Queerness, Visibility & Not Being Out (Or 'Out-Out')

This resource has been developed by Gone Rogue for One Dance UK.

Contents List:

About This Resource

Your Access Rider

The Bright Side

A Little Helping Hand

That's All Folks!

This resource is intended for queer artists **who are not out/partially out**, who wish to express their identity through their artistic practice and/or take part in opportunities and spaces that are explicitly queer.

About This Resource

👁 Queerness, Visibility & Not Being Out (Or 'Out-Out')

In the world today, across popular culture, mainstream media, and the UK's artistic sphere, **queerness has become synonymous with visibility**.

The idea of being "proud" is often conflated with being public, and visibility is frequently treated as the end goal.

But not everyone can or wants to be visible.

For many of us, queerness is quietly held. **This doesn't make it any less real.** We may not be out in certain parts of our lives for personal, cultural, familial, spiritual, or safety-related reasons. We may move between visibility and invisibility depending on the space we're in. We may not want our queerness to be the defining frame for how we are perceived and understood.

The pressure to be visible can alienate those who do not or cannot fit into this mold. This can make queerness feel like something that must be named and performed, just so we can belong.

✨ Alternative Queerness

But if this is not your experience, **know that you are not alone.**

Alternative queer stories exist. Alternative queer spaces exist. Alternative prides exist. **Queer lives outside the mainstream are valid**, and oh so vibrant, even if the world may not always see or understand them.

> ❝ Queer lives that are not yet fully visible are the most vibrant, as they hold the possibility of creating a world that exceeds the constraints of the present. They are not bound by the limited categories of the mainstream but are free to dream and live differently.
> — José Esteban Muñoz, Cruising Utopia (2009), p. 7 ❞

📱 Identity & Self-Expression

As artists, our sense of self is intricately intertwined with our artistic practice. Art isn't created in a vacuum. It is shaped by our lived experience of our inner and outer worlds. To sever ourselves from the art we create is almost impossible.

It is completely natural to want to make art that reflects who we are, including the complexities of our queerness!

💪 It's About the Choice!

Gone Rogue believes **expressing our queer identity through artistic practice should always remain an option,** one that we can choose to take on when we feel ready, with the means to manage the risks involved.

This requires thoughtful collaboration with other artists and organisations to create spaces where these risks are understood and managed.

The current structure of the art world often does not accommodate artists who are not fully out. It would be naïve to deny that characteristics such as queerness are often used to market, brand, and generate demand for artists. In many cases, funding, opportunities, and success in the art world come at the cost of conforming to certain narratives or expectations, including the **commodification of identity.**

The queer artist who cannot capitalise on their queerness may not be seen as straightforward or desirable to engage, and there are often additional hurdles in making opportunities safe for those who are not fully out/not out. **However, this difficulty does not make it an unworthy pursuit.**

It's a matter of intention, care, and collaboration. ❤️

📄 Access Riders

Access riders are commonly used by artists with disabilities and neurodivergence, but they can also serve as a valuable tool for queer artists who are not out. Access riders provide a framework to:

- **Communicate needs**
- **Set boundaries** around privacy and visibility
- Support **collaborative responsibility** – Where both artists and organisations work together to address and manage risks

Hence allowing artists to make explicitly queer work and engage meaningfully and safely in overtly queer spaces and opportunities.

😱 Reality, Risk…

The risks are real, and the fear of being outed is present every day, especially when engaging with themes or stepping into spaces that are overtly queer.

Take the time to ask yourself, what are my personal circumstances?

- Do I foresee coming out soon?
- Perhaps within the next year, 5 years, or 10?
- Can I afford to wait?
- Or is participating in queer projects something I would prefer not to do at all?
- Do the people I cannot come out to monitor or ask questions about my creative work or public engagements?
- Are they aware of the kind of work I make, or curious about the content/themes I explore?

While it may be difficult, it is also important to consider the potential impact of being outed.

- Do I receive financial, professional, or emotional support from the people I cannot be outed to, that might be impacted by disclosure?
- How would my safety, well-being, or daily life be affected if they found out?

It's important to be honest with yourself about what feels worth the risk, and what doesn't.

For Gone Rogue, creating an alter ego that allows space for expression is preferable. For Gone Rogue, waiting for the "right time" is agonising. For Gone Rogue, the time feels like now. But if your experience is different, know that there is no shame in that.

## The top priority is always your safety and well-being.
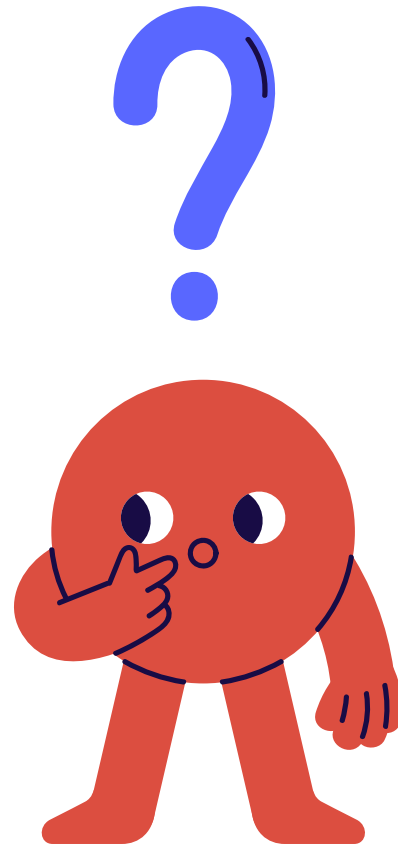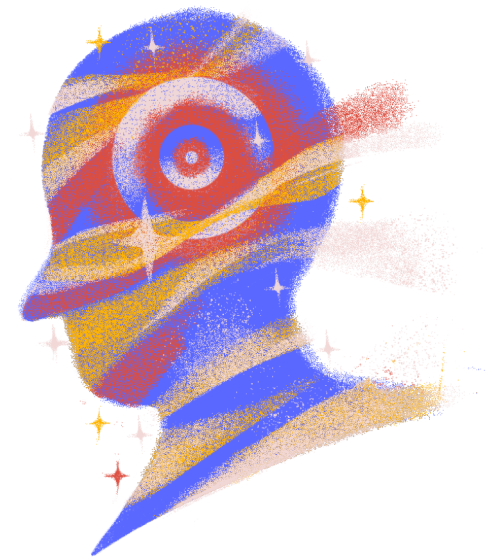
The anxiety will persist—there's no way around it. The fear of being outed, even while taking steps to manage that risk, will always be there. This anxiety will ebb and flow as you navigate queer spaces and opportunities, but it's crucial to regularly assess if the emotional cost outweighs the benefits.

If, at any point, the anxiety becomes more than what is manageable or beneficial, it's time to reassess the situation.

This guide will signpost support for your mental and emotional well-being. Your well-being is just as vital as your art, and there are resources available to help you manage this.

😌 … And Reward!
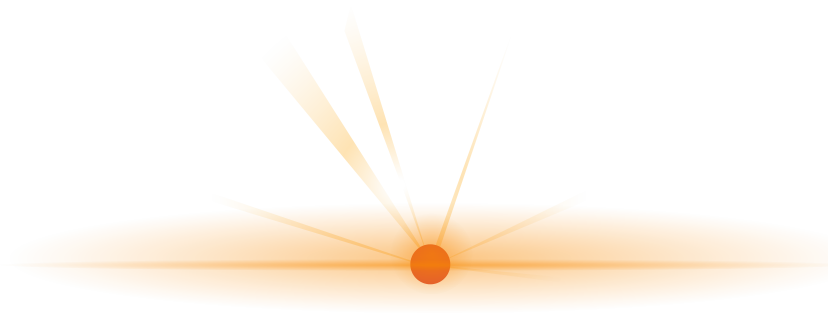
While navigating partial visibility can feel restricting, these limitations also **open up unique creative possibilities**. Working within boundaries encourages queer artists to explore abstraction, symbolism, alter-egos, queering the creative process itself and much, much more. Rather than diminishing the work, these layers deepen its resonance, **allowing queerness to be expressed in new and multi-faceted ways!**

Your Access Rider

Your access rider is a practical way to articulate what you need in order to participate safely and meaningfully in queer projects, spaces, and opportunities.

It encourages you to **think ahead, name your boundaries, and communicate them with clarity**, making collaboration safer and easier for all involved.

This rider is yours to shape. Gone Rogue will offer a series of prompts to help you reflect on your needs and circumstances as you develop your own rider.

🤔 First and foremost, what does safety look like to you?

Map your relationships to the people around you, ranging from the intimate, to the personal, social and public.
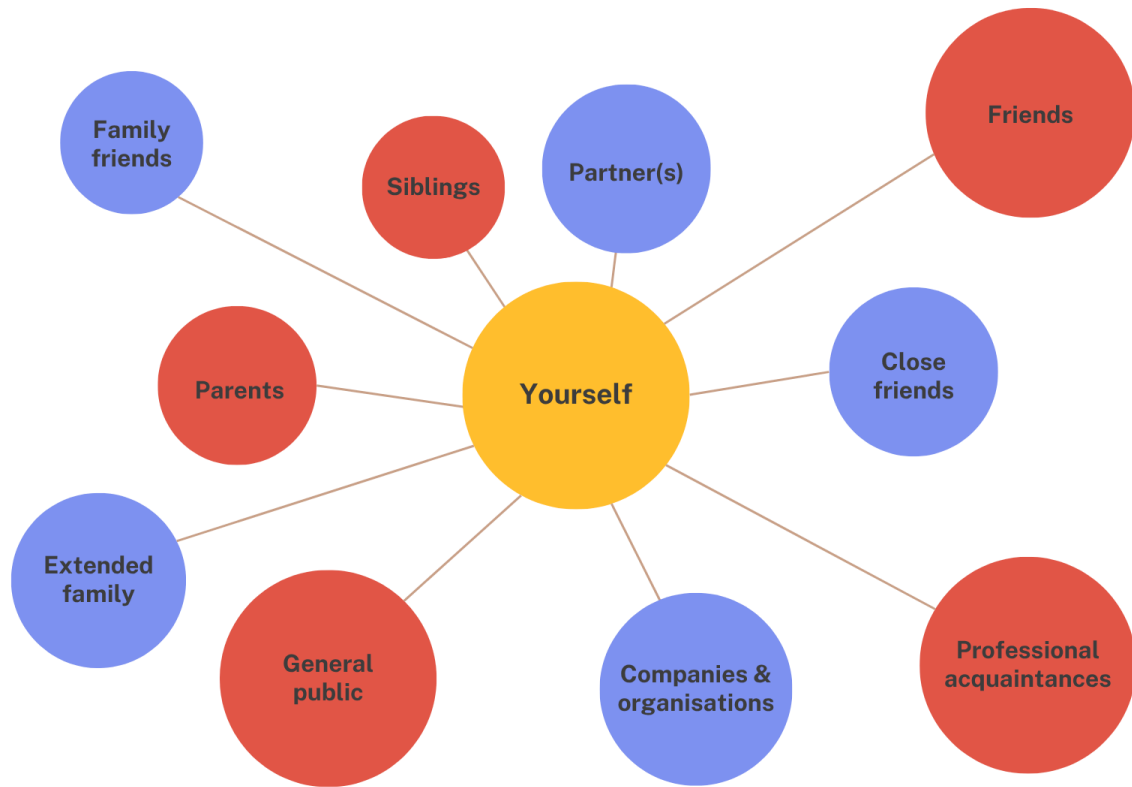
Who can and can't you come out to?

Consider the **contexts in which you interact with these groups of people,** particularly the ones you cannot come out to.

- Do they have access to your living space, belongings, or creative materials?
- Are they likely to attend public or cultural events you're part of (e.g. performances, festivals, workshops)?
- Is there a chance they could spot you at or hear about your involvement in a queer event?
- Do you have mutual friends or family who might mention your activities to them in passing?

💻 The Digital World

There is also the Digital World to reckon with.

Today, our online presence is accessible to virtually anyone we interact with. The internet does not discriminate: Family members, employers, collaborators, and strangers alike can access the same content. In this landscape, content about us can resurface at any time, often without context or consent.

However, this can be managed with just a bit of foresight and care! That is precisely what your access rider is for.

Ask yourself:

- Are you connected to the people you cannot be outed to on social media platforms (e.g. Instagram, X, Facebook)?
- Do they follow or monitor your public online accounts?
- Could their network overlap with collaborators, organisers, or institutions you're working with?
- Do you have any shared devices, email accounts, or cloud storage where sensitive content might be accessed?

💬 What's The Dream?

Next, identify the contexts you want to participate in.
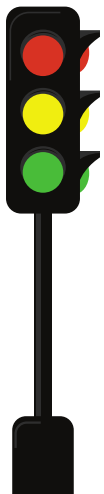
🔴: What contexts are a definite **no–go**, for now or perhaps indefinitely?

🟡: What contexts **feel risky, but manageable** with the right boundaries or support?

🟢: What contexts feel **genuinely safe** to express your queerness?

Some examples of contexts you may encounter include:

Explicitly Queer or Implicitly Queer	Public or Private	Examples
Explicit	Public	A Pride parade
Explicit	Private	A queer book club that meets in a designated room
Implicit	Public	Staging a queer-coded play at a theatre
Implicit	Private	A gathering of queer creatives at a friend's home

⚠️ Where's the Risk?

Once you've mapped out the contexts you wish to engage in, take some time to reflect on t**he aspects of your involvement that might create risk.**

For instance, as dance performers and makers who are not fully out, Gone Rogue may consider the following when engaged in or creating explicitly queer work:

Context	Risk
The creative process	Relatively low, where the process is taking place behind closed doors, and everyone in the creative team has been briefed on Gone Rogue's circumstances
Performing in explicitly queer work	Being recognised by someone in the audience who Gone Rogue is not out to, or having their participation mentioned to someone who does
Digital marketing	Gone Rogue being referred to by their legal name in relation to queer work, having their image associated with queer work, or being described publicly as queer-identifying

⚙ Your Approach

Next, let's formulate your approach!

Some approaches are more drastic, others more subtle. The key is to think about

These approaches involve physical and digital aspects. Some examples are:

Physical

- Attending only implicit or private queer spaces
- Participating in queer spaces in a different village/town/city
- Obscuring your face (e.g. with sunglasses, make-up or a cap) when attending explicitly queer events
- Requesting and wearing a signifier that indicates you do not want to be photographed
- Packing a separate outfit and changing your clothes after leaving the house to avoid being recognised at a public queer event

Digital

- Using a separate, private social media handle when participating in queer spaces
- Deliberate use/avoidance of certain labels (e.g. queer, LGBTQ+) and identifiers (e.g. background, nationality, race, age)
- Asking to remain unnamed or untagged in public posts
- Creating a pseudonym/alter ego under which explicitly queer work is made

🫁 Plausible Deniability

A lot of these approaches are about plausible deniability.

It means setting things up so that if someone outside your safe circle stumbles across your involvement, there's enough **ambiguity** to reasonably avoid exposure. Plausible deniability isn't foolproof, **but it gives you breathing room.**

🤝 It Takes a Village

While you can and should take steps to make your participation in queer spaces and opportunities safe for yourself, your approach will ultimately rely on **collaboration with other artists and organisations.** They are the ones who will help uphold and carry out the boundaries and provisions you set in motion.

Once you have decided on your approach, consider your next steps. Which of them involve working with others? **What do you need them to understand? What do you need to ask of them to make your participation feel safe and supported?**

Approach	Collaboration
Requesting and wearing a signifier that indicates you do not want to be photographed	Organisers should provide a clear visual signifier (such as a badge, sticker, or bracelet) for participants who do not wish to be photographed, and review all images to ensure those wearing signifiers are omitted before any content is shared. This must be upheld with care and understanding, as a single mistake could risk outing someone
Using a separate, private social media handle when participating in queer spaces	Particularly where artists or staff know you personally, they should take care when tagging you on social media, ensuring they use the appropriate handle (public or private) depending on the context and themes of the work
Creating a pseudonym/alter ego	There may be instances where an organisation must use your legal name for internal processes, such as invoicing or right-to-work checks. It is vital that they handle this information with care and discretion, for example, by ensuring that your legal name does not appear on any printed correspondence sent to your address

Now that you've considered the role collaboration plays in safely carrying out your approach, **it's time to communicate this to the people involved – Through an access rider.** 🗣️

The following template is not a one-size-fits-all document, but a reference to help you envision what your own access rider might look like. **You are best placed to adapt and personalise it to suit your individual needs and circumstances.** *The italicised sections in blue are drawn from Gone Rogue's own access rider, with identifying details redacted.* The non-italicised sections explain the reasoning behind each point and offer guidance for developing your own.

✍️Access Rider Template

Gone Rogue has found it useful to provide some **context** at the start of the access rider, explaining the circumstances that necessitate the access rider itself. This helps to:

a. Convey the **gravity** of the situation. Some of the people reading your access rider may have no lived experience of queerness and, therefore, no personal understanding of what it means to be outed, let alone to families or within cultural environments where this could be dangerous.

b. Encourage **care and caution**. ❤️ This understanding can inspire those involved to approach collaboration with diligence and responsibility, recognising that their actions have real consequences for your safety.

As a queer dance performer and choreographer who is not fully out, I navigate a complex personal identity that requires careful consideration of how I engage with public and digital platforms. I grew up in XXX and am currently based in Manchester. In my personal and professional life within the UK, I openly identify as queer. However, due to my background and familial circumstances, I must remain closeted in certain contexts, particularly with respect to my family in XXX, who are devout Christians. If my queerness were to be unintentionally disclosed to them, I would face the real threat of being subjected to conversion therapy, which could result in significant emotional, mental, and physical harm.

Gone Rogue has chosen to articulate **why queer expression feels vital, and worth the aforementioned risk**. Having experienced situations where the choice to undertake this risk was taken from them, they want the intention behind this endeavour to be clearly understood.

Despite this, my artistic practice is deeply rooted in my identity and queer expression, and I remain committed to creating and participating in work that engages with explicitly queer themes. I refuse to wait for my circumstances to change, knowing that may not happen for years, or decades to come. To mitigate the risks involved, I have developed this access rider outlining the specific considerations necessary when managing my public and digital presence and visibility.

Guidelines for Public & Digital Representation

This section establishes the foundation of Gone Rogue's approach to participating safely in queer spaces and making explicitly queer work, namely maintaining **full public anonymity through the use of a pseudonym**.

1. Anonymity in Digital Spaces

In any publicly shared materials where my queer identity, the queer themes of my work, or the queer nature of the opportunity or space I am involved in are explicitly mentioned, please do not use my legal name.

In these cases, please refer to me exclusively by the pseudonym Gone Rogue.

This section addresses the **language** that should be used when referencing or describing Gone Rogue in any **publicly accessible copy**. Gone Rogue recommends providing as much detail as possible. Instead of instructing organisations to simply "leave out identifying information," offer **clear specifics** to minimise the risk of misinterpretation or error.

2. Language used in Copy

When referencing Gone Rogue, please describe it as a collective. This provides me with plausible deniability should I ever be associated with it, allowing the queer direction of its work to be attributed to another 'member' if needed.

- *Information that can be disclosed in relation to Gone Rogue:*
  - *Manchester-based*
  - *Works in the fields of dance and film*
  - *Formed by alumni of XXX*
  - *Composed of artists of colour/the global majority*
- *Information that can be disclosed in relation to Gone Rogue, but preferably wouldn't be emphasised or discussed in great detail:*
  - *Previous work (avoid mentioning XXX where possible, as this has previously been associated with my legal name)*
  - *Has received support from/through: XXX*
  - *Creating work amplifying the voices of individuals on the margins of queer culture, such as WLW and QTIPOC*
- *Information that cannot be disclosed in relation to Gone Rogue:*
  - *My legal name, in part or full*
  - *My XXX nationality*
  - *My professional experience as a performer, including the names of companies I have worked with*

As a rule of thumb, please avoid mentioning any other personal details in promotional or public materials to minimise identifiable information.

3. *Limited Use of Identifiable Images and Media*

Any photography, videography, or promotional material involving my likeness should only be used with my express consent.

Artists are often asked to provide headshots or other promotional images for **marketing purposes**. 📸 To meet this need safely, you can create **alternative visuals** to be shared when requested. Gone Rogue, for example, has designed their own visuals to maintain anonymity.

If you wish to develop a pseudonym or alter ego but aren't able to create your own visuals, consider **simple alternatives**, such as:

- Blur or add a censor bar over your face using photo editing tools
- Using silhouettes or shadows
- Taking dimly lit photos that feature your neck, shoulders, or hands instead of your face.

In instances where promotional materials are necessary or preferred, I can provide alternative visuals (e.g. images of the work or abstract imagery) to be used instead of images featuring my face. Please reach out to me, and I will provide a WeTransfer link with the appropriate files.

4. *Careful Tagging and Attribution*

In any social media content where queerness is explicitly mentioned, please tag me at @gone_rogue_collective on Instagram. Please do not tag my personal handle, either alone or in addition to Gone Rogue's handle.

It is absolutely fine to ask that content is **sent to you for review** before being shared with the public. This gives you a final say on how you're represented. Just be sure to **respond promptly and stay mindful of timelines**! ⌚

I also ask that any quotes, interviews, or statements I provide are reviewed with me before publication.

For peace of mind when it comes to taking screenshots or checking emails around people they cannot be outed to, Gone Rogue has requested that **queer subject matter be omitted from email subject lines**. They also ask to be contacted through their Gone Rogue **social media account when approached by queer artists or organisations**.

If you live with people you cannot be outed to, ask that any **printed correspondence** 📫 be sent in plain envelopes, without explicit queer logos or organisation names. If your mail may be opened without your consent, **request to receive all correspondence digitally instead**.

5.   Confidentiality in Private Communications

For email correspondence regarding queer projects, please avoid using any language related to queer subject matter in subject lines.

Please do not contact me through my personal social media accounts using accounts that openly display queer content.

Gone Rogue is comfortable being out in closed queer spaces and recognises that acknowledging their lived experience of queerness can sometimes be important for **contextualising their creative work, their involvement in queer spaces, or their contributions to discussions on queer themes**. 🤗

If this applies to you as well, you may want to include a section (like the one below) stating that you are comfortable being described as queer in these settings.

6.   Attribution in Closed Spaces

In closed, queer spaces where my queerness is discussed or highlighted, I am comfortable with being publicly identified as queer in those settings. However, I ask that any documentation, reviews, or reports from these events follow the same guidelines outlined above when shared publicly.

Gone Rogue recognises that **performances are often documented for archival purposes** 📂, and that it may be difficult or even impossible to remove their likeness from such materials. For Gone Rogue, being identifiable in archives does not pose a safety risk; however, they have **requested that these materials are not distributed online**.

7.   *Archival Materials*

For any video documentation of performances for archival purposes, I request that material which features my image is not distributed online, or where this will be shared on an online platform, that content is password-protected or access-restricted.

Gone Rogue includes the following final note to **conclude their access rider, thanking the reader for sharing in the responsibility of ensuring their safe involvement**. 🫂

Final Note

While I wish to remain an active and visible participant in queer spaces and create work that celebrates queer identities, it is critical that we collaborate with care to ensure my safety. I am grateful for your understanding and support in following these guidelines, which allow me to continue my creative practice without compromising my personal well-being.

Welcoming questions or further discussion helps ensure all parties are on the same page and provides space to clarify any doubts.

For any questions or clarifications about this access rider, or to discuss specific considerations related to a project, please feel free to contact me directly.

The Bright Side

This may all sound a little doom and gloom, which is natural – Managing risk requires first acknowledging potential dangers and putting measures in place to mitigate them. But there is a bright side. ☀️

Gone Rogue rejects the notion that not being out is a state of limbo or a mere journey toward the ultimate destination of coming out. For many of us, this is our reality for the foreseeable future. That doesn't mean we have to resign ourselves to it.

💥 Creative Potential

There is creative potential in the hand we're dealt, and in making it work for us.

If anonymity is your chosen approach, know that while it may *feel* limiting, it doesn't have to be. **There are joys to reinventing oneself, and leaning into playfulness and mystique.**

Gone Rogue has enjoyed creating a **brand** for themself: A dark haired, red-scarfed entity, moving through time and space, omnipresent, yet nowhere to be found.

Spy stickers of their tag all over Manchester, on graffiti-covered walls and lamp posts. **It's all a lot of fun!**

Artistic anonymity is nothing new. Banksy's anonymity grants them both freedom of creative expression and protection from arrest for vandalism. **Daft Punk** evaded the pressures of the limelight early on in their careers through anonymity, drawing focus away from their personal lives and toward their music. The **Brontë sisters**, who authored classics such as Wuthering Heights, Jane Eyre and Agnes Grey, originally wrote under male pen names to avoid bias from publishers and readers.

🙀 Anonymous Queer Artists

There is no shortage of anonymous queer artists either!

Homo Riot (@homoriot) is an anonymous queer street artist based in Los Angeles, known for stencil graffiti, sticker art, and wheat-paste murals that challenge heteronormative narratives.

📸: Homo Riot

Queer Habibi (@queerhabibi) is a Middle Eastern artist who creates illustrations portraying the everyday, often hidden queer experiences of the Arab world.
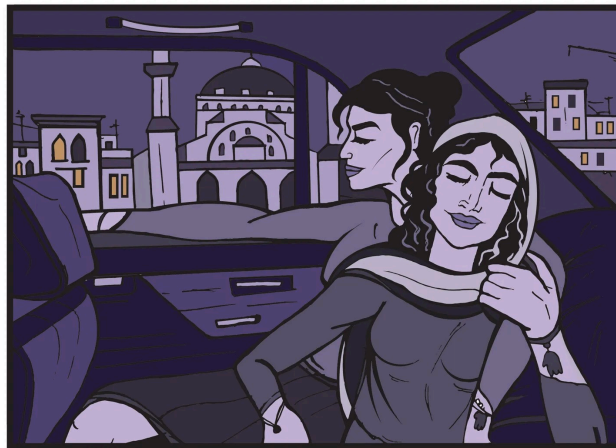
حب

📸: Queer Habibi

Lamya H (@lamyaisangry) authored the memoir *Hijab Butch Blues* under a pseudonym. *Hijab Butch Blues* reflects on identity, spiritual longing, sexuality and belonging through the lens of Islamic faith. Lamya rejects the idea that one must "come out" in every context to be truly "queer enough", emphasising that queerness need not be visible to be authentic or meaningful.

📷: Lamya H

Pussy Riot (@pussyriot) are a anonymous collective whose work blends music, activism, public performance and protest art. Transgender rights and gender non-conformity are a core part of their lyrical themes and activism.

📷: Mitya Aleshkovsky

🦋 An Affirmation

An anonymous creative practice is no less valid!

Anonymity simply shifts focus away from the individual and toward the work itself. Your work can stand firmly on its own, its resonance shaped by its message, the communities it speaks to, and the change it inspires. ✨

A Little Helping Hand

Given the inherent risks of engaging in explicitly queer work, spaces, and opportunities, safeguarding is a foremost concern. This resource prioritises giving you room to explore queerness and identity creatively without accidentally outing yourself.

But beyond physical safety, your emotional and mental well-being matter just as much, and they deserve equal care and attention.

Performance artists are frequently asked to draw from personal experiences in creative processes. While this can be powerful, it can also be deeply draining. For artists who are not fully out, queerness can hold both immense joy and real ache, encompassing cherished love and connection, alongside the strain it can place on important relationships. Creating or performing work while navigating that tension is no small feat.

🛡️ Safeguarding Your Mental Health

You are absolutely allowed to include provisions that safeguard your mental health in your access rider. In fact, doing so ensures everyone is on the same page, creating a safer environment where all involved can do their best creative work.

Some examples include:

Content Warnings & Consent

Request advance notice when working with sensitive themes (e.g. child abuse or neglect, religious trauma, etc.) and the option to opt out of discussions or content that becomes overwhelming.

Debrief Support

Request a structured debrief process after emotionally demanding tasks, especially when material is autobiographical in nature.

Breaks During Creative Processes

Include the right to request breaks if the creative process triggers distress or emotional fatigue, without needing to justify the request.

Quiet/Breakout Spaces

Ensure spaces for grounding and decompression are available.

Counselling

When approached for a project that has not yet been funded, or when developing a self-led project, consider budgeting for access costs that can support counselling or therapeutic sessions throughout the creative process.

Conflict & Harm Resolution

Request a clear procedure for reporting and addressing harm, microaggressions, or boundary violations, and identified individuals responsible for handling concerns.

🧑‍🤝‍🧑 Resource List

Please refer to the following resources for further mental health support.

Mind Support Line: 0300 102 1234

Open: 9am to 6pm, Monday to Friday (except bank holidays)

Mind Support Line is a safe, confidential space for you to talk about your mental health. Their advisors are trained to listen to you and help you find specialist support if you need it.

Mindline Trans+: 0300 330 5468

Open: 8pm – 11pm, Monday, Wednesday & Friday (some variation on days depending on volunteer levels)

Mindline Trans+ is a confidential emotional, mental health support helpline and signposting service for people who identify as Trans, A Gender, Gender Fluid, Non-binary. They are also able to offer support to friends and family. They support everyone dealing with any Transgender issues, be it for they themselves, their parents, siblings, colleagues, friends, or professionals.

Switchboard: 0800 0119 100

Open: 10am – 10pm, every day

Switchboard is the national LGBTQIA+ support line. For anyone, anywhere in the country, at any point in their journey. They can discuss anything related to sexuality and gender identity. Whether it's sexual health, relationships or just the way you're feeling. This is your space to explore, talk and be truly heard.

Mermaids: 0808 801 0400

Open: 1pm - 8.30pm, Monday to Friday

Mermaids provides a helpline and web chat service supporting transgender people as well as offering support for families and loved ones of trans children and young people.

Galop: 0800 999 5428

Open: 9.15am – 8pm, Monday & Tuesday

9.15am – 4.30, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday

(The helpline will close for 1 hour each day at 1pm and open again at 2pm.)

The Galop webchat and helpline is for LGBT+ people experiencing abuse or violence, such as hate crime, domestic abuse, sexual violence, "conversion therapy" or any other kind of abuse. They offer emotional support, guidance and help to explore what options may be available to anyone aged 18+ who is experiencing or has experienced violence and abuse.

LGBT Foundation: 0345 3 30 30 30

Open: 9am - 8.30 pm, Monday to Friday

10am - 5:30 pm, Saturday & Sunday

LGBT Foundation's helpline and email support service provides brief interventions, advice, emotional support and signposting. The team will spend time with you to explore your current situation, and work with you to identify potential next steps for support.

That's all, folks!

That's the end of the Rogue Resource. Gone Rogue hopes this has been eye-opening, demystifying, thought-provoking, affirming and uplifting. Remember, this is a stepping stone to forging your own path, and you are best placed to decide what works for you. Go forth, and **go rogue!**

For any thoughts, questions or provocations please drop Gone Rogue a line at **goneroguecollective@gmail.com**. Do have a nosey at our Instagram (@gone_rogue_collective_) for what we're up to, and please reach out if you're keen to collaborate, or just want to have a chat. ***You are not alone.***