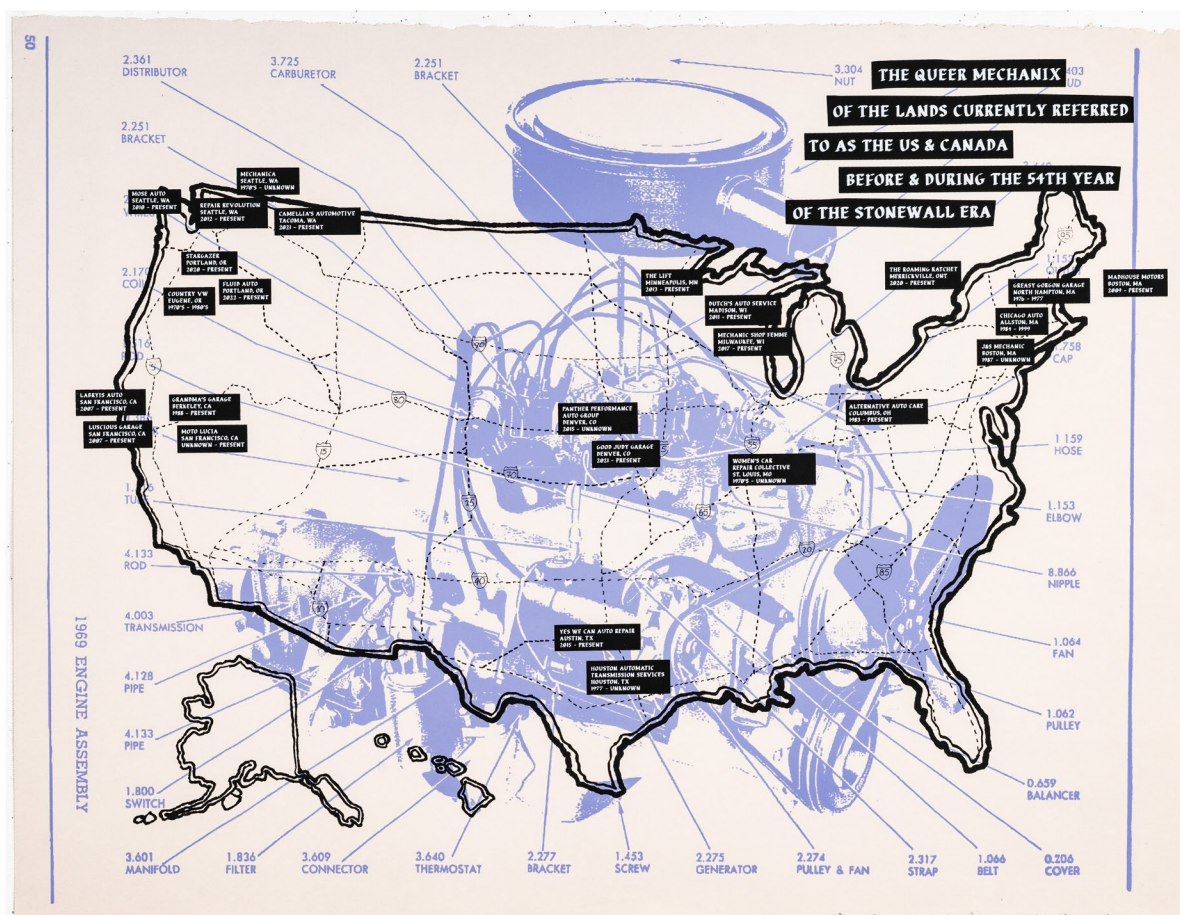


LJ ROBERTS | ISLAND PRESS NEW EDITIONS 2025



Above: LJ Roberts, front side of *The Queer Mechanix of the Lands Currently Referred to as the U.S. & Canada Before & During the 54th Year of the Stonewall Era*, 2025. Silkscreen and photolithography, 22 1/4 x 29 3/4 inches. Two-sided print.

The art of LJ Roberts often disinters iconic figures, sites and stories of trans and queer history – whether in an installation honoring tr/anscestor Stormé DeLarverie’s life and rebellion, *Stormé at Stonewall* (2019), or in Roberts’ embroidered portraits of friends, collaborators and lovers that have detailed twenty years of New York City community history. Through a residency and collaboration with Island Press, Roberts produced a double-sided photolithographic silkscreen print *The Queer Mechanix of the Lands Currently Referred to as the U.S. & Canada Before & During the 54th Year of the Stonewall Era* (2025) along with a portfolio of smaller prints; these form part of a new body of work that also includes mixed-media, embroidered textile and sound pieces, to collectively relay half a century of trans, queer, nonbinary and women-owned automotive repair businesses and their cultures.

The web of highway routes on Roberts' map is studded with garages where a contemporary traveler might find repair and respite. Their names are touched by the guardian operators who founded them, ringing with the diction and syntax of queer and feminist DIY cultures. The typeface used across these



prints sounds that history aloud – inspired by 1970s writing on the flyers of the St. Louis Women’s Car Repair Collective, whose font was made open-source and downloadable by its designer Nat Pyper, whose work Roberts discovered during archival research. The print’s linework further evokes the typeface’s alphanumeric stylization, the map’s black diagrammatic lines overlaying a lavender illustration of an engine, whose names for mechanical geegaws evoke bodily parts and sexual acts, campily compositing technological systems with corporeal, libidinal ones.

The other side of this (counter) cartographic print collages queer and (trans) feminist automotive history. Employment ads appear with interviews and photographs of autoworkers posed at work with vehicles and tools, all competence and swagger. Anecdotes of trusty mechanics providing emergency services for stray passengers are interspersed with advertising for repairing vintage rides and recent models. We learn of autoshops’ alignment with political organizing, the proximity of garages to lesbian coffee houses, counseling and support services. Images of keys and bolts, nuts and screws punctuate the collage, a visual language of joining that connects the fasteners of mechanical engineering to sexual conjunctions, communal links and social support.

Accompanying the (counter) public visual culture of Roberts’ cartographic print, is a portfolio of six smaller etchings and a poem by Miller Oberman evoking a more personal register. These greyscale etchings reiterate artefacts and photographs from the artist’s life and travels. Here, a mailbox outside a San Diego dry cleaner used for cleaning textiles; there, a picture from the historic queer beach town Provincetown. In one text-based print, the words “horse power” felicitously appear during a cross-country road trip, alluding to engine capacity and mechanical work. Other etchings evoke bodies of travelers and mechanix: two gloves whose fingers touch; two sweatshirts emblazoned “OIL CHANGES” recalls queer object pairs such as Felix Gonzalez-Torres’ coupling of two clocks that desynchronize over time, in “Untitled” (*Perfect Lovers*) from 1991. The poet Miller Oberman responds to these highway missives in *oil change*, a verse formed with line breaks throughout, as though a mixtape and road lyric of travel’s intimate sensorium.



Above: LJ Roberts, *Oil Changes*, 2025, portfolio of 6 etchings with poem by Miller Oberman and colophon, 10 1/4 x 8 1/4 x 3/8 inches.

Roberts' project is suffused with the semiotics of trans and queer DIY automotive cultures, reveling in how trans and queer people have collectively sustained one another and the codes of their communicating for cause – weaving an infrastructure of safety that remains with us still and transports us toward an open future, charted by this artist's talismanic, protective mapping.

**Essay by Jeannine Tang,
Assistant Professor of
Performance Studies,
New York University**



Above: LJ Roberts, *Oil Changes*, portfolio of six etchings with poem by Miller Oberman.

ABOUT THE ARTIST:

LJ Roberts is an artist and writer who creates large-scale textile installations, intricate embroideries, artist books, collages, and mixed-media sculptures. Their work illuminates off-erased and unacknowledged queer and trans narratives, people, and places. The artist creates conceptual and geographical maps of queer life of the past, present, and future through material deviance and re-imaging craft practices. Roberts has exhibited work at The Renwick Gallery and the National Portrait Gallery at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Stedelijk Museum, Barbican Centre, Victoria and Albert Museum, Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Toledo Museum of Art, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, Orange County Museum of Art, Anchorage Museum of Art, Museum of the City of New York, Brooklyn Museum, National Academy of Design, FLAG Art Foundation, The 8th Floor, and New York Historical. Roberts received The White House Champions of Change Award for LGBTQI+ artists in 2015 and the Women's Caucus for Art President's Award for Art and Activism in 2019. Roberts also received BRIC's Colene Brown Art Prize in 2022. Roberts' work is included in the collections of The Brooklyn Museum, Cantor Center for the Arts at Stanford University, Leslie-Lohman Museum, Oakland Museum of California, Bowdoin College Museum of Art, and the National Portrait Gallery, The Renwick Gallery, and the Archives of American Art all at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington DC. Roberts lives and works in Providence, Rhode Island and is represented by Hales London and New York.

Island Press is a research-based printmaking workshop and publisher committed to education and innovation in contemporary print editions and artist projects. Visiting artists work side by side with the master printer and students in the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts at Washington University in St. Louis. The result is high-quality print editions of technical complexity created in a unique setting where artists and students share skill sets and ideas.

Island Press is project-driven and collaborative, tapping into the place where the artist's creative research intersects with the all of the possibilities of the print studio. Recent artist projects include editions with Radcliffe Bailey, Chakaia Booker, Squeak Carnwath, Willie Cole,

Henrik Drescher, Chris Duncan, Tom Friedman, Ann Hamilton, Trenton Doyle Hancock, David Humphrey, Nina Katchadourian, Shaun O'Dell, Dario Robleto, Lisa Sanditz, Beverly Semmes, James Siena, Duane Slick, and Paula Wilson.

Island Press was founded in 1978. Past visiting artists include Hung Liu, Jaune Quick-To-See-Smith, Joyce Scott, Juan Sanchez, Nick Cave, and many other great artists.

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MORE INFORMATION

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