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ONE GALLERY, WEST HOLLYWOOD

IT'S WHERE I BELONG



**40 YEARS (AND MORE) OF
DRAG IN WEST HOLLYWOOD**

EXHIBITION ON VIEW:
MAY 22-JUNE 29, 2025.
FRIDAY-SUNDAY, 1-6 P.M.

OPENING RECEPTION:
THURSDAY, MAY 22, 2025, 8-10 P.M.

**ONE INSTITUTE ANNOUNCES
“IT’S WHERE I BELONG” EXHIBITION
SPOTLIGHTING HISTORY OF DRAG IN WEST HOLLYWOOD**

**Exhibition Presented as Part of the City of West Hollywood’s
40th Anniversary Celebration**

May 22 – June 29, 2025 at One Gallery, West Hollywood

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Los Angeles, CA (April 15, 2025) — One Institute announced today ***It’s Where I Belong: 40 Years (and More) of Drag in West Hollywood***, an exhibition spotlighting the City of West Hollywood’s decades-long legacy as a cultural hub for drag performers and the LGBTQ+ community at large. Presented by One Institute as part of West Hollywood’s 40th anniversary

celebration, the exhibition will be on view at One Gallery in West Hollywood from May 22-June 29, 2025. The opening reception for the exhibition will be held on May 22 in conjunction with the city's annual José Sarria Drag Pageant.

It's Where I Belong tells the story of drag in West Hollywood by uncovering rarely-seen materials from ONE Archives at the USC Libraries and from community contributions. Visitors will be treated to an array of archival photographs, videos, and flyers from drag shows and events, including appearances by celebrities like **Bette Midler, Diana Ross, and Chappell Roan**; drag superstars such as **RuPaul, Charles Pierce, and Jackie Beat**; and legendary organizations like the **Imperial Court and Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence**. The exhibition also features ephemera from political demonstrations and pride parades and a collection of costume pieces courtesy of local drag royalty and other community institutions.

As part of the kickoff to the City of West Hollywood's Pride Month celebrations, the opening reception for ***It's Where I Belong*** will take place following the city's annual José Sarria Drag Pageant on **Thursday, May 22, 2025, from 8-10 p.m. at One Gallery in West Hollywood**. Visitors will be invited to view the exhibition, enjoy light refreshments, and meet curator Lil Miss Hot Mess. A drag queen and scholar, Lil Miss Hot Mess has been performing drag for more than fifteen years, is a children's book author, and a public university professor. Just last month, Lil Miss Hot Mess was publicly attacked by Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Tickets for the opening reception available now at oneinstitute.org/its-where-i-belong.

Long before drag queens and kings became international superstars, they held a pride of place as local legends. Rooted deeply in community, drag performers push the boundaries of gender expectations while also serving flawless artistry, colorful cultural commentary, and unabashed challenges to the status quo. Since its incorporation in 1984 (and for decades prior), West Hollywood has played a key role in showcasing local talent and elevating the art form to an international stage. The city's contributions to drag include iconic clubs, raucous brunches, Pride parades, magazines, children's story hours, a historic drag laureate, and more.

"As one of only 7 recipients selected to receive funds to help the City of West Hollywood celebrate this milestone anniversary, we are honored to uplift the drag community and pay homage to the influence West Hollywood has had on it," said Rory Hayes, Public Programs Manager. "West Hollywood has been a strong partner to One Institute for decades, and the commemoration of its fortieth is cause for celebration amongst the LGBTQ+ community and our allies locally and nationwide."

However, even while drag has been celebrated across the US and world, it has also faced unique challenges, including present-day attacks from conservative politicians and extremist groups. The city of West Hollywood's storied history also includes key political actions, from 1970s protests against police arrests of drag performers for "lewd" conduct, to a 2023 march declaring that "drag is not a crime!" Drag artists continue to fight back, proving that glamour is not merely entertainment, but a crucial tactic of queer resistance and joy.

“The history of drag is a reminder that social change is a bunny hop: we take steps forward, then back, but always keep moving toward justice,” said Lil Miss Hot Mess. “Drag is a beloved art form, but this is hardly the first time it has faced opposition or helped our communities find laughter amidst our tears. It’s key that we not give in to hate and despair, and instead find inspiration in all the kings and queens that have come before us, who unabashedly fought for everyone’s right to be their most fabulous selves. We’ve got to keep on twirling.”

Learn more about the exhibition and register for the opening reception at oneinstitute.org/its-where-i-belong.

It's Where I Belong will be on view at One Gallery from May 22-June 29, 2025. The gallery is open to visitors between 1-6 p.m., Friday through Sunday, at no cost. Attendees at our opening reception are encouraged to participate in the scheduled program of events for the José Sarria Drag Pageant, which takes place just prior from 6-8 p.m. on Thursday, May 22.

Learn more about the José Sarria Drag Pageant: <https://www.weho.org/community/arts-and-culture/harvey-milk-day>

This exhibition is presented by One Institute and curated by Lil Miss Hot Mess. The project is made possible through an arts grant from the City of West Hollywood. Special thanks to ONE Archives at the USC Libraries.

About the Curator

Lil Miss Hot Mess is a drag queen, visual artist, and scholar who has appeared on world-class stages from Stanford University to Saturday Night Live. She was a founding organizer of the #MyNameIs campaign that challenged Facebook’s “real names” policy and serves on the board of Drag Story Hour. She is the author of three picture books: *Make Your Own Rainbow: A Drag Queen’s Guide to Color* (Running Press Kids, May 13, 2025), *If You’re a Drag Queen and You Know It* (2023), and *The Hips on the Drag Queen Go Swish, Swish, Swish* (2020). When not twirling, Lil Miss Hot Mess is a university professor, and her research and essays have been published in academic journals, books, and news outlets, including *The Guardian*, *Wired*, and *Salon*. More info: lilmisshotmess.com.

About One Institute

Founded in 1952, One Institute (formerly ONE Archives Foundation) is the oldest active LGBTQ+ organization in the United States. One Institute produces one-of-a-kind exhibitions and public programs that elevate queer and trans history and embrace emerging stories. Through K-12 teacher trainings, lesson plans, and youth mentorship programs, One empowers the next generation of teachers and students bringing queer and trans history into classrooms and communities. Additionally, the Institute assists in promoting the materials within ONE Archives at the USC Libraries, which houses the largest collection of LGBTQ+ materials in the world. The curatorial and educational choices made by One Institute are guided by our commitment to social equity and justice. We engage with the complexity of LGBTQ+ history and representation through highlighting the intersectional and authentic narratives of Black, Indigenous, people of

color (BIPOC), women, gender- nonconforming and transgender people, people of various abilities, youth, and elders across all socio-economic classes. Learn more at oneinstitute.org, and connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram @oneinstitutela.

SELECTED EXHIBITION IMAGES



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