

WHAT THE PLUS (+)
June 20, 2020 - July 25, 2020
The Arts Centre - Powell River Public Art Gallery



What the Plus (+) Group Art Exhibition features works in a variety of media produced by 17 qathet region artists ranging in age from 12-65+, who self-identify as LGBTQ2+ as well as allies. Working with a wide range of materials, themes, and techniques, we feature both emerging as well as recognized writers, fibre artists, printmakers, photographers, digital media and sound artists, sculptors, illustrators, animators and painters.

While LGBTQ2 stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and Queer/Questioning, and 2-Spirited, the plus (+) that is usually included after the initialism encompasses a list of other identities that fall under the queer umbrella, and aims to include those who identify as intersex, asexual, demisexual, non-binary, gender fluid, pansexual, polyamorous, and many more. Our exhibition title focuses on the '+' itself, as it indicates a range or 'gradient' (a gradual change of colors, such as purple turning gradually into blues and then greens) providing a visual metaphor, representing a multitude of tonalities that make up the fluid spectrum of human gender and sexuality. Participating artists were given the freedom to interpret the 'gradient' theme as they wished, submitting up to three pieces each.

This exhibition is timed with Pride events around the world, as we commemorate the Stonewall uprising of summer 1969, and the hard-fought progress toward acceptance and equality of people who identify as LGBTQ2+ throughout history, and who provided a model for resistance and social change. The global project is on-going and vital to human progress, as we aim to increase acceptance, justice and freedom for those oppressed for being who they are, and for loving whomever they choose.

As I am writing this, at a unique moment in time when the best of humanity is openly demanding racial equality while dealing with a global pandemic and the effects of human-driven climate change, it is my hope that this exhibition will highlight the generosity of spirit of our artists and of our community situated on the ancestral land of the Tla'amin People, whose treaty we honour and to whom we owe great gratitude as guests in the territory.

I would of course like to thank all our participating artists listed below, for sharing their work with the public. While much of the art is not overtly political in content, the context for the exhibition – the first LGBTQ2+ exhibition in our small city – represents an act of courage, generosity and openness, and is quite 'political' in itself. During the height of another global pandemic, AIDS activists in the 1980's brought us the slogan Silence=Death, implying that the production and expression of identity constitute an essential tool in the struggle for survival: In order for a group to act politically it has to claim visibility. There are many ways to express ourselves, and all paths and gradient colours in that famous rainbow, are necessary and relevant.

Our Artists and Presenters

Alfred Bolster
Amber Friedman
Angelica Hamilton
Blossom (Maia Wade)
Chris Roberts
Daniel Rajala
Earle Thompson
Fiona Tyler
Giovanni Spezzacatena (rabideye)
Jazz Rico
John Hewson
Karin Birch
Kathryn Neun
Kevin Wilson
Prashant Miranda
Sophia Sanford

And presenting TheyDay on Friday July 17th at 7pm (via live streaming through www.whattheplus.ca): Andrea Bennett with Nola Poirier

This exhibition would not have been possible without the generous and much-appreciated support of Powell River's qathet Community Justice, British Columbia Arts Council, Malaspina Art Society, Powell River Council for Arts, Culture and Heritage, Powell River Pride, and The Art Centre ~ Powell River Public Art Gallery.

Guest curator
Giovanni Spezzacatena RABIDEYE.COM