

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Queer art wherks the AGO for Pride!

JUNE 9, 2009 – TORONTO – For the first time in history, the **Art Gallery of Ontario** will host an official Pride Week event. **Artwherk!** kicks-off the 2009 Pride Week festivities with an opening night party at the **Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO)** on **Wednesday, June 24**. The annual extravaganza of creativity will feature performances by **Ryan G. Hinds** and Amai Kuda, and will showcase a mix of visual, installation and live art from some of the city's most talented emerging queer artists.

The event is produced by **The Artwherk! Collective** (www.artwherk.ca), a team of four friends who united in 2004 to provide a much-needed space for queer youth self-expression in the city's Pride Week celebration. As the size and popularity of **Artwherk!** continues to grow, so too does its capacity to support emerging queer artists by offering them coveted opportunities for exposure. Being at the AGO this year affirms this growth, establishing Artwherk! as a solid fixture in the LGBTQ community and as a launching pad for emerging queer artists.

"**The ARTWHERK! Collective** provides young emerging queer artists the chance to express themselves in a gallery setting, and allows the community at large to view the exhibition of new work by talented artists that may not have been viewed otherwise," says collective member **Kevin Charlie**.

"In this space we are amplifying new voices and identities through art. People (should) come to this space because their communities are reflected and challenged in new ways by the artistic visions of **ARTWHERK!** artists," adds co-founder **Christopher Hayden**.

Notable **ARTWHERK!** veterans and past performers include writer and author of "Emergency Contact" Tara Michelle Ziniuk, guitarist, singer and songwriter Rex Baunsit, and Toronto's sole male burlesque troop Boylesque.

The **ARTWHERK!** Collective is operated by **Ryan G. Hinds**, accomplished Toronto and New York stage actor and cabaret performer; **Christopher Hayden**, social activist, Ryerson University graduate and founding member of BoylesqueTO; **Chris Jai Centeno**, aspiring journalist and former Toronto Pride Youth Co-ordinator; and established wedding and lifestyle photographer **Kevin Charlie**, the newest addition to the team.

The party will run from **6 p.m. until 8:00 p.m., Wednesday June 24'th** with free admission and permits access to most other parts of the AGO. Also, the show will run until Sunday, June 28 with all featured artworks remaining on display with the cost of general AGO admission for entry.



For MEDIA INQUIRIES:

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