

LOVE, LUST & FREEDOM

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TENDERNESS AND PAIN

From quiet kisses and doing the laundry to hardcore raves. Life as a queer person and the right to love or desire whoever and however you want is addressed in a new photography exhibition at Kunstmuseum Brandts

Love, Lust and Freedom is on display at Kunstmuseum Brandts from 23 March, 2024

From the humdrum of the everyday to the experimental and, in some cases, potentially dangerous love life of certain members of the queer community. In the photography exhibition *Love, Lust and Freedom*, international heavyweights, young talents and established photographers insist on the existential right to be and express who you are.

The exhibition contains touching stories about the discovery of sexual identity, poetic accounts of loneliness and glimpses into uncompromising underground cultures where anything goes – but is not always safe. It contains hard muscles, tattoos and barren basements, but also tender glances and gentle embraces.

- *The exhibition invites us into a universe where we might recognise aspects of ourselves or find our open-mindedness being put to the test. It's about the very basic right to love whoever you love, and to live a life where you are true to yourself,*" says Stine Høholt, Director of Kunstmuseum Brandts.

Featuring works by well-known artists such as Nan Goldin, Wolfgang Tillmans, Robert Mapplethorpe and Sven Marquardt, the exhibition is the first in Denmark to focus on the unique ability of photography to depict queer life.

LOVE CAUGHT ON CAMERA

Fighting for the right to love someone of the same sex, and to stand by one's desires, takes courage and strength. This right still can't be taken for granted in most parts of the world, and even in Europe's 'Queer Capital', Berlin, where several of the photographers live and work, queer people are harassed in some parts of the city. In Denmark, it was illegal for two men to dance together until 1973, and it wasn't until 1981 that homosexuality was removed from the Danish Health Authority's list of mental disorders. For transgender people, this happened as recently as 2017.

Historically, photography has played an important role in the lives of the "lawless" people who have been forced to live under the radar, with no prospect of being open about their sexual orientation. Photographs have been used as a secret code. For example, a photo of two men under an umbrella signaled that a person was gay. Many people also kept a small photo of their loved one in their inner pocket – a small gesture, insisting on the fact that "we exist".

Love, Lust and Freedom is based on historical material, pieces from the museum's own photo collection and works by a number of contemporary artists with whom curator Marianne Ager has had a close dialog throughout the planning phase:

- *The works allow plenty of room for interpretation, giving the exhibition an immediacy rather than making it a political statement. It's the liberated space that art can create – this exhibition wasn't created to speak for someone, but to speak with someone,* says Marianne Ager, curator of the exhibition.

FACT BOX

- *Love, Lust and Freedom* opens at Kunstmuseum Brandts in Odense on March 23, 2024.
- The exhibition is supported by the Augustinus Foundation, the Beckett Foundation and the Spar Nord Foundation.
- The exhibition contains a special section that delves into historical material depicting queer love. This section was created by senior researcher and PhD Mette Kia Krabbe Meyer, KBU, who has spent most of her career researching this particular aspect of the history of photography, and professor, PhD Rikke Andreassen, who as project manager at Roskilde University has done research on queer women
- The exhibition features works by artists including: Mengwen Cao, MC Coble & Louise Wolthers, Samet Durgun, Nan Goldin, Marvel Harris, Florian Hetz, Clifford Prince King, Julie Lauerberg, Robert Mapplethorpe, Sven Marquardt, Rafal Milach, George Nebieridze, Niels Nedergaard, Ralf Obergfell, Tero Puha, Laurence Rasti, Mary Steen, Christer Strömholm, Dónal Talbot, Birk Thomassen and Wolfgang Tillmans.

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