



CALENDAR EDITORS PLEASE LIST: LGBTQ, OPENING RECEPTION/EXHIBIT: VISUAL ARTS

June 27, 2019

For Immediate Release

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CALIFORNIA HUMANITIES ANNOUNCES NEW EXHIBIT *WE ARE MORE* SHOWCASING WORK OF QUEER COMIC ARTISTS IN OAKLAND

Exhibit Takes A Page from *No Straight Lines* Documentary & Anthology About History of Queer Comics

(Oakland, CA) — **California Humanities** announces the opening for the next installation in the **Art of Storytelling** series, new exhibit ***We Are More: Stories by Queer Comic Artists***, which runs **July 8 through September 30, 2019** in Oakland. The exhibit highlights the intersections between queer identity, the arts, and the humanities, featuring work from four **queer-identified Oakland-based comic artists**, the exhibit also will feature excerpts from a forthcoming documentary film about the history of queer comics in the United States. The opening reception, featuring remarks from artists and collaborators will take place on **Tuesday, July 16**.

We Are More explores the ways in which the queer identity of four Oakland-based contemporary artists, **Ajuan Mance, Breena Nuñez, Lawrence Lindell, and Trinidad Escobar** illuminates and provides a lens into complex stories which often defy categorization. Mance's brightly-colored drawings are influenced by comics and street art, featuring queer people of color in couples and friend groups, going about their daily lives. Nuñez' *La Matriarca* is a short excerpt from a longer graphic novel about the artist's teenage self as she grapples with a crisis in her Salvadoran identity. Lindell's piece, *The Garden*, is an autobiographical magical realism comic set in Compton, California, about heartbreak, re-finding oneself, standing still and starting over. Escobar's black-and-white ink drawings reference Visayan mythology from the Philippines, suggesting that these indigenous deities bless queer people in diaspora.

We Are More draws inspiration from, and features clips of, the forthcoming documentary film ***No Straight Lines: The Story of Queer Comics*** by filmmaker and exhibit collaborator **Vivian Kleiman**. Supported by a **California Documentary Project** grant from California Humanities, *No Straight Lines* tells the stories of five queer artists—Alison Bechdel, Jennifer Camper, Rupert Kinnard, Howard Cruse, and Mary Wings—whose work addressed major issues of their respective times, and whom each ultimately reached worldwide recognition. Inspired by the book *No Straight Lines: Four Decades of Queer Comics* by Justin Hall, the film delves into the history of **queer comics over the last five decades**, illustrating the transition from their isolation from the mainstream and comic book stores to joining a part of the graphic storytelling canon. The featured artists' work comments on topics from the AIDS crisis and workplace discrimination, to the search for love and a good haircut.

"*We Are More* serves to illuminate the common humanity in all of us by focusing on stories told from a specific perspective," said **exhibit organizer and California Humanities Advocacy & Outreach Manager John Nguyen-Yap**. "The artwork in this exhibit—by contemporary, Oakland-based, queer-identified artists of color—is expansive in terms of theme, narrative approach, visual style, and format. While the artists in the show come from a queer perspective, the works help us to imagine how those perspectives intersect with other aspects of identity and human experience, which connects us all."

“As a part of our Art of Storytelling series, this exhibit beautifully illustrates how the humanities are connected to the arts,” said **California Humanities President and CEO Julie Fry**. “The installation draws upon the themes of upcoming film *No Straight Lines* and brings them into the present with work from contemporary artists. At California Humanities, we’re always interested in the intersection between the arts and the humanities, and this exhibit is an example of how together they can further enrich our understanding of the human experience.”

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We Are More: Stories by Queer Comic Artists

What: Exhibit of work by four contemporary queer-identified Oakland-based comic artists, featuring short excerpts from forthcoming documentary film *No Straight Lines* about the history of queer comics.

When: Monday, July 8—Monday, September 30, 2019

Hours: Second Fridays, July through September, 11 am – 2 pm, and by appointment

Where: California Humanities, 538 9th Street, Suite 210, Oakland, CA

Cost: Free and open to the public.

Contact: John Nguyen-Yap, jnguyenyap@calhum.org or 415-391-1474 x301

Link: <https://calhum.org/new-exhibit-we-are-more-stories-by-queer-comic-artists>

Opening Reception for We Are More: Stories by Queer Comic Artists

What: Join artists Ajuan Mance, Lawrence Lindell, and Trinidad Escobar, as well as filmmaker Vivian Kleiman at California Humanities for the opening of new exhibit *We Are More: Stories by Queer Comic Artists*. Hear remarks from the artists and California Humanities staff, browse books and art for sale by the artists, view clips of forthcoming documentary film *No Straight Lines*, and enjoy a light reception.

When: Tuesday, July 16, 2019, 5:30–7:30 pm

Where: California Humanities, 538 9th Street, Suite 210, Oakland, CA

Cost: Free and open to the public.

Contact: John Nguyen-Yap, jnguyenyap@calhum.org or 415-391-1474 x301

Link: <https://calhum.org/event/oakland—we-are-more-opening-reception>

ARTISTS & COLLABORATORS

Ajuan Mance is an American visual artist, author, editor, and a Professor of English and Member of Digital Humanities Working Group at Mills College in Oakland, California. Artistically, Mance may be best known as the creator of the portrait series *1001 Black Men*. She is the creator of a number of zines, including *Gender Studies*, *The Little Book of Big, Black Bears*, and *A Blues for Black Santa*. Her comics-inspired style is intended to make her art as accessible as possible. Mance was a judge for Prism Comics and Queer Comics Expo's Inaugural Prism Awards for representations of LGBTQAI+ characters in comics. She also is an author and editor of several scholarly books including *Inventing black women: African American women poets and self-representation, 1877-2000* and *Proud Legacy: The Colored Schools of Malvern, Arkansas and the Community that Made Them*. 8-rock.com

Breena Nuñez is an Afro Guatemalan-Salvadoran cartoonist based in Oakland, California by way of San Bruno and South San Francisco. Nuñez identifies as a non-binary womxn who uses she/her/they/them pronouns. Nuñez is pursuing an MFA in Comics at California College of the Arts. Her artwork touches on topics from the Afrolatinx diaspora, to everyday Central American experiences, queer people of color, and social awkwardness. Nuñez' comics are primarily self-published as zines to make them more accessible. Nuñez' work has been featured in online articles and interviews with *CultureStrike*, *Fierce Mitú* (one authored by Alán Pelaez Lopez and another by Stephanie Ginese), *Taco Talk* with Julio Salgado, *Huffington Post*, *Prime Vice*, *Colorlines*, *The Beat*, *Remezcla*, and *The Baylies*. breenache.com

Lawrence Lindell is a cartoonist and educator from California. He is the creator of *From Black Boy with Love*, *Couldn't Afford Therapy*, *So I Made This*, and the web comic *The Section*. He also started Bay Area cartoonist collective The Baylies. Lindell makes autobiographical, uplifting, politically and socially conscious comics focusing on Blackness, queerness, mental health and healing. He teaches cartooning and comics to 1st through 5th graders and holds workshops and panels for adults and teens. His work has been featured by *Afropunk*, *Huffington Post*, *Blavity*, *Atlanta Black Star*, and many other outlets. lawrencelindell.com

Trinidad Escobar is a storyteller from Oakland, California. She is an alumna of San Francisco State's poetry program and a Fellow of the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics MFA Poetry program. She is the recipient of the Olympiad of the Arts Award and the Frances Jaffer Poetry Prize given by The Poetry Center of San Francisco. Her first collection of poetry, *Loved Letters*, was a Finalist in the Meritage Press 2009 Tabios Manuscript Contest. Trinidad is a Voices of Our Nations Arts Foundation Fellow. Additionally, she trained in the MFA in Comics graduate program at California College of the Arts. Her writing and visual art have been featured in numerous publications, and she has been a guest artist and speaker at multiple venues throughout the Bay Area. Her graphic memoir *CRUSHED* was published in 2018. Her graphic novella *TRYST*, about queer *aswang* love, will be published by Gantala Press in the Philippines in 2020. Her graphic novel *Of Sea and Venom* will be published by Farrar, Straus, and Giroux in 2021. trinidadescobar.com

Vivian Kleiman is the filmmaker behind the forthcoming *NO STRAIGHT LINES: THE RISE OF QUEER COMICS* and is also the Executive Producer of the Academy Award-nominated documentary short film *LAST DAY OF FREEDOM*. With film partner Marlon Riggs, they garnered the George Foster Peabody Award, Organization of American Historians' Eric Barnouw Award, and the International Documentary Association's Outstanding Achievement Award. She has seven co-productions with the Independent Television Service (ITVS) for national PBS broadcast. As an educator, she served as Adjunct Faculty at Stanford University's Graduate Program in Documentary Film & Video Production. nostraightlinesthefilm.com viviankleiman.com

ABOUT ART OF STORYTELLING

[The Art of Storytelling](#) is an exhibit series celebrating California's rich cultural and artistic histories and dynamic changing demographics. Multi-generational storytelling and testimonials are articulated in these exhibits through a variety of visual media. Meant to magnify the fundamental bond between the arts and the humanities, Art of Storytelling exhibits provide an opportunity to illuminate history, celebrate culture, and learn about ourselves through what is on the walls and what the artists have to say about their work.

ABOUT CALIFORNIA DOCUMENTARY PROJECT

The [California Documentary Project](#) (CDP) is a competitive grant program that supports the research and development and production stages of film, audio, and digital media projects that seek to document California in all its complexity. Projects use the humanities to provide context, depth and perspective and reach and engage broad audiences through multiple means, including but not limited to radio and television broadcasts, podcasts, online distribution and interactive media, community screenings and discussions, in classrooms and libraries, at cultural centers, film festivals, and beyond. Research and Development Grants provide up to \$10,000 and Production Grants up to \$50,000 for awarded projects. Since 2003, California Humanities has awarded almost \$5.5 million through the CDP grant program.

ABOUT CALIFORNIA HUMANITIES

California Humanities, a nonprofit partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities, promotes the humanities – focused on ideas, conversation and learning – as relevant, meaningful ways to understand the human condition and connect people to each other in order to help strengthen California. California

Humanities has provided grants and programs across the state since 1975. To learn more, visit calhum.org, or like and follow on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

VISITOR & ACCESSIBILITY INFORMATION

California Humanities is in the Swan's Market building at 538 9th Street, Suite 210, in Oakland, California. Entry to the office is free and open to the public, by appointment or during stated exhibit hours. Metered street parking is available near the office. California Humanities is conveniently located three blocks from the 12th Street/City Center BART station, on the corner of 9th Street and Clay Street. Multiple AC Transit lines are available within a few blocks of the building. An elevator is available to the second floor, and wheelchair-accessible all-gender restrooms are available inside Suite 210. For other access needs, please contact info@calhum.org well in advance of your visit.

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For hi-res press images & interviews: Claudia Leung, cleung@calhum.org, 415.391.1474 x303