

ae MULTIMEDIA

# Mark My Words

BY EUAN BEAR

On a Friday night in early January, the “elders” of Vermont’s lgbt community saw the writing on the wall. Literally. The Dialogue Project, the brainchild of R.U.1.2? student intern and master’s degree candidate Heidi Wagner and Center Director Christopher Kaufman, posted excerpts of interviews with the elders alongside artworks commissioned for the project.

Full disclosure: I was one of the interviewees (age 53). Antara (aka Ann Gatch), a community songwriter and singer, wrote a song (Queen-Sized Bed) based on one part of my interview. It was a good song. I teared up. Think Phranc (for those of a certain generation and women’s music proclivity).

The story of how my parents loaned me and my then-lover money to buy a queen-sized bed, the same make and model as their own, stood out for her, Antara said in comments

with a Joni Mitchell-style sound for the song.

Nebulai performed a song he wrote from Bill Lippert’s (age 55) interview, about being a small-town boy.

Marie LaPre Grabon constructed a symbolic piece in doll form (“The Other/The Community”) for Eva Mondon’s (age 64) interview.

Shawn Lipenski, a staff member at R.U.1.2? and an actor, performed two pieces, one (“To Be Whole”) on behalf of poet Kim Jordan, based on the interview with transwoman Sarah Flynn (age 67), the other an untitled spoken-word performance piece based on Vermont artist Robert Hooker’s (age 55) interview.

Hooker had two art pieces in the show as well (“Out There Parts 1 and 2”), both combinations of acrylic and collage: one with a blocky humanoid figure with its cloth body torn open to reveal a pink triangle where its heart would be, the other with a dark, vaguely United States-shaped object,



Nebulai (left) and Antara join for Nebulai’s song from Bill Lippert’s memories of being a “small-town boy.”

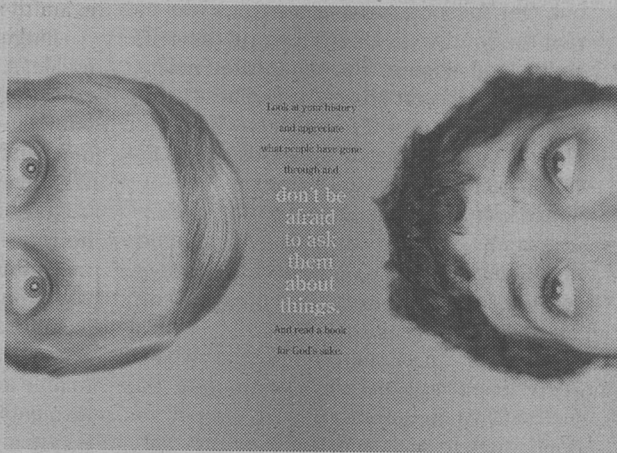
the reception, she “couldn’t bear to part with” the first one she made, “We Are Out in the Mountains,” a construction of wood, moss, and other woody objects with old photographs. Her second piece was a mixed media collection of pieces of torn black paper inscribed with

of collections and exhibitions at the Fleming Museum in Burlington.

Fourteen elders (“elder” defined as “over 50”), six women and eight men, were interviewed using a list of questions developed by members of Free 2 Be, a queer student organization

was unexpectedly moving. It felt as if the history of oppression I carry around in my memory was suddenly a little lighter after being shared and witnessed.

Now what needs to happen is for these elders – or others – to ask questions we want answered by youth. We need to hear them,



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Left to right: Marie LaPre Grabon’s “The Other/the Community”; Don Eggert’s “Pulled Quotes”; and Aurora’s “We are Out in the Mountains,” with which she was unwilling to part.

also with a torn piece of cloth revealing a pink triangle at the heart.

Don Eggert, art director for both *Seven Days* and *Out in the Mountains*, and a co-founder of R.U.1.2?, displayed “Pulled Quotes: Queer Concerns and Counsel from Tim Tavcar,” a kind of photo album-journal, with evocative images Photoshopped in next to pithy excerpts from Tavcar’s interview.

Aurora, a Huntington-based artist, contributed two pieces, because, she said at

excerpts from Nancy Pike’s (age 54) interview wired to backing paper. Other artists whose works were displayed include Robert W. Wolff, a sound designer, potter and artist (“Celebration of a Tri-Cultured Life”) and Stacey Thalden. Interspersed with the interview excerpts and related artwork were other items from the Vermont Queer Archives, including early newsletters and posters, and a cover from *CommonWomyn* from 1983. The Archives Coordinator is Margaret Tamulonis, who is also manager

at the University of Vermont, and Outright Vermont, a support and social organization for lgbtq youth under age 22, but primarily made up of high school-age students.

Among the elders not already mentioned were Peggy Luhrs (age 60), Fran Moravcsik (age 71), Jon Petrie (age 58), Tony Daniels (age 52), Ryland White (age 54), Brian Davis (age 51), and Alverta Perkins (age 81).

Being asked the questions and having the answers be part of a public event showing the art that was inspired by them

before her performance at the reception. Even though there was plenty of juicy tough political material in the interview, Antara explained, the bed was somehow emblematic of an acceptance of a lesbian relationship unusual for the times. She said she connected