

Queer Asian Artists, Creatives and Cultural Workers

Statement at the 9th ILGA Asia Conference

The ILGA Asia Queer Arts Festival was held for the first time between 28th November and 2nd December during the 9th ILGA Asia Conference, which took place in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. On 1 December, 9 queer artists gathered and discussed our experiences and the future we demand. **The Festival physically brought together 22 artists and cultural workers from Bangladesh, China, Colombia, France, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Iran/Denmark, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Palestine, Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam.**

Art and Activism in the LGBTIQ Human Rights Movement

We believe in the power of art as a catalyst for social change, a vital tool of activism. Queer art and its intersections champion ambiguities and, by doing so, circumvent systems of erasure that seek to exclude queerness in the world and, by extension, queer histories. Queer art is about exploding the cultural narrative order. Art is integral to our movement and becomes a mode of the political expression of queer identities especially in challenging political environments. Many of the challenges still being fought by our queer family are intersected with race, gender, ability, and access, and these are important stories that need to be shared. The programming at ILGA should reflect the centrality of artistic expression to our movement. Queer art is, and will forever be, important because without it, we lose opportunities for sharing and understanding. Real change only comes from a place of understanding.

Preamble:

Asian queer artists, creatives and cultural workers aim to:

- Express queer identities using art as a medium;
- Challenge narratives of heteronormativity and cisnormativity through our work;
- Decolonise our own spaces by putting people that look like us, places familiar to us, stories close to us in the forefront of our culture;
- Encourage creative freedom which challenges societal stereotypes around gender and sexuality;

Art touches the hearts of people. We fully support the ILGA Asia Queer Arts Festival at the 9th ILGA Asia Conference and the proposed recommendations above for improvement in the next edition.

As Asian queer artists and cultural workers, we face a lot of challenges and barriers. This can include censorship, criminalisation, violence, lack of resources, lack of funding and platforms, recognition and respect.

Recommendations

- To celebrate the power and beauty of queer arts, recognizing artistic labour and creativity, and freedom.
- To acknowledge that being an artist requires years of learning, preparing, and creating, as well as courage.
- To offer a professional platform to showcase queer artworks and performances with proper visibility and promotion of the work and respect for the work of queer activists,

- To ensure financial support and give a platform/space to meet with donors and collaborate with academics and traditional NGOs to foster growth, collaboration, and activism within our shared mission for equality.
- To acknowledge the challenges and barriers queer artists face and ensure the safety and protection of queer artists especially when the government and general society target them
- To respect queer artists' right to authorship and visibility by mentioning the artist's name whenever exhibiting their artworks, using their preferred name, and ensuring proper promotional efforts of their works.
- To ensure queer artists are in leadership and offer effective participation in the ILGA Asia conference for art festival with space to discuss the arts movement in Asia.
- To support the creation of Queer Asian Activist Artist Coalition (QAAAC).

Junmi Chen, Queer activist and filmmaker, China

Nhung Dinh, queer activist and artist , Hanoi, Vietnam

J Triangular & An-An Chen, HIV video support project, Taiwan

Jean & Mak, filmmakers, Hong Kong

Samapika Gautam, Nepal

Sandeep Shrestha, Nepal

Meraj Sharifi, artist and researcher, Iran/Denmark

Jasper Villasis, theater artist and filmmaker, Philippines

ILGA Asia 9th Conference
Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam
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