



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# SEX CRIMES

*Co-curated by Greg Ellis and Brian Paul Clamp*

August 15 – September 28, 2019

Opening reception:  
Thursday, August 15, 2019  
6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

“Sex Crimes,” organized by ClampArt and Ward 5B, explores queer culture as it has been historically defined by legislation in English-speaking countries outlawing sexual relations between consenting adults of the same gender. These draconian laws, interchangeably referred to as Crimes Against Nature, Unnatural Acts, and Sex Crimes, have led to mass incarceration, institutionalization, conversion therapy, public shaming, familial rejection, and the wholesale death of gay people.

The exhibition “Sex Crimes” provides artwork and literature with homosexual content that was often created in a shadow world of criminality, organized crime payoffs, and under the threat of arrest. These pieces, aimed primarily at gay men, were often passed surreptitiously from person to person. Producers of the artworks faced imprisonment and harassment if they were caught.

The body of work presented in “Sex Crimes” provides a window into the camaraderie and defiant response of sexual outlaws to governmental, religious, and cultural homophobia that has historically criminalized them. Until the Stonewall riots in 1969, gay people had not collectively organized in resistance to repression and discrimination. And it was not until 2003 in *Lawrence v. Texas* that the U.S. Supreme Court finally ruled that nonremunerative sex between consenting adults in private was protected by the Constitution and could not be criminalized.

Specifically included in the show is ephemera such as early mimeographs of erotic stories written on typewriters by gay men to be passed secretly from hand to hand; illustrated stories by Blade (Neel Bate) from the 1950s and 60s, also circulated among gay men as pornography; and examples of governmental and mental health manuals and brochures outlining how and why gay people should be jailed/treated for their sexual orientation.

A variety of pre-Stonewall works by queer artists are included in “Sex Crimes.” Some pieces, such as male portraits by George Platt Lynes and John S. Barrington, which were then not allowed to be displayed publicly, were created to appeal specifically to a gay audience; while other works by Bruce of Los Angeles, James Bidgood, Mel Roberts, and Jim French, were originally created as pornography and circulated in the shadows. Many artists in the show were targeted, harassed, and punished by authorities for their sexual preferences.

Ward 5B is an archival and curatorial service specializing in late 20<sup>th</sup>-century urban ephemera and art, with a focus on punk aesthetic, radical spaces, performance art, drag, experimental theatre, camp, queercore, and guerrilla/street art projects.

For more information and images please contact Brian Paul Clamp, Director, or see [www.clampart.com](http://www.clampart.com).