Palm Springs Art Museum

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Palm Springs Art Museum Announces *A Queer Arcana: Art, Magic, and Spirit*

On view March 28 through October 18, 2026

Palm Springs, CA (February 17, 2026) — Palm Springs Art Museum announces *A Queer Arcana: Art, Magic, and Spirit*, a major exhibition exploring how queer artists across generations have turned to magic, esoteric spirituality, and occult knowledge as tools for survival, resistance, and world-building. Bringing together work by 35 artists made between 1909 and 2026, the exhibition traces more than a century of artistic engagement with alternative spiritual practices as sources of identity, affirmation, and transformation.

Presented as part of the museum's Q+ Art initiative, which centers LGBTQ+ artists and histories, *A Queer Arcana* asks how hidden or mystical knowledge has functioned as a cultural strategy. Drawing on the meaning of *arcana*—hidden, mystical knowledge—the exhibition considers how alternative spiritual practices have served as a source of connection, affirmation, and transformation for queer artists. Across generations, artists have turned to esoteric systems, divination, ritual, and speculative cosmologies to articulate identity, cultivate community, and imagine new social and spiritual frameworks.

"*A Queer Arcana* reflects the museum's commitment to centering LGBTQ+ artists and the ideas that have shaped queer culture," said Christine Vendredi, JoAnn McGrath Executive Director of Palm Springs Art Museum. "This exhibition highlights artistic practice as a site of imagination, inquiry, and possibility."

Organized into six thematic sections, the exhibition focuses on shared histories and creative strategies across time and geography. One section examines occult practices that rose to prominence in the nineteenth century. Original drawings by English occult artist Austin Osman Spare from his influential treatise *The Book of Pleasure (Self-Love): The Psychology of Ecstasy* (1913) demonstrate his theories of automatic drawing and sigil magic, symbolic forms intended to bypass the conscious mind and manifest desire. These works appear alongside contemporary artists such as Elijah Burgher and Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, who reinterpret and extend Spare's ideas.

"Queer artists, activists, and cultural producers have long sought spiritual practices outside the mainstream to affirm their identities, build community, and envision new ways of being in an often-oppressive world," said David Evans Frantz, Curator-at-Large, Q+ Art. "As this exhibition demonstrates, these ideas have found expression in visionary, surprising, and profound works of art."

Another section of *A Queer Arcana* explores tarot and its reinvention by queer artists. Original works for *The Shining Tribe Tarot* by Rachel Pollack, a trans activist and respected authority on divination, are presented alongside large-scale paintings by Devan Shimoyama and Hilma's Ghost. Shimoyama's *Le Monde* (2024) reimagines the Major Arcana card The World, positioning the artist as the central figure in a composition historically interpreted as both male and female, rendered in paint, glitter, rhinestones, and sequins.



Additional sections explore intersections between queerness and Indigenous spiritual cosmologies; sexuality and eroticism as sacred, transformative forces; and artistic practices that bridge spiritual and physical realms through acts of world-making.

The exhibition also features an eclectic selection of newsletters, books, and magazines, underscoring the long-standing presence of magical and alternative spiritual practices

within queer culture and LGBTQ+ liberation movements. Highlights include *WomanSpirit*, a lesbian feminist magazine founded by Ruth and Jean Mountaingrove and published collectively from 1974 to 1984, as well as books and pamphlets by Dr. Leo Louis Martello, a Wiccan priest and gay rights activist active in New York City during the 1970s. Together, these materials illustrate how countercultural spiritual beliefs fostered community and inspired new visions of queer belonging.

Artists in *A Queer Arcana* include:
Carlos Alfonzo, Steven Arnold, Nancy Azara, Judy Baca, Elijah Burgher, Nao Bustamante, Cameron, Jayne County, Tee A. Corrine, Frances Salomé España, Russell FitzGerald, Edgar Fabián Frías, Tamara Gonzales, Marsden Hartley, Sadao Hasegawa, Richard Hawkins, Clarity Haynes, Sergio Hernández Francés, Hilma's Ghost (Dannielle Tegeder and Sharmistha Ray), Joseph Liatela, Candice Lin, Fred Lonidier, Mundo Meza, Daniel Correa Mejía, Naudline Pierre, Agnes Pelton, Rachel Pollack, Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, Billie Luisi-Potts, Eric-Paul Riege, Lezley Saar, Devan Shimoyama, Austin Osman Spare, Ingo Swann, and Faith Wilding.

A Queer Arcana: Art, Magic, and Spirit is curated by David Evans Frantz, Curator-at-Large, Q+ Art, Palm Springs Art Museum.

The exhibition is made possible through generous support from donors to Q+ Art at Palm Springs Art Museum. Additional support is provided by the Trellis Art Fund and The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

trellis art fund

The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts

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(Page 1) Hilma's Ghost, *You are finally sitting on your throne you have a wand that is your symbol of life and creativity. This work deals with permanence and satisfaction. everything you have put your efforts into for a long time will pay off in the future. It suggests that everything will work out well in the end - for you have always kept the long-term picture in view, choosing to take no shortcuts. Your legacy is sure to stand for quite a long time to come. This is a relief, for the path to get here has been filled with setbacks and challenges, making this point of the journey even sweeter*, 2023. Acrylic and flashe on canvas, 72 × 84 in. (182.9 × 213.4 cm). Courtesy of the artists

(Page 2) Devan Shimoyama, *Le Monde*, 2024. Oil, colored pencil, glitter, Flashe, collage, sequins, and Swarovski crystals on canvas stretched over panel, 84 × 68 in. (213.4 × 172.7 cm). Courtesy of the artist and De Buck Gallery

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Palm Springs Art Museum

Palm Springs Art Museum is the largest cultural institution in the Coachella Valley. The flagship building, located in downtown Palm Springs, features compelling art exhibitions, a vast permanent collection, and the Annenberg Theater, all in a 150,000-square-foot, architecturally significant building. Five blocks away, the Palm Springs Art Museum Architecture and Design Center, Edwards Harris Pavilion, features exhibitions and programming that explores architecture and design. The museum's collection also contains two icons of modernist design: Frey House II (1962) on the mountainside behind the main building and Aluminaire House™ (1932) on museum grounds. For more information, visit psmuseum.org.

Palm Springs Art Museum's Q+ Art Initiative

Q+ Art at Palm Springs Art Museum champions the often-underrecognized contributions of LGBTQ+ artists. Founded in 2023, the initiative is the only program of its kind dedicated to queer art and artists from within a general art museum.

Q+ Art recognizes the importance of Palm Springs as a center for LGBTQ+ culture in the United States and the contributions of the region's queer community. The initiative advances the recognition of LGBTQ+ artists and art histories through exhibitions, programs, collection building, community engagement, and education.