

Eric Avery

J. Morrison

Patricia Cronin

Zanele Muholi

Daniel Goldstein

Conrad Ventur

Slava Mogutin

Brian Kenny

Arthur Robinson Williams

David Wojnarowicz

STATION
MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

**BECAUSE
WE ARE**



This exhibition, **BECAUSE WE ARE** is not only about Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered (LGBT) civil rights but it is also one that presents artists whose civil rights are at risk simply **"BECAUSE THEY ARE..."**

It is an exhibition about a truism that states that every American citizen should be fully accorded his civil rights as specified in the U.S. Constitution. Freedom of speech and freedom of expression are the corner stone of democracy. Yet in spite of iron-clad constitutional protections, LGBT citizens have been legally discriminated against, abused, humiliated, oppressed and forced to abide by standards that are unnatural to them. LGBT civil rights and human rights have been ignored by a government that is charged with their protection and have been violated by religious fanatics, homophobes, bashers, skinheads and bangers— not only ignored and violated but their rights have often been denied and they have been marginalized on the basis of dubious legal grounds, corrupt religious beliefs, and exclusionary community standards. A citizen of the US should not be denied the opportunity to serve his country openly and live his own life openly within the nation's law, a law not based on irrational moral whims and prejudices, but on diversity and justice. It is cruel to force anyone to hide his sexual orientation and suffer the torment of self-doubt, mental abuse, and inner torture often to the point of suicide. It is hateful to shame, kill or imprison people who are perceived as different.

On one level, LGBT are an "Identity politics" group, a banding together of people with a focus on such social issues as "Gays in the Military," Gay and Lesbian marriage, legal rights in the workplace, sexual and physical abuse and HIV. On another level altogether, unlike other identity groups like Latinos who are focused on immigration or single issue Death Penalty groups, LGBT are a fully heterogeneous mixture of races, political ideologies and sexual orientations. We can be sure that within the group there is deep-felt concern for any and all civil rights and human rights issues. As a result, LGBTs are more than a sounding board; they are often wise in the ways of the world. While they are among the most abused and stigmatized people on earth, at the same time, they are among the most creative and gifted. In the art field alone, great artists in the past, such as, Michelangelo, da Vinci, and Caravaggio made major contributions to culture not only because they were Gay but also because they were supremely human and talented.

White males have dominated the modern history of 20th century art. Their numbers include the masters of POP Art, Jasper Johns, Andy Warhol, and Robert Rauschenberg, all known to be Gay, whose work originally challenged the status quo only to then become the status quo. The American art world now appears more receptive than ever to women, Latinos, African American, and Asian artists. After much struggle, these minority artists have assumed a somewhat subordinate role but greater visibility. However, while they share 2nd class citizen statuses with other minorities, LGBT artists are in some respects quite different from other groups. They are often more receptive to a diversity of views and subject matter, but as important, is the emphasis that these artists have given to AIDs and same-sex marriage, "Gays in the Military," and to the issues of sexuality that distinguishes them. The tragic loss of very many extraordinary artists as a result of HIV and AIDS has set American culture back many years. Curiously, AIDS was a Gay disease in the United States in the 1980s at the same time that it appeared as a heterosexual disease in Central Africa.

All of the eleven artists in this exhibition are on the cutting edge of an aesthetic that has true consciousness-raising political and spiritual power. The issues raised by these artists are not only fundamental to their artistic goals but also to their and our ideals of democracy and freedom. The curator included an artist from Africa where anti-LGBT abuse is deadly and in many cases is incited by right-wing Christians from the United States. This exhibition, *Because we are*, was organized by Tim Gonzalez and the Station Museum of Contemporary Art staff.

- James Harithas

PATRICIA
CRONIN

A few years ago Grand Arts, the Kansas City based non-profit art projects institution, invited me to make my dream project, *Memorial To A Marriage*. They would pay all the fabrication costs, but this grant had one stipulation: the artist's project had to be in a material she had never used before. The result was *Memorial To A Marriage*, an over life-size 3 ton Carrara marble mortuary sculpture which is a double portrait of my partner (the artist Deborah Kass) and me.

Since the Federal Government won't accept any individual states' Civil Union or Marriage Certificates for same sex couples we've had lawyers draw up legal documents (wills, health care proxies and power-of-attorney, etc.) in an attempt to simulate some of the legal protections of heterosexual marriage. These documents are depressing because their only usefulness is if one of us becomes incapacitated or dies.

I wanted something that celebrated our life together and so, decided to make an elegant and dignified monument to our relationship. I chose a nationalist form, American Neo-Classical sculpture, to address what I consider the federal failure to give gay Americans the basic human right of legal marriage.

I studied the Western history of sculpture, which is pre-occupied with death and remembrance, the cemeteries of Paris, and the history of dying in the United States. *Memorial To A Marriage* was installed on our actual burial plot in Woodlawn Cemetery, designed as America's Pere Lachaise, in Bronx, New York. (A bronze version is there now.) The statue addresses issues of lesbian invisibility, gay marriage, love and loss, and power and status. In death I make official my "marriage" which is still not legal while we are alive.

Memorial To A Marriage, 2002
Carrara marble
84" x 42" x 27"

