



THIS WEEK'S ISSUE



## A GAY time

### Exhibit examines evolving identity

Story by Gregg McQueen

A unique art presentation coming to the Bronx will explore the cultural shift in the identity of gay male artists of color through the past decade.

Titled "GAY," the group exhibition is presented by Longwood Arts Project, the visual arts branch of the Bronx Council on the Arts, and will be held from February 5 until May 7, 2014, on the campus of Hostos Community College.

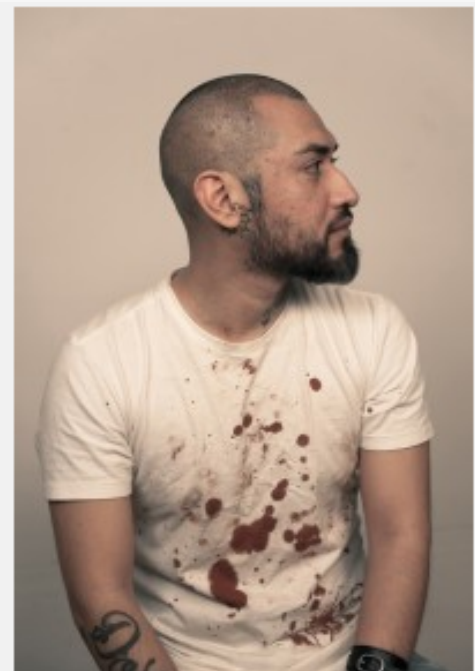
The program was curated by New York artist Ivan Monforte in collaboration with Visual AIDS and the Bronx Academy of Arts and Dance at Longwood Art Gallery.

Monforte has compiled a multidisciplinary roster of artists to showcase their talents through painting, drawing, sculpture, video, performance and text.

An opening reception will take place on Wed., Feb. 5th.

In creating the program for Longwood Arts Project, Monforte said that he wanted to work with openly gay men of color who present gay-themed art.

"I wanted to examine the self-identity of those individuals," explained Monforte. "It's like stigma upon stigma — stigmatized about being gay, about the color of their skin, and also the art they create."



"I want people to walk away with ideas," says curator Ivan Monforte of new exhibit "GAY".

*Photo: Cruz Caldera*

In addition to creating art in his Harlem studio, Monforte also provides HIV prevention education to gay, bisexual and transgender homeless and runaway adolescents.

After college, Monforte's first job was teaching HIV prevention to high school students in the South Bronx.

The upcoming exhibition will include a health fair featuring local, community-based organizations that provide services to gay men of color.



*Los Hijos de Doña Rita*, a pencil drawing by artist Hector Silva, 2011.

A highlight of the GAY schedule is a program by New York artist Jacolby Satterwhite, who will present segments of a video series that will soon be displayed as part of the Whitney Museum of American Art's Biennial.

Also on display will be works by Boston painter Steve Locke and drawings by Los Angeles-based artist Hector Silva, who was recently recognized by the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs for his dedication to representing the Latino LGBT experience.

While GAY definitely contains adult content, Monforte said that was not the focus of his exhibition.

"One of my artistic goals is to represent gayness in a way that's not oversexualized," he stated. "There are a lot of abstract art pieces and other types of work."

Additional events include a Kiki Ball, a youth-led, politically-minded division of the larger House and Ballroom community, as well as a college tuition fundraiser.

A panel discussion is scheduled for Sat., Mar. 8th, as part of the exhibition program.

Monforte said he created the panel with the intention of exploring what it means to be gay today, and how that identity has evolved in recent years.



*The Opportunists*, an oil painting by Steve Locke, 2007.

"Up until 1973, being gay was considered a mental disorder," he remarked. "But very recently, there have been great achievements in the community, such as gay marriage and the repeal of 'Don't ask, don't tell' to allow gays to serve in the military."

And while the Bronx isn't often thought of as an epicenter for either the gay or artistic communities, Monforte feels that it's an important step to hold the exhibition in the borough.

"I think it's a very different discussion having this event in the Bronx, rather than someplace like Chelsea," he said.

Monforte's goal in curating GAY was to assemble a program that attendees would find thought-provoking, but that was not his only intent.

"I was aiming for a celebratory atmosphere," commented Monforte. "I want people to walk away with ideas, but also enjoy themselves."

***"GAY" will be presented from February 5 until May 7 at Longwood Arts Project, on the campus of Hostos Community College, 450 Grand Concourse, Bronx NY.***

***For more details on the exhibition and a full schedule, please visit <http://www.bronxarts.org/lag.asp> or call 718.518.6728.***