

Review: CoolTan Arts Largactyl Shuffle: Celebration of LGBT History

Saturday 19th Feb 2011, 12noon

From Maudsley Hospital to Cross Bones Graveyard

"We gathered outside the Maudsley on a drizzly February morning. A diverse group of walkers, we were ready to sashay on a tour of Southwark and learn more about the borough, mental wellbeing, and LGBT history, local and otherwise.



Our first stop was the Institute of Psychiatry, where we learnt about 'treatments' received by people to 'cure' their homosexuality. Two years after being chemically castrated as an alternative to imprisonment for his sexuality, Alan Turing committed suicide. He was not the only victim of such misguided 'therapy'.

Moving on through Camberwell, we headed to CoolTan while rain briefly stopped play. Alongside tea, coffee, cake and getting to know each other a bit, we were given a fantastic tutorial in how to 'Vogue' (in the traditional sense, before Madonna nicked it for herself). A human runway was formed, and watching people lose their inhibitions, crack a smile and strike a pose was absolutely brilliant.



We moved on towards Borough, and heard about Molly Houses, the She-He Barman of Southwark, lesbian pirates and more - there was also a very brief discussion over whether Octavia Hill may have 'worn sensible shoes' (to coin a euphemism), but we couldn't come to a solid conclusion.

The finale of the walk was at Cross Bones Graveyard, just near Borough High Street. It is an unconsecrated cemetery dating back to medieval times, and is estimated to contain up to 15000 bodies - remains of 'single women' (a polite term for sex workers), also known as 'Winchester geese' lie there, along with babies, young children, and other 'outcast dead'.



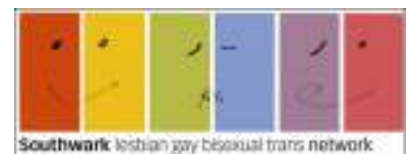
Lu, the walk leader, had brought ribbons for us to tie to the cemetery gates in tribute to those buried there, which I thought was a very kind and touching thing to do.

The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence were waiting for us at the gates, with a blessing, a dance, free safer sex supplies, and an exuberant attitude. After kneeling with them (and getting the obligatory photos taken together), we headed off into the warmth of The Gladstone (previously a gay pub), and whiled away the rest of the afternoon in excellent company.

If this is what an LGBT history walk is all about, then I'm out, proud and definitely going to come to the next one."

Our thanks go to Southwark LGBT Network for sponsoring the event, and to the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence for joining the walk, their support, blessings and performance.

Review by Zoe King, Largactyl Shuffle Walker and CoolTan Arts' volunteer.



Additional information

Image 1: Walk leaders at the Institute of Psychiatry

Image 2: Walkers at CoolTan Arts

Image 3: Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence at Cross Bones Graveyard

All photographs by Kathrin Kirrmann. Additional photographs on <http://www.facebook.com/cooltanarts>

The Largactyl Shuffle is named after the oldest anti-psychotic drug chlorpromazine sold as Largactil in Europe which has severe side effects.

[CoolTan Arts](#) exists to inspire the well-being and creative participation of a diverse range of people through the production of quality art. Reg. Charity Nr. 1064231
We are proud to have as Patrons: Maggi Hambling, Sokari Douglas Camp, Ali Smith, Clare Allan and Rosemary Shrager.

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