The first completed installation in Nick & Jake’s 50 States Project, 50 States: Wyoming references William Benemann’s, Men in Eden: William Drummond Stewart and Same-Sex Desire in The Rocky Mountain Fur Trade which chronicles the homosexual Scottish lord-turned-fur-trader’s Western travels with his lover the celebrated Cree/French Canadian hunter Antoine Clement.

In 1843 the pair led an expedition of 100 likely same-sex-attracted men from St. Louis to a lake in the Wind River Mountains of Wyoming where they threw a riotous bacchanal, a farewell to the rapidly disappearing frontier, replete with wagons of liquor, heaps of canned delicacies from Europe, and a trunk of renaissance costumes.

In 2014 and 2015 the artists retraced the 1,200-mile journey with 18 panels of tinted wax poured over painted LGBTQIA+ cowboy silhouettes. At regular intervals they stopped, recorded their Cartesian coordinates, and collected a soil sample which they spread over a wax panel, before running over it with their truck to imprint a soil tire track as a record of their progress. At key points along the journey, the artists filmed themselves walking west with the newfound knowledge that these quintessentially American landscapes had been the forgotten stomping grounds of gay men.

This experience – seeing the Wyoming mountains with a profound sense of belonging – inspired the artists to create work exploring the little-known LGBTQIA+ histories of each state, and launched their 50 States Project.
OUR PARTNERS

Oklahoma State University: Gender and Women’s Studies, Department of History, School of Architecture, Department of Art, Graphic Design, and Art History, Oral History Project, Office of Multicultural Affairs, EQuAL, OSQ&A and GSSO.
Community: Tulsa Equality Center/OKEQ, Payne County PRIDE Fest, PFLAG Stillwater, Living Arts Kitchen, University of Central Oklahoma Melton Gallery, University of Central Oklahoma Women’s Research Center and BGLTQ+ Student Center, Herland Archive, Living Arts Tulsa and Tulsa Artist Fellows.

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