



The Power to Dream curated by James Bolton

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As a young artist, I was especially drawn to film because I felt it had the power to make positive change in the world. Consequently, my films have often had a gay theme because I grew up in the American South and barely made it out alive. I have always had a close connection with other artists, especially painters. In fact, I began collecting art some 30 years ago. And in 2002, I started a project called *Other Voices*, which was an organization that supported those I felt were underrepresented in the arts, primarily women artists, black artists, Asian American artists and LGBTQ artists. The Hammer Museum loved what I was doing and was the first to support my organization and our launch was held at the museum.

In 2013, I was getting ready to direct a feature film in Europe when a doctor gave me a powerful antibiotic which massively damaged my body and changed my life overnight. Over the following couple of months my body broke down until I was bed-bound and relying on a wheelchair for mobility. Then, after a few years, I could walk a few steps and nearly nine years later, I could walk short distances.

In my journey to healing, I became acutely aware of the power of art to not only promote change, but to heal. Some years back, I moved a few paintings from my art collection that I'd left in my home in Paris to my current home in LA, and I noticed that living again with these paintings had a profound impact on my state of mind, and even my optimism, and ultimately my body's healing.

I also noticed that paintings I'd acquired in the last few years, since getting hurt, were not only bringing me joy, but diminishing my stress and ultimately, my pain, and that sometimes, when interacting with these paintings, I would forget about my physical condition and daydream for several minutes and sometimes, even hours. I was already aware that the body is programmed to heal and that this process can be aided when the body is properly supported, and then I learned that emotions release chemicals in the body, and these chemicals are the body's own pharmacy for healing, so it made a great deal of sense that diminishing stress, experiencing joy and wonder and a variety of other positive emotions could promote mental and even physical healing. A couple years ago, I began painting and drawing myself, something I had not done in decades, and this has also been beneficial to me and my healing journey.

So when Eric Hussenot and I discussed the healing nature of art, we felt there was an incredible opportunity for a conversation about the power of art to heal, including from physical illness. We all hear about how making art can help our mental well-being, but we rarely consider the impact it can have on the physical and mental health of the viewer/participant. I have decided to call the exhibition, "The Power to Dream," which is a lyric from a Patti Smith song, because I feel there is a very specific connection between art, dreams, emotions, states of consciousness and healing. Patti's own work as an artist has been very powerful to my work as an artist and for my healing and I met her in Berlin back in 2009 when we were two of only a very few Americans to be invited to have our film's premiere at the Berlinale. I was there with my film "Dream Boy" and she was there with her documentary, "Dream of Life," and of course, dreams are very important to us both.

The artists in our exhibition, THE POWER TO DREAM are individuals whose work has greatly impacted me and my own mental and physical well-being or who I felt were important to be among the conversation. And many of these incredible artists have created a painting especially with the theme of the show in mind. Sometimes, when I meditate, and in my dreams, when my body is healing, I see myself as completely healthy, walking and living life as I once did, again making films, drawing or painting, or being surrounded by art. And some of the work that has come to me in these spaces is by artists in this exhibition. Within art, whether making it or living with it, is the power for mental and physical healing, and I believe that the amount of healing possible is limited only by our ability or power to dream.

James Bolton is an award-winning director, writer, and producer. Three of his films have been officially invited to premier at the Berlinale. Bolton's debut feature film, EBAN AND CHARLEY, was released theatrically in 2001 to much critical praise and won the Grand Jury Prize for Best Dramatic Feature at the Chicago Reeling Film Festival. Gus Van Sant championed the film and compared it to the work of Ingmar Bergman. From 2002-2004 Bolton was the driving force behind the organization, Other Voices, created by Bolton to support visual artists who were underrepresented in the arts, and launched at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles. Bolton's second feature film, THE GRAFFITI ARTIST was invited to premier at the 2004 Berlin International Film Festival and was released theatrically in the US and in Europe. Bolton's short film, GROWING UP AND I'M FINE, was made while Bolton himself was a teenager and was screened in museums and schools in Europe. It was also an official selection of the Berlin International Film Festival. Bolton's third feature DREAM BOY had its world premier at the 2009 Berlinale and won the Grand Jury Prize at the Cardiff Film Festival and the award for Best screenplay at the 2009 Outfest Film Festival. The film starred Oscar nominated actress Rooney Mara (The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo, The Social Network), Oscar nominated actress Diana Scarwood (Silkwood), and music icon Rickie Lee Jones.