

## HANNAH QUINLAN AND ROSIE HASTINGS

*Gaby*

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It is fitting that one of the first American mainstream depictions of post-Stonewall gay culture, via one of its first anthems (*Y.M.C.A.* by Village People), would situate gay sociality within the physical location of a Christian charity organization. That the category of homosexual has ever existed owes much to Christian charity itself, a moral principle designed to unite a community of people who had lost their common interest (namely, the world). In the case of the people from the ‘Village’, the euphemistic proposal to “get yourself clean” at the YMCA (submitted as a pretext for aberrant sexual behavior), mirrors the simultaneous movement of a contingent gay community to clean up the West Village (in their eventual pursuit of wealth accumulation and inclusion within Christian family structures). This is only to say that the radical aspects of gay socialization were always anchored to their non-place in society and the extraterritorial spaces they inhabited, and were never acutely reducible to biological fact.

In the collaborative practice of London-based artists Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings, the appearances of LGBTQ culture are evaluated, in both their establishment and clandestine forms, as a tactile environment of lived signs that is performed and transformed by its inhabitants. Under historical circumstances that have liquidated the realms of public and private in favor of an all encompassing society, the queer culture that Quinlan and Hastings undertake is of a foregrounded intimacy; the intimacy of darkened spaces, and of biological processes necessarily brought towards illumination. Utilizing drawing and digital video (and their intersection in digital animation), the works of Quinlan and Hastings serve as both a document of, and proposition for, the social spaces of queer life.

In *Gaby*, a new video work named for the duo’s best friend, the artists present three vignettes highlighting intersections of gay culture (its iconography, politics and relationships) and the police (their tactics and their personnel). The vignettes include: a montage of found video clips where active police dance to *Y.M.C.A.* at pride parades, often joined by celebrating paraders; an animatics sequence of a 1977 issue of *Christopher Street* magazine, extolling (white, male) gay communities’ propensity to rejuvenate disregarded neighborhoods and “save” Manhattan from the “slums”; and a recounting by the eponymous Gaby of his brief relationship as an eighteen-year-old with a straight-presenting gay cop.

In conjunction with the video work, exhibited are a suite of new pencil drawings each titled, *We Haven’t Spoken Since*, a reference to the current status of Gaby’s relationship with the cop. The scenes depicted are of a shadowy twilight world in a bar like nowhere, populated by buxom alphas who are physically admirable but too mutable to be statuesque. And unlike the Village People, whose performed archetypes (policeman, Indian, soldier, worker) proffered legibility in exchange for circulation, the figures rendered by Quinlan and Hastings express the remainder in that equation, that which is unseeable in plain sight: the no-man’s land between the mask and your face.

Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings (b. 1991, Newcastle/ London) live and work in London. Their work centers on themes of queerness and resistance, and includes the ongoing project *@Gaybar*, where the artists re-stage the historicized gay bar as a container for queer practice, and the *UK Gay Bar Directory*, a moving image archive of gay bars in the UK. Selected gallery exhibitions include Arcadia Missa, London; Truth and Consequences, Geneva; 15th Venice Architecture Biennale; Oslo 10, Basel; Room E10-27, Paris. Their work has been presented in institutions such as Birmingham Museum of Contemporary Art, Birmingham; Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool; The David Roberts Art Foundation, London; and Somerset House, London. A publication documenting the *UK Gay Bar Directory* was released by Arcadia Missa in 2017.