

## OUR HISTORY



A selection of the historical coronation photos that make the ISRC Art Show an important part of our community history.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ISRC

zation. Admission is free and open to all ages.

"We want to have that history on display as part of an art exhibit," Strong says. "I'm just trying to build it so it becomes a really huge thing for everybody."

It's a rich history to document. The Imperial Sovereign Rose Court was born in 1958 with the formation of the Court of Transylvania by self-appointing Queen Samuel I. Samuel's reign lasted eight years, until a group of gay men calling themselves the Pruitts of Portland entered the scene, throwing biannual charity balls at which a "Rose Queen" was crowned.

In 1970, the title changed from Queen to Empress. It wasn't until 1971, however, the designation of Empress became a democratic process and not until 1975 that the court crowned its first emperor, Rose Emperor I Kim of the Lumberjack Court.

Although the court—through drag shows, community dinners and other outreach projects—has raised funds for philanthropic causes throughout its history, those efforts intensified as AIDS began to claim the lives of, ultimately, one-third to half of its members.

One of the city's first AIDS-related charities, Esther's Pantry, was named after Rose Empress XXIV Esther Hoffman Howard (aka Chester Brinker)—the first member of the court to die from complications of AIDS in 1985.

Today, the court and its members continue to raise funds for HIV/AIDS education and prevention, scholarships for LGBTQ youth and other worthy causes. And, of course, they

manage to look spectacularly fabulous while doing it. With such a long history of both doing and looking good, the court has been left with a vast collection of items to artfully display its history in the community.

Those who attend the show will not only witness these special items, some of which have never been seen before, they will also have the opportunity to experience one of the court's rituals—a title-awarding ceremony.

Reigning monarchs Rose Emperor XXXVII Chad Hammer and Rose Empress LII Tsunami Foxx will present Q Center Executive Director Kendall Clawson with an as-yet-undisclosed title in a special ceremony.

"It'll be just like a knighting ceremony," Strong explains, complete with kneeling and swords. Clawson's title will be unique to her and chosen by the reigning monarchs.

Strong says the organization periodically grants titles to members of the community—sometimes in jest—but for Clawson, the title will honor her work at Q Center's helm.

"It will be appropriate, not funny or jovial," Strong notes, though he is unsure of the actual designation. Regardless of the title Clawson ultimately receives, the ceremony will mark another historic moment destined to be remembered on the walls of the room in which it took place. ☐

**EMBRACE OUR HISTORY: THE IMPERIAL SOVEREIGN ROSE COURT'S SECOND ANNUAL ART SHOW, Opening Reception and Title Ceremony; Tues., Jan. 11, 7 p.m., exhibit runs through Jan. 31; Q Center, 4115 N. Mississippi Ave.; free; rosecourt.org.**



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