



ALYSSA CUMPTON

Maybe the Cat Lady Isn't So Crazy

Artist Statement

My art varies from the realistic to the surreal and is heavily influenced by plants and animals. I'm inspired by experiences and the world around me and much of my work is based on my travels around the country. I often utilize narrative in my art to tell a story. This particular display is inspired by the stereotype of the crazy cat lady. Most of us are used to thinking of an old lady and her cats as a bad thing, as someone who never managed to find commitment or love and is thus forced to settle. She forever battles her loneliness with an ever expanding horde of felines.

My piece challenges this narrative. Maybe the cat lady isn't crazy. Maybe she didn't need or want anyone else and is perfectly content to live her life with her cats on her own terms. I wanted this piece to represent anyone who ever felt like they didn't quite mesh with what life was "supposed" to look like. We're all a little crazy. But crazy doesn't mean unhappy.



About the Artist

Alyssa Cumpton is a self-taught artist who happened to get both a Criminal Justice and Fine Arts degrees on her way through college at Boise State. She works as a professional muralist and traveling sidewalk chalk artist and has competed in many events across the West. Alyssa has also worked in the landscaping industry for over a decade, a career that has fostered her love of gardening and plants. Her work is inspired by many trips hiking and exploring the country. She lives down a dirt road in the middle of nowhere with her dog, chickens, and, yes, eight cats.

Blooming with Pride

AT RED BUTTE GARDEN



KAT NIX

Heaven on Earth

Artist Statement

Flowers have some of the most pure and positive vibrations of any living thing; they share lessons of joy, presence, guidance, resilience, and connection; they are an expression of the divine. Much like flowers, our 2SLGBTQIA+ relatives are sacred and bring endless beauty, medicine, and magic to all of our lives. Their presence, experience, and joy must not only be protected but also celebrated.

This installation features flowers and mirrors floating down from the sky, connecting with flowers growing from the ground, reinforcing the idea that we are always connected. Flower magic often lies in the in-between and transitional places between spiritual and physical. They remind us that separateness is an illusion and of the proverb "as above, so below, as in heaven, so on earth." By offering a chance to see our reflection among the flowers, Kat hopes that participants will recognize their divinity and sacredness and remind them that they are perfect as they are right in that moment, that they themselves are Heaven on Earth.

This installation features primarily locally grown flowers. The flowers were chosen based on their seasonality as well as their virtues. Thistle embodies resilience, strawflower reminds us of everlasting beauty, and roses for opening to abundance and blessings. Mother Earth provides all the medicine, food, and beauty we could hope for. Kat hopes that by recognizing that we are an extension of nature, we will strengthen our connection to the land and each other. When we heal our relationship with the earth, we heal our relationship with ourselves and vice versa.



About the Artist

Kat Nix is a floral designer, artist, herbalist, death doula, and the owner of Ritual in Bloom, a floral business that centers rituals and intentionality in floral design. In her business, she explores the relationship between moon cycles, ancestral knowledge, rituals, and the subtle yet powerful wisdom flowers share. Kat has a degree in Urban Ecology and a minor in Multidisciplinary Design from the University of Utah. She also mentors Latinx teens and is the Public Art Program Manager for the Salt Lake City Arts Council. All these experiences have fueled Kat's love for art, community, and creating immersive installations.

With deep gratitude for the resiliency, love, and guidance of her ancestors and plantcestors, Kat is devoted to continuing to be a student of curanderismo and end-of-life work, exploring the relationship between the medicine and magic that flowers provide as we navigate transitional spaces.

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COREY KIMZEY

Queerness Gives Life

Artist Statement

Queerness Gives Life is an artistic representation of how, just as water gives life to plants, queerness gives life to members of the LGBTQIA+ community. This exhibit incorporates many flowers, grasses, and plants with historical or biological ties to the LGBTQIA+ community. Pamphlets beside the exhibit describe the significance of each plant. The fountain at the top symbolizes how queerness gives life to the community's many groups.

The plants are interconnected, which symbolizes that even though the diversity of the queer community is vast, we are all connected. My goal in this project is to celebrate that diversity and how community members strengthen one another.

As a member of the LGBTQIA+ community, I am continually inspired by others within the community. The LGBTQIA+ community is so diverse, yet it feels like there is an element that binds us all together. I believe that this element is our queerness. As we embrace our differences and similarities, we become stronger as a group. I have felt immense love and support from members of my community, and I hope this display embodies that.



About the Artist

My name is Corey Kimzey. My art journey started by making presents for other people. I was a student majoring in statistics and struggled with some mental health issues, so I started making felt book pages as gifts. Making them brought me joy, and I loved seeing the happiness they brought others. This project led me to explore creative ventures like poetry writing, macrame, wood carving, flower sculptures, and many more. I love exploring all artistic mediums, especially projects involving nature or natural elements. I am genuinely grateful for what art has brought into my life.

I've also always been interested in how art and math combine. I especially love exploring how shapes and patterns can be used in creative projects. Even as a child, I always added patterns to my art homework. Math and art often go hand in hand. As a member of the LGBTQIA+ community, I am truly honored to present at Red Butte Garden's Blooming with Pride Event.

Blooming with Pride

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LYA YANG

Embrace

Artist Statement

As I've been working through what my own queerness means and looks like, one of the most valuable gifts has been the generous warmth from other non-conforming queer folks. Whether through deeply transformative relationships or simply leading by example, witnessing their love for themselves, others, and me inspires and teaches me to love myself and others.

This painting, inspired by "The Kiss" by Gustav Klimt, is an ode to queerness of identity and queer forms of love - of going against the grain to be the most authentic and bright version of yourself, even (maybe especially) when change is frightening.

This is also an ode to the chrysanthemum - in Chinese Ru classicism, autumn chrysanthemums are one of four "Noble" plants. Chrysanthemums uniquely bloom in the face of cold weather, representing the virtue to withstand adversity. Its fragrance is earthy and not necessarily coveted. It is an offbeat flower, a late bloomer, and its nobility does not conform to the patterns of the masses.

White chrysanthemums are mourning flowers that commemorate death and represent rebirth. Other colors of mums symbolize abundance, endurance, and wealth. They are a token of celebration, love, and joy. This duality of mourning and celebration resonates with me. I have always internalized the chrysanthemum as a flower of queerness. Joy isn't just frivolity; it is a necessity and a product of determination to thrive in a challenging world.

This piece includes a collage element of photographs I solicited from my queer community in SLC. Trans and non-binary people have faced horrifying violence and discrimination, and the world can feel hostile against LGBTQIA+ folks. But we generate our own light, love, and warmth together. We are resilient and vibrant, and what makes us different is what makes us needed in the world.



About the Artist

Lya Yang is a visual artist born and raised in Salt Lake City, Utah, by immigrant parents. They received a BFA from the University of Utah with an emphasis in Painting and Drawing. They have since worked in various visual mediums, including sculpture, installation, and photography.

Blooming with Pride

AT RED BUTTE GARDEN



MAL STRUNK

Deserted Despair to Blooming Pride

Artist Statement

Hiding your true self can feel isolating as if you're deserted. When I finally felt safe enough to open up to a trusted loved one, it felt like letting them into my secret garden, a part of me I kept hidden for so long. It felt like I could finally let myself in because I didn't have to hide or mask anymore. I feel like I have found my own beautiful oasis inside my heart now that I live authentically - out and proud. The tender moments of letting others into my queer little world mean so much, and that's what I wanted to convey in this design, that journey I've experienced from self-isolating desert to blooming pride for who I am, exactly as I am.

From the outside, this floral installation feels desolate. Yet, once you step under the canopy, I hope you'll feel enveloped in pride, love, and community. Radiating from the heart of the design, you'll find a rainbow of blooms representing our vibrant LGBTQIA+ community.

All of these flowers were grown right here in Utah by local farmers. This piece reflects the beauty we are surrounded by, if only we can slow down enough to enjoy what's in front of us - flowers and humans alike. It means the world to me to be out and proud, and then creating art for the community is an honor. I hope you'll pause under the rainbow canopy and take it all in - the love, the magic, and the power of flowers. I invite you to exit the back of the display and walk through the wildflower meadow. I'm so glad you're here! Let's be friends on Instagram: @malthecreative



About the Artist

Hi Flower Friend, I'm Mal! I'm known for my big, bold, and bright floral designs. I am a Utah native who loves locally grown and sustainable flowers. There is something magical about creating with what's blooming and capturing the exact time and place you're in.

I've been creating all my life, but the medium of flowers found me 4 years ago. Flowers were a refuge during my darkest days. Floral design came naturally to me, and I've been in awe, watching my artistry bloom as I find myself again. Over the past 4 years, I've gone through such a transformation. I have even come out to my family and begun living my most authentic life. Putting myself and my artistry out there is difficult at times, but it's also incredibly rewarding.

Last summer, I won Best in Bloom, a national competition for Florists' Review magazine. I have designed weddings, events, personalized photo shoots, crowns for newborns, and so much more. This will be my third year designing an 8-foot-tall floral arch in the shape of Utah for Utah Flower Day.

Giving back to my community, especially my LGBTQIA+ family, is incredibly important. Seeing humans of all ages revel in the magic of flowers brings me joy! I am so excited to create my installation for the Blooming with Pride event and celebrate our incredible queer community.



MEGAN FOOTE

Colors of the Spirit

Artist Statement

In creating this display, I wanted to help foster deeper connections with the meanings of each color of the original Pride flag. While the rainbow as a whole is often associated with the LGBTQIA+ community, it is also important to ponder each color individually, as they are symbolic of valuable aspects of the queer experience. I hope that viewers will take the time to interact with each piece and stop to consider how they experience the ideas and feelings that the flag's colors represent.

One of the beautiful things about these colors is that they have meanings not exclusive to the LGBTQIA+ community. Everybody, regardless of any trait or identity, is encouraged to relate to these ideas, as they are not only part of the queer experience but part of the human experience as a whole. In fact, these principles are important enough to humanity that we have also associated them with particular flowers and plants in the natural world, further showing our appreciation for these impressions.

I want to invite everyone to add a note to each pillar to communicate your connection to the meanings behind the colors of the rainbow flag. How is your identity influenced by each value? How do you incorporate these ideas and feelings into your life and relationships? How can you promote love and inclusivity by acknowledging the symbolism behind each color? Please take a moment to appreciate and share these beautiful parts of life, humanity, and identity.



About the Artist

Megan Foote is a queer, disabled, and autistic artist from West Jordan, Utah. She loves working with various mediums, but some of her favorites are clay and paint. She has also recently worked heavily with digital mediums and enjoys exploring new techniques. Megan loves incorporating symbolism and "easter eggs" into her pieces and often explores themes of sexuality, politics, and identity through her craft. Creating works of art is her personal way of processing her thoughts and feelings and building an understanding of the world around her. This is Megan's first art installation and her professional artistic debut.



**RED BUTTE GARDEN STAFF:
JASON ALBA, BRYAN ANDERSON, HEIDI ANDERSON,
STACY ANDERSON, NICK LLOYD, SARA NEJATIFAR, &
LAUREN SWIDNICKI**

True Colors

Artist Statement

Welcome to our display, where we explore what it means to be true to yourself. Meet Leonardo de Poochio, a topiary dog made of brown carex, fearlessly painting his self-portrait while defying society's rules.

LEONARDO DE POOCHIO: A MIRROR OF COURAGE

Leonardo's self-portrait is more than just a picture. It reflects how *he* sees himself, not how others see him. This painting represents the idea that everyone has a hidden, authentic self, waiting to come out. Ideally, we'd all show our true selves without fear. However, society often pressures us to fit in, telling us which parts of our identities are acceptable and what should stay hidden. This creates a struggle between the masks we wear for the world and the true selves we want to reveal.

By painting himself as he sees himself—without hiding anything—Leonardo challenges society's expectations. His painting exposes his vulnerabilities and invites judgment from others. He knows not everyone will accept his true self. Still, he draws strength from being true to himself. His unfinished painting symbolizes the ongoing journey of self-discovery and the courage needed to stay true to oneself.

SYMBOLIC FLOWER PALETTE: A RAINBOW OF IDENTITY

Leonardo paints with a palette of symbolic flowers representing the LGBTQIA+ community. Each color and flower has its own meaning:

- **Red Roses:** Signify love, solidarity, affection, and commitment.
- **Orange Gerbera Daisies:** Represent creativity, energy, and the celebration of diversity.
- **Yellow Snapdragons:** Symbolize joy, optimism, and the courage to be authentic despite challenges.
- **Green Carnations:** Signify growth, harmony, and LGBTQIA+ pride.
- **Blue Hydrangeas:** Represent tranquility, acceptance, and unity.
- **Purple Lavender:** Symbolizes identity, pride, resilience, and community support.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND ACCEPTANCE

Embracing your inner self isn't a solo journey. It's enriched by the love and acceptance of others, represented by the sunflowers, bamboo, and gladiolus. With their support, we can embrace every part of ourselves.

YOUR AUTHENTIC JOURNEY

As you explore our display, think about your own path to authenticity. Write your thoughts on a card and add them to our community board. If you find a message that resonates with you, take it, and let it guide you on your journey to being true to yourself.

BREAKING FREE FROM CONFORMITY

Let's challenge norms, cultivate inclusivity, and create a garden where every flower, no matter its shape or color, is cherished, and every voice, no matter how soft, is heard.



Bekah Ogan

Despite everything, it's still you.

Artist Statement

Despite everything it's still you, is all about celebrating and having love for yourself. I used a rainbow of unique flowers and textures to show the beauty and uniqueness of our community. The heart has a flowing, natural shape that mimics a growing garden and smoothly blends the colors of the rainbow together.

I wanted to include cacti and succulents, since they are rigid and harsh, but durable. These plants also inspire me because they are able to survive even in harsh conditions and they remind me of living here in Salt Lake and growing up in Las Vegas. I have also included flowers that are delicate and airy, to feel uplifting. To me, this represents both the soft and hard sides of being a human, the ups and downs coming together, that's life.

Being a part of Blooming with Pride fills me with gratitude for creating an environment that brings some of my favorite things together, nature and the LGBTQIA+ community. I've curated a playlist of my Blooming with Pride journey if you want to give it a listen!

REMEMBER! The heart isn't complete until you step inside it, surrounding yourself with love, compassion, and hope.



About the Artist

We wither, we bloom. The cycles of nature have always felt soothing to me. I've been a floral designer for almost 10 years. I take inspiration from the creative world around me. When creating, I incorporate the emotions and visuals I receive from my favorite musicians, artists, and films. I take colors that have certain moods to me and combine with them a flower's unique quality or sentimental value to evoke the emotion I want to portray. My artistic style is textured and whimsical, and I'm always looking for a way to draw a person in.

One of my favorite events I contribute to yearly is "Art in Bloom" in downtown Ogden, where floral designers create displays inspired by local artists' contributions. I have competed for several years and have won the People's Choice Award in 2021, Honors in 2022 for my dried botanical work, and then came in Second Place in 2023 with my interpretation of Big Kid Medicine. I find comfort in flowers; one of the best things about them is how they are with you throughout your entire life—yet they have such a short life span. Every day, I use flowers to inspire and uplift others and myself.



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