

Movers & Shakers: Viewed through a queer lens

McCull Center Artist-in-Residence Abdi Osman documents Charlotte LGBT culture

by Matt Comer :: matt@goqnotes.com

Photographer Abdi Osman says he's always been interested in visiting the South. The history and culture is what's drawn him here and what led him to apply for an artist-in-residence position at the McColl Center for Visual Arts, where his documentary photo exhibit is on display now through March 18.

Osman, a Somali-born Canadian who makes his home in Toronto, has focused his work on the intersections of Muslim and queer identities, as well as LGBT men of color. In his three months in the Queen City, Osman will work with the Lesbian & Gay Community Center and McColl Center on his "Queer Reclamation Community Outreach Project."

He's providing disposable cameras to LGBT community members and asking them to take pictures of people, places and artifacts iconic of and symbolizing the city's LGBT culture and community. In March, he'll combine the various community-submitted photos into at least one commemorative poster documenting queer life in the Queen City.

Osman's local project is an extension of his life's passion.

"All my documentary photography is mostly queer-themed work," he tells *qnotes*.

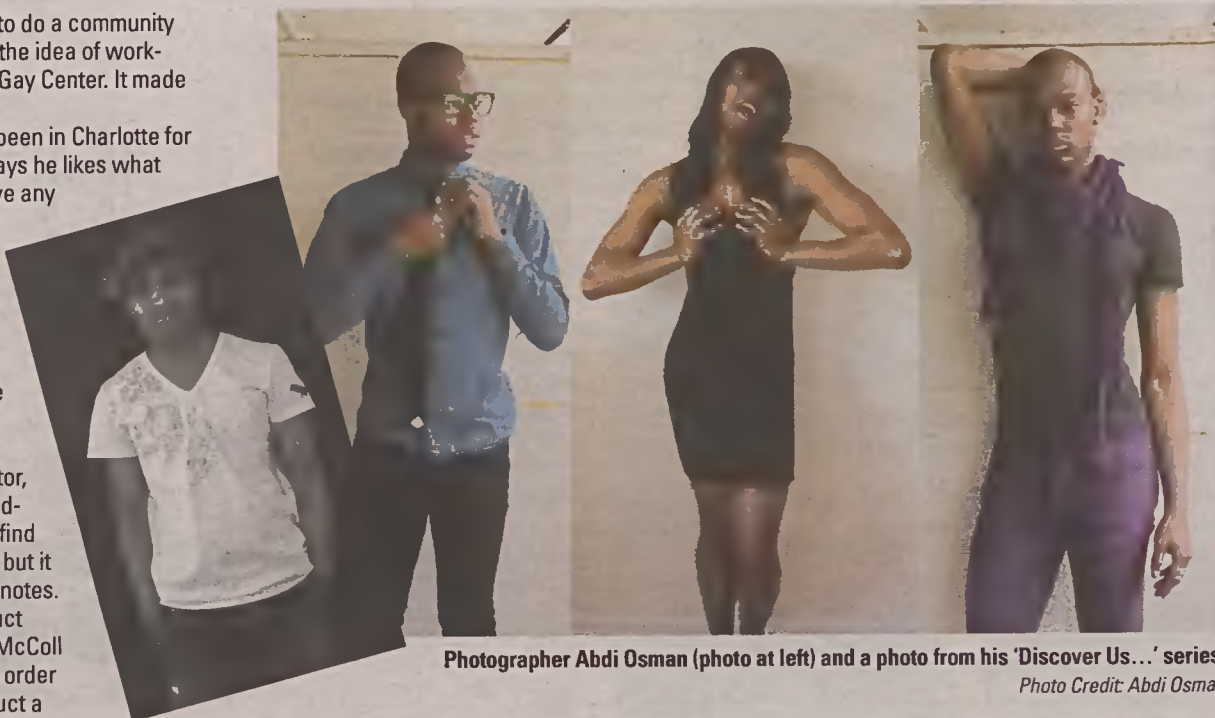
"When they asked me to do a community project I came up with the idea of working with the Lesbian & Gay Center. It made sense."

Although he's only been in Charlotte for a few weeks, Osman says he likes what he's seen but didn't have any expectations before visiting.

"I wasn't expecting anything because I wasn't familiar with what kind of reaction I'd get from people," he says. "People seem to be very nice."

And, even for a visitor, it doesn't take long to adjust to life here: "I also find the city is not a big city but it is very spread out," he notes.

Osman's final product will be unveiled at the McColl Center on March 19. In order to make that final product a success, he's asking folks to pick up and return the disposable cameras before the end of February. Cameras can be obtained



Photographer Abdi Osman (photo at left) and a photo from his 'Discover Us...' series.
Photo Credit: Abdi Osman

at the Lesbian & Gay Community Center or the McColl Center. Individuals with photos of their own can burn them to a CD and drop them off

at either location as well. ::
info: mccollcenter.org . gaycharlotte.com

Movers & Shakers: Raleigh Center is growing, reaching out

Shared office space and regional programs introduce new center to community

by Matt Comer :: matt@goqnotes.com

The dream of an LGBT community center in Raleigh and for the Triangle is fast becoming more reality than dream.

Last fall, organizers with the LGBT Center of Raleigh kicked off their initial fundraising stages and made their public debut at their first Coming Out Day event:

Board member Glenn Medders told *qnotes* in October he viewed the Center as a community catalyst. Its board and supporters are working now to reach out to other organizations and increase awareness across the area.

In December, the board announced a new partnership with Triangle Community Works (TCW). The two groups will share office space and work together on creating and maintaining programs benefiting the Triangle LGBT community.

Center board member Anthony Garcia-

Copian is pleased and excited about the new working relationship with TCW.

"They are such wonderful people and they already have such wonderful programs," he said. "We are able to help them and they are able to help us and together we can work for the community."

The Center and TCW are working together but will remain independent in the foreseeable future. At some

point, the two groups might discuss further the possibility of a merger.

"We have talked about that, because we're both striving to do the same thing

— create programs to do outreach for the community," Garcia-Copian said.

In March, the Center will host one of its first major outreach programs. They've established "Q Nights" which will take place monthly at LGBT and LGBT-friendly establishments across the Triangle region. The group will use it as a chance to familiarize itself with community members and needs and allow the community to get to know them.

"It is important to bring people together and sort of connect people with other people," Garcia-Copian said.

Bobby Hilburn, another Center board member, said the new Q Night events will create opportunities to reach out beyond Raleigh.

"We want to use them to really reach out to the outlying areas, too," he said.

Garcia-Copian agreed: "We want to go to Chapel Hill and Durham and other places. The idea is to keep things going every month, get feedback and help people. I feel the community is just too spread out."

The Center is continuing to encourage folks to join its Founder's Triangle fundraising campaign. They are seeking 1,000 people who will make a one-time donation of \$100 or

more. Those initial donors will be honored in a permanent artistic display inside the new Center's home.

"The Founders' Triangle really creates a grassroots effect," Hilburn said. "It feels like everyone has a stake in the Center."

As of now, 100 community members have met the Founders' Triangle \$100-plus contribution goal. Garcia-Copian and Hilburn encourage others to join the cause. Donations can be made online at lgbtcenterofraleigh.com. ::

Q Night at Steel Blue

The LGBT Center of Raleigh will host its first Q Night at Club Steel Blue in Durham on March 5 at 7 p.m. The event included live entertainment, a luxury raffle and speed dating.

Want to go?

Club Steel Blue
1426 S. Miami Blvd.
Durham, NC 27703
919-596-5876
clubsteelblue.com
lgbtcenterofraleigh.com

