

“Living Lesbian Legends” by Tanya Wischerath commissioned by the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District, Part of the “Giving Them Their Flowers” Art Exhibition 2024

Lenore Chinn

Painter, photographer, and political activist Lenore Chinn is a founding member of the Lesbians in the Visual Arts and Queer Cultural Center, who moved to the Castro district in the 1980s. There she became involved with many activist groups, including the Harvey Milk LGBTQ Democratic Club. Additionally, she served on the San Francisco Human Rights Commission. When she first joined the Castro community, the AIDS pandemic was at its height, and as those around her began to pass from the illness, she embarked on a mission to paint portraits of individuals while they were alive, not as posthumous tributes. Much like the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District, Lenore sought to celebrate queer life and history in the present moment.



Leigh Crow



Leigh Crow, a San-Francisco based actor and singer, is perhaps best known for her iconic drag king persona “Elvis Herselvis,” and recognized internationally as the first female Elvis Presley impersonator. She performed her first drag show in 1988, through which she gained recognition. Leigh has stated that Elvis Presley occupies an important place among lesbian icons, as he embodied and presented a style of glamor that bordered on feminine with his stage makeup and willingness to wear traditionally and stereotypically female colors, bending gender presentation in a manner seldom seen during his heyday, as Leigh does in her performances. She has upheld, satirized, and celebrated this notion through her work.

Jewelle Gomez

Jewelle Lydia Gomez is an American author, poet, critic, and playwright, who is recognized for her work in public television, theater, and philanthropy. She is the author of the Black lesbian vampire novel *The Gilda Stories*. Also, Jewelle worked on “Say Brother,” the first weekly Black television show in the U.S., and was a founding member of Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation ([GLAAD](#)). She was the president of the San Francisco Library Commission, sat on the Board of the Astraea Foundation, and was part of the 2004 lawsuit to make gay marriage legal in California. She served as the Director of Cultural Equity Grants for the San Francisco Arts Commission and the Director of Grants & Community Initiatives for the Horizons Foundation.



Marga Gomez



Marga Gomez is a comedian who centers her experience as a Latina lesbian. She earned her start in comedy and cabaret clubs of San Francisco in the 1980s, especially at Josie’s Juice Joint on 16th Street near Market. She has written and performed thirteen one-woman plays throughout her comedic career, and was in Off-Broadway and national renditions of *The Vagina Monologues*. Additionally, Marga was a founding member of the Latino comedy group Culture Clash.

Jeanette Gandionco Lazam

Jeanette Gandionco Lazam is an anti-racism and housing activist who exercised her passion for human rights in San Francisco beginning in the 1970s. She was one of many Pilipino tenants to fight eviction from the International Hotel.

Demonstrating her conviction to the cause, Jeanette stood her ground during the protests, and was the last to leave during the eviction. Decades later, she became the final tenant to return to the I-Hotel's new infrastructure in 2021. At the time of her retirement, she worked at Congresswoman Barbara Lee's 9th Congressional District's Office in Oakland, California. Her activism continues to inspire others in their fight against gentrification and displacement.



Frances "Franco" Stevens



Frances "Franco" Stevens is the founder of *Curve Magazine*, a leading international lesbian magazine first published in 1990. Following a period of homelessness due to rejection from her family in response to coming out, Franco sought to bring her vision to life, despite various investors denying her support. Believing that her vision would become a success, she maxed out her credit cards and created a vehicle not only for entertainment, but connection and community for queer women across the country, some even stating that the publication saved their lives. In 1997, Franco suffered an accident that left her permanently disabled and wheelchair-bound, affecting some of her working abilities. Though she sold *Curve* to Avalon Media in 2010, she reacquired it in 2021, donating it to the [Curve Foundation](#), whose vision it is to "empower lesbian, queer women, trans women, and non-binary people to share culture

and stories, connect with each other, and raise visibility."

Olga Talamante

Olga Talamante, a Chicana woman, is an activist, community builder and philanthropic leader. Olga was a political prisoner because of her work in Argentina in 1974 when she was abducted and tortured by Isabel Perón's government for sixteen months before a grassroots campaign ensured her release. She was a member of the American Friends Service Committee, and is the founder and former executive director of the Chicana/Latina Foundation. Additionally, she serves on the boards of the National Center for Lesbian Rights, El Concilio of San Mateo County.



Ruth Villaseñor



Ruth, a Chiricahua-Apache Mexican woman, is significant because of her role as a co-founder of the Bay Area American Indian Two-Spirits ([BAAITS](#)) organization, and her work as a cultural producer and curator. Ruth curated, with Roger Kuhn and Amelia Vigil, an exhibition at the GLBT Historical Society Museum entitled "Two-Spirit Voices: Returning to the Circle" in 2019. She also co-curated a show on BAAITS that is currently at the SF LGBT Center. As a Two-Spirit person, she is active in ensuring that Indigenous peoples are centered in queer and trans contexts and that Two-Spirit people are centered in Indigenous contexts.

Info about the artist: **Tanya Wischerath** lives and works in San Francisco California. Tanya Wischerath's work is highly autobiographical, depicting an intimate and surreal landscape of gender fluidity and contemporary queer expression. Her paintings and drawings act as a visual memoir and utilize her surrounding community as models, their depictions vacillating between allegorical and personal. www.tanyawischerath.com



Info about the District: The Castro LGBTQ Cultural District is committed to preserving, sustaining, and promoting the rich cultural legacy of the Castro and its significance to San Francisco's LGBTQ+ community and beyond. Our goals are to highlight the structures and sites important to our history; foster racial, ethnic, gender and cultural diversity among residents and businesses; and create a safe, beautiful, and inclusive space for LGBTQ+ and allied communities, to visit from around the world and call the Castro home. www.castrolgbtq.org