

# Have / Hold

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*Words and images by Wynne Neilly and Kyle Lasky.*

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**H**ave / Hold is a series of self-portraits challenging the traditional narratives and stigmas around masculine intimacy. The two of us first met at art school in 2009 as two young butch women who found kinship in our masculine identities and our mutual interest in documenting the queer experience. We transitioned in tandem and supported each other through the complicated, non-linear processes of reimagining our identities and relearning how to see ourselves and be seen by others. The ease with which we express our closeness is built on lifetimes of the socially acceptable open affection of “female” friendships, a kind of connection we have chosen to keep with us.

Years later, as two cis-presenting men—and more specifically, as men who date women—our relationship is an anomaly among heteronormative representations of male friendship. Whenever we interact, whether through photography, the internet or real life, people often assume we’re lovers because the kind of intimacy we share is rarely represented outside of romantic relationships. Balanced on the thin line between platonic and sexual closeness—a tension always ripe with romance—our work is intended to contribute to an archive of our relationship which can exist in perpetuity. While the viewer may initially associate our pictured scenes with the typical rituals of a couple—a lazy morning in bed, getting ready for a night out, changing to swim, taking in a sunset while on vacation—the defining proof of the relationship is denied. Our trans and non-male identities further complicate and add nuance to the homoerotic imagery.

Even as gay and queer representation in mainstream media increases, there remains a lack of awareness or celebration of queer platonic intimacy between people of the same gender. In this project, we seek to frustrate an erotic expectation while creating space for new truth.

Polaroids by,  
and courtesy of,  
Kale Chesney































