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**DENVER**  
ARTS & VENUES



## Curatorial Statement

Most of us know the saying "in sickness and in health, 'til death do us part." This common wedding vow conjures up images of an idealized future between two people and their devotion despite life's ups and downs. But what else does this phrase indicate?

Historically, this pledge has been part of a wedding ceremony for two heterosexual, opposite-gender, able-bodied individuals. Marriage between lesbian women or gay men was only made legal in the U.S. in 2015, and today it is still very difficult for disabled individuals to get married at all. The promise of "in sickness and in health" takes on new dimensions, however, when we think outside of the social construct of marriage and of what it means for those who cannot or do not marry.

In this exhibition, which includes photography, video, multimedia, installation, performance documentation and text, guest curators Mary Grace Bernard and Genevieve Waller bring together works by artists who examine illness, human relationships and the domestic sphere, in order to delve into alternative visions of devotion. The artists explore disability (physical, mental, visible, invisible, etc.) as it impacts people of color, and femme, non-binary and queer bodies in particular, including the historic, ongoing suffering and toll that HIV/AIDS has taken on LGBTQ+ individuals. The artists also look at the ways that private and gendered spaces become a battleground for promoting an ethos of care where the labor of caretaking must be valued by all.

As curators, Mary Grace Bernard and Genevieve Waller are interested in the intersections of disability - and illness in particular - with queer and feminist critiques of marriage, patriarchy in the home, and dominant hetero imaginings of domestic space and sexualities. With this exhibition, Mary Grace Bernard and Genevieve Waller pose the following questions: What is queer about illness? How can we reimagine devotion outside ableist notions of "normal" bodies? And, how do feminist notions of care intersect with the concept of "chosen families" in LGBTQ+ and crip culture?

## About the Curators

**Mary Grace Bernard** (MG, she/her) is a transmedia and performance artist, educator, advocate, and crip witch. Her practice finds itself at the intersection of performance art, transmedia installation art, art scholarship, art writing, curation, and activism. Exploring seemingly separate fields like the material and immaterial realities of (dis)ability, the living dead, queerness, cyborgism, crip time, post-humanness, spirituality, madness, care, dependency, and the boundaries between the personal and political spheres of existence, she seeks to dissolve binary thinking while converging otherwise invisible communities and their stories.

Bernard's work is conceptual, personal, socially engaged, deeply researched, and contemplative. From staged photography to found-object sculpture, digital video to curation, performance to art writing, she chooses media per its ability to communicate directly with her audiences. Through her transmedia artworks, she turns art visitors into active, empathetic spectators of her painful and time-consuming care routines. MG's work pulls from various historical contexts to reimagine traditional narratives for a more equitable future.

**Genevieve Waller** is an artist, curator, writer, historian, and writer. She creates camera-less photographs, drawings, installations, sculptures, and videos that deal with excess, substitution, transparency, and the status of everyday objects. She researches and writes about the aesthetic of camp, the history of LGBTQ+ culture, film, modern and contemporary art, and popular music. Originally from Wichita, Kansas, she received a BA in Art History from Wichita State University, an MFA in Photography and Art History at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio, and an MA in Visual and Cultural Studies at the University of Rochester in Rochester, New York. She spent a year in Berlin, Germany as a Fulbright grantee and for many years has been a college radio DJ, most recently on Radio 1190 in Boulder. She currently lives in Denver, where she is founder and editor of the art journal *DARIA: Denver Art Review, Inquiry, and Analysis*.

# In Sickness and in Health

June 1 - 30, 2022

**Guest Curated by  
Mary Grace Bernard  
and Genevieve Waller**

**Exhibition Installed by  
JDP Arts**

**McNichols Civic Center  
Building, First Floor  
Community Gallery**

## About the Artists

**Paloma Ayala** (b.1980, Matamoros, Mexico) is a visual artist interested in empowering the relationship between domestic living strategies and political contexts. Her work takes the form of publications, videos, installations, reading/cooking sessions, and workshops that fictionalize historical, ecological, or social problematics as means of analysis and critique. Paloma's projects nourish visions of connection, dreams of emancipation, and emphasize practices of care. Her favorite spaces to work in range from the kitchen to the river shore, from an international crossing bridge to agricultural land, from a community meeting to the aquelarre. Paloma's work is rooted in her home, the eastern Mexico/U.S. border landscapes, simultaneously blooming in her current base in Zurich, Switzerland.

**Jeff Rufus Byrd** is a performance and video artist whose work has been exhibited all over the globe. After having a stroke while working in his office, he has made several pieces that have explored that experience.

**Meca'Ayo Cole** (aka Tameca L Coleman, they/them) is a queer singer, multi-genre writer, multidisciplinary artist, editor (*ANMLY, just femme & dandy*), and massage therapist who currently lives in Denver Colorado. Their work explores heartbreak and healing, finding the words for our experiences, familial estrangement, being "in-between" things, finding beauty, even during times of strife, and movement towards reconciliation.

**Michael Espinoza** (they/them) is an artist working in textile, mixed media, photography, and performance living in Portland, OR. Michael's current practice is devoted to re-contextualizing fiber media as a ritual connecting them to Queer Ancestors lost too soon to disease, persecution, or fatal sadness. The resulting artworks are photographic embroideries which unflinchingly explore the embodied experience of queerness. Michael is building two new bodies of artifacts and photography-based fiber work (*snapshots for future lovers*, to be completed spring 2023 and *How to Survive a Plague*, summer 2022), both about loss, survival, sexual liberation, and conspiring with ancestors towards queer futurity.

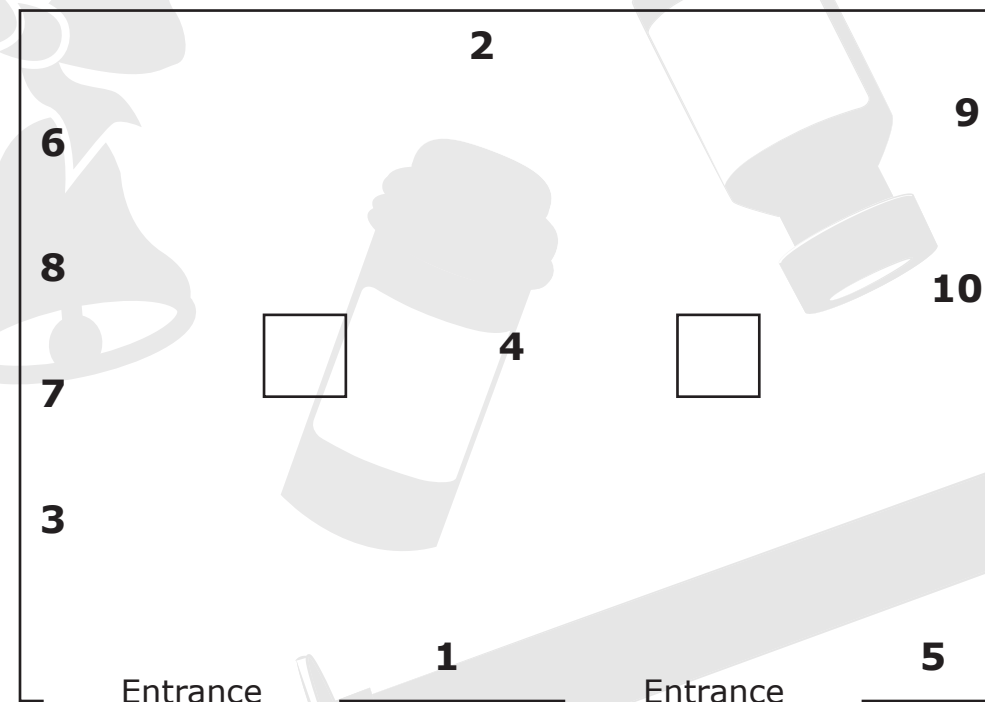
**Margeaux Feldman** is a writer, educator, artist, and community-builder living on Treaty 6 Territory in what is now known as Edmonton, Alberta. Margeaux holds a PhD in English Literature and Sexual Diversity Studies from the University of Toronto, where they wrote a dissertation that explored the intersections between chronic illness, trauma, intimacy, care, and queer sexuality. Margeaux has self-published numerous zines that focus on their experiences with poverty, chronic illness, and trauma, and are currently working on transforming their dissertation into a book manuscript entitled *Touch Me, I'm Sick*.

**Matthew Hilyard** is an artist, curator, and educator. He creates drawings, paintings, mixed media two- and three-dimensional works, and photographs. His primary interest is abstraction, though his work also draws on contemporary and historic art of all kinds. In his photographs, he also explores gay identity and culture. Based in Andover, Kansas, his work has been included in numerous national and international juried exhibitions. In 2015, *New American Paintings* selected his paintings for their West Coast issue 120. Matthew has curated a number of exhibitions and he teaches at Mark Arts in Wichita, Kansas.

**Stephanie A. Lindsey** is a photographer, filmmaker, and mixed media artist whose work focuses on the collective identity of African-Americans. She was featured as an emerging artist in *Exposure* magazine. Lindsey received a BA in Film from Howard University and a BFA in Photography from the University of Colorado at Denver, and a MFA from San Francisco Art Institute where she was a Graduate Merit Fellowship recipient. Her work focuses on the social issues of ethnicity, concentrating on social ramifications of the institution of slavery and how it has shaped her identity as a Black American.

**Cherish Marquez** (b.1989 El Paso, Texas, USA) is Latina and Queer identifying. She spent her childhood in Sierra Blanca, Texas, and adult life in Las Cruces, New Mexico. Currently, she lives and works in Denver, Colorado. She holds a BA in Fine Arts and Creative Writing at the New Mexico State University and an MFA in Emergent Digital Practices from the University of Denver. She is an interdisciplinary artist with a focus on digital media.

## Gallery Guide



1. Margeaux Feldman, *you are magic!*, 2018-2021, Sixty affirmation collages using vintage and current magazines and washi tape with LED lights, dimensions variable.

2. Genevieve Waller, *Chains of Love*, 2011-present, Cellophane and adhesive, dimensions variable.

3. Jeff Rufus Bryd, *Stroke! A Video Game*, 2020, Digital video, 12 minutes 16 seconds.

4. Stephanie Lindsey, *Maktub Series*, 2006-2009, Embroidery on cotton, dimensions variable.

5. Mary Grace Bernard, *this body of work* (in collaboration with Alessandra Pearson), 2018, Archival pigment prints, 24 x 16 inches.

6. Cherish Marquez, *Espasios*, 2020, Site-specific installation, 4 x 6 feet.

7. Matthew Hillyard, *Super Bug* and *Tested*, 2020, Archival pigment prints of photographs with vinyl letters and scratched surfaces, 12 x 10 inches; *Boy*, 2022, Archival pigment print, 10 x 12 inches.

8. Meca'Ayo Cole, *Hands*, 2020, Archival pigment print, 12 x 12 inches; *Longing, I Guess*, 2021, Archival pigment print, 11 x 14 inches; *This is my auntie hat*, 2021, Archival pigment print, 11 x 14 inches.

9. Michael Espinoza, *Bound: a ritual for Queer Ancestors lost to AIDS*, 2020, Performance documentation and spell, 5 minutes 39 seconds; *How to Survive a Plague (COVID mask)*, 2020, Latex condoms, denim and sequin fabric, 5.5 x 7 x 2 inches; *Physique Pictorial Burial Shroud I*, 2020, Cross-stitch embroidery, wood, and fabric, 13 x 16 x 2 inches; *Deathrush Burial Shroud*, 2021, Cross-stitch embroidery, fabric, wood, and found-objects, 12 x 8 x 3 inches; *Bound Stone Burial Shrouds (triptych)*, 2020, Cross-stitch embroidery, found textiles, 8 x 8 x 1 inches; *offering my body to Queer Ancestors for their purposes*, 2021, Cotton embroidery, 3 x 3 inches.

10. Paloma Ayala, *Pussies of the Sea* (a storytelling session, part of CRIPTONITE), 2020, One channel video, 11 minutes 47 seconds.