

an40

ASSEMBLY



Assembly Blackpool: The Coast Is Queer

**Tuesday 28 &
Wednesday 29
September 2021**

**Led by Garth
Gratrix from
Abingdon Studios**

a-n.co.uk/assembly/assembly-blackpool

Garth Gratrix, artist and Founding Director of Abingdon Studios, will be logging in from Blackpool to lead a-n's online Assembly. *The Coast Is Queer* is a two-day event inviting artists, artist-led spaces, organisations and institutions who are located on the edges of the UK, to open a discussion on coastal practice and queerness.

An introduction by Garth Gratrix

In 2017, in an empty shop window in Blackpool, artist Harry Clayton-Wright and I put out the statement, 'The Coast Is Queer!'. It has become an ongoing curiosity around the clandestine ways in which LGBTQIA+ artists live, work and cruise materials and spaces alone, apart and together.

For a-n Assembly, *The Coast Is Queer* acts as a collection of discussions between artists, artist-led spaces, organisations and institutions who are located on the edges of the UK, working in proximity to and or in partnership with the coast.

My work deals with slipperiness and the proud and problematic lived experiences of being LGBTQIA+.

How do we work to define or refine a future arts sector that considers 'queerness' as a better starting point to 'new normal'? How might strategies to support artists focus on remaining vital, to keep taking risks, expand thinking and cultivate shared cultural experiences?

We probably won't define what is meant by Queer, because its strength perhaps is its refusal to be finite. We will likely raise more questions than answers in a quest to suggest no one right or wrong. We will explore together, in the slipperiness of the present moment, how queerness can manifest as an ingredient or binding agent in the way we think about future programming in the arts. How do we platform and promenade our future queer potential?

How do we look to Queer history but be forward-thinking in our collecting, commissioning, collaborating, confidence and future networks of care? How might the coast be a space for solidarity, new systems of support and respite for artists?

Let's connect and open up conversation by the coast. Let's consider queer potential necessary to build an inclusive and yes, still slippery, terrain in which to make art, share experiences, collide and collaborate across networks. Nuanced but never alone.

**Register to attend:
a-n.co.uk/assembly/assembly-blackpool**

Tuesday 28 September 2021

Musical Opening | 10am

An introduction to The Coast Is Queer by **Garth Gratrix**, with music by Blackpool based queer musician, **Laura Catlow**.

Artist-Led spaces, a queer agenda 10.35am

How are artists queering the dynamics of space and showing ways to work on the edges, by the sea? Speakers **Simon Bayliss** (artist), **Lothar Goetz** (artist), **Tom Ireland** (artist and curator Supercollider, Blackpool) and **Guy Oliver** (artist and co-founder Quench Gallery, Margate) share their experiences.

Platforming, promenading and collecting queer lived experiences 11.50am

How are galleries, organisations and institutions supporting and commissioning queerness and ensuring queer material is collected, seen, understood and passed onto future generations?

Panel discussion with **Paulette Terry Brien** (Curator, Grundy Art Gallery, Blackpool) **Michelle Bowen** (Director, UK New Artists, Nottingham), **Sarah Davies** (Director, Phoenix Artspace, Brighton and Creative Workspace Network, National), **Charlotte Keenan** (Curator, Queer British Archive, Liverpool/Manchester) and **Rose Lejeune** (Curator, Performance Exchange, London).

Lunch | 1pm

Sustainable livelihoods strategies 1.30pm

Dr Susan Jones, former Director of a-n, will present new evidence on sustainable livelihood strategies amongst artists.

First Outing | 3pm

An online tour of the current exhibition at Abingdon Studios and Grundy Art Gallery in partnership with UK New Artists Ltd and Arts Council England. Curated by **Queerly Made** (Daniel Fountain and Matt Gale). Exhibiting artists, **Claye Bowler**, **Dan Chan** and **Matthew Rimmer**.

Roll up, round up | 4pm

An opportunity to reflect as Garth Gratrix rounds up the discussions from the day.

the pink and yellow thing remembers 4.10pm

A ten-minute film experimentation by Blackpool based artist, **Harry Clayton-Wright**.

Coin Extraordinaire, an archive of seaside amusement arcade sound walks by artist, researcher and lecturer, Martha Lineham. To be played at regular intervals throughout the conference days.

Wednesday 29 September 2021

Curating the coast - front line or forgotten edge? | 10am

How are curators researching and thinking about the coast, or water's edge as a platform for developing opportunities for artists and each other? And what does tossing the rule book do to enhance cultural experiences of difference?

A panel discussion with **Matt Retallick** (Independent Curator, Liverpool), **George Vasey** (Curator and writer, Saltburn-on-sea); **Mariama Attah** (Curator, Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool), **Garth Gratrix** (Founder, Abingdon Studios, Blackpool), **Rosie Osbourne** (Founder, The New Art School, St Ives) and **Ben Borthwick** (Head of Creative Programming, KARST, Plymouth).

Paying artists to be artists | 11am

Members of Abingdon Studios present their recent project achievements.

Proximity Collective (Anne-Marie Atkinson, Ann Carragher, Antony Hall, Jackie Haynes, Rebecca Howard, Sarah-Joy Ford)

Material Art Network (Kerry Tenbey & Ellie Barrett)

Rockified (Gustavo Ferro & Sam Meredith)

New Queers On The Block | 12pm

Making queer culture and community happen. **David Shepeard** (Director of Marlborough Productions, Brighton) will lead a discussion on the role live art plays

as a producer of queer-led, intersectional performance, partying and radical community gathering and thought. With speakers **Jenni Lewin-Turner** (Director, Urban Flo Creatives, Brighton); **Benjamin Sebastian** (Co-Director, Performance Space, Folkestone); and **Katy Baird** (Artistic Director, Home Live Art, Hastings).

Lunch | 1pm

Pecha Kucha | 2pm

Selected artists from an Open Call to LGBTQIA+ artists who are living on the coast give 5-minute presentations on their practice.

Fill up, round up | 3pm

Pour a glass, chat, ask questions, share experiences and listen to others. An opportunity to network with event contributors and fellow a-n members.

a-n Assembly 2021 is free and exclusive to a-n members.

Register to attend:

a-n.co.uk/assembly/assembly-blackpool

Garth Gratrix is currently part of PIVOT, an 18-month development programme for mid-career artists living and working in the North West of England. Delivered in partnership by Bluecoat, Liverpool and Castlefield Gallery, Manchester.

Abingdon Studios is a member of the Guild 2019-2023 cohort. a-n Assembly 2021 is developed in partnership with Guild, East Street Arts' sector support programme supporting and empowering artists to help them create more resilient and sustainable work via artists' spaces.

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