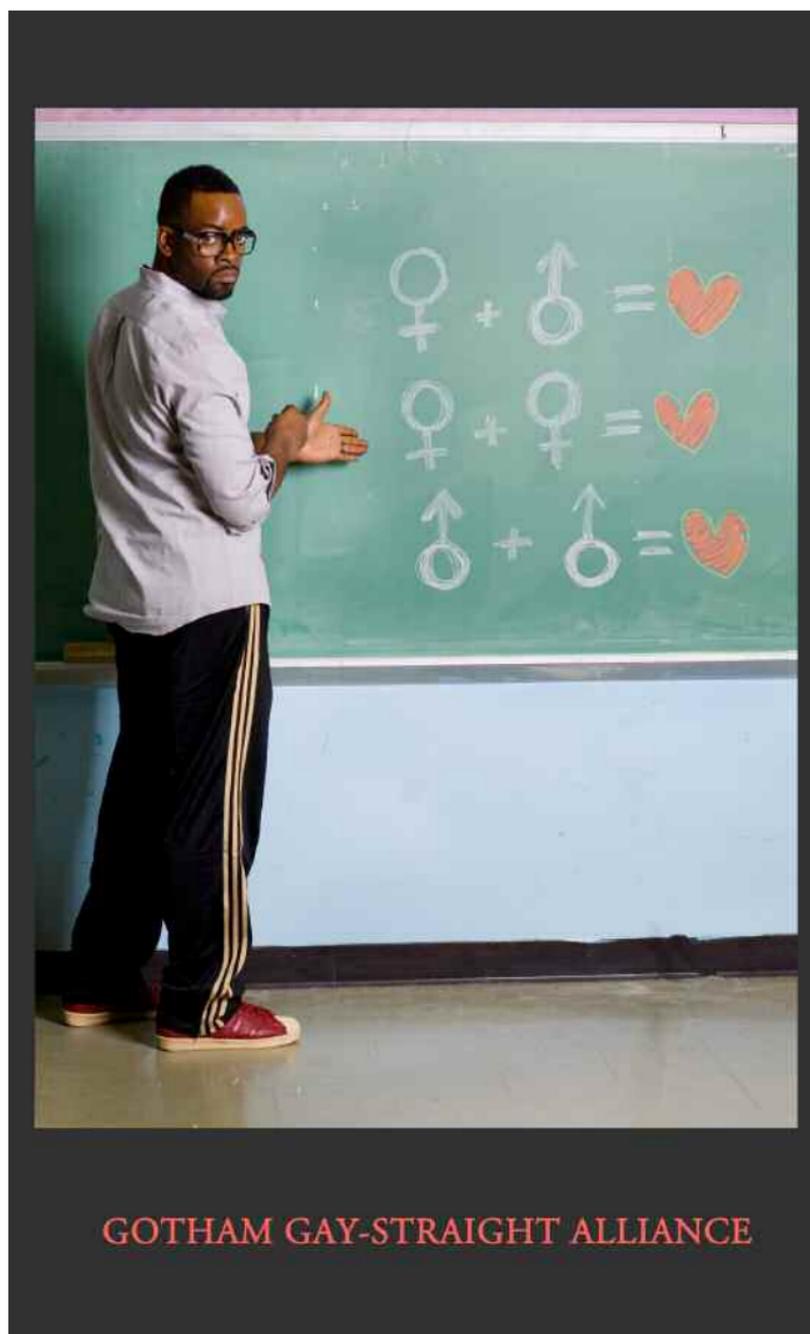


C L I F F O R D
C H A N C E



GOTHAM GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCE

Annual Pride Art Exhibition –
New York

Summer 2011

Annual Pride Art Exhibition – New York

In celebration of Gay Pride Month, Clifford Chance proudly presents the fifth edition of the Annual Pride Art Exhibition in its New York City Office. This year, Arcus Americas sponsored artist Lisa Ross and oral historian Svetlana Kitto to develop a program for high school students from the Gotham Professional Arts Academy's GSA (Gay Straight Alliance) in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. Through the course of a semester-long series of workshops led by Ross and Kitto, the students developed large-scale banners that address issues related to identity, visibility and acceptance. The banners will be exhibited at Clifford Chance during June, July and August, followed by an exhibition at the school. The students also will participate in the June 15th opening reception for the exhibition.

At Clifford Chance, we are committed to enhancing diversity at the Firm and to fostering a supportive work environment in which all employees can develop to their fullest potential and contribute their best work to the success of the firm and its clients, without discrimination on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, citizenship status, pregnancy, disability, or any other status protected by law.

In addition to organizing the Annual Pride Art Exhibition, the Americas and London chapters of Arcus (Clifford Chance's global LGBT and allies community) are each involved in a number of activities throughout the year, including pro bono legal work and financial sponsorship for LGBT community and charitable organizations.

The GSA Banner Project

The Gotham GSA Banner Project came together when Arcus Americas voiced an interest in sponsoring an artist/educational collaborative as part of its Annual Pride Art Exhibition. Arcus Americas developed the idea with the firm's curator, Jacob Robichaux, who reached out to artist Lisa Ross. Having taught photography to LGBT youth at the Harvey Milk High School for a decade, Ross suggested working with a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) at a high school. GSAs are a relatively new development in American schools—that are quickly gaining in popularity—and aim to provide a safe space for youth that promotes tolerance and compassion. Ross came up with the idea that a GSA would work with an artist to create graphically exciting, large-format banners that combine text and image to address the concerns of the GSA and selected the newly-formed GSA at Gotham Professional Arts Academy in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn for the Project. Students in the GSA at Gotham would have the opportunity to create and exhibit their work at Clifford Chance and in their own high school.

The project started with a visit to Clifford Chance, where the students met members of Arcus Americas and other members of the Diversity Committee and got an opportunity to exchange histories with the lawyers and staff—across generations. Jassiem Garcia spoke on behalf of the GSA and explained why he started the group: “I just wanted a place where people can be comfortable in their skin and where I can feel comfortable in mine.” GSA member Jaelynn Pittman chimed in that she was tired of boys making fun of a friend of hers just because he was different: “The truth is they are all jealous because he has so many girlfriends and they wish they did.” She explained that she had joined the GSA to support him. The students got to view the CC exhibition space where their work would later hang and then crossed the street to the Museum of Modern Art, where they met an arts educator and were introduced to the kind of work they would be making.

The task became: How do we generate discussion that would result in catchy phrases and powerful imagery that represent the GSA's ideas and goals? Svetlana Kitto, oral historian and writer, joined the Project to hammer out the language portion of the banners. She thought: What if the students interviewed one another in an oral history style about the GSA—why they joined, why it was important to them, what they wanted to see it accomplish? Once the interviews were transcribed, the students would not only have quotes and ideas to work with for their banners but would get to know each other in the process.

Students then used their transcripts to brainstorm eye-grabbing text-and-image ideas with Ross and Kitto. Once ideas were finalized, Ross set up a photo studio at the school complete with professional lighting and state-of-the-art equipment. With guidance from Ross, students set the scene and took their own artful photos. In the final two weeks, students were instructed in Photoshop and laid out their banners on screen, combining their text-and-image ideas into a finished product.

Beyond teaching the students about art, artmaking, interviewing and writing, the Project has also brought the GSA closer. “Before we began the banner project I was unsure of people's names in the GSA,” said GSA member Christine Collazo. “Since we started, however, I've

noticed that everyone seems to be much closer to each other; we have gained a connection with each other thanks to this project.” Jassiem Garcia agreed; and having expected “all business and no play” was “surprised to see so many laughs come out of the project.” The students are also excited about the effect the banners will have at school. Said Charmaine Amey: “I am really looking forward to how the student body is going to react to the banners—their response could be negative or positive. Either way, it will spark conversation and hopefully raise more questions.” At Gotham’s Exhibition Night in May, the GSA dedicated a classroom to raise awareness among students, parents, and teachers using their new banners.

With the help of Arcus Americas and the Banner Project, it seems the Gotham Gay-Straight Alliance, only in its first semester, is off to a great start!

Special thanks to Gotham’s principal, Alex White, whose support made the Project run smoothly and to Shelby Mitchell, Gotham’s social worker, who has been an advisor to the GSA since its formation.

Svetlana Kitto

In the GSA

I can

BE

MYSELF



On the train ride home



I have to
LOSE
myself.

GOTHAM GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCE

We're All Made In God's Image



Gotham Gay-Straight Alliance

HOMOPHOBIA,



GOTHAM GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCE



JUST

LIKE

YOU

GOTHAM GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCE



Gay Is Not An
Insult



GOTHAM GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCE

~~Batty man fi dead~~

Gay man fi live



~~Queers must be killed~~

Queers must be loved



~~Please mark my words~~

Please mark my words

~~Gimme that tee nine~~

Gimme that peace sign

~~Shoot dem like bird~~

Let dem fly free like bird



Let dem queers fly free like



BIRD

GOTHAM GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCE

The dates of the New York exhibition are:

June 1 – August 31, 2011

The exhibition is open by appointment,
contact Jennifer Giangrande Marco on 212-880-5829/3166.

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Works courtesy of students from the Gotham Professional Arts Academy's Gay-Straight Alliance.