

# BLISTER

the story of one chosen family (sisters, brothers, blisters)  
to negotiate our collective secrets, intuition, and other bodily functions



blister

This zine is a product of Stay Gold, an intergenerational LGBTQIA+ arts program at the Museum of Contemporary Art Tucson. This program typically runs each spring and fall. We ran a special program this summer to keep us all connected during the long period of isolation caused by the pandemic.

This goal of this program was to provide space for intergenerational connections within the LGBTQIA+ community through shared autobiographical storytelling and zine-making. Our facilitator, artist and intuitive Asher Hartman, encouraged intuitive making and creating, connecting each participant with deeper aspects of the self or parts of ourselves we may not be consciously connected to. A focus on making guided by intergenerational connections allowed for a space of vulnerability, honesty and discovery to open up. Each week, via Zoom, participants walked through the process of unfolding their experiences to reveal what may lie unseen or unacknowledged. Each session built upon the previous week culminating in a collection of visual and text-based narratives included in this zine. We use the format of the zine as a tool to both subvert dominant narratives (often told about us, without us) while also providing an outlet for artistic production.

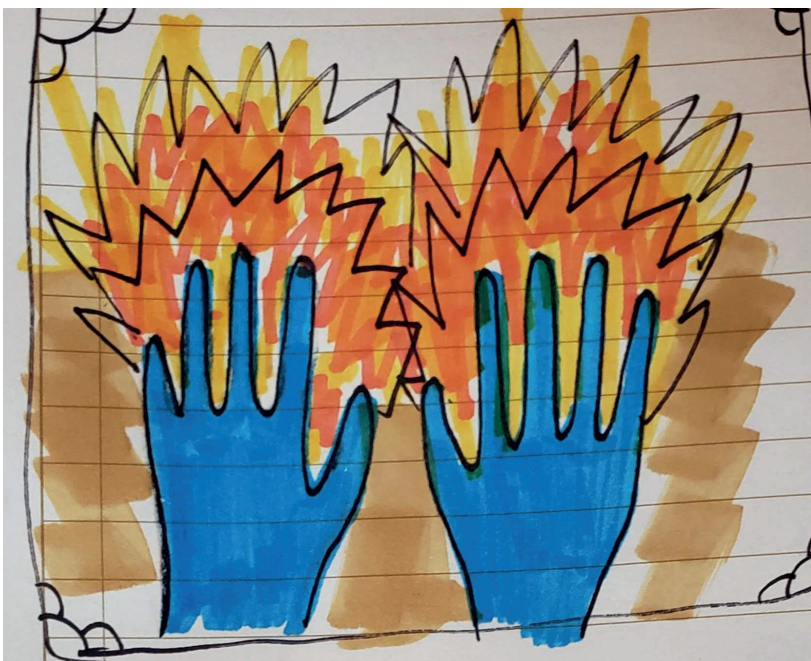
Asher Hartman is an interdisciplinary artist, writer, director and intuitive practitioner, whose work at the junction of visual art and theater centers on the exploration of the self in relation to Western histories and ideologies.



# Table of Contributors

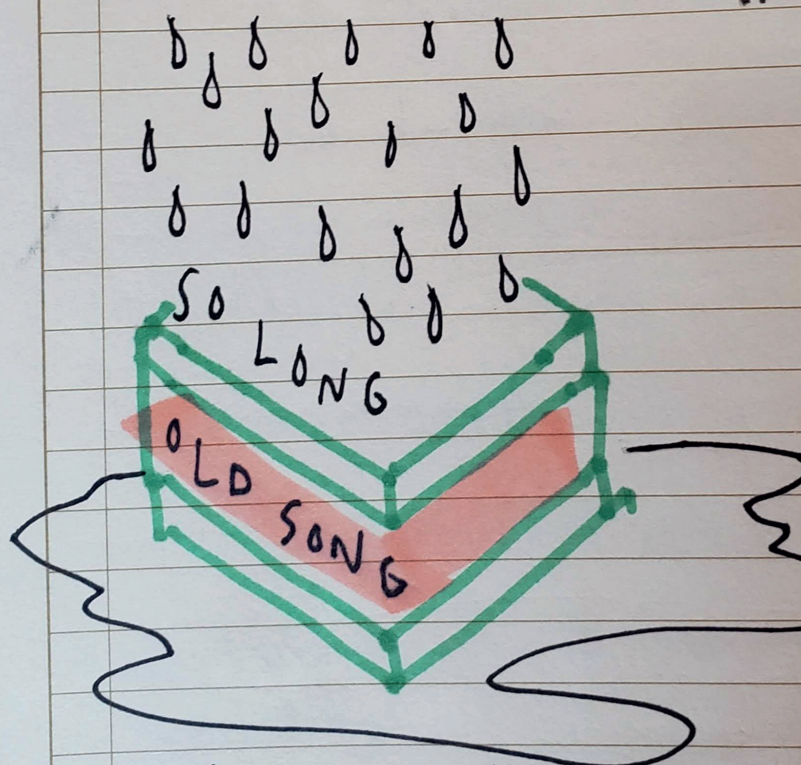
Danny Gonzales  
Meredith Glaubach  
Nicole Santarsiero  
Melanie Gray  
FRANK  
Gayle Brickert-Albrecht  
Phyllis Solow  
Eli Burke  
Susannah M.  
Harrison Orr  
bea flowers  
Em Miller  
Walker Orr  
Eryn Rubin  
Jackson Wray

Thanks to Asher Hartman for facilitating.



TERROR OF  
KNOWING

IN-



DON'T BE AFRAID.

# Playlist

“The Circle Game” by Joni Mitchell  
“Open Arms” by Tracy Chapman  
“32 Flavors” by Ani DiFranco  
“Both Sides Now” by Joni Mitchell (the more upbeat version from the album “Clouds”)  
“This is Me” (Greatest Showman Soundtrack) by Keala Settle  
“Moonshot” by Buffy Saint Marie  
“Miracles” by Jefferson Starship  
“Talia” By King Princess  
“Send in the Clowns” by Sondheim, Judy Collins, performing  
“Ella’s Song (We Believe in Freedom)” by Sweet Honey in the Rock  
“Stay Gold” by Stevie Wonder  
“Guided by Wire” by Neko Case  
“Beautiful People” by Melanie  
“Flirting with Her” by Sir Babygirl

SCAN ME



I do too,  
Everyone has  
been so  
gentle and  
fun!

I hold you all  
to my heart





I FOR<sup>9</sup>TIVE  
MYSELF FOR  
THE WAYS  
MY QUEER  
INDIGENOUS  
SOUL HAS  
BEEN  
COLONIZED







# My people



Mary and I became friends just before I turned 6. Legend goes that we met on a playground and I shared a precious piece of Angel Food Cake with her. Subsequent years, we would make each other an Angel Food Cake for each other's birthdays as well as a homemade gift. Around the age of 12, my mother and I and she and her mother went on a cruise. I don't remember how we decided, but our mission was to figure out which ear housed the "gay earring" and we all investigated by asking strangers their opinion. We never found out. Mary was the first of the friends to be in a sexual relationship with a boy, and she maintained that sexual relationship while having other boyfriends. I didn't know for years. One summer in college, I visited her in DC for a weekend. I was very annoyed when she insisted on having a friend join us one evening. She told me that night that she was confused about her feelings about this friend. They went to college together and saw each other almost every day. She was unsure of her feelings because she loved her friend and didn't know if it was the gay kind of love. Now, many years later, they plan on marrying.

Kathryn was a wild child. When I would have her over for playdates, we would ransack my room and run and scream. She had a big family and I would dote on her younger sisters. One time at a sleepover, we had begrudgingly allowed her younger sister to sleep in the same room as us. To be fair, they shared the room, but it still felt very kind of us. We were playing truth or dare and the younger sister dared us all to lift our shirts at the same time. I hated this idea. My body was developing faster than average and I did not want to expose it more than necessary.



At the count of three I barely lifted my shirt. She went to a different school and we hardly kept in touch. This past year, I ran into her when I was back home for Thanksgiving. In passing, I offered a place to stay if she ever came through. And months later when she came through, she hit me up. It turned out that while she



was studying abroad in college she had spent time with a really nice straight couple and they stayed in touch. The couple eventually broke up, and Kathryn was full of warring emotions and couldn't understand why. Kathryn and the now single woman ended up going on a yearlong cross-country road trip. They fell in love. Kathryn was passing through Tucson on her way to Canada, where she was going to live with her new girlfriend.



Katherine was a fast friend in middle and high school. We learned about progressive politics together and fawned over handsome teachers. She was rowdy and smart and so so funny. We were always late to classes together and apparently, she'd often talk to the teacher afterwards and explain that I was having "lady problems." Her moms were lesbians and so freshman year of high school we joined the Gay Straight Alliance. We would go and listen, and afterwards we would joke about how we were the only straight people there. To be fair, the other kids in the club were a little weird, but we were very quick to distance ourselves. By junior year she had a long-distance girlfriend.

Jane and I became friends in high school. They took me on hours long walks and I watched with awe as they spray painted art on bridges. They opened my eyes to leftism and I developed a lot of my politics talking to them. We went to Prom together as friends, and my parents believed we were a straight couple. We talked about being bi a lot, and our relationship with gender. I wished I had centered myself less in those conversations, when they came out as trans. As soon as they got to college they got into a queer relationship, and have been consistently dating people of different genders since.



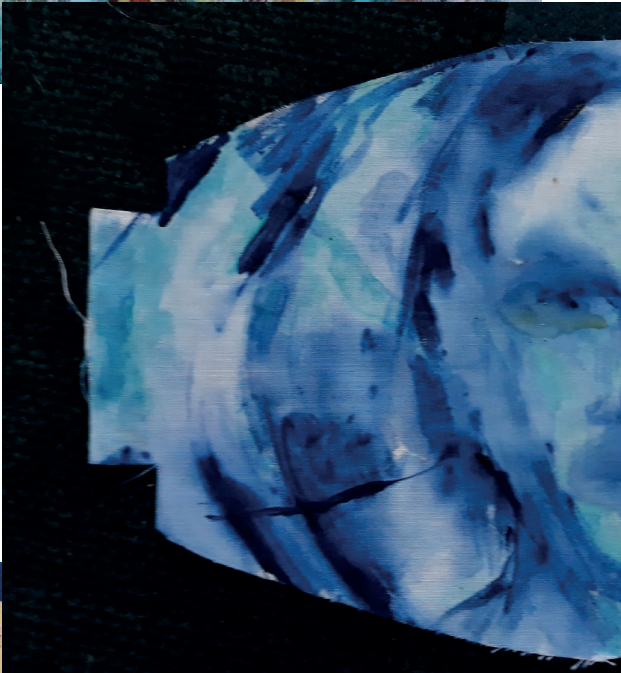
In addition to Mary and Kathryn and Katherine and Jane, Kimmie and Prisha and Sarah and Emma are also queer. But when we became friends none of us knew, but in another way I think we all did.



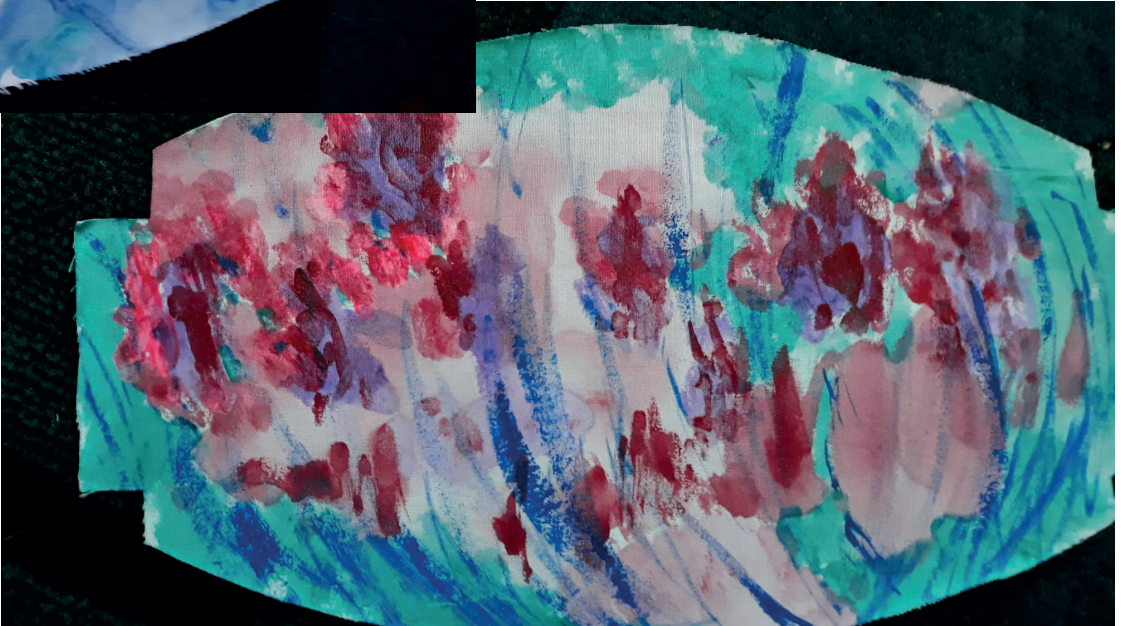












THE WORLD LOVES YOU

STA

I BELIEVE IN YOU



WE ARE HERE FOR A REA



YOU ARE

STOP SAYING THOSE  
THINGS TO YOURSELF



Y HERE I LOVE YOU

YOU NEVER HAVE TO  
FEEL ALONE AGAIN

Handwritten text on a torn piece of paper, partially obscured by a green silhouette of a person.

you DESERVE  
SUPPORT

YOU ARE SAFE

SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL

YOUR SOUL SHINES

I've always believed that one's internal locus is the surest guide. My gut instinct around new situations and people more often than not has served me well. But along with most folks I was conditioned to value the external locus as more civilized; more powerful. So, for most of my life I would have told you I was true to the former, while I was actually acting out the latter.

Maybe I can hang some of the blame on being a baby boomer, though I only recently realized that my birth year situates me as one. Having parents who grew up in the austerity of the great depression and WWII planted the idea that production and industry and loyalty were more meaningful and valuable than feelings or desires or self-knowledge. After sixty years of always doing what I thought was the "right thing" it took divorce number two, a bout with depression, and a core-rattling 40 minutes with a new therapist to realize I hadn't been walking my talk for a very, very long time, if ever.

So, for the past year I've been working at regaining that internal locus of control. Not that I totally lost touch. In problem solving, creative ventures, or outward analyses I could still access my intuition, but in matters of the heart it definitely got benched while my rationalizations most often commanded the floor. I became so practiced at discounting, or just plain ignoring my feelings, sensations, and instincts that I lost the ability to name them. Simple questions about what I wanted or hoped for invoked an odd panic—a fog of confused defensiveness that rendered me tongue-tied. At loss for a genuine reply I became expert at constructing plausible explanations that would satisfy the questioner. I developed a knack for composing strings of wise-sounding multi-syllabic words that most often passed for a thoughtful response. But eventually the cache' of clever phrasing wears thin, and the person on the receiving end realizes it's just double-talk meant to appease. Turns out to be an unsustainable pseudo-communication style that generates more confusion and distrust all around.

I might have hoped that, like riding a bike, one could jump right back on and sail down a path of introspection and self-knowledge. But apparently intuition is a bit deeper, and more fickle than mere muscle memory. It's demanding some honest connection from me and will not tolerate the doubletalk. I've finally returned to repairing my most important relationship and getting to know me is going to take a little time.



Let it go,  
'Tis my mantra for growing old.  
I cannot hold back time,  
I cannot stop the Flow,

Movement becomes soft and slow,  
Memory cracks,  
Breaking the rigidity of a Lifetime,  
Stunning new patterns form,  
Awakening creativity long buried.  
It is time,  
Let it out,  
Let it go,

*Phyllis Solow*  
4/24/2020



Phyllis' hand  
Age 73

Mom's hand  
Age 100



ENR NUMBER 01





Growing up, my family kept lots of secrets. Who had an affair, who was gay, who tried to commit suicide. These were things that once I found out, I was told never to repeat or ask questions about, especially with anyone outside of the family. What would people think of us?!

I don't think my family is unique in this way. As I grew up and had conversations with other people, it seemed it was quite normal for families to keep secrets...which is both relieving and concerning at the same time. I think the famous Tolstoy quote "happy families are all alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way" could be rephrased to say, "each unhappy family keeps secrets and carries these burdens around with them, but they are burdens; secrets are burdens who we really are. In the end, we must shed our secrets so people see our inner core."







toy  
py  
be amended  
its own secrets  
und". I'm convinced that  
ts don't protect us, they mask  
They provide a kind of armor that  
like the layers of a Russian doll. Most  
the outer dolls and only a few see the true  
doll.

When I had children, my partner and I made a concerted effort to NOT keep secrets from them. I don't want them to feel like they must carry around several versions of themselves or of our family.

I now realize that this makes my created family decidedly not normal, but I hope much happier.



I AM THE SCREEPER  
I LIE  
I HIDE  
I DON'T SAY  
ANYTHING  
IT KEEPS ME  
SAFE  
IT KEEPS THEM SAFE



RISK

REWARD

RISK

REWARD

RISK

REWARD

RISK

REWARD

RISK

REWARD

RISK

REWARD







designed by flowers press  
printed by Newspaper Club  
featuring fonts BadlyStamped, Bahnschrift,  
Fragment Core, and MOON GET! from dafont.com

This zine is a collaboration between members of the group Stay Gold, an intergenerational LGBTQIA+ arts group organized through the Museum of Contemporary Art Tucson.  
Made over Summer 2020.

This project made possible by a grant from Aroha Philanthropies.

