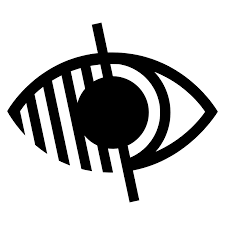
2 April – 25 August 2019 Gallery 4

Archive

Queer Spaces:

London, 1980s - Today

LARGE PRINT GUIDE



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Artworks

Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings

The Scarcity of Liberty #2, 2016

Cork board mounted on wooden frame, magazine pages, pins

Courtesy the artists / Arcadia Missa Gallery

In 2015 and 2016, a time when many popular and historic LGBTQ+ spaces in London were closing, Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings initiated their UK Gay Bar Directory project.

**continues on next page**

They photographed and filmed some 170 gay venues across the UK and gathered objects, leaflets and memorabilia.

The Scarcity of Liberty #2 presents some of this material in the style of a community pin board. Quinlan and Hastings describe the white, young, hairless, healthy male bodies that pervade much of the flyers and magazines that they found as ‘a toxic model for what a queer body looks like’. Nevertheless, the attention to mental health, safe sex, addiction support and other social issues, demonstrate the value of gay bars as places of community solidarity and service provision.

Tom Burr

Shoe Mirror (Blue), 2006

Wood, steel, mirrored glass

Collection of Charles Asprey, London

Untitled, 2010

Text printed on gallery window. First published in Corduroy Magazine, New York, Issue VIII, 2010, p. 87

Courtesy the artist

Since the early 1990s, New York based conceptual artist Tom Burr has explored in his work the relationship between queer sexual expression and the built environment. **continues on next page**

Both Shoe Mirror and the short text displayed nearby address moments of contact between warm, imperfect and breathing bodies with hard, cold and reflective architectural surfaces.

Ralph Dunn

Public Toilets, 2006

Five chromogenic prints

Courtesy the artist

The tiled concrete public toilet block documented in Ralph Dunn’s photographic prints was known as a cruising site for gay and bisexual men. The facility in Lewisham stood until the mid-2000s when it was demolished to make way for a high-end housing development.

Prem Sahib

Helix IV, 2018

Plaster and chromed steel

Helix IV is derived from a sculptural relief, which was originally displayed above a whirlpool Jacuzzi in the Chariots gay sauna. The sauna closed its Shoreditch branch in 2016 to make way for a luxury hotel development.

Liquid Gold, 2019

Lights, yellow gels

On view 6 pm to 8 am from Whitechapel High Street

Courtesy of the artist

**continues on next page**

You are invited to view Liquid Gold outside of the gallery opening hours. The 19th century interior of the Whitechapel Gallery is illuminated with a suggestive yellow glow glimpsed only through the windows facing onto the street.

Evan Ifekoya

Throw Rewind Body Slowly, 2016

Collage drawing on materials from the Rukus! Black Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Cultural Archive, London Metropolitan Archives

A Net Made of Individual Knots, 2017

Sound, 16 mins 29 secs

Both courtesy the artist. Commissioned by Embassy Gallery, Edinburgh, 2017

Fragments of flyers and photographs from the archives of queer black social spaces appear through circular windows in Evan Ifekoya’s colourful collage. An accompanying sound work is activated every 20 minutes, in which overlapping voices tell a fragmented story about experiences of queer nightlife venues across multiple time zones, locations and perspectives.

Rainbow Flag from The Joiners Arms

Textile and wood

Collection of Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings

This rainbow flag flew above the entrance to The Joiners Arms until its closure in 2015. Since then the flag has been displayed by artists Hannah Quinlan and Rosie Hastings as part of their @Gaybar project (2014–17), for which they constructed fully functioning gay bars in a variety of different venues. The bars played host to a series of parties, discussions and events considering issues confronting LGBTQ+ communities. They selected topics ranging from Brexit to the whitewashing of queer history to the gentrification of queer spaces.

The rainbow flag is a symbol of pride and activism for the LGBTQ+ community.

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First used in the 1970s in San Francisco, the design has been periodically updated and today often appears with the addition of black and brown stripes in solidarity with LGBTQ+ people of colour.

Films

Excerpt from Under Your Nose: The Story of the Black Lesbian and Gay Centre (BLGC), 2018, directed by Veronica McKenzie, 20 mins

The Black Cap, 2019, directed by Georgie Worth and Rosalind Chaston, 5 mins

Excerpt from Save The Tavern, 2015, directed by Tim Brunsden, 20 mins

See separate document for transcripts

**Interactive Map**

LGBTQ+ Nightlife Premises: London, 1986–Today

* Scroll to see spaces appear and disappear over time
* Hover over icons to see the name of the space
* Read about the spaces featured in the exhibition
* Do you remember a queer space not yet featured on the map? If so, we’d be pleased to hear from you

Email: [urbanlaboratory@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:urbanlaboratory@ucl.ac.uk)

This map uses data from UCL Urban Laboratory to record nightlife venues designated primarily for LGBTQ+ use, from 1986 to the present.

The timeline begins and ends with two periods of policy change. 1986 was the year the Greater London Council was disbanded. In 2019, Mayor Sadiq Khan published a Cultural Infrastructure Plan(2019), which draws on Urban Lab’s data to include LGBT+ night-time venues.

The map includes bars, nightclubs, pubs, cabaret venues, cafés and community centres, and some other types of space. Setting up a venue requires access to unevenly distributed resources.

Women, trans and BAME groups have had fewer designated spaces, and have tended to run events moving between venues. Urban Lab are currently gathering data on such spaces, but these are not yet shown in this map. However, some case studies in the exhibition (WANC Café, London Lesbian and Gay Centre, the Black Lesbian and Gay Centre) are indicative of queer spaces that have either moved between venues or have hosted events, providing resources for the most marginalised LGBTQ+ groups.

Display Cases

London Lesbian and Gay Centre

Opened 1983, closed 1992

Farringdon, Islington

The vision for the London Lesbian and Gay Centre (LLGC) was ‘a central community-based centre run by lesbians and gay men for lesbians and gay men, providing a relaxed alternative to the commercial “scene,” which often excludes women, older and younger people, and those without much money.’ Supported by Mayor Ken Livingstone within an array of radical equalities policies and community initiatives under the Greater London Council (GLC), this intensified after the Conservative government promised the abolition of the GLC in their 1983 manifesto.

The building at 67–69 Cowcross Street comprised five storeys of former poultry-packing facility, converted to a design by a young architect, Fiona McLean that incorporated a disco, bars, café, shop, bookshop, a women-only floor and coffee bar, crèche, meeting rooms and workshop spaces. The bookshop, managed by Gay’s The Word, ran only for a few months, opening amid a two-year legal battle with HM Customs and Excise who had raided the Marchmont Street branch of the shop in April 1984. Funding for the LLGC was rapidly withdrawn and the GLC disbanded in 1986. **continues on next page**

As the Centre reconfigured its operational model from workers’ cooperative to social enterprise, there were controversies over financial management. It survived until 1992 and during its existence hosted a wide range of political and activist organisations, services and cultural events, many of which continue to play an important role today.

1. Exterior of LLGC and LLGC workers during opening event, 1985. Photographs: Robert Workman. Courtesy Bishopsgate Institute

2. LLGC explanatory leaflets

3. Fiona McLean, concept architectural drawings for LLGC

4. LLGC Newsletter, November 1988. Courtesy Bishopsgate Institute

5. Letter of rejection from the Charity Commission, 13 August 1984

6. Launch of GLC’s Gay and Lesbian Charter, County Hall, 8 October 1985. Photograph: Val Wilmer. Courtesy Bishopsgate Institute

7. Changing the World: A London Charter for Gay and Lesbian Rights, 1985. Courtesy Bishopsgate Institute

8. Press invitation ‘GLC Launches Lesbian and Gay Rights Charter’, 3 October 1985. Courtesy London Metropolitan Archives

9. LLGC Extraordinary General Meeting, 16 November 1986

10. ‘Glamorous Nights Tea Dance’, flyer, c. 1988

11. Lesbian Strength March, 23 June 1984. Photograph: Brenda Prince. Courtesy Bishopsgate Institute

12. Stack of seized books, confiscated by the UK Customs and Excise Office. Courtesy Gay’s The Word

13. Gay’s The Word application to LLGC Steering Committee, 28 April 1983. Courtesy Gay’s The Word

14. ‘Briefing Note 8 – The Aims of Defend Gay’s The Word’ in Gay’s The Word Information Pack, with badge. Courtesy Gay’s The Word

15. List of groups meeting at LLGC

16. Condom with sexual health message from LLGC

17. LLGC ‘Buy Our Centre’ leaflet, 1990. Courtesy Bishopsgate Institute

18. ‘We Support the Centre’ petition letter, 1990. Courtesy Bishopsgate Institute

19. LLGC monthly profit and loss report, March 1992

Unless otherwise specified, all items courtesy Hall-Carpenter Archives, LSE library.

🎧 Listen: Extracts from two public conversations about the London Lesbian and Gay Centre, UCL Urban Laboratory at the Museum of London (14 July 2018) and Gay’s the Word (18 October 2018)

The Black Lesbian and Gay Centre Project

Established 1985, opened in Peckham, 1992, closed 1999

Peckham, Southwark

The Black Lesbian and Gay Centre (BLGC), the first of its kind in the world, was initiated by the Gay Black Group who formed in 1981.

In 1982, they approached the Greater London Council (GLC) with a proposal for the Centre as a space to gather information, drop-in, advisory and counselling services. This led to funding for outreach workers, but the group had to make do with temporary space in Tottenham, Haringey, and other sympathetic local authority offices. Premises in Peckham were finally offered for the Centre in 1992. Like many of London’s queer spaces and community infrastructure since the city’s deindustrialisation, the Centre occupied a brick-built Victorian railway arch – practical in terms of space provision and with good transport connections, but also challenging to convert and inhabit.

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The establishment of this initiative attests to the fact that not all lesbian and gay people, or people of non-heteronormative sexualities and non-conforming gender expressions, or other with other marginalised identities, felt included in the London Lesbian and Gay Centre (LLGC).

Indeed, the latter is remembered by some as a particularly white gay male-dominated space, echoing the commercial scenes of the 1980s and 1990s. After the abolition of the GLC, the BLGC, like the LLGC, had to rely on donations and membership fees for income. Although it closed in 1999, the work of the BLGC project made black lesbians and gays more visible and its positive legacies continue today.

1. BLGC Newsheet, December 1985. Bishopsgate Institute

2. ‘Black Lesbian and Gay Centre invite you to their AGM and open meeting’, 9 August 1986, poster. Bishopsgate Institute

3. Haringey Black Action and Black Lesbian and Gay Centre March, October 24 1987, flyer. Bishopsgate Institute

4. BLGC Newsletters, October/November, 1988; June/July 1990; February/March 1992. Bishopsgate Institute and Hall-Carpenter Archives, LSE Library

5. ‘Becoming a Member of the Black Lesbian and Gay Centre’, flyer. Bishopsgate Institute

6. BlackOut, Issue 1, Summer 1986. Hall-Carpenter Archives, LSE Library

7. ‘Benefit event at Cheeks Niteclub’, 18 December 1985, flyer. Bishopsgate Institute

8. BLGC ‘Social Gathering and AGM’, 1996, flyer. Bishopsgate Institute

📺 Watch: Excerpt from Under Your Nose: The Story of the Black Lesbian and Gay Centre (BLGC), 2018, directed by Veronica McKenzie, 20 mins

**Central Station**

Opened 1992

King’s Cross, Islington

Central Station is located in a Coaching Inn near the Regent’s Canal. Formerly known as The Prince Albert, its licensing records go back to the mid-nineteenth century. It opened as a gay venue in 1992, when King’s Cross was identified with street prostitution and high crime.

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Prior to this, a disco had taken place at The Prince Albert after the Gay Liberation Front’s first demonstration at Highbury Fields, in 1970.

Two days after re-opening as Central Station two severe homophobic attacks, using CS gas, led to the installation of metal shutters. The venue stayed open and played a vital role hosting diverse groups following the London Lesbian and Gay Centre’s closure in 1992.

It provided a community focus for those sick and dying from AIDs-related illnesses and for those who supported and grieved them, hosting funerals. Today, the pub is the sole survivor of a former cluster of independent venues in King’s Cross and Angel. The building successfully combines hotel, pub and cabaret space, with underground disco/late-night cruise bar.

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It continues to host many regular and established LGBTQ+ events and groups, including those specifically aimed at trans clientele, as well as catering for local customers from the new offices and cultural venues associated with the area’s Eurostar-driven redevelopment.

1. ‘Pink Angels Weekend at Central Station’, Thud Magazine,9 June 1995

2. Central Station Opening Night Party, flyer, 6 February 1992

3. ‘Gay Alliance Discos’ held at The Prince Albert, flyer, c. 1980s

4. Barry Laden, ‘Straights would be happier if they had pubs like this’, The Gay Gazette*,* 18 October 1995

5. Central Station Newsletter, No. 16, Feb–March 1995

6. ‘Central Station,’ profile in OutThere Magazine*,* March 2008

7. Duncan Irvine behind the bar at Central Station, 2019. Photograph: Ben Campkin / UCL Urban Laboratory

8. Exterior of Central Station, 2019. Photograph: Ben Campkin / UCL Urban Laboratory

9. Press release for Gay Words at Central Station discussions, August 1994

10. ‘History Repeating Itself’, profile in Boyztown, 19 February 2005

11. Performance featuring Dockyard Doris, c. 1990s

12. Invitation from Duncan Irvine and Martin Mason inviting Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother to a birthday party at Central Station, 2 July 1996, with reply from Clarence House, 9 July 1996

All items courtesy Central Station

🎧 Listen: Interview: Ben Campkin and Lo Marshall with Duncan Irvine, 31 March 2017, Central Station

First Out Café Bar

Opened 1986, closed 2011

St. Giles, Camden

This continental-style day- and night-time vegetarian café, bar and exhibition space was the novel idea of a group of young socialists who set it up as a workers’ co-operative by and for lesbians and gay men.

Initial discussions at The Bell, King’s Cross, in the mid-1980s, were followed by two years of planning hosted at the London Co-operative Development Agency, Ladbrook Grove, and the London Lesbian and Gay Centre. Preparations included a business plan, careful market research and liaison with existing community spaces. Loans under-written by the London Borough of Camden enabled the café to open in time for Pride 1986. A fire in September 1986 forced a brief closure, but the venue then remained open until 2011, gaining a bar license in 1991.

Next to Centre Point, the location was considered safer at night for women than Soho, but outside tables and chairs were only added later due to fear of abuse. Rent was relatively affordable, due to delayed planning consent – a precursor scheme to the Tottenham Court Road underground station’s Crossrail-associated redevelopment. As this unfolded, business suffered due to building works and closures of related venues. A temporary lease extension offered by owners Consolidated Developments was not sustainable, and although buoyed by public support the staff, emotionally drained by the negotiations, announced they would close on 4 October 2011.

1. Exterior of First Out Café Bar, c. 2005

2. Neil & Bert, comic strip featuring First Out Café Bar, QX, 7 January 1998

3. Prospectus for First Out Coffee Shop Project Ltd., 1985

4. ‘First Out is In’, press cutting from Gay Times, August 1986

5. ‘Social Aims: Cooperation and the lesbian and gay community,’ page in First Out Coffee Shop Project business plan, 20 March 1985

6. Flyers for ‘Girl Friday’, event ‘for women and their male guests’

7. Invitation to 10th Anniversary Party, 13 July 1996

8. Cary James, ‘First Out and Still on Top’, press cutting, 1996

9. Visitors’ book and cards from well-wishers, 2011

All items courtesy Maria Tejada, Robert Kincaid and Malcolm Comley

🎧 Listen: Interview: Maria Tejada, Robert Kincaid and Malcolm Comley with Ben Campkin and Lo Marshall

City of Quebec

Opened 1936 or 1946

Marble Arch, Westminster

A purpose-built pub occupying part of the ground and basement floors of a modern mixed-use block. Open by 1936, it formed part of a 1930s rationalisation of Old Quebec Street, replacing a number of small houses. Later sources – including a framed drawing and historical commentary on display in the pub – put the date at 1946, stressing an association with ‘gay’ Royal Airforce servicemen returning from WW2, and with a generation who fought hard for gay rights.

With Regency-style bay windows, and a long, deep floorplan, accentuated by a tapering darkwood bar, the architecture suggests domestic seclusion – offering a sense of interiority often important to queer venues.

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Originally partitioned into more private and public bars, the pub is now one open space at ground level, and extends with seating outside in the now-pedestrianised street. It is operated by Greene King, a large ‘pub co’. Noted for its wide catchment area and popularity with elder gay men a recent refurbishment was controversial and led to customers feeling that the venue’s identity as an important long-standing gay pub and cabaret space was threatened. In response, Greene King have publicly committed to the importance of its heritage as ‘London’s oldest LGBT+ venue’ and have signed up to the Mayor of London and Night Czar’s LGBT+ Venues Charter.

1. ‘One of the world’s oldest gay venues in London saved from closure’, Gaystar News, 5 November 2015

2. Sampson Associates, Proposal for new building façade, architectural rendering, 2014

3. Interior view showing framed drawing of City of Quebec, c. 2000s

4. Design Access Statement prepared by Sampson Associates architects, 2014

5. F. J. Eedle and Meyers, plans and sections for City of Quebec, 1934. Courtesy London Metropolitan Archives

6. City of Quebec exterior, 2019

7. Lady la Rue performing for City of Quebec patrons, 16 January 2011. Photograph: Chris Jepsen

🎧 Listen: Interview: Ben Campkin and Lo Marshall with Ralph Lane, 31 March 2017, UCL Urban Laboratory

The Joiners Arms

Opened 1997, closed 2015

Hackney Road, Tower Hamlets

The Joiners Arms Beerhouse was licensed for beer retail from as early as 1869. The pub was rebuilt in its modern form in the interwar period. The exterior of what had by then become a fully licensed pub included decorative panels depicting the name and emblem. The pub had closed in the mid-1990s after a fatal shooting outside. It reopened as a gay venue, licensed to David Pollard (1954–2018), in 1997. Pollard was proud of the venue’s inclusivity to all genders and sexualities and the diversity and internationalism of staff and customers.

The large flexible open space was used for pool, socialising and dancing, as well as pride events, charity fundraising and HIV testing.

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Gender-neutral toilets and a smoking area at rear were also features, both of which were intensively used. The venue became very popular in the early 2010s. The Hackney Road façade was subject to a number of homophobic attacks. In 2012, comic artist David Shenton decorated the interior with a large mural. In 2015, new owner, Admiral Taverns, closed the pub suddenly. A planning application for a large mixed-use redevelopment of the site and neighbouring plots was in progress. Campaign group Friends of the Joiners Arms formed in and subsequently won Asset of Community Value status for the venue, placing it on a register of property deemed of special community importance.

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Tower Hamlets recently made an unprecedented move, voting unanimously to insist that the site’s developers grant a 25-year lease for an LGBTQ+ venue within the reconfigured site and specifying that the developer contribute to fit-out costs, subsidised rent, and the extension of the proposed new venue’s floor space. Friends of the Joiners Arms are organising to form a community cooperative to bid to operate it.

1. Advert for the Joiners Arms, Thud, No. 129, 23 May 1997, p. 6. Courtesy Central Station

2. ‘Help build London’s first community-run LGBTQI pub, flyer for public meetings, March 2018. Designed by Luca Modesti

3. Poster for public meetings, April/May 2017, designed by Jess May

4. Notes from public meeting about vision for a future LGBTQ+ venue, 23 August 2017

5. Protest outside the Joiners Arms, 2015. Photograph: Frantzesco Kangaris

6. Information document about Friends of the Joiners Arms, 2015

7. Regal Homes development proposal for the Joiners Arms site, 2017. Courtesy Regal Homes

8. ‘Disco balls not wrecking balls’, flyer for public meeting, 22 February 2015. Designed by Jess May

9. Timeline of interactions with developers, appendix from letter of objection submitted to Tower Hamlets Council, July 2017

10. ‘Long Live Queer Spaces’, tee-shirt print designed by Jess May

11. Letter of support from Positive East during appeal of Asset of Community Value listing. Courtesy Positive East

Unless otherwise indicated, all items courtesy Friends of the Joiners Arms

🎧 Listen: Interview: Andy Garraway (Planning Out) with Amy Roberts, Jon Ward and Peter Cragg (Friends of the Joiners Arms)

Royal Vauxhall Tavern (RVT)

Recognised drag venue by the 1940s

Vauxhall, Lambeth

There is no clear date at which RVT became popular with queer, cross-dressing and drag communities. It has been used continuously by them since at least the 1940s and by mid-1970s there were regular drag performances on the bar. In 2014 the RVT was sold to an Austrian developer Immovate, causing understandable concern regarding the diminishing cluster of Vauxhall venues. Campaign group RVT Future formed and acted fast, using the media to rally support and put forward applications to list the space as an Asset of Community Value (2014) and Grade II Listed Building (2015): both firsts for LGBTQIA+ venues.

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These listings recognise the architectural fabric - dating from an 1863 design by James Edmeston that was central to a since demolished townscape, and containing columns possibly derived from the closed Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens - alongside the longer-term legacies of cultural experimentation and social significance to the LGBTQIA+ community. In 2016, RVT Future subsequently applied for, and won, the designation of Sui Generis (a planning use class meaning ‘of its own kind’). Although today the fabric is protected, the use is still vulnerable to change. RVT Future are currently setting up a Community Benefit Society to raise money towards a community buy-out.

1. RVT Future campaign summary, 2015

2. Letter of support from The Revd. Alison Kennedy, St. Peter’s Vauxhall, 7 June 2015

3. David Tinney and Neil Dalzell in ‘Emulate’ performance, including coffin, funeral flowers, and brochure for ‘Royal Vauxhall Tower’, 2015

4. ‘Emulate’ spoof website, 2015

5. Still from Immovate marketing film

6. Press cutting from NotTelevision, 7 November 2014

7. Baz Comics, Tales of the Tavern: 1985*,* 2015. Courtesy Barry Timms

8. Royal Vauxhall, musical about Princess Diana, Freddie Mercury and Kenny Everett and their ‘wild night’ at RVT. Courtesy Desmond O’Connor

9. RVT Future campaign badges

10. David Hoyle performing in Meta Data at RVT, October 2016. Photograph: Holly Revell

11. Notification of designation decision email from English Heritage to Ben Walters, RVT Future, 8 September 2015 with ‘listed’ website graphic

12. RVT Future initial application to English Heritage, January 2015. Courtesy Ben Walters

13. Press cuttings about the RVT: International edition of New York Times, 6 August 2015; Evening Standard, 25 June 2015; and QX Magazine, 23 April 2015

📺 Watch: Excerpts from Save The Tavern, 2015, directed by Tim Brunsden, 20 mins

The Glass Bar

Established 1995, closed 2008

Euston, Camden

A women-only members’ club in the West Lodge, Euston. Elaine McKenzie, who set the venue up, did so to provide a welcoming space, perceiving the scene as ‘cold and cliquey’ and noticing that there were few spaces for women and BAME-identifying people. To be women-only the venue had to be a members-only club, with a £1 door charge. The venue was inclusive to anyone who identified as a woman. A Grade II listed monument, designed by engineer J.B. Stansby, the Portland stone, lead-roofed building was hidden in plain sight, and frequently proved difficult for members to find. It had previously been a British Rail office and, in the mid-1970s, provided temporary accommodation for GALS (Girls Alone in London Service), an advisory for homeless girls.

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There were two storeys, connected by a spiral stair, so the venue was only wheelchair accessible at ground level. Originally supportive, owners Network Rail placed restrictions that inhibited business, preventing outside seating. In 2006, faced with roof maintenance works, and with the rent tripled and backdated, the venue closed. A successful community fundraising campaign enabled it to reopen three months later. With another dramatic rent increase in 2008, McKenzie decided to close up and continue the venture as a network, making temporary use of other venues.

1. Architectural elevations for 190 West Lodge, Euston Square

2. Photograph showing Euston Square with Statue of Robert Louis Stephenson

3. Entrance to Euston Square Station, engraving, c. 1870s

4. Planning application form completed by Elaine McKenzie, 9 April 1996 with drawing indicating alterations to convert 190 West Lodge, Euston Square into a bar, 1996

5. Advert for The Glass Bar, DIVA, December 1997,

p. 13

6. Advert for The Glass Bar with listings, G3, October 2002, p. 12

7. Feature about The Glass Bar, DIVA, December 1997, p. 39

8. Exterior of The Glass Bar, 2008. Photograph: Ewan Munro

9. Advert for The Glass Bar, The Pink Paper, 4 July 1997, p.23

10. Article about fifth birthday party, G3, January 2002, p. 17

🎧 Listen: Interview: Ben Campkin and Lo Marshall with Elaine McKenzie, November 2018, UCL Urban Laboratory

The Black Cap

Recognised drag venue by c. 1965, closed 2015

Camden High Street, Camden

Mother Black Cap is the name assigned to these premises in licensing records dating back to 1751, apocryphally, like the Mother Red Cap opposite, after a local witch. The building on the site today dates from 1889 and its decorative façade is topped by a bust of Mother Black Cap. By 1965, the pub had become known as a drag and cabaret venue. Between the 1970s and the 2000s it was associated with numerous popular drag and cabaret performers (Mrs. Shufflewick, Hinge and Bracket, Danny la Rue, Lily Savage, Regina Fong, Sandra, Adrella, Julian Clary, Titti la Camp, Graham Norton and Dave Lynn). In the 2010s the Meth Lab and the Family Fierce, hosted by drag artist Meth, oversaw a revival, with popular club nights featuring the stars of RuPaul’s Drag Race:

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linking between global, virtual and local queer culture and space. In 2012, after acquisition by new investors, the pub’s owners, Faucet Inn, applied for planning permission to convert the bar on the first and higher storeys into flats. A community group formed and applied successfully for the venue to be listed as an Asset of Community Value (ACV). This was later overturned, but after the submission of another similar planning application, which was refused, the ACV status was reinstated. Nonetheless, Faucet suddenly closed the venue on 12 April 2015 sparking weekly protest vigils, direct action campaign #WeAreTheBlackCap, and the temporary squatting of the venue by Camden Queer Punx 4eva. The ACV was again appealed, but the appeal rejected, in July 2015.

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A huge archive of objections to repeated planning applications, as well as the production of an ambitious alternative business case, and the formation of a new social enterprise, the Black Cap Foundation, attest to an effective campaign driven by commitment to the venue’s continuing social and historical importance.

1. Black Cap Foundation factsheet, 17 November 2016

2. Black Captivist News, campaign bulletin, January 2019

3. Protest vigil outside the Black Cap, Summer 2018

4. The Black Cap in 1904

5. The Black Cap in 2015

6. The Black Cap Business Plan, March 2017

7. Protest vigil outside the Black Cap, October 2015

8. Notification of asset of community value listing, 8 April 2015

9. Handwritten and online responses to community consultation, April 2014.

All items courtesy the Black Cap Foundation / Alex Green

📺 Watch: *The Black Cap,* 2019, directed by Georgie Worth and Rosalind Chaston, 5 mins

WANC (Women’s Anarchist Nuisance Café)

1998–2011

Various squatted and autonomous spaces, Hackney and Tower Hamlets

From the early prototype in a rave warehouse in Dalston in 1995, to an anarchist nuisance café, in the Toxic Planet squat, Stoke Newington, WANC was a monthly women’s DIY vegan café. A panacea to passive consumerism, WANC’s aims were to celebrate women, difference and diversity, providing a creative space run through co-production. This included preparing vegan food, making music, art, poetry, performances, workshops, discussions and entertainment. WANC welcomed trans women, trans men and non-binary people who still had links to the women’s movement. The acronym WANC was acquired during its time at Spiral Women’s Squat on Queensbridge Road, Dalston (1999). The café ran in other squats, such as Shacklewell Baths and The Boys Club, Dalston, before eviction in 2001.

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WANC then relocated to The Radical Dairy, a ‘Womble’ Squat – associated with Womble, a London-based anarchist and anti-capitalist group – in Kynaston Road, Stoke Newington (2002–03). A police raid on May Day 2002 left the squat without computers or electricity, but WANC continued and developed themed nights such as Night of the Cosmic Femmes and Tomboi. Subsequent venues included Chinaman Squat, a former Chinese takeaway on Dalston Lane (2003–04) and RampArt Social Centre, on Rampart Street, Whitechapel (2004–07), followed by a re-emergence as WINC (Women’s Inspirational Nuisance café), a monthly event at music venue Passing Clouds (now closed), and a final stint at The Boys Club in Dalston. WANC stopped running due to the difficulties of finding affordable venues, which was made harder by the passing of Section 144 of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (2012) which made squatting in residential properties illegal.

1. Sebastian Buser, WANC zine, 2014

2. WINC, Passing Clouds, Dalston, flyer, 2011

3. WINC, The Boys Club Dalston, flyer, 2011

4. WANC at Toxic Planet (the first WANC), flyer, 1998

5. WANC at Toxic Planet (the first WANC), flyer, 1998 (reverse side)

6. ‘Summer Solstice’, WANC at London Fields, E8, flyer, 2006

7. WANC at Rampart, Aldgate, flyer, 2007

8. WANC at Rampart, Aldgate, flyer, 2005

9. WANC chequebook reading ‘Women’s Area Network Café’

10. Sebastian Buser, map charting WANC venues for WANC zine, 2014

11. WANC at Radical Dairy, flyer, 2002

12. WANC at Radical Dairy, flyer, 2003

13. WANC at Chinaman, Dalston, flyer, 2003

14. WANC at Chinaman, Dalston, flyer, 2003

All items courtesy Sebastian Buser / Caro Smart

🎧 Listen: Caro Smart, recollections of WANC, March 2019