

Description next to the artwork

These are the first 20 seconds of an animatic to the song *Farewell Kabarista* by Vagabond Opera.

The animatic will tell the story of a young gay couple who meet each other in the thriving queer scene in 1920s Berlin. However, as Germany gets increasingly hostile towards nonconforming behaviour when Hitler gains power, they become more unsafe in their own country. After the book burnings at the Institute for Sexual Science in 1933, they find themselves forced to flee their homeland...

Artist's Statement

I am making an animatic to the song *Farewell Kabarista* by Vagabond Opera. The animatic will tell the story of a young gay couple who meet each other in the thriving queer¹ scene in 1920s Berlin. However, as Germany gets increasingly hostile towards nonconforming behaviour when Hitler gains power, they become more unsafe in their own country. After the book burnings at the Institute for Sexual Science in 1933, they find themselves forced to flee their homeland. In America, they are forced back into the closet as it's illegal to be in a gay relationship there.

I wanted to tell this story because I want the existence of queer people throughout history to be more visible. The thing that attracted me to this story in particular was that the main couple live very freely in the beginning of the story. We like to think of progress as linear: that the world has always been less accepting than it is now and it objectively sucked to be gay in any period before ours. But that is not true: there have been many periods in which queer people could live openly. 1920s Berlin had a thriving and public queer scene and accessible sexual healthcare for both cishet² and queer people. Not three years later, all of that was destroyed and many queer people either had to flee the country or were murdered. That backwards evolution must have been really painful for the people who lived back then. First, you live an open life with your same-sex partner, and two years later, you have to flee the country and hide your sexuality because your life depends on it. That pain is what drew me to this story and is what I want to convey through my animatic.

This piece clearly ties in with the rest of my work: my goal is to tell stories about people who have not yet seen themselves represented in the popular narrative. As a queer woman myself I have really struggled with this. Queer people are often pushed into villain or sidekick roles, and when we do get our own stories it's often about our struggles. More often than not, queer leads end up killing themselves. These stories are also almost exclusively about men. I simply couldn't connect to that. I was not a strong butch lesbian or cast out of my family because I was gay. I was a girl who wore frilly dresses and had a loving and supportive family, and also happened to like girls. My goal is to create stories for people like me. To show that there is more than one way to be queer, and that we too are not always outcasts or unhappy.

You might say that this animatic is still about gay men and still has an unhappy ending, and therefore it still plays into the common narrative about queer people. However, this story starts with both our protagonists having a safe space and being completely comfortable with themselves and their sexuality. That is not something queer people are often granted in the media, let alone in historical pieces. They are also two vastly different people, who are both queer in their own ways. Their safe

¹ Throughout this entire piece I will use the word queer as an umbrella term for the entire LGBT+ community. I am aware that not everyone likes this word, I personally decided to use it because it's more inclusive than LGBT+

² Cishet person: a cisgender, heterosexual person. Basically anyone who is not LGBTQI+.

space may be taken away from them, but the story doesn't lose its joy or life because of it. This animatic is a celebration of queer culture and freedom. It is a reminder to keep fighting for those whose freedoms are being taken away. It is *not* a sob story. It is a celebration.

In short, my goal with this animatic is to create a story for queer people, that is not a stereotype but rather a real story about a part of queer people's history that is often forgotten. I want to bring attention to the freedoms that queer people had in the 1920s and to how abruptly they were taken away. Most importantly, this work is a celebration of queer life and a reminder that better times will come.