

EDIE FAKE

b. 1980, Evanston, IL

Lives and works in Twentynine Palms, CA

EDUCATION

2002 Bachelor of Fine Arts, Rhode Island School of Design

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2021 *The Pieces*, Western Exhibitions, Chicago, IL

2020 *You Gotta Vote*, Facebook 'Voting is Voice,' Fort Worth, TX

2019 *Labyrinth*, The Drawing Center, New York, NY
Affordable Housing for Trans Elders, UC Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, CA

2018 *Gut Rehab*, Western Exhibitions, Chicago, IL
Structures Shift, Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, NY

2016 Marlborough Chelsea, New York, NY

2015 *Grey Area*, Western Exhibitions, Chicago, IL
Edie Fake for Trunk Show, Trunk Club, Chicago, IL

2013 *Memory Palaces*, Thomas Robertello Gallery, Chicago, IL

SELECT GROUP EXHIBITIONS AND PERFORMANCE PROJECTS

2021 *Chicago Comics: Future Forward*, Buddy, Chicago, IL

Chicago Comics: 1960s to Now, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL

The Western Exhibitions Drawing Biennial, Western Exhibitions, Chicago, IL

Grouper, Broadway Gallery, New York, NY

2019 *Vignettes*, Richard Heller Gallery, Santa Monica, CA

Queer Forms, Katherine E. Nash Gallery, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN

Queer California: Untold Stories, Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA

Queer Abstraction: Contemporary Queer Abstraction, Des Moines Art Center, IA

- 2018 *Surface/Depth: The Decorative after Miriam Schapiro*, curated by Elissa Auther with Angelik Vizcarrondo-Laboy for The Museum of Arts and Design, New York,
Declaration, curated by Stephanie Smith and Lisa Freiman, with Amber Esseiva, Johanna Plummer, and Lauren Ross. Institute for Contemporary Art, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
- 2017 *Occupancies*, Boston University Art Galleries, Boston, MA
The Nothing That Is: A Drawing Show in 5 Parts, curated by Matt Distel and Bill Thelen, The Carnegie, Covington, KY
Underlying system is not known, Western Exhibitions, Chicago, IL
- 2016 *How High?* Left Field, San Luis Obispo, CA
Tomorrow Never Happens, Samek Museum, Bucknell University, Lewisburg, PA
Gist & Gesture, Kavi Gupta, Chicago
World Made by Hand, Andrew Edlin Gallery, NYC
- 2015 *Making Chances*, curated by John Neff and Lorelei Stewart. Gallery 400, Chicago, IL
Feminist Bookstore, curated by Jennifer Armbrust and Michelle Blade. Reading Frenzy, Portland, OR
The Gay Mafia is Real, Western Exhibitions, Chicago, IL
Friendship and Freedom, MASS Gallery, Austin, TX
- 2014 *Embodiment*. Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL
The Stench of Rotting Flowers, Charlotte Street Foundation, Kansas City, MO
No Fate But What We Make. Rhodes' Clough-Hanson Gallery, Memphis, TN
- 2013 *Binary Lore*, Three Walls, Chicago, IL

How Do I Look, Roots and Culture, Chicago, IL
Edie Fake & Kevin Killian Secret Lives, Night Club, Chicago, IL
Naked Spaces: Architecture in Art from the Kinsey Institute Collection, Kinsey Institute Gallery, Bloomington, IN
- 2012 *Binary Lore*, Feldman Gallery, Pacific Northwest College of Art, Portland, OR
Blaque Lyte, curated by Chris Kerr and Paul Nudd, Telephone Booth, Kansas City, MO
The Sexual Life of Patterns, A lecture performance for The Center For Experimental Lectures, PS1, New York
All Good Things Become Wild and Free, H.F. Johnson Gallery, Carthage College, Kenosha, WI
- 2011 *Bless This Mess*, Gallery 400, Chicago, IL

- 2009 *FINGERS Tour*, A twenty-city and five-week queer art and performance tour; Collaboration with Lee Relvas
- 2008 *Queer Zines*, New York Art Book Fair, New York, NY
- 2007 *Rainbow Dawn*, Art In General, New York, NY, Collaboration with Lee Relvas
Sex In the City, Dumbo Art Center, Brooklyn, NY
Tent Show, Nikolaj Museum, Copenhagen, Denmark, Collaboration with Math Bass
Freundesfreundin, Schalter, Basel, Switzerland
Shared Women, LACE, Los Angeles, CA
- 2006 *Flex Your Textiles*, John Connelly Presents, New York, NY
PeaceCore Zine Tour, A twenty-city and five-week performance and book tour; Collaboration with Lee Relvas
- 2004 PILOT TV, *Nightgowns*, Chicago, IL, Co-organizer for a four-day autonomous artists' TV studio and conference focusing on Trans/Feminism

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin, OH
 Davis Museum at Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA
 Des Moines Art Center, Iowa
 Fidelity Investments Corporate Art Collection
 Joan Flasch Artists' Book Collection, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL
 KADIST, San Francisco/Paris
 Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction, Bloomington, Indiana
 Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park, KS
 Progressive Insurance Corporate Collection, OH
 RISD Art Museum, Providence, RI
 Thomas J. Watson Library, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
 Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum, Columbus, OH

SELECT PUBLICATIONS

- 2018 [Little Stranger](#), Published by Secret Acres, Los Angeles
 2014 [Memory Palaces](#), Published by Secret Acres, New York
 2010 [Gaylord Phoenix](#) (collected), Published by Secret Acres, New York
 2004-2006 [LTTR](#), Contributor to issues #3 and #5

GRANTS AND AWARDS

- 2012 Propeller Grant for The Chicago Alternative Comics Expo
- 2011 Ignatz Award for Outstanding Graphic Novel
- 2010 Breakout Artist, New City, Chicago
Critical Fierceness Grant for queer art in Chicago
- 2009 Printed Matter's Awards for Artists recipient
- 2004 City of Chicago CAAP Grant for Artists' Projects
- 2002 Pell Art History Award, RISD

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 2021 Chicago Tribune. Christopher Borrelli, "Chicago Comics' show about cartoonists headlines the proposed 2021 calendar at the MCA." January 11, 2021.

NewCity. Kerry Cardoza, "Art Top 5: June 2021." May 28, 2021.

Chicago Tribune. Christopher Borrelli, "Chicago Comics' at the MCA makes this plain: Comics should be seen as a Chicago thing." June 17, 2021.

NewCity. Annie Howard, "Tending to Queer Histories: Edie Fake Returns to Chicago With Two Exhibitions." June 28, 2021.

Chicago Reader. Dmitry Samarov, "Do comic strips belong in this museum?" June 29, 2021.
- 2020 Counting Knuckles. Lorraine Heitzman, "At Long Last ALAC." February 27, 2020.
The New York Times. Edie Fake, "The Diary Project: A Drawing Exercise to Help See a Beautiful Way Forward." August 21, 2020.
KOAA. Spencer Humphrey, "Murals go up in Colorado Springs to encourage voting." October 4, 2020.
Fort Worth Business Press. FWBP Staff, "Fort Worth among cities in Facebook voting project," October 5, 2020.
Colorado Springs Indy. Heidi Beedle, "Opinion: Queering the vote." October 14, 2020.
- 2019 The Seen. Coco Picard, "The Weight of a Line: Art and Comics." April 18, 2019.
Animation Magazine. Mercedes Milligan, "MoCCA Arts Festival Guests of Honor Announced." Jan 23, 2019.
- 2018 Art in America. Kyle Macmillan, "Edie Fake." Dec 1, 2018.
ArtNet. Joel Straus. "Chicago Art Advisor Joel Straus Recommends 8 Gallery Shows to See During EXPO Chicago." September 27, 2018.
New City. B. David Zarley, "Building the Body from the Inside Out, A Review of Edie Fake at Western Exhibitions." October 16, 2018.
The Smart Set. Chris Mautner, "Translating Identity: Reading L. Nichols and Edie Fake's memoirs." September 27, 2018.
Juxtapoz Magazine. Joey Garfield, "Gut Rehab: Edie Fake's Elaborate and Maze-like Paintings @ Western Exhibitions, Chicago." September 14, 2018.

- Chicago Tribune. KT Hawbaker, "With 'Gut Rehab' at Western Exhibitions, Edie Fake connects trans bodies with queer architecture." September 13, 2018.
- The Paris Review. Renee Gladman and Edie Fake, "Cities of the Future, Their Color." Issue 225: Summer 2018.
- Culture. Ann-Derrick Gaillot, "Edie Fake's 'Little Stranger' is the Most Delightfully Weird, Touching Comic You'll Read This Year." July 10, 2018.
- An Interior. "Illustrated Identity." Summer 2018. Portfolio spread.
- Hyperallergic. Anne Swartz, "The Pattern and Decoration Zeitgeist." June 13, 2018.
- The Paris Review. "Announcing Our Summer Issue." June 5, 2018.
- The Architects Newspaper: The Editors, "Artist Edie Fake explores gender identity and sexuality through architectural drawings." June 1, 2018.
- Art News. Claire Sheldon, "Beyond the Surface: Miriam Schapiro's Endurina Leacy is on Full View at the Museum of Arts and Design." April 24, 2018.
- Hyperallergic. Alina Cohen, "How Miriam Schapiro's Feminist Work Transcended the Line between Art and Craft." (reproduction) March 29, 2018.
- 2017 Pilcher, Alex. *A Queer Little History of Art*. London: Tate Publishing, 2017.
- Hyperallergic. Orion R. Martin, "When Comics Abandon Narrative and Venture into Abstraction." July 27, 2017.
- The Standard. Los Angeles-art inspection, "The New Wave: 7 Emerging LA Artists You Should Know." July 20, 2017.
- The New York Times. Krista Burton, "I Want My Lesbian Bars Back." (illustration) April 14, 2017.
- 2016 i-D. Bryony Stone, "The queer artists of fire island." July 14, 2016.
- Artspace. Artspace Editors, "Surface Magazine Editor-in-Chief Spencer Bailey's Favorite Works from NADA New York 2016." May 4, 2016.
- Contemporary Art Daily. "Edie Fake at Marlborough Chelsea." April 21, 2016.
- Creator's Project. Gabrielle Bruney, "Intricate Architectural Drawings Are Allegories for Queer Bodies and Sex." April 2, 2016.
- 2015 Artnet News. Brian Boucher, "USC7 Dropout and Transgender Artist Edie Fake's Mesmerizing Drawings Explore Queer Geometries." June 8, 2015.
- The Seen. Kate Pollasch, "The Hairy Who & the Chicago Imagists," September 2015.
- New American Paintings. David B. Zarley, "Space: Edie Fake at Western Exhibitions." July 15, 2015.
- Artforum.com. Caroline Picard, "Critic's Pick: Edie Fake." July 1, 2015.
- Artnet. Caroline Massara, Kathleen "17 Must-See LGBTQ Exhibitions This Summer." June 25, 2015.
- New City. Cardoza, Kerry. "Portrait of a Gallery: Trunk Show." May 30, 2015
- Artforum.com. Katie Anania, "Friendship and Freedom." February 3, 2015.
- 2014 Los Angeles Review of Books. Joshua Michael Demaree, "Fake Places: The Work of Edie Fake." July 17, 2014.
- The Reader. Noah Berlatsky, "Edie Fake's Memory Palaces dazzles." May 11, 2014.
- The Pitch. Liz Cook, "Charlotte Street's Stench of Rotting Flowers: brilliantly decadent decay." April 22, 2014.
- Animal New York. Karen Peltier and Brandon Soderberg, "Edie Fake's Memory Palaces Bring New Life

to Forgotten Queer Spaces.” April 4, 2014.

The Comics Journal. Graham Kolbeins, “Rad Queers: Edie Fake.” Feb 5, 2014.

The Hammer Museum Blog. Darin Klein, “CLOSE TO HOME: Spotlight on Local Artists at Printed Matter’s LA Art Book Fair 2015 | Edie Fake.” January 14, 2015.

- 2013 Journal of Medical Humanities. Brian Cremins, “Bodies, Transfigurations, and Bloodlust in Edie Fake’s Graphic Novel Gaylord Phoenix.” vol. 34, issue 4: December 2013.
The Reader. Claudine Isé, “Art beyond binary at Three Walls.” July 2, 2013.
Nothing Major. Matt Putrino, “Edie Fake: Interview.” April 18, 2013.
art21 Magazine. Thea Liberty Nichols, “You Can’t Always Give and You Can’t Always Take.” April 9, 2013.
The Reader. Sarah Nardi, “Edie Fake doesn't care what's real.” February 12, 2013.
The Guardian Observer. Corrine Jones, “Gateways to Chicago’s Gay Past.” February 10, 2013.
Art Practical. Randall Miller, “From Chicago: Memory Palaces.” January 28, 2013.
Artforum. John Motley, “Binary Lore.” January 20, 2013.
Bad At Sports. Orendorff, Danny. “Edie Fake’s Ecstatic Afterlives.” January 11, 2013.
Chicago Magazine. Jason Foumberg, “Drinking with . . . Edie Fake.” January 11, 2013.
Hyperallergic. Alicia Eler, “Homage to a City’s Queer History.” January 11, 2013.
- 2012 Gaper’s Block. Bert Stabler, “A Theatre Within, Open to All: Edie Fake's Memory Palaces.” Dec 28 2012.
Bitch Magazine. Devyn Manibo, “Sm{art}: Queer Zine Machine, Edie Fake.” July 26, 2012.
- 2011 Bad At Sports. Caroline Picard, “How to Draw Your Own Door.” July 20, 2011.
The Rumpus. Zach Dodson, “The Rumpus Interview With Edie Fake.” May 17, 2011.
New City. Jason Foumberg, “Portrait of the Artist: Edie Fake.” February 21, 2011.

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Eddie Fake's paintings start as self-portraits, and from there, they make a break for it, referencing elements of the trans and non-binary body through pattern, color and architectural metaphor. His precise, intimately scaled, gouache-and-ink paintings on panel are structured around the physical aspects of transition and adaptation as well as mental and sexual health.

Since moving from first Chicago, then to Los Angeles while briefly attending grad school at USC, to now the high desert of Joshua Tree in California, Fake's work has evolved from his acclaimed *Memory Palaces* series reimagined facades of urban lesbian bars and gay nightclubs to a new feeling of vulnerability due to shifts in the U.S. social and political climate. The work blurs lines between architecture and body with structures adorned by elements that seem to be both decorative and protective. Architectural components are used as visual metaphors for the ways in which definition and validation elude trans identities. Says Fake, "*More and more I'm trying to bring an anarchy into that architecture, or a fantasy and ecstasy of what queer space is and can be.*"

Opening June 19, 2021, Eddie Fake will have several publications, paintings and a large wall installation in Chicago Comics: 1960s to Now at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. He has a large wall painting currently on view, through June 27, at the Berkeley Art Museum and Film Archive in California and a painted installation at The Drawing Center in New York, up through September 19, 2021. Fake's multi-media work drawings, paintings, installations, comics, books and zines has been written about and featured in *Artforum*, *New York Times*, *The Paris Review*, *Art News*, *Art 21*, *The Guardian*, *Hyperallergic*, *The Comics Journal*, and *The Los Angeles Review of Books*. Fake's 2018 show at Western Exhibitions was reviewed in *Art in America*. He was on the first recipients of Printed Matter's Awards for Artists and his Gaylord Phoenix collection of comics won the 2011 Ignatz Award for Outstanding Graphic Novel. His work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, including solo shows at the Everson Museum of Art in Syracuse, NY and Marlborough Gallery in NYC and in group shows at the Museum of Art and Design in NY, the Institute of Art at VCU in Richmond, VA. Fake's work is held in the collections of the Des Moines Art Center in Iowa, the RISD Museum in Providence, RI, KADIST in San Francisco, and the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art in Overland Park, KS. Eddie fake was born in Chicagoland in 1980 and received a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2002. Fake is represented by Western Exhibitions in Chicago and Broadway Gallery in New York and he currently lives and works in Twentynine Palms, California.

WESTERN EXHIBITIONS

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READER

Do comics belong in this museum?

By Dmitry Samarov

June 29, 2021

Does a comic strip belong on a museum wall? I ask this not to question the value of cartooning, but because I wonder whether a wall is the best place to experience what comics are designed to do. This ate at me as I wandered through “Chicago Comics: 1960s to Now,” the generous survey of 60 years of Chicago’s cartoonists currently on view at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. There’s absolutely no question that much of the work on display deserves to be known and celebrated. But are the walls of a museum the right venue?

A comic strip is read as much as it’s seen. The artist/writer spends years honing their style and vision, experimenting with format and presentation, but most of the time, the ultimate destination for cartoons and comic strips is the printed page rather than a wall. Context is paramount to the audience’s experience in art, so when comics are taken out of a newspaper or book, something is inevitably lost. There’s certainly no faulting Dan Nadel, the curator of the exhibition, for the sweep and breadth of this survey. The show traces the art form’s evolution from newspaper mainstay to alt-weekly counterculture outrageousness to hermetically personal expression. Any visitor with even the most casual interest in comics should be able to find something to fall in love with here—but something still didn’t quite connect for me, no matter the quality or subject matter in the vitrines or on the walls.

Nadel was obviously aware of the challenge of displaying art created to be held in one’s lap, up close, and experienced privately. The exhibition addresses this problem with supplementary materials. In the room devoted to Ivan Brunetti, there is a shelf of his personal collection of toys and figurines. Other rooms have maquettes and other work product meant to give context to the artists’ processes. Additionally, many walls are taken up by vinyl blowups of single panels or details of drawings. These oversize copies do little to illuminate each artist’s unique vision and contribute to a chaotically busy visual presentation. The exhibition experience at times felt like being at an estate sale: having to consciously ignore a lot of noise in favor of the isolated objects of personal interest.

There’s such a polyphony of approaches and styles that it felt like artists were yelling over each other. Other times, there was a disconnect between my longtime experience of particular work and how it was presented in these rooms. Lynda Barry’s exuberant panels felt strangely muted, while Chris Ware’s obsessively ordered work suffered from a busy salon-style grab bag installation.

The highlights of the exhibition were younger artists whose work is not dependent on either narrative sequencing, nor the printed page. **Edie Fake’s** abstract architectural prints left a mysterious magnetic charge and Lilli Carré’s video loop of ever-mutating female figures from art history, seemingly made of rubbery bubblegum, made me smile. I sat through the sequence four or five times and could easily have stayed longer. If I had to choose a favorite, it would be Jessica Campbell’s wall of weird acrylic carpet creatures. Their bright industrial colors and artificial turf texture were like a 21st-century update of Henri Matisse’s *Jazz* series. Unlike so much of the work presented here, which suffered by being ripped from its natural habitat, these funny figures absolutely owned their environment. I could stand anywhere in the gallery and they commanded attention in a way the small ink-and-painted-pieces-on-paper of the others couldn’t.

This show is a love letter to comics and our city’s role in comics history. I’d never skip a chance to examine original art by longtime favorites and the inclusion of Black artists’ work going back to the 1940s is illuminating and necessary. For anyone interested in the nuts and bolts of the medium, there are countless examples of in-progress or partially completed drawings that will be especially valuable to young people looking to get into art themselves. In the absence of a more suitable venue than an art museum, I’d urge anyone interested in comics and in this city’s history and culture to visit. But afterwards, pick up

Barry's *The Greatest of Marlys*, Ware's *Jimmy Corrigan*, and the exhibition's accompanying reprint of *It's Life as I See It: Black Cartoonists in Chicago, 1940-1980* to experience the genuine article.

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Tending to Queer Histories: Edie Fake Returns to Chicago With Two Exhibitions

By Annie Howard

June 28, 2021

It's been seven years since the artist Edie Fake last lived in Chicago, having decamped first for Los Angeles and then a desert area outside that city in 2014. But with their new solo show at Western Exhibitions, "The Pieces," as well as their appearance in "Chicago Comics: 1960s to Now" at the Museum of Contemporary Art, the city continues to play a key sustaining role in their work. Fake describes feeling "tethered to [Chicago] in almost a magical way," the city where they worked at Quimby's Bookstore and first found the themes that have guided their work ever since.

With "The Pieces," Fake drew inspiration from their sandy surroundings while continuing to explore themes of queer community that have been at the core of their work for years. In paintings reminiscent of earlier works like the "Memory Palaces" series, as well as a series of collages which play with sandcastle-like structures built with disparate objects like seashells, googly eyes and butterflies, things shape themselves together as much as they're held apart, gaps which bring to mind the ever-present six-foot gaps separating us over the last year. As with all of Fake's work, abstract representations of community form and collapse, cohere and dissipate, reflective of the real experience within queer lives and their ever-shifting constellations.

Newcity spoke with Fake about their new Chicago exhibitions, their ongoing focus on transitory communal spaces and why it's important to tend to queer histories.

Sand is a defining element in your show at Western Exhibitions. When did that focus come into your work, and how does it operate in these new pieces?

There are these little sand particles that have been showing up in work I've been doing without kind of much of the focus. Then, throughout the pandemic, I've been thinking about the question: What is a queer architecture for the Anthropocene? It's something that seems like it can be so easily swept away, and yet, it's something that gets rebuilt constantly or reformed with pleasure, and vision and joy. Thinking about how fragile structures have seemed, especially in the past year, and how that can be reimagined.

Trying to think of a title around sandcastles, everything with them is so corny, but it really is this concept for the work: it's something that gets built with the knowledge that imminent destruction could be very close at hand, and yet it's built with joy, and for pleasure, even with that kind of temporary-ness of it at the forefront. Also, living out in the desert, constantly looking at sand and having a real appreciation of all these different elements that go into it, and the magic of it holding together and falling apart too.

That sense of transitory communal space has been there in other pieces of yours, most notably the "Memory Palaces" series, where futuristic queer facades seem like they might exist in one moment and be gone in the next. Is there a through line in those themes between these works?

This year has been such a revelation about the value of physical space. As someone who thinks about it all the time and really values physical space, this has been a real exercise in seeing how important it is to be able to share physical space with others. Thinking about the separateness between all the little particle elements in these paintings and collages, and in the way that actual sandcastles work, there's this thing called liquid bridges, where a little bit of water holds together these separate elements, and how they erode when they dry up. There's some lovely wording at the Palm Springs City Hall, which says "the people are the city." I think about that with these sand structures coming together: there's this community that's abstract and fragile and constantly reforming itself or having different boundaries. Sand also has a lot colliding with it. Where I'm living, I see climate change making the environment much hotter and much drier very quickly, and at the same time having sea levels rise, which is a huge threat to something like a sandcastle. Sand as a construction material is also becoming more and more scarce as development with concrete accelerates.

Though you haven't lived in Chicago for a few years, the city has obviously remained important to your work, especially with your ongoing connection to Western Exhibitions. What does it mean to come back to Chicago for this solo show and your MCA appearance?

I feel like I spent a lot of years as a nomad, but I feel like I have an umbilical cord relationship to Chicago. At the same time, I know that my idea of what the city is isn't set in stone, and that every time I come back to it, it's a changed place. It's the first place where I started having art shows and I feel close to the integrity and the resourcefulness of the art scene in Chicago. I also don't know what to expect, because every time I return to it as a place it's different. Still, I do feel tethered to it in almost a magical way. It's a formative place for me, and a place where I solidified something that my work continues to grow out of, looking at queer history and queer space, why I do that, and different methods for doing that.

Your work sits against a backdrop of significant growth in the trans community, and a frightening spate of new anti-trans legislation in most states in the United States. How do you sit with those conflicting forces hovering over trans life today?

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." Not only that, but the present is not enough. The world is becoming much more specifically restrictive for trans people, and then at the same time there's simultaneously a lot of things that are better, like accessing trans affirmative medical care has become much easier for me over the past decade. Having complex identities, and language around trans identities has become much more widely accepted in the past few years, and open to nuance in a way that it hasn't been a wide way before, which I think is very exciting. But this legislative targeting is really ferocious and terrifying and part of these larger patterns of oppression.

So much of your work is about tending to what we've inherited as queer people. Why is that kind of attentive approach to history so essential in your work?

Tending is such a powerful word, because I think that's exactly how we see the potential of what's happened and make connections to history that's still living. We can also tend to histories that have passed where the people and places aren't accessible anymore, but you can still say, "This demonstrates this mode of life." It's complicated, and it's not something that could ever be duplicated, but it is something that it brings roots into what happens next.

There's also the act of touching the past or hanging on to a vision of it that can touch the future. I feel like I'm not interested in like a first-ness. I'm interested in legacies of things, and specifically a legacy of queer and trans lives in space, place, city and world.

Chicago Comics' show about cartoonists headlines the proposed 2021 calendar at the MCA.

By Christopher Borrelli

January 11, 2021

'Chicago Comics' show about cartoonists headlines the proposed 2021 calendar at the MCA

When you think of the cultural benchmarks of Chicago — that familiar reel of greatest hits flickering in the eye of tourists — you think of hot dogs and pizza, you think of the blues and Capone, you think of the Great Migration, architects, Bulls, Cubs and hogs.

But maybe we should add cartoonists.

Assuming they reopen before summer, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago has an ambitious doozy of an exhibition on the way, a vast argument for the seminal history of local comics artists. "Chicago Comics: 1960 to Now," the MCA's presumed 2021 blockbuster, opening in June, includes art, sculptures, installations and artifacts from more than 40 local cartoonists. The lineup is a dizzying who's who of 60 years of Illinois-based illustration and graphic memoir, from celebrated (Chris Ware, Lynda Barry, Nicole Hollander, Dan Clowes), underrated (Ivan Brunetti, John Porcellino, Archer Prewitt) to contemporaries such as Emil Ferris, **Edie Fake**, Lilli Carré and Anya Davidson.

It's looking like one of the largest museum exhibitions of comic book artists ever.

"People in the arts community have always known this really strong history of Chicago comics," said Dan Nadel, the longtime Brooklyn-based curator and comics historian curating the MCA show, "but what's not so widely recognized is how, city for city, the Chicago comics heritage is the strongest in America. And it's not a hard case to make."

Until now, however, it's also been a pretty homogenous case.

"To be frank, it's been a white-guy history," said Michael Darling, MCA's chief curator.

This show aims to advance that narrative by focusing partly on the overlooked wealth of Black cartoonists from Chicago. Again, some are familiar — the comics of Kerry James Marshall, now among the most celebrated painters in America, gets a sizable presence. But there's also, among other Black artists, Bianca Xunise of the syndicated strip "Six Chix," and Charles Johnson, who spent the '60s and '70s as an in-demand cartoonist though is better known now as author of the 1990 National Book Award-winning novel "Middle Passage." (Indeed, Black cartoonists are so central to the show that, in lieu of an exhibition catalog, New York Review Comics will publish a 40-year history of Black cartoonists in Chicago, featuring a cover by Marshall.)

"Chicago Comics," spanning four of the museum's largest galleries, plans to make room for some nascent scene setting, with pocket histories of the Chicago Tribune's innovative midcentury comic strip section (home of such landmarks as "Dick Tracy" and "Gasoline Alley"), as well as the comics found in Chicago's Black press, Chicago-based Playboy magazine and the Chicago Seed, a petri dish for the alt-comics to come.

That once-innovative spirit — along with its geographic centrality, its former role as a printing hub and its place in the Great Migration — secured the city's importance among cartoonists. But even as artists like Ware, Barry, Brunetti and Clowes became fixtures in the adult world of graphic novels as well as beloved illustrators of New Yorker magazine covers, the nation's stonier arts museums never quite gave the medium much respect.

Darling, who previously worked at the Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, had a role in its 2005 exhibition “Masters of American Comics,” then a milestone in the museum exhibition of cartoonists. (A show, he notes now, that displayed only male artists.) Since coming to Chicago, the MCA Chicago has had emerging Chicago cartoonists and a solo Clowes exhibition, but even that meager number of shows, Nadel said, in terms of American arts institutions, has made MCA probably the leading exhibitor of cartoonists in the country. “They know what they are doing with this stuff.”

The origin story for this new show came after the success of the Clowes exhibition. Darling called Ware to “kick the tires of the idea,” which went from a century-spanning survey to a mere 60 or so years of comics history. It also seems to have solved the problem of displaying cartoonists in museums: Rather than a show of books and small pieces of artwork intended mostly to be read, “Chicago Comics” will include an original installation by Brunetti, a new film by Carré, **a mural by Fake** — even sculpture by Ware. It will also feature retrospectives of work by Marshall, Ferris, Johnson, Barry and others.

But no superheroes, no DC, no Marvel.

Nadel said it was a “tough choice,” but ultimately the museum went for “single creator” works. Meaning, more memoir-istic, “less corporate” alt-comics, Darling added. (Fear not: The Museum of Science and Industry has a Marvel show still planned for spring.)

“I think the goal here is showing all the innovative ways the medium of comics can be used for self-expression,” Nadel said, “but also, how open that history has actually been to more kinds of artists than we’ve previously been told. My hope is it’s the start of a larger conversation about what is the history of comics. If Chicago could have nurtured this many great and unrecognized cartoonists, then what about the rest of America?”



Opinion: Queering the vote

By Heidi Beedle

October 14, 2020

Colorado Springs is one of 10 cities across the country to receive mural installations as part of Facebook's "Voting Is Voice" campaign, part of the platform's broader initiative to support voting in the 2020 election. In a June 16 op-ed for *USA Today*, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg wrote, "I believe platforms like Facebook can play a positive role in this election by helping Americans use their voice where it matters most — by voting. We're announcing ... the largest voting information campaign in American history. Our goal is to help 4 million people register to vote." Part of that initiative involves placing five murals in each of 10 cities.

"Facebook identified Colorado Springs as one of their target cities for this effort," explains Claire Swinford, urban engagement director for the Downtown Partnership. "We were No. 3 on their list, right behind San Diego and Los Angeles. The rationale they gave us is that Colorado Springs has low voter turnout. ... They just popped up in my inbox with that message and said, 'Can you help introduce us to property owners who may be willing to partner with us?' We were very lucky that some of our friends in [the Hillside neighborhood] stepped up so quickly and some of our friends downtown did as well."

Facebook selected five artists for the project, including **Edie Fake**, whose mural is on display on the east wall of the Hillside Community Center, overlooking a community garden. "I had done a project as part of the Facebook Artist in Residence program, and I think they were pulling from folks they had worked with before to come up with the Voting Is Voice initiative," explains Fake. "I think voting is such a part of the big picture this year. It was an exciting project to be a part of."

The 2020 election will be especially important for members of the LGBTQ community. "I think that in the past four years we've seen a complete empowerment of discrimination and oppression on many levels, especially for Black, Indigenous and people of color, and trans people and queer people in general," says Fake. "I think this year voting the complete ballot to counteract that is pushing back against these kinds of huge forces that are at work right now."

Fake's mural, which reads, "You gotta vote" in yellow letters on a pink background, bordered by a colorful mosaic of geometric shapes, is informed by their existence as a transgender person. "My art is really centered on creating queer space and envisioning queer and trans spaces, both from history and the potential into the future," says Fake. "Additionally, I have worked on design projects that have centered around gender-neutral bathrooms and out where I live [Joshua Tree, California], I was part of a group of folks who worked to kind of put up a billboard in support of trans people after we had a transphobic political campaign roll through our area in the midterms."

Colorado saw its share of transphobic political efforts in February, when House District 14 Rep. Shane Sandridge introduced two bills targeting trans people. Both HB20-1114, which would have prohibited minors from accessing gender-affirming health care, and HB20-1273, which would have banned trans women from high school sports, failed to pass.

"A lot of my artwork draws from architectural details and a resourcefulness of the queer community and a willingness to both be resourceful and to celebrate our existence," explains Fake. "That's part of what brings the color and flashiness into my work. For this campaign especially I wanted it to be really direct and exciting and really queer, and getting at that through a celebration of color and pattern."

Fake's geometric style is informed partially by the art of architecture. "I lived [in] Chicago for a while and I felt all these traces of queer history there that weren't overt," they say. "I was like, 'This building seems really gay.' The ephemeral nature of queer space was really important for me to dig into then and now. Looking at the history of vanished spaces

and vanished organizations, and things that people had started that had made an impact that aren't widely known, and sort of reimagining those as queer space — that led me to the idea that we need to make space for ourselves now in society, as queer people, as trans people, and what does that look like? Especially when I feel there is so much that we're written out of, just by gendered language and policy."

In addition to murals, Fake is also known for the 2010 graphic novel *Gaylord Phoenix*, which they used to explore aspects of their own identity. "I started drawing it many moons ago," they explain. "It was a self-published comic at first, based around centering a trans character and a character who moved through many states of gender as they had sexual encounters and different interactions in these fantasy environments. I used it as sort of a way to work through my own identity, and to see how a trans body moves through space, and also to be kind of weird and wonderful. I wanted to capture the things I didn't have words for in my own identity, and kind of give them a world where they're as fantastic as I thought they were."



Eddie Fake's mural overlooks the garden at the Hillside Community Center.

Murals go up in Colorado Springs to encourage voting
By Spencer Humphrey
October 4, 2020



Five new murals just went up around Colorado Springs as part of a national get out the vote initiative. And they're making the city just a bit more vibrant. It's all part of Facebook's 'Voting is Voice' initiative encouraging people to vote this November. The social media giant commissioned five artists to create murals encouraging voter participation in 10 cities across the U.S., including Colorado Springs.

"I've been making art since I was a little kid," Edie Fake said. Creating art is Fake's passion in life.

"My paintings are kind of an ecstatic architecture," He said. "Like an experimental exciting way of visualizing the world."

Recently, his work caught the eye of a pretty influential force. "I work with Facebook as part of their artist in residence program and did a mural at their Los Angeles office," Fake said. And now, he has a new mural.

"My design has a lot of color and pattern. Almost trying to be like a celebration, but also trying to express some of the urgency. Of getting registered to vote and voting."

He is one of the artists commissioned by Facebook to create murals encouraging voting. "The murals that are going up are all wheat pasted design so their wheat pasted posters," Fake said. "And one is going up, I think it might actually be up already on a community center."

For him, the message is clear. "It just says you gotta vote in big large letters," he said. And he's glad he can help make that happen.

"Well I think each election there's a huge portion of the population that's eligible to vote that doesn't," he said. "And I feel like for us to really experience a democracy and to kind of feel seen, voting is part of that."

The New York Times

The Diary Project: A Drawing Exercise
to Help See a Beautiful Way Forward
By Edie Fake
August 21, 2020

WHAT WILL GROW HERE?

HERE IS A SIMPLE DRAWING EXERCISE I USE TO FOCUS MY THOUGHTS, UNDERSTAND MY EMOTIONS AND TRY TO SEE A BEAUTIFUL WAY FORWARD.

STEP 1
TURN OFF YOUR SCREENS. GET A PIECE OF PAPER AND A DRAWING TOOL. DRAW A SIMPLE STEM. JUST A LINE IS FINE.

STEP 2
NOW, THINK ABOUT AN ISSUE YOU CARE ABOUT, AND START TO DRAW A FLOWER ON THE STEM.

STEP 3
EXPAND YOUR FLOWER. AS YOU DO, CHECK IN WITH YOUR EMOTIONS, THINK ABOUT YOUR ACTIONS. TRY TO SEE A BRIGHTER FUTURE AND YOURSELF IN IT.

DON'T WORRY AT ALL ABOUT A "GOOD DRAWING." SIMPLY KEEP ADDING SHAPES, COLORS, AND LINES TO YOUR FLOWER.

KEEP YOUR ISSUE IN MIND.

FIG.1

FIG.2

AS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC DRAGS ON, IT IS HARD FOR ME TO AVOID FEELINGS OF DESPAIR AND FUTILITY. DESPITE RECOGNIZING THAT THIS IS A CRITICAL MOMENT TO FIGHT FOR CHANGE.

AS YOU DRAW, ASK YOURSELF "WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT THIS?" LISTEN TO YOURSELF AND CHALLENGE YOURSELF.

YOU CAN ADD WORDS TO THE FLOWER OR MAKE IT PURELY VISUAL.

THESE DAYS, PLANTS, BOTH LIVING AND DRAWN, REMIND ME OF MY OWN RESILIENCY AND POTENTIAL.

EXTEND THE BLOSSOM OF YOUR FLOWER AS BIG AS YOU NEED TO. DRAW AS LONG AS YOU WANT. KEEP THINKING. KEEP FEELING.

WHEN THIS FLOWER IS DONE, CLOSE YOUR EYES AND REFLECT.

DRAW LEAVES AND ROOTS. ADD PATTERN. LET SIMPLE MARKS BECOME A COMPLEX FORM.

EVERY DAY, ADD ANOTHER FLOWER TO YOUR PAGE. BUILD A GARDEN OUT OF THESE FLOWERS. MOVE TOWARDS CLARITY AND ACTION, AND AWAY FROM CONFUSION AND INERTIA.

TRYING TO GROW PLANTS FROM SEED THE PAST FEW MONTHS HAS BEEN HUMBLING- A REAL LESSON IN THE STRUGGLES AND TRIUMPHS OF BRINGING SOMETHING TO FRUITION.

THIS IS ONE SMALL STEP. LOOK AT ALL OF THESE BLOOMING FLOWERS AND THINK ABOUT WHAT WILL GROW OUT OF THIS TIME.

THE SEEN

April 18, 2019

[120 | THE SEEN]

The Weight of a Line

ART AND COMICS // YVAN ALAGBÉ,
JESSICA CAMPBELL, AND EDIE FAKE

By Coco Picard

An age-old mode of artistic research involves bringing a sketchbook to a museum and sketching a painting or drawing in order to understand its operations. Such efforts can yield different insights at different times. The following graphic review follows a similarly intuitive but careful endeavor, looking at three contemporary comic book artists, Yvan Alagbé, Jessica Campbell, and Edie Fake, who also engage the field of contemporary art. Each artist interrogates their own political concerns from sexual politics to gender identity, racial identity, and forgotten histories, using unique mark-making and material strategies that resonate conceptually with the emotive and political landscapes they engage. As a result they capture something of our moment: a deep frustration for society's habits, a frustration that nevertheless unearths new forms of potential. _____


_____ In addition to his own accomplishments as a cartoonist, Yvan Alagbé (b. 1971, Paris) spearheads multiple publishing efforts, including a contemporary art review he cofounded, *L'oeil carnivore*, a magazine, *Le Cheval sans tête*, and a comics publishing house, Amok. In 2001, Amok partnered with the publishing group Fréon to establish the Franco-Belgian collaboration Frémok, now a major European graphic novels publisher. Alagbé's graphic novel, *Yellow Negroes and Other Imaginary Creatures* (New York Review of Books, 2018) was recently translated into English. Jessica Campbell (b. 1985, Victoria, Canada) is an artist and humorist based out of Chicago; she is the author of two graphic novels, *XTC69* (Koyama Press, 2018) and *Hot or Not: 20th Century Male Artists* (Koyama Press, 2016), and, working in performance, fiber, painting, and drawing often uses carpet remnants to create stand-alone, figurative artworks. Edie Fake (b. 1980, Chicagoland) is a painter and graphic novelist who envisions and explores the potential of queer spaces—imagined, personal, and historical. He is the author of two books, *Gaylord Phoenix* (2011 winner of the Ignatz Award, Secret Acres), and *Little Stranger* (Secret Acres, 2018). _____

_____ Just as typeset critics must internalize and reflect the work of a given artist or author in their writing, this review aims to explore a parallel effort through drawing and handwritten text—creating a graphic reflection of the artists' work. Bear in mind that each drawing of an artwork or comic panel is a failed copy of the original, a copy that has been translated through the hand of the author. _____

THE WEIGHT OF A LINE

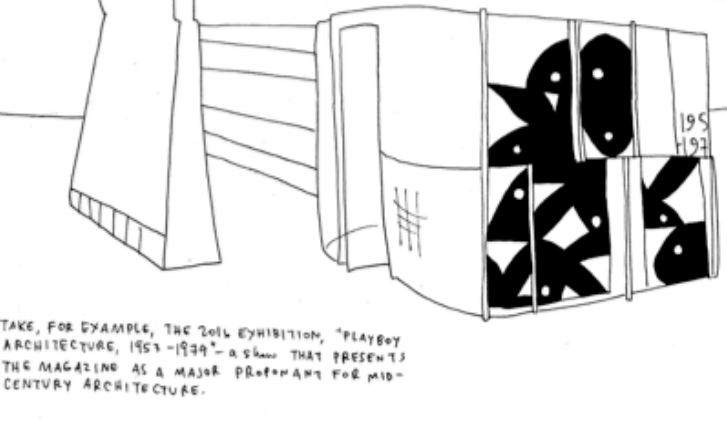
ART **YVAN ALAGBÉ**
and COMICS **JESSICA CAMPBELL** and
with **EDIE FAKE** BY CARO PICARD

I AM ALWAYS INTERESTED IN THE LINE BETWEEN



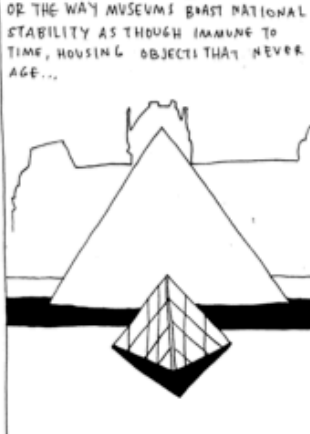
WHAT MIGHT FIRST APPEAR LITERAL OR PRACTICAL WILL, ON CLOSER INSPECTION, REFLECT A BIAS — a set of terms or priorities FILTERING DAILY LIFE

THESE THINGS SHARE AESTHETIC ASPIRATIONS TOO.

TAKE, FOR EXAMPLE, THE 2016 EXHIBITION, "PLAYBOY ARCHITECTURE, 1957-1999" — a show THAT PRESENTS THE MAGAZINE AS A MAJOR PROGRAM FOR MID-CENTURY ARCHITECTURE.

OR THE WAY MUSEUMS BOAST NATIONAL STABILITY AS THOUGH IMMUNE TO TIME, HOUSING OBJECTS THAT NEVER AGE...



LIKE BORDERS BETWEEN COUNTRIES, THESE PRIORITIES AIM AT IRREFUTABILITY — THEY NEED TO BE CONVINCING, THEY WANT TO BE DUBIOUS —

meanwhile ...



THINGS ARE CHANGING — THE WATER IS RISING, DISCIPLINES BLUR —

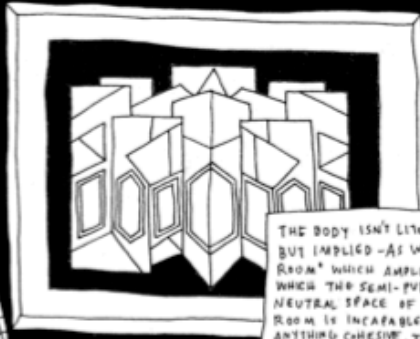


THEY HAVE STACKED THE OLD STATUES ON TOP OF FILE CABINETS TO KEEP THEM SAFE, BUT IT IS NOT ENOUGH ...

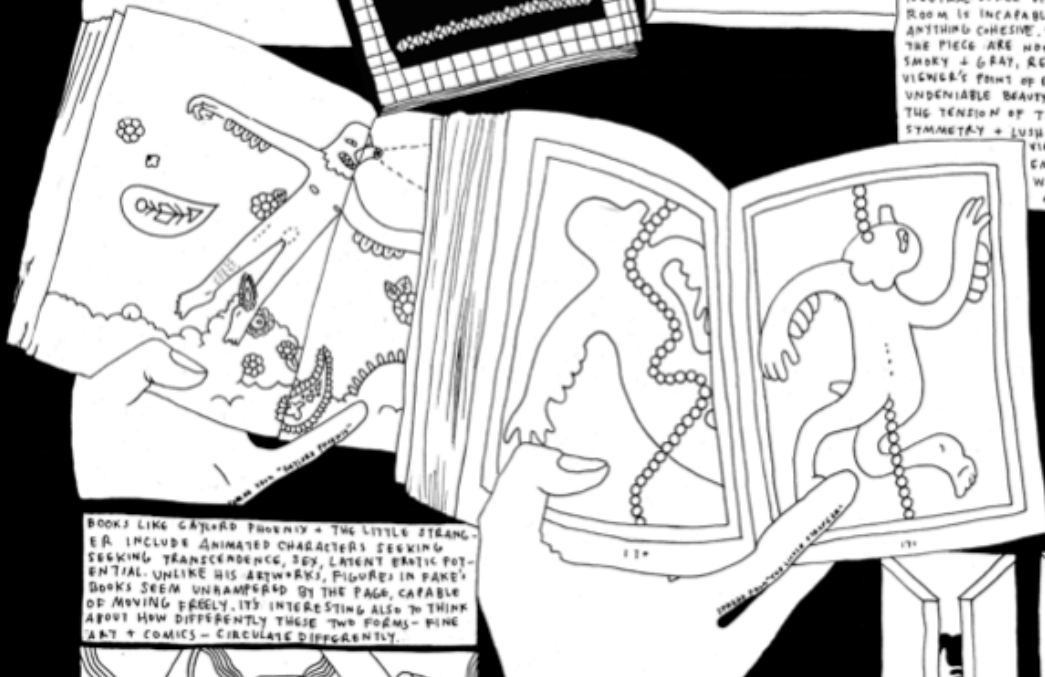
EDIE FAKE

ALSO UNCOVERS HISTORIES - RECOVERING THE FACADES OF LONG LOST GEMINIST & LESBIAN WATERING HOLES IN A SERIES OF DRAWINGS BY LATER COMPILED IN A BOUND BOOK.

FAKE HAS CONTINUED TO PLAY WITH THE ILLUSION OF SPACE, PUSHING + PULLING AGAINST THE TWO-DIMENSIONAL PICTURE PLANE WITH ARCHITECTURAL COMPOSITIONS THAT ALMOST SEEM INHABITABLE.

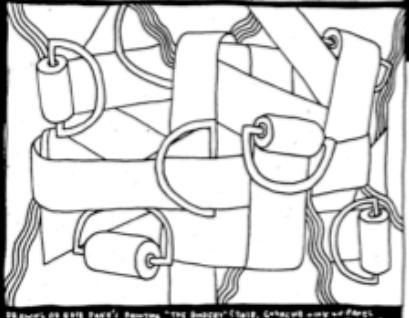


THE BODY ISN'T LITERALLY PRESENT BUT IMPLIED - AS WITH "THE FITTING ROOM" WHICH EXPLORES THE WAY IN WHICH THE SEMI-PUBLIC + SUPPOSEDLY NEUTRAL SPACE OF A CHANGING ROOM IS INCAPABLE OF DEPICTING ANYTHING COHESIVE. THE MIRRORS OF THE PIECE ARE NON-REFLECTIVE, SHINY + GRAY, REFLECTING THE VIEWER'S POINT OF ENTRY. STILL, THE UNDENIABLE BEAUTY OF THE IMAGE - THE TENSION OF TIGHT, GEOMETRIC SYMMETRY + LUSH COLOR, PUTS THE VIEWER AT EASE TOO. EMPowering THEM WITHIN THIS HALL OF MIRRORS.



BOOKS LIKE CATHERINE FROENIX + THE LITTLE STRANGER INCLUDE ANIMATED CHARACTERS SEEKING TRANSCENDENCE, SEX, LATENT EROTIC POTENTIAL. UNLIKE HIS ARTWORKS, FIGURES IN FAKE'S BOOKS SEEM UNBANNED BY THE PAGE, CAPABLE OF MOVING FREELY. ITS INTERESTING ALSO TO THINK ABOUT HOW DIFFERENTLY THESE TWO FORMS - FINE ART + COMICS - CIRCULATE DIFFERENTLY.

TRADITIONAL ARTWORKS ARE SOMEHOW MORE PUBLIC, OR PUBLIC. MAYBE FOR THAT REASON FAKE'S INDIVIDUAL DRAWINGS REFLECT DISCRETE, RIGID STRUCTURES. HIS BOOKS ARE MORE INTIMATE, ENGAGING A ONE-ON-ONE RELATIONSHIP WITH QUESTING POST-GENINIST THAT MOVE DIAGONALLY THROUGH ALLEGORICAL LANDSCAPES.



DETAILS OF EDIE FAKE'S DRAWING "THE SHOOTER" (2018, GRAPHIC ARTS CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY)

PANEL 2 FROM P. 104 OF THE LITTLE STRANGER

MAYBE THE DESIRE FAKE CAPTURES - CALL IT HOPE, DETERMINATION, LUST - AN INNER PRESSURE THAT FLIES AGAINST, AROUND, & THROUGH HARD LINES - MAYBE THIS IS THE THING THAT DRIVES US ALL FROM INSIDE OUT.

WESTERN EXHIBITIONS

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MoCCA Arts Festival Guests of Honor Announced

Mercedes Milligan

Published on January 23, 2019

The Society of Illustrators has revealed its first round of Guests of Honor for the MoCCA Arts Festival, taking place April 6-7 at Metropolitan West in New York City. This year's featured Guests of Honor are:

Edie Fake, whose award-winning comics series Gaylord Phoenix explores desire and transformation in a dreamlike, fantasy setting. His new collection of short comics Little Stranger (published by Secret Acres), collects a wide range of short pieces published in a variety of formats and contexts. Fake is also a fine artist, whose Memory Palace drawings reimagine historical Chicago-area queer spaces. His recent paintings have been exhibited at Western Exhibitions and featured in The Paris Review.

Art in America

Edie Fake, Chicago at Western Exhibitions

By: Kyle MacMillan

Dec 1, 2018

The dozen gouache-and-ink compositions in Edie Fake's recent show (all 2018) were somewhat deceptive. Semiabstract images bearing electric colors, geometric patterns, and push-pull dynamics, they suggested art for art's sake. But they were layered with allusions to the transgender artist's explorations of sexuality and identity. Such combinations of eye-catching designs and personal and political concerns place Fake in the tradition of the 1970s and '80s Pattern and Decoration artists—a connection also claimed in "Surface/Depth: The Decorative after Miriam Schapiro," a group exhibition held earlier this year at New York's Museum of Arts and Design that delved into the influence of one of the movement's pioneers and included Fake's work.

The Evanston, Illinois, native, who now lives in the California High Desert just outside of Joshua Tree, has something of a double career. He is probably best known as a force in the alternative comics scene, with Gaylord Phoenix, his 2011 book about a nonbinary humanoid on a journey of self-discovery, winning the Ignatz Award for outstanding graphic novel. At the same time, he is an up-and-comer in the art world whose work not only was included in "Surface/Depth" but also will be featured in the Des Moines Art Center's 2019 show "For Today I Am a Boy: Contemporary Queer Abstraction." During the peak of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the 1980s and '90s, some artists confronting the ravages of the disease and examining other aspects of LGBTQ life camouflaged their messages via abstraction because of the controversial nature of the subject matter. Though one would hope our society has advanced enough that such disguising is no longer necessary, "queer abstraction" remains a potent means for investigating complicated issues.

Fake's latest body of work follows from his "Memory Palace" series of drawings, which reimagine the facades of Chicago-area gay and lesbian venues (bars, nightclubs, bookshops) as elaborate structures. While architectural references are often evident in the new work, they are less overt than in the previous series. In Tangles, a showy polka-dotted stairway is tucked into the center of a busy, fantastical space with an off-balance perspective. Boxes with gridded patterns on their ends jut forward, and curving brown stripes weave in and out of the foreground.

A gallery statement suggests that these works should be considered self-portraits of sorts, the images "referencing elements of the trans and non-binary body through pattern, color and architectural metaphor." While Fake does not seem interested in conveying definite meanings in them, he does explore particular themes and motifs, as titles like Center Part or Neutralities might indicate. In The T Room, eight colorful, patterned squares form a central "T," which likely stands for "testosterone" or "transgender." Four of the squares contain the letters "F" and "T" interlocking in such a way that they produce an "M," evoking the notion of female-to-male (FTM). In a Chicago Tribune interview, Fake alluded to doing a painting about binding his chest and eventually undergoing what he called "masculinizing chest surgery." That work is clearly The Bindery, one of the most explicit images in the show, with its convoluted interplay of floating red, white, and blue bandage-type strips unspooling from five rolls. Even in the less direct works, however, Fake's overall intent seems clear: to conjure a vibrant space where freedom of gender expression can reign.

Chicago Art Advisor Joel Straus Recommends 8 Gallery Shows to See During EXPO Chicago.

By ArtNet News

September 27, 2018

This month's guide, organized by Chicago art advisor Joel Straus, features David Hockney, Liliana Porter, Edie Fake, and more. The Windy City gets its annual turn at the center of the international art world this week, as EXPO Chicago returns for its seventh edition. And while the city has plenty of cultural opportunities to offer year round, the local art scene is turned up a few notches this time of year, showing that Chicago is on its way to becoming one of the country's elite art cities.

Just ask Chicago-based art advisor Joel Straus, the principal of Straus Art Group and a founding director of EXPO Chicago. Straus has worked in the art scene for over 30 years. He's seen a lot of growth in his time.

"Chicago's creative landscape is ever-evolving," Straus explains to artnet News. "Recently, there has been an exciting migration of galleries moving to the West Town neighborhood. All of these galleries are within a three-minute drive of each other, making it an ideal destination for visual art." Just ahead of the sale, we spoke with the decorated art advisor to hear about some of the shows that he's most excited for this week.

See his list, and others, below!

Exhibition: "Sanford Biggers: New Work"

When: September 15 - October 27, 2018

Where: Monique Meloche Gallery, 451 N. Paulina Street, Chicago, IL

"This exhibition displays new work that shows the influence of his fellowship at the American Academy in Rome. I really loved the carved marble sculptures that were derived from brick brock statues the artist purchased on eBay. They were assembled from different kitschy sculptures and then digitally modeled and carved mechanically in 3-D." JS

Exhibition: "The Water Lily Pond of Life"

When: Oct 10, 2015 - Dec 31, 2020

Where: Zhou B Art Center, 1029 W. 35th St., Chicago, IL

Exhibition: "Torkwase Dyson: James Samuel Madison"

When: September 14 - October 27, 2018

Where: Rhona Hoffman Gallery, 1711 W. Chicago Ave., Chicago, IL

"This exhibition displays powerful paintings in tonalities black and white. While non-representational, they have references to both landscapes and architecture. There is spontaneity of an abstract expressionist painting with the graphic quality of a blueprint. There is three-dimensional space created in two dimensions in the same way that a Fred Sandback sculpture creates space in 3D." JS

Exhibition: "NoNonchalant: Abstraction by 10 Chicago Artists"

When: September 21 - November 21, 2018

Where: Alan Koppel Gallery, 806 N. Dearborn Ave., Chicago, IL

Exhibition: "David Hockney: Time and More, Space and More..."

When: September 13 - November 21, 2018

Where: Richard Gray Gallery, 875 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL

"These works display images of a studio with Hockney's paintings on display in the print, created in a monumental scale. The paintings and furniture are photo-based, with a skewed dimensionality that is created in Photoshop, forming an environment that has the classic Hockney perspective. For me, it doesn't matter whether a master artist uses a paintbrush or Photoshop because it is about the composition, not the technology." JS

Exhibition: "Liliana Porter: MEMORABILIA"

When: September 15 - November 3, 2018

Where: Carrie Secrist Gallery, 835 W. Washington Blvd. # 1B, Chicago, IL

Exhibition: "Stan VanDerBeek: Poemfield"

When: September 14 - October 27, 2018

Where: Document Space, 1709 W. Chicago Ave., Chicago, IL

"This exhibition displays Poem Field film loops that were generated from an IBM computer in the '60s and '70s. It is a rare opportunity to see one of the first of its kind of generative films." JS

Exhibition: "Edie Fake: Gut Rehab"

When: September 14 - October 27, 2018

Where: Western Exhibitions, 1709 W. Chicago Ave. Suite 2C, Chicago, IL

"The exhibition is comprised of small, precise geometric urban landscapes that reference trans and non-binary bodies using complex structures and a bright color palette. The blurring between architecture and the body creates an incredibly visceral experience." JS

NEWCITY

Building the Body from the Inside Out, A Review of Edie Fake at Western Exhibitions

By B. David Zarley

October 16, 2018

Edie Fake is our preeminent architect, conjuring uncanny edifices, queer space cathedrals, from the atmosphere like Elsa; but now, from a high dry desert raised and razed, but not a barren valley those talents have been turned to the assemblage of structures more intimate: those of the anatomy which constitutes an outside portion of our identity, internal and out. Couched in the language and forms of architecture, Fake creates temples of and to the body, codified and protected via pattern and line and as indomitable as the buildings that inform them and as reflective of private ipseity as an interior design. Rigid lines about gentle waves and sharp processes, a constant, harmonious clash between states; pattern and color turning genitalia into objects; structures-cum-structures, atomized and reconstituted in chocolate mink, salmon, abyssal black and tarnished gold, in flesh, blood, and water, parts hidden in, surrounded by and in relation with pinwheels and striped piles, diamonds, spheres, and church pipes, Atari brick and quilted angles, are these prismatically pied disco balls whose light comes from within.

Vitrines and gates both call back to vaginas the original font and are receptive and protective, respectively; the biological underpinnings, striations and stingray ripples bond the cellular walls and the building elements as visual mortar and painted peritoneum. The sense of liminal space and slippery definition is ensconced and emboldened in the architecture, which carries across the obliques into the wall, or as in the depiction sublimely lifted, an icon from some temple to Janus of an IUD whose composition looks both phallic and female all at once. Great rolls of binders feel like industrial textile how cruel!, how negligent the often ugly and utilitarian medicinal design of so important and vibrantly alive a garment like the binder; save us, [Sky Cubacub's creations](#) and ribbons of skin sanguine spongy-red spine, bone, creamy adipose tissue, pallid fascia, hypoxic lapis as they congregate but never tangle, the bolts of being instead holding the canvas and eye and thought in place.

Vast and busy as identity itself, the works are intimidating yet open, paintings as patients; in portraying the body as oecodomic, Fake proves that the corporeal is as constructed as any building. (B. David Zarley)

Edie Fake's "Gut Rehab" shows through October 27 at Western Exhibitions, 1709 West Chicago.

WESTERN EXHIBITIONS

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Translating Identity: Reading L. Nichols and Edie Fake's memoirs

By Chris Mautner

September 27, 2018

While at the Small Press Expo in Bethesda, Md., earlier this month, I attended a panel entitled "Trans Memoir." During the program, a small group of transgender cartoonists talked about how comics provided them with a mode of self-expression in which they could delineate their best, ideal selves and talk about issues and emotions — often difficult to articulate — that come with being trans.

Two recent books from the small press publisher Secret Acres — *Flocks* by L. Nichols and *Little Stranger* by Edie Fake — underscore what those cartoonists were saying. Both books examine the struggles of being transgender and dealing with dysphoria, albeit from very different perspectives and sense of aesthetics.

Flocks is a relatively straightforward memoir of Nichols's life growing up in rural Louisiana, with one notable exception: While all the other characters are portrayed in a relatively realistic fashion, Nichols draws himself as a button-eyed rag doll. This has the effect of instantly engendering the reader's sympathies — he looks so vulnerable — and also visually signifying that the protagonist feels like an outsider.

Assigned female at birth, Nichols grew up in a deeply religious and conservative community and thus was constantly plagued by feelings of shame and confusion about his sexuality and gender. These feelings of anxiety and self-loathing are frequently depicted by arrows or lightning bolts labeled words like "queer" or "pressure" that point both inward and outward (but usually inward).

Much of the book is concerned with Nichols's journey towards self-acceptance and self-care as he grows to maturity and eventually transitions to male. But what's interesting about *Flocks* is that Nichols refuses to provide any one-sided condemnation of either his family or religious community. While he makes starkly clear the anguish and fear he felt at being "different", he also praises his parents for giving him the confidence to excel at school and eventually attend M.I.T. And he also refuses to spurn religion, instead, finding a church that espouses a spirituality sans condemnation.

Edie Fake, meanwhile, takes a more surreal and at times, a horrific route to articulate his concerns over gender and sexuality. The short stories and drawings that make up *Little Stranger* often take contorted paths, but the emotions underlying them are very real and raw.

Not one for subtlety, Fake's comics are filled with makeshift genitalia and other body parts that transmogrify with alarming rapidity. A cow's udders become spurting phalluses, a group of leeches become sex toys. In "Foie Gras," images of preparing a turkey or cutting a fish become strangely sexual when juxtaposed with text that reads "fuck me like this". In one cartoonish sequence, a witch removes two cup-shaped breasts from a pumpkin-headed creature, placing one at the crotch instead. "The old switcheroo" the witch exclaims as she disappears in a puff of smoke.

Many of these sequences are funny despite (or perhaps because of) their explicit nature. But there is also an air of menace throughout Fake's work. In "Night Taps," a demon appears at a window and cryptically warns that "your house is like a cracked egg . . . what could ever protect your fragile shell?" A hand holds a card that reads "This card has been chemically treated. In 3 days your prick will fall off." In "L.A. Silence" Fake visits a clinic where he suddenly grows breasts and almost drowns in a sea of milk.

Fake's work can often be cryptic and disturbing, but his attempts to articulate his anxiety, desire and even happiness about being transgender rings through loud and clear and is not so far afield from the message of acceptance and love that Nichols emphasizes in *Flocks*. In both these books, people in the LGBTQIA community and beyond can find empathy, recognition, and solace. •



Gut Rehab: Edie Fake's Elaborate and Maze-like Paintings @ Western Exhibitions, Chicago

By Joey Garfield

September 14, 2018

"It's given me room to try stuff out," Edie Fake told our contributing editor, Joey Garfield, in the new [Fall 2018 Juxtapoz print issue](#). Fake was talking about his move to the California desert from Chicago, and obvious big change of scenery that had the artist thinking about their work in a different light. "I look at the work that I started when I was in grad school in LA and saw it was coming from a place of sadness and worry, and trying to draw these drawings that are puzzles and metaphors about identity that were all ending the same. Being out here kind of reminds me that things are flawed, funny and contradictory, and that's ok. It was all a process to go through. I feel like between drawing those drawings and being out here, I can think, 'Oh yeah. There is joy in life, not just conundrums'."

This sentiment works well into Fake's new exhibition, *Gut Rehab*, now on view through October 27, 2018 at [Western Exhibitions](#) in Chicago. It is Fake's second solo show with the gallery. As the gallery notes, "Fake's paintings start as self-portraits, and from there, they make a break for it, referencing elements of the trans and non-binary body through pattern, color and architectural metaphor. His precise, intimately scaled, gouache-and-ink paintings on panel are structured around the physical aspects of transition and adaptation as well as mental and sexual health.

"Since moving from first Chicago, then to Los Angeles while briefly attending grad school at USC, to now the high desert of Joshua Tree in California, Fake's work has evolved from his acclaimed *Memory Palaces* series reimagined facades of urban lesbian bars and gay nightclubs to a new feeling of vulnerability due to shifts in the U.S. social and political climate. The work blurs lines between architecture and body with structures adorned by elements that seem to be both decorative and protective. Architectural components are used as visual metaphors for the ways in which definition and validation elude trans identities. Says Fake, 'More and more I'm trying to bring an anarchy into that architecture, or a fantasy and ecstasy of what queer space is and can be.'"

[Read our interview with Edie Fake in the new Fall 2018 issue, on newsstands now.](#)

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Chicago Tribune

With 'Gut Rehab' at Western Exhibitions, Edie Fake connects trans bodies with queer architecture

By KT Hawbaker Chicago Tribune

September 13, 2018

It's Virgo season, baby. According to the stars, Aug. 23 through Sept. 22 is *the* time to lean into solid organization, good judgment and the details; an earth sign, Virgo is all about groundedness and deliberate moves, putting away the summer cutoffs and zipping up a sensible jacket.

Virgo season also marks Edie Fake's return to Chicago, with his new show "Gut Rehab" at Western Exhibitions. In fact, astrology catalyzed the paintings curated here, the artist's second solo show with the gallery. Fake just also happens to be a Virgo.

"I saw an ad in an old magazine for a gay bar in Chicago called the Virgo Out," Fake said in a phone interview. "I was like, 'Oh, my God, there's a bar called the Virgo Out? I'm a Virgo — how did I not know?' I went to go find it. Of course, it was long gone, but that's sort of what started the project."

With the earlier "Memory Palaces" series, Fake recreated the facades of abandoned or demolished queer spaces, borrowing the precision and angles of architecture while retaining the cartoonish sensibilities that saturate his comics practice. It's one part ancient history, another part organized chaos, zero parts white space.

"My interest with these architectural forms began in Chicago, with researching queer histories and communities in the city," Fake said. "So much has happened, but it also seems so transitory — things came and went. I started by drawing buildings that remembered those spaces. And, there's some power in redesigning these spaces. Not for the sake of nostalgia, but for the idea that there can be lineage."

This series forms the backbone of Fake's newest work. After moving from Chicago to Los Angeles to Joshua Tree, Calif., he isn't flanked by high-rises, sirens and towers. In this wide-open space, he's looking inward, now using architectural metaphor to explore and express his own trans autobiography.

"It morphed into using architecture or the forms of architecture to speak about contradictions, particularly in like trans identity, like the building of 'impossible' buildings as a metaphor for trans bodies," Fake described. "It's saying, 'This sounds impossible but it can be visualized, it can be realized.'"

"I wanted to do a painting about what it felt like to bind my chest for so long and eventually having masculinizing chest surgery," he said. "I began to think, 'Oh! This language could be in these architectural structures that I am painting and these colors that I am using. I could make this connect to my body.'"

Fake's gouache and ink images are an amalgamation of his other histories: The particular combination of media is frequently used in the comics and zine community, where Fake first emerged with the series "Gaylord

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Phoenix” in “2001 or 2002.” The rigorous, if bombastic, organization of his paintings isn’t just a Virgo tick; it could also be read as an instinct borne from reading narratives in neat, paneled sequences.

“My impulse is to take these architectural forms and push them into more euphoric, ecstatic visions. I feel so vulnerable about this work, but it feels like I’ve been painting little love letters to myself and the way my body has changed in regards to gender.

“Not to sound corny, but there’s a lot of meditating on ‘What does it mean to be in this body of god?’ and ‘How can that visually be portrayed?’ ”

the PARIS REVIEW

Cities of the Future, Their Color
Renee Gladman & Edie Fake
Summer 2018

It was in the third of the essays I was writing on how we’d come to see the cities of the future as *cities of the future* (something to refocus our attention on, now that the *cities of the future* of the past, the structures in which we were all living, had been thoroughly codified and photographed and renovated, resold as more shimmering or more minimalist versions of themselves then rephotographed, and we were liking the reiterations on our Instagrams, enjoying this incredible proximity to architecture: I was an architect, writing about architecture in my poems), but it was hard to deny that we’d reached that time in our respective chronologies when *cities of the future* was something that had to be reenvisioned and discussed as you sat under studio lights in a narrow room of books in an office building and your talk was broadcast over the Internet (you were not of the technological elite, so you didn’t know that sitting hunched over would make you appear hunched over to anybody watching), but the idea of *cities of the future* came to everyone one night in our sleep and it was time to begin to think and talk about it, to try to envision what these would look like and who would occupy them and if they would have different names or exist on different planets (you had to be speculative but also had to weigh in on what was actually happening on your streets, in your bodies, and between bodies): it was in number three of the essays that I began to see color as that which would make our cities of the future *cities of the future* and this was thanks to Edie Fake, whose renditions of the architectures of our new cities performed like an architecture finally taking into account our clothes. I began writing the essays about the cities of the future, starting with weather and invisibility *cities of the future, their weather*; then *cities of the future, invisibility* and I began each never considering that the cities of the future had color, and not only color but very bright color that was not only very bright but patterned as well. However, you couldn’t get to these cities until you sufficiently saw the houses that composed them. I wrote *houses* but I also meant hotels and museums and cinemas and every other entity-object constructed to put time to the body. You had to see the houses first just to understand where you were in the present, to see the present bend and grow loud,

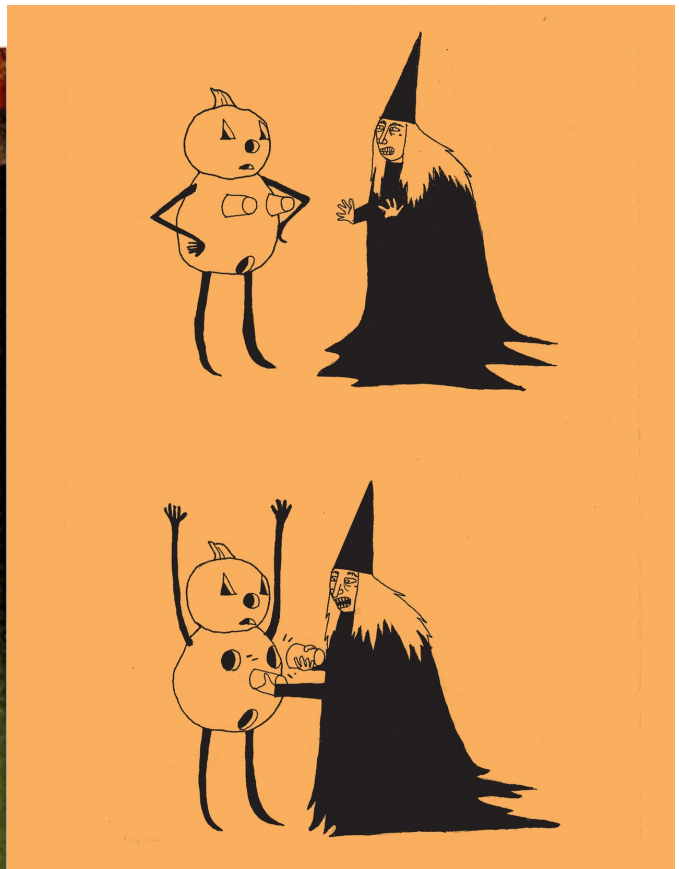
like all the fingers around you snapping at once and in beat with something that brought your bodies together, though not into uniformity, rather something syncopated, where your cuffs lined up with his belt and his afro and your knees bent and her sunglasses slid a little down the bridge of her nose and they added a clap to their finger snap or maybe just held their arm up for a while, further away from everything but still syncopated, still drawing lines through your late night and early morning: no, first you had to look at the houses of the cities to get to the *cities of the future*, and to do this, you started with color. Something happened to my clothes and to the clothes of everyone when we brushed against the city, the city of our old photographs, and this seemed to imbue the lines of the houses within our cities of the future with color, but not just colors of the spectrum also colors that resulted from being in a constant electrified syncopation with other colors (like the making of plaid), and where the lines hit the architecture, made it distinct, into a shape for living, was exactly where the invisibility happened in the second essay I was writing on the *cities of the future*, though I realize that sounds contradictory, putting color and invisibility together like that, but you only saw color because everything else was being subsumed into larger invisible structures, the colors were the boundaries between where things were going and what remained: they were where the line broke before the new line began but with the new line in sight: color was *between* and luminous and brought bodies outside, roaming black bodies, roaming bodies in skin tights, leather houses for the feet, blinking, popping shirts and tops, roaming bodies speaking languages from beyond. These were queer geometries, someone had said, because the bodies brushing the landscape rearranged the outdoors; the cities responded to what your clothes said you needed. I had all these T-shirts with holes; I wanted to be everywhere at once; I wanted a conversation with the buildings I entered, for the building to say something and my brushing it to respond, for it to allow its lines to move, to roam within its shape, such that to enter it would be to go on talking, to make everything you did a matter of space, an ongoing equation asking, What is your body doing, what does it need? But these movements would not be to placate the body in the cities of the future, rather to keep the body roaming: making rooms with your feet and your breathing; with your legs up and open; with your stomping and gliding; with your slipping past and through other bodies taller and stronger; to bring out the dark of you, let it roam. There would be all this roaming blackness in the cities of the future that agitated everything not in motion, that behaved like questions about space and belonging, asked to be embraced, to be layered, to be applied to math: the blackness providing a way to build inside the structures already there, and the other colors flickering so you could see the dimensions of space — sometimes you'd see a house intact inside another house with one trimmed in electric yellows and the other in pink, and people would be occupying them like new shapes arriving to some Euclidean page, wanting opposites and sames and inverses and transverses and the ____ and the ____ of the unknown languages of these shapes to reconfigure where we lived and how we lived and who got to dance in the center of the lives of our pages.

The Outline

Edie Fake's 'Little Stranger' is the Most Delightfully Weird, Touching Comic You'll Read This Year

By Ann-Derrick Gaillot.

July 10, 2018



In the opening comic of the book [Little Stranger](#), a fanged balloon-like creature with a tail made of the alphabet zips through a maze of bold lines until it reaches a forest of tree-like bodies, enters one, dances, and zips off to a dollar store on what looks to be a flying watermelon. The book only gets weirder, and more inventive, from there. Through his stories and zines of beings in search of identity and form (though the subject of some of the pieces included can't be nailed down so simply), comic artist, zine maker, and painter Edie Fake's stories focus on communicating experience and feeling rather than linear narratives and passages of time. Now, for the first time, over a decade's worth of Fake's underground zines have been collected in this new book, *Little Stranger*, a

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compendium of unique visual explorations of non-binary bodies and queer community, as well as abstract feelings and experiences much more difficult to sum up in words.

Having started his career in the Chicago queer and DIY arts communities, Fake moved to California in 2014 to attend the MFA Program at the University of Southern California Roski School of Art. But after [he and six other students dropped out](#) to protest rescinded financial support among other depletions of the program, Fake moved to the desert outside of Joshua Tree, where he lives and works today and compiled *Little Stranger*. The collection has echoes of his 2011 book *Gaylord Phoenix*, an abstract narrative mythology about a queer creature on a psychedelic journey of self-discovery for which Fake won the 2011 Ignatz Award for Outstanding Graphic Novel. Similar to that work, *Little Stranger* takes the reader on a fantastical journey warping narrative and comics convention at some times, and doing away with them altogether at others. Made up of Fake's zines from 2002 to 2017, the pieces in *Little Stranger* explore a number of drawing styles touching on everything from intricate patterning to vintage advertising, cookbooks, and diagrams. One-off, context-less drawings appear between mini-narratives about approaching the unknown. And while the book doesn't demand any one story or interpretation, Fake, who is trans, often explores bodies and sexual experience in his zines, embracing the absurdity and fear that surrounds both subjects.

With its fearless embrace of all things pleasurable, weird, and a little scary, *Little Stranger*, which will be released July 17, offers a unique, visceral reading experience unlike any other comic, graphic novel, or zine I've ever read. Fake spoke to *The Outline* via phone from his home in California to shed a bit more light on his new book and share some of the intention behind his work.

How did you decide to put your zines together in *Little Stranger*?

My publisher Secret Acres came to me with the idea. At first I was like, there's not enough material, and also thought that it wouldn't make sense together because there's a bunch of different stuff from a bunch of different times. But I think the book came together really nicely as a collection of short stuff. It's all stuff that came out in small press editions, so it's nice to have it all collected in one place instead of a thousand squirrelier places. It [all] makes sense together as some kind of queer sex liminal fantasy, or something.

How did you decide what you wanted to include and how you wanted to put them together?

The order was the most fun because it was kind of like making a mixtape. It was really nice to take a look at the stuff and be like *oh there's like this thing that loosely connects this to this and that makes it blend easily one into the other*. When we first started putting it together I was like it's all going to be scrambled eggs, nothing's going to fit. And then there's enough threads throughout that I could make it work.

Did you discover these different threads as you were going through or did know the recurring themes that come up in your work?

There's some approaches I have to making comics that revolve around a similar theme. There were elements that I knew were entrance points for me to make a comic. Like, I'll base some of the character design on like Halloween decorations because I think it is a funny way to access something that's kind of goofy but referencing something scary, and there are just weird beautiful bodies. [I'm] also trying to get the comics to touch either a strange experience or something that I can't quite remember but feel on an emotional level.

And they're not in any sort of chronological order.

Yeah, not really. The book came together more around scenes than around what goes where on a timeline. That's interesting, too, because I can see my thoughts cycling back onto things.

Instead of looking at your work in this linear way.

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Yeah, totally, and being like 2002 was like this, 2003 was like that. There's definitely stuff that's much looser, zines that were little illustrations or no narrative, and I'd say almost all that stuff is earlier. I draw this narrative comic *Gaylord Phoenix*, and when I was between making issues of that I would try and play around with stuff that was based on a single story and more emotional drawings, for lack of a better word.

Your paintings were [recently featured in the Paris Review](#). In your zines you explore bodies and depiction of bodies more. But in your paintings it seems like you focus more on place making and spaces and architecture. Is that fair?

Yeah, absolutely. And [in] my drawing process, if I have an idea and it's pushing to be something that's more narrative I'll probably approach it in a sequential way like a comic or a zine. The paintings seem like ideas that I have less of a narrative grasp on. Paintings can talk about bodies and history and queer identity in this way that they try to push a lot into a single image. Especially stories about or thinking about bodies and vulnerability and sexuality, my mind has a much more narrative take on that, and so I tend [to approach those in] little books. I also like that zines are more of an intimate format. I try and play it by ear, what my ideas tend more towards, and then follow that star to make what I think best suits the way I'm thinking about things. It goes back and forth, too. It's nice to have different approaches.

In some of these zines, there's a you character.

Yeah, [with *Gaylord Phoenix*] people kept asking if I was the character in that series, and I was like *well kind of, of course, but it's also a psychedelic fantasy so also not*. But drawing myself in the comic[s] almost started as a thought experiment. What if I really was a blatant character in it? I keep doing it because it seems like it is like a powerful approach to making comics. I don't have a really good grasp on making something that would be straight up autobiographical. But I do feel like I'm really interested in portraying trans bodies in the comics and also trying to work in the way a body feels, a visceral kind of examination of my own body and sexuality. They're almost like horror fantasy or something.

Yeah, there's so much in *Gaylord Phoenix* that is really playful. *Little Stranger* has that, too, but there's also more frightening imagery around the change and morphing of bodies.

The scripting of all of these starts out super loose and almost dream-like, and then I try and hone it into something that feels really like a story that seems very honest to me. And yet at the same time, I have a lot of fury, I guess, and also appreciation of things that are a little uncomfortable or scary. There's more and more language and honesty around trans bodies. But I think there's still these huge gaps in talking about them sexually in a way that's non-binary and affirming. And although some of these stories are gruesome stuff, I almost felt like I had to take the most visceral path to get to to something that was driving me or like something I was dealing with. I have a lot of missing memory and trying to sort through that is part of what these comics are, too, to the point where it's almost like I get really uncomfortable reading them, and I wrote them. I can't read them straight through because they're about something for me that I still can't articulate. But I'm trying to.

"Creep" Edie Fake / Courtesy of Secret Acres

You play a lot with panels. Sometimes they're really defined, sometimes they're just one big page, in one they're windows. What's the thought process that goes into using comics conventions like panels?

I really have to force myself to use panels, it doesn't come naturally to me. But I also like doing really corny things with panels, like making them into windows or something. There are comics in this book that almost start off with the premise of me forcing myself to learn how to use panels because I never think about that with the pacing of a comic. I'm more interested in them as creating a spatial thing in the comic rather than necessarily moving the timing along, the pacing along, at a certain rate. I'm much more interested in them being windows or doors or a panel being an entire room than it being a moment in time.

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You depict bodies in so many different ways. Is that something you've explored for a long time?

I do feel like there things that a drawing loses if I just go in for a totally realistic representation of a body. In order to sprinkle it with the gay magic that I know is there, I lean much more into adding something that's fantastical. I'm not afraid to have bodies that transform really quickly or morph or change into other things or have this kind of cosmic erogenous aspects to them.

Do you ever think about the reader when you're making your comics and zines or is it a completely personal process?

I do think about the reader in the way that I want the comics to be most legible to queer bodies and people. Just like anyone, I want to feel seen in the world. I have a transmasculine, non-binary body. I feel like it's more and more represented in culture, but there's also a lot of missing language for it, in a way. And so my first thoughts of audience are [that] I want [my work] to help contribute to a conversation of queerness. And then if it's entertaining in a general sense that's great, too. I remember when *Gaylord* came out, there were a lot of reviews of it that were like *this book isn't for everybody* and I was like, *no book is for everybody*. When you say a book is for everybody, I'll probably tell you that I hated it.

So who is *Little Stranger* for?

As the dedication of the book [says], it's for queer weirdos, Queerdoes, and it's specifically for trans and non-binary people, especially. But, yeah, I'm excited if anyone wants to give it a chance and read it.

HYPERALLERGIC

The Pattern and Decoration Zeitgeist

By Anne Swartz

June 13, 2018

Surface/Depth: The Decorative After Miriam Schapiro, currently at the Museum of Arts and Design assesses the legacy of Miriam Schapiro, the only member of the original P&D group no longer active. (She died in 2015.) Schapiro's work looks awesome in the space. She's known for moving from spare, abstract, geometric forms to abundant, dense surfaces on canvases sometimes shaped like hearts, fans, or houses. There we see a great deal of art and ephemera included too — important to enable understanding of the origin story of her accretionary process — those dense surfaces didn't just build themselves. The whole show is a visual feast, contextualizing Schapiro's lovely paintings for a new generation. In addition to being an accomplished maker herself, Schapiro used highly decorated surfaces in her *femmage*s: collages involving remnants from women's creativity or from their lives. She was also a teacher who helped students use their personal content to make art. Josh Blackwell, who actually had her as a teacher, is included in this show. His work repurposes everyday plastic and fiber as a three-dimensional variation on the gestural language of painting. Additionally, Jasmin Sian, **Edie Fake**, and Jodie Mack are all delights in this show, and provide a thankfully broad reading on the notion of decoration.

the PARIS REVIEW

Announcing Our Summer Issue

By The Paris Review

June 5, 2018



My hope is that this issue is a version of Morris’s garden: a microcosm of the larger literary ecology, gathered (perhaps not too unassumingly) between two covers. We owe our sunny front cover to Edie Fake, the *Review*’s first trans cover artist. His paintings in the issue’s portfolio imagine queer spaces and invent “impossible” architectures as a metaphor for trans bodies. In the portfolio’s essay, Renee Gladman optimistically envisions in these spaces a speculative future—cities occupied by people “like new shapes arriving to some Euclidean page, wanting opposites and sames and inverses and transverses.”

Read full article at <https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2018/06/05/announcing-our-summer-issue-2/>

THE ARCHITECTS NEWSPAPER

Artist Edie Fake explores gender identity and sexuality through architectural drawings

The Editors

June 1st, 2018



Chicago-based illustrator Edie Fake's colorful architectural drawings explore the concept of queer spaces. In his work, identity, gender, and sexuality are metaphorically depicted through architectural elements, both real and imagined.

This series is currently on display at the Museum of Arts and Design as part of the *Surface/Depth: The Decorative After Miriam Schapiro* exhibition, on view through September 9.

ARTNEWS

Beyond the Surface: Miriam Schapiro's Endurina Leacv is on Full View at the Museum of Arts and Design

Claire Sheldon

April 24, 2018.

“Surface/Depth” brings to life a phantasmagorical world in which psychedelic patterns dance on televisions wrapped in vibrantly colored paper and canvases teem with multicolored flowers. Both Schapiro and the artists she influenced demonstrate the many ways craft works—collages, quilts, and even plastic bags—can become useful, critical tools for investigating social and political structures.

Whereas Schapiro was concerned more broadly with women’s experiences in the domestic sphere, the other artists in the show—Sanford Biggers, Josh Blackwell, and Sara Rahbar among them—are grappling with issues related to race, gender, sexuality, the U.S.’s actions in the Middle East, and more.

These works are interspersed with those by the contemporary artists, who offer various updates of Schapiro’s signature style. **Edie Fake**’s drawings, part of a series called “Memory Palaces,” depict architectural facades and doorways; according to the artist, the works represent his “queer neighborhood” in Chicago. (These places have been invented by Fake, or have been demolished or coopted in the physical world.)

Read the full article at <http://www.artnews.com/2018/04/24/beyond-surface-miriam-schapiros-enduring-legacy-full-view-museum-arts-design/>

The Standard

The New Wave: 7 Emerging LA Artists You Should Know

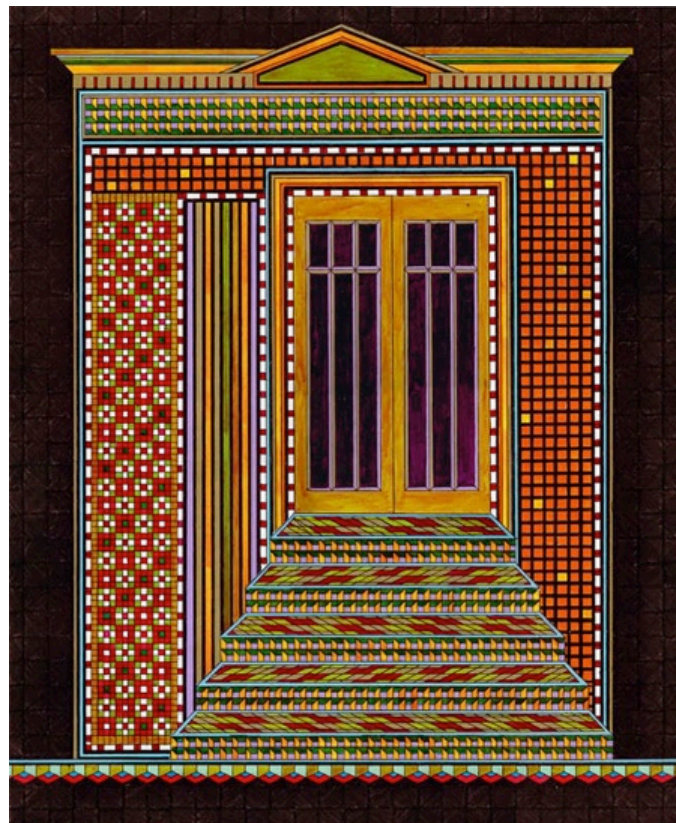
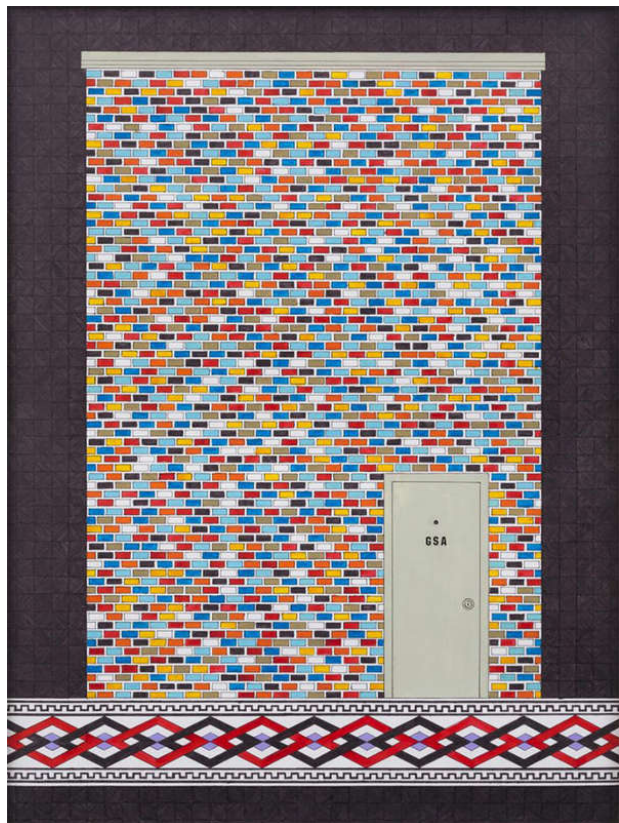
The Standard art inspection

July 20, 2017

Curious what's happening on the Los Angeles art scene now? You should be. For decades, the city has been attracting artists with its remarkable light, warm weather, and wealth of cheap space, and those draws have borne fruit in the form of a thriving art community. Add to that world-class museums (the Broad, Hammer, LACMA, MoCA), forward-thinking curators, galleries showing all kinds of work, and voila, instant art scene! Well, maybe not instant, but you get the idea.

The seven young(ish) LA artists here offer a snapshot of the new wave of work taking shape now. What do these artists have in common? Almost nothing! Is their style quintessentially LA? Not really. And that's the beauty of it. LA's scene has reached a level of richness where no one style, approach, or school-of-thought dominates. What you have instead, is a plethora of artists taking interesting risks, making a diverse array of work across every conceivable medium, and sometimes, even re-imagining mediums altogether. And that, gentle art goer, is the surest sign that something really good is afoot.

EDIE FAKE



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Left: "The Gay Straight Alliance Building", 2011; Right: "Gateway (for Dylan Williams)". Images courtesy of Western Exhibitions, Chicago.



"Somewhere's Over (The Rainbow Room)", 2016. Image courtesy of Western Exhibitions, Chicago.

Edie Fake draws on Chicago Imagism, the Hairy Who, and diverse forms of outsider abstraction to create intricate, enchanting drawings that suggest early video games spliced together with carnival funhouses that the artist conceives as queer spaces. Fake made waves in 2015 as a member of a group known as the USC7, resigning from the school in protest to corporatization measures. He is also a respected graphic novelist, winning awards for his *Gaylord Phoenix* collection, which follows the danger-fraught journeys of its namesake, "a creature willing to sacrifice anything for love and self-knowledge."

The New York Times

I Want My Lesbian Bars Back

By Krista Burton

April 14, 2017



Two drawings from artist Edie Fake's series "Memory Palaces," which re-imagines lost and forgotten queer bars, theaters and clubs in Chicago and gives them elaborate new facades. According to the artist, Club LaRay was a music venue and La Mere Vipere was a gay club that became central to the city's punk scene. Credit Edie Fake

CHICAGO "Where is everyone?"

It was a late Saturday night in August 2010. I had just moved to Chicago, and the second my girlfriend and I unloaded the U-Haul (yes! clichés are fun), I sat down on a box in our new apartment and Googled "lesbian bar Chicago."

Two hours later, we stood outside the first search result, hesitating. Nervous sweat trickled down my sides in the unrelenting humidity that I didn't yet recognize as a defining characteristic of Chicago summers. We were about to meet our new community, a whole sea of queers who had never had any dealings with me or my exes!

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Music thudded from inside the bar. It seemed promising, so we walked in.

No one was there.

Well, there was a bartender, who smiled at us as we froze in embarrassed horror in the doorway. My girlfriend went to order us drinks. I scurried over to stand at a table and watch music videos by Madonna and Rihanna. She came back with our drinks, and I inhaled mine, eyes wide in a silent scream.

Aside from having their basic human and civil rights taken away, nothing makes homos more nervous than an empty dance floor at a gay bar. It goes against the natural order of things, like RuPaul without big hair or Sean Spicer giving a calm and informed news conference.

“Do you think it’s always like this?” I whispered.

“It can’t be,” my girlfriend murmured. “How could they stay in business?”

Most lesbian bars don’t.

It’s been almost seven years since that night in Chicago. I’m even more nervous now.

I love hanging out with my people, but these days, I hardly ever go to lesbian bars. That’s because they don’t exist anymore. There are queer and lesbian dance nights, sure, but in most cities, “queer” bars cater almost exclusively to gay men.

That worries me. We always tell young gaybies that getting out of their rural town and moving to the big city is the answer to finding their queer family. But as queer people become normalized, have these tight-knit families and communities once found in lesbian and gay bars just melted away into a puddle of casual societal acceptance?

I think that’s what is going on. Dedicated queer bars, especially spaces for lesbians, female-identified queers and trans and genderqueer people, are vanishing. It makes me feel out of place, like a really gay goose who just wants to flap her wings to some Robyn and Missy Elliott but finds herself in a pub in Wrigleyville on a Cubs game day. Where are the queer hangouts to set my inner homing device to?

Lesbian bars are dropping faster than drag queens on a slippery stage. [Rubyfruit Jungle in New Orleans](#). [Sisters in Philadelphia](#). [The Lexington in San Francisco](#). All gone, all the last of their kind. And since lesbian bars tend to absorb all the queers who aren’t gay men, and since more people than ever before are identifying as L.G.B.T.Q.I.A.+, don’t you think it’s kind of weird there are so few bars?

This has been happening for a while, but I think we’ve reached a tipping point where few folks blink if you mention you’re gay. That’s because being queer has become so normal now that Ellen DeGeneres can beam nonthreatening gayness into America’s living room every day and no one, not even my card-carrying Tea Partyer relative, says anything except, “Ooh, I love it when Ellen dances.”

We’re mostly accepted. But I feel like I’m losing something small but precious.

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Edie Fake

I want my lesbian bars back. I want clear, dedicated spaces where queers hang out, places that sneering teenagers can drive past with their friends and secretly wonder about. Our bars are closing or gone. How do we find community now? (Beyoncé's pregnant with twins; she's too busy, gays!)

I do think being inclusive is important. I'm glad it's becoming O.K. to be queer, that millions of straight people are so loving and welcoming and open that they want to come to the pride parade, to dance in the few bars we have left and to watch us mock the ill-dressed on national TV.

Gay marriage? Legal. Laverne Cox has an Emmy nomination. Queen Latifah and Janelle Monae are openly queer and, gasp!, they still have careers. "Modern Family" exists. Kristen Stewart and her girlfriend sulk their way across Los Angeles. Kids are coming out as queer and trans earlier and earlier, softening people's hearts, one at a time.

But there is a still need for queers to have a community with spaces of their own. There is value in knowing there's somewhere you can go to be near others who understand what it's like to be a 'mo every single day. It's not all hot, fun June days during Pride Week and drinking vodka shots from a rainbow bottle.

If the price of more acceptance is the loss of a few places to drink and dance, I'll take it. But what we're losing are places that young, shy, queer kids in new cities can go to, knowing they'll be surrounded, maybe for the first time, by people like them.

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The queer artists of fire island

By Byrony Stone

July 14, 2016

We meet five emerging LGBTQ artists as they prepare for a month-long residency on New York's iconic Fire Island.

Each summer on Fire Island, a tiny community off the coast of New York situated just below Long Island, five LGBTQ artists are invited by Chris Bogia and Evan Garza, the co-founders of Fire Island Artist Residency, to spend a month living and working together. For four weeks, their home is Cherry Grove, an idyllic, remote area of the island only accessible by boat, where artist Chris Bogia tells me "it is roughly a city block length walk from the bath to the ocean".

Fire Island is the oldest gay town in the country, Bogia explains when I ask him why he chose the location. For decades, it has been historical site for queer art making, housing writers such as Tennessee Williams and Frank O'Hara and artists including Robert Mapplethorpe and Paul Cadmus.

"We wanted to honour that tradition of culture-making by queers by bringing an even more diverse group of young talented people to contribute to that legacy," Bogia tells me. "A generation of gay artists were lost during the AIDS crisis. Mentors from that generation are fewer than we'd like, and so creating a situation that brings folks from that generation to commune with emerging artists is an important way of attempting to repair some of the cultural collateral damage from AIDS."

In 2011, Chris Bogia and Evan Garza opened submissions for LGBTQ artists from America and across the world to come and live in the house then named Hard Times in the country's first LGBTQ artist residency. Five artists in residence were picked from a list of applicants by a team of staff and art world figures. During the month they lived in Cherry Grove, artists would work in the studio where they would be visited by celebrated lecturers from across the country. Twice a week, they would also attend evening events at Community House — one of only three nationally recognised LGBTQ historic sites — and, on other evenings, artists would be free to explore Fire Island's thriving LGBTQ community, going dancing or to the islands drag shows.

When I ask Bogia about FIAR's most memorable resident, he tells me about Babirye Leilah, who came to Fire Island last summer from Kampala, Uganda where she had recently been outed as gay by a local tabloid. "Her work and her artistic voice had largely been silenced where she was from, and it was a privilege to watch her thrive and make work unencumbered by fear," Chris explains. Babirye subsequently decided to stay in the US and seek asylum. Although attitudes towards the LGBTQ community in the US are generally shifting slowly towards something like acceptance, in June the world witnessed the massacre of 49 people and the wounding of

53 others in gay nightclub Pulse in Orlando by American security guard Omar Mateen. The fear felt by Babirye Leilah rippled through LGBTQ communities across the world. "We were all reminded that LGBTQ people, people of color, women, any "other"... Are all vulnerable populations," Chris says. "FIAR wants to give voices to the emerging visionaries who will create the visual culture that we want to make real so that in the future our voices and our communities just get stronger."

From the 420 artists that applied for residency in the FIAR house this August, Chris Bogia, Evan Garza, art experts and FIAR alumni and staff chose Paolo Arao, Edie Fake, Wilder Alison, Jesse Harrod and Derrick D'Von Woods-Morrow. During their time on Fire Island, the five artists will be visited by lecturers Tom Burr, Angela Dufresne, Jeffrey Gibson and Eileen Myles, and take part in a special collaboration with Visual AIDS featuring Tom Bianci. i-D meets the five artists as they prepare to begin their residency on the iconic Fire Island to talk about work, sex and what it means to identify as queer in 2016.



The Deep End, 2015

Where do you live?

I live in the California High Desert, out around Joshua Tree National Park.

How does sexuality play into your work?

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In my drawings I use ecstatic architecture and vivid geometry to draw spaces for queer (and specifically trans) identities and histories. Each piece evolves from free associations between bodies and architecture, from the physicality of rectal doorways and bloody pools to psychological gestures like vibrating pattern and winding, maze-like walls. I'm always trying to go out on a limb in envisioning what Queer Space can look like, so the finished drawings become these Winchester Mansion-style building-riddles about identity and sexuality.

What does it mean to identify as LGBTQ in 2016?

I don't think there's any singularity to what it means. A lot of work has been done for trans and queer civil rights and safety, and a whole lot of work still needs to be done in a multitude of directions: the decriminalization of trans bodies, environmental justice, racial justice, healthcare and housing access — the struggles all continue.



Surface Magazine Editor-in-Chief **Spencer Bailey's** Favorite Works from *NADA New York 2016*

By Artspace Editors

May 4, 2016

Before taking the helm as editor-in-chief of the highly regarded contemporary design magazine *Surface*—and simultaneously stepping in as a trustee of the **Noguchi Museum** in Queens — the New York-based journalist **Spencer Bailey** worked in various capacities at publications like **The Daily Beast**, *Vanity Fair*, and *Esquire* while also contributing to *The New York Times Magazine* and *Bloomberg Businessweek*. It's this wide-ranging practical education that's granted Bailey an unusually sophisticate and diverse set of touchstones when it comes to evaluating contemporary art. Here, Bailey lends his practiced eye to a few of the offerings at this year's edition of [NADA New York](#), on view May 5-8 in **Basketball City**.

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SRO, 2014

“This totally reminds me
Memphis Group. I’m a fan
Nathalie Du Pasquier’s
and I can’t help but think
looking at this.”



of the graphic work of the
of artist and designer
paintings and drawings,
of Du Pasquier when

The Creators Project

Intricate Architectural Drawings Are Allegories for Queer Bodies and Sex

By Gabrielle Buney

April 2, 2016



Citadel, 2016. All images courtesy the artist and Marlborough Chelsea

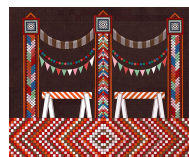
[Edie Fake](#)'s gouache and ink drawings deal with themes of queer identity through an unusual lens: architecture. In intricate, incredibly detailed geometric figurations, Fake renders structures that are analogies for the body and sexuality. "I think that geometric patterns have subtle stories they tell the viewer through the arrangement of shapes," he tells The Creators Project. "A form [may] engulf another, pass through it, rub up against it, rest on top of it — maybe that all comes back to telling a story about how bodies interact with other bodies?"

The project began when Fake, who's currently based in LA, was living in Chicago. In researching the city's history, he found that many of its queer and feminist spaces had closed down. "I could feel a rich continuum of gay activity in my bones, but I couldn't see any solid evidence of the past around me — only tiny hints of it would come to the surface," he writes. "So I started drawing re-imagined spaces as a way to reinvigorate those sites and as a way to think about potential and memory in the world we're building right now."

The project evolved from Fake imagining spaces that were once real to drawing sites that would be impossible to build, constructions that serve as allegories for the body. "They're built around complicated spaces in sexual and gender identities, and especially spaces I navigate within trans identity," he writes.

Switches, a stark design that evokes M.C. Escher-esque impossibilities, is one such work. "I wanted to draw a place that had no inherent top or bottom as a way to evoke sexual and gender flexibility and I wanted that idea to run concurrently through the drawing with ideas about circuitry and circulation, the electricity of the body, mirrors and mirroring and outer space," says Fake.

READER



More than 100 years ago, a *Life* magazine cartoon satirizing New York City real estate ads didn't mock overpriced apartment leases. Instead, artist A.B. Walker's Manhattan skyscraper was roofless and without exterior walls and soared into the stratosphere amid clouds and Wright Flyer-style airplanes. It proposed a unique open-air "country house" experience on every floor, each fitted with grandiose cottages, trees, and fountains.

Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas addressed the 1909 cartoon's implicit narrative in *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan* (1978). Walker's work described "the ideal performance of a skyscraper," Koolhaas wrote. "The building becomes a stack of individual privacies" where "each . . . artificial level . . . is treated as if the others did not exist."

"Koolhaas describes a blueprint as a kind of map of a utopian space/design," says Brian Cremins, programming coordinator for the Chicago Alternative Comics Expo (CAKE). "When I read this in his book, I thought of a page of comics."

In some comics, Cremins sees a fixation on the past and an authorial pursuit he calls "utopian": "an attempt to bring narrative logic, order, and sense to what otherwise might be senseless or forgotten altogether." At the Chicago Architecture Biennial, he'll moderate a panel called "Imaginary Worlds" about the long interdisciplinary history between comics and architecture with architects Ania Jaworska and Sam Jacob and comics creators Edie Fake and Keiler Roberts.

After unearthing a history of taverns, clubs, and more that were once home to Chicago's LGBT community, Fake set out to visually re-create those spaces in *Memory Palaces*, an elaborate, almost LP-size art book of psychedelic-quilllike graphic design.

"I think of what I get to do as more like making a perfume than designing an actual building," Fake says of his florid facades. "I get to take the different auras of various architectural details and draw something together based on how space makes me feel."

If *Memory Palaces* is a study of exteriors, Keiler Roberts's *Miseryland* concentrates on interiors: it compiles seven volumes of her warm and funny autobiographical comic *Powdered Milk*. Shaped in her wire-thin linework the harshest pen strokes are reserved for filling out the Evanston artist's ponytail *Miseryland* mostly shows entertaining conversations between Roberts and her precocious toddler within Roberts's carefully rendered living space. Their chats yield all the elastic sentence permutations you'd expect from a child who is learning language.

"Of all the formal elements, I think the most about my use of space, composition, dialogue, and gesture," Roberts says. "I use all of these toward the goal of creating a sense of life, both as I experience it, and how I want it to be. I feel cozy when I look at the comics of myself inside my home."

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THE SEEN

The Hairy Who: Reframing Rebellion

By Kate Pollasch

September 17, 2015

My thoughts begin in the bathroom. Not in the bathrooms that house stalls with their juvenile jokes, love notes, and graffiti scrawled on their walls, but in Roger Brown's second floor bathroom, now preserved as a house museum, at the Roger Brown Study Collection. Walk up the winding stairs to this Chicago space, and a curator may have you open the medicine cabinet door, where you will reveal shelves cohesively covered with whimsical doodles, a displaced tooth, a bottle of wood glue, and other accessories. It is within this micro-space of carefully curated corners that I remember locating the macro-ethos of The Hairy Who and the Chicago Imagists (collectively referred to as the Imagists) as a whole. For this group, every crevice of life, every daily moment and interaction, was an opportunity for subversion, artistic intervention, and nonconformity.

Recently, there has been a pronounced resurgence of interest into Imagist history. Beyond crediting this focus to mere hindsight, or considering it as evidence of revisionist work, there is something propelling their legacy into the twenty-first century.

What is it about the Imagists' rebellious example that is so relevant today?

The Imagists' story starts roughly in the 1960s and 1970s where a constellation of Chicago-based artists, including Roger Brown, Philip Hanson, Gladys Nilsson, Jim Nutt, Christina Ramberg, Suellen Rocca, Barbara Rossi, and Karl Wirsum, among others, worked and exhibited together in a collaborative, collegial, atmosphere. In the early 1960s, the art scene in Chicago offered little opportunity for young artists, and many of the Imagists' politically brassy, "low-brow," comedic, and sexually charged work did not align with the New York commercial art atmosphere. In decidedly not waiting for New York to come calling, and resisting the search for approval from an even more distant art world overseas, the Imagists instead produced their own alternative group exhibitions. Their openings consisted of giving out comic-book style decals and catalogues, coating walls with brightly patterned mismatched wallpaper, or incorporating found objects into the installations. The Imagists' exhibitions were, and still are, the antithesis of a pervasive "white cube" style. Their work was polarizing; garnering both admiration and harsh critique. Brown himself even published scathing reviews of the very critics who admonished their self-created scene.

From this early point onward, each artists' career followed a trajectory all its own though generally, the Imagists continued to will a place for themselves in an often oppositional atmosphere well into the later part of the following decade.

The return to a more collective model of working was not necessarily new then or now, and is rather expected at historic moments such as the turn of a century, or major shift in industry we need only look to the Romantics, Dadaism, or the resurgence of Arts and Craft. But in the twenty-first century, the form has been co-opted by both mainstream commercial industry and non-profit or alternative art communities, allowing artists to operate

in both spheres, free from old-guard rigid ideas of either “selling out,” or pledging allegiance to the “alterative.” Artists are now faced with both.

In the wake of an oversaturated art market, with its limited funding and the ever-churning art school industry, international contemporary artists are building their own opportunities outside of the mainstream art market, very similarly to the Imagists’ midcentury model. In Chicago, this self-made spirit is still evident in the structure of apartment galleries, a concerted emphasis on the interdisciplinary, and pop-up spaces. This, paired with an increase in contemporary artists who use the Imagists as a source for their work, raises questions on how and why the group’s original concepts of rebellion are being interpreted.

In the 1970s and 80s, Roger Brown’s paintings unhinged the walls of high-rise buildings and cut open the roofs of structures throughout the city, to illuminate figures engaged in normally unseen erotic activity. Before the International Mr. Leather competition was a well promoted Chicago event, Brown rendered the predominantly unknown and underground leather Gold Coast Bar on his canvas, elucidating a fantasy where sex and desire slipped into every room, behind every bush and tree, and on every level of Chicago’s architecture. But even with the Imagists’ subversive agency at the time, much of Brown’s erotic work was held back by his commercial gallery, and minimally addressed in art history.

However, now when the erotic is familiar, even expected in the white cube, Brown’s approach speaks more to individual intentionality than it does to pushing the limits of titillation. Chicago-based artist **Edie Fake** continues this trajectory – the graphic linear quality of his paintings, and the kaleidoscopic electric palette references to the group’s formal aesthetic, echoes the conceptual concerns of the Imagists’ work. Whereas Brown cut into Chicago’s landscape to visualize a dream of group sex and erotic space-making for the predominately oppressed and invisible gay community he identified with, Fake builds up traces and fantasies of buildings that speak to notions of queer and trans history, utopia, loss, and identity. Channeling the ethos of Brown and using the Imagists’ dissident approach, Fake’s work lives in less of a binary art industry than his predecessors. Fake’s generation is one that can be featured in a commercial gallery – Fake’s recent solo exhibition *Grey Area* at Western Exhibitions – while at the same time it can receive the Ignatz Award for Outstanding Graphic Novel, Gaylord Phoenix.

In an increasingly institutionalized scene, there are still moments within the commercial and non-profit structures built around contemporary art that allow for the same collaboration the Imagists sought out nearly sixty years ago.

While the likes of Gladys Nilsson, Karl Wirsum, or Art Green celebrated the strange and uncanny, making exquisite corpse drawings together and believing in the spiritual essence of a unique flea market object, high-market artists such as Jeff Koons’ practice presents a flip of this culture, reveling instead in the high gloss manufactured star power of consumer capitalism. Locally, the non-conformist legacy of the Imagists reverberates in smaller organizations, such as Threewalls’ publication *PHONEBOOK*, and Temporary Services, whose website states, “The distinction between art practice and other creative human endeavors is irrelevant to us.” But this influence is also on a larger scale, creeping into established institutions and galleries, such as Corbett vs. Dempsey, whose program champions Imagist art history. Existing as a model of Imagist ideology itself, the commercial gallery fosters musicians, self-taught artists, international film screenings, and a record shop. Concurrently, *The Freedom Principle: Experiments in Art and Music 1965 to Now*, on view at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, offers an uncanny harmony to Karl Wirsum’s fusion of jazz, blues, and painting

on an expanded curatorial scale. It was in fact Wirsum's iconic portrait of musician Screamin' Jay Hawkins, which visualized his raw theatrical presence so perfectly, that was used on Hawkins' 1970 album cover. This crossover of art into ephemera, home collections, and collaborative practices was recently recognized in New York at Matthew Marks, both through an exhibition and publication that features the group's collected publications, available this month.

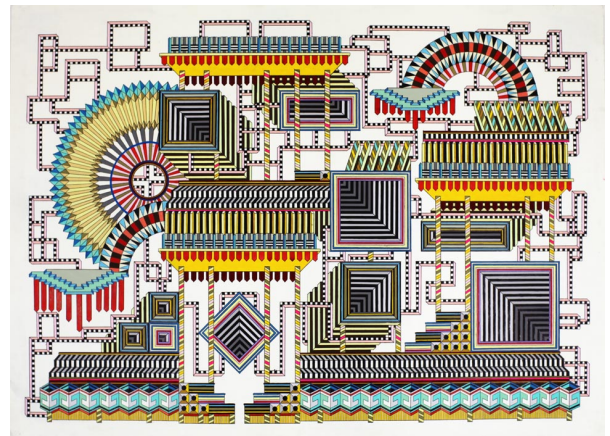
In the necessary plurality of today's art world—between titles of artist, curator, designer, and collector—the current of the Imagists' counterculture is more relevant now than ever. In willing an individualized ethos into existence amid the unique economic structure of the art world today, the Imagist-style of rebellion offers an example of the idiosyncratic, hybridized system that led to the grounds for their work then, and perhaps a generation to come.

June 19 to July 18, 2015

EDIE FAKE

Opening reception
Friday, June 19 | 5 to 8pm

For images and more information,
please contact Scott Speh
(312) 480-8390 scott@westernexhibitions.com



Western Exhibition is thrilled to present ten elaborate and intense gouache-and-ink drawings in Edie Fake's first solo show since moving to Los Angeles in 2014. The show opens during Chicago's PRIDE weekend on Friday, June 19, with a free public reception from 5 to 8pm. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 11am to 6pm.

Edie Fake's work grapples with the manifestation and meaning of queer space. His drawings use architectural elements as visual metaphors for the ways in which definition and validation elude trans* identities. These structures come together to map what Fake considers to be a liminal landscape of self-definition. The imagery depicted (stages, parade floats, art deco buildings) combines and conflates parts of Fake's family history with aspects of queer history, reaching towards a personal, psychic geography of transpeople in society. He states: "It's a lot of serious stuff, but also not without an ecstatic aspect, even to its more sinister or confounding moments."

"Just A Stage" dramatically pairs its title, the dismissal of agency and legitimacy, with an elaborate, shape-shifting theater—a space drawn around temporal, transitional and transitory states of being. Similarly, the drawings "Sugar In The Tank" and "The Friends Of Dorothy" turn obscure queer euphemisms into unruly parade floats which contort and confuse visual and linguistic perspectives. "The Blood Bank" is a site of family conflict and sadness that simultaneously references the civic panic that shuttered bath houses at the dawn of

the AIDS crisis. “Gender Changer”, a drawing of an imposing black-and-gold building, is constructed around two shafts of windows in multicolored window frames. The two columns of windows, supported by an blocky, unmovable edifice tease out the limitations of a male-female binary. Similarly, “The Fitting Room” depicts a structure of mirrors that folds back into itself, rooted in the intangibility of identity.

Fake’s drawings from 2010 to 2013, recently collected in *Memory Palaces*, a monograph by Secret Acres, depicted building facades that reimagined queer and feminist spaces from Chicago’s past. On *Bad At Sports* in January 2013, curator Danny Orendorff wrote about this body of work: “...the collection of building facades Fake depicts described as a neighborhood can only be psychically located between utopian fantasy and interpretive research. Doing so foregrounds how the imagination and it’s shadow, desire, propels individual or collective searches for heritage, lineage, and belonging...Comprehension of these disappeared, criminalized spaces and services entails not simply an intellectual recognition, but something much more sensorial and perhaps even spiritual when translated through the prismatic hallucinations offered by Fake.”

Edie Fake’s drawings, comics books and publications have been written about it in *artforum*, *The Chicago Reader*, *The Comics Journal*, *Art 21*, *The Guardian*, *Hyperallergic* and the *Los Angeles Review of Books*. He was one of the first recipients of *Printed Matter’s* Awards for Artists and his collection of comics, *Gaylord Phoenix*, won the 2011 *Ignatz Award for Outstanding Graphic Novel*. His work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, including group shows at *MASS Gallery* in Austin, *John Connelly Presents* in NYC, the *Nikolaj* museum in Copenhagen, *LACE* in Los Angeles, and *threewalls* in Chicago. Edie Fake was born in Chicagoland in 1980 and received a BFA from the *Rhode Island School of Design* in 2002. He currently lives and works in Los Angeles.



Space: Edie Fake at Western Exhibitions

By B. David Zarley

July 15, 2015

The blood is voltaic, salt and copper and life and death, flowing fast and high around the fever dream haemalducks of [Edie Fake's](#) *The Blood Bank*, imbued with a passionate glow which seems to radiate in juxtaposition with the cold, flat surfaces—marble? tile? stone?—which constitute its flowing surface, a room of stately and imposingly beautiful columns and arches, its facade shot through with sharp geometry, like a thousand black shark's teeth on pallid sand, the columns topped with ornate weeping bull's eyes; a dazzling array of colors—rococo patterns formed from tiles the color of salmon and toothpaste, bands of claret and powder blue, jade and bubblegum, lace of electric orange-red—is lost to the eye by the great flowing blood's final destination, a pool fit for a Bathory, its deep center a rich bordeaux, fed by the blood flowing through the veins around the room's ceiling, flowing *hot*—like lava around the edge of a caldera—hot in color and consequence, biologically and ethically, burning in memory with fear, anger, paranoia, colored the red of passion and hazard both, blood from *them*, blood begetting panic, the blood of the AIDS crisis, the dread invisible specter preying on the edges, closing the bath houses and haunting the blood banks, a nightmare, blood a commodity and curse, the mark of Cain and the gift of vigor, forever pouring into Fake's pool, which must be deep, deeper than the sea, to never jump its cold, slick sides, leaving not so much as a patina as its waves lap and stop with a clinical precision, and one stares into the sanguineous abyss, is presented—with disconcerting pulchritude—the horrors of a not-so-distant past, a spiritual kind of hemorrhagic shock. *B. David Zarley, Chicago Contributor*

Fake's intricate architectural forms in *Grey Area*, a show of ink and gouache at [Western Exhibitions](#), inspire anxiety and awe in their complexity, their ruthlessness, their ability to hypnotize and capture via reticular aesthetic and intricate content. The shattered and prismatic spaces Fake creates are emblematic and symptomatic of the amorphous spaces in which those who refuse to identify by the usual societal poles—male/female, gay/straight—must inhabit, places lacking in definition and foundation, strung like spider's fly wires across the vast and tortuous gaps which tear holes in society like the transient, nameless, non-conforming victim of a violent hate crime, and are often ignored by the powers-that-be just the same.

In taking the structure—with its inherent connotations of safety and stability, progress, the past, human triumph over nature—and twisting it into spaces which reflect none of those things, Fake makes manifest the difficulties faced in finding and defining queer spa

Few things are as unsettling or liberating as the sudden lack of strictures, and Fake's forms—floating about nightmarishly, bound together by the dot trail of phantom *Family Circus* children, ignoring—no, spitting on!, really—architectural and physical rules of place—have a way of inspiring a certain kind of healthy dread upon which one lingers, savors, like the final dregs of a powerful spirit, the last dusty lines of a drug, the final shredding burn of a physical exertion, moments of pain and anguish and beauty which we relish as they beget some kind of greater understanding, some kind of better us; that his forms dazzle and lure and hypnotize via color schemes intricate and screaming both—a grand cuttlefish on paper—allows the social

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message, one quite difficult to comprehend and relate to, not to mention express, the perfect vehicle for entry.

The Fitting Room, a melange of mirrors, splinters reflections and identity into a million different directions, taking the politically charged notion of fashion, particularly as it pertains to perceived sexual orientations and gender norms, and adding in not only the confusion of the funhouse Hall of Mirrors but also the terror; think the climactic pulp story in which the protagonist must chase both the villain and their ghosts, a silent army as illusory as the societal norms Fake's dread structures reflect. *Just a Stage*, ringed by glorious rainbows and tubes as if in possession of a mighty, million-throated pipe organ, sloughs off its dismissive title—a stage, a phase, a *confusion*, something to be pushed through, survived, grown out of, life and identity little more than chitinous cicada shells—with an explosive jonquil backdrop, impossible to deny or ignore.

Fake's facades seem tortured in their unrelenting pushing against boundaries and limitations, splaying themselves into impossible directions, becoming bisected by panes of glass, their exertions glittering on their faces and floors. Only *Gender Changer*, with its comparatively severe adherence to mimesis, seems something less of fantasy than reality, and its imposing form is truly the most chilling in the exhibition. Held high and tight by twin columns, constrained yet powerful, the stately manse of *Gender Changer*—which should evoke strength, familiarity, comfort—seems instead oppressive, a Brahminic structure of a fearful past, and one yearns, with exquisite pain, for Fake to gut the great house, splay it open, allow its colors to run, run like blood...

ARTFORUM.com

Critic's Pick

By Caroline Picard

July 1, 2015

Having recently relocated to Southern California, Edie Fake returns to Chicago with “Grey Area,” a solo exhibition of ten ink and gouache drawings on paper. Each work describes a different geometrical space: *The Blood Bank*, 2015, features an ornate green-and-gold-tiled, roofless bathhouse. Behind three arched columns, one glimpses the inside of this building, where there is a rich red pool. As the warmest mass of color, the pool vibrates in powerful juxtaposition to the drawing’s otherwise cool, angular lines. As with many of Fake’s compositions, the space is foreshortened, and the building presents itself in the manner of a stage model, tilted down, creating a false illusion of depth. This compressed spatial experience is elaborated in *The Fitting Room*, 2015, a labyrinth of vertical parallelograms and hexagons that read at once as a diagram of reflecting mirrors and as a lush geometric pattern. The constant refraction of each non-reflective silver surface induces a sickening but beautiful claustrophobia.

Though still resonant with his series of “Memory Palaces,” 2012–13 highly ornate drawings of building facades from historical or imaginary queer and feminist spaces Fake takes greater risks inscribing dimensional space in this latest body of work. The resulting compositions are less literal in most cases and stray farther into abstraction. His pleasure in pattern remains consistent, congealing in the ecstatic parade-float composition of *Sugar in the Tank*, 2015, which reappropriates homophobic slang, and *Sue*, 2015, an entirely abstract work. By producing these illusory and structural interventions in the two-dimensional picture plane, Fake asserts the need for a radical, transformative space.

17 Must-See LGBTQ Exhibitions This Summer

By Kathleen Massara

June 25, 2015

The painter John Constable supposedly wrote that summer is "the time of year when the devil comes and spews art over London."

Two centuries later, summer again brings art to the masses. For the priggish, June is an especially bad time, since it is Pride Month in New York and in many other cities worldwide, in homage to the Stonewall Rebellion, which took place on June 28, 1969.

It's tough to create a list of contemporary queer artist shows, for one, because the list is so long, and two, competition is so fierce. But it's handy to have in case you are asked about edifying activities at a party or during a parade this month, or if you get stuck debating the Supreme Court ruling on marriage equality.

So in celebration of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and/or Queer artists, here's a list of don't-miss summer exhibitions in New York and beyond.

...

7. WHO: Edie Fake

WHAT: Edie Fake is trying to create a queer Utopia, so watch out. The USC7 dropout is the author of the comic collection *Gaylord Phoenix* and the series *Memory Palaces*, which explores sites of queer and feminist collective memory in Chicago. His latest exhibition, "Grey Area," features intricate ink and gouache works, with insider titles such as *Sugar in the Tank* and *Friends of Dorothy*.

WHEN: June 19 July 18, 2015

WHERE: Western Exhibitions, Chicago

See more at: <https://news.artnet.com/people/lgbt-exhibitions-this-summer-306117>

USC7 Dropout and Transgender Artist Edie Fake's Mesmerizing Drawings Explore Queer Geometries

By Brian Boucher

June 8, 2015

An artist who dropped out of a top MFA program in protest is opening a ravishing solo show of maniacally detailed drawings this month in Chicago.

Edie Fake, a transgender artist who left the University of Southern California's Roski School of Art along with all six of her classmates in protest last month (see *The USC Roski Fiasco Points to the Corrosion of Art Education Nationwide*), creates visually riveting drawings, some depicting architecture, some pure abstractions.

A new show, "Grey Area," takes place at Chicago's Western Exhibitions (June 19 July 18), during LGBT Pride Month. It's hard to read the title as dealing with anything but a realm free of gender binaries.

Just as the transgender movement is reaching a new level of visibility with Caitlyn Jenner's Vanity Fair cover (see *Annie Leibovitz Shoots First Portraits of Caitlyn Jenner*), ironically, Fake's work often deals with euphemism and coded language. Titles like *Sugar in the Tank* and *The Friends of Dorothy*, two drawings in the upcoming show, refer to old slang terms for homosexuals.

Sugar in the Tank turns such derisive slang into a joyous geometric visual riot, with interlocking shapes in bright hues. While Fake's work has often been compared to Islamic tilework and quilt patterns, it also recalls the obsessive character of much Outsider art, perhaps an even more apt considering that the LGBTQ population is so often marginalized.

Gender Changer uses a more staid palette to depict a hulking brick building whose symmetry is inspired by male and female duality. In focusing on a façade, it recalls Fake's 2013 solo "Memory Palaces," at Chicago's Thomas Robertello Gallery, in which he showed drawings depicting the façades of historical Chicago gay bars. Even when they're abstract, the new drawings' dense patterning evokes colonnades, domes and arches.

Fake, born in 1980 just outside of Chicago, got a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2002, and since then been busy creating zines like the widely beloved *Gaylord Phoenix*. In a video interview, Fake described an image of the main character in that serial zine stabbing his leg, saying it echoed his own ritual of injecting testosterone into his thigh. He also revved up a vegetable oil-fueled bus for "The FINGERS Tour," a five-week queer art and performance expedition he co-organized with L.A. artist/musician Lee Relvas in 2009.

Then, a year ago, Fake left Chicago for California. "I'm going to USC for straight-up art," he told the *Los Angeles Review of Books*. That chapter in Fake's life ended last month after a year of

what the former students call a "bait and switch," in which the school retracted various promises (see Entire 2016 MFA Class Drops Out of USC's Roski School of Art and Design).

The USC7, as they've been dubbed, say they plan to stay in the Los Angeles area and undertake projects collectively. If Fake's ecstatically colorful and emotionally rich drawings are any indication, we're looking forward to more shows by these brave souls.

NEWCITY

"Portrait of a Gallery: Trunk Show."

By Kerry Cardoza

May 30, 2015

On a recent sunny Sunday afternoon, a few dozen people gathered near the boathouse in Humboldt Park for an opening of new work by Lilli Carré. The work was a bumper sticker reading "I'm for clarity" spelled out in Rebus, pictograms that spell words phonetically, for the mobile gallery Trunk Show. The puzzles-and-games theme of Carré's project extended to the snacks on hand, "signifier" pasta salad, and the activities, lawn games.

Trunk Show, run by Jesse Malmed and Raven Falquez Munsell, unveils a new sticker each month on the couple's well-worn 1999 Ford Taurus. They started in 2013, motivated by interests in alternative exhibition spaces and in offering the works as a subscription series. The stickers sell a la carte for five dollars, or collectors can subscribe and receive the whole season's work.

Subscriptions help make the project self-sustaining and appeal to patrons collecting the art as a multiple. This season each sticker has a print run of 100. Munsell says the production model was not meant to create exclusivity. "It wasn't about a sense of false scarcity," she says, but about keeping the work affordable.

Collectors approach the project in varied ways. Jason Lazarus, who designed January's "Record the Police" sticker, layers each new piece on top of the previous one on his car. Most people, Munsell says, are more precious with them. Some collectors have asked for a plastic sleeve, to slide the stickers in and still preserve them as objects.

Image from Lilli Carré for Trunk Show opening/Photo: Trunk Show

Artists have been playing with bumper stickers as a medium since the late 1980s. Marlene McCarty, inspired by graphic-design-oriented artists like Jenny Holzer and Barbara Kruger, produced stickers with time-period appropriate messages like "HONK If Your Body's Not Yours." Bumper stickers are a concise way of communicating to the world; it's easy to see their attraction for artists. As drivers are forced to read them and respond, artists can use them as functional props to convey meaning, or to comment on their mass appeal.

June's artist Edie Fake says he likes the low-stress format. "People can collect them like a completist and like them and treasure them," he says. "People can also treasure them by using them." Fake's sticker unveiling will be concurrent with his solo show opening June 19 at Western Exhibitions. His work involves things hidden in patterns and the power of combined forces; the stickers will spell out a message when placed together.

Many artists consider the secondary audience, people on the road, when coming up with ideas. Carré thought about the bold statements drivers often make with bumper stickers. "You really have this strange captive audience," she says of people stopped in traffic. "It was an interesting challenge to try to think of something that could be experienced in this brief interval and still ask to be stared at."

The curatorial model also allows collectors to actively respond to each show. “If people really do put them on their cars it’s like the shows are expanding,” Munsell says. “Ideally they can be anywhere across the country.”
(Kerry Cardoza)

ARTFORUM.com

Friendship and Freedom

by Katie Anania

February 3, 2015

History is always partial, fragmentary. Remnants and details rise to the surface, but the rest has to be reconstituted by observers in the present—doubly so for queer history, which often has other layers of obfuscation to deal with. Some of the components of “Friendship and Freedom” read like a historical exhibit awaiting queer rebirth. Leah DeVun’s vitrine of punk-rock friendship books culled from her personal archive, for instance, is installed beneath three tape recorders playing gravelly, decaying mixtapes. DeVun’s accompanying photos of the fey and fanciful little books serve to “queer” an already subaltern history: Punk is raucous and loud; the objects in the gallery point to a community of lonely dreamers.

Edie Fake’s ink drawings of long-closed Chicago gay bars (from a larger body of work that investigates the city’s historic gay publications and organizations as well) another way to create queer relationships with history. Fake began these pieces with only the names and addresses of the bars, advertised covertly in gay magazines. The drawings, based on the absence of these spaces, are unapologetically fantastic: Each building is composed of ornamental inked patterns shattered across the page like disco quilts. For Fake, the ghosts of these spaces generate strange opportunities for friendship—an opportunity echoed in Nightmare City’s video *DAISIES*, 2011, projected on a corner wall. The work parodies Věra Chytilová’s 1966 film of the same name, in which two young women in bathing suits run amok, grotesquely eating everything in their path. In Nightmare City’s rendition, the characters sit on a beach towel wearing cheap bikinis, true to contemporary fantasies of bad-girl sisterhood. Films, cities, strangers—in this show, everything becomes a friend through visions reborn.

HAMMER

Memory Palaces, Lil' Buddies, LA Art Book Fair Fundraising Edition
by Darin Klein
January 14, 2015

DK: How long have you been self-publishing?

Edie Fake: I grew up around self-publishing, and got involved with making zines as a teenager. The series I'm best known for, the *Gaylord Phoenix* minicomics, started in 2002.

DK: How many different titles have you published?

EF: I've self-published over 20 zines and comics and I've authored two titles put out by the publisher Secret Acres.

DK: What are you bringing to the fair this year?

EF: This is the first time I'll have the new *Memory Palaces* publication at LA Art Book Fair. *Memory Palaces* is a full-color oversize zine that collects my most recent drawings - these elaborate building facades that re-imagine queer and feminist spaces. I'll also be bringing my latest self-published photo zine, *Lil' Buddies*, and a bunch of other books and things.

DK: For readers who don't know, what is your relationship to the LA and NY Art Book Fairs and Printed Matter in general?

EF: I've been working with Printed Matter for over a decade now - they were one of the first places to sell the Gaylord comics and their support through the years has been incredible. I've been tabling at the NY Art Book Fair since the very first one, and I'm so excited to be part of the Los Angeles incarnation. I just moved back to Los Angeles a few months ago, which makes the LA Art Book Fair double-dreamy now. This year I was asked to do one of the "ticket" editions for the fair, and it was a chance to create an edition larger than anything I could print on my own. My artwork is concerned with how an ecstatic architecture can help to embody rad concepts. With this edition, I wanted to put that to work at what is most culturally pressing: visibility, empowerment and justice for black people worldwide.

DK: Can fans expect to see further adventures of *Gaylord Phoenix*?

EF: I've been uncertain for years as to whether *Gaylord Phoenix* would continue or not and I just recently decided that it will keep going. I'm still sketching it out, but I hope to have a new comic ready by the end of this summer. There's going to be lots of weird magic and I think the drawing style might be change quite a bit.

DK: Who and/or what are you looking forward to seeing at the fair this year?

EF: I'm a book worm, so browsing the fair is always my favorite part. There's always too much stuff to get through, and I love that - seeing all the activity in every direction. I'm partial to queer zines, and I think the Book Fair helps both to build the future of queer zines and to uncover their past. The event itself turns up so many new artists and networks - it's really inspiring energy. The programming this year looks awesome, too. I'm amped about Frances Stark, the Black Radical Imagination Mixtape, *Bidoun's* reading event and the Sex Archive Show N' Tell. Also- your Box of Books event with the Bookmobile Project is going to be RAD

DK: Do you participate in other book fairs or zine fests? If so, which ones?

EF: I do - I try to go to four to ten book fairs every year. Because I make a lot of comics I often find myself at comics festivals - I really like Comics Arts Brooklyn (CAB) and the Toronto Comics Arts Fest (TCAF) and folks in LA just started Comics Arts Los Angeles (CALA). Last year was the first Linework festival in Portland and it was really great. And I'm certainly partial to the Chicago Alternative Comics Expo (CAKE) which I was involved with organizing for a few years.

DK: You moved to LA from Chicago to attend USC - how are you enjoying LA and school?

EF: School has been great. I'm used to balancing my creative practice with a bunch of other obligations, but now I can give it my full attention, which is awesome. I'm just trying to make the best use of the time.



Fake Places: The Work of Edie Fake

By Joshua Michael Demaree

July 17, 2014

AN OBSERVER glancing quickly around the Bridgeport coffee shop on Chicago's South Side where we meet to talk could easily overlook comics artist Edie Fake. He is small in frame, with dark hair and a light complexion, with a perpetual fly-on-the-wall air; more interested in why anyone would want to be the center of attention than in commanding the position himself. As he talks, he doodles or folds a piece of paper, becoming at times very excited and looking up with wide eyes in moments of deep engagement: this is when the real Fake comes out.

"One of the most important things about what I've been doing is sharing it in person with people," Fake muses. "I love book fairs and getting to digest other people's ideas. I think that's really why I make stuff. It's a call-and-response."

Fake's initial reserve belies an immense sociability, grounded in kindness and openness. It's the reason he's becoming a powerhouse in the American alternative comics scene — an organizer for (and founder of) the Chicago Alternative Comics Expo (CAKE) and employee of the city's bastion of the underground press, Quimby's Bookstore. He's also a flourishing celebrity within queer art circles, with a recent interview with *Rad Queers*, a video series highlighting the work of queer artists and organizations. "It's super exciting!" he says of his growing popularity. "I meet people and they say, 'Oh! *You're* Edie!' They already know my work and I'm like, 'How did that happen!?' It's a huge compliment."

His unassuming demeanor is more than a mannerism. It's integral to Fake's genius: his work appears cute and fun and simplistic on the surface, but quickly reveals a biting intelligence. In his long-running series, *Gaylord Phoenix* (anthologized by Secret Acres in 2010), he deftly explores deeply personal questions of identity without sacrificing his waggish playfulness. Including work from Fake's earliest years, it traces the evolution of Fake's work over time. "The drawings in the beginning are really scrappy and just piles of stuff I was interested in," he remembers. "Weird diagrams and games and little figures." The later work reveals a neater, more intentionally designed visual approach paired with metaphoric and nuanced storylines.

The series follows the journey of an eponymous humanoid hero, "the Gaylord Phoenix," as the nonbinary protagonist traverses epic landscapes and interacts with a variety of fantastical creatures, both helpful and malevolent, in search of personal fulfillment. For most of the series, the Gaylord is unable to save anyone, recoiling from an unnamed, deep emotional trauma. Ancient Greek heroes were men and gods willing to sacrifice themselves to save others through feats of strength or endurance: the Gaylord is on a similarly epic quest to resist the influences of others, to forge an identity free of expectation. In the end, the Gaylord is capable of self-sacrifice in order to be reborn into the genderless form always desired, and not on anyone else's terms.

“Very early on, after the first three issues, I mentioned to someone that I saw it as a weird kind of queer mythology,” Fake remembers. “That’s how I saw it.”

It is epic: the story follows a meandering, loose narrative that, again like the mythologies of ancient Greece and Rome, connects to real and personal experiences, all told to help a reader make sense of the world. Fake turns the Gaylord’s quest into a mythopoeic origin story for queerness itself, providing fantastical answers to the difficult questions of sexual and gender identity, questions that rarely have tidy answers.

The book’s layout is not reliant on the common comics panel-and-gutter layout, which comes in his case from his DIY roots. “[My first zines] were really immediate, just ballpoint pen on copy paper. I had read a bunch of comics, but I didn’t necessarily understand why panels were the go-to form. I was also coming from a film and animation background,” Fake adds, referring to his undergraduate work in video at the Rhode Island School of Design. Indeed, each page appears more as a series of storyboarding cards or illustrations rather than the linear narrative of more traditional sequential art. Pushing the boundaries of what the general reader might think of as comics, Fake uses this style in much of his work, including his two ongoing series *Sweetmeats* and *Lil’ Buddies*.

“I did this series before called *Foie Gras* which tries to build a narrative based on illustrations from *The Joy of Cooking*. It was a formal experiment,” Fake recounts. “*Sweetmeats* are all just kind of tiny narratives. I was reprinting stories I had put into anthologies.” *Lil’ Buddies* is part illustration collection and part documentation of our visual culture. In the series, Fake collects and redraws anthropomorphized objects from advertising signs (think of the smiling, dancing tooth on your dentist’s billboard) and runs an accompanying Tumblr.

His most recent published work, *Memory Palaces*, is a collection of paintings first exhibited in the Thomas Robertello Gallery in Chicago in January of 2013, put out by Secret Acres in April. No normal exhibition catalog, the book of intricately drawn and colored ornate facades lacks any introduction or accompanying commentary. It feels more like a zine — including a stapled saddle stitch binding — and each page displays one painting after the next. Indeed, *Palaces* might not seem to many like comics at all.

This is okay with Fake, who sometimes eschews the label. “When I want to be quick about it, I’ll say, ‘I’m a zinemaker ...’ but I’m interested in how the borders of comics have expanded,” he says. “I don’t think of myself as a cartoonist, necessarily, but on the other hand [*Memory Palaces*] is definitely comics. It has narrative to it.”

The booklet depicts 15 imagined facades inspired by extinct institutions of Chicago’s LGBTQ history and a few gateways dedicated to friends (such as Dylan Williams, founder of Sparkplug Books and a fellow comics artist who passed away in 2011). Fake reimagines such spaces as Club LaRay, a former predominantly black gay dance club from the 1980s, or Nightgowns, a defunct queer arts space from the early 2000s, turning them into exquisitely embellished palaces. It’s the literalization of the ancient Greek and Roman mnemonic device known as the “method of loci” (also known as a “memory palace,” hence the title), wherein a subject imagines a large palace and places within each room a memory (much in the same way that some forms of quilting instill within each piece of patchwork a memory or dedication). To recall a memory, all one has to do is visualize the palace and enter the room corresponding to the desired stimulus. “That was my impulse with *Memory Palaces*: to create spaces that people could identify with, but that you don’t need to be in to feel.”

The method mimics natural memory processes in the brain (i.e., it's easier to find the remote if it's always in the same place), but in *Palaces*, the result is more dizzying than clarifying, captivating the reader visually and nostalgically. Fake turns a former lesbian newspaper *The Killer Dyke* into an electrified dive bar of flamboyant stained glass. The Newberry Theatre, a former movie palace turned gay porn theater that closed in 1977 (before Fake was born), is given a second life, complete with an eternal marquee advertising two features: *Any Boy Can* and *The Insatiabes*. As the reader flips pages, each building becomes a character in and of itself, a repository for both Fake's memories and those of the reader. "It's meant to help someone reimagine history or remember old friends," Fake suggests. Indeed, an arch's keystone holds the nervousness of a first kiss, and there on a pedestal is your awkward dance at the first gay club you ever went to. Each bar on each window is another queer friend who protected you as you began making a space for yourself in your new, queer world.

Fake bridges the personal and the social, pushing beyond entertainment toward activism. "There are some people that, in reviews of my work, just don't know how to talk about trans-ness as a part of the story," Fake states.

When I deal with my own body in space, if some people don't know how to deal with that, then they won't give me the time of day. People reading my work often want me to make it more clear, more tidy, but I won't make it clearer for them. I want to take up the space I take up in the way that I do.

Fake mentions that readers of *Phoenix*, perhaps wanting to pin down the epic work's unclear narrative, are quick to conflate the character's questioning of gender and sexual identity with Fake's own personal story (which he writes about in *Sweetmeats*).

"One of the questions I get a lot is: 'Are you the Gaylord?' It's like a 'Yes, sort of, kind of,' thing," he offers. "I don't really have an interest in drawing autobiographical comics, but I do have a huge interest in drawing trans bodies in space and making that an integral part of the story. That's part of the universe I walk around in every day so it's become a huge part of my comics." *Memory Palaces* is similarly personal, but Fake's work goes far beyond autobiography to propose a shared history.

As we sit in the coffee shop, Fake regales me with stories of his nomadic past. Raised in Chicago, he eventually left to attend RISD. He moved to New York City, where his work picked up momentum and the offer from Secret Acres came to publish the at the time unfinished *Gaylord Phoenix* series in a single volume.

It's a funny story: I was living in New York, but they were LA-based. Secret Acres had sent a letter, but I hadn't received it [when] I [went to] a book fair in San Francisco. These people came up and said, 'We love *Gaylord Phoenix*! Have you thought of having it published ever?' And I thought they were just fans asking about my ambitions for it, so I said, 'Maybe. But I love self-publishing!' They just said, 'Oh, okay. Well, we'll look for more of them!' When I got back to New York and got the letter, I called them up. 'Yeah, I'd be interested in publishing.' And I think I said, 'It's funny, some people were just asking me if I had ever thought of publishing.' Then when I went to the meeting, it was them! The superfans!

After the offer from Secret Acres but before finishing *Phoenix*, Fake bought a school bus and toured around the country. "I went feral for a while. The bus kind of ate my life for a year," he describes. It did take him to Baltimore, where the bus finally broke down. Weighing his options, he decided to return to Chicago, which, he said, "Welcomed me back with a bear hug." He arrived back home on the day Michael Jackson died. "I got

out of my friend's car in Chicago and another friend called and said that Michael Jackson was dead. I said, "What are you talking about? What witchery is this!?" I remember it being a really communal day."

In many ways Fake is a classic nomad; this fall he will be moving to Los Angeles for graduate school. "I'm going to USC for straight-up art," he says. Fake may be nomadic in terms of space and freedom, but he is (perhaps because of this fact) heavily invested in the ideas and politics of place: how we create them, what they can mean to us, and who in our society is denied their security.

Fake's work examines the intersections of history and sexual and gender identities, how they can be used to create artwork, and how they can create a place for his readers. In *Gaylord Phoenix*, he gives gender-neutrality an origin story via a grand queer tale. The anthropomorphized objects in *Lil' Buddiesturn* ubiquitous advertising conventions into friends, instilling them with a sense of familiarity. (I now point out a Lil' Buddy whenever I see one.) And in *Memory Palaces*, Fake gives a second life to institutional spaces that no longer exist in any form — each now devoid of a real space — providing them a historical security and queer readers a mythological origin story of their own.

"Autonomy complicates the definitions of things and the rules about things — especially about gender and sexuality," Fake said, considering his work's place and appeal in contemporary comics culture. "I think that knowing who you are, finding out who you are, and claiming who you are can be like the trans 13-year-old who plays baseball but doesn't have an organized sports teams to join. It's about an all-is-one kind of thing, but that doesn't mean there won't be nuance."

In her book *Belonging: A Culture of Place*, bell hooks writes about returning home to rural Kentucky after a long academic career in New York City. In one chapter she discusses porches, the ubiquitous womb-like structures attached to the front and back of any rural home, writing: "A perfect porch is a place where the soul can rest." In the same way, perfect comics can give openly and sincerely to the reader a place to rest their soul. This is Fake's most powerful talent and his work's best quality.

READER

Edie Fake's Memory Palaces dazzles

By Noah Berlatsky

May 11, 2014

Edie Fake is a one-person comics locus. He works at Quimby's, the city's alt comics hub, and he's one of the forces behind the Chicago Alternative Comics Expo, which holds its second annual convention from May 31 through June 1.

The trans artist's latest project is about community — specifically, the queer community. In the recently released book *Memory Palaces*, Fake offers a stunning series of illustrated reimaginings of spots from Chicago's LGBTQ history: bars, bathhouses, bookstores, clinics, venues. He turns each

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into intensely patterned, luminous 2-D facades, some of which Thomas Robertello Gallery exhibited last year for Fake's first solo show in Chicago.

One of the more demure pieces, *Blazing Star*, which takes its name from an old Chicago lesbian organization, actually looks like a building, with red brickwork, a portcullis window, and the eponymous star on the door. Other images abandon architectural pretense, existing as shimmering designs that invite you not so much into a particular structure as into Fake's brain, as if community and consciousness were inextricable.

Fake's work, like that of the comic artist Gaylord Phoenix, has always dealt with the malleability and interpenetrability of gender, and *Memory Palaces*, with its focus on queer spaces, is no exception. The bright colors and intricate line work make his images appear computer generated, suggesting the traditionally male sphere of video games. At the same time, the meticulous detail and patterning evoke traditionally female crafts such as quilting. The result isn't ungendered so much as a celebration of how gender can be a part of community in multiple and dazzling ways. *Memory Palaces* turns the landscape of Chicago into a dream of wonder and love, where everyone is welcome.



Charlotte Street's Stench of Rotting Flowers: brilliantly decadent decay

By Liz Cook

April 22, 2014

It started with a ghost. Charlotte Street curator-in-residence Danny Orendorff divined the subject for his latest exhibition, *The Stench of Rotting Flowers*, from a haunting photograph of a now-deceased glamour-puss. The photograph in question, Peter Hujar's haunting "Candy Darling on Her Deathbed," captures one of Andy Warhol's superstars posing in her hospital bed, facing death with flowers and flawless lipstick.

"I wanted to explore the tonal affectations of bereavement," Orendorff explains. "Our attachment to heartbreak and sorrow and how we can become indulgent in it all."

That theme, decadence in the face of decay, echoes throughout the exhibition, though Hujar's photo isn't part of it. The 13 artists on display at La Esquina collate diverse, secular responses to grief, often fusing ceremonial qualities with camp appeal.

It's nothing new for Orendorff, whose curatorial residency has been marked by an interrogative engagement with social and political themes. No matter the subject, Orendorff's selections probe barriers: between classes, between cultures, between fine art and mass-produced kitsch.

The latter division is on full display in local artist Rain Harris' porcelain confections. Orendorff selected two pieces from her "Poison Bottle" series for the show at La Esquina, and they look, at first blush, like something you might find on your grandmother's dressing table. The organic shapes bloom with feminine curves and ornate embellishments, floral patterns lustered to a pearlescent sheen. But Harris amps up the accents to a garish pitch, adorning her pieces with plenty of low-culture flairs. Barbie hair spills from the spouts of "Bon Bons for Babs," cheap rhinestones trapping light around its base. "Festoon" adds feathers to the mix, as well as an erotic charge in the form of pointy, gold-dipped nubs that jut from the bottle like nipples. Harris' "Poison Bottle" pieces are glamour made grotesque, a worthy complement to Candy Darling's toilette.

They're also incredibly detailed and fastidious, another important connection to the economy of loss. "I wanted to draw out qualities of the handmade, the meticulously made," Orendorff says. Those touches tap into the labor and cost of planning a funeral.

It's hard to imagine something more enormous than Jesse Harrod's sculpture, a lavender tissue box nearly 10 feet tall. "The Enormity of Lesbian Grief" is a behemoth of taffeta and lace from discarded wedding dresses, part minimalist sculpture, part radical nod to the Lavender Menace, a group of lesbian protestors in the 1970s. "Enormity" evokes a tension between the domestic connotations of wedding dresses and handcraft and the sculpture's more threatening scale and sexual imagery. Lace details droop from the flowers' openings like probing, wet tongues.

Many of the works at La Esquina are similarly grand in scale, including an unusually large painting by Peregrine Honig. The local artist's "#DiscoSaintSelfie" anchors the exhibit in an intricate combination of insincere self-indulgence and authentic beauty. The materials are just as diverse: A lush floral wreath, rendered in oils, is complicated by a fractured halo of mirror-ball tiles (poised at head height — perfect for snapping selfies). Glue drips across the tiles, coating the surface in an unctuous film. On the floor, Easter lilies peek from peat moss, flanking the painting and inviting you to approach as if to an altar. The flowers were lush and blooming on this show's opening day, but you can imagine the lilies withering and curling with time, diffusing the fouler perfume that Orendorff's title suggests.

It may seem hard to reconcile **Edie Fake's** dazzling pen-and-ink meditations with hashtags and Barbie hair, but Orendorff is determined to give authentic grief its due. Fake's "Gateway" drawings are individual imaginings for deceased friends, blueprints for an afterlife custom-built for one. The vibrant, saturated colors and tessellated shapes evoke Islamic tile work or Navajo textiles, sacred explorations of geometric designs. Fake's work is characterized by meticulous mark making: Each exacting pen line seems like a meditation, a secular analogue to worrying rosary beads between your fingers.

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Though tonally different from some of the other works on display, Fake's elaborate portals offer a reminder well within the show's context: Pain questioned or mocked is not pain less keenly felt. No matter how the artists might denigrate the saccharine, loss and grief remain enormous, complex specters. *The Stench of Rotting Flowers* succeeds in teasing out diverse, at times contradictory, responses to grief, capturing the solemn as well as the silly. Candy Darling had it right: Loss can be luxurious, a floral perfume turning sickly in the air.

ANIMAL

Eddie Fake's Memory Palaces Bring New Life to Forgotten Queer Spaces

By Karen Peltier & Brandon Soderberg

April 4, 2014

The artist Eddie Fake is, in his own words, a “buildings nerd.” His latest book, *Memory Palaces*, which collects 16 vibrantly patterned drawings that reimagine lost queer spaces in Chicago, debuts at this weekend’s MoCCA Arts Fest at the 69th Regiment Armory.

“When I first moved back to Chicago a few years ago,” Fake recalls, “there was something about the queer history in the city that seemed just below the surface.” Researching that history via advertisements in the backs of vintage gay magazines—including *Clothesdick*, “the international magazine about clothed men”

Fake found queer bars, theaters, and clubs that no longer exist in the city, and gave them elaborate new facades wrought from his mind’s eye. *Memory Palaces* is the result of that reimagining.

Fake considers each of these elaborately illustrated palaces as a “resource for the present.” The facades—which recall everything from the decorative tiles of Islamic architecture to 8-bit video game levels—exist on paper but cannot be found in the real world, and the flattened perspective of each frees the buildings and their decorations from the demands of the natural world of building. “It’s almost like the structure of the building starts to evaporate and it just becomes a pile of ornamentation,” Fake notes, describing the process of transferring each idea to the page.

When searching for ornamentation that feels like it belongs to a particular palace, Fake is keen on “cruising history for things that make sense.” Though the work isn’t entirely tied to the past. “It’s partially an intuitive process,” he says. “I draw heavily from the aura of buildings I like around town.”

Like a grand queer Xanadu, *Memory Palaces* celebrates locales like “Club LaRay,” a dizzying composition that rewards close inspection, sending your eye through the space to soak up the richness of each visual element. A repeating spectrum pattern oscillates with electricity as though lit up on the page, and a domed pediment suggests what further extravagances may be found inside.

The repetition and density of ornamentation feels meditative, both as an observer and when appreciating Fake’s diligence in execution: “There’s a slow process, where the background gets filled in with ballpoint pen, and my hands are doing stuff but my brain is problem-solving,” he says. “Ornamentation seems to come naturally from that.”

The ideas and conflicts that Fake embodies as a trans artist are also present in the architecture, beyond each palace’s queer subject matter. By creating a space that’s separate from the physical and fueled by unlimited potential, these buildings are like trans bodies. They find structure and beauty in the progress of formation and the resulting space they define, separate from the rigid and confining demands of the supposedly real, heteronormative world.

“The neighborhood of *Memory Palaces* expands. It is something that grows outward, so that you can keep walking through it,” the artist says. The viewer contributes to the possibility of each space by further imagining what goes on inside of it. However soaked in loss *Memory Palaces* might appear, it is ultimately hopeful because it demands that the viewer think about creating what they want see in the material world. The work is, as Fake says, “a springboard for making mental architecture.”

Allowing these imagined spaces to exist without the rules of construction or building material ties them more strongly to the element of memory, as well: Things you remember are not as they actually were, and the work we make as artists never comes out quite the way we plan. *Memory Palaces* reminds us that

beauty lies in the process of forming and retaining memories and experience, and the physical ways we let that beauty manifest in the world.

READER

Art Beyond Binary at Threewalls

By Claudine Isé

July 2, 2013

One of the first pieces you'll encounter in "Binary Lore" is **Edie Fake's** *LGBTIQUA*, which consists of a word formed from eight pastel-toned octagons, each one containing a single letter. The octagons are staggered in a way that makes you want to recombine them. Read left to right, the letters spell the nonsensical QITaulBg, but if you mix the order up you'll find words like LAB and QUIT; if you follow a zigzagging line, the word QUILTBAG emerges. It may sound like a slang name for a body part, but QUILTBAG is in fact an acronym for Queer/Questioning, Undecided, Intersex, Lesbian, Transgender/Transsexual, Bisexual, Allied/Asexual, Gay/Genderqueer; the term is viewed by some in the queer community as more inclusive than "LGBT" — it literally holds more.

The art in "Binary Lore," the last show at Threewalls's current location (the gallery plans to reopen early next year in a new location, as yet TBA), is about expanding options and categories beyond either/or. The exhibit pairs Fake — he of the *Gaylord Phoenix* comic zines as well as the more recent "Memory Palace" drawings, which depicted a part-real, part-imaginary queer Chicago — with Brenna Murphy, a Portland, Oregon, artist who works with digital technology. She collaborates here with Birch Cooper under the moniker MSHR (pronounced "mesher").

MSHR's *Ceremonial Chamber* is an interactive sound and light installation comprising two rectangular glass tables placed at opposite ends of a shallow bed of sand that holds pieces of driftwood, mirrors, white string lights, and a number of red and green strobe lights — the entire thing has a trippy, techno-organic feel. The tables contain digital prints of mysterious, runelike forms that alternately bring to mind coral reefs, ivory carvings, or Mayan statues. They also look like bar codes, which is essentially what they are: when you move a sensor across the images, you actually modulate the sound. Touch certain images and the pulsations get faster or slower; others raise or lower the pitch. The real magic happens when people play the tables together: there are six sensors in all, so groups can create their own impromptu symphonies.

Fake's part of the show extends on the "Memory Palace" drawings he exhibited recently at Thomas Robertello. Except for one drawing, the works here are three-dimensional and somewhat architectural in nature, inspired by the signage and decor of old movie theaters. There's a four-part floor piece assembled from striped and marbled linoleum tiles; on the wall, a series of geometric, black-and-white sculptures resemble marquee lights, though the bulbs are plaster.

Each marquee arrangement is made up of several units that can be reconfigured in countless ways. As installed now, they look like superenlarged fragments of those QR codes that seem to be

popping up everywhere, including on museum walls. QR codes themselves configurations of modules made up of individual black or white dots are capable of holding several hundred times' more information than conventional bar codes can. As it turns out, QR codes and QUILTBAGs have a lot more in common than you'd think.



Edie Fake

By Matt Putrino

April 18, 2013

Just a small sample of the work Edie Fake has completed in the last few years gives you an idea of his recent bio: a food fetish zine called *Foie Gras* (based on some unintentionally lewd images in *Joy of Cooking*), a queer-mytho-log comic of Chicago named Gaylord Phoenix, and enough T-shirts and tattooed bodies to fill the grease-conversion school bus in which he toured a variety show called "Fingers" around the US.

His latest (and much more stationary) project, "Memory Palaces," recreates doors, entryways, and buildings, each significant to Chicago's queer history using geometric patterns, gouache, and ballpoint pen. We caught up with Fake on the phone from his Chicago studio.

You did a performance tour called “Fingers” in a converted vegetable oil bus. How did you find a bus like that?

When I got the bus it was living at this place called the Flower Shop in San Francisco, a lot of the folks there had done really innovative grease conversions on large vehicles. It's a super squirrely, non-science science. A lot of kids who were part of that scene were buying old buses and doing amazing grease conversions. The person I bought the bus from did a really amazing switchover.

Then you had to scour for vegetable oil?

Yeah, sometimes it was legitimate and sometimes it was barely legal. I had a pair of coveralls and I was like, "This is my mechanic costume!" I'm really small of build and they were oversized, so I felt like a mechanic clown. And being like, "I have this bus I need to fill with your old grease, can I do it?" It was a total learning process. The first time I was on the bus and getting grease myself we found this dumpster with grease, but it was rancid desert grease. It was disgusting, it had dead fish in it. I was like, "Well I guess this will work...we'll filter it a couple of times." It was like headache-vomit. Learning that there's more out there than just awfulness was important.

What kind of places were you guys performing? Were they proper venues or book stores and house shows?

It was a totally mixed bag. We did a show at the sculpture center in Queens, but also we'd play house shows and just spaces, a variety of spaces where experimenting with, where performing, could happen. There were nine people on the tour minimum, and we just had some big Google-clusterfuck in terms of organizing it. People were like, "I can get this city, and this city," so it was through different peoples' connections.

It's interesting to take a show like that on the road. A lot of artists and authors just do hometown stuff and one-off shows. What was the impulse to do a proper tour?

Well, the fact that I lived on a bus. I crash landed in Baltimore for a season, which was winter, and not the smartest thing to do. But it was fun. By the time spring rolled around, I was like, “Oh my gosh, I live on a bus. I need to drive it.” The reason I lived on the bus was to be very nomadic and take everything with me, have that be a resource. It was because I had a bus: the vehicle was there and the will was there.

To change gears from the tour, you work at Quimby's book store in Chicago during the day.

I do. I'm the comics sommelier.

Does that mean most of your studio time happens late at night?

Totally. I'm pretty nocturnal at this point. I usually run the late shift at the book store and do studio hours until about four or five every night.

Did you always work so late?

I've always leaned toward the lateness. I like how quiet it is at night. There are no distractions. I couldn't like, go to the bakery. I could go get an all-night taco, but it's not like during the day where I can be like, “I have to go run this errand, that's more important than drawing this thing.” At night it's like, “No, it's time to do it.”

You've described screen printing as a healthy thing to do. That reminded me of your tattoo work in a way because they're both kind of physically demanding mediums.

I think spiritually, being involved in the physical production transfers into the energy of the object but, also in terms of my commitment to making something, being totally hands-on feels very healthy to me. Sending something off to the printer still seems really weird as an idea. When it's like, “But I could learn how to use this finicky equipment instead.” Whether I'm drawing or silk screening, it's the long way around. I work very slow, that's how I like it.

So how long have you been doing tattoos?

I don't tattoo anymore. I still design tattoos for people. I did a year and half apprenticeship, and then another little while doing tattoos in San Francisco. In terms of making me commit to drawing, it really did the trick. You have to draw things you wouldn't normally. It was like boot camp or something. Putting them on people was casual, but it was also, like, blood ceremony. Like a casual blood ceremony!

How much back and forth is there with the people you're tattooing?

Sometimes the person is very involved in the process, sometimes people are just like, “Fill in everything black, I'm going to sit back and take the pain.” I was lucky to have a lot of scrappy friends who were like, “Totally do an apprentice tattoo on me.”

I developed a design sense drawing specific things. People would be like, “Draw a cat...but how *you* draw it.” Then I draw a cat and they're like, “No, more like how *you* draw it!”

How do you approach designing something wearable like a T-shirt or a tattoo as opposed to drawing a comic?

I think tattooing is a special kind of illustration work and design work. And you have to think about the element of a gift, and developing something that's appropriate to a cause outside of yourself. So for tattoos I would think about it like choosing the perfect gift for someone.

How did you first get involved with Secret Acres?

It's a really clowny story. They had contacted me when they were first starting their press, but I was living in New York and working on the west coast at the time in this film job. So they sent me a letter that I didn't get because I hadn't been home in four months. Then I ran into them at a comics show, and I still didn't know they had contacted me, and they casually asked me if I'd ever been interested in publishing. I thought they were fans of the zine, I didn't think they had any interest. When I got back to New York I got their letter, and we had a dinner meeting and it was like, "Oh! You guys are the guys from San Francisco who were really cute!" It kind of almost didn't happen.

I'm curious about your research process. A lot of your work is about imagined histories and actual historical events. Where do you start?

I guess it's a mix of personal sources and things that I read up on. For this last series of drawings I was reading up on gay history, almost in a casual way because I didn't know a lot about the queer history in Chicago. So any time a name really struck me I would make a note of it to delve deeper into that realm. Through the project I came to realize I'm not a great researcher: I'm a research snacker. It's the potential of the past I'm after, not the nostalgia for it. It's a combination of knowing that something happened, and then "What if it was realized like this?"

Your website has this unmarked stream of images that you pulled from zines that could be hard to track down now. The site reads like an auxiliary project to the zines themselves. How did you choose which images to digitize and which to keep in the printed zines?

My website hasn't been touched in a little while, but I think about what looks good cascading after things. The website was me half-assedly teaching myself HTML. I was like, "You know what looks best, the prettiest images from the zines on a white background." My Tumblr is a wet dream for me. I don't post things that often, but that is my preferred way of looking at the Internet. Beautiful images just endlessly cascading.

You Can't Always Give and You Can't Always Take

By Thea Liberty Nichols

April 9, 2013

Edie Fake's punk ethos of reciprocity and collaboration extends into his work as a comic, tattoo, and performance artist. His arresting graphic work plays with the fluidity and elasticity of images, which sometimes literally interconnect, as in the continuous sidewalk seen in the foreground of his Memory Palaces series. The looping movement in these drawings exhibits an almost cinematic pacing. Below, Fake gives us some background into how his experience working in film impacted him, as well as how his cross country travels in a big, veggie-oil-powered school bus led him, prodigal son style, back to Chicago.

I got a bus while I was living in San Francisco. I was tattooing at the time and able to save the money for it. For several years, I had been moving every four months or so. I had deep wanderlust. Finding a rolling home had started to seem like the only solution. I got this amazing bus from this badass, Kevin Sour, who taught me how to drive and take care of it. The bus had a rich history and a really solid veggie oil conversion. From there, I recklessly decided to drive it from the Bay Area to Philadelphia with my friend Heather Ciriza. That ended up being several months of what I would call "clown school" finagling grease, wrangling the bus down the road, being this large, dirty, weird spectacle. I sort of crash landed in Baltimore after that, until I got the urge to get driving again. I organized a performance tour called Fingers.

There were nine of us on the bus for Fingers, and although it was crowded, it worked really well. There's so much to think about when trying to maintain a big vehicle. When I was doing it alone maintenance was all I could think about. But with friends it got so much easier, and I got into making work and performing again. We did a loop around the East Coast and Midwest. On our way to our last show the bus broke down in a big way outside of Louisville. It took a long time for me to give up on fixing the bus. While I was working through it, I moved into Scott Tankersley's living room closet here in Chicago. The city gave me a really warm welcome. I was able to get a foothold quickly and start scheming again. The bus is now retired on queer land in Tennessee.

Performing and tattooing are both very much a combination of your own energy and other people's...as is being alive! Acknowledging that is really important for me; it's part of a multimedia social conversation. I think that staying part of the conversation is staying open to new ideas and methods and letting them adapt your own vocabulary. I'm not sure how else to talk about it except in these vague terms. Sharing what you do, as flexibly as possible, helps other people understand your ideas. Simultaneously, being as flexible as possible toward what other people are sharing with you expands how you understand the world.

I started out working in animation. I was a film major in college and then worked as a negative cutter for about six years. After school I gravitated toward making drawings, collages, and comics because the resources were easier to access, and a lot of the language of film stayed on. My Gaylord Phoenix comics especially developed from thinking about translating animation into static drawing. I almost think about collage like film editing and I almost always see smaller work as part of a larger body, like scenes in a movie.

Every time I catch one of Alexander Stewart's and Lilli Carré's Eyeworks Festivals I am reminded how much animation can accomplish and what a strange experiment it can be. For those reasons, I think a lot about taking up filmmaking again. I feel like I'm in a bit of a cocoon with it though. Rather than jumping into it, I'm waiting for a cohesive project to envelope me. Part of this is because of time constraints - I feel pulled in other directions and I know how much a commitment a film can be. Hopefully, it will become a bigger part of my practice soon. Until then, I'll just have to let the residue linger on other mediums.

For as long as I've been an artist, I have felt part of communities where bartering and collaborating are critical parts of growth. Cross-pollinating is how ideas spread and get expanded upon. Sharing what we can is how we help each other thrive on this messed up planet. It creates networks, emotional bonds, kinship, thought, and physical resources. You can't always give and you can't always take. The balance is something I'm always working out.

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READER

Eddie Fake Doesn't Care What's Real

By Sarah Nardi

February 12, 2013

Chicago has always seemed like a magical place, one where past and present intertwine. It's a haunted city, animated by memory, that often feels unmoved by the passage of time. Nowhere is this more strongly felt than in the architecture, buildings in which the spirits of Sullivan, Burnham, and Wright persist. But even in lesser-known structures, the smaller buildings populating neighborhoods throughout the city, ghosts remain. The tops of these structures, with their intricate tile work and ornate stone facades, offer glimpses of the past. To keep your eyes lifted is to be transported back in time, to imagine all the wondrous things those buildings may once have held. But to drop your eyes is to be confronted by the present—a discount shoe store, a carry-out restaurant—some quotidian thing that makes all the ghosts disappear.

Eddie Fake is a conjurer of spirits, the prime mover of a mystical world. In his reimagined Chicago, it is forever night and there is nothing to scare the ghosts away. Fake's "Memory Places" is a series of intricate drawings of buildings, structures that seem, like the view through a kaleidoscope, to both expand and recede into themselves. Drawing from a history of Chicago subcultures, Fake recreates iconic dance clubs and punk bars like Club La Ray and La Mere Vipere, places that have ceased to physically exist but live on in the city's collective memory. His Chicago is a dreamscape, a place too strange and beautiful to be real, reimagined with all the fantasy that a loving memory confers.

"Memory Places" also includes five "Gateways," tribute architecture Fake has designed for friends who've passed away. The process of creating the drawings, some of which took 80 hours to complete, was cathartic for Fake, a "formal approach to mourning" that allowed him to use only an isolated block of his brain. The juxtaposition of Fake's obvious technical skill and the quiet mysticism of his subjects is what makes him so compelling. I have the sense that beneath the precision and geometry of his work is an unwavering belief in the unknown—a hope that gateways work in both directions, allowing ghosts to come and go as they please.



From Chicago: Memory Palaces
By Randall Miller, Art Practical
January 28, 2013

Chicago is a city identified by monumental institutions, infrastructures, and cultural mores: da Bears, da Bulls, da Cubs, the Wilson (formerly Sears) Tower, deep-dish pizza, punishing winters, crooked politicians, the 'L,' the Magnificent Mile, the blues, the South Side, and *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (1986). It's a place defined by signifiers so iconic that they often cast a shadow over the more marginal aspects of Chicago's history and culture. Edie Fake's exhibition *Memory Palaces*, at Thomas Robertello Gallery, offers a refreshing viewpoint on the city by paying homage to Chicago's alternative history; the works highlight the bars, venues, and independent publishing houses from the city's LGBT community and its punk heyday.

Fake's fifteen works on paper have a jewel-like intensity. Their rich color schemes and intricate patterning are reminiscent of arabesque and Moroccan tile designs, Art Deco architectural flourishes, and Byzantine mosaics, as well as American "Home Sweet Home" needlepoint craftwork. While most of the images coalesce into depictions of buildings and storefronts loosely based on actual Chicago buildings, they are largely indistinguishable from small-town, Americana-style architecture, which arrived prior to the invasion of midcentury modern design.

Fake's buildings provide a pictorial body for real-world organizations that once offered the services and entertainment foundational to Chicago's LGBT-community culture. Fake represents these storefronts in a rectilinear design that is hard and stark against the works' black backgrounds, emphasizing both color and shape. The image of a red brick building in *Blazing Star* (all works 2012) evokes a small-town sheriff's office somewhere in middle America, its blue window and white door completing the American color scheme. *Blazing Star* was also the name of a

newsletter published in the mid-seventies by a Chicago-based lesbian liberation organization. Fake's *Blazing Star* combines the history of the organization with the authority of an iconic storefront motif to reimagine the newsletter *Blazing Star* as a type of national institution — as American as apple pie — rather than as the radical social outlier it once was.

The Newberry Theater, *Killer Dyke*, *The Snake Pit*, and *Nightgowns* have a similar, prototypical small-town architectural familiarity. These titles refer to a gay porn theater, another mid-seventies radical newspaper, a now defunct gay bar, and a queer art space that existed in the early 2000s, respectively. The references again build a foundation of imagined normativity and acceptability around places, groups, and publications that were unsuccessful in gaining footholds as institutions or social infrastructures. The solid, squared, and almost masculine architecture that Fake uses to embody these spaces is paradoxical, contrasting with the ephemeral nature of the foundational organization of each. Fake's buildings float on bands of diamond-shaped patterning that could be read as imaginary sidewalks or as placeholders for the foundations of a yet to be realized institutional permanence.

Other works in *Memory Palaces* do not depict their subjects with such specificity but tend more toward abstract patterns that constitute an invented architecture. Windows, doors, and steps are suggested in the radiating design scheme of *Gateway (for Mark Aguhar) (Palace Door calloutqueen)*. Fake's *Gateway* series comprises monuments to deceased friends, like pictorial mausoleums meant to house the memories of the dead. The ornate patterning in pieces like *Gateway (for Flo McGarrell)* and *Gateway (for Dara Greenwald)* exalts their subjects in lavish reliquaries composed entirely with ball-point pen, ink, gouache, and paper. Together these works open a window onto Chicago's alternative history, and the elegance, control, and visual poetry with which Fake renders them is a triumph in itself.



Eddie Fake's Ecstatic Afterlives

By Danny Orendoff

January 11, 2013

On view currently at Chicago's Thomas Robertello Gallery are 15 pen, ink, and gouache drawings on paper by local artist, illustrator, and author of the Gaylord Phoenix volume of comics, Eddie Fake. Titled 'Memory Palaces,' the exhibition is a stunning showcase of Fake's exceptional, and exceptionally idiosyncratic, formal skills in composition, pattern-design, and color; as well as a moving meditation on loss. Specifically, Fake pays tribute to the passing of five friends, colleagues, activists, and artists (Mark Aguhar, Nick Djandji, Dara Greenwald, Flo McGarrell, and Dylan Williams) in a series of drawings titled Gateway, and to ten real or imagined spaces of queer congregation no longer, or never, existent.

Put simply: depicted are places Fake, or the rest of us, may never go. They are hopeful spaces vividly imagined by those living in a contemporary urban environment largely ravaged and rid of countercultural nightlife by neoliberal vice and zoning laws, class-targeted antidrug policies, and corporate gentrification efforts throughout the late 20th century. As such, the collection of building facades Fake depicts – described as a neighborhood – can only be psychically located between utopian fantasy and interpretive research. Doing so foregrounds how the imagination and its shadow, desire, propels individual or collective searches for heritage, lineage, and belonging. What might be made possible for someone whose very personhood and politics teeters on the brink of unviability by the realization that, *yes*, La Mere Vipere (a burned down gay/punk venue in the now-gentrified Boystown), Killer Dyke (a radical lesbian periodical), and JANE (a clandestine feminist-led abortion service) did, indeed, exist here in the 1970s? Comprehension of these disappeared, criminalized spaces and services entails not simply an intellectual recognition, but something much more sensorial and perhaps even spiritual when translated through the prismatic hallucinations offered by Fake.

The flatness of the paper Fake has drawn upon is only a format, as his palette of offbeat hyper-colors and remarkable geometric drawing skills translates a deeper, pulsating dimensionality, like the embedded optic phenomena of a Magic Eye poster and a horror vacui painting. A handful of the places recreated here include dance venues, sex-clubs, and art spaces, all of which Fake has foregone a faithful architectural re-approximation of in favor of getting at something much more enigmatic – the mind-altering life practices they facilitated. Representing nightlife from psychedelia through disco and punk, up to rave, Fake renders his spaces with the fluorescent sensibilities and colors of escape developed via dance-floors and acid-trips. Neon hues that should clash, but somehow don't, cohere in vibrant mosaic facades Fake has lent to 80s voguing-hub Club LaRay and former host of 70s gay anarchy nights The Snake Pit. Seeming inspired by the hypnotic, transportive potential of repetition and detail in geometric art, Fake's designs are infused with a mystical content in the style of Islamic tile work or Huichol yarn and bead art.

The evocation of non-Western, nondenominational, and anti-representational spiritual aesthetics acquires political significance upon realization of for whom Fake has drawn a Gateway. Fake has imagined entryways into the hereafter markedly more colorful, robust, lavish, and peculiar than the pearly ivory luster of Judeo-Christian

concepts of the afterlife. Those mourned are imagined as entering a kaleidoscopic, palatial elsewhere, rightly undoing inherited notions of heaven too tidy, too conservatively patriarchal, for housing the spirit of trans-queer-feminist artist of color Mark Aguhar, the anti-racist feminist dance parties of Dara Greenwald, or the critically outsider sensibilities of punk/metal-comic pioneer Dylan Williams.

It is here where Fake's project best comes into full relief; it is only through the physical manifestation of improbable psychic longing that another world becomes possible, knowable, inhabitable. After hours, off the books, and after life; Fake honors such phenomena, and those residing there, with an informed, aspirational intensity apparent in the meticulous, strange, gorgeous labor of his drawing.

Binary Lore

By John Motley

January 20, 2013

Outwardly, the work of Chicago's **Edie Fake** and the Portland, Oregon, duo MSHR (Brenna Murphy and Birch Cooper, who are also part of the art collective Oregon Painting Society) seem to share little common ground. Fake, a meticulous draftsman, produces the serial zine *Gaylord Phoenix*, which showcases his drawings of Burroughsesque psychosexuality and violence. MSHR, on the other hand, create retro-futuristic installations that combine natural regional signifiers, such as moss and driftwood, with scroll-like sheets of intricately patterned rainbow holograms and interactive audio components. But in "Binary Lore," their dissimilar work forms a cohesive demonstration of how cultural categorizations based on simplistic binary oppositions for Fake, male and female, horror and lust; for MSHR, nature and technology, craft and code are fast becoming the stuff of modern myth.

In addition to his zines, **Fake** here presents selections from the 2010 "City of Night" series drawings of imagined versions of Chicago's bygone landmarks of queer culture, including the Virgo and the Sex Garage. *Mama Peaches*, 2010, presents a dimensionless and rigidly patterned storefront: Its sherbet-colored brickwork and seafoam shutters conjure the pixilated graphics of 8-bit video games. Rather than preserve a lost history, Fake sublimates it into a site of personal desire.

In MSHR's *Terrestrial Senser*, 2012, a darkened room contains a series of light boxes, whose surfaces shimmer with digitally rendered holographic patterns inspired by conch shells. Mounted mirrors bounce mounted green lasers overhead to produce a spatially disorienting effect, while low-end drones and shrieking frequencies oscillate based on a viewer's position throughout the space. It's maximally stimulating, like some arcane arcade, while approximating the infinite in its reflections and echoes. Like Fake's drawings of storied clubs, MSHR not only enact an emphatic longing to connect with another realm, but materialize that interstitial space that exists somewhere between the known past and a possible future.



Drinking with... Edie Fake

By Jason Foubberg

January 11, 2013

Second Story is a gay dive bar that is easy to miss. Tucked behind the gigantic Gap on Ohio and Michigan, Second Story is exactly the type of Chicago venue memorialized in Edie Fake's drawings, some of which are on view in his first Chicago solo exhibition *Memory Palaces* at Thomas Robertello Gallery. Fake's drawings refresh the facades of Chicago's historic gay and lesbian meeting places—mostly bars and nightclubs—as vibrant, stylized mausoleums.

“The drawings are love letters to queer culture,” says Fake, who met me at Second Story after working the nightshift at Quimby's. At 10 p.m. on a Wednesday night, Michigan Avenue was empty like some godforsaken place, but Second Story was afire with club music, Christmas lights, and barflies. Fake and I settled in to a corner with gin-and-tonics poured with a (very) heavy hand.

Fake is one of those very rare crossover artists that happily inhabits several genres. His drawings are always highly anticipated in the local art world and he's also beloved in the comics and 'zine scene. Fake calls it his “split personality” because he won't display his screenprinted comics on a gallery wall, nor will he print them in limited editions like fine art objects. Fresh from polishing his new series of drawings for the recently opened exhibition, Fake is now arm deep in co-organizing the second annual Chicago Alternative Comics Expo (CAKE), which opens mid-June at the Center on Halsted.

The Chicago native moved around the country a lot and wrote a handful of break-up letters to various cities before finally returning. Lately, Chicago has been incredibly good to Fake—“It's obscene!” he says in jest of his recent success. At turns Fake trades tongue-in-cheek for thoughtfulness. We chatted about the revival of risograph printing and the future of print media (only books that rise to the level of fetish objects will survive, we agreed), and then lingered on his collection of anthropomorphic hotdogs that he's readying for a collection to be titled *Lil' Buddies*. Fake's new year's resolution is to “get back on the Internet,” though with his upcoming stint at the LA Art Book Fair Fake will more likely spend his time screenprinting and drawing than surfing the Web. When the disco ball turned on overhead, Fake joked, “We've made it!” and we retreated into the chill night.

HYPERALLERGIC

Homage to a City's Queer History

By Alicia Eler

January 11, 2013

Edie Fake is a radical punk queer feminist activist. He is currently “at large” in Chicago. Before that, he was driving around the country in a yellow school bus doing the gay performance “Fingers.” At the opening of his solo exhibition *Memory Palaces* at Thomas Robertello, he told me that he grew up somewhere outside of Chicago, and when he left town he thought his relationship with the Windy City was over for good. But much to his surprise, he returned. Chicago is like that. Many born-and-bred Chicagoans swear they’ll leave, and they do — for a time, anyway. Chicago has a way of bringing its queers back to the city for reasons unbeknownst to them. The theme of Fake’s show offers us a clue as to why.

Fake reflects on Chicago’s queer history both through his own personal experiences of friends who passed away, and through the spaces and places that have either disappeared, still remain, or never existed at all, yet still host the politicized queer ghosts and spirits of its occupants. This body of 15 drawings took Fake one year to produce. All are dated 2012 and made rather meticulously, almost scientifically, from the same materials — ballpoint pen, ink, and gouache on paper. Fake’s hyper-geometric patterning looks like a Southwestern mosaic, the lo-fi aesthetic of a 1980s Nintendo video game, and a touch of Magic Eye. Among Chicago artists, it’s highly recognizable — a mesmerizing meshing of geometrically inclined lines that seem handspun from a mind with an impeccable precision for detail. The drawings appear genderless and are located somewhere in a space outside of normative time structures.

Of the 15 drawings, ten of them are rooted in the city’s queer history. “Killer Dyke” and “Blazing Star” refer to twin lesbian newspapers of the 1970s. *Killer Dyke* was a 1971 radical feminist newspaper published out of Northeastern Illinois University; *Blazing Star* refers to the newspaper and group that were part of the mid-1970s Chicago Women’s Liberation Union (CWLU). In Fake’s “Killer Dyke,” a yellow doorway with the word “DYKE” emblazoned at the top of it and the squiggly lettering of “KILLER DYKE” painted on the window blend into the hyper-patterned facade; though not purporting to be an actual representation of what this space was, Fake’s contemporary reenvisioning of it draws energy from the past, pays homage in the present, and looks forward to future radical queer spaces and publications.

As such, each piece in this exhibition acts as its own intricate study of past, present, and future in one image, drawing viewers into both the fantastical and actual history of the space. Fake travels from bathhouses to gay bars to clubs to feminist clinics to punk venues and theaters until he reaches completely imaginary places, such as the one depicted in “Untitled Buildings (Shapes),” a yellow, orange, green, and red facade with a sign that includes a wishbone, key, anal beads, and random amorphous shapes.

The other five pieces in the show are tributes to friends of the artist who passed away in the last two years. Queer Chicagoan Mark Aguhar, aka Call Out Queen, was a fierce, femme-identified artist of color whose Tumblr presence and artwork commented on and called out the mainstream media’s glossy glorification of the gay white male body, among other problematic representations. Only months away from receiving her MFA from the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), Aguhar decided to take her own life. The tightly knit

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Chicago queer art community responded with a powerful memorial exhibition, *The Dragon is the Frame*, at UIC and a memorial ceremony at local art space Roots & Culture. Fake's "Gateway (for Mark Aguhar) (Palace Door - calloutqueen)" is a magnetic, mesmerizing, three-dimensional-seeming yet two-dimensional in reality drawing of cubes, slashes, diamonds, stacked boxes, and hook-like jags that lead the eye to a singular closed door. Like looking too long at a Magic Eye drawing, it's impossible not to get lost in the image. The experience is also similar to the way one can travel down the rabbit hole of [Aguhar's Tumblr](#); which still lives online. Fake's drawing marks the fact that Aguhar has traveled to the other side; it is Fake's vision of Aguhar's passage from the world of the living to the world of spirit.

Fake also pays tribute to four other fallen, creative queer heroes. [Nicolas Djandji](#), a 24-year-old aspiring curator who had been living and working in New York City, was riding home one evening when he was struck and killed at an intersection in Brooklyn only blocks away from his home. For him, Fake draws towering blue pillars with triangular tips up top that point into a black sky background. A folded and jagged yellow accordion-like shape leads the way to a portal door covered in pink diamonds and black-and-white triangles, outlined with red, black, and green lines.

The three other tribute drawings are for publisher, cartoonist and comics historian [Dylan Williams](#), who died of cancer; artist [Flo McGarrell](#), who was killed in the Haitian earthquake of 2010; and pioneering activist, video/performance artist, writer, and artist [Dara Greenwald](#), whose battle with cancer ended last year. Fake pays respect to these creative people whose spirits live on through our memory of them. *Memory Palaces* is a powerful, comprehensive tribute to Chicago queer history. If there's one flaw, it's that, at times, the drawings may begin to look repetitive. But much like the same types of faces one sees over and over again regardless of what queer establishment they happen to arrive at, there is a comfort in sameness.

GAPERS **** BLOCK

A Theatre Within, Open to All: Edie Fake's Memory Palaces

By Bert Stabler

December 28, 2012

Dame Frances Yates, renowned scholar of English proto-science alchemy and mysticism, recounts the history of an architecture-based "art of memory" handed down from Simonides of Ceos to Greek and Roman orators, through Thomas Aquinas and Dominican monks, to Renaissance Italians Giulio Camillo and Giordano Bruno, to eventually influence the logical method of Descartes and the monadic metaphysics of Leibniz during the Enlightenment. Explicating Bruno, Yates says that, "(i)n 'your primordial nature,' the archetypal images exist in a confused chaos; the magic memory draws them out of chaos and restores their order, gives back to man his divine powers." The utilization of spatial structures as tools to link mortal minds back to eternal ideals, and thereby strive for self-perfection, seems a relevant technique to consider in contemplating the icons of local queer historicity lovingly executed in gouache and ballpoint pen on paper by Edie Fake.

Now-vanished local gay bars and clubs (La Mere Vipere, The Snake Pit, Club LaRay), a theatre and an art space (Newberry Theatre, Nightgowns), an underground abortion clinic (JANE), and radical newspapers (Blazing Star, Killer Dyke), as well as some invented venues (Night Baths, Shapes), are rendered by Fake as stunning graphic facades, comprised of precise and vibrating patterns, that simultaneously call to mind mausoleums, temples, and rococo storefronts. He draws "gateways" as well, remembrances of departed artists and friends Mark Aguhar, Nick Djandji, Dara Greenwald, Flo McGarrell and Dylan Williams. "The buildings in my drawings are not about nostalgia for a lost time," he says; "instead, they are about re-awakening the impulse to create physical space for queer voices, lives and politics." Fake sees the series, when hung on a wall together, as a "cohesive neighborhood" that includes, through aspirational memory, the individuals and spaces necessary for a self-sustaining queer community.

Despite their communitarian aspirations, Fake's facades, in their stylistic idiosyncrasy, belong to a history of "psychedelic" visionary architecture, from Giovanni Piranesi to A.G. Rizzoli, Archigram, and Bodys Isek Kingelez, a course that opposes, disregards, or seeks to overturn or subvert the efficiency, vastness, frugality, and brutal rationality of industrial-age utopian structures, both literal and figurative. In evoking this former (and older) lineage, in which the approach to space consists not of a harmonizing of uses but of attempts at earthly perfection, Edie Fake carries the torch for a revolutionary dream more fantastic than engineered, an aesthetic gospel of a promised land remembered in stolen moments of prophetic togetherness by a people who live in exile in their own city, in every city.

Sm{art}: Queer Zine Machine, Edie Fake

By Devyn Manibo

July 26, 2012

You know when you come across a super rad zine artist and you're really into their work, then you casually waltz into a comic shop, and you find one or two of their zines from years and years ago, but you get pretty bummed that the zine and comic shops in your area don't have a sufficient selection, so you scour the Internet but can only find so many other things, then you realize you've wasted hours looking for who has the lowest shipping costs? You then proceed to read every interview with them, you learn all you can about their life, then you step back for a minute, and it hits you — maybe you're a little obsessed with the artist and you feel weird about it, but you end up e-mailing them professing your undying love for them and their work anyway? Please tell me this isn't something only I go through.

Regardless, starting right here, right now, I will be taking you on a journey, showing you why I love three incredible queer zine artists, and why you should love them too.

First up: Edie Fake!

If you're familiar with the amazingly wonderful anthology of queer artists *Gay Genius*, (which, if you're not, you should find a copy and flip through it, or buy it from BitchMart because it's great) edited by Annie Murphy, then you've probably heard the name Edie Fake thrown around. He did the cover art, among other heart-melting illustrations featured in the book.

My love for Edie Fake's work started when I received one of his comics, *Foie Gras and the Joy of Cooking* in the mail from my mom. Puzzled, I looked at the cover thinking it must be some tiny cookbook. I opened it, only to be surprised by careful drawings of food with captions such as "fuck me like this," as a knife slices flawless diagonals into a ham, or as a fist punches freshly risen dough. It was bizarre, but so perfect in every way; this was food porn at its very best. I mean, I know food can be really overtly sexual, but this — this was something else. I realized at that very moment that I needed more. What else had this mysterious Edie Fake made, why had it taken me so long to find him, and why weren't we best friends? So, thus began my research, and the rest is... well, I already told you what happens when I find a zine artist whose work I love.

Hailing from basically all over the place, but most recently, Chicago, this dreamboat/artist extraordinaire manages to create the queer utopia we've always wished for, in tantalizing, death-defying, terrifying, but simultaneously beautiful ways. His mythically inspired characters, such as Gaylord Phoenix (the Gaylord-turned-bird-man), or Rico McTaco (the four-legged dyke), transcend gender and sexuality through their sensual and enlightening explorations of the body and how they experience pleasure, pain, fear, and delight. He said in an interview with the Rumpus about his comic series (recently collected into a book), *Gaylord Phoenix*, "I wanted the comic to be set in a queer world, where sex, sexuality, and gender were all messy, surreal and fluid. It's important to me that those things don't have to look like I've been told they should look like — because that's not how I've ever seen them." His comics and characters go far beyond the reaches of any queer ideal. Fake does all he can to throw away any preconceived notions of desire, allowing us to be released from the confines of what the hell we *thought* it meant to be queer, and into a phantasm to explore with open arms and open hearts.

His comics have very little text, which in theory would make them quicker reads, but instead you get lost in the images, staring at each one until your brain forms its own enigmatic daydream. Each image in itself is a story to be told, a world to wander, a terror to be torn down, a body to touch, a love to want.

Fake explains that "Gaylord's exploits are in large part, about not being afraid: to be a sex freak, to have a freaky body, to want a freaky experience. I wanted very much to keep the story sex-positive and still talk about violence, rage and sadness, while maintaining a vision of overwhelming queer ecstasies." These characters are freaky queers just like us, but more unabashedly so. They do not hide their meltdowns, their fears, or their confusions, but rather take these as opportunities to realize themselves, whether alone or with the help of others. Fake's comics are stories of queer discovery.

There are so many points when devouring his work where you might find yourself unsure whether to be deeply frightened or just really turned on, but this is the point! Fake finds ways to blur the lines between what might ordinarily disturb us with what scares us with what makes us hot and bothered, and that is absolutely radical. Now, go do your research and find everything that Edie Fake has to offer; or maybe get a tattoo from him, because he does that too. You won't regret it.

How to Draw Your Own Door: An Interview with Edie Fake

By Caroline Picard

July 20, 2011

Edie Fake's first graphic novel, *Gaylord Phoenix* (Secret Acres) was eight years in the making. An erotic and sometimes violent psychedelic spirit quest, the book compiles the adventures of its central birdman who travels far and wide in search of self-knowledge and passion. It's a two-colored interior, with a rich vocabulary of symbols and innuendo, from magical dwarfs to crystal splinters and tubular genitalia. The drawings are lush and decadent yet they resonate with a kind of personal touch too. When I put the book down I felt like I had been left with a piece of cartoon chalk, what will no doubt come in handy at such times in the future when I find something blocking my path (you know, because cartoon chalk draws doors through walls). This book is liberating and joyous and why not, for shouldn't life be the same? Pain and vulnerability can lead to insight.

Despite the epic proportions of this one body of work (and here is a great [interview](#) about *GP* specifically) Fake has worked on other projects as well, participating in performances, working as a tattoo artist and developing an alternative history of Chicago. I wanted to ask Fake more about his work and how it flows together in an effort, I suppose, to explore his underlying and hybrid ideology. In some ways I surprised myself: I asked a lot of questions about tattoos. I'm curious about what tattoos mean in our culture, (perhaps especially because I'm spending the month in Providence and tattoos are really and truly all over the place). How are tattoos different from drawings? And where do those paths cross. Edie Fake seemed like a good person to talk to.

Caroline Picard: *What happens to you when a drawing of yours is tattooed on someone's arm? In other words, does the significance of the drawing change? How would you compare a tattoo with a drawing's relationship to the world when contextualized by a book/on a page?*

Edie Fake: I think a couple of things happen in a couple of different ways. First off, drawing a tattoo for someone is sort of like finding the perfect gift for someone you barely know. Part of a perfect gift is that it is entirely wanted and sort of surprising and I think it also has to have a little personal flair; some indication of who the giver is and why they would choose to give such a thing. So just the drawing/planning itself is already a lot more collaborative than just thinking about what you'd draw on your own. Then, you start tattooing someone and it's a whole other thing. It's a blood ritual and it's craftsmanship and it's fun and painful and casual too. I was only tattooing for a couple of years, but when I was working on someone there was this whole new process of understanding each line drawn, and also an understanding of why this tattoo was going to fit the person getting it. I think I was looking at the stuff I was tattooing like it was different sorts of heraldry. The person wearing the tattoo is a huge part of what the drawing becomes, both physically and energetically. That's the biggest difference throughout the process. With drawings on paper I usually am pushing out a drawing with my own vision, and then it can have a really singular presentation. Tattoos temper your own version of how things should be with someone else's ideas and I really love it because it can really push the way you draw into some strange places trying to figure out the common ground where "what someone wants" meets "what you want to give to them." I'm not tattooing now, but I miss it a lot and I miss the way it pushed my drawings. I'm starting to casually put my feelers out for another apprenticeship here in Chicago.

CP: *I'm interested in how you use drawings to empower and embolden ideas you have about fluidity and gender identity—Can you talk a little bit about how the medium enables your philosophy/ies?*

EF: I'm not sure if my thoughts are organized enough to bring up anything worthy of being a philosophy! I do identify as a transsexual and I do think a lot about the expansiveness of language, the importance of self-definition and how that all relates to complicating gender and sexuality. Collapsing and expanding meaning of words and images can work towards a wild and playful vision of sex positivity as well; that's what I strive for in drawings.

Multiple meanings are critical. I really think that's what keeps visual, verbal and physical language alive, the way that new interpretations will always be added to the heap. I make a lot of work based on innuendo and word play. Coded meanings and visual decadence can provide a place where drawings can snap into something that complicates gender and implies new systems. For me, it's impossible to articulate queerness in a direct and definitive way because it doesn't exist like that. It's much better pieced together through a drawing with many things happening, the interplay of different codes, sly language tricks, a collision of symbols, because all these things together gets more toward the idea of a border-less, boundless queer gestalt.

CP: *Do you believe in a Utopia? (not necessarily something to implement, but something to work towards?)*

EF: I don't believe in some true, universal, obtainable utopia, or any kind of unified vision for a utopia, at all. However, I have experienced periods in my life I would definitely call "utopic" where I've felt amazing energetic kinship to those around me, or even just to myself... I should add, these were not periods that were free of problems or hardships, but they were times of feeling deeply connected to what I was doing and how I was living. Constantly scheming and trying to help others with their schemes.

I think the world is shitty and hard really lovely things always fall apart, pain, violence, heartache and futility reign supreme. Flying in the face of that, a utopia notion in my head can push me forward, and encourage me to try to create good energy and critical work. Utopia as a constant push to conjure up how things could be better, and then the working your ideas into realities.

CP: *In some way I was thinking about the utopia question because of the on-line project [Gay Utopia](#). I was wondering if you could talk a little about that—how did the project get started? What was it like developing work for an on-line and shared context?*

EF: Before the Gay Utopia Online Symposium, I felt like the term was floating in the air a lot, especially the air over Chicago. In my experience, it was being used as sort of a rallying cry, to envision working for each other, creating networks, sharing resources, and helping each other build the things we wanted to see in the world. When I went on tour with Lee Relvas in 2006 she delivered this brilliant soapbox speech as part of our performance that culminated with asking the audience "Are you ready for a Gay Utopia?" Well, the answer to that was yes.

I'm unsure of how the Online Symposium started, but that project was the brainchild of Noah Berlatsky and Bert Stabler. It's a wild grouping of folks that they brought together, and I'm really proud of the work I did for the project. There's a wide range of how people approached the work there, and I think I approached it as someone who feels like "Gay Utopia" is a concept that nourishes me and is integral to how I see the cycles of my life tumble out. The Gay Utopia shares a lot with the Temporary Autonomous Zone and I am really invested

in both of those, so I wanted to create a comic that reflected falling down that rabbit hole. When I settled on a long scroll down drawing, I also decided that the most important thing for me to show in the images was the close combination of destruction and ecstasy, love and fury going hand-in-hand, fueling each other. That's a big part of my lived experience.

CP: I was thinking about tattooing again, and your description of its gift-quality. It made me think too about how you describe community and connectedness as being somehow central to those moments of utopic experience. In many cultures, it feels like tattoos have ritualistic significance—it's a sign given at the coming of age, for instance, or after some epic experience. I was wondering if you feel like tattoos have a ritualistic resonance in your experience and what that might be?

EF: It's a funny thing- it IS totally a ritual, and there's this formal setup to it, but when you're in it, it can seem casual. I guess I should call it "important casual" though it's a nice shared energy with tattooee and tattooist totally concentrating on what's going on. As I was learning, I did tattoos on a lot of friends and I think that certainly had the pleasant effect of getting closer to people in a new way, through this little ritual, that wouldn't have happened otherwise. It's very much an act of trust too, which plays into making it powerful.

CP: What do you hope your work, say like Gaylord Phoenix, accomplishes in the public sphere? I'm asking partly because you talk about your drawings as though they reflect a personal process—like, it's the space where you can really center yourself around an interior landscape. That said, I feel like the book is incredibly welcoming and playful and generous—so it feels like a world where I am invited to participate. Â I'm interesting in how that dynamic might play into the way you think about your work.

EF: Ideally, I make drawings that are about possibilities and potentials. Considering it now, I suppose I'm making objects that try to occupy or push towards a world I'd like to live in. I'm always borrowing energy from powerful scraps of language that roll my way, trying to recognize patterns and kinships and teaming it all up visually. With that in mind, it's amazing to hear that the drawings can turn around and give out their own little powers. It's so great when it when it feels like there's sharing and exchange happening because I definitely hope for something large, lovely and real.

CP: I was also reading that you do some performance work as well—can you talk a little bit about that? And maybe what it is like to physically embody something, (vs. describing it 2-dimensionally).

EF: I do occasionally do performance work. To me it seems much more like conducting a public experiment, whereas displaying a finished drawing is like showing off the answer to a long series of problems. Performances are so dependent on your openness and the openness of the audience and they hinge on both the clarity of your purpose and also your ability to convey that purpose in a non-didactic way. It's usually a medium I use when I have a cluster of ideas floating around my head. To perform effectively it is so hard! For me, performing is maybe the hardest, so I try to listen to my heart about it and know when I've got something cooking, and if I'm not really feeling it knowing to throw in the towel and forget it, I'll just do some drawings, which I always have ideas and methods for.



The Rumpus Interview with Edie Fake

By Zach Dodson

May 17, 2011

Edie Fake is on the verge. His first book, *Gaylord Phoenix* (Secret Acres), is a collection of comics about a gay bird-man which have appeared in tantalizing little chapbooks for the past seven years. Fake has lived all over: Providence, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Baltimore. He returned to hometown Chicago last year after the bus he lived on broke down and joined the staff at the venerable Quimby's bookstore. He was one of the first recipients of Printed Matter's Awards for Artists, and recently received a Critical Fierceness Grant from Chances Dances for his next big project, a gay history scroll of Chicago.

The Rumpus: *Gaylord Phoenix* isn't easy to describe. If you had to give an elevator pitch, what would you say?

Edie Fake: "Oh, well, you see..." I'd say, "...it's all about this young, wandering Gaylord being reborn as a bird-man. His journey is an epic magical roller coaster ride through a psychedelic microcosm of homoerotic smut and gender meltdown and, the whole way through, he's recovering and reconciling the violent, painful parts of his past with his powerful present self. Then there's a great orgy scene at the end."

Rumpus: Sold! Hollywood loves an orgy! Sex is obviously a big deal in this book. A lot of the Gaylord's exploits directly involve it or result from it. How do you see this story relating to sexuality and gender?

Fake: I wanted the comic to be set in a queer world, where sex, sexuality and gender were all messy, surreal and fluid. It's important to me that those things don't have to look like I've been told they should look like because that's not how I've ever seen them. Pinning erotic stuff down tends to strip its meaning away, but I think being playful and weird can revive it. Gaylord's exploits are, in large part, about not being afraid: to be a sex freak, to have a freaky body, to want a freaky experience. I wanted very much to keep the story sex-positive and still talk about violence, rage and sadness, while maintaining a vision of overwhelming queer ecstasies.

Rumpus: Speaking of Gay Utopia: Can you speak a bit about community and the Fingers tour, and how that has fed into your work?

Fake: An idea of community and kinship (much love to Lee Relvas for bringing this word into my life) has fueled the comics I make and almost all the work I do. Hopefully, not in the sense that I just want to preach to the choir, but more like I want to do my part to help build a queer world with the preacher, the choir and everybody else.

The Fingers tour was part of this period of time that I owned and lived on a giant grease powered school bus. I've tried recently to talk coherently about it, and I always fail miserably at describing all the bliss and mayhem. I would say that touring has done the amazing thing of making a "social network" feel really, really real, not just like some internet game. There's some physical power in that, to meet humans (and animals!) to share things with even in places you seldom go. It's so nourishing, and it's often so flexible. To have things to share with

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people is a really important exchange. For me, it's usually comics, prints or performances making up for my lack of practical skills. I'm drawn to self-publishing the world of zines and comics mostly, because I am always thrilled by bartering, seeing what other people are up to in a way where our ideas are physical, accessible and can be traded easily. It's a way of sharing resources, I think, and that feels like such a rich place to build things from.

Rumpus: *Gaylord Phoenix* employs a visual language that's all your own. Comic book conventions (panels, speech bubbles, narrative sequences) are replaced with your own clever devices. Were you purposefully eschewing those conventions? Or was it more instinctual, just form following function?

Fake: I started drawing *Gaylord* while I was thinking about ideas for an animated film. I had just gotten my own Bolex camera at the time, and I'm schooled in handiwork animation I love it. I think a lot of the visual language for the *Gaylord*, especially the way speech and vision are projected, comes from film, and I like what it connotes.

I flat-out have a lot of trouble thinking in panels, especially with the way I want the story to move through a page, so I prefer a page where the characters can reoccur in the same scene. That makes their place in space and in their bodies more flexible and vibrant. At the core though, the layout and pacing have always been almost exclusively from the gut, where I won't start a new page until the one I'm working on pushes things forward.

Rumpus: So... Where can I get a nose cone that projects my thoughts?

Fake: In terms of nose cones you are going to need an empty toilet paper roll, some paint, a piece of string, tape or glue and one of those laser pointers that does laser shapes.

Rumpus: What's your process like? Did you write first, or did it begin with the visual?

Fake: There's a funny sort of planning behind it. Whenever I'd start a new issue of *Gaylord* it'd come into my head as a few key visual scenes, and I'd make teeny-tiny drawings of them, like one-inch-by-half-an-inch, just to keep the idea in mind. Then I'd draw out about forty of these tiny little boxes (one for each page) and I'd start trying to place where the first key images would go and what language would work. Once I had about the first ten thumbnail pages of written language mapped out something would happen, mostly all the other images and language, would gush out and snap into place and I'd have my plan. A few times though, the opposite would occur I'd get ten pages of planning deep and everything would seem wrong, the language would be empty and not funny and the plot would seem contrived, so I'd scrap everything and wait for a new round of visual directions to lead me somewhere new. Ouch. Mostly it would happen fast and small, though, and then this little plan could be stretched and rearranged pretty easily. That smallness kept everything a little less than perfectly planned and let me be flexible with the story as I was drawing out the actual pages.

Rumpus: A really enjoyable thing for me, as a reader, was puzzling out the meanings and effects of various things/creatures/magics in the book. It would be a crime to decode it, so I won't ask what the crystal claw is, or how the wispy deep magic of the lower phoenix works, but maybe you could us me one little key to something in the book?

Fake: Something that maybe isn't part of the plot but informs the story is the ways the book tries to handle the codes of the Tarot. Its something I'm always trying to learn more about and definitely tried to stay aware of while I was drawing. There are a couple pages that are direct mimicry of certain cards, but perhaps with complicated

meanings, like the spread of the Chariot card drawn with the spectacle of a drag ball. There are a few pages that are like the “Aces” of the deck, points that things wildly spring forth from, and other elements, implements and numbers that I tried to line up. I’m not an authority on the Tarot, but I do love dealing directly with the symbolic meanings in numbers, symbols and patterns. Water is the emotional element, cups are water. Air is tied to intellect, ideas, swords/knives and, in the case of *Gaylord Phoenix*, memory. Earth is linked to physical concerns and the body, so it makes sense that’s where the book concludes. The four wizards are this four-posted structure of stable-but-shallow solutions, the Gaylord can and has to go deeper. With Tarot-oriented symbols, I tried to choose things carefully, and yet not get bogged down or bog things down with a system I am just beginning to learn.

It should also be noted, while I was drawing this *Gaylord* series a bunch of amazons in Portland and the West Coast published the Collective Tarot Deck, which is just a mind-blowing powerful project. The traditional suits are reimagined in this queer, feminist, radical way that is still faithful to the traditional intent of the cards. A super-inspiring force to see come together at the same time I was dropping little crumbs about this kind of thing throughout the *Gaylord* comics.

Rumpus: The collected work reveals your evolution as an artist and story-maker in a really intriguing way. When you started putting out mini-comics years ago, was there an end in sight?

Fake: It totally took seven years to get this all together, but I’ve got some good excuses for the amount of time, and I’m really glad it took so long. When I first began, I’d put out a 40-page segment every year and it was totally open-ended, with no idea as to how, or if, it would conclude. After I had done four issues like that, I started a tattoo apprenticeship and that ate up all my time and pretty drastically changed my drawing style. When I came back to *Gaylord* after a three-year hiatus, my patience for drawing had finally caught up to the visions I had for filling a page. When I look through the book, the point where the Gaylord reopens his leg wound is the point where the drawings take a notable turn towards the extravagant. It’s really satisfying to me, and it was tempting to re-do everything with some newfound “chops”. However, I think the cruder-style at the beginning is specific for the way the story is told at first. To redraw it seemed sort of futile, like it would just end up overworked and there’d be nothing to figure out in the drawings. I am so happy I let the old material be I really like watching the plot grow up and into itself.

Rumpus: How did the tattoo work change your style?

Fake: Tattooing made me a real uptighty about shapes and visual clarity and smooth linework. It also had me drawing all the time, stuff I would never in a million years think about drawing, so it was constantly about problem solving and visual innovation. There’s also the vast history of tattoo art, and I found a lot of drawing answers I’d been looking for in classic American tattoo flash.

Rumpus: What else do you count in the influences department? Paisley, RISD, the Maya?

Fake: That about sums it all up! I love looking at textiles, especially ones with unusual dye jobs or ones where the pattern is in the weave of the fabric. Also: cellular diagrams, acupuncture charts (any kind of diagram or cross section, really), desert lifeforms, caves and caverns, Carol Rama, heraldry, hand painted signage, surrealist collage, conspiracy magazines, Ernst Haeckel, Emory Douglas, Emma Kunz, fungus and mold, novelty architecture and rolling homes.

Rumpus: A terrible last question, but I think I just have to know: What's next?

Fake: The project I always say is “next” and what I realize is going to be “next” for a while, is to draw scroll that acts as a sort of beautiful map of gay history in Chicago. It's going super slow and it's daunting, there's a lot of research which I am learning about how to approach, but I'm taking it on. I've been continually working on a related series of drawings to this idea which are vibrant imagined facades of former LGBTIQ(etc....) establishments in Chicago. The idea of these fantasy buildings based on real spaces is to portray the energy and beauty of intentional gay space.

Immediately right now, I am getting back into screen printing at the Spudnik Press here in Chicago and that feels like such a healthy thing to do. I love the mechanics of staying up all night printing. I'm going to be doing some design work for a herbal first aid project local permaculturalist Nance Klehm is developing. Also, I am starting to draw looser and goofier comics, which are mostly about a bunch of clowns.

NEWCITY

Portrait of the Artist: Edie Fake

By Jason Foumberg

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Chicago buildings look like dirty cakes, Edie Fake tells me, and I imagine not a wedding but the bachelor party who or what kind of person might jump out of a giant dirty cake? Fake's drawings from the "City of Night" series, which are fictional portraits of architectural façades, inspire a little guessing game. "I trust you can imagine what goes on inside," says Fake.

He begins with the name of a historic Chicago spot that served or promoted the gay and lesbian community, such as Sappho, The Virgo Out and The Cabin Inn, and dresses it up in architectural fantasy. Although all of these clubs, bars, community centers and gathering spots are now shuttered, photographs and narratives exist in various local archives. Still, Fake refigures their street-view facades using a composite of architectural details culled from his observation of Chicago vernacular styles. These are small, human-scaled buildings, decidedly not skyscrapers, that sport rainbow siding, or a swinging saloon door, or slanted roofs like a suburban residence. There is little sign of people in these drawings, besides a half-pulled window shade in one. The facades are still and quiet, like the exaggerated monuments to the dead in Graceland Cemetery.

The "City of Night" series is Fake's small side project to his grand scroll of Chicago gay history, currently in progress. He describes the scroll as a huge visual map, though not linear, and a "pile of history." It will be more historically functional than the creative portraits of long-gone clubs, as Fake is conducting research locally at the Leather Archives, the Chicago History Museum and the Gerber/Hart Library. Both the scroll and the "City of Night" series are part of Fake's investigation into the psychology of lost, or hidden, or secret, Chicago locales.

In the "City of Night" series, the place names become signposts for viewers to explore on their own. For example, the drawing with the rainbow siding is for The Virgo Out. I looked online and found out that, in the 1930s, The Virgo Out was a hub for the "pansy and lesbian craze in Bronzeville." This is fascinating, and I'm further lured into this terrain by Fake's good hand at drawing decorative patterns. The houndstooth, herringbone and geometric labyrinth designs (plus tons more hand-drawn patterns in Fake's multi-issue zine "Gaylord Phoenix") are not superficial pattern porn but, like the long-gone clubs, have their own social histories and cultures of identity. Patterns on repeat hint at an attractive continuum.