

## MEDIA RELEASE

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**GLBT  
Historical  
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*museum & archives*

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## **GLBT Historical Society, EPIC: the Irish Emigration Museum and Irish Dept. of Foreign Affairs Open Irish LGBTQ Diaspora Exhibition**

**San Francisco** — On Saturday, May 14, the GLBT Historical Society was pleased to formally open a traveling exhibition exploring the Irish LGBTQ diaspora in the Front Gallery of the GLBT Historical Society Museum in the Castro district. The exhibition, *Out in the World*, was created in June 2021 through a partnership between EPIC: The Irish Emigration Museum and the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs. *Out in the World* will soon begin an international tour, and the GLBT Historical Society is hosting its inaugural display outside of Ireland.

For centuries, Ireland has traditionally been a source of emigration, due to poverty, economic problems, political repression and disasters such as the devastating Great Famine of 1845 to 1849, during which nearly a quarter of the country's population died or fled. And Ireland's vast global diaspora has often been a queer one. Across the generations, Irish LGBTQ people have emigrated and found opportunities to live and love abroad. Yet this journey was rarely a simple transition from an oppressive island to a liberal wider world. Irish LGBTQ emigrants often faced prejudice abroad. Ireland, once a place of shame and silence, could also become a welcoming site of return.

Speaking at an opening event for the exhibition, Ireland's Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Catherine Martin T.D. said, "*Out in the World* is an astonishing look at the stories of Ireland's LGBTQ diaspora. The exhibit celebrates the tireless and brave activism of twelve remarkable people and reflects the diversity of the Global Irish—70 million people worldwide, including 33 million in the United States and 2.2 million in the state of California. I would like to congratulate the GLBT Historical Society for

mounting such an important exhibition. Transatlantic collaborations such as this are important as we continue to build transatlantic cultural partnerships, especially between our museums and archives.”

Ireland’s Consul General in San Francisco, Robert O’Driscoll, said, “San Francisco has for decades been the symbolic heart of LGBTQ rights and it is entirely fitting the first international exhibition of *Out in the World* takes place here. We are deeply thankful to the GLBT Historical Society for their partnership on this exhibition and for the opportunity to tell the story of Ireland’s LGBTQ diaspora.”

*Out in the World* highlights 12 queer diaspora stories across six themes: exclusion, community, love, defiance, solidarity and return. The exhibition’s thematic approach encourages intergenerational conversations and reflections on contemporary LGBTQ history. Many of the stories explored in the exhibition intersect with American history, including transcendentalist poet Walt Whitman’s relationship with his Limerick-born lover Peter Doyle; Stonewall Riots participant John O’Brien; and the Irish Lesbian and Gay Organization (ILGO), which was founded in a Japanese restaurant in New York city in 1990.

“We are very excited to have this exhibition on display throughout this year’s Pride season,” said Andrew Shaffer, Interim Co-Executive Director of the GLBT Historical Society. “And we look forward to integrating some local stories of San Francisco’s Irish and other queer communities into the mix.” California State Senator Scott Wiener also made remarks at the event.

The exhibition is curated by Dr. Maurice J. Casey, a research fellow on the Queer Northern Ireland project at Queen’s University Belfast who was previously Historian-in-Residence at EPIC. “The show is really about movements in many directions—not just from Ireland to abroad, but people who came back to Ireland as well,” said Casey. “And it’ll be interesting to see what people in the U.S. take away from it, how they have perceived Ireland’s own recent political and cultural transformations regarding LGBTQ people. They’ll have the chance to juxtapose those against the development of LGBTQ issues in the U.S.”

*Out in the World* is a collaborative project of EPIC: The Irish Emigration Museum, located in Dublin, and the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, reflecting the commitment in Ireland’s national Diaspora Strategy to support Ireland’s LGBTQ diaspora through initiatives designed to promote inclusiveness, tolerance and respect for diversity. *Out in the World* was developed with the consultation of Queer Culture Ireland, an LGBTQ culture, heritage and art group of which EPIC: The Irish Emigration Museum is a founding member.

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**ABOUT THE GLBT HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

The GLBT Historical Society is a public history center and archives that collects, preserves, exhibits and makes accessible to the public materials and knowledge to support and promote understanding of LGBTQ history, culture and arts in all their diversity. Founded in 1985, the society is recognized internationally as a leader in the field of queer public history and maintains one of the world's largest archival collections of LGBTQ historical materials. Our operations are centered at two sites: the GLBT Historical Society Museum, located in the heart of San Francisco's Castro neighborhood; and the Dr. John P. De Cecco Archives and Research Center, open to researchers in the Mid-Market district. For more information, visit [www.glbthistory.org](http://www.glbthistory.org).

## GRAPHICS

The following images may be reproduced only in association with coverage of *Out in the World*. Credits noted in captions are mandatory.



Posing for a photograph at the GLBT Historical Society Museum are (left to right) California State Senator Scott Wiener; Irish Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media Catherine Martin T.D.; GLBT Historical Society Interim Co-Executive Director Andrew Shaffer; Irish Consul General in San Francisco Robert O'Driscoll. Photograph by Son Huynh.

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