



### LGBT+ History Month Blog – Lo T.

**02/02/2021.**

GYRO's LGBT+ History Month project got off to an inspirational start when artist, activist and all round creative joy Lo Tierney came in to GYRO to talk all things art, activism, autism and drag race!!

Big thanks to GYRO members, Isaac, Salem and Alix who conducted the interview and asked some thought provoking and insightful questions a la John Snow (that is the Channel Four News presenter not the Jon Snow of Game of Thrones fame)!!

For your pleasure, below is an abridged transcript of the interview for you to enjoy and be inspired by. The interview started off with a tricky little icebreaker question from Isaac–

Isaac: if you had to choose, would you rather never draw again or never speak??

Lo: 'I love talking, but I love drawing! That is a really tough one... If I had to choose, I would never speak again... But I would communicate through drawing!'

Isaac: What inspired you to become an activist and what inspired you to be an artist?

Lo: I found inspiration from Tumblr at first, there was a lot of representation of LGBT and Autistic people on there.

In addition, my left-wing teachers they showed me new perspectives on issues of feminism and equality. And when a local artist called Laura K Chapman was invited into my class and I saw what they were doing, I then decided I wanted to be an illustrator.

Isaac: Why and how did your illustration and art become a form of activism?

Lo: At the beginning, my artwork was really quirky (inspired by Salvador Dali, Frida Khalo), but then I hit a brick wall, not really knowing where to go with it. But then I was invited to volunteer and run creative workshops with the service users at the local homeless charity The Whitechapel Centre and this really inspired me to think more about art and social issues.

I took part in a rally (early 2017) against homophobia in Chechnya, and I created a sign that turned some heads and resulted in me being invited to do some activist art prints for The Walker Art Gallery as part of their Coming Out exhibition. I love surrealist art but activism art is really close to my heart.

Salem: When did you first start going to GYRO and did GYRO have an influence on you becoming an activist?

Lo: I was in my early 20's, didn't really feel like going to 'Gay town' as I didn't want to drink alcohol but I still wanted to socialize. My friend recommended I come to GYRO. It is something a bit different from a night out, but you still get to socialize! GYRO helped me discover that I was non-binary through conversations with other people there that helped me explore myself. Being in GYRO helped me realize who I was!

Salem: Who (or what) has been the biggest source of support and/or inspiration in your life and how has this gives you confidence to do art and activism?

Lo: A woman called Kirsten who I met at a life drawing class invited me along to an art class that was full of other LGBT people who really supported and helped me (especially the older people)! They nurtured my work and me and that was such a big source of support for me at the time.

Katya from Ru Paul's Drag Race because they are so open about mental health.

St Vincent- an LGBT indie rock singer whose style and music is on point!!

Salem: Do you watch drag race, if so, who is your favourite Queen?

Cheryl Hole from Drag Race. She is so funny and doesn't take herself too seriously. She is a breath of fresh air.

Alix: What do you do in your spare time to relax and look after your well-being?

Lo: I love nature, so if it's nice outside, I will go for walks around the parks in Liverpool where I can just take in nature, breathing in all the fresh air, and think to myself this is bliss!

I do a bit of meditation, which helps me sleep, and I am one of those people who need their sleep!!

If I feel a bit down or depressed I will reach out to my friends and talk. They always end up cheering me up. They can offer a new perspective that helps me feel less down. It might seem like a bit of a strange thing to do but I always think 'what would Cheryl Hole do?', she wouldn't be keeping it to herself!

Alix: If you were to put a piece of your art in to a time capsule to inspire future LGBT+ young people, what would it be and why?

I drew a big heart who has rainbow arms and they are giving themselves a big hug. I just love the message of this – community, self-care, looking after each other and love.

Note: The theme of LGBT+ History Month is Body, Mind and Spirit and GYRO, in partnership with National Museums Liverpool are putting together a digital time capsule for LGBT+ young people of the future that will share positive messages of hope for their physical and mental health.