

PRESS RELEASE

University of Leeds Art Collection 'queer-ied' by Artist Matt Smith for LGBT History Month

Exhibition: 'Other Stories: Queering the University Art Collection'

27 February - 5 May 2012



This February, in celebration of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans) History Month, the Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery (University of Leeds) presents a special exhibition project, 'Other Stories: Queering the University Art Collection'. With support from the National Lottery through Arts Council England, artist Matt Smith has been invited to create 'interventions' in the Gallery, inspired by the University's collection of materials relating to Edward Carpenter, Victorian writer, social campaigner and early gay rights activist. The exhibition runs from 27 February until 5 May 2012. The Gallery is open from Mon Sat, 10-5pm and admission is free.

A historical display about Carpenter forms a part of the exhibition, focusing on his connection to Leeds and his association with artists and intellectuals, including Alfred Orage and the sisters Isabella and Emily Ford. The archival material, drawn from **Special Collections at the University of Leeds Library** and loaned from the **Edward Carpenter Collection at Sheffield Archives**, holds fascinating insights into Carpenter's importance in relation to the social history of the region.

The research process for Smith's contemporary 'interventions' has been informed by Carpenter's story, along with the stories and accounts of people from the LGBT community held in the **Ourstory Archive in Brighton**. Using everyday objects, Smith has created site-specific ceramic and mixed-media pieces, placed alongside artworks in the Gallery's permanent collection, a process he describes as 'queering'. The gay liberation movement's uptake of the word 'queer', formerly a derogatory term, led to its reinvention as a means of positive self identification in the 1980s. However, it is also used to signify anything odd or unusual. Smith's approach reflects both meanings of the word; his response to the Gallery's collection is non-normative, unexpected, and yet it is directly inspired by the experiences of people in the LGBT community.



In presenting new ways of seeing and understanding the artworks, Smith offers an alternative view of our shared national history as represented in museums and galleries. Some visitors who come looking for the interventions will find them, while others will not notice them. Either way, through resonating with LGBT culture, this thought-provoking exhibition raises questions about different understandings and experiences of the world, interpreted through art.



Curator Layla Bloom said: 'We're very excited to have the opportunity to work with Matt Smith, with support from the National Lottery through Arts Council England. Matt Smith's creativity in investigating LGBT histories in so many different media and with so many layers of meaning has been incredibly rich to observe. He has been an inspiring artist to work alongside. We hope his inventive responses to our collection inspire others to imagine their own stories'.

A catalogue with new essays by the artist and by academics Dr. Lara Perry (University of Brighton) and Dr. Joy Dixon (University of British Columbia - Canada) explores the themes of the exhibition at the University of Leeds in a wider context. As Dr. Lara Perry commented on Smith's work: 'His installation renews and expands our sensitivity to the art of the twentieth century, and reshapes the relationship we have in the present with the past it represents. In particular, this exhibition opens up for us a relationship with the usually repressed histories of lesbian, gay and bisexual relationships in England'. The catalogue, *Other Stories*, will be available for sale from the Gallery shop in February 2012.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a full programme of related talks and events, including the popular **Burton Saturdays**, free creative activities suitable for all ages. Full event details can be found on the gallery website: www.leeds.ac.uk/gallery/events.htm.

Supported by the National Lottery through Arts Council England



- ENDS -

Notes to Editors:

IMAGE INFO:

1. Untitled III, Stratton Fonopad address book, ink © Matt Smith 2012
2. Untitled I, Lasercut oak and brass tray © Matt Smith 2012
3. Untitled V, Ceramic coffee set, ceramic transfers © Matt Smith 2012

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EXHIBITION CURATOR:

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ADMISSION/ HOURS:

10.00 - 17.00, Mon-Saturday
Admission: FREE

VENUE INFORMATION:

The Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery, Parkinson Building, University of Leeds, LS2 9JT

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The Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery is an accredited art museum at the heart of the University of Leeds campus, refurbished in 2008 with funds from the Audrey & Stanley Burton Charitable Trust. The Gallery offers both a programme of temporary exhibitions and a display of selected treasures from the University Art Collection in its main gallery. An Education Room houses the University's collection of drawings and works on paper, while also offering space for private study, research and teaching.

Accumulated over more than a hundred years, the Collection consists mainly of European, principally British paintings, drawings and prints, dating from the 17th century up to the present day, with small collections of sculpture, ceramics, and photographs. Outstanding elements are the Sadler Gift of early 20th-century British art, the collections of drawings and paintings by artists of the Camden Town and Bloomsbury groups and their contemporaries, and works by former Gregory Fellows in Painting and Sculpture, and the recent gift of works from the late Stanley & Audrey Burton's personal collection of 20th-century British art.