



## Outlaw Representation: Censorship and Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century American Art

By Richard Meyer

Oxford University Press ISBN-0195107616

392 pages, 194 illustrations \$35

### For further reading:

▼ **Lesbian Art in America: A Contemporary History**  
By Harmony Hammond  
August, 2000

▼ **Outlooks: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities  
and Visual Culture**  
By Peter Horne  
October, 1996

**TM:** You end the book by talking about taking "the risk of unrespectability." Can you say more about what you mean by that?

**RM:** Taking the "risk of unrespectability" means accepting the fact that somebody somewhere will always be bothered by homosexuality, will always consider it a "problem" for the larger culture. Rather than responding to such people by arguing that lesbians and gay men are no less normal, dignified, or morally upstanding than anyone else, I am interested in what happens when we insist that we really are different, and that our difference opens onto other possibilities for social, sexual, and creative life. This, for me, is the appeal of queer-ness – the refusal to conform to someone else's idea of what it means to live a respectable life, to have normal sex, or to make decent art. The artists in *Outlaw Representation* took the risk of unrespectability not only by portraying homosexuality in their work but also by emphasizing the power of non-conformity.

**TM:** *Outlaw Representation* gives us an amazing and inspiring roadmap of potential ways that gay artists have pushed boundaries and challenged society. What do you think your book tells us about strategies for countering the censorship of gay culture now and in the future?

**RM:** Gay and lesbian artists have made precious contributions to American culture not by fitting their work into some rigid standard of decent art but by proposing alternative visions of social, sexual, and creative life. Rather than downplaying or apologizing for their difference

from the mainstream, queer artists have expanded upon and expressed that difference in brilliantly imaginative ways. I think this is a crucial historical lesson and a key strategy for the future not only of gay art but also of gay life and politics. ▼

*Tim Miller is a solo performer and the author of Shirts & Skin and Body Blows. He can be reached through his web site: <http://hometown.aol.com/millertale>*

**“Gay artists  
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to male clientele



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**Edward R. Langlois, LICSW**

Licensed Clinical Social Worker  
Diplomate in Clinical Social Work

86 Lake Street  
Burlington, Vermont 05401

Tel. (802) 865-3450  
Fax. (802) 860-5011

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**Robert L. Keith, Ph.D.**

Director of Training  
Licensed Psychologist - Doctorate  
Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist

789 Pine Street  
Burlington, Vermont 05401

Tel. (802) 951-2089  
Fax. (802) 951-2093

P.O. Box 875  
90 Main Street

**BLACKWOOD  
ASSOCIATES, PC**  
attorneys

Burlington, VT 05402  
802-863-2517

[blackwood.law@verizon.net](mailto:blackwood.law@verizon.net)

fax: 802-863-0262

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**Laurie S. Rosenzweig**

Attorney at Law

18 South Main Street, P.O. Box 1455,  
Rutland, VT 05701

802-786-2251

e-mail: [Sabu234@AOL.com](mailto:Sabu234@AOL.com)

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149 North Main Street • Wallingford, VT 05773  
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**BOB GREEN, LCMHC**

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