

The Library (2020 - ongoing) is an open-ended series dedicated to covers of books by queer artists and writers. Each painting, in watercolour and pencil on cotton paper, measures 260 x 180 mm, and is dated with the exact date of completion. They are pop art facsimiles created as Round discovers and digests a queer canon (the show represents 15 of more than 50 covers). As the catalogue of covers grows, it readdresses the idea that queer history has been obfuscated, an optimistic archive of literature by LGBTQ+ writers and artists.

The series comes from a desire to think about the past, Round's present-day relationship to it, and how our perspectives on history change over time. The motivation to address queer history stems in part from Round's time at art school in London in the 1990s. A time when a generation of art students were interested less in the body, gender, and identity, and more in combining form and conceptual thinking. Arriving later than some to an exploration of queer lineage, Round began to paint the book covers as an itinerant open research project into queer voices of the past and present.

Over time, reading and painting these covers became a vector to contemplate the aspects that made up Round's queer identity and queer identity itself more broadly. The books chosen for the works on paper are therefore not necessarily focussed on the author's queerness, but can relate to other facets of their work or character. The series might include art, science or cookery books, and the complete collection includes names as disparate as Virginia Woolf, Rita Mae Brown, Emmanuel Cooper, Paul B. Preciado and David Hockney.

Round has not read all of the books in the series. When object choices do not reflect a connection to the book's content or author, they come from a feeling or a visual inclination towards the typography. While the artist will sometimes alter minor aspects of the covers to fit the uniform dimensions of the series, or the colours to hand, the watercolours are largely faithful to the originals; the physical process of reinterpreting the covers with some precision enacts a source of meditation.

The breadth of the covers speaks to a renewed collective interest in excavating figures from queer history whose queer identity might have once been concealed.¹ Or a reevaluation of figures who serve as "problematic" role models.² *The Library* asks us who is "worthy" of commemoration and representation, and indeed whether that is a relevant question once the covers have been removed from their original contexts.

That the series is first shown at Tenderbooks, in Cecil Court, among longstanding purveyors of various objet and rare books, speaks to their past lives as book covers and future lives as artworks. Round hopes they will be traded among book lovers and LGBTQ+ people, passed on like the dogged paperback and hardback editions they represent. Moving plaques, reminding those who perceive them to conduct their own excavation into queer history.

Amelia Abraham

1 See also the project *Queer Bible*, spotlighting lesser-known LGBTQ+ figures from history

2 For another example, see the *Bad Gays* book and podcast series, by Ben Miller and Huw Lemmey