

Charles Flowers

Artist Profile

Part of West Hollywood's One City One Pride Queer Arts Festival

Name: Charles Flowers

City of Residence: Los Angeles

Age: 47



Photo courtesy of Charles Flowers

1) Who are you, where do you live, and what kind of art do you make?

My name is Charles Flowers, I'm a poet, writer, and editor. I moved to Los Angeles five years ago, and to Crescent Heights 3 years ago. I publish BLOOM, a print literary journal for LGBT writers. We've published 8 issues (5 in New York and 3 in Los Angeles) and over 240 LGBT writers.

2) How old were you when you came out, and what is your coming out story?

I grew up Southern Baptist in Tennessee, so it's not a pretty story. I managed to come out to my best friend freshman year in college, and a few more by senior year. I moved to NYC after graduation, where I began to live openly. I began to come out to my family a few years after that.

3) How does being queer affect your artwork?

When I started BLOOM in 2004, there were few outlets exclusively for LGBT writers (and there are still are not that many). At the same time, I didn't want

to reinforce any stereotypes about what “gay” writing is. So I wanted to create an LGBT space where LGBT writers could do whatever they wanted. The result was our mission/editorial policy:

- BLOOM does not discriminate against the imagination. Gardeners must identify as Queer (LGBT), but the flora of their labor need not serve any pre-conceived notion of beauty. Peonies, sweet williams, ragweed, and gladiolas—every shade & shape of blossom—are all welcome. Let the garden grow.

4) In your mind, what is gay pride and how do you celebrate it?

My notion of gay pride has changed over the years – I’m 47 so I’ve marched a lot of miles on Sundays in June. My first big sense of pride was the 1993 March on Washington, it was the most gay people I’ve ever seen. Then, it was about being as visible as possible, in as big a crowd as possible. Now, I’m married (legally in the window before Prop 8 passed) for almost 5 years – with the same man for 12 years. We have a mortgage, two dogs, a very domestic life. Pride is when I refer to my husband to people I don’t know, holding hands when we walk, small things that indicate who I am, who we are – no apologies, but no drama either. Publishing BLOOM is a bigger gesture of pride – to care enough about LGBT writers and their work to devote resources and bring a literary journal to life.

5) Where can we see your artwork during the One City One Pride LGBT Arts Festival this year?

West Hollywood in BLOOM

West Hollywood Library, 625 N. San Vicente Blvd., Free Admission.

Opens Thursday, June 13, 7pm-8:30 pm.

Discover local queer writers who have appeared in the pages of BLOOM, called by Edmund White, "the most exciting new queer literary publication to appear in years." Featured readers include Michael Wolf, Monica Carter, Joshua Charles, Abbie Leavens, and others.

www.weho.org/pride www.bloomliteraryjournal.org