



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THE SHELLEY & DONALD RUBIN FOUNDATION
AT THE 8TH FLOOR PRESENTS

***KINDRED SOLIDARITIES:
QUEER COMMUNITY AND CHOSEN FAMILIES***



Christopher Udemezue, *Blue Mountains and The Stain of William Thomas Beckford*, from the series *Facing a Foggy Mirror*, 2017. Courtesy of the artist.

**The 8th Floor
17 West 17th Street, NYC
(Between 5th and 6th Avenues)
October 21, 2021 - January 22, 2022**

NEW YORK, NY – September 22, 2021 - The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation is pleased to present *Kindred Solidarities: Queer Community and Chosen Families*, a group exhibition reflecting on chosen familial structures in the context of queer culture, expanding beyond the notion of a heteronormative, nuclear, or government mandated framework. *Kindred Solidarities*

features works by **Jamie Diamond**, **Andrea Geyer**, **Nan Goldin**, **David Kelley**, **Larry Krone**, **Kalup Linzy**, **Carlos Motta**, and **Christopher Udemezue**. Exploring the idea of a structure based on allyship, rather than genetics, the exhibition will address how family is defined through gender, sexuality, and the collision of global identities, cultures, and community experiences. An opening reception will take place on Thursday, October 21 at the Foundation's gallery space, The 8th Floor, in New York City (details and guidelines to be announced).

The artists in *Kindred Solidarities* mine the politics of representation, history, soap operas, and popular culture to examine questions surrounding the importance of safe neighborhoods, the depiction of queer love and happiness, and intergenerational supportive relationships. Addressing activist and outsider narratives, each draw on political engagement to further collective concerns, forming a connective thread of kinship with queer contemporaries and forebears.

On Friday, June 26, 2015, the Supreme Court struck down bans on same sex marriages in all 50 states. Prior to this historic change in legislation, and for an incalculable period, LGBTQIA+ people have had to find and construct their own families outside the bounds of the law. People have often been compelled by necessity to find support and kinship due to expulsion or rejection by their biological relations. This has frequently been the result of religious beliefs, sexual repression, or other culturally constructed mythologies surrounding homosexuality and gender. Every community needs a nurturing neighborhood in which to thrive, and New York City – a long-time haven for anyone who doesn't fit societal norms – is also examined as a bedrock of the Gay Rights Movement and a safe site for the thriving unconventional families depicted in this thematic group show.

Each artist has addressed ideas of emotional bonds and sentiment, from physical mementos to elements featuring traditional handcrafts. **Larry Krone's** *Then and Now (Cape Collaboration)*, 2012, features a cloak comprised of hundreds of pieces of decorative embroidery and sewing found in thrift stores and estate sales. The synthesis of the disparate pieces compiled as a single object references the traditions of quilting and patchwork, in which fragmentary parts become whole, blending individual histories over time. Krone references his chosen kin through these keepsakes and familiar cultural tropes. He shares this with **Kalup Linzy**, whose *Queen Rose Family* sagas have been the mainstay subject of his irreverent video works. Modeled after soap operas, his cast of characters feature the artist in a variety of guises playing real and invented relations. Linzy's work explores the love and loss inherent in real, fictional, and chosen familial structures. Fictional relationships – a group of strangers staged as a nuclear family – are documented in **Jamie Diamond's** conceptual video *The History of the Harmonie Family Portrait* (2008). The work, part of her series *Constructed Family Portraits*, considers the intimacy, familiarity, and veracity – or lack thereof – prevalent in conventional photographic portraits. Diamond subverts this tradition by hiring actors, who've never met, to pose in hotel rooms they've never inhabited.

Representations of intimacy, quotidian life, and community are tackled by **Nan Goldin** and **Andrea Geyer**. Since the 1970's, Goldin's practice has involved documenting her own community through portraiture that is deeply personal, verging on autobiographic. Her candid,

uncompromising photographs provide a glimpse into LGBTQIA+ subculture, giving her subjects visibility and permanence. Geyer's series *Constellations* charts the checkered history of lesbian relationships as the rights of the women have increased in certain cultures. The subjects depicted significantly impacted the cultural landscapes of their time, through holding salons and creating communities where topics like gender and politics could be discussed, including writers and life partners Alice B. Toklas and Gertrude Stein, black activist and writer Jessie Redmon Fauset, and Irish aristocrats Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby who lived openly as lesbians in the 19th century. The artist sources vintage photographs and illustrations, collaging them with a refracted gaze. The series examines those missing, or not foregrounded, in heteronormative histories, which have been primarily focused on male cultural production.

The concept of community explored by Goldin and Geyer is similarly reflected in the works of **Christopher Udemzue, Carlos Motta, and David Kelley**. In his two-channel video *Neither Forever Nor Instant* (2013) Kelley collaborates with artist groups Parallel Lines and Fabulous Independent Educated Radicals for Community Empowerment (FIERCE) to document tours of historic sites related to the Gay Rights Movement. Representing family and community from a broader perspective, Motta's practice deconstructs LGBTQIA+ lives and histories. His installation *We Got Each Other's Backs* (2020) allows the viewer to inhabit an environment where they can experience the stories of self-identified queer artists talking about being openly undocumented in America. One chapter focuses on Julio Salgado, creator of the Undocuqueer Project, in discussion with his biological family – who have embraced his sexuality – about coming out, activism, and his political art practice. Complicated histories, and the overlooked participation of queer people in armed rebellions leading to radical change, such as the Haitian Revolution, is the driving force behind *Facing A Foggy Mirror*, Udemzue's vivid photographic series, inspired by classical painting. Two works, *Blue Mountains and The Stain of William Thomas Beckford* and *Untitled (In a trance, she walked out onto her reflection, closed her eyes and received a plan from beyond the mountains)*, center on figures from opposing sides of slavery in the 18th Century Caribbean: the former referencing William Thomas Beckford, a aristocratic gay man who fled Europe to the sanctuary of the West Indies, only to become an oppressor after inheriting one of the largest plantations in Jamaica; and the latter paying homage to Queen Nanny, the legendary leader of the Jamaican Maroons, community of formerly enslaved Africans living in the island's dense, mountainous interior.

Queer solidarity and community is as important as ever – perhaps even more so – with new prejudicial laws being passed in various countries around the world, and the pervasive acceptance of violence against LGBTQIA+ people. The artists in *Kindred Solidarities* recognize this and act for the betterment of their community, and their respective family units. Each of the works in the exhibition celebrates the happiness found in queer kinship and chosen families, in addition to forming new connections with, and bringing to light the efforts of, overlooked or obscured figures throughout history. They collectively demonstrate that acceptance, belonging, authentic living, and, ultimately, being loved for who you are, can be found outside of the biological ties we're born into.

Kindred Solidarities is curated by Anjuli Nanda Diamond and George Bolster.

Visitor Guidelines

To enter the gallery, The 8th Floor will require all visitors 12 and older to show proof of vaccination and a valid ID. Visitors under the age of 12 must be accompanied by a vaccinated guardian. Visitors are required to wear a mask at all times in all areas of the building.

About the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation

The Foundation believes in art as a cornerstone of cohesive, sustainable communities and greater participation in civic life. In its mission to make art available to the broader public, in particular to underserved communities, the Foundation provides direct support to, and facilitates partnerships between, cultural organizations and advocates of social justice across the public and private sectors. Through grantmaking, the Foundation supported cross-disciplinary work connecting art with social justice via experimental collaborations, as well as extending cultural resources to organizations and areas of New York City in need. sdrubin.org

About The 8th Floor

The 8th Floor is an independent exhibition and event space established in 2010 by Shelley and Donald Rubin to promote artistic and cultural initiatives. Inspired by the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation, the gallery is committed to broadening the access and availability of art to New York audiences. Seeking further cultural exchange, The 8th Floor explores the potential of art as an instrument for social change in the 21st century, through an annual program of innovative contemporary art exhibitions and an events program comprised of performances, salon-style discussions, and those organized by external partners. the8thfloor.org

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#ArtandSocialJustice

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[Image Description: Two shirtless Black people lay together surrounded by tropical flora, including palm tree fronds and birds-of-paradise. To the left of the image a white hand reaches through the flora.]

Due to the ongoing public health emergency, dates for the exhibition are subject to change.