



Stacy Pete

the false understanding of "passing"

Artist Statement

Passing

1. The ability of a person to be seen as a member of an identity group or category that differs from their own.
2. Something that is simultaneously craved and feared, like a desire for safety that comes with unsettling implications.
3. A perceived necessity, an illusion of protection, suggesting that blending in might shield you from violence.
4. A burden that can discredit one's authenticity.

We are always incomplete.

We are always inauthentic.

We are always barely "passing."

My art refuses to appease heteronormativity or gender conformity, and instead recognizes that nature is not binary and that queerness exists throughout the natural world.

In my ideal world, "passing" would be a meaningless term because you wouldn't have to prove your gender, sexual orientation, racial identity, ethnicity, religion, or disability status.

You simply are.



About the Artist

Stacy Pete loves art that sparks emotion and conversation. Raised in a Utah community that never felt fully authentic to her, she has often struggled with the idea of "passing," whether as a mother, a friend, a spouse, or even an artist. Her work reflects that journey, not just toward "passing" as an ally of the LGBTQIA+ community, but toward embracing herself as a member of it.

Passing is dedicated to all the beautifully unique humans who have had the courage to stand alone. It's a tribute to love, community, and the quiet strength of living authentically. This installation was brought to life through the hands-on and emotional support of many extraordinary people. The laughter, the conversations, and the healing we shared live in every moss-covered piece, each placed by hand with care and intention.

Thank you to the entire Youth & Family Programs team at Red Butte Garden.
I love you all!

And a special thanks to Kat Nix at Ritual in Bloom for sharing her incredible floral skills.

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Mal Strunk

The Phone Booth Sessions: Conversations with Little You

Artist Statement

As an artist, there's something magical about being deeply inspired by someone else's work. Last summer, local songwriter and musician, Mindy Gledhill released Volume 1 of *The Phone Booth Sessions*, the first in a three-part series of imagined phone calls to her younger self. She recorded the entire album inside a vintage phone booth she discovered and transformed into a recording studio.

Listening to this album became a ritual for me. It helped me slow down and connect. Whether I was in my car, my backyard, or my bathtub, these songs turned ordinary spaces into sacred ones—my own "edge of the world." I found safety inside my own heart, holding space for every version of me.

When I started dreaming up what I wanted to create for Blooming with Pride, I knew I wanted to design something inspired by Mindy's magic. I didn't expect it to grow into an installation that honors the entire album, but I'm so glad it did!

This space is designed as a "listening experience" where you can hear the album that's meant so much to me. Each song is represented by a color of the rainbow, with design details woven throughout, inspired by what the lyrics and songs mean to me.

I also got to bring another love of mine into this piece—murals! And even better, I created them alongside Racheal Jackson of Banyan Bridges, the artist who first inspired me to pick up a paintbrush. She flew in from Portland to help bring this vision to life. Creating side-by-side with someone who's inspired me endlessly? Pure magic.

The album is just 30 minutes long, so settle in, explore the interactive activities, and stay as long as you'd like. 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. As a Utah native, I'm passionate about locally grown, sustainable flowers. There's something magical about creating with what's blooming and capturing the essence of a specific time and place.

I've been creating all my life, but flowers found me five years ago. They became a refuge during my darkest days. Floral design came naturally to me, and through it, I've watched my artistry bloom alongside my journey of self-discovery. I've come to see not just flowers, but life itself as a form of art, especially as a queer person. There's incredible beauty in living life exactly as you are.

Putting myself and my art out into the world can be hard, but it's also the most rewarding thing I've ever done. Giving back to my community, especially my LGBTQIA+ family, is at the heart of everything I do. Watching people of all ages experience the joy and wonder of flowers brings me joy. I'm excited to be back at Blooming with Pride and celebrating our incredible queer community.

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Caitlin Stewart-Johnson

Tapestry of Belonging

Artist Statement

Tapestries have been used for thousands of years to tell stories, mark important moments, and fill walls with what people care about most. With *Tapestry of Belonging*, I wanted to create a living version of that—a floral installation that shares a message of love, unity, and pride for the LGBTQIA+ community and its allies. To me, flowers are the perfect symbol: each one is unique, and together they create something vibrant, wild, and beautiful.

The structure is made from reclaimed pallets and shaped with chicken wire to give it dimension and life. The flowers spill past the edges on purpose, because real belonging doesn't stay inside the lines. Every bloom was chosen not just for how it looks, but for how it adds to the whole. To make the piece even more interactive, I've added a teleidoscope so visitors can view the tapestry through a shifting, mirrored lens. It's a playful reminder that everyone sees the world a little differently, and that beauty often depends on how we choose to look.

Being part of Blooming with Pride is really meaningful to me. I hope this piece makes people feel seen, celebrated, and connected. We all belong in this tapestry—just as we are.

Instagram: @caitdoesart__



About the Artist

Caitlin is a mixed media artist and designer with a deep love for creativity and community. She has a degree in Art and Design with a minor in Art History. After becoming a mother, Caitlin rediscovered art as a vital form of expression and a way to stay connected to herself and the world around her. Her work often blends reclaimed materials, natural elements, and thoughtful composition to explore themes of belonging, identity, and visibility.

At the heart of Caitlin's practice is a passion for activism and ally ship—especially in support of the LGBTQIA+ community, where many of her closest friends and family belong. Her pieces are designed to celebrate and uplift, creating visual spaces where people feel seen and valued. She believes that art can be a powerful tool for change, and her work invites viewers to reflect, feel, and connect. Through opportunities like Blooming with Pride, Caitlin continues to use art to build a more compassionate, inclusive world.

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Red Butte Garden Staff: Brittany Tobler, Lauren Swidnicki, Quincy Jackson, Emma Pruitt, Sam Moreno, Shelby Carvalho, and Adrienne Day

Wayfinding: Authentic Natures

Artist Statement

We are all finding our way, step by step. We grow, change, and come into our true selves in our own time. *Wayfinding: Authentic Natures* reflects that journey and invites us to explore who we are, listen to ourselves, and honor the many paths that lead us toward truth and self-acceptance.

Each of the five gardens marks a stage along that path. These landscapes reflect the emotional terrain we navigate, moving from solitude to connection, and from quiet reflection to joyful pride. Rooted in Utah's diverse ecosystems, each space invites us to pause, reflect, and remember that growth takes many forms.

Wayfinding is rarely a straight line. The bridges and trails symbolize the winding paths we walk. Sometimes we move forward with clarity. Other times we return to familiar places with new understanding. Every turn, pause, and reroute is part of becoming.

Created by a team of artists who believe in visibility, empathy, and lifelong learning, this installation celebrates all who are navigating their own journey. It honors every story, identity, and voice along the way.

The Desert Garden represents endurance and courage. Even in the harshest conditions, we can adapt and begin again.

The Forest Garden is a place of mystery and quiet transformation. It invites us to turn inward and trust what we find beneath the surface.

The Alpine Garden symbolizes clarity and self-acceptance. Though the path may be steep, it offers the perspective that comes from living authentically.

The Wetland Garden is inspired by the Great Salt Lake. This space embraces fluidity and growth, reminding us that identity flows, adapts, and deepens with time.

The Celebration Garden is at the heart of the experience. This space honors wholeness, pride, and joy. It is a place to stand in the light of your most authentic self, embracing your strength, your struggles, and all the messiness that makes you whole.

These gardens are not just landscapes. They are markers on a map we each must draw. They reflect where we have been, what we are learning, and who we are becoming.

You are finding your way, and that is beautiful, brave, and entirely your own.



About the Artist

Affectionately known as a passionate team of kind-hearted nerds, the Youth & Family Programs staff poured their hearts, creativity, and more than a little foam into the creation of *Wayfinding: Authentic Natures*.

Fueled by compassion, imagination, and an uncanny ability to make anything out of cardboard and zip ties, the team brings their display to life with joy, care, and deep intention. They believe in making spaces that are accessible, playful, and meaningful, and where everyone, especially LGBTQIA+ youth and families, can laugh, reflect, and grow together.

If you see them during the event, they'll probably be hot-gluing something last-minute or hyping up a guest's creative masterpiece. Either way, stop by, say hi, and let them know which part of the garden speaks to your heart.



Corey Kimzey

Utah: Naturally Queer

Artist Statement

Utah: Naturally Queer is a celebration of the many queer plants and animals that exist in nature, especially right here in Utah.

Growing up, I never heard about same-sex relationships in animals, plants that reproduce asexually, or species with both male and female reproductive parts. Instead, I was surrounded by narratives that denied queerness in the natural world—an experience that felt profoundly isolating as a closeted LGBTQIA+ kid. I know I'm not alone in that.

This display is meant to show just how common and beautiful queer behavior is in the wild. My hope is that visitors will begin to notice these incredible plants and animals in Utah's ecosystems, and maybe feel a little more seen, a little less alone.

Many of the species featured here are connected to my hometown of St. George, Utah. The desert landscapes, the plants and animals—they remind me of home and of growing up. In a way, this project is a love letter to my younger self. I was always surrounded by queerness. I just didn't know it yet.

So next time you're out exploring this beautiful state, I hope you'll pause and recognize how diverse, vibrant, and naturally queer Utah really is.



About the Artist

My art journey began unexpectedly while studying statistics in college and working through mental health challenges. I started making felt book pages as gifts for friends. Creating them brought me joy, and seeing that joy reflected in others sparked something deeper. That small project opened the door to a new world of creativity.

Since then, I've explored many artistic mediums, from poetry and macramé to wood carving and flower sculptures. I'm especially drawn to projects rooted in nature. Art grounds me, inspires me, and helps me connect with others in ways I never imagined.

I've always loved patterns and shapes, and I'm fascinated by how math and art intersect. Even as a kid, I was the one adding geometric patterns to every school art project. For me, math and creativity aren't opposites—they work hand in hand.

As a proud member of the LGBTQIA+ community, I'm honored to share my work at Red Butte Garden's Blooming with Pride. Creating something that celebrates both nature and identity means the world to me.

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Meagan Bertelsen

Alternative Routes

Artist Statement

"Being queer saved my life... I had to make alternative routes, and it made me curious."
—Ocean Vuong

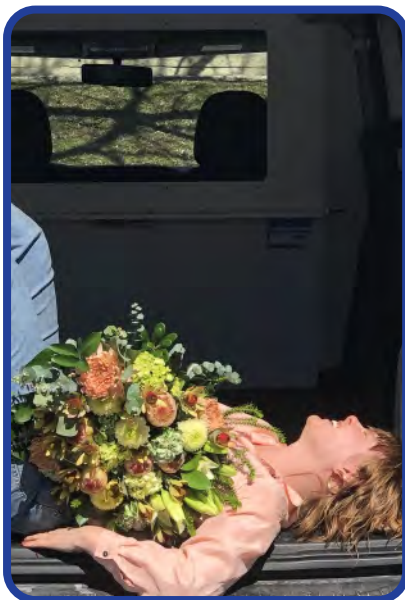
Alternative Routes is an immersive, floral sanctuary honoring the vast and beautiful spectrum of gender expression. Inspired by Vuong's reflection on queerness as innovation, this installation invites visitors to step off the main path and into a quiet, celebratory space—a place to reflect, to wander, and to feel seen.

A geodesic dome of locally sourced branches shelters monochrome floral groupings, each representing a different point on a multidimensional gender map: femme, butch, agender, androgynous, genderfluid, and more. These living constellations invite viewers to move through the space, not along a linear spectrum, but inside a spacious, blooming world where every expression belongs.

Visitors are invited to contribute their own experiences by writing messages on colorful slips of paper and tying them to the structure. Over time, these handwritten reflections transform the dome into a shared archive of identity, memory, and presence. Inspired by global traditions like Tanabata and fairy trees, the installation becomes both a collective offering and a visual census of community.

Created in one of the Garden's quieter, more secluded spaces, *Alternative Routes* honors the richness of gender diversity within the LGBTQIA+ community. This is not just a floral display—it is a living, breathing map of how we belong to ourselves and to one another. It is an ode to queerness as resilience, curiosity, and creation.

Here, beauty is not confined. Identity is not fixed. And every path is valid.



About the Artist

Meagan Bertelsen is a queer florist and dancemaker in SLC, two ephemeral art forms celebrating different types of living bodies and the messages they contain. For her, both floral and dance offer the unique opportunity for the viewer to be transported through their senses to the heightened, alive, present moment.

With a special interest in both mediums for site-specific pieces, large installation, and active viewership, she enjoys crafting lush environments that immerse participants and actors alike. Whether with botanicals or movements, her work often strives to build intelligent ecologies that support interconnection, improvisation, and play. Recently, her installation piece made of entirely foraged blooms from the three creeks of the Jordan River confluence, "Headwaters to how we got Here," was selected for Queer Spectra Arts Festival 2025. She is also the artist behind the local shop, GALOREfloral.

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Alyssa Cumpton

We Are One

Artist Statement

I designed this piece as a play off the idea of "Pride." A family of lions, is of course, known as a pride. Using this as a jumping off point, I began to think of pride as a kind of family or community. I wanted this display to be colorful and eye catching to portray the grandeur of the natural world and to act as a stand in for the vibrancy of the LGBTQIA+ community.

The two murals in this display are meant to represent the gay and lesbian communities, with two male lions on one mural and two female lions on the other. The plants that go along with each image are color coordinated to each groups respective flag, and the plants chosen were selected both for their colors and to make the viewer feel as though they could be standing on the continent of Africa.

Throughout the display are mirrors. Take a look at them and try out your reflection in different ones. As you do, you can see yourself as part of the structure of the Pride. These reflective elements are meant to portray how all of us together must find our own Pride. Not everyone will be able to see themselves in all the mirrors, and that's okay. It might take a while, but eventually everyone can find their own place in the Pride.



About the Artist

Alyssa Cumpton works as a traveling side walk chalk artist and muralist. She is often inspired by the natural world, be it through her backpacking adventures or through her job in the landscaping industry. She hopes that her art will inspire others to conserve the wonders of nature and inspire others to appreciate the beauty of the planet.

Her paintings combine geometric and stylized elements along with more realistic renderings of animals to create a style that toes the line between realism and abstract. She often uses neon and metallic hues to create a dreamlike atmosphere.

She holds a BFA in Fine Art and a BA in Criminal Justice, both from Boise State University. She has recently done several public art pieces for the City of Sparks and the City of Reno and was the 2024 Black Rock, High Rock, Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area Artist in Residence.

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Bekah Ogan

Spill Your Guts

Artist Statement

Spill Your Guts is about inner beauty, finding your authentic self, and an outpouring of love. To me, it represents finding a community that makes me feel seen so that I can blossom and grow. We are all delicate and intricate, and it can be daunting to try and grow connections with other people. *Spill Your Guts* is about capturing that moment when you decide to open up and reach out to the people around you.

A single red rose represents the heart inside the chest cavity, the colorful flowers exploding out of the head represent the mind, personality and creativity, and flowing botanicals representing veins that connect the body, mind and heart all together into a distinctive organism. I've chosen lots of local flowers to represent our community right here in Salt Lake.

I'm excited to be a part of Blooming With Pride once again since it brings two of my favorite things together, flowers and the LGBTQIA+ community. The main inspiration for *Spill Your Guts* is my friends in our "little gay garden." I put together a playlist from our favorite songs, which you can check out by scanning the code.



About the Artist

Bekah Ogan is a floral designer with over 10 years of experience. Inspired by the emotions and visuals found in music, film, and the world around her, she believes each flower carries its own mood—and uses that to capture fleeting moments in her designs.

Trained in a traditional flower shop that took a chance on her with no prior experience, Bekah quickly found her voice in floral work, especially in memorial pieces that honor a person's essence. Flowers have become her daily language for expressing emotion—delicate, raw, and sincere.

Her work is known for its whimsy, texture, and willingness to take risks. She regularly exhibits at the Eccles Art Center's *Art in Bloom*, where she's earned multiple awards, and was a featured artist at last year's Blooming with Pride for her piece *Despite everything, it's you*.

For Bekah, flowers are about presence—through joy or grief—and finding beauty in their brief existence. Her work honors the ongoing cycle of withering and blooming that connects us all.

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Renee Salois

Hands of Unity

Artist Statement

As an occupational therapist, I spend my days supporting individuals with neurological diagnoses to live fuller, more meaningful lives. Through this work, I witness daily how identity is shaped by both visible and invisible experiences—and how often those at the intersection of the LGBTQIA+ and disability communities go unseen.

I created *Hands of Unity* to celebrate and spotlight this intersection. The vibrant flowers in LGBTQIA+ colors represent the beauty and diversity of queer identities. On one side of the sculpture, mannequin hands in a spectrum of skin tones reach out, spelling “pride” in American Sign Language. This gesture honors the Deaf and disabled communities, acknowledging that many who use ASL do not identify as disabled, while others do—reminding us that disability is not a monolith, and neither is pride.

For someone who is both LGBTQIA+ and has a disability, self-expression can be an act of courage and creativity—finding new ways to be seen, heard, and celebrated in a world that often overlooks both identities.

Statistically, LGBTQIA+ people are more likely to experience disability than their non-LGBTQIA+ peers, yet our stories are rarely told together. By bringing these hands and colors together, I hope to spark conversation about the ways our communities overlap and the importance of making all spaces—artistic, social, and beyond—accessible and inclusive.

The interactive kaleidoscopes invite you to see the world through a new lens, just as we are all called to expand our perspectives and embrace the full spectrum of human experience.

Let’s move beyond single stories. Let’s create a world where every identity—queer, disabled, both, and beyond—can bloom in full color. I invite you to learn, listen, and advocate for spaces where everyone is seen, valued, and celebrated.



About the Artist

Renee Salois is a florist and occupational therapist based in Utah. By day, Renee works at Neuroworx, supporting individuals with neurological conditions and advocating for accessibility and meaningful participation in daily life. By night (and weekends), Renee channels a lifelong passion for art into floristry, creating whimsical, textured arrangements that brim with life and color.

Inspired by the endless variety and resilience found in both people and flowers, Renee sees floristry as a joyful return to the simple, grounding beauty of nature. Each piece is a celebration of diversity—reminding us that, like flowers, every person brings unique beauty to the world. Through art and advocacy, Renee invites others to notice, appreciate, and connect with the richness that surrounds us all.



Gillian Ruppel

Queerness Through the Pages

Artist Statement

As a queer book artist and writer, I've always been drawn to the quiet power of literature and natural imagery. While I deeply admire the vibrancy of Pride parades, drag shows, and nightlife spaces, those louder expressions of identity have often felt overwhelming to me. For a long time, I struggled with the idea that my queerness had to be loud to be valid. Over time, I've come to understand the strength in gentler forms of pride—stories pressed between pages, symbols tucked into petals, a bloom left on a windowsill.

Queerness Through the Pages reflects that quieter, but no less radical, celebration. The piece draws on the legacy of queer floral symbolism and the enduring contributions of Sappho, Oscar Wilde, and Virginia Woolf—writers who helped cultivate a coded, blooming language for queerness. Through handbound pages, archival text, and carefully arranged live flowers, I explore how literature and nature together can speak volumes about identity, resilience, and love. My artistic approach relies on both tactile craft and historical reverence, allowing the materials to speak as much as the words themselves.

Participating in Blooming with Pride affirms that there is room for all forms of queer expression—loud and soft, wild and tender. My hope is that viewers will feel a sense of quiet belonging in this piece, and remember that queerness, like a garden, is made up of many textures, voices, and ways of growing.



About the Artist

Gillian Ruppel is a book artist, writer, and recent graduate of the University of Utah, where she earned degrees in English and Book Arts. Her creative work blends literary history with material craft, often exploring themes of identity, queerness, and the quiet ways in which stories endure. Drawing from traditions of archival research and handbinding, Gillian's practice is grounded in both the poetic and the tactile.

Her work often focuses on the subtle forms of expression and resistance found in the margins of literary and natural worlds. With a deep reverence for queer writers and the coded symbolism of flora, Gillian's pieces invite reflection on belonging, visibility, and the radical potential of softness. *Queerness Through the Pages*, her featured piece in Blooming with Pride, exemplifies her interest in the intersection of bookmaking, queer heritage, and botanical language.

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