

INHOUSE EXHIBITION
19 March — 8 May 2022

QUEER ICONS

A project by Fin Serck-Hanssen,
Caroline Ugelstad Elnæs, Bjørn Hatterud



Western etymology makes the word icon coincide with the Greek eikōn, "likeness, image," someone like me that I can see in a mirror, the likeness of me, within reach. Yet, it is an image, not reality, because someone like me, real or imaginary, has paved the way for me to be someone I may not yet be or represented: I aspire to be in their likeness. In the 20th century, pop icons were fundamental in redeeming secularity in such figures, bringing the possibility of the person from the street, the people, to climb the ladder, make a difference, contribute to social change by being with the struggle, and leading it. They became exemplary lives, models.

Fin Serck Hanssen, Bjørn Hatterud, and Caroline Ugelstad Elnæs traced their Norwegian legends, leading figures from the queer community born before 1970 who not only contributed but built the Norwegian society we know today. While Norway is reaching the 50th anniversary of the decriminalization of homosexuality this year, proper recognition of actual figures who worked on all sides of the struggle has not come to the pages of schoolbooks. New academic literature suggests that pop icons are fundamental in exercising soft power to influence the attitudes and values of, among others, young people. They provide an alternative to the political establishment and play a role in empowerment, inspiration, education, information, awareness-raising, fundraising, opinion building, and lobbying. It represents the opportunity for many people to gain a voice to speak without fear when expressing their sexuality, which sadly continues to remain a taboo. Sexuality and desire continue to be manipulated and streamlined by the normative culture dictating the bourgeois nuclear family as the only possible model of sexual identity and behavior and the smallest recognized unity of a productive society.

During the last five decades, Fotogalleriet worked to shape a space for representation, where people could create their image under their premises: images that could represent different ways of life outside given norms and institutions. Queer Icons, a multilayered project by Fin Serck Hanssen, Bjørn Hatterud, and Caroline Ugelstad Elnæs, is on many levels a work in progress as we have a long way to go into a more equitable society which not only endorses non-normalized positions but makes them become their primary model, icons. As these issues sit at the intersection of social sciences, technologies of power and information, and the aesthetic field of what's yet to be normalized and accepted, Fotogalleriet, in its continuous work as a kunsthalle with its public remit and accountability, is inherently the primary site of presentation of such concerns and propositions.

Contribute to the exhibition actively. Iconize. Contact us and send feedback. It is a shared history. Make it known!

Fin Serck-Hansen, Bjørn Hatterud
and Caroline Ugelstad Elnæs

Queer Icons began when Fin met an old acquaintance at the London Pub in Oslo. "Is it him? Is he still around?" thought Fin. It dawned on him that there were almost no photographs of the person he encountered taken in recent decades, and he was struck by the urgency to document a generation of 'queer icons' while they continue to be with us. Fin called Bjørn and asked to collaborate. They made a list with Kjell Nordström, styling parts of the project. One of the requisites for setting forward names was people who had lived long, at least fifty years.

At first, they thought this would be pure documentation work with historically accurate biographies. At the same time, The Norwegian Archive for Queer History (Skeivt arkiv) in Bergen received resources to collect life memories from lesbians, gays, transgender people, and other queer lives. The enormous documentation of The Norwegian Archive for Queer History now includes in-depth interviews, video recordings, and rich library material. The Archive also interviewed many people portrayed by this project. At the same time, a group around the author and activist Inge Ås made an enormous effort to document lesbian activism in Norway, which resembles the selection of the queer icons in this project.

Since others did essential documentation work, the *Queer Icons* project became free to take a different direction. It could focus on bringing out the diversity that queer lives represent, in all colors and shapes, oppositions and fun, party and politics. The aim was to be inspired by queer, beautiful lives!

Queer Icons is not a representative or exhaustive work of history. It attempts to produce a nuanced story about lives that reconstitute a generational portrait when these lives are brought side by side. In the decades both before and after the decriminalization of homosexuality in Norway in 1972, various forms of queer culture developed underground: in nightclubs, in art spaces, educational institutions, or through voluntary work

and closed gatherings. Queer histories, therefore, depend on being retold orally to survive.

Since all the interviewees have reached fifty years of age, several by a good margin, it was integral to the project to bring them to public light tempestively. Unfortunately, some of them left us before we could get in touch with them, and some others passed away before the project reached the public eye. Others asked for an exception or firmly refused to be part of such an overtly defined queer context. Many have been skeptical of being called queer or attributed to the status of an icon. Eventually, the photographic undertaking became more extensive in size, and the book and the exhibition ensuing from the project are a selection of a selection—restricted mainly by the space of the page and the exhibition.

Fin has lived in parallel with the portrayed subjects and known many of the icons personally. Bjørn is in his mid-forties and missed these role models for an adult, queer life. Eventually, from a younger generation, Caroline supported Bjørn and Fin in the task. In this way, the project gives different insights into those who have helped create it.

In an academic context, the word icon is made coincide in its etymology to the Greek *eikon*, which means image, often used in religious cults of Christ or Saints in Orthodox churches. In a figurative sense, the word relates to a “person or cause that is considered a representative symbol (for a movement, culture, and similar); admirable or respectable person.”

Wanting it or not, the people portrayed in the project are, to us, without a doubt, *icons*.



1. Per Barclay, artist, b. 1955
in Norway



2. Gerd Brantenberg, author, teacher,
and writer, b.1941 in Norway



3. Maurice Budini, actor, b.1944
in Italy



4. Brita Møystad Engseth, TV host
and personality, b.1966 in Norway



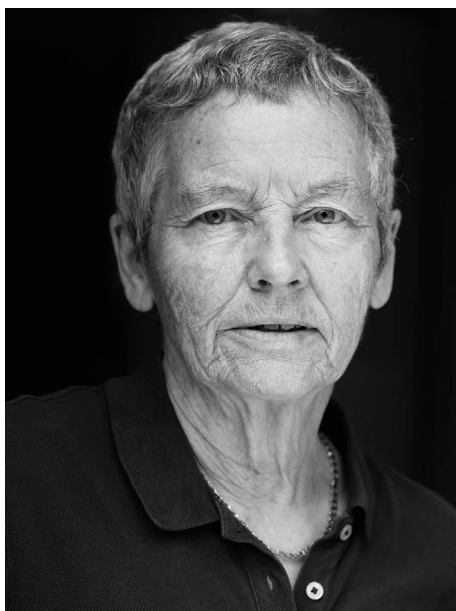
5. Lill-Ann Chepstow-Lusty, artist,
b.1960 in the UK



6. Christeene, performance artist,
b. in the US



7. Vaginal Davis, performance artist,
b.1969 in the US



8. Turid Eikvam, criminologist
and activist, b.1948 in Norway



9. Cårejånni Enderud, TV host and personality, b.1966 in Norway



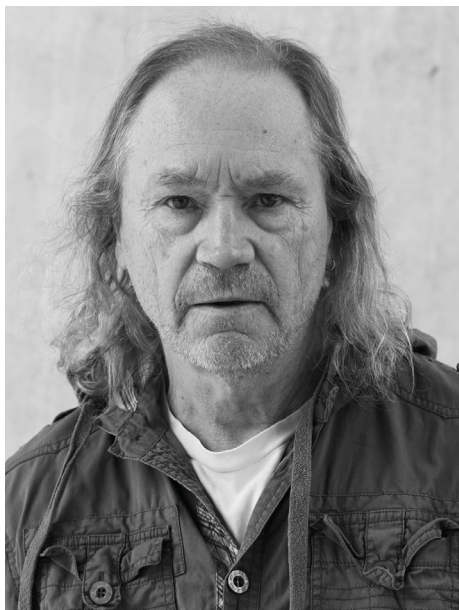
10. Reidar Engesbak, journalist, b.1966 in Norway



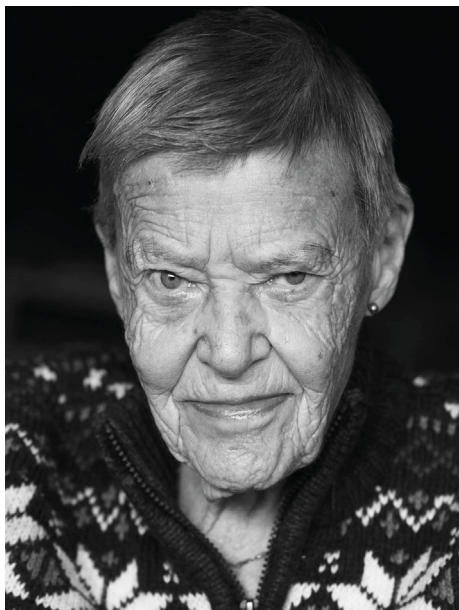
11. Liv Finstad, Professor of Criminology and Sociology of Law, b.1950 in Norway



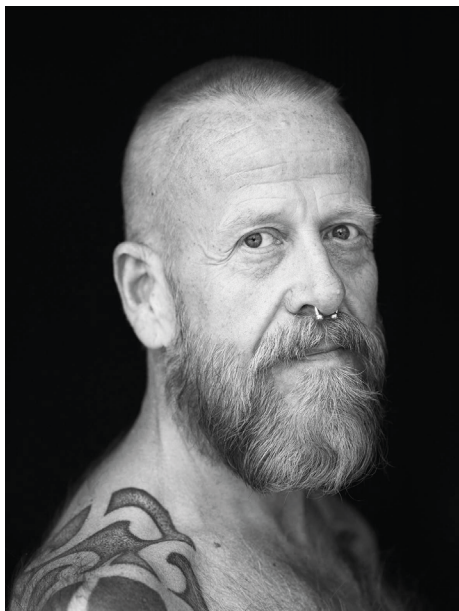
12. Rolf Flatmo artist, b.1955 in Norway & Morten Sortodden, social educator and environmental therapist, b.1961 in Norway



13. Stein Fossli, musician, activist and journalist, b.1952 in Norway



14. Kim Friele, author and activist, b.1935–d.2021 in Norway



15. Halvard Haldorsen, musician, b.1963 in Norway



16. Dag Johan Haugerud, author and film director, b.1964 in Norway



17. Armand Henriksen, diva, designer and activist, b.1966 in Norway



18. Sven Johannessønn Henriksen, actor and writer, b.1955 in Northern Norway/Sápmi



19. David Hoyle, performance artist and film director, b.1962 in the UK



20. Lars Daniel Krutzkoff Jacobsen, film director, b.1962 in Norway



21. Mona Nesje, survivalist, b.1966
in Norway



22. Ulf Nilseng, dance artist and
choreographer, b.1963



23. Kjell Nordström, designer, b.1962
in Sweden



24. Kristin Norderval, composer,
b.1957 in the USA



25. Nelly Nylon, drag artist, b. in Norway



26. Genesis P-Orridge, signer, songwriter and activist, b.1950 in the UK, d.2020 in the USA



27. Esben Esther Pirelli Benestad, professor emerit, sexologist, b.1949 in Norway



28. Catherine Opie, artist, b.1961 in the USA



29. Tom Ovlien, journalist and activist,
b.1955 in Norway

Arne-Harald Hanssen, criminologist,
b.1958 in Norway



30. Svein Skeid, activist,
b.1950–d.2020 in Norway



31. Calvin Ray Stiggers, actor and
dancer, b.1957 in the USA



32. Morten Rudå, actor, b.1960
in Denmark



33. Siri Sunde, priest, b.1958
in Norway



34. Gudmund Vindsun, author, b.1949
in Norway



35. Øyvind Palm, bureaucrat and activist,
b.1947 in Norway

a project by Fin Serck-Hanssen, Bjørn Hatterud
and Caroline Ugelstad Elnæs

The exhibition *Queer Icons* is the result of a series of meetings that photographer Fin Serck-Hanssen and authors Bjørn Hatterud and Caroline Ugelstad Elnæs have had with groundbreaking queer personas born before 1970. The project aims to contribute unwritten recognition surrounding Norway's queer genealogies to mainstream history. Taking place in the context of the 50th anniversary of the decriminalisation of homosexuality in Norway, *Queer Icons* consists of an exhibition, a publication, and a wide-ranging public programme.

The book is edited by Bente Riise and designed by Den Luca. The exhibition is designed through a collaboration with the design collective HAIKw/, Ida Falck Øien and Harald Lunde Helgesen.

SKEIVE



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Exhibition

Curator: Antonio Cataldo, Artistic Director, Fotogalleriet
Producer: Camilla von Køppen, Head of Exhibitions, Fotogalleriet
Curators Public Programmes: Håkon Lillegraven, Head of
Mediation, Fotogalleriet and Miki Gebrelul, Programme
Coordinator, Fotogalleriet
Exhibition Design: HAIKw/ (Ida Falck Øien and Harald Lunde
Helgesen)
Installation: Alf Ollett, Art Handler & Technician, Fotogalleriet
Onsite Mediator: Sakib Saboor, Digital Consultant and
Mediator, Fotogalleriet
Partner, exhibition: The Norwegian Theater (Det Norske Teatret),
Kristian IVs gate 8, 0164 Oslo
Partners, public programme: Oslo Fusion, Vega Scene

Book

Editor: Bente Riise
Photo Editor: Petter Snare
Graphic Design: Den Luca
Styling: Kjell Nordstrøm and Tor Erik Bøe
Assistant Photographer: Simen Kjellin

Booklet

Graphic Design: 34studio

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Markus Langen
Valborg Stene
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Oslo Municipality Funeral Service
SLM
Kristin Lian
Thore Winter
Mathias Kopperud
Ole Ludvig Vandbakk
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Bjørn H.
Kai V.
Lynn M.
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Nasjonalbiblioteket
No. 53 Pub og Bar
Påfuglen
London Pub



Excerpts of the exhibition are on view at
The Norwegian Theatre (Det Norske Teatret)
Kristian IVs gate 8
0164 Oslo
www.detnorsketeatret.no

For more information on the exhibition, visits
and tours, or press inquiries, contact Fotogalleriet's
Head of Mediation and Communication
Håkon Lillegraven at haakon@fotogalleriet.no.

For international press inquiries, please write to
Arash Shahali at presse@fotogalleriet.no.