

Hite Institute of Art + Design

it was not written down

Stephen Irwin x Letitia Quesenberry

Cressman Center for Visual Arts | 100 E Main St Louisville, KY

August 21 – October 6, 2024

Reception: Friday August 23, 2024 | 5-7pm

The Hite Institute of Art + Design is pleased to present *it was not written down*, an exhibition of works by Louisville-based artists Stephen Irwin (1959–2010) and Letitia Quesenberry (b.1971).

it was not written down tells an unfinished story of longing and loss. Vestiges of the past become the substance of futures that may never materialize. Sparks still fly between friends.

Stephen Irwin loomed large in Louisville’s art community. By all accounts, he was a “true chameleon,” as a writer for the legendary, queer magazine *BUTT* put it, “a nightclub impresario... beautiful, modern artist, local celebrity, trash, multiple heart-attack survivor, pacemaker carrier.” With an abiding interest in ephemerality, Irwin made work that appears often on the verge of disappearing. For his “rub outs,” a series begun in the early 2000s, Irwin culled pages from his archive of vintage pornography magazines and rubbed their surfaces with abrasive materials leaving behind ghostly apparitions, slits and circles, beautifully sculpted body parts, and tender touches. Submerged fingers disappear into thin tissue, tongues flick upon it, and hands emerge from the same diaphanous stuff.

If Irwin removed layers, Letitia Quesenberry adds them, transforming found images and materials into alluring objects that thwart our impulses to name and know. Referring to her work as “containers for ecstatic unpredictability,” Quesenberry layers materials in mysterious ways, engendering “a kind of visual veiling that destabilizes perception,” as she states. Suspended between materiality and metaphor, her work transfixes our gaze and tantalizes our fingers. With her *Little Darlings*, a series ongoing since 2014, Quesenberry encases small portraits of friends, icons, lovers, and legends in frames shaped like Polaroids, conjuring an imagined past—a queer pantheon for the future. Stephen’s there, gently touching a wall behind a milky, waxy veil. An impish iconoclast among multitudes.

Curated by Jennifer Sichel, Assistant Professor of Contemporary Art and Theory, this exhibition will coincide with the symposium *Queer Art / Queer Archives*. For more information on the symposium, visit: <https://louisville.edu/art/exhibitions/all/queer-art-queer-archives>

it was not written down will be on view at the Cressman Center for Visual Arts August 21 – October 6, 2024. An opening reception will be held on Friday August 23 from 5-7pm. This event is free and open to the public.