

About 1,050 male couples and 850 female couples have tied the knot. Officials believe the Netherlands' gay community numbers about 400,000 people.

CHINA

The Hong Kong gay-themed film *Lan Yu* won four Golden Horses at the Chinese film awards Dec. 8 in Taiwan.

Stanley Kwan won the Best Director trophy, and Liu Ye snagged the Best Actor nod. The film also picked up Best Screenplay Adaptation and Best Film Editing awards.



Liu Ye received a Chinese Oscar for his performance in the Hong Kong gay-themed film *Lan Yu*

JAMAICA

The Caribbean's Catholic bishops Dec. 18 denounced a recommendation by a Jamaican government committee that the nation decriminalize gay sex. "There is an obvious consistency in the Old and New Testament salvation history about the moral unacceptability of homosexual relations," said Monsignor Richard Albert, speaking on behalf of the bishops.

THE PHILIPPINES

The House of Representatives' Committee on Civil, Political and Human Rights approved a bill banning discrimination based on actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity Dec. 5.

The measure was written with help from the Philippines' Lesbian and Gay Legislative Advocacy Network. The bill must negotiate several other hurdles before it can become law.

INDIA

Four employees of the Lucknow AIDS organizations Naz Foundation International and Bharosa Trust formally were charged with conspiracy to commit sodomy and possession of obscene materials in mid-November. The men were arrested in July and spent six weeks in jail before being released on bail.

Police reportedly have ignored evidence that the arrested individuals were engaged in nothing more nefarious than safe-sex education and that the organizations' work is supported by the Indian government. According to Naz executive director Shivananda Khan, the groups' lawyers likely will request that the cases be dismissed.

"We are hopeful of succeeding in the courts and repose faith in the justice system and believe that ultimately justice shall be done," he said. "We do not think the Indian judiciary will punish us for trying to save lives by following policy formed by the government of the country."



Spanish dictator Francisco Franco reviews his victorious troops

SWEDEN

A man who donated his sperm to a lesbian couple allowing them to have three kids must pay \$265 a month in child support now that the women have split up, a county court ruled Dec. 9. The man plans to appeal the decision, the *Nerikes Allehanda* newspaper said.

AUSTRALIA

The lower house of Parliament in the state of West Australia, where Perth is located, passed a gay law reform bill Dec. 12 after a heat-

ed all-night session. It lowers the age of consent for gay sex from 21 to 16; grants same-sex couples the rights that straight common-law couples have in areas such as property transfer, medical treatment, inheritance and death benefits; and gives gay couples equal access to adoption and in vitro fertilization, according to the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

The bill was a matter of fervent public debate for weeks. Opponents said lowering the age of consent would encourage pedophilia. In November, about 2,000 "family" activists picketed Parliament in opposition to the measure.

The bill now goes to the upper house, where it is expected to pass.

SPAIN

Parliament voted Dec. 12 to erase the criminal records of homosexuals locked up by the regime of former dictator Francisco Franco, who died in 1975. Legislators also plan to compensate the men for the torture and imprisonment they suffered, according to Britain's *Guardian*.

The newspaper said, "Thousands of homosexuals were jailed, put in camps or locked up in mental institutions under Franco's homophobic dictatorship, which lasted for 40 years." Gays who caused a "public scandal" or presented a "social danger" were imprisoned for up to three years. Others were treated with electric shocks in mental hospitals.

LIECHTENSTEIN

The Parliament of the small European nation of Liechtenstein passed gay partnership legislation Dec. 13. The measure awaits ratification by the government.

It extends marital rights to same-sex couples in areas such as taxation, residency and insurance. Adoption and reproduction technology rights were not included in the bill.

ITALY

A 97-year-old wealthy gay man in Rovereto has donated his vast film and video porn collection to the city government and asked that it be displayed in the public library after he dies. According to the *Supereva* Web site, the collection contains "all the masterpieces of the best gay porn directors." □

Compiled by REX WOCKNER, who has reported for the gay press since 1985. He has a bachelor's degree in journalism from Drake University and started his career as a radio reporter.

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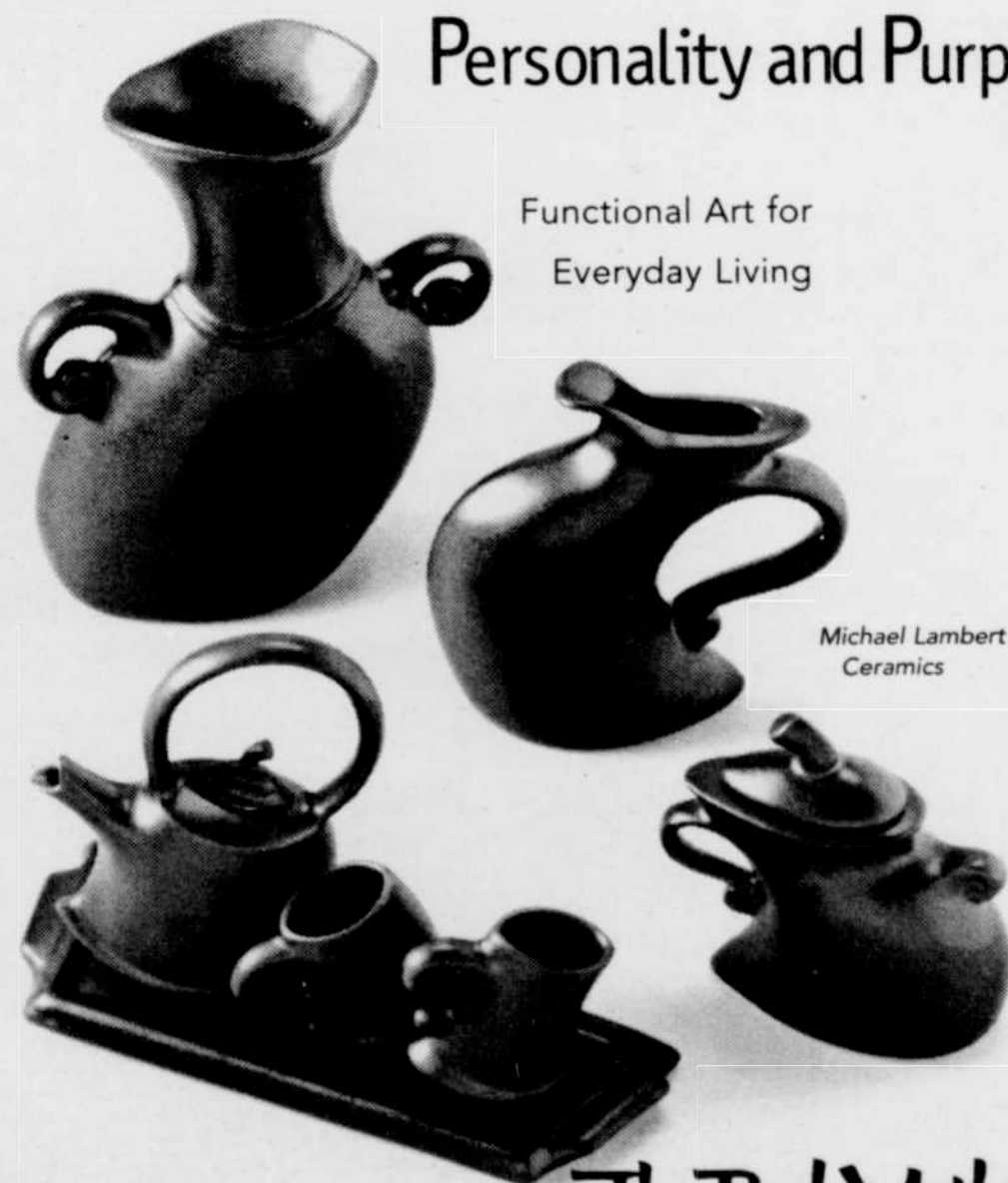
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