

FOUR SEASONS MAGAZINE

88

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**STYLED
SELF**
Deborah
Kass'
*Altered
Image #1*,
1994

IMAGE AND IDENTITY

In the age of avatars, selfie filters and constantly morphing visual languages, how is queer culture being documented? New York's Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art offers an overview.

By Karen Rhodes

HOW DO WE DEFINE OURSELVES—and how may others seek to define us—in imagery? Works by more than 40 contemporary artists trace the legacy and the ever-changing landscape of visual languages in “**Omniscient: Queer Documentation in an Image Culture**,” on display at the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art in New York through January 2. The museum was founded more than 50 years ago as a platform for queer artists and—with more than 30,000 objects in its collection and a research library of more than 3,000 volumes—today serves as a cultural hub for LGBTQ+ communities. It worked with curator Avram Finkelstein for nearly three years to bring “Omniscient” to life. The exhibition traces visual codes and vernaculars across borders, media formats and generations. “A culture fuelled by images is one that’s highly stylized and moulded by trends, cultural icons and cultural canons,” Finkelstein says. A group of works in the exhibition reference the art of Andy Warhol, who was deeply interested in the concept of self-image. Deborah Kass’ 1994 gelatin silver print *Altered Image #1* was created in response to a Warhol self-portrait in which he wears a “feminine” wig and makeup to explore ideas around role-playing and identity. The title “Omniscient” speaks to the high-level overview provided; to digital surveillance and meaning-making; and, Finkelstein says, to “the knowingness that’s necessitated when viewing an image culture from the margins.” leslielohman.org

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