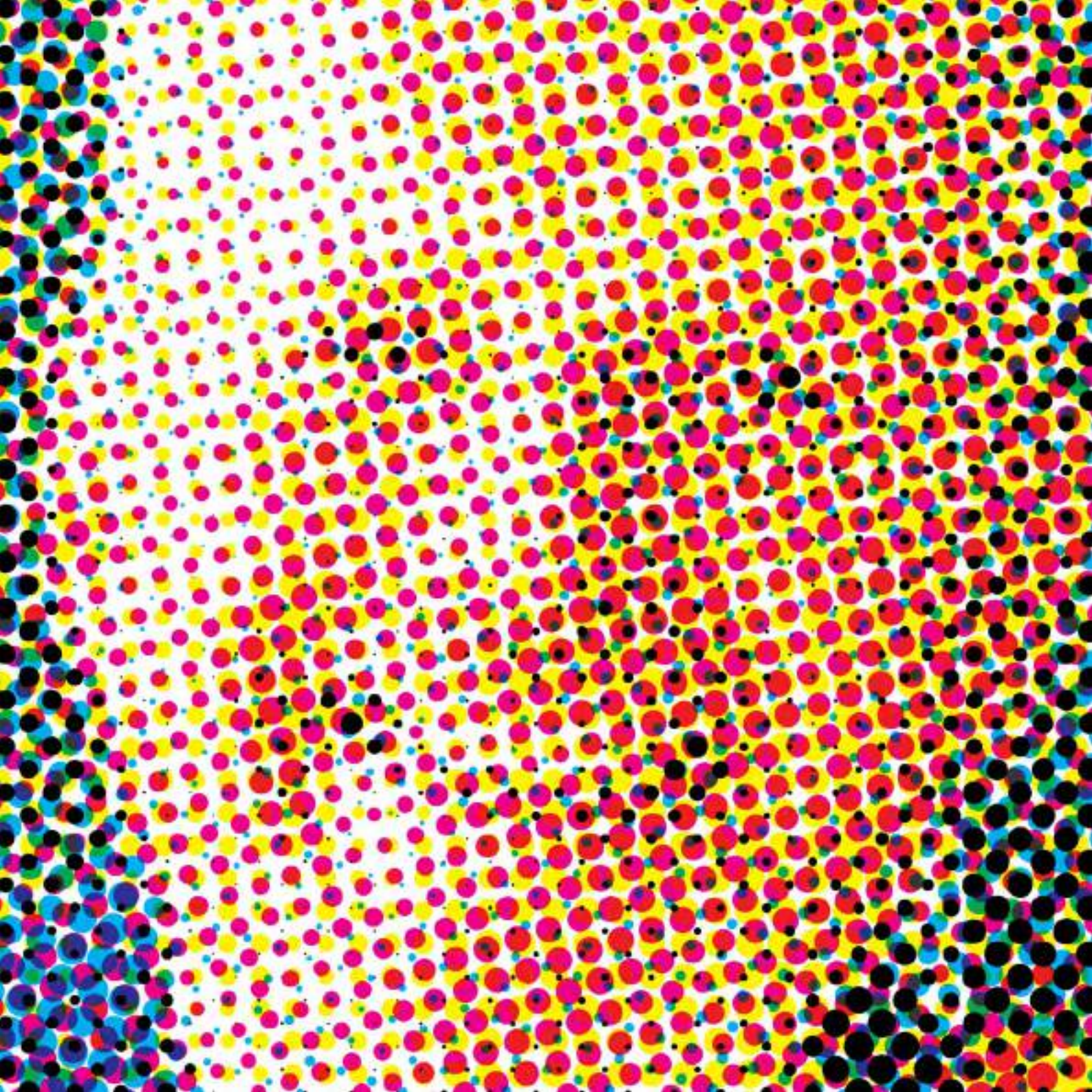
Our reception in our own community wasn't always as warm. Outside Heaven disco, for example one man called the police to stop us collecting. His argument was that the miners were 'against the

government, anti-gay and breaking the law'. We were incredulous, considering the way the police treat gay men in London. Much of the hostility, in retrospect, came from the fact that those same gay men had NEVER thought about these issues themselves! Ironically there was, developing in many people we came into contact with, a deeper understanding of the nature of heterosexism and sexism than existed in many of the gay men who showed such hostility to us. Against that the amazing support that MOST people gave will go down in history.

Months later, when both the TUC and the Labour Party passed their important Lesbian and Gay Rights motions with massive majorities, it was not least because of the efforts of all those women and men in our community who contributed to the great Miners' Strike of 1984-5.

From A Brief History of Lesbian and Gay involvement in the Miners' Strike,
Ashton, 1985





TOMASZ KITLIŃSKI

- 1965 Born in Lublin, Poland.
- 1981 Participates in a school strike in support of Solidarność.
- 1984
-1989 Kitliński participates as translator of English and Polish for Grupa Chwilowa oppositional theatre in Poland, and travels with them in 1986 to Scandinavia, in 1988 to Scotland and 1989 to Israel. This theatre company is seen by Richard Demarco.
- 1989 In June, the first parliamentary elections in Poland follow the Polish Communist Party's abandonment of power in April, and leads to its defeat at the polls.
- 1990 In January, Demarco leads a tour of Poland and brings Angus Reid's one-man show *How to Kill*, which Reid performs in Lublin. Kitliński persuades Reid to stay in Poland to perform, and to write a text together. After three months they publish *Parallel Lines*. It is perhaps the last book produced on Poland's samizdat presses that had permitted the publication of forbidden and subversive works, such as Orwell's *1984*. The convention of 'parallel text' allows them to explore their experience as parallel. On the right-hand pages Reid writes his first impressions of Poland, including encounters with the theatre artist Tadeusz Kantor, the novelist Tadeusz Konwicki and Zbigniew Makarewicz, conceptual artist and head of the Polish Artists Union. On the left-hand pages Kitliński juxtaposes this with a stream-of-consciousness text, as the abject spokesperson of a disillusioned Polish counter-culture. The text unfolds like a relationship and both begin to explore their vulnerabilities: in Reid's case his grief at the death of his father, and in Kitliński's his experience of aphasia whose recurrence is 'perhaps my only real fear ever'. As the text concludes their roles have exchanged. For both Reid and Kitliński the text marks a significant point of artistic self-discovery. Kitliński translates the text into Polish and both editions are published by Makarewicz's Galleria X press.
- 1991 After graduating in English Kitliński undertakes post-graduate study in Maine, Paris and London.
- 1992 Defends his 'Diplome d'Etudes Approfondus' at the Université Paris 7, supervised by Julia Kristeva.
- 1995 Meets Pawel Leszkowicz, his future husband.
- 1997 Teaches at UMCS-Lublin.

Awarded Fullbright scholarship to study at the Center for Research on Democracy, New York.	1998
Delivers academic papers in Paris, Los Angeles and Cape Town.	2000
Takes part, with Paweł Leszkowicz, in the Karolina's Bregula's campaign against homophobia in Poland: 'Let Them See Us'.	2003
Through protest and assistance he helps to save the jobs of 400 workers at UMCS-Lublin.	2009
Awarded European Commission grant to study at the University of Brighton.	2012
Marries Paweł Leszkowicz in England. Publishes <i>Dream Democracy</i> , and in this book and other papers he posits 'guest - otherness' as the highest social value. The phrase involves wordplay: it is the literal translation of the Polish word for hospitality, Gość – inność. He proposes that the Lublin region be a 'guest-other', just as happened in previous centuries when cultures, religions and atheisms co-existed there. He participates in the reconstruction of Jewish life and supports Ukrainian minorities and initiatives. As an active member of KOD (the Committee for the Defence of Democracy) he campaigns for the rights of the economically excluded, refugees, ethnic and national minorities and, in his words, the 'emotional minorities'.	-2014 2014
In May, following a violently xenophobic campaign, the Law-and-Justice affiliated candidate, Andrzej Duda wins the Polish presidential election. In October, the right-wing populist party Law-and-Justice wins 37.6% of the vote in a national election, and rules by outright majority, gradually undermining the independence of Polish judges, the Supreme Court and the Constitutional Court.	2015
Kitliński receives the 'Equality and Diversity' statuette for his campaigning for women's rights in Lublin. As visiting Associate Professor he teaches classes in democracy at Kobe College, Japan.	2018
Participates in the defense of the Gorka Czechowskie ecological enclave. In May, the Lublin region is declared as an LGBT-free zone in an unprecedented and illegal move to alienate social minorities. Violence towards the Polish LGBT community escalates. In September, a couple attempt to explode a bomb at the Pride march in Lublin.	2019

- 2019**
contd
- In September, Kitliński curates 'Guest-otherness', an exhibition in Lublin that includes the work 'Juden-frei' by Dorota Nieznalska. It is described by the Law-and-Justice appointed Provincial Governor of Lublin region, Czarnek, as 'anti-Polish and abominable'. In the same month Czarnek is awarded a medal by UMCS-Lublin University and Kitliński protests. Czarnek responds by launching a state prosecution of Kitliński. In October, the Law and Justice party win 44% of the vote and a renewed parliamentary majority. In November, in a politically motivated move, Kitliński's status is degraded at UMCS-Lublin. Reid starts a petition in support of Kitliński, which attracts over 1,250 signatures from all around the world.
- 2020**
- In February, Kitliński is invited to speak at the conference 'Queering the Museum' at the Tate Gallery, London. He calls for delegates 'to find ways to politicize queer'. By March, Law-and-Justice inspired movements have led to more than one third of Polish municipalities declaring themselves LGBT-free, pledging to refrain from tolerance and to withdraw funding from LGBT groups and charities.
- March – June, Kitliński collaborates again with Angus Reid to create *Parallel Lives*. Having collaborated in their mid-twenties they note ongoing parallels in lives steered by left-wing activism in politics and culture; they notice parallels in the past, in the life of Harry Whyte, and parallels in the future, in the lives of those that participated in the painting 'Quartet', and elsewhere. The paradigm of 'parallel lives' expresses an unfolding empathy with the other and a way to imagine co-existence, in counterpoint to guest-otherness. In mid-June, immediately following the end of lockdown in Poland, Kitliński participates in the exhibition *We are Human* in Lublin, campaigning for LGBT visibility.
- On the 28th June, following a violently homophobic campaign Andrzej Duda, the Law-and-Justice affiliated president of Poland, is narrowly re-elected. The pro-LGBT rights campaign, 'Stop Bzduram' (Stop the Nonsense) protests in Warsaw, leading to the detention of a trans-activist, Margot, and 48 supporters. LGBT studies are banned in Universities. A Synod of the Polish Catholic Church formally recommends the establishment of camps for the compulsory re-alignment of LGBT people. A spate of street muggings go unprosecuted by the police. There is a steady exodus of LGBT people out of Poland. On the 18th September, Kitliński is formally informed by the police that he faces charges on two counts: 'offending the Republic of Poland', and 'offending religious feeling'.
- 19th October, Czarnek is sworn in as Minister of Science and Education.
- 22nd October, the 'reformed' Polish Constitutional Court enforces a near total ban on abortion prompting wide-spread protests.



Polish state complicit in escalation of homophobia

ANGUS REID draws attention to the case of Tomasz Kitlinski, an academic targeted by a provincial governor in an increasing vociferous campaign of LGBT witch-hunting

TWO months ago the Star published a letter I wrote with the Polish academic Tomasz Kitlinski, to draw attention to the way a far-right agenda was penetrating Polish universities.

A prominent ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party politician, Przemysław Czarnek – well-known for his discriminatory views – had just been honoured with a medal *Amicus Universitatis* by Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, where Kitlinski lectures.

Czarnek, the governor of Lublin province, has form when it comes to abusing minorities.

He uses his public position to slander the LGBT community as “degenerates,” encouraging street violence at pride marches.

He officially supports the declaration of “LGBT-free zones” in south-east Poland.

He has also formally accused Grzegorz Kuprianowicz, chairman of the Ukrainian Association in Lublin, of “insulting the Polish nation.”

And, as if to prove himself more Catholic than the Pope, he toes an ultra-conservative, anti-feminist line on women’s rights.

Kitlinski was appalled that such a man should be honoured by the university.

“It shocked my moral sense,” he wrote, adding: “I couldn’t remain indifferent” and so he protested online: “The governor of Lublin Region prides himself in offending Ukrainians, Muslims, the LGBT community and women.”

Kitlinski himself is the very antithesis of Czarnek, a gay man and a prominent minorities’ rights and trade-union activist.

He studied in Lublin, Mainz, London, Paris and New York, but has always returned to Lublin to teach, to revive the city’s multiethnic past and to cultivate a cosmopolitan and tolerant culture.

His protest has, however, given Czarnek the opportunity to escalate the situation and hit back by ordering the state prosecutor to bring Kitlinski to court – just as he has done with Kuprianowicz, a case Czarnek lost.

As Kitlinski says: “By accusing me they intend to send a signal of intolerance to the population at large, and show that any criticism of their racist, homophobic and misogynist attitudes will be met with prosecution

nist attitudes will be met with prosecution, case by case. This represents an attempt to close down free speech and open discourse on human rights in civil society.”

It is important to understand the legal mechanism Czarnek is using to prosecute Kitlinski.

He claims that it is not he that has been offended by Kitlinski’s protest, but “the constitutional organ of the state.”

In other words, to hold him accountable for his offensive views is to accuse the state directly.

That there are no rational grounds for prosecution doesn’t matter. This is doublethink, a coercive use of state power, specifically article 226 of the constitution, to ensure that Czarnek’s bigotry passes without question and that Kitlinski receives the maximum penalty which is a hefty fine and/or up to 12 months in prison, which in a case of “offending the state” can be doubled.

How is it possible for an elected official of the state to use the state to defend his bigotry? To understand this, one must recognise that in Poland the state has changed.

“

... by accusing me they intend to send a signal of intolerance to the population at large, and show that any criticism of their racist, homophobic and misogynist attitudes will be met with prosecution



PiS has total control of the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. It is no longer a system of checks and balances to protect the rights of its citizens. It has become something else. An entity that demands submission – a “sacred” entity that takes offence and punishes its citizens.

This affair is more than gay-baiting and bruised egos. Kitlinski is in real danger from a toxic political environment. So, what can be done to defend him?

I began an online petition to spread the word (see below). In Poland two grassroots movements, the Committee for the Defence of Democracy and the Citizens of the Republic of Poland, have voiced support for Kitlinski.

They accept that his protest against Czarnek had a sure foundation in fact and they defend his right to free speech under Article 54 of the Polish constitution.

But the real problem is that this case is not about free speech at all. Kitlinski is being used as a scapegoat in a bonfire of human rights created by a regime that is deliberately testing the extent to which it can get away with repressive politics in the teeth of EU norms.

However, in Robert Biedron, leader of the Spring Party (Wiosna), Poland has an openly gay MEP and the new united left candidate in the 2020 presidential elections, but Biedron’s election in May 2020 would be a miracle.

While MEPs like Biedron vote for sexual diversity in Europe, Kitlinski’s prosecution is a symbolic step in the suppression of minority rights at home.

For domestic politicians, Europe is a rainbow flag-leaf that it uses to conceal their own far-right agenda, to impose a national mono-culture that is homogeneous, hetero-normative and Catholic.

Their rhetoric covertly dehumanises the LGBT minority, while they claim to respect LGBT people but to oppose LGBT “ideology.”

Of course, they cannot say what LGBT “ideology” is, if not gay people themselves.

Their mouthpiece is the far-right media, such as the national station Radio Maryja (named after the Virgin Mary).

It repeated the accusation against Kitlinski of “defaming the state” every hour, every day, for a whole weekend, with the monotony of an Orwellian Hate Week.

Last November a special working group was set up in the Sejm (Polish parliament) to address issues of equality of the LGBT+ community. However, of the 24 members none is from PiS.

So, what is the political significance of this organised homophobia?

There is an important lesson from the past. In 1917 the Soviet Union removed the whole of the tsarist penal code, including the law that criminalised homosexuality and in 1922 the new Soviet criminal code removed all legal restrictions on sexual activity – a move that is the closest to total sexual liberation that socialism has come.

But in 1934 the Stalinist bureaucracy recriminalised it. The homosexual minority found a voice in Harry Whyte, a communist of Scottish origin, who complained to Stalin in the rational terms of the earlier Soviet legislation.

Whyte pointed out that “it is inevitable that there will be a permanent minority of homosexuals in any society, be it capitalist or socialist. The masses are not intolerant towards this minority, and it represents no threat to the population.”

But as Whyte found out, a rational assessment counts for nothing when the state wants a scapegoat. In the Soviet Union of 1934 or Poland of 2020, homophobia is a key embodiment of repressive state power.

It is as useful as anti-semitism, Islamophobia or anti-feminism with the advantage that it has no ethnic bias. It can be applied equally to everyone.

Homophobia in contemporary Poland is symptomatic of a concerted attempt to control the way people think and feel. It is part of the same politics that have made it illegal to mention Polish collaboration in the Holocaust.

Politics has risen to power by whispering what it takes to be the “secret desire of the masses” – to subordinate women, to persecute homosexuals, to expel foreigners and to establish “purity.”

The Law and Justice party aims to articulate, incite, and enact these desires. And the prosecution of Kitlinski is another attempt to demonstrate that these sinister and violent desires have become the law.

■ Petition: chng.it/bvXhGCBM.

This is the first time in my life that I am in intense communication with an exhibition that is happening elsewhere. Parallel Lives is Angus Reid's display of paintings, photographs and textual vitrines, all 'against homophobia'. The show includes the text we wrote together in Poland in 1990, *Parallel Lines*, and the article he wrote a few weeks ago in support of me, for the Morning Star.

The Morning Star was the great illicit pleasure of my childhood. In the 1970s it was the only English-language paper that came to the International Press Club in Lublin. From 1980 Poland opened up and you could find Newsweek, Time and the Economist, but for my primary school years it was just the Morning Star. They kept it under the counter. My father bought it for me. It had the feeling of forbidden fruit.

I objected when my university honoured a homophobic politician. He is a mouthpiece for the far-right, and he is trying to prosecute me. The University have degraded my status and my salary and deprived me of the opportunity to research, to be creative. But I find myself included in this exhibition and invited to add myself as a witness, as an artist and a thinker, and for me this is a welcome invitation. To contribute time and attention to the exhibition is a way to show that we still remember how to live in times when we are forbidden to travel and see one another. The exhibition is a repository of hope, an ethical event as well as an aesthetic event.

And now, writing from Poland about an event in Scotland, I feel like one of those East European freedom fighters who looks to Scotland for inspiration. I look for the Romantic rebels, for Ossian, Scott and Byron. I look for the oppositionists, the oppositionists in love.

It was a Scotsman, Harry Whyte, who objected to Stalin about the re-criminalisation of homosexuality in the Soviet Union. Angus Reid places Whyte's protest alongside mine as a 'parallel life'. He has designed a life-size media vitrine for video messages. In it, my face is the same size as that of Harry Whyte's in the neighbouring vitrine, and along side Whyte's are four more, those of four gay criminals from the 1930s, Harry Whyte's contemporaries. We all present selfies from our historical moment. We stand together. And in my mind I dream of a utopic Scotland... which Angus Reid destroys.

His Scotland is dark and morose. It is a medical space, an old veterinary school that doesn't disguise itself. The photographs are dark. These men were imprisoned under laws that were still in force in Scotland in 1979, when Angus was at school in Edinburgh and I read the Morning Star in Poland.

The exhibition is 'against homophobia': the homophobia he feels in his environment and in himself, and which he challenges through his creativity for the benefit of all, including me. We are living through an ethical catastrophe in Poland in which an autocratic government takes advantage of lockdown to accelerate its control over peoples' freedoms, over their minds and bodies. Abortion is banned. LGBT-free zones are enforced. They even try to hold a presidential election in times of plague, to skew the result in their favour.

But this exhibition can save us. It is saving us already. It is more than a static showing of completed work: it contains the invitation to join in, to contribute, to share. And this sharing is the paradigm for universal sharing. It offers hospitality to otherness. It goes beyond class, gender, and sexual orientation to embrace the many.

This sharing begins with the circle that have contributed to the work. This employment of a social network creates a dialogue that is perpetually enriching and changing the meaning of the show. Step by

step, as the circle widens it suggests the possibility of a better future, a higher structure of feeling and a renewed confidence in ourselves and our discoveries. What might those discoveries be?

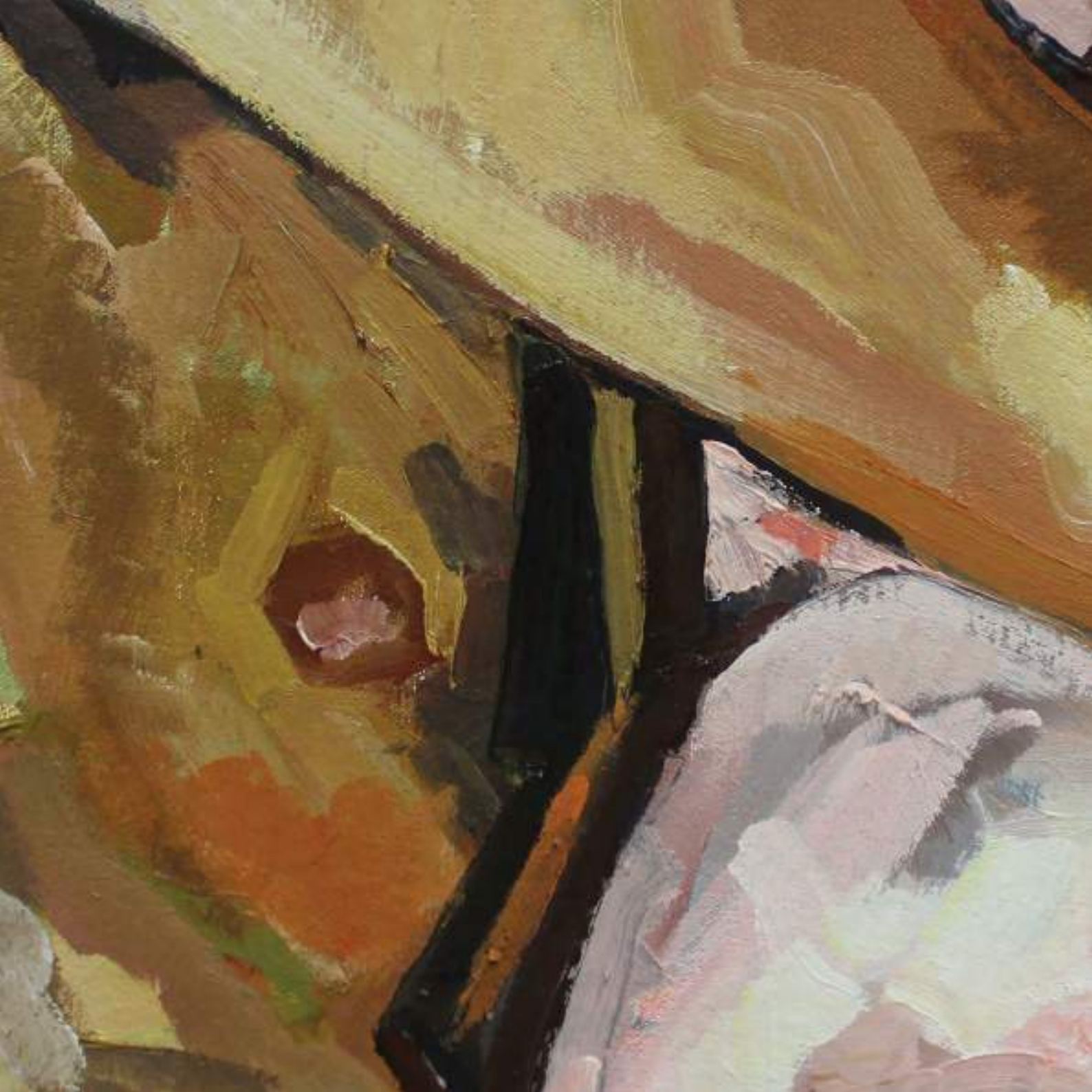
These are surely the values represented in the paintings: tenderness, gentleness, proximity, identification with the other, empathy, feeling the other's pain. And accompaniment – that small acts of kindness, the politics of small things. And the politics of big things. A defense of activism. The sensibility of protest. And the protest itself.

This combination of paintings, photographs and textual vitrines offers a new way to combine ethics with aesthetics in a way that has immense positive potential: it offers hospitality to otherness, and respect in the true sense of the word, of 'seeing again', and in this case we empathise with the prostitute, the working class man, the revolutionary, and with those dispensing tenderness in the sauna.

In the language of Angus Reid's images, the lamp in the darkness, the primary signifier, is the male nude. As an image, the nude is simple and explicit, and universally recognisable: it is the language of sexuality. It is both individual, and universal and embodies needs that are felt by everybody. Everybody feels something about it. And it is, somehow, cheerful. It is, in other words, democratic. Angus Reid's nudes are a way to re-embody the essence of democracy. And this feels like a fresh discovery, the democratic character of the nude. The embodiment of democracy as erotic, individual and universal.

This recalls the exhibition of democratic art in a London gallery for working class people in 1939: when Picasso's *Guernica* was shown at the Whitechapel. 80 years later we still need to protest. We have invented new media and, if only very slowly, we are learning to direct it towards a common goal and a good use, socially speaking. But we still need paintings to represent what has become of us. Painting remains essential as the way to catch the mind, to catch the eye, and to catch the masses. That alchemy... or, as my mentor Julia Kristeva once wrote, that translation of '*... the space of desires into the surface of colours...*

Lublin, May 2020















ANGUS REID



Why paint?

Painting is a gracious way to accept the world's hospitality. Painting requires sustained observation. My energy works best when it encounters an equivalent energy that comes from the subject. The point where the two energies meet is where things get tried out, tested and dared, made and destroyed. That is where the art happens and the images begin to appear.

For example: when I was 19 I went to Cyprus and I encountered this beaten-up city, Nicosia. I felt compassion for those streets, and grateful to the people who put me up. Five years ago I went back and the city still felt grateful to be painted. I was glad to be the instrument by which the city could see itself afresh. Nicosia restored my confidence in painting and the significance of painting and after Nicosia I was looking for a subject in Scotland. I thought it might be a very big landscape akin to the Cypriot work: what Edinburgh looks like from the Pentlands, or what lowland Scotland looks like from Ben More. But it turned out that the most interesting thing to paint was gay men, and the hidden landscape of same-sex desire.

Why is it hidden? The Scotland I grew up in was, and still is, very homophobic. It dislikes homosexuality and doesn't wish to encounter it. I am Scottish enough to feel that homophobia inside me. But I wanted to explore my own attraction to men as well as the attraction that exists between men. Painting offered itself as a sympathetic and practical way to look inside this hidden zone.

How did the composition come about?

One morning I felt the compulsion to draw a scene in a gay sauna from memory. The sauna in Edinburgh is dark and narrow, but in my imagination I saw it like a tableau, as though on stage. I saw four figures, three older men with a younger man in the middle. The different circumstances of different generations are very important, and their relationship is very dynamic and interesting. I didn't know who the people were and I was sure that I had never seen an image like that. Part of the obligation to work comes from the sense that you are seeing something for the first time.

There is no realistic depiction of same-sex love between men anywhere in Scottish art. And yet it is a fact of life for many men. And the fact that it is hidden contributes to a terrible mental health problem for many men, including me.

It reflects the fact that gay rights exist in Scotland today but in a strange way, under the radar. Scotland has never had a Stonewall moment when the gay community politicized and came out fighting. Gay rights were conceded on the quiet, as a legal fudge, and they haven't displaced the homophobia that runs through Scotland like lettering through rock. In 1979, the year that I first came to Scotland as a schoolboy, Donald Brooks, who was a founder member of the Scottish Minorities Group that lobbied for gay rights, put it this way:

'If Scotland had to carry full responsibility for its separate nationhood, I doubt whether the law would have changed. I tend to think that a truly Scottish Scotland would be a rabidly heterosexist society and gays would not last long..'

The Edinburgh school I went to in the 1980s was indeed rabidly homophobic and completely unlike the primary school that I had been to in South London. So, the composition came about in defiance of all that. My sketch gave me the means to take aim at homophobia and to show same-sex relationships between Scottish men. It is, at the same time, both an act of solidarity with gay men and a question addressed to the homophobes: what is it about this that you fear?

THE FACT THAT I AM HOMOSEXUAL



What was the challenge?

The challenge was to develop a way to address this question to society at large. It began with the need to get real men to sit like I had seen them in the sketch. They were ordinary men recruited at random, and it wasn't until *Quartet* was finished that I realized I had never made a painting that big before, nor painted a group of naked figures. This is a clue to the kind of painting that *Quartet* is: it was the voluntary commitment of those men that drove it forward. I relish the sense that I am the instrument, or the channel, for a collective intention like that.

Take the heads, for example. In one study of three heads one of the guys, the one on the left, was telling us about his experience when he buddied men with Aids in the 1990s for the Terence Higgins Trust. I just let the drawing happen, and it looks to me like a man holding a ghost, in the presence of death. That particular drawing, and that experience of older gay men, was a crucial anchor for the main composition.

There's another study of two heads made for *Duet* that is also very strange to me. One man seems very quiet, gentle and compassionate, and almost alien in his detachment. The other seems monkey-like, infantile and regressive. In its primitive way the drawing is feeling its way into something I had never seen before: how one man can hold and cradle the vulnerability and pain of another, without judgment. It is something very beautiful and wholesome and healthy, seen for the first time.

And there's another, quite unlike the rest, that expresses the solitary beauty of a young man. When I showed it to him he said 'You know, if I really thought I really looked like that, then...'

It was a very conventional drawing, a straightforward rendering of his features. I was very careful because he was the youngest and he was crucial for the painting and could easily have chosen to walk away. It was strange to him but real to me, and very useful.

What took you out of your comfort zone?

To be open about homosexuality took me outside my comfort zone, but to do so as an artist allowed me to negotiate that. But when the art itself went wrong I had a big problem. Like, for example when the erection appeared in *Quartet*. The painting was going well when that younger guy and one other sat for me and suddenly the whole mood changed. We had this convention that they would take up the positions I had sketched for them, and this slightly theatrical business of assuming a pose somehow restrained the erotic potential. It became like a social and everyone was happy to sit there naked. There was Mozart and Morrissey, tea and biscuits, and I kept the studio warm. But suddenly there was this young man's erection, obviously real, and then these two men were challenging me to paint it. Often painting has to be quick and made without thinking, but as I painted it I felt I was wrecking the whole thing. I know of no depiction of an erect penis that is not pornography. The whole project ran up against what has always been unacceptable in art. Girodet's *Endymion* doesn't have an erection. You never see one, not in Freud, or Schiele or Gerstl or even Warhol or Koons or Jung. The censorious homophobia of centuries of academic art arose in my gullet like nausea.

How did you find your comfort zone again?

We stopped. At the next session the whole group got involved. There was no question of painting it out, but it didn't work and no one knew what to suggest. But the solution, interestingly, had already been offered by the original sketch. In that drawing, ever so faintly, the central vertical of the guy's penis is being held in another man's hand. The motif had always been a part of the design, but what looks like a fist in the drawing became a caress in the painting. It involved an adjustment of arm and body, and that allowed it to take its place in the narrative of how and why and what happens when men like these are together in this way.





The difference between sketch and painting is very important for *Quartet*. The sketch follows a geometry of horizontals and verticals, heads in a row, and straight backs. When I observed the group from life it revealed much subtler and more beautiful geometries that I had been unable to imagine: the lovely irregular loop of hands that touch around the circle, for example, or the bumpy line of knees and the rhythm of dangling legs and feet, or the strong resonance of individual heads that are like distinctive single notes phrasing the composition.

To paint on a square canvas emphasized these patterns and geometries. The square is a special shape that creates an equal emphasis across the entire surface and it heightens the abstract qualities of the image. You can feel that kind of thing going on very emphatically in Agnes Martin, and I think of her painting *Friendship* (1963) as a relation of *Quartet*. It's exactly the same size, six foot square. Those abstract patterns have a special significance because they are derived from the real, and not from fantasy. They represent the real topography of touch and desire in this situation of men together. The square allows you to read all that. It seems to super-activate every sub-square within itself, right down to the tiniest mark.

How did you know when to stop?

A painting represents the time spent painting it. Because of the collective nature of the project the time had to be limited. It took five weeks from beginning to end, working every day. To me, the whole drama was in the bodies and the painting concluded when I found the line that is their boundary. That line demonstrates the space they occupy, variously sitting or lying, perched or propped or hanging or leaning. I darkened the background and that felt like a presentiment of closure. The application of all those delicious dark vertical strokes was a kind of 'unthinking' that encountered and defined the boundary. Both *Quartet* and *Duet* express solidarity between men, for sure. They express amazing courage and vulnerability and depth of feeling. But they also show the limits of that.



But that way of coming to a close didn't stop the creative momentum of the image itself, which immediately rolled over into film-making. I made the [film](#) *Quartet* immediately after I finished painting. Both painting and film belong to the same moment and that additional step confirmed to us all that the project must reach out to other audiences beyond the gallery itself. This was the activist impulse, that was always latent within the project, beginning to realize itself.

The exhibition contains paintings and drawings, but also films, text and historical research. How did it come together?

The physical properties of the room in which you exhibit are very important. *Parallel Lives* is housed in what was the War Memorial Library of the former Vet School, and it retains the Edwardian paneling and display cases of old. It is ironic that a room that had been used to commemorate masculinity in militaristic and hetero-normative terms had become the venue for *Quartet*. I needed to create a 'safe space', where everything is careful, candid and beautiful, and able to welcome the solitary visitor. The environment is my gift to them. My first move was to take the gold lettering that Edinburgh schools like to use for their memorial boards, and to install a giant text around the walls that included the words 'homosexual' and 'revolutionary'. That felt good.

The words came from a letter by another one-time Edinburgh schoolboy, Harry Whyte, who went to Heriots, half a mile away. Whyte wrote them in a letter to Stalin in 1934, protesting against the re-criminalisation of homosexuality in the Soviet Union. Given Scotland's history of homophobia I was amazed that such a man had even existed. Here was a gay man from Edinburgh, who was educated at the same private school that J. K. Rowling sent her kids to, protesting on behalf of the global homosexual proletariat to Stalin himself, at the very moment in history when it might have been possible to prevent Socialism from becoming homophobic. Quite incredible.

Later, he served on the suicide ticket of the Second World War, the Arctic convoys. In Harry Whyte, the War Memorial Gallery found a

bona-fide war hero. A *gay* war hero. A gay *Scottish* war hero. A *card-carrying communist* gay Scottish war hero. A *comrade*. A *brother*.

Whyte was also the kind of man who disappears from history as gay men did in the first half of the 20th century, but because he was a communist British Secret Intelligence kept files on him from the date he joined the party. They are in the National Archive, and downloadable, and I could reconstruct his remarkable life from those formerly classified documents. To recover his life felt like part of the project. I put his life together as a time-line.

I also had wall space to fill and the chance to develop the potential of *Quartet* with more large paintings. *Duet*, the study of two men, came easily. We had spotted the image during the sittings, and it went through like a 'one-touch' painting. I would be happy to spend the rest of my life making an extended series of duets as they seem to me to be grammar in a language we need to learn afresh: the language of tenderness, of touch, of holding the other's vulnerability and pain, and of caring for everything that makes for emotional well-being. By contrast *Solo*, which concludes the Summerhall suite of paintings, came reluctantly and by virtue of lockdown. In that period of isolation I subjected my own body to the same gaze that I had brought to the others. It felt right to include myself in their company. But if *Quartet* is a singularity and *Duet* the first in an infinite series, *Solo* is something else again. It is the representation of representation, what the body looks like when braced and standing as one is to paint at life-size.

Lockdown also coincided with an extraordinarily vicious presidential election in Poland in which homophobia was pressed into the service of delivering a slender majority for the far-right. I was in fear for friends in Poland, and justifiably so. Human rights for LGBT people were being openly questioned by politicians who made incitements to violence on TV. People who went into gay bars were being beaten up with total impunity.

Tomasz Kitliński, a Polish academic with whom I had written a book 30 years before, called out the homophobia of one of these politicians, who then brought the heaviest possible state prosecution against him.

What is my exhibition for if not to express solidarity with those who experience homophobia? What is it for if not to cast a light on the political roots of state-sponsored hate-speech and scapegoating?

So, alongside the time-line of Harry Whyte's life and protest I made another, that of Tomasz Kitliński's life and protest. And when I put the time-lines of these two men side by side I found myself beginning to compare them as *parallel lives*. For example: I met Tomasz when I was 24, as was he. It was a decisive moment for us both. What was Whyte doing at 24? He joined the Communist Party. What was the 24 year old doing who sat for me? He didn't just sit for me but was the only one with the raw nerve to urge me to 'get it out there'. And what about Mark Ashton, who was one of the most effective gay activists in the UK in the 80s? What was he doing at 24? He was already a member of the Communist party and at 24 he founded *Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners*, and forged the link between gay rights activism and the Labour movement. It was Ashton who undid Stalin's homophobic legacy for British socialists, and paved the way for me to write about Whyte and Kitliński in the Morning Star. The badges I made as a give-away to those who get it, are my homage to Ashton's activism.

These lives are parallel to those of the men who sat for *Quartet* and *Duet*, and to mine. To imagine other peoples' lives as parallel is a way to empathise, to understand better and to experience solidarity. It's what Joseph Beuys called 'work in the social medium'.

And that work doesn't stop. When the show was ready I found myself looking for people to discuss it with, and I found them. I created five new films from zoom conversations. This new series culminates in a master-class in LGBT activism given by Peter Tatchell.

The marvelous thing about Summerhall is that it is able to accommodate all this. An exhibition is not the static display of preconceived work. It is a process. Not many people understand that. Being at Summerhall has helped me to develop the activist potential of the project. But the great thing is that alongside all that necessary political and cultural work, Summerhall maintains and defends something else that is just as important: the fragile territory of art.





JAKE DUYVESTYN



It was really exciting to be a part of this work, and it's even more exciting to see it find a context to live in, and to get out there into the world so that people can experience it...

What interesting times we are going through right now. I think, as queer people, one of our biggest strengths is our sense of community and it's going to be really challenging to get through this crisis without losing that. We're not able to go to bath-houses, we're not able to go to clubs and events and be part of our community right now... And it's really important that we're aware of that and that we do all we can so that we don't lose that strength in community.

I really feel for people who are disconnected at the moment, who are maybe living with unsupportive or homophobic relatives in unstable housing situations...

On the bright side it's really good to see that the cracks in society are starting to show and it's becoming clearer and clearer just how broken the system was.

Harry Whyte (1907-1960) is the forgotten Scottish hero of gay rights activism. Born in Edinburgh to working class parents, he was a journalist who joined the Communist Party in 1931. In 1934, while working in Moscow, he wrote a letter to Stalin protesting against the re-criminalisation of homosexuality, which had been emancipated in 1922.

Mark Ashton (1960-1986) was a British gay rights activist and co-founder of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM) in 1984. He was a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain, and general secretary of the Young Communist League.

Tomasz Kitliński (1965) is a Polish political philosopher, cultural and social analyst, and civic activist. He is a lecturer and trade unionist at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University and an author of books, articles, petitions and letters of protest. In his research and teaching, he deals with contemporary society, culture and politics, intellectual history, literary and critical theory, art practice, religious studies and social anthropology. In his activism, he champions women's, LGBT, labour and refugee rights and participation.

Angus Reid (1966) is a Scottish artist, writer and film-maker. His plays include *How to Kill* (1989) and *Believer* (1992); his films include *Brotherly Love* (1994), *The Ring* (2004) and *Primary School Musical!* (2012); his poetry includes *The Book of Days* (2012) and *The History of Art in 100 Limericks, Volume One* (2018). Recent exhibitions include *6 Peaks* (2012) and *Vision of Nicosia* (2015).

Jake Duyvestyn (1993) is a user-experience designer and aspiring veggie gardener. Raised on the lands of the Yuwibara, Bwgcolman, and Wulgurukaba people in so-called Queensland Australia, he has since spent time living in Meanjin (Brisbane), Wangal country (Sydney), Dorset, Edinburgh, Utrecht and now resides in Naarm (Melbourne). He aims to make use of the privilege and acceptance granted to his generation of gay men to uplift the most vulnerable members of the wider queer and marginalised communities.







A
PARALLEL
LIVES
THE MALE
NUDE
CONVERSATION



A
PARALLEL
LIVES
SITTING &
BEING PAINTED
CONVERSATION



A
PARALLEL
LIVES
WHO IS
HARRY WHYTE?
CONVERSATION



A
PARALLEL
LIVES
STALIN AND THE
HOMOSEXUALS
CONVERSATION



A
PARALLEL
LIVES
PETER
TATCHELL
MASTERCLASS



PARALLEL LIVES

LOCKDOWN FILMS



PAWEL
LESZKOWICZ

THE MALE NUDE

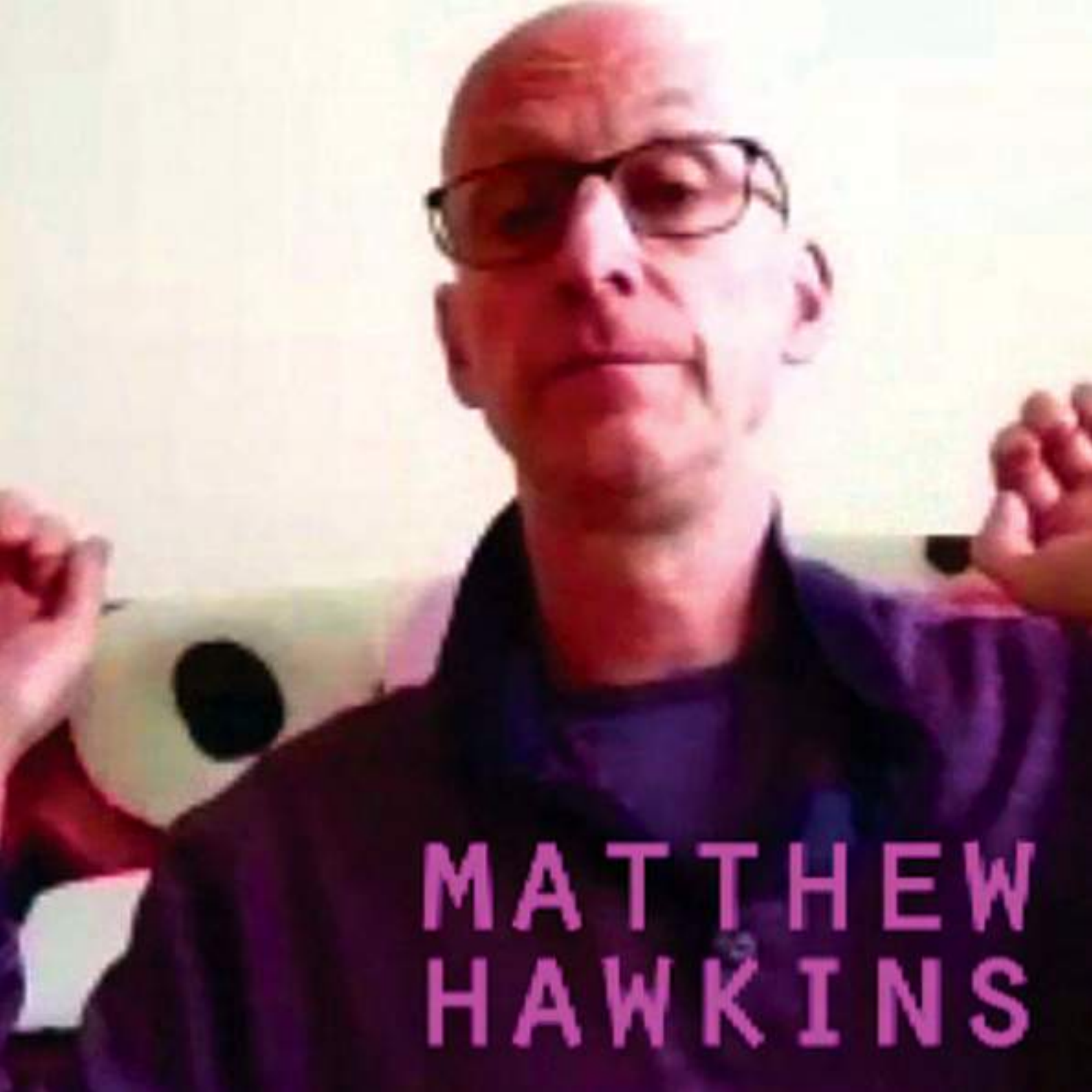
(11 mins, 22/5/20)

I would like to add one further historical fact to this discussion and I think the exhibition is embedded in this historical fact. In the 30s and the 40s and the 50s the most severe oppression of gay men was experienced by gay men in Great Britain, including Scotland of course, and by gay men in Soviet Russia. The highest number of persecutions and imprisonments was in Britain – a capitalist and democratic country – and in totalitarian Soviet Russia.

The exhibition brilliantly brings this historical fact to the forefront, to a level of visibility, to allow for contemporary historical understanding of the situation that we are dealing with in these two countries. Great Britain now thinks of itself as a very liberal country but it was even more oppressive, especially in the 50s, than the Soviet Union was, when it comes to sexuality.

Sexual oppression is something that is very much visible in the exhibition, through the photographs of imprisoned homosexuals, through the story of Eastern Europe now and Tomek's trouble in Poland, and also through the special quality of those paintings.

These paintings are not only male nudes, not only intimate and not only erotic... there is also something traumatic in them, and that is why they are interesting.



**MATTHEW
HAWKINS**

SITTING & BEING PAINTED

(17 mins, 29/5/20)

My experience was being called in to help with the sitting because that fellow couldn't be there all the time. So I took that central position for many days...

We never posed in the studio all four of us at the same time. There were never more than three at a sitting. Some people actually exchanged roles as well... so there was a certain amount of movement, a certain ephemeral quality, actually, about the long sit, strangely. But again, the bathhouse or the sauna is about ephemera. This is what we go for. Ephemera.

But there was a moment in one of the sits for *Quartet* when it was a bit chilly and we needed to move around, so we just went into this kind of hug... Angus was out there making some tea to bring to us and he happened on this image when he returned and it was one of those things, we all knew this could be a next step.



YEVGENIY
FIKS

WHO IS HARRY WHYTE?

(13mins, 5/6/20)

To me it was very shocking that a communist would try to defend homosexuality in the Soviet Union. That a communist would write to another communist – meaning Harry Whyte to Stalin – and as a communist, try to argue in defence of homosexuality using precisely communist theory and quoting Stalin himself, trying to prove to Stalin that ‘leveling’ in any area of life is anti-communist, is anti- Marxist... I couldn’t imagine a communist in the 60s writing a similar letter to Khrushchev, or a communist in the 70s or 80s writing a similar letter to Brezhnev. It would be unthinkable. The fact that Harry Whyte wrote such a letter in the 30s tells me that there must have been, still, an open culture in communist circles in Moscow... As far as anyone knows no similar letters were written to Soviet leaders after ‘34...

I was also shocked by the fact that the existence of this letter proved to us that the 20s and the early 30s in the Soviet Union were different. So there was a re-criminalisation, right? Which means that before it was re-criminalised male homosexuality was legal, or quasi-legal. This was an absolute shock to me, to realize that before ‘34 there was no criminalization of homosexuality in the Soviet Union. I had no idea. I was born in ‘72 and I took it absolutely for granted that male homosexuality was always a criminal offence in the Soviet Union and the Russian Empire. That was a shock that I am still recovering from.



DAN
HEALEY

STALIN AND THE HOMOSEXUALS

(38mins, 12/6/20)

I think we have to go back to the mindset of the early 20th century when governments across the political spectrum, from Liberal Democracy to Fascism, and Nazism to Communism all thought they could control human populations at quite an intimate level. It's what Michel Foucault called 'Bio-power'. So, actually trying to enhance, to grow populations, and to make them healthier, and to make them more capable as workers and as soldiers and as mothers - everybody had their role to play. The idea was that humanity was somehow malleable and perfectible. And that Science offered ways to do that. And as part of that, getting rid of sexual anomalies made sense to a certain kind of mindset.

To come back to Harry Whyte: what do you think he thought he was doing?

I think he genuinely did think there was a debate to be had and serious points to be made. Obviously, he had quite a clear line worked out on how Marxism and some kind of anti-homophobic politics meshed together and how it worked. And I don't think he's alone in that. There is a genuine sense among thoughtful gay men in Soviet Russia that they are very much part of the sexual revolution, and they understand the de-criminalisation of sodomy in 1922 as their piece of the sexual revolution. They see the Russian Revolution as their revolution as well.



PETER
TATCHELL

A MASTERCLASS WITH PETER TATCHELL

(16 mins, 19/6/20)

What I'd like to ask is a question.

We know that in many parts of the world some of the successes in recent years have been through the legal system. So the US Supreme Court just declared that discrimination against LGBT+ people in employment is illegal; India, the courts there declared the ban of same-sex relations to be unlawful...

I'm just wondering if you could explain to us what are the avenues and options, the likelihood of any successful legal challenge... Because technically, under the Polish constitution and indeed under various treaties that Poland has signed, this anti-LGBT crusade is unlawful.

So, can you give us a take on that?

Paweł Leszkowicz is a Polish art historian and art curator. He is a professor at the Department of History of Art, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, and a member of International Association of Art Critics. Leszkowicz is also an LGBT rights activist. Together with his partner Tomasz Kitliński he took part in Poland's lesbian and gay visibility campaigns *Let Them See Us* and *Equal in Europe*.

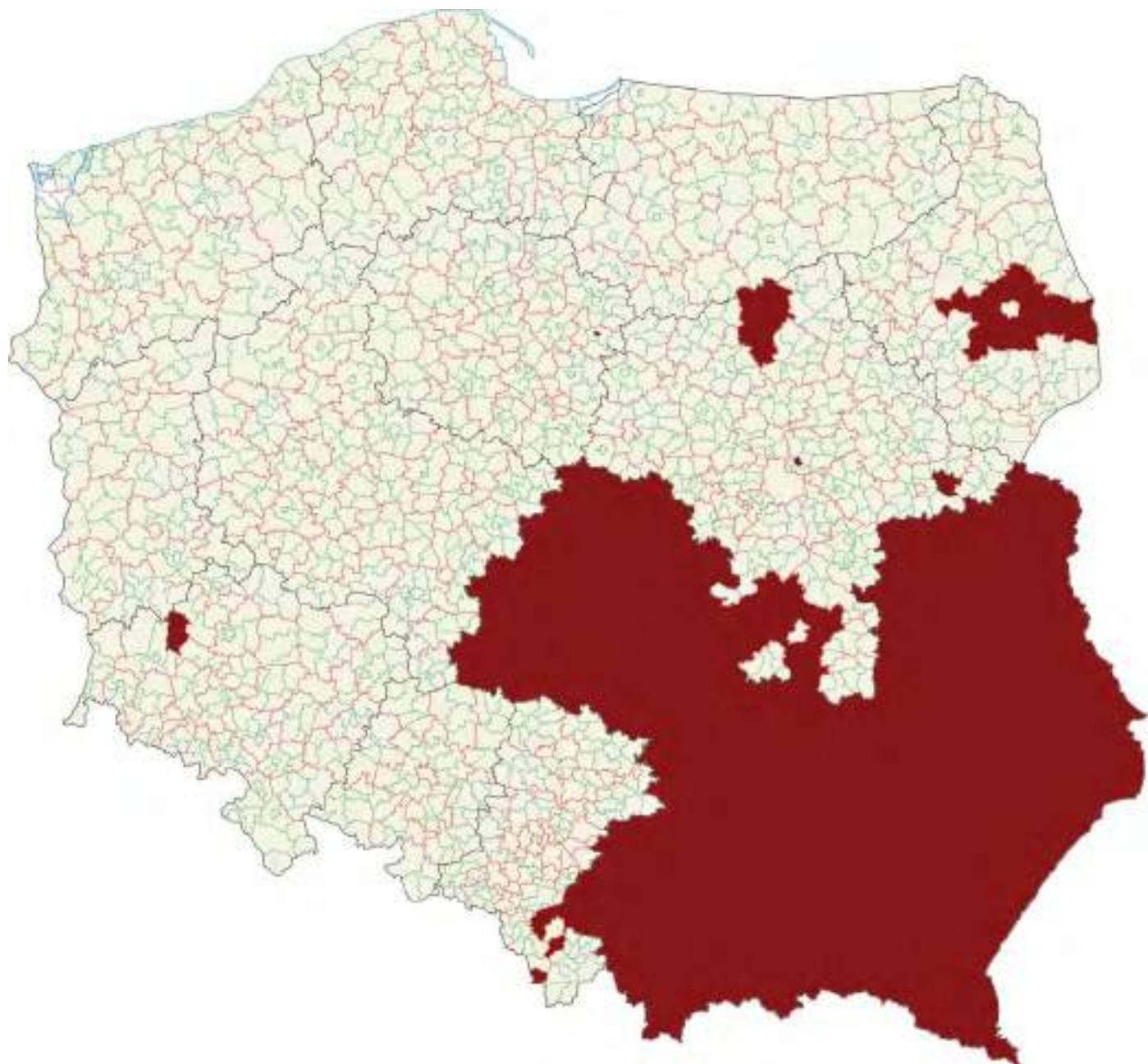
Matthew Hawkins is Royal Ballet School trained. He travels light and exudes embodiment. He was a founder member of Second Stride and Michael Clark dance companies, and studied with Merce Cunningham. He has been awarded the Jerwood Choreography prize, a Dance Artists Fellowship from Arts Council England, a Herald Angel award and Professional Development/Choreographic Futures support from Creative Scotland. At Dance Base, Edinburgh, he gives regular classes to professionals, beginners, elders and those with special needs.

Yevgeniy Fiks is a multidisciplinary, post-Soviet conceptual artist. His medium includes painting, drawing, performance, and book arts. He was born in Moscow, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1972 and has been living and working in New York City since 1994. Fiks defines “the post-Soviet artist” as one who has the responsibility to raise the proper understanding and critical reflection of Soviet history in order for post-Soviet societies to move forward.

Dan Healey is a Canadian and British historian and slavist. Since 2013 he has taught at St Antony's College, Oxford University. He is a pioneer of the study of the history of homosexuality in Russia. His book *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia* (2001) was awarded second place in the Gladstone Prize of the Royal Historical Society. His scientific interests include the history of LGBT of Russia, Russian and Soviet medicine and psychiatry, Russian and Soviet penitentiary institutions.

Peter Tatchell is a British human rights campaigner. Originally from Australia, he is best known for his work with LGBT social movements since the late 1960s, including with the Gay Liberation Front 1971-74 and the direct action group OutRage! 1990-2011. From 2011, he has been the Director of the Peter Tatchell Foundation.





PARALLEL LIVES

A CALL TO ARMS

Almost a year ago we sent out a warning that a far-right agenda was penetrating Polish Universities, turning them into beacons of ultra-conservatism and stifling all progressive values and protest. The first indication that the bodies that govern Universities were giving in to political pressure was an honour given to Przemislaw Czarnek, an outspokenly homophobic politician, by UMC-S Lublin. He met the protest of University workers with the severest response: a prosecution on the grounds of 'offending the Republic of Poland'. He was using Article 226 of the Polish Penal code to hide both personal bigotry and a far-right agenda behind the integrity of the state itself.

This prosecution sought a scapegoat, and found one in Dr. Tomasz Kitliński. The trial is currently in progress and the initial police interrogation took place in mid September 2020. This was the first time the formal charges were disclosed and it is clearly part of a public campaign of intimidation. It is impossible to see how any legitimate grounds exist to prove that Kitliński offended the Republic of Poland by calling a homophobe a homophobe, but it seems certain that the trial will go ahead, and to lose it would be a blow to Czarnek. Czarnek's self-investment in the case is a factor because on 19/10/20, in a deliberately provocative move by the government, he was made Minister of Education and Science. This has given him a position of extraordinary power. It has delivered every place of education, from primary schools to universities, into his hands and into the choke-hold of a far-right ideological agenda that is profoundly regressive, monocultural, heteronormative, Catholic and conservative. Czarnek's appointment is a declaration of cultural war against a diverse and progressive society, both in the Universities and at large.

■ POLAND

Far right being made legitimate

THE general election in Poland has brought with it a wave of ultra-conservative far right social policies that is working its way into the institutions of Poland.

This is a blatant attempt to normalise misogyny, homophobia, xenophobia and racism. This kind of infiltration is demonstrated by the way the government of Law and Justice (Czarnek, an outspokenly right-wing bigot, has been singled out for criticism over the issue of protecting university dignity).

Universities, however, have given the highest academic honour awarded by the Maria Curie Skłodowska University in Lublin, the first communist university in Poland.

The ceremony was conducted in the presence of the grandson of Madame Curie, Pierre Joliot, with no dissenting voice, but one planned held up by a woman activist that bore the slogan "We awards for those that breed hatred".



REACTIONARY RESURGENCE: Maria Curie Skłodowska University in Lublin has honoured an outcasted bigot.

It is as though Nigel Farage were given the highest academic honour by Oxford University, and the platform to broadcast Farage hate speech, and was a supposed.

The population stands by while Polish universities are being turned into bastions of ultra-conservatism, and all progressive values and protest is stifled.

Progressive employees and students are being subjected to an increasing hate campaign and take this opportunity to appeal for solidarity with progressive forces across Europe and worldwide.

We have circulated a letter of protest in local and national newspapers in Poland to express a shared disgust at the normalisation of these views, and we invite others to join the protest.

DR TOMASZ KITLIŃSKI
Lublin, Poland
Edinburgh

ANGUS REID

Last year we recognized that the capitulation of a university to a man like Czarnek was an attempt to '*normalise* homophobia, xenophobia and racism'. This was a tactic of the far-right, made in order to win the recent Presidential election. The abuse of LGBT rights has always been cynical and politically motivated. Now their tactics are more alarming. Politically, the government seeks to distract attention from an economic crisis of its own making by stoking civil protest and media fury at the sheer provocation of Czarnek's appointment and the crudity of his regressive agenda. There are sure to be confrontations in the coming days, and they invite them openly. Clearly, the strategy is intended to intensify their power and control of society. But this kind of politics comes at a serious cost to human lives. It is creating a generation of victims, of all ages, who are being subjected to state aggression, discrimination and brutality in civic life, and homophobic violence.

How should we respond? Everything hitherto has been a skirmish, but Czarnek's appointment is a declaration of war on European values of diversity and tolerance. Nobody believed that human rights were at stake a year ago when the Polish far-right began its campaign. Now, the situation has drastically worsened. Dr Kitliński is just one of many who are in serious danger. We must express our solidarity. When one person is threatened, we are all threatened.

We propose the following:

- If your town or region, wherever you are in the world, is twinned with a Polish town or region that has adopted the 'LGBT-free' ideology, that you show this is unacceptable by withdrawing from the 'twinning' arrangement;
- An embargo on all Polish politicians, like Czarnek, President Duda and others who are spokespeople for hate-speech, by disallowing them entry into other countries and any opportunity to spread their homophobic views;
- An embargo on all Polish products that come from companies who have associated themselves with the regime such as Kompania Piwowarska who make both Tyskie and Lech beer are alleged to have done;
- To support legal action against the current Polish government for acting unlawfully, by disregarding the Polish Constitution which prohibits discrimination on any grounds;
- To participate in protests at embassies and consulates.



PARALLEL LIVES

INVENTORY

- 1 3 large-scale paintings of naked men, and all the preparatory drawings,
- *Quartet*, depicting four men in a bath-house on a dark background; twelve drawings and one imaginary sketch;
 - *Duet*, depicting two men, one cradling the other; three drawings;
 - *Solo*, depicting the artist depicting himself; four drawings.

- 2 The installation of words in gold lettering at large scale that encircle the room at the level of the cornice, applied directly to the walls. The text reads:

*'The fact that I am homosexual in no way diminishes my value
as a revolutionary; the masses are not intolerant'*

- 3 Documentation of two lives, those of Harry Whyte (HW) and Tomasz Kitliński (TK), laid out symmetrically, and comprising:

- Time-lines, from birth to death, or birth to the present day, mostly researched from secret government surveillance, or from life;
- Two articles published in the Morning Star about each man that explore the political and historical context of the protest that is a common feature of their lives;
- Documents that attest to the non-fictional nature of this enterprise, namely the book *Parallel Lines* (TK) and a facsimile of a spy report (HW); Indications of the inner life of both men comprising extracts for a letter of 1934 (HW) and an appreciation of the show *Parallel Lives* itself (TK);
- Social context for their lives comprising police photographs of men in 1930 arrested for soliciting homosexual sex and blackmail (HW) and a meditation on the meaning of contemporary queer activism as 'Arendtian action' (TK).

- 4 Six large glass vitrines that contain back-lit 'selfies', four of which are from the 1930s police records, one of which contains a blown-up detail from a demonstration showing Harry Whyte's face (circa 1930), and a TV monitor, turned through 90 degrees into 'portrait' format. The monitor displays films on a 30 minute loop, each one interspersed with sections of blank screen. This musical/visual 'video commentary' is designed to accompany the silent visitor to the space and, as video tends to draw attention to itself at the expense of the other work, to be as self-effacing and 'quiet' as possible. The only parts that assert themselves are the statements of TK and MH. The films comprise:

- A video statement from Tomasz Kitlinski;
- A video statement from Matthew Hawkins (who sat for *Quartet* and *Duet*);
- A staring match with Jake Duyvestyn (who sat for *Quartet*);

- Three visual/musical meditations on the three paintings and the process from sketch to painting by which the compositions were assembled. These three films are all distinctly different:

- I. *Quartet* intimates complexities of geometric composition;
- II. *Duet* intimates simplicity of geometric composition;
- III. *Solo* intimates a conscious reassessment of the clothed self-portraits of the tradition (Van Gogh, Cezanne, Munch, Corot et al) and explores similarities with naked precedents in Durer, and Van Eyck's depiction of Adam in the Ghent alterpiece.

5 There is also a basket of badges that are offered as a potlatch to the visitors, expressing solidarity with TK, HW and the Polish LGBT community. Each is one of 200, and a uniquely designed multiple.

6 In an adjacent room, and online, are five 'lockdown movies', films of zoom conversations that play on a 90 minute loop. Each film is described on the wall and dated, and draw together three groups of people:

- Those involved in the creation of the artwork;
- Those involved in discussion of the artwork;
- Specialists outwith the show whose knowledge is sought in the fields of Soviet history and contemporary activism.

The balance between these two rooms is part of the overall artistic strategy of show, namely to divide the experience into 'art' and 'commentary'.

- The art takes place in a room that was formerly used as a 'War Memorial Gallery' and displays this function clearly both in signs above the door and furniture within. For the exhibition in Summerhall, this room is designed as an experience, for stillness and contemplation.
- The commentary takes place in an adjacent room that has no such historical connotation where people are encouraged to drop in on a continuous cycle of conversation about themes raised by the artwork.
- Between these room is a corridor that displays extensive documentation of Joseph Beuys, whose concept of 'invisible sculpture' is deliberately interpreted by the title of the show, *Parallel Lives*. This documentation is accompanied by a further film, wall-mounted, with headphones, that plays on a loop. It features Angus Reid and is an optional 'guide' for the visitor. This film is called *A Short Guide To Some Visual And Some Invisible Things That You Might Otherwise Miss*.



PARALLEL LIVES

THE BOY CHRIST



The new boy had never slept in a room with other boys. At home he had his own room. His mother made the bed.

He was just thirteen when his Dad got the job in Scotland. They had to sell the old house in Crystal Palace and buy a new one. He had to start in a new school. While they found the house he would have to be a boarder. It's just for a term, said his Dad. Just until Christmas. It's not long. Don't worry. I'll write. Already, that was strange. He had never received a letter from his Dad before.

In the new boy's dormitory there were four beds, and his bed was closest to the door. They were given one fresh sheet per week and they were supposed to change them alternately, with the fresh one below and the old one above, but for the whole term he never did. He only changed the top sheet and beneath him the lower sheet yellowed, soaking up the night terrors.

'Jimmy!'

When the whisper came it wasn't for him. It was for the boy at the far end of the dormitory. Jimmy whispered back.

'Walker? That you?'

A torch entered the room, with three figures and a bristle of excitement.

'Jimmy! Watch!'

One of them stood at the door while another leant against the wall, his face lit up by the torch. He closed his eyes and started to pant, deeply and regularly.

‘What ya doin’?’

‘Watch!’

For the space of a minute the boy took deep breaths in rapid succession, and over the last long exhalation Walker leant heavily on the boy’s chest. Then he lifted his hands away and they all watched as the boy they knew became a rag doll. His eyes rolled back, his knees folded, and he slid down the wall into their astonished silence.

‘Fuck! Is he dead?’

‘Aye! He’s dead!’

Then Walker did something amazing. He knelt over the body, pinched the nose and pressed his lips to the boy’s mouth. He blew and then sat back.

‘Black-out. It’s a black-out.’

‘But... is he dead?’

‘Nah! Well, yeah, but jus’ for a minute.’

Walker put his mouth to the other boy’s mouth and continued to blow until the body moaned and came back to life. In the torchlight the eyes flickered open to stare upwards at Walker with dazed happiness.

‘Good man,’ said Walker. ‘See? He’s all right.’ Then he turned to Jimmy with a dangerous smile. ‘Wanna try?’

Jimmy didn’t need to be asked. He was already puffing and pulling his pyjamas wide.

‘Snake!’

The voice came from the doorway. The torchlight vanished, and in the darkness there was a sudden scramble. The new boy felt Walker’s breath on his face.

‘Newbie! You clipe, and I’ll twist your balls.’

He felt the frame beneath the bed creak as Walker slung himself under, hanging onto the bare metal springs. The door opened and the light went on.

‘Hoi! What’s going on?’

The house master stared angrily at the new boy, as though he were responsible. The boy could feel Walker’s presence beneath him, a mattress-width apart. He blinked up at the adult.

‘Hallo sir!’

The house master glared around the room. ‘I know full well... that something is going on!’ The other three were rubbing their eyes. His gaze returned to the new boy. ‘You had better own up!’

The new boy reached for his specs, and he stared up at the housemaster’s face. He saw how it softened, in deference to the new boy’s innocence.

‘Just tell me what’s been going on.’

‘Nothing, sir!’

There was a pause. The house master seemed unable to enter the room. From the doorway he couldn’t see the bodies suspended below the bed-frames. Nobody spoke.

Then, in a small voice, the new boy inquired: ‘Is this a fire-drill sir?’

It was inspired and the others chimed in.

‘Is this a fire-drill sir? Should we get up sir? Shall we get dressed?’

The house master sighed. ‘No, no. No need.’ He smiled, to reassure them. And then, conniving in the pretense that everything was normal he said ‘Goodnight.’

He switched off the light and closed the door, and the boys waited, holding their breath, for the sound of his departing footsteps. Even after he had gone they continued to wait. Walker was the first to emerge.

‘Good man.’

As Walker gently drew the door open he whispered: ‘Let’s try it on Stewie, eh? Stewie’s gonna be up for it!’ And then: ‘Hey! Newbie! Hey! You coming?’

For a moment the new boy weighed up the choice between the defeated adult and the dangerous boys, but there was no competition. He tagged along, sharing the excitement, and it wasn’t until a boy slumped and hit his head on a radiator that the game was over. As he ran he heard angry shouts and someone protesting, but he hadn’t been caught. Back in the dorm he was silent, listening to the others. He was waiting for his heart to calm down. His heart was beating wildly, like a jungle drum.

In the bed beside him was Brunton, who shaved, and spent the time after lights out expounding his strategies for shop-lifting. Always buy something, said Brunton, and they never catch you. Next was Graeme, whose parents lived in America and were getting divorced. And last was Jimmy.

The new boy was in higher sets than all of them and rarely saw them during the school day, but on Saturdays he teamed up with Graeme. Graeme also wore specs and ended every sentence with a snorting laugh. They went to Woolworths to try to figure out what might be worth stealing, and how. It was only the records that interested Graeme in Woolworths. His bands were ELO and Boston, and when the new boy held up a copy of *Voulez Vous* he gave him a blank look. Then he flicked a single across the rack. *Since You Been Gone*. Rainbow.

‘That’s for you!’ Snort. ‘Remind ya of the folks back home!’ Snort.

The new boy slipped it into his armpit, and went up to buy some bubblegum.

Back at the boarding house they listened to it, and set the needle to the start to play it again. By the third time around, Graeme had taught him the lyrics. They sat facing one another, playing it out with full drama. When it got to *Your poisoned letter, your telegram* they were in full flight. They extended a finger to point one another in the face. *Just goes to show you don’t give... a... damn!* At that Graeme snorted helplessly, in great shudders that brought tears to his eyes. He shook them away in time to the chorus. *Since you been gone, since you been gone, I’m outta my head can’t take it...*

Graeme slept in the bed beside Jimmy, and it would be two years before Jimmy got expelled. Once Jimmy had come over to the new boy but recoiled in disgust from the smell of his bed-sheets. And the new boy, who had been ready to fight, just lay in the darkness while Jimmy abused Graeme instead. Graeme protesting, like Piggy in *Lord of the Flies*. Jimmy getting his way. Graeme in pain. And once, between short breaths, Graeme saying that’s quite nice actually.

For Christmas the school was putting on a musical that two teachers had written. The musical was about a cripple who worked in a boatyard. The cripple was picked on and abandoned by his friends, and eventually bullied to death. The new boy auditioned and got the part that no-one else wanted. His role to come on at the end, to put an arm around the cripple's shoulders, and take him to heaven. What they wanted was an angel. What they wanted was The Boy Christ. It was a bit square, but it was easy. It was no big deal.

The drama teacher's wife was excited as she made him up. She put glitter on his eyelids and held up the silvery tunic she had made for him. No glasses, she said. And just wear your pants.

As he stood in the wings the new boy felt the silky material against his bare body. His Mum and Dad had come up for the show. Their faces were in the audience along with all the other parents. But not Graeme's parents. They never came. It was tough on Graeme. But he knew what to say to his own Mum and Dad. He would tell them he was fine. He would tell them that boarding was fun. He would tell them that he didn't want to come home.

Alone in the darkness he felt his heartbeat quicken. He could feel the noise going on inside him. Do it. Go on. He slid off his underpants, kicked them into a corner, and stood naked in the silver sheath.

On cue, he stepped out.

A heartfelt thank you——

to Andrew Brown for curating the show from the start
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to Robert McDowell for curating the show to the finish

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the poem on page 7 and the story on page 123 are by Angus Reid;
Donald Brooks is cited in *The Sexual State, Sexuality and Scottish
Governance 1950 - 1980*, Gayle Davis and Roger Davidson (2012)

The Lockdown Films can be found through [links](#) in this catalogue
and on the [Summerhall website](#), www.summerhall.co.uk



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