

**International  
Photo Exhibition 2023**

**queer**  
Youth



**Rainbow  
Cities  
Network**

International  
Photo Exhibition 2023



## Dear Audience,

We are delighted to welcome you to the 8<sup>th</sup> edition of the International Photo Exhibition organized by the Rainbow Cities Network. The network counts among its members 47 cities distributed on four continents: Europe, Asia, North and South America. We as a network aim to discuss local approaches in equality and anti-discrimination work for LGBTIQ persons, to learn from each other, and to develop joint strategies to effectively stop discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer people, and to promote the equal participation of LGBTIQ persons in all areas of society.

Every year during our General Assembly the RCN members vote on a current relevant topic for our community. This year's topic is "Queer Youth".

Youth in general are a vulnerable group in many societies but Queer Youth struggle even more, according to the EU LGBT survey, young queer people were least likely to be open about being LGBTIQ and the most likely to state that they had been victims of violence or discrimination. They also perceive their environment as intolerant towards LGBTIQ people. Additionally, based on the Trevor project findings 45% of LGBTIQ youth seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year.

Those numbers and findings are alarming and therefore, as a network, we wanted to put Queer Youth in the focus for our exhibition. We consider it important to recognize



**The board**  
Rainbow Cities Network

the resilience of this group but more importantly to cast a light to all those youngsters where their local governments are on their side and are trying to ensure that the education system provide a safe and supportive environment for young LGBTIQ persons, free from bullying and exclusion.

As a network, we are aware that there is still a lot to do, but this Photo Exhibition aims to send a message of hope to our queer global youth. WE SEE YOU and WE GOT YOUR BACK.

The next images portray and represent amazing, fearless and resilient youth that are brave to speak up and show who they are.

We warmly welcome you and hope you enjoy it!





## The RCN exhibition “Queer Youth”

Categories and norms play a big role in our society. People use them for orientation but also question them and the (in)justices and (in)visible barriers shaped by them. Norms are created by majorities and are usually heteronormative and sexist, therefore they pose a huge problem for members of minority groups.

It is particularly difficult for queer youth that norms are a large part of our basic understanding of gender, relationships, and sexuality. At a time when the right of young people to self-determination is openly questioned, they have to face daily struggles in a heteronormative and partly queerphobic society.

They often face difficult coming-out processes and the rejection of their parents, bullying at school or work, a lack of acceptance, and tension within families. People who identify as gender non-conforming are often faced with discrimination or even violence, also in public space. Still, queer youth raise their voices and demand a better future.

In coming-out and queer youth groups, they find like-minded people and support in the process of coming-out. Getting to know like-minded people, getting professional psychosocial counselling, and being part of an active queer community helps queer youth in accepting themselves and being proud of their sexual orientation and gender identity. It helps them accept themselves and a queer life.

Queer youth camps and queer youth centres provide safe spaces where the young people can get to know and explore the diversity of gender expressions and gender identities, and where everyone can feel free to be who they are and try out things for themselves. The camps and centres provide help, advice, connections, new experiences, and new friends as well as a wide range of groups and leisure activities. Here, young people can participate in activities and actively create spaces that become a home – their home.

Laws protect from discrimination but laws alone are not enough. Schools must offer workshops to enable a better understanding of LGBTIQ issues and increase respect for diversity as a step towards a safer school environment for everyone. Cities must open their city halls, carry out awareness raising campaigns, support LGBTIQ organisations and bring them in contact with municipal and state agencies. The entire civil society has to work hard and cooperate to promote the inclusion of all LGBTIQ citizens irrespective of their age.

This exhibition clearly shows: queer youth are unstoppable!

So, don't mask who you are and what you feel, but be proud of who you are, who you love and how you look – which is fabulous!



Photo: Georg Wilke

**Wolfgang Wilhelm, Vienna**  
Curator of the exhibition





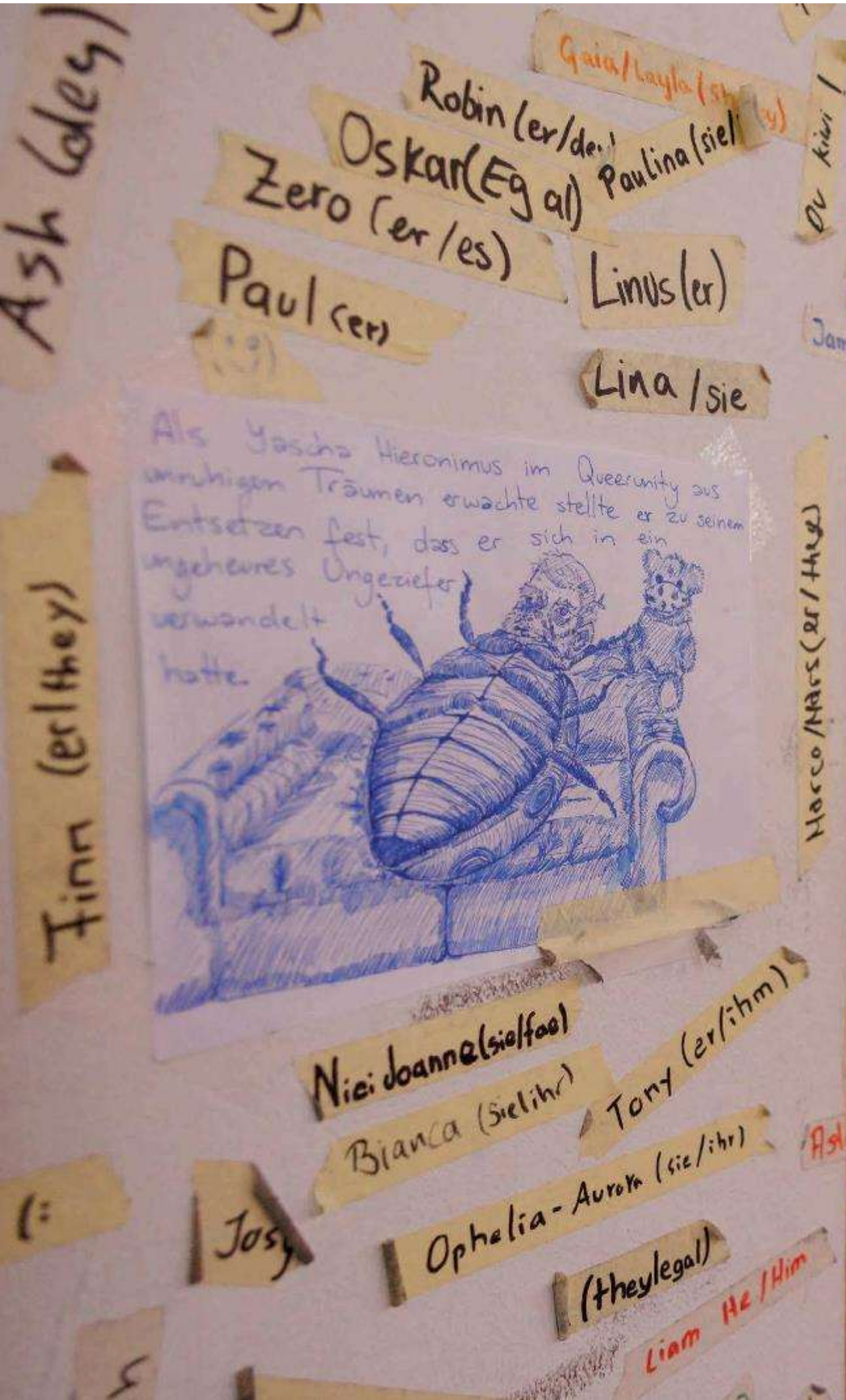
## UNSTOPPABLE (2022)

by Marius Steffen

Queer youth are unstoppable – not only during Cologne Pride but also during the rest of the year. Even though they have to fight the daily struggles in a heteronormative and partly queerphobic society, they keep up their voices and their demands for a better future.

In Cologne teens and young adults meet at the LGBTIQ\* youth center „anyway“ and find help and friends in the process of coming-out. Founded in 1998 it was the first of its kind in Europe and it is still the biggest to this day.





## QueerUnity

by Michael Walmüller

Since 2019 Hanover is home to a LGBTIQ youth center called QueerUnity. Since then, over 400 LGBTIQ young people have registered on the digital counterpart. Here you will find help, advice, connections and friends. The center offers a wide range of groups and leisure activities. Creativity as an expression of their own identity is a big topic for young people. So over the last three years the youth center itself has become a kind of work of

art. There are large and small drawings, handicrafts and texts everywhere in the rooms, which reflect the lives of the young people. They have found a home here that belongs to them. To show that, they started putting up their nametags and pronouns at the end of a meeting somewhere in the youth center. On shelves, flowerpots, door frames, walls, tables, anywhere. It is a work of art in itself. This could not reflect the soul of the center better.





# Never Middle of the Road

by Ryan O'Sullivan

Karma is an active member of UpCork, the city's support group for young queer people. They are proud of who they are, who they love, and how they look – which is FABULOUS!

Cork City Council support the LGBTI+ Inter-Agency Group, which in turn seeks to bring together the city's LGBTI+ activist groups – such as UpCork – with municipal and state agencies, to promote inclusion of all LGBTI+ citizens, whatever their age.





## Keep the mask

by Young people from Masterclass in Gender and Culture  
in Vg58, Youth, Jobs and education, Aarhus Municipality

The photo is a photo of a product from one of the participants of the so-called masterclass Gender & Culture. The masterclass Gender and Culture is created for young people who receive social support. The focus is: What norms are – and how they are

a large part of our basic understanding of gender and sexuality. In the masterclass the participants acquire knowledge and share experiences under the team “Gender and Culture”.





## I am whoever I am when I am it by Taiwan Tongzhi (LGBTQ+) Hotline Association

In 2000, a young boy from southern Taiwan, named “Yeh Yung-Chih”, had been bullied and died in school because of his “over-femininity.” In 2004, Taiwan passed the laws “Gender Equity Education Act” to prevent the tragedy like this happening again, and also to commemorate the “Rose Boy,” Yeh Yung-Chih. The laws alone are not enough though. The

LGBTQ+ and gender equality advocacy groups, governments, and the whole civil society have been working hard and together to achieve the goal of creating safe and violence-free campuses for years. One day, each young kid can say it out loud “I am whoever I am when I am it.”





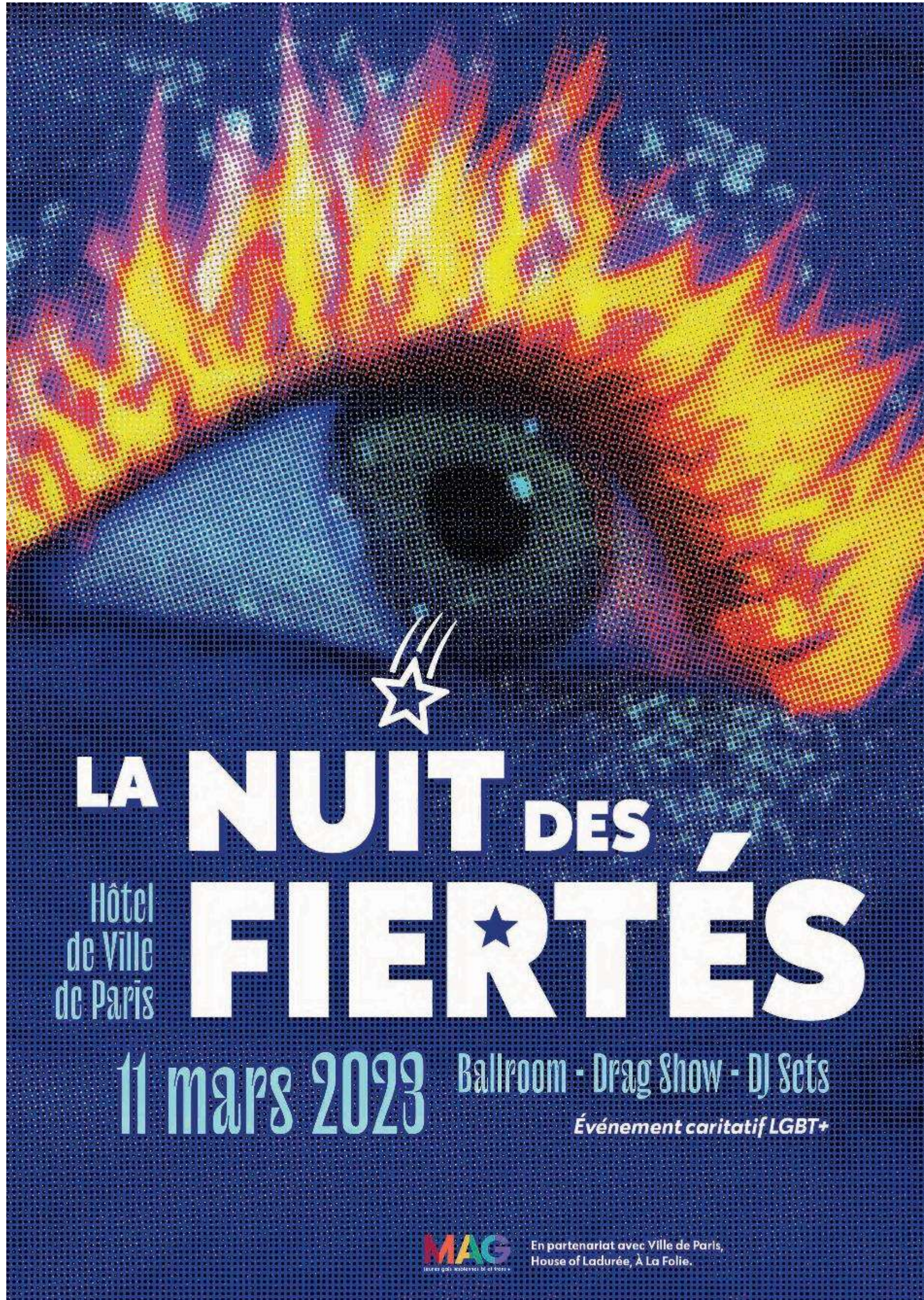
## Time for love and solidarity

by Le Refuge Genève

These pictures were taken especially for this exhibition during a workshop at Le Refuge, a support centre for LGBTIQ+ young people with family issues, funded by the City of Geneva. At a time when the rights of young people, especially trans or gender

questioning people, to self-determination is being violently questioned, they remind us that it is about time that we love ourselves ... and each other. An inspiring message of better care and solidarity from the people who are building the world of tomorrow.





## La nuit des fiertés by Marie Jolu-Planques

On Saturday March 11, 2023, “MAG Jeunes LGBT+” in partnership with the municipality of Paris organized a Pride Night to raise funds for this queer youth NGO. The salons of the Paris City Hall have become, for one night, the place of an artistic and festive LGBTQI+ event. This big party allows queer youth to take over the City Hall with a great program, a gala dinner, an associative village, drag shows, ballroom, and DJ sets to dance.





## Queers at School by Danielle Liniger

“What does LGBTIQ mean?”. “What are the reactions of your friends and family?”. “When did you realize you were trans and how does that feel?”. “What is the difference of gender, sex and orientation?”. “Have you ever experienced discrimination?”. Since 1999, people from the ABQ School Project have

been visiting school classes. They answer students’ questions and talk about what it’s like to be queer in a cis-heteronormative society. Every month on the 7<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm the ABQ team meet in Bern to discuss and exchange.





# Austrian Young Trans\* & Inter\* Camp 2022

by Nemanja Popadic, Verein COURAGE

The fifth Young Trans\* & Inter\* Summercamp took place in Murau, in the Austrian state Styria, from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> of July, 2022. 37 kids, juveniles and young adults from the age of 10 to 22 and ten supervisors spent a great time together in the heart of Western Styria. New friendships have been forged and many experiences could be gained. For

these queer kids, juveniles and young adults, the Camp successfully provided a safe space where they could get to know and explore the diversity of gender expressions and gender identities, and where everyone could feel free to try out things for themselves.





## Students gathered in a gym for LGBTIQ+ workshop

by Nina Dale

The City of Helsinki conducts participatory budgeting which allows residents to make proposals and vote on the allocation of 8.8. million euros. Three pupils proposed that all comprehensive schools in Helsinki should organise workshops on diversity of

gender and sexual orientation. The proposal was voted to be implemented in 2023. The goal of the workshops is to enable a better understanding of LGBTIQ+ issues and increase respect for diversity as a step towards a safer school for everyone.





## KUSS41 by Spencer Schmalz

KUSS41, the first queer youth centre in the Federal State of Hessen, was opened in Frankfurt am Main in 2010 and is run by AIDS-Hilfe Frankfurt. The photo is from a project that visitors of KUSS41 collaborated on with Jutta Stocksiefen and Robert Schittko from Fotografie Forum Frankfurt. The subject is Leigh Weingärtner, with tattoos by Carlie Liebeck.





## Flag raising for Pride Month

by Philipp Rothe

Initiated in 2018, Queer Youth Heidelberg is an offer for gay, lesbian, bi-, pan- and asexual, trans, inter, non-binary and questioning youth. Here you can just be who you are, meet new friends and start joint actions. It is a place for exchange, shelter and for leisure activities for LGBTIQ+ up to the age of 18. In

addition, the specialist office for LGBTIQ+ children's and youth work Rainbow City Kids has originated here. Queer Youth actively trains professionals and volunteers in gender and sexual diversity in the field of youth work and education.





## Maze of Expressions by Monika Zupin

Maze of expression was an exhibition presenting 11 young queer artists in the City hall in 2022. After times when space for culture was limited to the possibilities and dictates of the political epidemiological situation, it is even more important to provide a venue, visibility and promotion to young LGBTQ+ artists and their

artworks. The exhibition project, turns to them and creates a set of different views of LGBTQ+ young people on this difficult period through artworks and offers up and coming artists the opportunity to present their work in a visible, established space.





## The way you are by City of Munich; schmid:heilig

This picture is a piece of a campaign for queer youth. It is one of the themes concerning the gender identity. Posters with that picture and a tip to a website were presented in public spaces as well as in youth centers. It shows, that identity is different, diverse, colourful and in every case wonderful. Young queer persons do identify themselves as they feel. Be who you are - you are welcome - „the way you are“!





## Color

by Chen Ket Hiung

“Color” (色) in Chinese refers to both colors and desires. Since birth, we are categorized by our color and treated with a “colored” perspective. However, the Queer community emerged to acknowledge their desires and show their unique colors to the

world. The six-color rainbow has become an umbrella for LGBTQ+ individuals, protecting their dreams and beliefs and promoting a more diverse future. (Photo: 435 Art Zone, New Taipei City, by a student from Private Tungnan University.)





## Social (in)equality by Matheus Santana

Queer youth struggled during the pandemic with issues like mental health, income, housing and tensions within families. The picture shows D'Avellonne who struggled as an independent illustrator during that time. The invisible barrier, the pandemic, between youth and society is portrayed by the piece of glass she is holding.

Matheus is a photographer and online content creator. For this series he collaborated with SPACE010. The project contains an exhibition, videos and online magazine.





## “I take a stand for tolerance in hip-hop”

by OJA Zürich

Music and especially hip-hop can be a source of empowerment for queer youth, but its lyrics often display queerphobia and sexism. That is why the City of Zurich launched a series of workshops and concerts called “Züri los zue” (“Listen up, Zurich”).

About 700 teenagers engaged with the topics of queerphobia and sexism in hip-hop and learned to use the power of hip-hop against it. By putting their names on the wall of tags, they took a stand for hip-hop culture welcoming and not excluding queer youth.





## A cute day at Sabaah

by Liv Latricia

Siren (she/her, they/them) and Se Eun (she/her) are both employed at Sabaah - an association that works to improve the conditions of LGBTQ+ people with a minority ethnic background. Se Eun works in the head office while Siren works in the network café, a place where like-minded people come to meet in a safer and more inclusive space. This photo was taken at a photoshoot at Sabaah, where volunteers, workers, allies, and friends participated. The City of Copenhagen supports Sabaah's activities.



DU BIST

*gut so.*



## The spirit of gut so. by Mareike Bundschuh

In June 2022 the queer youth club “gut so.” opened in Mannheim. “Gut so.” means well so and emphasizes the value of young people. Since then, rainbows have lit up the rooms and the young people have created a mascot, the spirit of “gut so.” Gradually it is getting more accessories like the rainbow scarf.

Like all youth centres, the “gut so.” is funded by the city of Mannheim and works at the city level to empower young people.



International  
Photo Exhibition 2023



## References

**No. 1, Cologne**

“UNSTOPPABLE (2022)” by Marius Steffen

**No. 2, Hanover**

“QueerUnity“ by Michael Walmüller

**No. 3, Cork**

“Never Middle of the Road“  
by Ryan O’Sullivan

**No. 4, Aarhus**

“Keep the mask” by Young people from  
Masterclass in Gender and Culture in Vg58,  
Youth, Jobs and education, Aarhus

**No. 5, City of Taipei**

“I am whoever I am when I am it” by Taiwan  
Tongzhi (LGBTQ+) Hotline Association

**No. 6, Geneva**

“Time for love and solidarity” by Le Refuge  
Genève

**No. 7, Paris**

“La nuit des fiertés“ by Marie Jolu-Planques

**No. 8, Bern**

“Queers at School” by Danielle Liniger,  
[www.danielleliniger.com](http://www.danielleliniger.com)

**No. 9, Vienna**

“Austrian Young Trans\* & Inter\* Camp 2022”  
by Nemanja Popadic, COURAGE

**No. 10, Helsinki**

“Students gathered in a gym for LGBTIQ+  
workshop” by Nina Dale

**No. 11, Frankfurt am Main**

“KUSS41 – Queer Youth in Frankfurt am Main“  
by Spencer Schmalz

**No. 12, Heidelberg**

“Flag raising for Pride Month at Queer Youth  
Heidelberg” by Philipp Rothe

**No. 13, Ljubljana**

“Maze Of Expressions“ by Monika Zupin

**No. 14, Munich**

“The way you are” by City of Munich; schmid:heilig

**No. 15, New Taipei City**

“Color” by Chen Ket Hiung

**No. 16, Rotterdam**

“Social (in)equality” by Matheus Santana

**No. 17, Zürich**

“I take a stand for tolerance in hip-hop” – wall of  
tags at the event “Listen up, Zurich” by OJA Zürich

**No. 18, Copenhagen**

“A cute day at Sabaah” by Liv Latricia

**No. 19, Mannheim**

“The spirit of gut so.” by Mareike Bundschuh

**Graphic design**

Christian Högl, Vienna ([www.creativbox.at](http://www.creativbox.at))



Rainbow  
Cities  
Network