



**cruise  
this  
space**

*cruise this space* is an experimental publication by eli nolet  
made in conversation with  
Adrien Crossman and their solo exhibition *now[here]*  
on view from August 11th to September 30th, 2023  
at Factory Media Centre.

eli nolet

# Hope at 100 km/h

**KARENA  
WALTER**  
SEARCH ENGINE

**Q: On the north side of the QEW between Vineland and Beamsville, there is a large cross with a sign saying “God loves you” and lights up at night. There is no church in sight. Can you tell me what the purpose of the sign is and what does it mean?**

**A:** Anyone who’s ever travelled on the busy stretch of the highway in Vineland has likely noticed the distinctive cross 14 metres above the traffic.

Mounted on a pole, the Christian symbol mysteriously rises from a farmer’s field and glows brightly at night as if suspended in air.

The real story is that it was put up by Dyck’s cousin Henry Wiebe in 2001 who simply wanted to give passersby “hope” whether they are Christian or not.

Wiebe, 85, was pastor of Vineland Mennonite Brethren Church at the time and had heard stories about people feeling inspired by crosses.

When he read an article in a book that advocated “taking the cross out

of the cathedral into the marketplace” — the place where people are — the wheels started turning.

“One day I was travelling on the Queen Elizabeth highway along the service road in Beamsville and I saw those thousands of cars travelling in both directions and said to myself, ‘There is the marketplace,’” he said.

“Why not put up the cross somewhere along the Queen Elizabeth highway where people can see it?”

Fortunately for Wiebe, his cousin owned a farm next to the QEW and was willing to let him put the large cross on his property.

It cost \$25,000 to have the cross built, paid for by Wiebe and a Burlington businessman who liked the idea.

Shortly after putting it up, members of Wiebe’s congregation said something was missing — it needed words.

He settled on God Loves You. “It’s biblical, it’s personal and it’s short

OUT OF THE CLOSET  
AND INTO THE STREETS

Wiebe said the cross has to be opened up and cleaned out every 10 years and the lights have to be changed.

He pays a hydro bill out of pocket of about \$112 a month to keep it lit overnight. But he said it’s worth it, based on feedback from people who say it’s encouraged them.

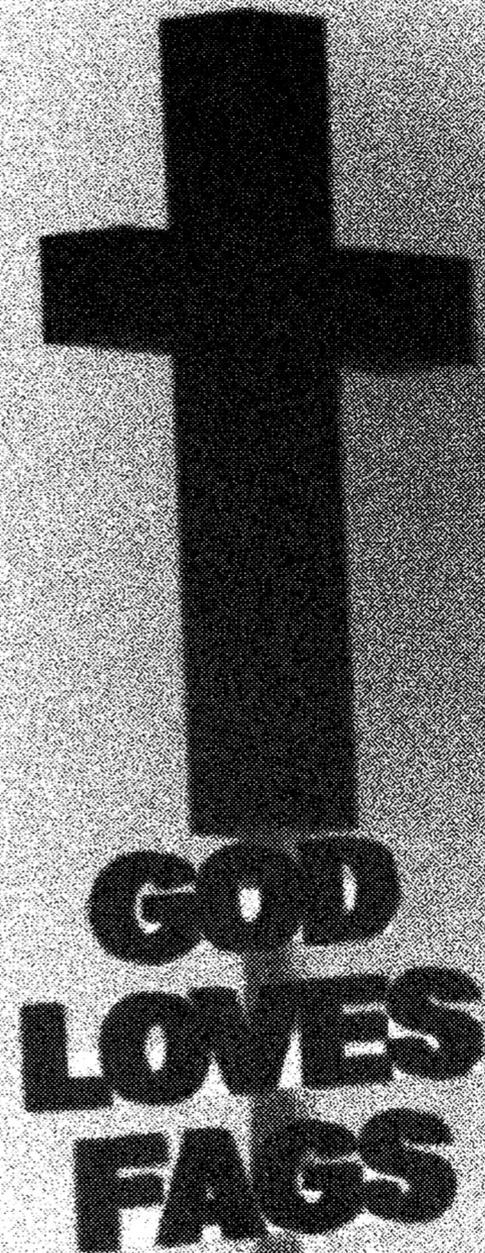
He thinks the cross is serving its purpose of letting people know someone cares about them.

“I wanted to give people hope, that was my main reason. I wanted them to know that if there’s no one that loves you, there’s God that loves you,” he said.

Wiebe said he’ll never know what impact the cross has had on the thousands of travellers from different countries and walks of life who pass.

“What’s amazing about it is there’s been no vandalism,” Wiebe said. “No one has shot at it or aimed at it.

“It’s like it’s been protected.”



“that sign is something that I always passed by in the car with my parents when I was young, and would see on the side of the highway up into my teens and 20s

I always had like a weird, I don’t know, relationship to it, where I felt like I didn’t consent to the message, or I felt like it wasn’t for me. I had this negative association with the sign because I had a negative association with Christianity, and it being homophobic, and transphobic and so I had this idea to reimagine it in a queer sense ”

*its defiant — queering this huge sign thats off the side of the highway*

“ yeah. and to say God loves fags feels like an extension of God loves everyone. Because if God loves everyone, God would inherently love anything you could put at the end of that sign

But I think it’s very telling that... the two times I’ve proposed to show that piece, I’ve gotten rejections

it seems like a statement that’s very extreme for people or something, you know? ”

*Yeah.*

“ I didn’t grow up with a lot of religious trauma, but my relationship to religion has shifted in the past few years, as I’ve thought more about the ways that queer spaces and queerness feels like very holy in a space of worship, and also thinking about the way devotion and worship and desire can kind of factor into queerness.

yeah, also like, gay bars as holy spaces. ”

“ the light boxes are part of a series of three, with neon signs from fictional queer bars that I’ve seen in media [TV / film]

that work is really inspired by the fact that a lot of the physical queer spaces I went to in my 20s, when I was coming of age as a queer person are now closed.

a lot of the media that I watched as a young closeted queer person really formed my queer identity. it’s like, the bar, in *But I’m a Cheerleader*, which was the first of the series with the *Escapades* sign, holds a really similar place in my brain to The Hen House in Toronto, which was a real bar that closed

I think a lot about how queer spaces that exist, the physical queer spaces that exist in my memory

— that exist in the past and don’t exist in the present —

they take up a similar fictional space to these queer spaces that I can technically keep revisiting through media, they’re inhabiting a shared space — —

they’re really formative to me, but I can’t go there. ”

through the work, trying to catch the feeling of those spaces, whether its tangible or not



like creating the affect of revisiting a memory

Heaven, Digital Render, 2023

“ I wanted people to leave with UTOPIA above the doorframe, because I want to... I think it's important to give people kind of a hopeful feeling to leave on.

UTOPIA and DYSTOPIA I made for a solo show in 2019. And they explored my relationships to kind of a binary thinking — - or different sides of queer theory. — — — - Lee Edelman's, 'No Future', which is queer nihilism. And then, José Esteban Muñoz 'Cruising Utopia', which is very much like queer potentiality the potentiality that lives within queer relationships and queer relationality.

I was thinking about how I relate to both sides of it.

I was thinking about dystopia, and Utopia being at the end of two binaries, representing both poles. And then the idea of existing and being, being kind of enough, and you don't have to choose God loves fags really relates to the idea of just existing, and that being enough. ”

they all are touching, ideas rubbing against each other like bodies in a gay bar [ REAL OR FICTIONAL OR FANTASY OR MEMORY ]

## DYSTOPIA

*No Future, Lee Edelman*

[ uncompromising / the queer position is one of relentless nihilism ]

## SCUM

*SCUM Manifesto, Valerie Solanas*

[ wild and divisive / and as any manifesto is ; a cultural artifact // near-utopian imagining , near-dystopian uncompromising ]

## UTOPIA

*Cruising Utopia, José Esteban Muñoz*

[ queerness is a future bound phenomena / not yet here / imagining ]

“ queerness is not yet here  
I its a future oriented profoundly utopian mode  
of being [[exist]]

“” utopia as a critical and  
collective longing that is relational to historically  
situated struggles”

“Queerness is not yet here. Queerness is  
an ideality” ‘a horizon of being’  
your longing is the labour

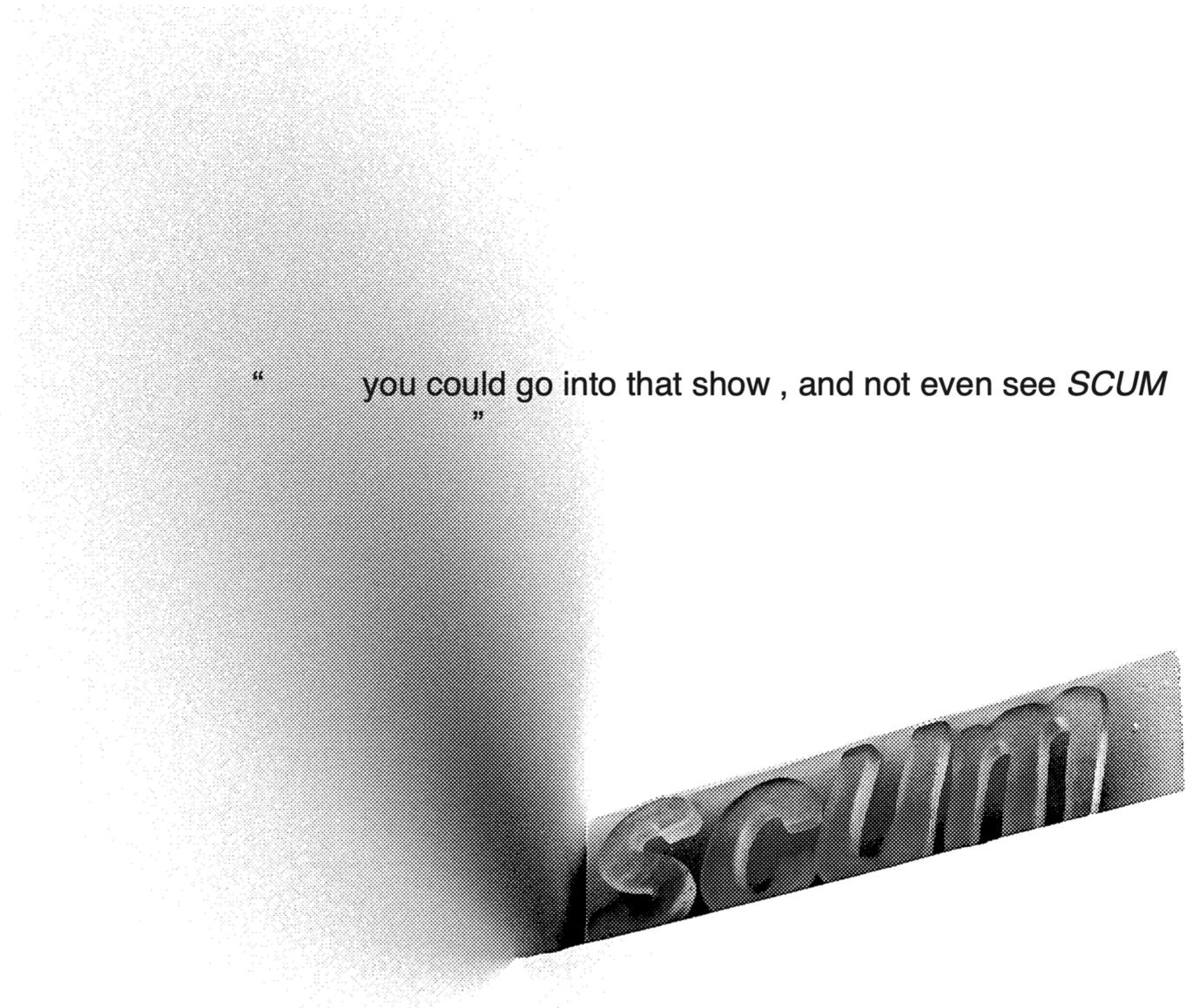
crossman often shows work in multiple exhibitions and in different contexts, but theres always a thread of relation to each other. there is an realization of world building through artistic practice —

“ you’re creating a world that your works live in, and they’re in conversation with each other “

—- *they’re really formative to me, but i can’t go there*

— — like;  
the fictional, the historical, the spaces that we can keep revisiting through media or our memories, the formative.  
you can’t go there but you can;  
chase it, you can make it, you can cruise it,,

*“ you can make the objects that make sense in the world that you’ve built through your art practice, and they can follow the logic of the world that you’ve created. and they can just be that. just be part of that, in conversation with that. they don’t have to do anything else. “*



“ you could go into that show , and not even see *SCUM* ”

*its asking you to spend the time and notice.*

“ you know, like cruising is like that. //  
i’ve been reading a lot about cruising // it’s a practice that asks not only for you to spend the time, but it asks for you to pay attention, to look, to pick up on cues

”  
*so you want people to like  
cruise the space*

“ yeah! *laughs*  
”  
i want people to cruise the space. yeah. Yeah.

# UTOPIA

**Factory Media Centre** is Hamilton's not-for-profit artist-driven resource centre for film, video, new media, installation, sound art, and other multimedia art forms.

**Adrien Crossman** is a queer and non-binary white settler artist, educator, and curator currently residing on the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples in Hamilton, Ontario. They hold an MFA in Visual Art from the University of Windsor (2018), and a BFA in Integrated Media with a Minor in Digital and Media Studies from OCAD University (2012). Crossman is interested in the affective qualities of queerness, investigating how queerness can be felt through specific aesthetics and sensibilities. In addition to having exhibited across Canada and internationally, Adrien co-founded and co-runs the online arts publication *Off Centre*. Crossman is an Assistant Professor in the School of the Arts at McMaster University.

**Eli Nolet** (they/them) is a queer interdisciplinary, settler-indigenous artist from the occupied territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee, and Mississaugas (otherwise known as hamilton, ontario). Currently studying at McMaster University towards a B.F.A. in Studio Art, Eli's artistic practice explores identity and selfhood through activations of static image and text work. Across their practice, Eli is interested in investigating the many layered histories of queer culture and desire, and questioning the binaries of visible/invisible, normative/transgressive.

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