



Nick Vaughan & Jake Margolin: *Around the Corner and Two Blocks Down*

Artist Reception: Thursday, January 15, 6 – 8 PM

Performance Lecture: Wednesday, February 11, 6–8 PM (Performance to begin at 6:30)

January 15 – March 7, 2026

Because there was no wind,
The smoke of your letters hung in the air
For a long time;
And its shape
Was the shape of your face,
My Beloved.

– Amy Lowell, *A Burnt Offering* (1916–17)

McClain Gallery is proud to announce our second solo exhibition with artists Nick Vaughan and Jake Margolin: *Around the Corner and Two Blocks Down*. The show features a group of new *wind drawings* depicting fragments of architecture and details of sites throughout Oklahoma, Missouri, and Kansas that formerly housed queer spaces. Nick and Jake will present a public performance-lecture about this body of work at the gallery the evening of February 11, 2026.

Nick and Jake make beautifully material work that spans media to reveal queer histories from all 50 states. In their ongoing series of *wind drawings*, the artists have developed a technique that uses dispersal in order to engrain charcoal into paper. They translate photographs into laser cut stencils and lay down charcoal powder onto the page. Then, they blow the charcoal away using pressurized air. The force of the wind drags the charcoal particulates across the tooth of the paper, etching the final image onto the page. Nick and Jake's drawings teem with symbolic gestures: charcoal recalls the ruinous potential of fire on wood and paper; wind evokes erosion and objects lost to time and space; paper is the historical material for the official record, fraught with sensitivity to the elements.

Each drawing is titled with the location's prior life as a queer space. The places, former gay and lesbian bars, drag stages, or cruising grounds, are memorialized through their naming and pictorial effigy. Nick and Jake undertake a complex maneuver with these ethereal and ghostly images: the drawings act as document, record, and monument for spaces no longer living. In *Terrace Lounge/Bon Sai (Topeka, Kansas)*, a door with a pediment towers at almost 8 feet, appearing wind-blown. Kansan bar attendees might remember this entrance and the former space's successive names, but the image obscures this convivial past. The whole story is just beyond grasp, behind an impenetrable portal. But as the title of the exhibition suggests, all one might need to do to gain passage is to ask for directions.

Through their work, Nick and Jake reveal and protect sensitive histories via careful retelling. Stewarded by queer people, these lost spaces' stories are recorded and made available to others seeking them. The current political and social moment in the United States provides a galvanizing backdrop to this particular conversation, with the proliferation of AI fakes and campaigns of misinformation (and outright lies). Examining history and its mechanisms, the way it is recorded and kept hidden, raises questions of how oppressed heritage can endure despite those pressures. Nick Vaughan and Jake Margolin highlight the necessity of maintaining shared memory with lyricism, delicacy, and wit.

NICK VAUGHAN & JAKE MARGOLIN (b. 1983, Colorado; b. 1980, California) are Houston-based interdisciplinary artists who explore connections between America's LGBTQIA+ histories and contemporary queer experiences. A married couple, Nick & Jake's primary body of work, *50 States*, is an ongoing series of installations made in response to little-known pre-Stonewall queer histories from each state. This multi-decade endeavor draws from recent groundbreaking academic work, the artists' own archival research, and significant time spent learning from and collaborating with local LGBTQIA+ community members. Their practice focuses on remnants of performed actions, processes of decay and entropy, and an expansive understanding of archiving and cartography. They assert queer historical agency and cultural presence while complicating historical narratives through the ambiguities and contradictions that underpin the experiences of their queer forbearers.

For the last decade the artists' work has shined a light on the under-appreciated history of the South's queer community and the outsized role it has played in the national movement for queer rights. These projects have included interviewing, partnering with, and commissioning work from a wide range of community elders; organizing panel and long table discussions, and other community building programming around issues facing the Houston LGBTQIA+ community; and collaborating extensively with local queer archives, libraries, and community spaces. A solo exhibition titled *Town Meeting 1978–2028* at Art League of Houston in the summer of 2025 culminated in a symposium held over two days in the exhibition space. The symposium kicked off a three-year project engaging Houston entities in the fifty-year anniversary of Town Meeting 1, which was pivotal in the organization of queer rights in Houston with national impacts.

In 2024, Nick & Jake founded **Rendezvous Center for Art**, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that supports interdisciplinary artwork exploring the rich diversity of queer experiences. They have had solo exhibitions at Blaffer Art Museum; DiverseWorks; Art League; and Aurora Picture Show, all in Houston, Texas; Oklahoma City University Norick Art Center, OK; Oklahoma State University Museum of Art, Stillwater, OK; Invisible Dog Art Center, New York, New York; and non-traditional community-facing venues including Pride Festivals in Tahlequah, Oklahoma and Houston, Texas; Houston Community College Campuses, Houston Public Library, University of Houston MD Anderson Library, and numerous queer bars. Their work was shown in group shows including at Contemporary Art Museum Houston; Blaffer Art Museum, Houston, TX; Dimensions Variable, Miami, FL; among others. Their work is included in many permanent collections including in Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA; City of Houston Public Art Collection; Brooklyn Historical Society, NY; among others. Coverage of their work has been reviewed in *Artforum*, *Hyperallergic*, *Glasstire*, and *Terremoto Magazine*. Margolin and Vaughan are recipients of NYFA Fellowship, Tulsa Artist Fellowship, and grants from IdeaFund, MAPFund, Houston Arts Alliance, and Mid America Arts Alliance. Both artists are members of the theater company The TEAM and frequently collaborate as visual designers with choreographers Faye Driscoll and Yoshiko Chuma. Nick and Jake are represented by McClain Gallery and have had two solo exhibitions (2023, 2026) there.