



# LESLIE – LOHMAN MUSEUM OF GAY AND LESBIAN ART

## ***Expanded Visions: Fifty Years of Collecting*** **March 10 – May 21, 2017**

### ***Curatorial Narrative***

The Leslie-Lohman Museum co-founders, Charles Leslie and Fritz Lohman, have spent more than 50 years amassing artworks that speak directly to their experience as gay men. From their earliest acquisitions, Charles and Fritz searched for images of queerness in art history and made an effort to support living gay artists who did not have an outlet for their cultural production. Their collecting efforts began an archive that would eventually lead to the formation of a non-profit foundation in 1987—in the height of the early HIV epidemic—with a mission to exhibit and preserve art that speaks directly to the many aspects of the LGBTQ experience, and foster the artists who create it. Those early efforts have yielded one of the most unique archives of work that would have otherwise been lost or destroyed, and comprises the core of our collection that now houses more than 30,000 objects.

*Expanded Visions: Fifty Years of Collecting* mines the rich cultural coffers of the Museum's permanent collection to trace the evolution of the Museum amid shifting social conditions. As a survey of our collection, we have chosen works of art that represent known, venerated artists as well as objects created by individuals unrecognized in the canon, combined to help to tell a compelling story about our shared history.

Confronting emergent themes in queer history, *Expanded Visions* addresses centuries of evolving social systems in which public issues and debate sparked a rich culture of queer artistic practice, invoking the expressive power of identity politics in visual culture. Ideas of censorship, obscenity laws, and their overt persecution in the 1950's and 1960's are challenged by the work of Chuck Renslow, Neel Bate, and others. Works from the Culture Wars era, such as those by Robert Mapplethorpe, will be in conversation with untitled, unattributed objects dating to the 1800's and early 1900's in order to acknowledge a past that has been hidden from history. Other sections of the exhibition—featuring work by artists such as Berenice Abbott, Catherine Opie, and Cathy Cade—approach themes of body image through the documentation of queer communities, simultaneously challenging the dominant standards of heteronormative beauty while also creating a visual history where one did not exist. Works highlighting sexual spaces and intimate sites—both public and private—afford the HIV and AIDS crisis of the 1980's a prominent presence in the thematic discourse of the exhibition as well.

*Expanded Visions* weaves together a tapestry of intersectional queer identities throughout centuries of art-making, asserting the richness and cultural import of the Leslie-Lohman Museum's expansive collection as it has evolved within the kaleidoscopic social landscape of queer culture throughout the years. Special efforts will be made through the layout design and label didactics to connect well-known, iconic queer artists with lesser known or lost artists to ultimately reveal the unique archive of works embedded herein. We look forward to using the selected works from our collection to tell the story of our evolving Museum institution and our efforts to diversify and broaden our collection along the intersections of age, race, class, ability, sex and sexuality.