Project Description

A People’s Museum of LGBTQ History is a grassroots archive created by hundreds of people of various ages, hometowns, and backgrounds. It is a witness to the ways that lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer people are present in all of our lives. The museum asks you to remember: Who is the first LGBTQ person you knew in your life? It is an act of collective memory. It is a renunciation of erasure and forgetting. It is hundreds of faces and stories — of aunts, uncles, cousins, parents, children, friends, classmates, teachers, public figures, strangers, and selves. It is a public gathering of private realities, which relate a multiplicity of memories.

The museum invites you into a space of productive encounters, where the collection of portraits and stories is open to constant reorganization and reinterpretation. The rhizomatic structure of the archive encourages visitors to draw new connections between materials in the archive, and in doing so, to envision an infinite number of LGBTQ histories.

This project is created by AK/OK, the art and design collective of Kate Jarboe and M. Wright, as part of their ongoing series of works activating queer archives in order to advocate for equality and to preserve queer culture, in the face of injustice and assimilation. The installation of A People’s Museum of LGBTQ History at San Francisco State University in Spring 2018 will be the culmination of a series of participatory public workshops, spanning two years and two continents.

AK/OK’s work has been presented at The Brooklyn Museum, Bishopsgate Institute (London), Open Engagement, Brown University, and the Rhode Island School for Design; and has been exhibited at the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts (New York), Fernwey Gallery (Chicago), and SOMA (Mexico City). Their artist’s books are distributed by Printed Matter in New York.

**Workshop proposal: California State University, Chico**

Over the past year, we have been conducting drawing workshops at various venues, where participants tell the story of the first lesbian, gay, bi, or trans person they remember in their life. The resulting collection of drawings and stories is a repository of portraits and memories about the LGBTQ people (childhood friends, teachers, family members, etc.) who have played a role in everyday people’s lives. The workshops have involved a rich variety of participants who are both queer and straight, of all ages and backgrounds.

We launched the project at The Oakland Museum of California in May 2017, and have since hosted workshops at the Brooklyn Museum and Bishopsgate Institute (London), among other venues. Since then we have gathered 200+ portraits and stories through the participatory drawing workshops.

Images of the workshops are posted on the project website and Instagram:

http://anarmyoflovers.org
http://www.instagram.com/anarmyoflovers

During the summer/fall/winter of 2017, we will take the project on a cross-country, coast-to-coast tour to collect more drawings and stories from all over the US. The tour will begin in Portland, Maine and end in Portland, Oregon, with an itinerary of 10 universities and museums. The tour will culminate in an exhibition of *A People’s Museum of LGBTQ History* at San Francisco State University in Spring 2018.

We are proposing to give an artist’s talk and lead a workshop at Chico State in Spring 2018, in which students/faculty/staff can participate in contributing to *A People’s Museum of LGBTQ History*.

In the workshop, visitors are asked to draw a simple portrait of the first LGBTQ person they remember knowing in their life. This might be a family member, childhood friend, teacher, a public figure, or even themselves.

In an exchange of creative labor, all participants will be credited for their contribution to the exhibition, and will receive the official uniform of An Army of Lovers, which is a T-shirt emblazoned with the power rainbow symbol.

Now more than ever, it is vital to add as many diverse voices as possible to the archive and to make the stories of ordinary LGBTQ Americans seen and heard.
A PEOPLE’S MUSEUM OF LGBTQ HISTORY
2016–ongoing

Community workshops conducted at the Oakland Museum of California, the Brooklyn Museum, and the Bishopsgate Institute in London, with future venues in 2017

The project will culminate in an exhibition at the San Francisco State University Design Gallery, 2018