



Above left: Quentin Crisp
Above right: Bayard Rustin

"About eight months ago, I woke up for the third day and read about the bullying and suicide of LGBT kids and I said to myself that I had to do something. What could I do that would touch these kids and make them feel okay about who they are?"

-DAL RAY WILLIAMS

Williams exists as two personas in the world. "I kept coming up against the problem that my photography and painting looked as if it was made by different hands, or different people," he says. To solve this issue, he created "Dal Ray Williams" as a second name for himself. "For me it was chaos, so I devised a filing system for my head," he explains. "Darrell Williamson takes photographs and Dal Ray paints."

Williams' creative process is likewise complex. One of the exhibit's pieces depicts the glowing face of Harvey Milk. Williams' approach begins with the background. "Harvey's background is bright and cheerful as I imagine he was," he says. "Within the background are textile prints, some of which I designed and some [of which] I didn't."

He then moves on to other aspects of the subject's life: "First, if you read about him, his life was somewhat of a patchwork. He was in

the military, an accountant, then a hippie, then a shop owner and then an elected official. There is patchwork to symbolize this. There is a fabric print within this that is of hollow-nosed bullets. There are five slash marks of a handgun damask fabric to account for how many times he was shot."

Painting is Williams' final step. "I paint the portraits in white only. I've done this since about 1984," he says. "The reason I do this is that I believe there is an innocence to the people I paint or draw—sort of angelic."

The future bodes well for *Queer Academy*. Its next stop is California for a December show at the San Francisco LGBT Community Center. Since this round's focus is on men, the next iteration of *Queer Academy* will be on women. "I'm not certain when it will be finished because I want to put down the brush for a little while and shoot some photos," Williams says.

"I already have the fabrics for Gertrude Stein and Marlene Dietrich. Also, I would like to get a grant for Part Two." ☐

Queer Academy opens Sat., June 4 with a reception from 6 to 10 p.m. The gallery is open noon-5 p.m. Fri.-Sun. Disjecta is located at 8371 N. Interstate Ave. Visit disjecta.org.

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