

KATE WERBLE GALLERY

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OUT

Room with a Skew

Brennan Gerard and Ryan Kelly are exploring queer relationships in unusual settings.

BY JERRY PORTWOOD

SEPTEMBER 16 2015



Photography by Sophy Holland. Gerard (left) and Kelly at The Glass House. Groomer: Evanie Frausto. Styling by Stacey Berman. Clothing by Vince. Shot on location at The Glass House, a site of the National Trust for Historic Preservation

The Glass House, the iconic modernist building located in New Canaan, Conn., was part of the home of architect Philip Johnson and his partner, David Whitney, for more than 40 years until they died in 2005. Now, its intimate history has led performance duo Brennan Gerard and Ryan Kelly — who themselves have been involved in each other's lives creatively and romantically for more than a decade — to develop a series of site-specific performance pieces they've titled *Modern Living*.

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“Johnson had been living there since 1949, two decades before Stonewall,” Kelly explains. “He and Whitney eventually lived there in this sort of gay domestic partnership, and they gathered a community of mostly closeted gay people from the art world — Rauschenberg, Merce Cunningham, Warhol, Lincoln Kirstein — for social events. It was very queer.”

Beginning in January 2016, the pair will begin to articulate the idea of “queered” spaces in West Hollywood’s Schindler House, another modernist architectural touchstone (designed by Rudolph Schindler as an experiment in cooperative living between two families), and other key modernist homes, such as the Breuer House in the Hudson Valley, and the de Menil in Houston. So far, all of Gerard and Kelly’s works have probed the idea of intimacy as a fluid concept that changes over time.

“That’s part of the project of queerness — questioning those narratives of how one should live one’s life or spend one’s time,” Gerard says. “It’s political for us. The model of marriage can be very constricting and cause a lot of problems for how one lives one’s life. We think this alternate concept is a necessary story that needs to be told.”

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