



Light After Dark

A Selection of Artworks & Writings
Examining Queer Culture & Nightlife in London

Edited by Kat Hudson, featuring written work by Ben Walters, Fenella Hitchcock, Angel Rose, Gina Tonic, Otamere Guobadia, Lyall Hakaraia, and La John Joseph

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Cover Image by Rachel Hodgson
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OURS

An introduction from *Light After Dark* exhibition curator and editor of this zine: contemporary pop-surrealist artist, gallerist and club-goer, Kat Hudson

I caught a late night train down to the south coast from London Victoria the other week and met a lovely couple that, for the purposes of this piece, we'll call Brad and Janet.

Brad and Janet ran panting on to the train just as the doors were closing with a half-empty bottle of Barefoot Cabernet Sauvignon, and sat down opposite me beaming with red-lipped triumphant grins. I smiled and complimented them on their refreshment setup. Janet offered me a drink.

Brad and Janet were in their 30s, neatly put together, Brad in a starched white Hugo Boss t-shirt and Janet with her tight blonde curls. They were on their way back from a rare night on the town for which Janet had managed to find a babysitter for their daughter. In good spirits, we all got chatting. Brad was a builder and Janet a contractor working remotely for a central London firm. I divulged to them that, amongst my other professions as a designer, artist, and promoter, I was working on an exhibition with the National Trust on Queer London club culture, to celebrate fifty years since the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in England and Wales. They were intrigued and we started to have the most wonderfully honest and open conversation about LGBTQ+ people and the journey we've been on that I think I've had with anyone outside of the community to date.

"I don't mind people being gay or anythin' Brad seemed a little uneasy, 'two blokes walking down the street holding hands don't bother me. It's just those ones who have to rub it in your face makes me feel all queasy. Like you can't not look at 'em, wearing women's clothes, all in your face, walkin' 'n' talkin' like women too, all loud. It's like they're going out of their way to rub it in. Why try so hard to be different?!"

I listened patiently until he had finished before putting across my point of view. "Has it occurred to you," I said in a purposefully calm and considered tone, "that for the people who act and dress like this, being anything else would in fact be the thing that they would have to 'try so hard' to be." Brad was not yet convinced, so I continued, "If you walked into one of our spaces, where we all dress to the nines, flamboyant as hell, gender boundaries out the window, it would be YOU who would be the one who's in OUR faces - trying so hard to present yourself in the way you want to be perceived."

"I don't try hard to be anything" he chimed in, defensively. "It could be argued otherwise," I said, "Your white pressed Hugo Boss T-Shirt, your thick silver chain, gelled hair." Janet raised her eyebrows at him and smiled as she took another sip of wine. "But that's not" - "You do," said Janet. "But that's just who I am" said Brad. "Exactly!" I exclaimed. "That's just who you are! And that's just who we are. If you were in our

space you would be the ones who, in your words, would look like you were rubbing your 'otherness' in our faces. You would be the ones that didn't fit in." ... "Ah," he said. He thought he had me now.. "But we wouldn't come into your spaces though would we" ... I smiled, my volume lowered and my enthusiasm softened. "The difference is though Brad, that your space is the whole world. We just have a few little dingy clubs in East London." He sat back, eyes wide. He understood. He still didn't like how it made him feel but he understood. Janet got it too. We all poured another cup of Cabernet Sauvignon.

The journey continued amicably as did the conversation. We talked about homophobia on building sites, about lesbianism and what if their daughter was gay (not the same by the way, lesbians don't make Brad that uncomfortable), parties, work, and children.

'You know what though,' said Brad as the tannoy announced their stop, 'On a building site, the toilets are the most disgusting thing you'll ever see. 'orrible smell, full of graffiti too. Now ten or so years ago it was all kinds of homophobic

shit, so-and-so's gay, such-and-such bums such-and-such. etc. etc..' He paused, his tone softened, and with a sense of pride he looked at me and said, 'don't see none of that stuff in there now.'

Legally, we've taken so many amazing, positive leaps as a community since 1967, but socially a lot of prejudices still lie beneath the surface. Of all the different viewpoints presented in this zine, one that remains constant is that we all feel different from what is widely considered to be 'normal'. We don't all want to feel integrated with the norm either. Although some do and that's ok too - see the homonormative club nights of the new(ish) LGBTQ+ mainstream that's popped up since legalisation. I very much hold the view that being yourself should not, in itself, be an act of rebellion. Rebellion should be something that you choose for yourself. As a whole I feel confident in saying that we just want our differences to be accepted for what they are, celebrated, and to celebrate them with each other in our own spaces - spaces where we fit in. Spaces in which we can pretend, if only for the night, that the whole world is ours.

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QUEER FUN MATTERS

Ben Walters

This year is the fiftieth anniversary of partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in England in Wales. There's quite rightly been a lot of attention paid to histories of exclusion, oppression, marginalisation and violence. But there's another queer history to remember, one of equal importance: a queer history of fun. Fun might not always be easy to come by but it plays a vital role in queer lives, whether in the form of friendship, sex, partying, making art or other expressions of

pleasure, self-expression and togetherness by queer people on queer terms. Fun matters. Fun is worth taking

seriously. Fun is a powerful engine of thoughts, words, actions, relationality and change. Fun is embodied and performative. Fun builds muscles. And fun does things. Fun is also utterly subjective. Different people have different ideas of fun.

My idea of fun is stimulating and absorbing activity that has positive emotional and affective associations, is bounded in time and space, and is perceived by those experiencing or observing it as having low stakes. But that's just me. Your idea of fun might be knitting or fisting or running through fields of wheat.

Fun offers relief from everyday boredom

and frustration. But it does more than that. Even though it looks or feels disposable and inconsequential – those perceived low stakes – fun models and rehearses values, behaviour and interactions that have wider ethical and political consequences. The fun you have says a lot about the world you want.

Fun can be radical, progressive, emancipatory. But it doesn't have to be. Fun is powerful and it is political

but it does not have inherently defined political values. There are different kinds of fun and some of them are loathsome. Last year, fun was a big part of Donald Trump's early election rallies.

They had carnivalesque atmospheres. "Do we have the most fun?" Trump asked from the podium, and the crowd cheered. The people who chanted "lock her up", spat at reporters and shoved women and people of colour – they were having fun. Those rallies were full of nasty laughter and brutal fellow-feeling. It was fascist fun – the kind of fun that trains people in fascist thinking and behaviour. But other kinds of fun do different things. Queer fun, for instance. What is queer fun? I wouldn't offer a fixed answer. That wouldn't be very queer.

To me, it's fun that celebrates diverse sexualities and gender identities.

'Queer fun is about finding joy in relief from normative expectations but it's also a platform for resistance to oppression and a space to rehearse utopia.'

Fun that values marginality, fluidity, contingency and critical thinking.

Fun that sees the value of real bodies and real feelings.

Fun that is fine with complexity, contradiction and failure.

Fun that has no time for normal.

Fun that imagines stranger, better futures.

Fun that celebrates fun for fun's sake.

Queer fun is about finding joy in relief from normative expectations but it's also a platform for resistance to oppression and a space to rehearse utopia.

Those low stakes mean fun often gets trivialised. (Just a bit of fun.)

It also means fun often gets ignored – which means you can get away with a lot under the guise of fun.

So have queer fun. Build queer muscles. Take strength and wisdom from queer fun past. Use queer playgrounds in the present to make a start on queer futures.

And take fun seriously. It just might save the world.

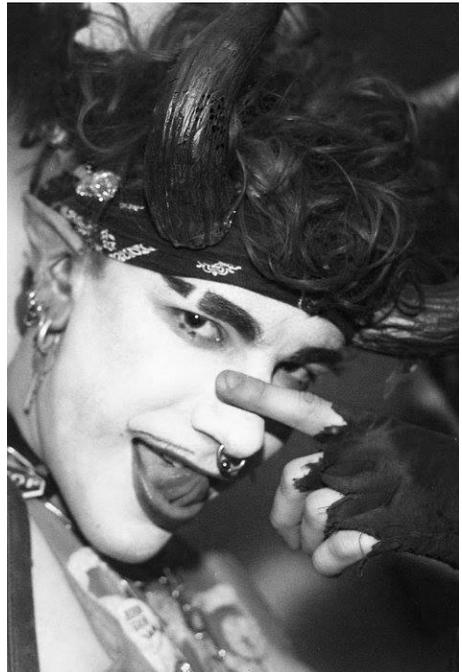
Ben Walters is a doctoral candidate at Queen Mary, University of London, researching the work of Duckie and how to do things with fun. He and Duckie presented a day of Queer Fun at the Royal Vauxhall Tavern in June. Ben is also a writer, programmer and campaigner to support queer spaces. He blogs at nottelevision.net.

‘Take fun seriously. It just might save the world.’



^ Club-goers at Pxxsy Palace by Sara Ahmad.

Jenkin by Emily Rose England v



CLUBLAND

Fenella Hitchcock

THE AGONY BEFORE THE ECSTASY

When committed to paper in stark black and white, enduring biblical rain while you queue up outside a dingy basement bar at 11.34 on a Friday night in East London doesn't seem to hold much excitement or appeal. Sucking on a cigarette cadged from the girl in front of you, eyes gritty with glitter and face stiff from hairspraying your makeup in place, you try and ignore the fact that your feet are wet and numb from walking forty minutes to the club. Did anyone ever end up with trench foot because they decided that two extra cans would contribute more to the success of the evening than arriving warm and dry? Beside you, your friend begins to perform an elaborate form of striptease, simultaneously draining the last of his acrid piss wine and wriggling out of the 'decoy clothes' he wore in order to avoid unwanted attention from hordes of White Shirt Men that plague the City's streets after dark on weekends.

So why bother? Did you play Non-Stop Erotic Cabaret one too many times? Is the image of the purple and black exterior of your hometown's only goth club and the exotic creatures you'd see hanging around outside imprinted on your mind's eye for all eternity? Did Party Monster honestly make that much of an impression? Or is there a hint of necessity to this whole experience - something more urgent than pure indulgence? London after dark is inarguably one of the most rich and vibrant sites of club culture and the myth of clubland past looms heavy for the sort of individual

interested in a very specific kind of clubbing experience - one that stresses creativity, transformation and, above all, the pleasure of release. These club nights, predominantly independent adhoc affairs organised by members of subcultural groups for a subcultural audience actively seek to create a space in which like-minded strangers can drink, dance, laugh and cop off with each other and fashion, to use the term in an all-encompassing sense, plays an integral role here. Neither fashion nor the nightclub are intrinsically queer but both are significant sites of queer cultural production and the collision of the two holds immense, electrifying potential for the articulation and re-configuration of the way that we choose to communicate, experience and think about sexuality and gender.

A DICTATORSHIP AT THE DOOR AND A DEMOCRACY ON THE DANCE FLOOR

Waiting patiently in line can feel positively Sisyphean, particularly if you're fresh on the scene or soaked to the skin, but eventually you come face to face with the hulking great mass of the hired security. He acknowledges your friend's outfit choice with a soft smile and pokes through the contents of your clutch. Is anyone actually stupid enough to keep their drugs in their purse? He hands it back and squares your eye. 'Please don't ask me if I've got any ID, please don't ask me if I've got any ID, please don't ask me if...' Finally, he waves you in.

The final hurdle. The Door Bitch. The

most entertaining and terrifying of their kind guard the door with a theatrical ferocity that owes everything to the glamorous bogey(wo)men who stood at the entrances to legendary clubs decades before them. Cerberus in thigh high vinyl boots, a market stall negligee and ratted hair is knocking back flat lager while she stares down a pair of tourists in denim. 'Don't you get it? This is not a spectator event! Take part or fuck off.' Admission is ultimately determined by the way you've adorned your body as opposed to what's in your wallet and your drag is your golden ticket. She cocks a heavily pencilled brow and asks you if you're on the cheap list, taking her time to find your names, flicking through the list several times and pausing to ask, 'how do you spell that again, dear?' Pretending this is Studio 54 and not some rank basement bar in Hackney is all part of the performance, of course. Eventually she gives it up, takes your three quid and turns her attention to the next bunch of revellers. She is radiant with power, guardian of the gate and enforcer of the alternative fashion system put in place by her set of queers, misfits and show offs. In many ways, the ultimate stylist.

As you descend the narrow staircase into the bar below, something seems to shift. It's not the heat of bodies, or the pre-drinks, or your vertiginous heels that are a size too big. The rules of the everyday dissolve, time stretches like elastic. The so-called 'golden age' of clubbing of the 1980s and 90s has evidently moulded the looks and outlooks of your fellow revellers: period costume details are paired with

'Don't you get it? This is not a spectator event! Take part or fuck off.'

breastplates, bodypaint smears on elaborate wigs, skip finds rub up against experiments which will later form the basis of The Next Big Thing's graduate collection. Nightlife has long been held up as an integral part of fashion practice and process and an interrogation into where you went out at the weekend

is seen to be as valid a basis for crit sessions as questions about the inspiration you found in the university library. The club may be a catwalk (either billed as such or in a more spontaneous sense) but it is also a space to test ideas, somewhere to find a muse as much

as lover or a new set of friends. The influence of 1980s fashion in London is not only evident through what these individuals have on their backs, but also in the emphasis on personal expression, originality and the 'one-off' and the significance given to social life and the necessity to work across fields. Of course, there'll always be someone who takes a look around and sneers, 'well, I've seen that before,' and yes, references to Westwood, Galliano, BodyMap, the Neo-Naturists, Gaultier and a whole range of countercultural icons are legion at nights like this. Appropriation is key, as it always was, and what's wrong with homage anyway? The fact that the recognisable design elements of these looks still speak to the interests, times and lived experience of a new generation of artists, writers, designers, models and performers is testament to the strength of the original. Besides, knocking off your idols is the first step towards inventing something new, it's just that the most polished and arresting looks disguise the hours of labour, thought and error that has come before - that's half of the magic.

MONEY, SUCCESS, FAME, GLAMOUR

The line between leisure and performance blurs; someone gets up on the bar and does a seemingly impromptu lip sync, a small group perform a carefully choreographed dance they'd been practicing for a week, someone else stands in the middle of the dancefloor knitting. To the outside world, these carefully crafted after-dark personas may seem little more than empty, dishonest posing but what could be more honest than dressing up, which exposes the truth of how sexuality and gender is always constructed, from the disco to the dole queue.

At some point, you'll need to take a breather from throwing yourself around the dancefloor to brave the elements

‘what could be more honest than dressing up, which exposes the truth of how sexuality and gender is always constructed, from the disco to the dole queue.’

and smoke (for ‘smoking area’, read: ‘the pavement outside’). Tottering back up the stairs and out into the cold, you wrap your fur tightly around your chest and shelter your wig under the umbrella of another party goer who’s too pissed to light up. You pull their cigarette out of their mouth, clamp the soggy filter

between your front teeth and do it for them, asking to cadge one in return for your trouble. ‘Fuck’s sake, they’re Sobranie... But I suppose so.’ They shove the packet into your hand. ‘I want to give up but you always meet the best people in the

smoking area and everyone wants to be your friend if they can steal a fag that matches their acrylics.’ For some it’s business as well as pleasure and the club can be a professionally ‘beneficial’ for those that want to get ahead. It’s not unusual for people to turn up with an agenda or in order to make specific ‘connections’ and the club can act as a form of DIY ‘fame’, at merely a local level or as a stepping stone towards a larger stage. While years gone by you might have been desperate to catch the eye of the photographer for your favourite magazine or to get snapped for weknowwhatyoudidlastnight.com, these days everyone has a camera in their pocket and, hey, if you turned out a killer look but forgot to record it to post on the internet, does it really still count?



Fenella Hitchcock is a fashion and cultural historian, writer, and lecturer. Her work focuses on themes of sexuality, queer nightlife, performance / art, biography, and oral history.

^Victoria Sin by Sara Ahmad

EXCERPT FROM UTOPIA ON THE DANCEFLOOR

Angel Rose

Within both popular culture and historic records, the nightclub is often depicted as a utopia - a site of freedom, celebration, and empowerment. Historically, London has vast and vibrant tradition of club culture. While British subcultural movements of the mid 20th century such as mods, teddy boys or punk rockers may have utilised night clubs as places to congregate, it was not until the 1980s, that London clubs like The Blitz, Mud Club, The Batcave and Taboo transformed clubbing from a youth culture pastime, into a creative revolution.

These clubs - and the characters that filled them - would be generally described as either central or satellite to the early 80s New Romantic movement, which was characterized by outrageous outfits and post-punk music, as well as progressive attitudes towards art, sex and politics. Within the movement, dressing for clubbing became an art form and the outfits exhibited by New Romantics raised questions about the construction of identity, gender and history. In the words of Dave Halsam: “the New Romantics didn’t just wear mad clothes, they became new people.”

The promise of “becoming who you really are” is something that is ingrained into the mythology of the city, and the core values of New Romanticism – namely fun, flamboyance and personal freedom – can still be felt at the heart of the today’s club scene, particularly within its alternative and queer circles. While it may be easy to romanticise countercultural movements of the past, the notion of London as a permissive paradise still attracts thousands of young creatives to the city each year. However, there is something for me about the clubbing experience that goes

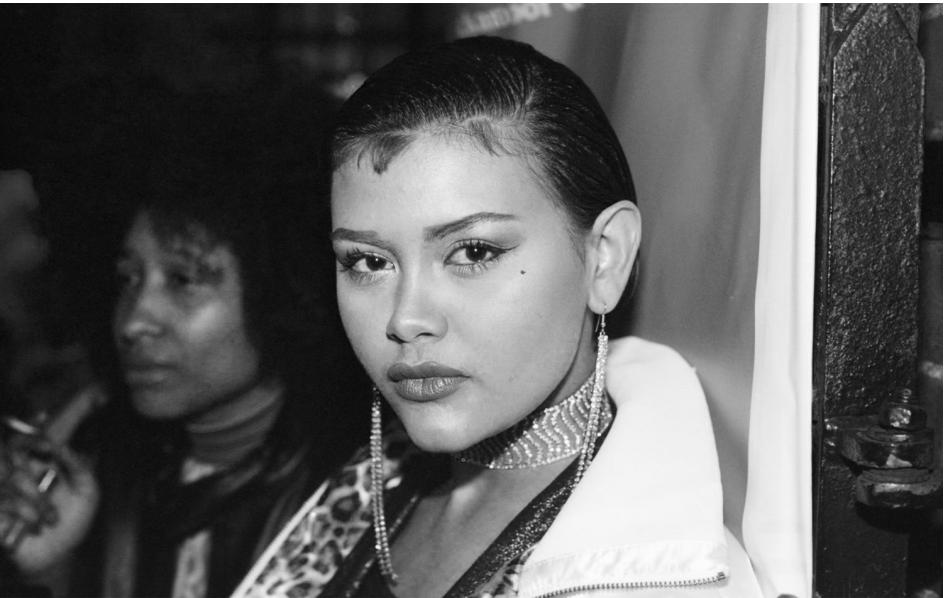
beyond fashion or youth culture. Those trends will change over time, but the joy of totally losing yourself amongst a crowd on sweaty dance floor is something that is almost universal. The night club dance floor has the capacity to connect us in ways that might seem unimaginable in the light of day, and these experiences stay with us – even after the party is over.

For me, dancing is the most liberating element of clubbing. The nightclub dance floor is a distinct social space, and the way in which we experience crowds of strangers in a club is dramatically different from the way we experience crowds in daily city life. Catching a stranger’s eye on the tube is fiercely avoided by most city-dwellers but on a nightclub dance floor, random eye contact might be responded to with a sweaty smile or a knowing wink. To smile with a stranger is rare thing in this city. I understand that these moments of eye contact that I’m describing are small, microscopic even, but they are important when we compare them to other daily exchanges of city life, so often suffused with anxiety and mistrust.

The atmospherics of clubs - flashing lights, smoke, and loud music disorientate us from the dictates of the everyday. On the dance floor we are emboldened. We feel love, and we feel ecstasy.

Read full article in FUN CITY: UTOPIA ON THE DANCEFLOOR No.1

Angel Rose is a video, performance, and printed media artist. Her video work has been screened internationally, at film festivals and exhibition spaces including Centre Pompidou, The ICA, and The BFI. Read more of her work in her fabulous series of zines including Fun City, Sick Bag, and Serious Fun.



Photographs of club-goers at VFDalston and Polyester Party 2015-2017 by Emily Rose England



QUEER NIGHTLIFE

Gina Tonic

It's too simple to compare a club night to a watering hole, a scavenger hunt or a mating dance. It's an allegory that has been drawn time after time, in any situation that heterosexual people are present, and able to date. My problem has never been with the routine, with trying to find someone to fuck: The crudeness of dancing with your friends, to see which guy has caught who's eye, and whether or not it's acceptable to be fingered in the back of a taxi.

Instead of an animalistic ritual, it's a royal, tiered hierarchy. One in which to be accepted you must be the funnest, the fittest, the most fucked and the most fuckable.

Instead of dancing crudely with my friends and getting fucked up for the sole purpose of getting fucked up, the formative years of my nightclub attendance was teetering on tippy toes in Matalan heels. Three way snogs and screaming at your ex and being shagged sideways by somebody's older brother's mate. Control pants that squeeze, covered by control top tights that constrict until you're sick. Femininity performed in a way that isn't performance, but pressure.

Being queer in a small town found

myself surrounded by a kind of queerness that was just as unaccepting as the boys in the clubs who found my friends fitter than me. I was slim because they liked me, fat when they hated me. Judging foundation marks and cellulite while grabbing girl's bums because it doesn't mean anything. Because it's fun. Because it's funny. Because it's so much harder growing up gay in a small town, in the small Valleys, in the small country of Wales.

'Our differences and our depressions, our brightness and brilliance was too much for too many people, until we built our own rooms to wreak havoc in.'

Having big breasts is an open invitation: They push against my bra towards you. They're in your eyeline, they're basically in your hand. It's okay, it's nothing sexual. You've never cared about tits, not on pop up

ads or page three or nudes that went around school. Men's topless Tuesdays were the only reason you had a Tumblr account. It isn't sexual. You'll comment on them first and I'll cackle. I can't kick off - it's not sexual. I laugh, because it's not sexual.

"Escaping" is a loaded term, because nobody escapes where they come from. Nobody leaves it behind when they leave. Not all of us want to either. The word is liberation: stemming from living in a city, from living in a city with a queer population, queer nights, queer days, queer outfits and queer moderated

Fun™. It's open. It's different. And that's the point.

When I get asked before I am touched, I am content. When I can scream and it's met by more, I am content. When I am wearing next to nothing as a size 18, tottering in heels I can't walk in, lipstick on my chin and a stranger tells me I'm beautiful, I'm content. When there is no ill intent, I am content.

Sexuality may be the beginning of my queerness, but it doesn't take up all of it. My otherness comes from my fat, from my face, from my screeching brashness that took up too

much space in unsafe spaces. Being queer is about standing out.

Our differences and our depressions, our brightness and brilliance was too much for too many people, until we built our own rooms to wreak havoc in. Being queer is about fitting in.

Gina Tonic is a writer, online editor for Polyester Zine and head of social media at We Are Cow. Her work focuses on issues of

feminism and personal style,

Read more from her in Dazed, Bustle, Crack Magazine, The Debrief, and more.



^Gina Tonic by Kat Hudson

THE PRICE OF ADMISSION: ON QUEER NIGHTLIFE AND THOSE WHO ARE LEFT BEHIND

Otamere Guobadia

For time immemorial, Nightlife has always borne a very particular primacy and importance to queer people and to queer people of colour in particular. Mainstream narratives of nightlife always account for frivolity of the exercise, without accounting necessarily for its purpose. I would argue that to queer people, nightlife has historically, never been pure hedonism, but rather we are night creatures—the people in the margins trying to fiercely and hurriedly reclaim the solidarity, personhood, and intimacy so often denied to us by the light of day. Thus Nightclubs, and ‘ballrooms’ become spaces of creation; communion; an exercise in liberation.

In a white supremacist, heteronormative society that visits violence upon queer bodies – those bodies that deviate from it’s own entrenched standard--the mental health of LGBTQ people is necessarily devastated. Recent studies show that Nearly 50% of trans people under the age of 26 have attempted suicide. Such are the effects of slurs and physical violence, and the profound effects denial of personhood, community and representation bear upon the mental health of queer people; It is the inability to envision a future without violence and rejection; a frustrated desire for space in which

one’s life, loves, and body are not a thing to be demeaned or ridiculed, but rather normalised, and even celebrated.

Owen Jones, queer media figure and journalist for The Guardian, walked out of a live television interview over a guest’s belligerent attempt to deny that the 2016, Orlando massacre (that devastated the LGBTQ Latinx community in Florida) was at it’s very heart, a queerphobic attack.

Queer nightlife is resistance; it is a practice of survival. Queer nightclubs are in some manner of speaking culturally sacrosanct. They too are places of worship. Through a heteronormative lens it might seem

paradoxical to hold something so irreverent as nightlife in such reverence, but to to see bodies like yours thrive and enjoy themselves is nourishing; to have those thoughts and desires normally demonized by wider society, affirmed and unchallenged is a life-sustaining necessity.

But here I depart from egalitarian fantasy. Queer nightlife might have the potential to be radically and beneficially transformative to those that find themselves encompassed by it– to provide avenues and build communities– but the toxic status quo in which we find ourselves leaves so much to be desired.

‘Nightclubs, and
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LGBTQ nightlife, and the performance of queer identities lend themselves quite naturally to aestheticization: to the creation of queer aesthetics. The boldness of its fashions, a historically entrenched disregard for gender norms; an abundance of colour, and pomp and camp ceremony. Nor is there anything inherently wrong with this aestheticization. Resistance does not necessarily lose its teeth by virtue of being glamorous, but rather by leaving behind its most vulnerable. The curation of resistance becomes a hindrance to resistance itself when it dictates who may be allowed to have that resistance celebrated, and who having sought refuge and acceptance in queer niche, from the suffocation society, is only further rejected.

What happens when queer counterculture, last bastion and protector of outcast, begins to devour its own most vulnerable?

There are numerous widespread examples of how institutions of queer nightlife fail to interrogate their own reproduction of structural violence. So many cool and avant-garde spaces that promise queer revelry and liberation almost always end up replicating the hegemonic standards of beauty and popularity that they should be divesting from. In London there are numerous documented incidents of nightclubs such as DSTRKT refusing entry to black people on the basis of their race. Mainstream spaces that market themselves as 'queer' spaces are mostly dominated by and predominately catered towards white, gay men.

Queer venues in the capital, and in particular these de facto gay venues, continue to employ entertainers that count blackface and yellow-face acts among their repertoire, and in multiple cases both performer and venue have demonstrated a lack of genuine remorse when confronted.

Contemporary mainstream queer spaces then, seem created primarily for the consumption of, and marketed to conventionally attractive people who possess both the socioeconomic capital to occupy these spaces and the license from wider society. White muscular identikit adonises adorn shop fronts in Soho and online advertising

and magazine racks – all a conscious, unflinching alienation of everyone who falls outside of its declared boundaries of beauty. Queer people of colour (QPOC) find spaces filled with their appropriated language and aesthetics, co-

‘a frustrated desire for space in which one’s life, loves, and body are not a thing to be demeaned or ridiculed, but rather normalised, and even celebrated.’

existing with a genuine antipathy for their presence and desire for access to these spaces. It is devastating to note the perverse irony that LGBTQ asylum seekers (primarily queer people of colour) who are routinely asked to prove their queerness by reference to their experience of the UK’s queer scene, and homeless youth, who are disproportionately LGBTQ – both the most vulnerable and marginalised of us – are denied access to the ceremony of nightlife, by prohibitive expense and an exclusionary culture.

It is a culture that projects an image centred around unattainability

and bourgeois exclusivity, merely masquerading as resistance. Hierarchies in queer spaces are so evident not only in racialised door policies, nor in the demographics of these spaces, but in how these nights are recorded. Gay nightlife photography is a study in the erasure of ‘undesirable’ bodies—fat bodies; black bodies; femme bodies; poor bodies; disabled bodies. We should ask ourselves: Who makes it past the club doors? What bodies get photographed? Who gets to be remembered? The importance of club photography should not be underplayed. If for better, or worse “everything exists to end in a photograph”, then there is a profound injustice in refusing to evidence and preserve the history of the those in



our community that society would consider unpretty; a desire and anxiety to be recorded as a member of one’s perceived community and as one’s authentic self, is as valid a desire as any.

These venues create atmospheres that are untenable for those designated undesirable. The true price of admission should not be a forced compromise and forsaking of one’s otherness in order to fit into prescribed boxes of rich, white queer acceptability. There’s something bitterly ironic when queer people who have had their bodies marginalised and policed become gatekeepers and arbiters of what’s chic, beautiful and ultimately worthy of acceptance and celebration.

Counterculture, and specifically queer counterculture, fails to be transgressive if it doesn’t create a sense of community based around empathy— if it does not allow us to imagine other ways that depart from the punishment and rejection society has visited us with; if these spaces do not provide some respite and harbour for all queer peoples. This counterculture fails us if it cannot imagine kinder ways of being and occupying space that aren’t exploitative or exclusionary of the queer people such a movement should seek to celebrate.

It’s not an exaggeration to suggest that in many ways, this is a matter of life or death; isolation and rejection from wider society profoundly damage the mental health of even the most privileged of queer people. Police brutality and racialised violence in a white supremacist world declines the mental health of many people of colour; the reality for many queer people of colour is often a dispossession of any sense of community on both ends—

^ Club-goer at Pxsy Palace 2016 by Kesang Ball

It is the life and experience of the perpetual other: to knock at the door of a queer nightlife that appropriates their culture with the only reward being a merciless alienation. Isolation shortens life expectancy, and increases risks of suicide, and yet we have a status quo that necessitates the isolation of a significant proportion of those most at risk in our community.

This is where we find ourselves now: a queer nightlife scene, that has taken from its people of colour and excluded the most marginalised to which it had a duty, where the necessity for glamour and cool aesthetics has overtaken the primacy of the welfare and emotional well being of its most vulnerable. A scene that appropriates its fashions and its grit and its magic in worship of chicness and bourgeois aesthetic but dislocates its cultural labourers. This is not hopeless, cynical exposition— the status quo is dire, but the situation is not without hope. I do sincerely believe that queer nightlife has the potential to be radically, beneficially transformative. That even the most marginalised of the LGBTQ community can have their personhood reinforced and find safety— but all of this is contingent upon a radical overhaul of existing conditions. Our welfare must retake its primacy above capital gain, and the desire for aesthetic must take its place below

‘A queer nightlife scene founded upon empathy and openness is true resistance — one that moves beyond assimilation and reproduction of a white heteronormative gaze towards something nobler and kinder.’

the welcomingness of the community. These are not merely lofty ideals; there are already people who have begun to do this essential work. Body Party, founded by Kareem Reid, seeks to create a nightlife experience for queer people of colour that is centred on a narrative of their bodies that seeks not to exploit, but to normalise and affirm. Papi Juice and GHE20G0THIK are nightlife experiences created for and by queer and trans people of colour, with an explicit mission to “affirm and uplift queer and trans people of color.”

Queer nightlife has a long way to go to reclaim the heart and soul of its transgressive potential: its warmth, its acceptance, its ability to embrace the variety of life, regardless of race, class or ability. A queer nightlife scene founded upon empathy and openness is true

resistance— one that moves beyond assimilation and reproduction of a white heteronormative gaze towards something nobler and kinder.

Otamere Guobadia is a writer whose work focuses mainly on desire, queerness, race, and millennial life in diaspora. He's the former editor of Oxford based queer and trans publication, No HeterOx, law graduate from University College, Oxford and former President of the Oxford University LGBTQ society. He claims to have 'the shapeliest legs of any nobleman in England. Read more of his work in Huck Magazine, Dazed, The Independent, Gal-dem, and more.

QUEER LEGACY

Lyall Hakaraia

Lyall Hakaraia is a fashion designer, stylist and owner of East London's favourite disco basement, VFD (known to regulars as Vogue Fabrics). VFD is a basement of dreams, an arts space, and hub of queer London with the very best in music, performance and mayhem.

When we first started VFD as a safe place for all of our friends to come and party, sweat, roll in the dirt and have fun the idea that we would still be running a venue almost 10 years later was the last thought to cross our minds then.

When we started our underground unlicensed parties the venue was called 'Death Trap Disco' and summed up our nose thumbing at local

government and our DIY approach to the running, decoration and promotion of the venue. At that time the alternative club scene in London was centred around Soho and Vauxhall that promoted a predictable homo normative culture in which diversity and difference were not welcomed or accommodated.

In our joy of being able to bring different peoples from various underground families together we created a Queer scene that celebrated everyone regardless of their gender or sexuality.

As our events became more regular and grew in popularity the idea that we were creating a new community and so generating culture became a reality. A focal point from early on was to collect and accumulated memories, images and artworks as a record of all that had been.

With our 10 year anniversary coming up in early 2019 we are in the process

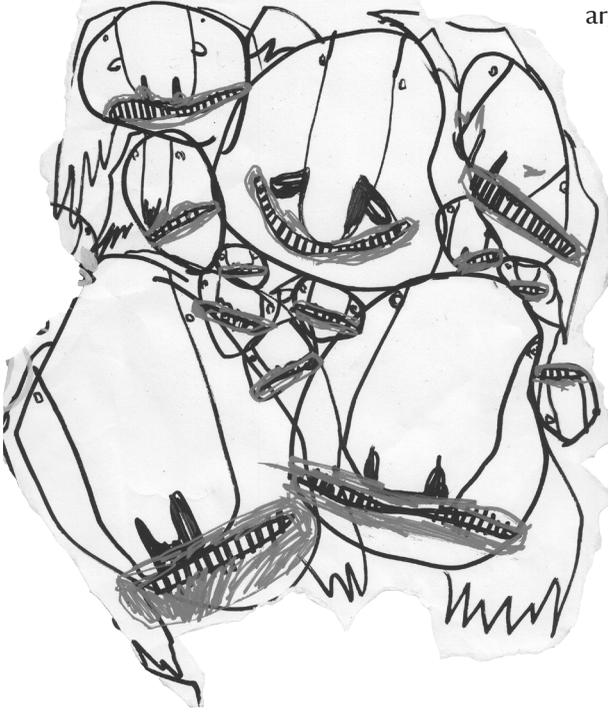
of making a book to mark the many extraordinary people, happenings and artworks created around VFD from our shared community archives. It has been a rewarding process and the echoing sentiment from all those who have been involved with the process is that our community needs to be recorded and cherished for its own sake.

'At that time [when VFD started] the alternative club scene in London was centred around Soho and Vauxhall that promoted a predictable homo normative culture in which diversity and difference were not welcomed or accommodated'

For me keeping a continuous record of our own culture is incredibly important as a representation of who we are at a certain time and place. We need to be keepers of our own histories and to work with queer academics rather than allowing our struggles to

serve as carefully curated rhetoric for unsubstantiated academic arguments and theory. We must collect everything and create extensive networks of reference so that misinterpretation cannot happen by outsiders and that the facts are continuously supported and affirmed from more than one source or point of view.

Our power as a community comes from the control of our own narrative the DIY attitude at the centre of Queer culture is an important ethos that will be reflected I believe in our authentic represented in the future.



**Above: Sketch by Charles Jeffrey
Below: Crop from 2016 VFD Rad Festa Poster by Alexandre Simões and Kevin Le Grand**

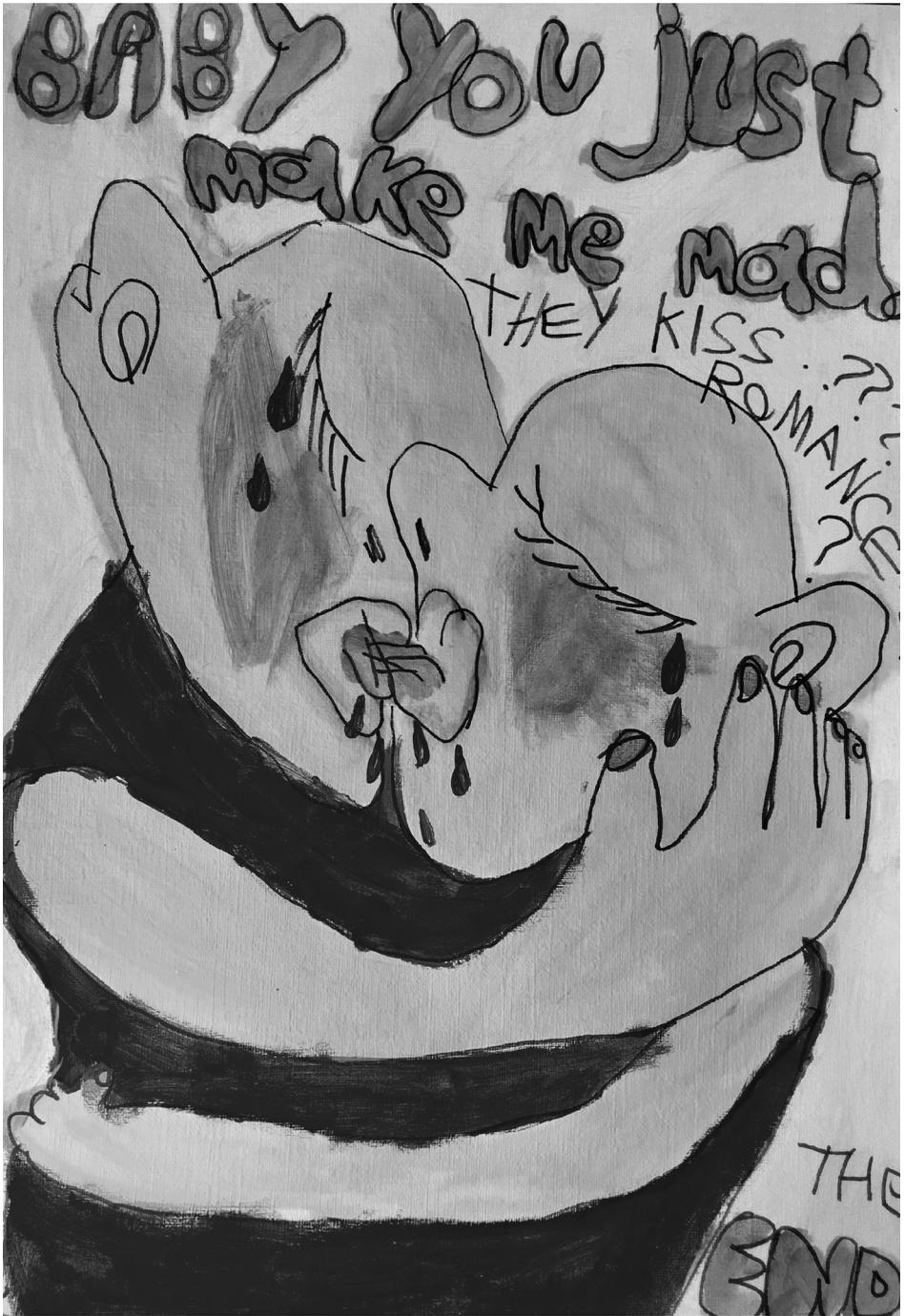


This zine was edited by Kat Hudson kathudson.co.uk and made possible by the National Trust team at Sutton House in Hackney. Having already thanked everybody on page 3 all that's left is to encourage you to come to the *Light After Dark* exhibition at Sutton House nationaltrust.org.uk/sutton-house-and-breakers-yard this autumn, and join us for our events throughout October as part of the *Never Gonna Dance Again* Season; including panel discussions and open debate in collaboration with Queer Spaces Network, lecture performance with readings from distinguished bi-gender poetry lecturer Zoe Graham, usually known as Graham Fawcett (Oct 3rd), and queer self publication fair including zine workshops run by the team at The National Archives, Kew (Oct 15th) more details can be found online. Until then we'll bid you farewell and leave you with this rather beautiful poem by artist La JohnJoseph:

It was nice to love you for a little while,
completely by chance,
like a hamburger wrapper which had blown across your path,
catching the front of your shoe.

It was nice to feel like I wasn't,
failing,
constantly,
to not be,
but rather that I had succeeded in being,
and being something you desired,
which,
remarkably,
I also desired to be.

How often does that happen?
Not defined by my lack,
not summoned into being by what I was without,
not commodified,
not mauled and pandered to,
not something sacred or wicked or needing to be dealt with,
Just organic matter that twitched in its very own manner.
And loved for it,
completely by chance.



^ Painting of lovers by Rachel Hodgson 2017. Working in the medium of pound shop paints, crayons and sharpie pen, Rachel's work explores gender, romance and despair. See more in the Light After Dark exhibition at Sutton House in Hackney this Autumn (Sept 28 - Oct 29).

NATIONAL TRUST PREJUDICE AND PRIDE

2017 marks 50 years since the Sexual Offences Act (1967), which partially decriminalised homosexuality in England. A wide variety of museums (e.g. British Museum, V&A, Brighton Museums, People's History Museum), heritage organisations (Historic England, Heritage Open Days), Parliament, the media and many others will be marking and celebrating LGBTQ culture and heritage in 2017. We all have an opportunity to understand our heritage better as we reflect on the legacy of those LGBTQ individuals whose stories have not been fully told.

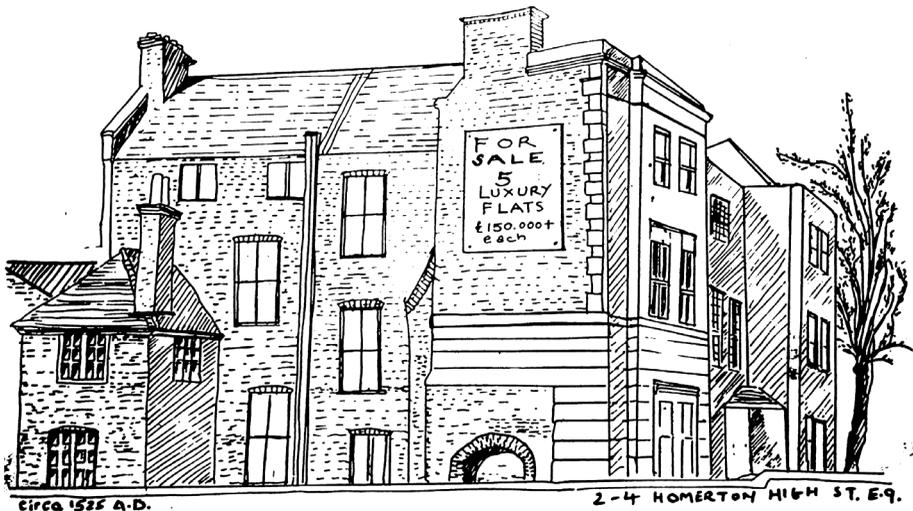
In Prejudice and Pride we are building on the work of Historic England's Pride of Place project. We are working with LGBTQ equality charity Stonewall and academics at Leicester University to ensure a strong legacy for LGBTQ histories at our places beyond 2017.

SUTTON HOUSE

Sutton House's Prejudice and Pride programme, Sutton House Queered, has played host to a multitude of different queer-community-led exhibitions, events, and performances over the year.

Sutton House Queered's Autumn season Never Gonna Dance Again remembers lost venues and the history of club culture in London, whilst also championing campaigns to save those currently under threat of closure. Sutton House itself faced such a threat back in 1987 before the successful campaign to save the historic Tudor property from being converted into luxury apartments. Key events include the Never Gonna Dance Again symposium on September 20th, our Light After Dark exhibition September 28th - October 29th and accompanying events (see p.20), and the NSA: A Queer Salon on September 30th.

See more from Sutton House: nationaltrust.org.uk/sutton-house-and-breakers-yard



^ Detail from Save Sutton House Campaign poster, used with permission of Sutton House



National
Trust



Sutton House Queered presents

Light After Dark

An exhibition celebrating the past, present, and future of Queer nightlife in London, whilst exploring the trends and topics that surround the club scene today.

September 28th - October 29th

**Join us for our private view on
Wednesday September 27th from 7pm**

Sutton House

2 & 4 Homerton High St London

E9 6JQ

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/sutton-house-and-breakers-yard

Exhibition curated by Kat Hudson. Featured photograph of Jender Anomie by Emily Rose England.

Current campaigns to get involved with:

RVT Futures: www.rvt.community

The Joiners Arms: www.thejoinersliveson.org.uk

The Black Cap: www.weareblackcap.com

