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Contact:

Jenal Dolson

+ 312 404 9188

jenal@andrewrafacz.com

www.andrewrafacz.com

Chicago, IL, November 7, 2025 – **ANDREW RAFACZ** is thrilled to announce *What A Long Strange Trip It's Been*, a solo exhibition of new works by Wells Chandler, in Gallery One. The exhibition opens Friday, November 7th and continues through Saturday, December 20th, 2025. This is the artist's third solo exhibition with the gallery.

Chandler's site responsive, hand-crocheted installations emerge from the entanglement of ecology, gender, and queer iconography. The etymology of *queer* is *twerka*, meaning "to twist." Crochet is a process of twisting lines; it is repetitive and contemplative. Meditation underlies Chandler's labor-intensive, slow practice, embedding time, ritual, and devotion directly into the work. Informed by Jungian frameworks and comparative religion, Chandler weaves art history, esoterica, pop culture, and autobiography to stage heterotopias oriented toward collective healing.

The Secret of the Golden Flower, an early Taoist meditation text later translated by Richard Wilhelm and commented on by Carl Jung, teaches that enlightenment arises through the circulation of inner light—a turning inward that transmutes shadow into radiance. This pattern of transformation is echoed in Goethe's *Faust*, where the homunculus, longing to dissolve his glass vessel and merge with the generative waters of the Great Mother, achieves union with the source of all becoming by descending into the sacred feminine. Structural to both of these texts is the *coincidentia oppositorum* – the mystical union of opposites. This dialectic principle is central to Jung's *process of individuation*, where self-realization emerges through the integration of the unconscious and the marriage of the contrasexual forces of anima and animus. Wholeness dawns when the ego acknowledges it is not the sole center of the psyche. Across spiritual traditions, this alchemical act of re-membering represents the highest stage of psycho-spiritual transformation. Flowering becomes a metaphor for this inner shift; the divine hermaphrodite as both forge and crucible, embodies nondual reunion.

Invoking vitality and presence, Chandler's exuberant garden symbolizes the cultivated mind and the interdependence of all existence. Within this psycho-spiritual ecosystem, loss, grief, and love compost into new life. Bugs—each named after the artist's family members—animate a terrain of repair and generational healing. As *yidams*, they serve as sacred mirrors, emissaries of reconciliation, restoring wholeness through the purification of aversion. Flowers titled after popular love songs and lyrics compose a chorus of tenderness and elation. As splayed queer icons, each bloom gestures toward *bodhicitta*—the opening of heart and mind through love and surrender.

Suffering is an inevitable part of life, yet it is through the metabolization of pain that being deepens and meaning arises. Despite our differences and irreconcilable grievances, an invisible force connects us—felt more than known—binding all living beings in shared existence. Liberation is not an escape from earth but a deep flowering within it.

Aiding this endeavor, joy and humor emerge as potent strategies. In the artist's words, "Choosing joy is radical because joy is idiosyncratic pleasure—and that destabilizes power as it currently exists." Humor softens rigidity, challenges fixed relationships, and cultivates compassion. These tools allow Chandler to create environments charged with the profound openness of childlike wonder—a state in which perception is fluid and everything is alive with possibility. Chandler's talismanic lexicon punctuates a myth-making that embraces the fantastical and positions queerness as central—rather than peripheral—to culture itself, revealing transgender identity to be a generative, world-building force. Installed as an interdependent field, the works hold symbols and viewers in reciprocal relation, modeling attunement that resists separation.

WELLS CHANDLER (American, b. 1985) lives and works in Bronx, NY. He received his MFA from Yale University in 2011 and was awarded the Ralph Mayer Prize for proficiency in materials and techniques. He was a 2015 Queer Art Mentorship fellow paired with Angela Dufresne. He was a recipient of the Sharpe Walentas Studio Program (2016-2017), and received a BRIO from the Bronx Council on the Arts (2025). Recent solo exhibitions include ANDREW RAFACZ (Chicago, IL), Galerie Eric Mouchet (Paris, France and Brussels, Belgium), Montserrat College of Art (Beverly, MA), Soloway, (Brooklyn, NY), and Diablo Rosso (Panama City, Panama). Group exhibitions include Spring Projects (Brooklyn, NY), The Fundação Arpad Szenes - Vieira da Silva (Lisbon, Portugal), Uncle Brother (Hancock, NY), International Objects (Brooklyn, NY), Goldfinch Gallery (Chicago, IL), Helena Anrather (New York, NY), Olympia (New York, NY), Dee Pre Art Gallery (Holland, MI), and Leslie Lohman Museum of Art (New York, NY). He has exhibited at art fairs in Chicago, Cologne, Copenhagen, London, Madrid, Mexico City, Miami, New York, Palm Springs, and Paris. Chandler was appointed the Tieger Mentor of the Arts at Cornell in 2023. He regularly contributes art reviews, poetry and essays to The Electric Pencil, an alternative art journal founded by The Wood Ox Mystery School. His work has been written about by Roxane Gay, Art Forum, The New York Times, The New Yorker, Hyperallergic, The Huffington Post, TimeOut, Modern Painters, Maake Magazine, and AEQAI. His work is included in numerous public and private collections.