



Location  
Mills Gallery, 539 Tremont St. Boston, MA 02116

On View  
August 31 – December 7, 2024  
1–6pm, Wednesday – Saturday

Opening Reception  
September 6, 2024 | 6–9pm

Press Kit – [Images + Text](#)  
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Exhibition page – [DEVOTIONS, to a dirty queer home](#)



J Rowen O'Dwyer. *Lillian Undressing*. 2024. Oil on canvas.

## ***J Rowen O'Dwyer: DEVOTIONS, to a dirty queer home* Honors LGBTQ+ Intimacy and Community Through Bright Artworks**

Curated by Lillian O'Dwyer, this exhibition of oil paintings, functional objects, and zines opens to the public on August 30 at the BCA Mills Gallery.

BOSTON, MA – Boston Center for the Arts (BCA) is thrilled to announce the opening of J Rowen O'Dwyer: DEVOTIONS, to a dirty queer home curated by Lillian O'Dwyer, presented at the BCA Mills Gallery on August 31 through December 7, 2024. DEVOTIONS, to a dirty queer home is J Rowen O'Dwyer's tribute to the local trans and leather communities. Capturing in oil paintings, functional objects, and zines the complexities of queer intimacy, daily life, and communal spaces.

The exhibition blends vibrant depictions of friends and lovers with documentary-style imagery, celebrating the essence of these communities and their everyday experiences. It's a collection of work that embraces hard gazes, gentle touches, the complexity of bodies, and daily acts of care. In essence, it's J Rowen O'Dwyer's love letter to his community of trans folks. The imagery of queer intimacy and the domestic realm originates from play parties, bar nights, as well as from candid moments from daily life of transexual bodies in pleasure, creation, and community.

The photographic qualities of the work enhance the documentary aspects of the artist's practice that nod to archival imagery of queers involved in the 80's and 90's leather subculture communities. Similarly, his zines capture the organizing O'Dwyer does within the Boston leatherdyke scene, capturing a budding rebirth of the community over the last year.

A dirty queer home is a rave, a park bench, the light under a street lamp, a place to piss in the alley, an unmade bed, a meal with a lover, a collar around your neck, the glow of a laptop screen, a soft place, the smell of leather and sweat, a moment of being seen, a moment of being felt.

– J Rowen O'Dwyer



On September 6, 2024 the opening reception for J Rowen O'Dwyer: DEVOTIONS, to a dirty queer home, curated by Lillian O'Dwyer will be held in the Mills Gallery; that will also be celebrating the opening of Kate Wildman: prayers from the earth in the Mills Project Room. On the same night from 5–8pm, explore the four floors of the Artist Studios Building next door and meet the artists currently in the BCA Studio Residency.

BCA is also excited to announce a series of public programs in conjunction with J Rowen O'Dwyer: DEVOTIONS, to a dirty queer home. On Thursday, October 3, 2024, from 6–7 pm, join us for Paint the Town Red: Boston Queer Figure Painters in Conversation. This event will feature artist J Rowen O'Dwyer in conversation with local queer artists Campbell-Lynn McLean, Amanda Pickler, and Will Valdes, discussing themes of nightlife, eroticism, domesticity, kink, and community. The conversation will be moderated by exhibition curator Lillian O'Dwyer.

On Saturday, November 2, 2024, from 1–6 pm, we invite you to experience a dynamic performance by Xray Aims, exploring the depths of queer identity and expression.

Finally, TRIBUTE on Saturday, November 16, 2024, from 7–11 pm. This after-hours event invites local queers to come together and transform the gallery into a vibrant, dirty queer home for the evening. Celebrate community, creativity, and queerness in an unforgettable night of dance and connection.

*Acknowledgements: Boston Center for the Arts is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency, the City of Boston, by Liberty Mutual, Deborah Munroe Noonan Memorial Fund, Bank of America, N.A., Trustee, the Clinton H. and Wilma T. Shattuck Foundation, Wagner Foundation, TD Charitable Foundation, Culture Pop Soda, and through the generous support of our individual donors.*

### **About the Artist: J Rowen O'Dwyer**

J Rowen O'Dwyer (they/he) is an interdisciplinary artist currently living and working in the Boston area. Their research focuses on generational queer histories of community organizing and embodiment practices in kink and leather communities. His paintings situate young queers within this rich history, shining a light on the human elements of connection and the healing, vulnerable act of seeing and being seen. Creating real spaces for liberation and connection is the foundation for O'Dwyer's practice. At heart of his work is the time he spends in service to this community through event organizing, documenting moments, and forming lasting bonds and entanglements with others. They received their M.F.A. from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts and their B.A. in studio art from Agnes Scott College.

### **About the Curator: Lillian O'Dwyer**

Lillian O'Dwyer (they/she) is an independent curator and public historian living in Boston, Massachusetts. Their curatorial work documents the ways that contemporary art is utilized as tools for community building and radical change. She weaves together archival materials of how artists and organizations interact with social movements with the current growth of community organizing in Boston, focusing specifically within dyke spaces. Their work centers the artist and community voice, questioning how we can create channels of connection between art and community. Their most notable curatorial experience was Can You Hear Us Now: Revolutionary Art of the Next Generation at Dalton Gallery in Atlanta, GA. They received their BA in Art History from Agnes Scott College.

### **About Mills Gallery**

The Mills Gallery has been showing contemporary artists and curators from Boston and beyond since the mid-1970s. The Mills Gallery supports innovative exhibitions that connect artists with the community, peers, and resources providing a vibrant platform for new art in Boston. The Mills also presents signature exhibitions such as the Drawing Show and the Project Room Exhibition Series which features work by BCA Studio Residents who are part of a three-year residency in the BCA Artist Studios Building.

### **About Boston Center for the Arts**

Boston Center for the Arts (BCA) supports working artists to create, perform, and exhibit new works; develops new audiences; and connects the arts to community, and has for over five decades engaged the creative community for public good. While the organization's physical residence is in the historic South End, BCA touches every part of Boston's cultural

ecosystem. A leading force in the city's cultural community, BCA has supported thousands of individual artists, small organizations, and performing arts companies, who add depth and dimension to the Boston arts ethos. Through residencies and programming, BCA serves as an epicenter for an expanding cohort of artists working across all disciplines, and has catalyzed careers by providing fertile ground for experimentation and artistic risk-taking. To learn more about Boston Center for the Arts, visit [bostonarts.org](http://bostonarts.org).

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