



## Press Release:

# Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings 'In My Room'

16 February to 31 May 2020

Launch event: Saturday 15 February,

6.00pm to 8.00pm. All welcome.



Focal Point Gallery is pleased to announce *In My Room*, Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings' first solo institutional exhibition, bringing together film, fresco painting and works on paper. As a new body of work, *In My Room* develops the artists' enquiry into the politics, histories and aesthetics of queer spaces and culture. This enquiry builds on their travels across the UK whilst making 'UK Gay Bar Directory (UKGBD)' 2016, a vast project documenting the systematic closure of LGBTQA+ dedicated social spaces. To Quinlan and Hastings, it became apparent through this research that the gay scene caters predominantly to white gay men. This prompted them to consider how this scene strengthens the historic male access to capital and sexual freedom, acting as an accelerator for masculinity, capitalism and power within the urban landscape.

Wishing to explore the question of access further in their new film, Quinlan and Hastings went location scouting in Birmingham's gay village, only to find that in fact many of the bars and clubs have recently closed or will close in the next few months, due to the area being rapidly redeveloped as luxury residential accommodation in anticipation of the new high-speed rail line. This gave the film – and Quinlan and Hastings' ongoing wider archival project – a new urgency to capture these historical LGBTQA+ spaces at a time of immense change, thereby highlighting the impact of gentrification upon the cultural substructures of a city and its gay communities.

In conjunction with the archival impulse of the film, Quinlan and Hastings have used dance and the performing body as a way to think through and investigate the ways in which male interaction and power are consolidated, particularly in relation to male sex culture. The film is set in three different locations: Bar Jester and the Core club in Birmingham and Shoeburyness Fort in Southend-on-Sea. Recently closed, Bar Jester had been open since the 1970s, transitioning from a men-only venue in the 1980s to a women-upstairs men-downstairs layout, and then into a mixed venue. The Core club is a members-only, men-only venue which hosts monthly club nights: it will close in the coming months. The third location, Shoeburyness Fort, was used by the British School of Gunnery as a training and experimental base for the army since 1859, then re-armed during World War 2 as part of the coastal defence, but now in disuse. Another form of a male-only environment at that time, the imposing, yet desolate Fort is flanked by the Thames Estuary one side, and by a recently built housing development on the other.

Within these three locations, the camera focuses on the strict routine of the line dancing format which is performed by the dancers without any emotional connection to the music or communication with each other. In contrast, a specially choreographed shadow dance (a derivative of the line dance) allows for a much more charged mirroring of the dancers' bodies, whose interaction becomes intensely intimate and at times, almost violent. The film suggests a subconscious reproduction of power in public space through codes, gestures and behaviour. Wall rubbings of the stone relief that fronted the Bar Jester appear as a repeating motif throughout the film. These unique works are also presented on paper in the exhibition. A ghostly record of an iconic LGBTQA+ venue at the moment of its passing, the Jester takes on a life of its own as a folkloric and governing character.

Quinlan and Hastings will also create a major new fresco painting in the gallery, bringing this specialist, ancient technique into contemporary practice by engaging with the public and architectural nature of the medium. Depicting a high street populated by pedestrians, this quotidian imagery considers the role urban architecture plays in the formation of identities, and reflects on the ways in which movement is informed by a culture of male dominance. At a time of extreme and ongoing austerity, heightened surveillance and the privatisation of public spaces, the street is an increasingly contested and political zone.

### **Selected c.v.**

Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings (both born 1991 Newcastle & London) live and work in London. They have participated in group shows including the recent 'Cruising Pavilion: Architecture, Gay Sex and Cruising Culture', ArkDes, Stockholm; 'Kiss My Genders', Hayward Gallery, London; and 'Queer Spaces: London, 1980s - Today', Whitechapel Gallery, London (all 2019). Solo presentations include 'Something for The Boys', Two Queens, Leicester (2018) and 'Gaby', Queer Thoughts, NYC (2018). Recent performances took place for Image Behaviour, ICA (2019), Art Night (2019), Move Festival, Pompidou Centre (2019), and Kiss My Gender Live, Southbank Centre (2019).

## Acknowledgements

In making the film, the artists have worked with choreographer Les Child, singer Jesse Hultberg and dancers: Ted Rodgers, Matthew Hawkins, Paul Liburd, Christopher Sparkey, Gary O'Brien and Lucille Marshall. The soundtrack for the film will be produced by Owen Pratt and includes the song 'In My Room' by Mark and The Mambas. Rosie Taylor is the Director of Photography. The artists trained with Fleur Kelly to learn the classic Roman technique for fresco painting.

## About Focal Point Gallery (FPG)

Focal Point Gallery (FPG) supports the production and presentation of new and recent contemporary art that challenges us to think and feel differently about locality, our sense of self and the importance of communities. Our wide-ranging and pioneering artistic programme is relevant to local and national audiences alike, through exploring current concerns that also resonate internationally. Based in Southend-on-Sea on the Thames Estuary, FPG's activities take place in locations across the region with our reach extended by working collaboratively with like-minded partners.

FPG is located on the ground floor of The Forum building in Elmer Square, 100 metres from Southend Central Station. (Trains are every fifteen minutes from London Fenchurch Street, journey time fifty minutes.) As south Essex's only public funded gallery for contemporary art, FPG receives regular funding from Arts Council England as a National Portfolio Organisation and is part of Southend-on-Sea Borough Council from which it receives ongoing support.

Opening hours: Wednesday to Saturday 10.00am to 5.00pm,  
Sunday 11.00am to 4.00pm

For further information, please contact [laurabowen@southend.gov.uk](mailto:laurabowen@southend.gov.uk)  
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