

RAW ME/MEDIA COVERAGE

June 25, 2011/The Toronto Star

There's always more going on at Pride than you might think: a charity run, a Pride Prom for LGBT high-school students, and even art shows (at the Gladstone Hotel and Bezpala Brown Gallery). Buddies in Bad Times Theatre is hosting two weeks of shows and parties, and even U of T has some interesting events, including a Pride Pub at Hart House. But it's all overshadowed by the party vibe.

Brent Ledger/Living Reporter/TheStar

<http://www.thestar.com/living/article/1013302—ledger-oh-pride-where-have-your-smarts-gone>

June 24, 2011/The Globe & Mail

Lately, Pride has gotten a bit too “family-oriented” for me. Bezpala Brown fixes that problem with a steamy chafing dish of raw (in the great, 1950s use of the term) sex-positive images. Don't bring the kids.

R.M. Vaughan/The Exhibitionist/TheGlobe&Mail

<http://m.theglobeandmail.com/news/arts/rm-vaughan/stevnn-halls-landscapes-are-a-kick-in-the-head/article2074371/?service=mobile>

June 17, 2011/FAB Magazine

ART TARTARE: Raw Me has artists baring their souls and bodies

fab guy photographer Drasko Bogdanovic's last exhibit, *Naked Man Staring at You*, proved too hot for the hosting gallery to handle. Despite deliberately courting controversy, the gallery insisted on removing some of the more explicit photos and converting all the colour photos to black and white. Bogdanovic was confused: “Black and white suddenly makes it art?”

The photos will be on view in their full-colour glory at a new exhibit, *Raw Me*. An “exploration of sexuality and self-identity with no labels or definitions,” *Raw Me* features seven artists baring their souls and bodies. The explicitness is perfect for Bogdanovic, who will also be displaying his non-YouTubeable videos. Bogdanovic says he is simply following his muse: “There are no rules, sexuality has no bounds, all is right with the perverse.”

Drew Rowsome/Fab Magazine

<http://www.fabmagazine.com/fab-blog/art-tartare>

June 16, 2011/ Xtra Magazine

**Raw Me brings intimate stories to Front St gallery
SHOW & TELL / New show deals with coming out, sexuality**

Sarah Hunter knew she was a lesbian at the age of four. But it took another 45 years for her to come out.

“Even though I was around gay people growing up, they weren’t able to own it,” the Toronto-born artist says. “My father eventually came out later in life as gay, but growing up I was surrounded by internalized homophobia.

“It was also a very sexist environment where women were nothing,” she adds. “If I’d had better role models in terms of being female and in terms of being queer, maybe it wouldn’t have taken me so long to fully understand who I was.”

The former art teacher and current arts administrator’s late-life coming out process provided the fodder for her new body of work, being presented as part of the Raw Me exhibition at Bezpala Brown Gallery this month. The show features a diverse group of queer artists, including Nickolas Hadzis, Francis Luta and Donald Vaillancourt.

Also featured are a selection of photographs from Drasko Bogdanovic deemed too hot for his exhibition at Riverdale’s Hang Man Gallery in April. Though Raw Me is the only entirely queer show at the upstart St Lawrence Market space to date, any controversy it generates will not be the first. The gallery last made waves in February with Hungarian-born artist Peter Alexander Por’s paintings, which included (among other things) a hole-riddled Pope Benedict XVI and a crucified Barack Obama.



Life Is a Cabaret.(Sarah Hunter)

Hunter’s work relies more on subtlety than shock. Her expressionistic collection of paintings, drawings and collages explores inner landscape by drawing on images from films, dreams and myths. She frequently focuses on the relationship between humans and the natural world. While “coming-out art” often conjures images of naked bodies and rainbow flags, Hunter is more interested in the subconscious elements of sexuality, perhaps because of how she came to understand her identity.

“My husband and I were struggling in our marriage and had decided to go to counselling,” she says. “During a session I was talking with my therapist about gender roles. Suddenly something clicked and I realized I was gay. There were so many things that had never made sense, but when I found this piece of the puzzle that made everything fit together.”

Hunter split up with her husband shortly after that, though the two remain good friends. She joined a coming-out group at the 519 Community Centre on the advice of her therapist, where she met Fariz Kovalchuk (another artist featured in the exhibition, who also manages the gallery).



In Flagrante. (Drasko Bogdanovic)

“It’s a very big group, usually about 30 people at each meeting,” Hunter says. “People are dealing with all kinds of issues there, but what unites almost all of us is the need to connect with a community of queers.”

“When I first came out I felt like a teenager, even though I was almost 50,” she adds. “I really wanted to find ways to be a part of the community. A lot of queer spaces are mostly male, so I ended up gravitating towards gay men.”

When Hunter eventually made her first lesbian outing, she was in for a huge surprise. While attending a women’s event at Slack’s, she unexpectedly encountered a bunch of familiar faces.

“I saw this group of women I knew who had all been married to men, like me,” she says. “I had known them for years, and our kids had played together while they were growing up. When I went over to say hello, one of them said they had been wondering how long it would be before they finally saw me there. I guess all of them knew I was gay before I did.”

Chris Dupuis/Toronto/XtraMagazine